



Parental Engagement Policy

KHALSA ACADEMIES TRUST - Parental Engagement Policy

This policy is applicable to our schools; Khalsa Secondary Academy (KSA), ATAM, The British Sikh School (TBSS) and any further schools we open.

Approved February 2019

Introduction

Parents are at the heart of our Schools as it is because of them that our schools exist. Our approach to engagement is founded on our desire for selfless service to all of our parents and pupils. We want all parents to have the opportunity to contribute positively to the future success of the Trust and schools. We wish to see parents involved in the local Governing body, the Board or the Trust.

Parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups. (Desforges 2003).

Parental engagement is defined as parental engagement in learning, as opposed to parental involvement in schooling (Harris and Goodall 2007). The definition was made to ensure that practitioners and policy makers were not confusing the objective of getting parents involved with school life (e.g. attending parents' evening, which is seen as reactive to the school) and the objective of engaging parents with their child's learning (seen as proactive).

In order for parents to become effectively engaged in their child's learning, they need to understand the programme of study for each area of the curriculum, what steps their child will make, the skills they will need, what success will look like and what can be done at home to enhance and embellish the learning experience. This is achieved through a range of communication strategies, such as letters home, curriculum blog sites, information on the school website, parent information evenings and workshops, hyperlinks to appropriate support materials, recommended reading, glossaries and recommendations for trips and outings to relevant venues to support current topics.

Aims of this Policy:

Any parental engagement strategy has at its heart one simple aim: To improve the learning of our students through building a positive trusted relationship between the school and parents.

This policy will:

- Identify the key considerations and barriers to effective engagement
- Identify ways Khalsa Academies Trust schools could engage with parents
- Demonstrate how we develop a positive relationship with parents through building trust based on positive, open, transparent, efficient communications and feedback.

This policy should be seen as complementary to the home school agreement, which is largely focused on teaching and learning aspects of the school and home relationship.

The word parent has the same meaning as carer within this policy.

Key Messages and Considerations:

- Parental needs assessment should inform interventions and strategies.
- All parents' contributions are welcome.
- Personalised approaches are needed for some parents, particularly for those deemed 'hardest to reach.'
- Communication with parents should be accessible to all.
- We recognise that contextual factors like work, other children, health issues, transport etc will impact on how parents engage with the school.

Barriers to Parental Engagement

In our work of engaging with parents, all staff should be mindful of barriers to parental engagement. All parents love their children and all want them to succeed but there are many reasons why some parents may not be seen to actively engage with school.

- Practical issues like childcare, work commitment and lack of transport
- Health issues / care commitments
- Perceived formality of parent groups
- Feeling intimidated by teaching staff, possibly relating to their own schooling
- Meeting times inconvenient
- Literacy / numeracy issues
- Language barriers
- Embarrassment, particularly when their child may be experiencing difficulties
- Lack of understanding about systems or what children are learning

For this reason, it is essential that our approach to engagement is continuously adapting and is flexible so that we are constantly working to reduce barriers to engagement.

Strategies for Parental Engagement at Khalsa Academies Trust Schools

Communication

Communication is at the heart of any relationship and can positively inspire trust and confidence with the school.

The reception desk should always be manned during school opening hours with a clearly visible notice during out of school hours on how parents can contact someone in an emergency.

When parents visit the school, the reception staff should welcome them and offer refreshments and a comfortable seating/waiting area.

Parents' telephone calls should always be answered quickly and efficiently (usually less than 5 rings) with a high quality customer service approach. In the event that a parent has to leave a message, then the message should be responded to within 24 hours even if a solution to the particular issue is not realised.

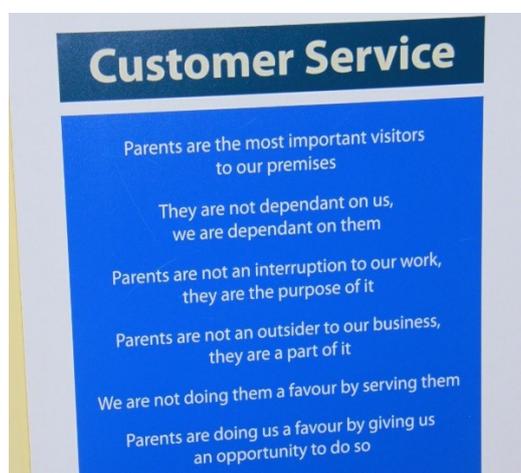
Parents that send any member of staff at the school a message via an email should be responded to within 24 hours.

The headteacher of the school should be available to meet parents face to face within five working days of a written or verbal request or within 48 hours if it is an urgent matter.

The school should attempt to identify whether a parent may require a translator in the event that their first language is not English and provide a translator during office hours.

The school should always offer to translate school publications into another language if requested.

The school should display its attitude to parents by displaying the following type of poster/picture in the reception area:



Parent Surveys

The Governance Handbook, from the Department for Education (DfE), has a section on "having regard to the views of parents". Section 5.2 says:

All boards should assure themselves that mechanisms are in place to engage meaningfully with parents and enable all parents to put forward their views at key points in their children's education.

The Khalsa Academies Trust Board will ensure that independent parent surveys are carried out twice a year, the first during the Spring term (around February) and the second in June.

New parents could be surveyed for the experience with admissions and induction.

The core questions should be the same for all schools and be aligned to the Ofsted questions, however supplementary questions can be added in line with specific issues or challenges that each school faces.

Core questions

Parents/carers are asked to record their view for the following 12 questions, by stating either 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know':

1. My child is happy at this school
2. My child feels safe at this school
3. My child makes good progress at this school
4. My child is well looked after at this school
5. My child is taught well at this school
6. My child receives appropriate homework for their age
7. This school ensures the pupils are well behaved
8. This school deals effectively with bullying
9. This school is well led and managed
10. This school responds well to any concern I raise
11. I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress
12. I would recommend this school to another parent
13. Is there anything we can do to make our school better? (text box for comments)

The sample size should be appropriate based on the size of the school and that out of all the responses at least 75% are in agreement or strong agreement to at least 75% of the 13 questions.

Areas that show concern should result in further research such as a focus group or further questionnaires followed by an action plan as part of the school development plan.

Communication ICT

The school should see ICT as a powerful tool for engaging with parents. It allows us to provide up –to date information to parents; respond promptly to questions and concerns; celebrate student achievement in its many forms.

Each school will use:

- Email to communicate individually with parents or to send group messages / reminders
- School websites for information about systems, policies and processes, as well as up to date news and details of student success
- Online reporting so that parents can monitor their children's achievement progress
- Virtual Learning Environment so parents can access weekly independent learning tasks and check that their children have submitted tasks

- Online reporting for homework that has been set/marked along with teachers comments

Each school is required to keep an up to date register of those parents without access to the internet and to ensure that they receive all communications.

The school should offer training sessions for parents who need support to access ICT, such as VLE training.

Monthly Newsletters

The Head of the School should write a monthly newsletter which includes (as a minimum):

- Updates about developments – building, resources, new policies
- Details of the week's Teaching and Learning
- Updates about SEN and G&T provision (spell out as first time of use)
- Details of Pupil Experiences
- Celebration of students' achievements
- Explanations of school policies, such as behaviour
- Requests for help and support, including sourcing materials or resources for particular projects
- Safeguarding notices, such as e-safety
- Details of the school's approach to teaching and learning
- Notice of upcoming events
- Progress towards a permanent site or other building issues
- Regular (weekly) updates on the schools twitter and or facebook sites.

In addition, the newsletter is used to elicit parental views on aspects of the school that we are reviewing. Every fortnight the newsletter generates responses from parents.

Parents Meetings

The Schools should have a welcoming ethos and, as many of the parents live locally, they often come to the school to drop off equipment or relay messages. Many informal meetings between parents and staff take place during these exchanges and parents often use these to relay key information about their children, such as medical updates, family details and information on anything that might impact on a child's learning. For those students who find the transition difficult, the school should have regular, informal, daily meetings with parents and this is a helpful way to share ideas about support and progress. In addition, parents and staff request formal meetings when a more detailed discussion is needed and these are calendared.

Moving Forward Meetings

In the event of a negative behavioural issue with the pupil, the school should organise a meeting to help support students and their parents in modifying negative behaviour or helping to resolve other issues. These should be consciously positive in approach and are about resolution and support, not punishment. The desired approach to behaviour management condemns labelling and is designed to avoid negative cycles of behaviour. For

parents who may have become conditioned to being defensive about their child's behaviour, this is a much more positive step towards engaging with them. Often parents blame themselves and are embarrassed over poor behaviour but we ensure that we do not consider any child 'naughty' and just consider all students capable of making poor decisions. Our hope is that, over time, this approach will be a factor in engaging with some hard to reach parents who become fed up with 'being called up to the school' and therefore disillusioned.

In these meetings, where appropriate, the school should offer engagement with external agencies that may be able to support the student with particular needs or the family more widely.

Student Planners

Each school should offer a bespoke student planner which records independent learning tasks but also have weekly learning reflection, where students evaluate the week's learning and set targets. As well as developing student meta-cognition, parents can also access an insight into their child's learning, providing them with a chance to discuss learning with their child, instead of having to accept 'fine' as a typical adolescent response to enquiries. In addition, these should be signed weekly, these can be used for home-school communication, allowing parents to provide their own comments and notify staff of any issues or appointments.

Support and Training for Parents

We know that for some of our parents who have educational links, older children or broader knowledge, much of what their children will be doing is already familiar to them. However, there are others who, for a range of reasons, know little about the progression of a child through secondary school and the kind of support they may need. For this reason the school should not assume that the same information will be clear to all. Because of this, and the complex needs of some children, both academic and pastoral, we aim to provide a range of support and training for parents. Some of this will be open to all and some will be tailored to individual parents.

Support and Training will cover areas like:

- Understanding of ICT systems
- Explanations of reporting and student achievement
- Independent Learning Projects
- Helping parents access local health services
- Support with accessing family services
- Literacy / numeracy support for some parents
-

Our approach should always be multi-layered to engage all, such as a written detailed explanation of reports and levels, followed up by a small group training session for those who want this, alongside the Learning Mentor meeting with a parent to explain the report face-to-face. One size does not fit all.