

# Examples of listening to and consulting parents

## Home-school liaison

*'An effective method for these groups was to have a direct telephone line, bypassing the school switchboard, to an identified person in the school whom the parents knew and to whom they had the confidence to speak. One way to avoid misunderstanding was to have a 'link' person in the school, that is, someone who either spoke the language of the parents, or, as in the case of the gypsy traveller students at Southern Metropolitan, someone who was known to and trusted by the families, to do the liaison work with parents. This 'link' person allowed for a two-way process of communication to occur because it provided an opening for parents to talk about their own concerns and not always have to wait for the school to contact them. The more that parents felt able to approach the school, the more confidence they developed to take part in other aspects of school life'.*

From 'Parental Involvement in Multi-Ethnic Schools',  
[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)

## Annual parents' survey

Many schools that set out to survey parents' views are disappointed by the results. A secondary school in North Yorkshire, however, has had an annual parents' survey, with a high response rate, for several years. Each year it looks at:

- the general level of parental satisfaction with the current arrangements for contact,
- the views of parents on several issues of current discussion and development.

Its success is undoubtedly due to the fact that parents can actually see that their views are regularly sought and listened to and do actually make a difference to the way the school goes about its work.

## Listening to parents

Key Stage 4 students from a secondary school in the North-West undertook a systematic collection of parent views as part of their studies. One group did this as part of the 'Listening and Talking' components of their GCSE English course; another group did so as part of an 'Interviewing' activity, which is a core element in their GNVQ 'Tourism' course.

The results of this combined work introduced originally as part of the introduction of the home-school agreements, provide important insights into parental expectations and viewpoints.

## Working with parents at Cuthbert Mayne

*'The project has enabled staff to gain very clear views from parents. If that is all that the project achieves it has been worthwhile. Staff have been surprised by what parents have had to say and we have changed the way we communicate with parents as a direct result of the project.'*

Headteacher

Our starting point

*Cuthbert Mayne School has always been committed to working with parents and has undertaken a range of small projects. We were concerned to gain a better understanding of parents' perceptions of the school and to find out how we could communicate with them more effectively. We were also concerned to involve parents more fully in their children's learning and wanted to give them the opportunity to identify the areas they wanted us to address.*

*A questionnaire was tested with Year 10 parents, seeking information on the quality of school communications. Parents and staff designed this together. After being tried out, the questionnaire was amended and distributed to all parents. The answers were collated by students and analysed by a group of parents and staff. The results were then discussed by parents and staff and acted upon.*

*A new parents' information book was produced to reflect what parents said they wanted to know. The style of letters to parents was also altered.*

Successful schools CEDC

## Questions parents ask

In one school, tutors with responsibility for children in the same year agreed to make a written note of questions that parents asked at a forthcoming parents' consultation evening.

In a short meeting during lunchtime on the following day they compared notes. In addition to a discussion of the particular individual problems of pupils they taught, they uncovered several common problems and shared concerns from parents generally.

These have provided the basis of further, clearer information for all parents in that year and also suggested a couple of themes and topics for future parent workshops.

