

#mathscpdchat 14 January 2020

Engaging parents with their children's maths learning.

Hosted by [Simon Ball](#)

This is a brief summary of the discussion – to see all the tweets, follow the hashtag #mathscpdchat in Twitter

#mathscpdchat
TONIGHT - Tuesday, 14 January, 7-8pm

Engaging parents with
their children's maths learning.

Hosted by Simon Ball @ballyzero
ncetm.org.uk/mathscpdchat

Some of the areas where discussion focussed were:

characteristics of good key-stage-appropriate parental engagement:

- it **improves pupils' confidence** in doing mathematics;
- it takes account of '**where parents are coming from**';
- providing parents with a '**kit**' of **maths materials (manipulatives)** that pupils use in school;
- opportunities for parents to '**do the maths themselves**';

- keeping parents informed about **'what is happening in school'** ... for example using **Class Dojo (link below)** to connect with parents by sharing photos and videos of lessons, and private messaging;
- communicating with parents by **making phone calls** ... calling home regularly ... needing to check with 'the pastoral team' that it's appropriate to contact by phone a particular parent/carer ... making positive phone calls at the end of Friday every week;
- whether there is a **pupil-age-limit beyond which parental engagement is not necessary/appropriate/helpful** ... that parental engagement must 'be active from when pupils are young' (that 'you cannot expect to start engaging with parents when pupils are 16+');
- **dialogue with parents that is 'open and honest'** ... for example not being 'defensive' when phoning a parent/carer ... listening to the parental view;
- endeavouring to make the **first contact with a parent a positive one** ... if that's not possible making your points politely and keeping the contact (e.g. a phone call) brief;
- preparing for a discussion with a parent/carer by **having-to-hand concrete/clear examples** to back-up what you want to communicate;
- **always carrying out (following through on) any promises** that you make;
- making it clear that you want the best for the parent's child, and **acknowledging that they do too**;
- engaging with a parent/carer **as soon as possible after starting to detect 'an issue arising'** ... not waiting until a pupil is 'failing' or 'disrupting the class frequently' before making contact ... that it makes for easier conversations later on if 'things get worse' if you have already established a good relationship with the parent;
- acknowledging, and acting upon, awareness that **parents may be keen to help pupils at home, but that they may not know how to do that**;
- working with parents with the aim of **preventing pupils picking up negative (damaging) messages about maths from their parents** ... for example helping parents understand why they should avoid saying 'I was never any good at maths and I'm OK';

whether parents' evenings are effective in improving pupils' learning and behaviour:

- that a face-to-face meeting can be very helpful, but that **positive consequences may be short-lived**;
- that it can be unhelpful for a very young pupil to be present during a face-to-face discussion with a parent/carer ... that the **pupil's presence may be an obstacle to honest discussion**;

- that **when a pupils is older it may help if the pupil is present** at a meeting with the parent ... the pupil may find that it easier to be honest in the absence of their peers ... that fostering pupil independence is eased by pupils knowing what they need to focus on;
- **in primary schools, parent evening interviews are often far too short for in-depth discussions about maths learning** because the whole curriculum has to be addressed;
- whether at parents' evenings **parents have opportunities/time to 'tell the teacher their side of the learning experience'** ... the importance of seeing parents as partners in supporting their children's learning;
- acknowledging that some parents may be intimidated by their idea of the school's expectations of them ... they may not want to admit that, although their child is struggling with maths, they are unable to help them ... that it is **important to make the school's expectations of parents clear, for example by explaining that it is the pupil's learning that matters, not the mere completion of homework tasks;**
- that parents' evenings may contribute to a much **wider 'menu' of parental-engagement events and actions** ... for example forms of parental engagement might also include parents' workshops, invitations to lessons, maths-games clubs and family-numeracy classes;

improvements in parental engagement that contributors to the discussion hope to encourage and see:

- encouraging **more teachers habitually to make regular positive phone calls to parents/carers** ... preparing 'scripts' in case a phone call goes to voicemail ... leaving an email address;
- that **sending emails may be as efficient as making phone calls** ... that email communications can be used to establish a time for a more in-depth phone call ... that one email can be sent to several parents;
- **sending 'praise cards' to parents** in the post or by hand with pupils;
- making a commitment to yourself to **make three positive phone calls before you go home at the end of every week** ... that it's an excellent way to end each week and to give pupils and parents a good start to the weekend.

In what follows, click on any screenshot-of-a-tweet to go to that actual tweet on Twitter.

This consists of parts of two linked conversations about parents' and teachers' understandings of what each expects of the other, and how teachers can help parents

support their children's maths learning at home. The conversation was generated by this tweet from [Katie Baker](#):

 **Katie Baker** @edukatemaths · Jan 14
#mathscpdchat I teach (maths only) in primary and have just submitted my PhD thesis which involved research into parental engagement. Good parental engagement works in partnership with parents to find out what would help them help their child.

and included these from [Simon Ball](#), [Katie Baker](#) and [Mary Pardoe](#):

 **Simon Ball** @ballyzero · Jan 14
Replying to @edukatemaths
Support at home is the goal, isn't it? Good luck with your thesis - I hope it all goes well! #mathscpdchat

 **Katie Baker** @edukatemaths · Jan 14
I found most parents were incredibly keen to help at home. They often didn't know how to though. #mathscpdchat

 **Mary Pardoe** @PardoeMary · Jan 14
This 'familymathstoolkit' might be a start for them:
familymathstoolkit.org.uk/information-fo... #mathscpdchat ... for example ...

these from [Simon Ball](#), [Katie Baker](#) and [Kathryn Darwin](#)

 **Simon Ball** @ballyzero · Jan 14
Question Two: are parents evenings effective at your level? Do you see the improvements in student behaviour that you were looking for following them? #mathscpdchat

 **Katie Baker** @edukatemaths · Jan 14
Replying to @Arithmaticks @martynyeouk and @ballyzero
Is there time for parents to tell the teacher their side of the learning experience? Because they will undoubtedly be experiencing a different side of their child and maths than we do. Do we as teachers see parents as partners or as clients or something else? #mathscpdchat

 **Kathryn** @Arithmaticks · Jan 14
I'd like them to consider us partners. We all want the best for their children, and so should be a team. But I do sometimes think we're seen as a service... #mathscpdchat

and these from [Katie Baker](#) and [Simon Ball](#):

 **Katie Baker** @edukatemaths · Jan 14
Some parents I spoke to felt so intimidated by the school's expectations of them to get their child to complete homework they were doing it themselves rather than admit to the school their child was struggling and they couldn't help. #mathcpdchat

 **Simon Ball** @ballyzero · Jan 14
Oh. Oh my goodness. That's shocking! The long term implications of that approach are staggering. What do you think is the best way for teaching staff to work around or with that? #mathscpdchat



Katie Baker @edukatemaths · Jan 14

When parents understood that it was learning that mattered not completion they adopted a different approach. But they did have to be told that - school's need to make their expectations of parents very clear. Do we want them to police, support, facilitate and how? #mathscpdchat



Simon Ball @ballyzero · Jan 14

So an alteration to the way we communicate the importance of the child completing their homework - a massively important point! #mathscpdchat

(to read the discussion-sequence generated by any tweet look at the 'replies' to that tweet)

Among the links shared were:

[Keeping Parents in the Loop with ClassDojo](#) which explains how to connect with parents by sharing feedback, posting photos and videos to Class Story, and private messaging. It was shared by [Martyn Yeo](#)

[Improving children's confidence in maths starts with parents](#) which is an NCETM article about the interesting work that Nicol Winfield-Murray, the Maths Lead at Wyndham Primary School in Derby, carried out to secure parental engagement in maths. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[FamilyMathsToolkit](#) which is a comprehensive website designed to help teachers support parental engagement with maths. It contains sections relating to many aspects of effective parental-engagement, such as *Understanding Barriers to Engagement* and *Supporting All Families*. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[The Parent Factor](#) which is a National Numeracy report (2016) on the impact of the *Count on Us: Parental Engagement Programme*. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)

[Parental Engagement and Firm Foundations for All](#) which is a National Numeracy interim report (2014) on an initiative that was designed to reach the learners most in need of support. It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)