

**National Centre for School leadership/National Union of  
Teachers/Institute of Education**

**Equal Access to Promotion**

**Phase 3 Research Project**

**A Case Study of the relationship between parental participation in  
school activities and their children's educational achievement.**



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## School Context

St. Martin in the Field High School is a 11-19 state comprehensive, multi ethnic, Church of England Girl School, located in Lambeth, in the south west of London. The school has a population of over 800 students. Its last GCSE results was 76% 5 A\* to Cs and 56% inclusive of mathematics and English. St Martins is a very inclusive school, which does it very best to ensure that all it students achieve their full potential. The last OFSTED inspection (2007) graded the school as outstanding.

The school takes its partnership with parents very seriously. It believes that continued communication between school and home is of vital importance if the girls are to make the most of the opportunities offered at St. Martin's. The school currently offers the following formal and informal activities aimed at encouraging parental involvement in every aspect of their daughters' school life.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents evenings (formal for each year cohort)</li> <li>• Coffee morning (informal context as parents set agenda in each year group)</li> <li>• Laptop club (parent training in basic laptop skills)</li> <li>• Chicken and chat (informal meal with all parents)</li> <li>• Cultural celebration</li> <li>• Cabaret</li> <li>• Year 6 interview with parents</li> <li>• Year 9 Option Evening</li> <li>• Whole school fun run</li> <li>• Gospel concerts</li> <li>• School productions (Plays, Musicals, Christmas Pantomime etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer fair</li> <li>• Champagne evenings (charity event)</li> <li>• Home work (via planner)</li> <li>• Sports Day</li> <li>• Regular reports</li> <li>• Invitation to sports day</li> <li>• Letters to parents (departments and whole school)</li> <li>• Students' personal diaries</li> <li>• Individual action planning day</li> <li>• Termly newsletters</li> <li>• Telephone conversation</li> <li>• After school sessions with the school Chaplain</li> </ul>
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The school believes that apart from providing the opportunity for socialisation with the whole school community, these programmes support discussion on issues ranging from problems with modern living, spiritual and emotional development of the girls, nutrition, gang and street culture, internet safety and supporting children through challenges of their teenage years.

The vast majority of these events, especially the more formal, are well supported by our parents. However despite these numerous and varied activities hosts by the school there are some parents who do not participate in any of these activities and if they do very, very little.

## **The Aims of the study**

1. To develop an understanding of the effect of parental participation in school activities on their students' educational achievement.
2. A review of the school policy on parental involvement in school activities.
3. To identify the factors that limit parental participation in school activities.
4. To design a whole school approach that encourages continued parental engagement in school activities.

## **Methodology**

- Two samples of 20 year 11 students were selected from the 2008 and 2009 cohorts. 10 of these exceeded their target and 10 were the lowest performers of those that achieved below their targets. The data used were taken from 2008 Raise on Line result was used and the mock exam results analysis was used for the 2009.
- Interview with Assistant Head Teacher with responsibility for Students Welfare and Guidance.
- Interview with form tutors and Year Directors and attendance coordinator.
- Interview with the parents of the children who were used as the sample.
- Review of data collected from the questionnaire completed by parents after attending formal and informal event in school.

## **Main Findings.**

### **A Positive Strong Relationship**

There is clearly a link between parental involvement and their children's educational achievement. St. Martin's has demonstrated this in the massive turnout of parents (an average of between 70-80%) for parents' evenings and those other events put on by the school and the excellent value added and GCSE results the school produces.

### **Excellent attendance at school events**

The data suggests that parent/guardians were very supportive of what the school is currently doing to involve them in their children's education. They believe that St. Martin's is doing more than enough for their daughters to

succeed. This has been highlighted in the quality of the turnout at parents evenings and other non-formal events.

### **Ongoing underachievement and unsatisfactory attendance**

There was evidence to note that the sample of girls studied was believed to be underperforming or have underperformed were the girls with academic underachievement running through their school life. This was evident in their end of year reports since end of year 9 and attendance data.

### **Communication between school and home**

An improvement in communication between school and home is needed. Some parents are not always aware of the various events that happen in school. The parents interviewed have not been on the school website. They have not yet got access the school portal. They see this as another means of communication to get them involved in their daughter's education. They are not aware of the various extracurricular activities hosted by the school.

These parents want more and regular and periodic information about students' performance/behaviour in school. They want to know about the negative behaviours being displayed by their students with immediate effect. They believe that sometimes the school allows their daughters' negative behaviour to fester for too long before they are told.

### **Parent support group**

Parents say that they would have welcomed parent support groups which would help them in understanding their daughters development and how best to deal with their daughter through the challenging teenage years. The group would have helped them to understand what other parents are going through giving them the hope of not giving up on parenting.

Two parents said that they stayed away from school because they were experiencing similar difficulties at home raising their daughter resulting in them being reluctant to come into school to talk with teachers, fearing the confirmation of their experiences at home.

### **Economic factors limits parental participation**

Economic factors contribute negatively or otherwise to parental participation in their children education. Eight of the parents interviewed were single parents and having to work. As a result the opportunity to participate actively in their daughters' educational development was limited.

### **Timing of events**

Some parents experienced difficulties attending these events because of clashes of time.

## **Key Points for Action**

Information gathered from parent questionnaire needs to be feedback to classroom teachers as these are the individuals who are more likely to effect the change.

- Feeding back my findings to the senior leadership team (Assistant Heads with responsibility for Partnership with parents and Welfare and Guidance respectively).
- Feeding back to staff in staff meeting about parents' appreciation of what they are doing and how continued and regular conversations would help.
- Encourage parents to refer to the school website and encourage the school to roll out the learning platform to parents as quickly as possible.
- Design a document which provides information to staff as to what we do to engage our parents reinforced by whole school INSET.
- Initiate the parent support group as early as year 7. Recognise the challenging students from as early as year 7 and bring the parents/guardians together for ongoing discussion
- Invite those teachers who are free to join in the discussions coffee mornings.
- Investigate the possibility of parents/guardians working alongside teacher in lessons

## **Impact Assessment**

The case study has confirmed to the management team the excellent work that the school is currently doing to involve their parents in the educational development of the students. These activities are varied, hosted at various times and is provide different contexts in an effort to be inclusive. This has confirmed the school's passion for building this relationship which is so greatly appreciated by the vast majority of our parents. Some of the recommendations I have made were already being by looked by the team and will be implemented in the coming year. However other areas highlighted by the study will be taken into consideration for urgent implementation for instance rolling out the learning platform to our parents. The opening up of the Learning Platform to parents would further provide parents with access to more information on the school. They could also use this medium to communicate with school if they are having difficulties coming in. The senior manager with this responsibility is aware of this and plans.

Serious consideration will be given to the possibility of involving parents coming in and working along side teachers in lessons despite the SLT's awareness of the challenges of introducing a strategy like this.

### **Evaluation of the EAP Programme**

I found the EAP programme useful in further developing the skills necessary to lead on whole school policy enactment and implementation. It provided me with the opportunity to talk and shadow experienced members of leadership team, gaining an insight into their everyday responsibilities. The ability to engage teachers and parents, talking openly about such a difficult topic was rewarding. I was able to persuade these parents/guardians about the value of providing this information. Being able to gain their confidence that the information they give will only be used for the further strengthening of the relationship between school and home. In addition, talking with these parents outside the context of a formalised parents' evening was a changing experience. These parents listened and shared in a relaxed atmosphere. I too was very different in my approach to them; I listened, without interruption, to them occasionally venting their anger when talking to me about this sensitive issue.

Feeding back the main findings to members of the senior leadership team and convincing them as to taking up the recommendation was also a highlight of this project. This of course brought up issues to do with prioritising and being able to budget for the continued development of this partnership despite the understanding that strengthens the relationship between school and home will massively improve students' academic achievement.