

3.7 How can Foster Carers support their child's learning?

Research evidence consistently demonstrates the role of carers¹ in securing positive educational outcomes. Harris and Goodall (2007) make a distinction between carer involvement, and carer engagement. Carer involvement includes a range of activities within and outside the school, but these do not directly influence educational outcomes. However, carer engagement involves the carers directly influencing the child's learning through active engagement.

There are many ways in which carers can actively engage in their child's learning.

Carers can:

- Talk to the child about their progress at school.
- Set routines around completion of homework.
- Encourage them to say "yes" if they are offered additional support or opportunities.
- Keep up to date with how the child is doing by talking to the tutor and/or the class teacher.
- Use the home school communication system to let the school know how things are at home, including how well home learning is going.
- Ask the child about one thing that they have learnt during the day.
- Ask what helped improve their understanding or remember what they have learnt.
- Ask how this will help in other lessons.
- Ask what the child liked learning most during the day.
- Ask the child what carers can do at home to help the child with what they have learnt in school.
- Build on the child's strengths and interests and recognise their successes e.g. how their work has improved recently.

¹ The research of Harris and Goodall (2007) did not single out Foster Carers, and so the research summary presented here is more generic: hence use of the phrase "carer" rather than "Foster Carer"

Schools need to establish an ethos of carer engagement in the school to facilitate carer engagement.

Schools can

- Reassure carers that their ability to support the child at home is not about experience or qualifications. Carers can coach the child, giving suggestions about tactics and skills to support learning. Many carers may feel a tutor is better equipped to support learning so it is important to stress that a carer can often learn about a new area alongside the child in their care, and this interaction has the potential to promote both education and attachment.
- Give information about how carers can help the child's learning. Make the information available in a variety of formats including in writing, face to face, and electronically.
- Make sure carers know how to share information about the child with the school, and how to do this.
- Ask carers how they would like to receive information and communicate with the school, and facilitate this.
- Make a special effort to invite carers to participate in opportunities the school already offers, such as coming to view a lesson, school trips, attending parent workshops etc.
- Have an area on the school website that includes details of what the child will be learning each term, and specific suggestions as how carers can extend and reinforce the learning.
- Enable carers to share their skills and interests with their child through family learning or family clubs.
- Offer carers guidance on how to find additional support for themselves in relation to literacy, numeracy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).
- Welcome the extended family and community to support learning.

LONDON FOSTERING ACHIEVEMENT

Read more:

Harris, A and Goodall, J (2007). *Engaging parents in raising achievement: Do parents know they matter?* Nottingham: Author. Available from:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6639/1/DCSF-RW004.pdf>

DCSF (2010) One to one tuition: parent and carer leaflet. Nottingham: Author. Available from: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Partners/Schools/One-to-one-tuition/Documents/one-to-one%20tuition%20parent%20and%20carer%20guide.pdf>

Scottish Executive (2006) Parents as partners in their children's learning toolkit. Edinburgh: Author. Available from:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/147410/0038822.pdf>

The series of 8 "Making the Difference" leaflets for parents published by the Quality in Education Centre, Strathclyde. Available from:

http://www.angus.gov.uk/gsearchresults.htm?cx=005204087397907911534%3Aqayq_sfat_mu&cof=FORID%3A11&q=making+the+differnece&sa=Go

Lucas, B and Smith, A (2009). *Help your child to succeed: The essential guide for parents*. 2nd Edition. London: Continuum International Publishing Group