Parent Engagement

at

Arbour Vale School

Arbour Vale School values Parent Engagement

At Arbour Vale School we recognise that when you nurture a relationship with families, open up a dialogue and provide a support platform, the children ultimately benefit.

Through a combination of support groups, educational sessions and social events, parents and carers at Arbour Vale School are given the tools and opportunities to be more involved in their children's wellbeing and development.

When families are engaged, we can better meet the needs of our pupils. There is a greater mutual understanding and parents feel more supported.

The challenges faced by our special needs students and their families are very specific, so we aim to provide a service where we can tackle these difficulties with a positive, supportive and proactive approach. Through engagement workshops we give parents a platform on which to express their problems and share ideas. Involvement in these sessions, helps to build positive relationships and lets people know that they are not alone. We also run educational workshops led by specialists in a wide variety of fields, supported by charities we have forged important working relationships with.

When parents are engaged, they are able to support their children more effectively. They are more likely to access the support and services they need and we are able to work in partnership with them.

At Arbour Vale School, we do a fantastic job engaging with our families and our school is now planning to build upon this by applying for a Parent Engagement Award.

What are we already doing?

Parent support groups and workshops

Over the past few years Arbour Vale School has worked with partner charities and specialists in a variety of fields, to offer families a variety of workshops, educational courses and coffee mornings. We have a parent support group that meets on a weekly basis and a selection of courses that change from one term to the next, based on parental need, charity involvement and funding.

Our partner charities and specialists lead a variety of courses in fields ranging from Autism and behaviour strategy to workshops in toilet training. Our courses are highly successful and we have consistently received excellent feedback from parents. (Attendance)

Above: A workshop in which students were also involved. Learning and interacting alongside their parents and carers.

"The children are more secure knowing that parents and schools are working together" *Associate Feedback*

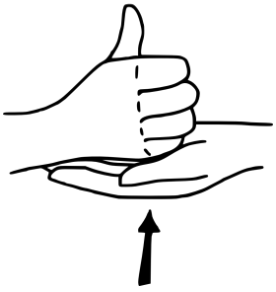
Parent Support Group

Arbour Vale School has established a successful parent support group. This is run by **The Autism Group**. The group is open to parents and carers as well as the wider community.

the autism group

Through actively working with local charities and forging relationships within the community, we have been able to offer our parents the additional support they need. Many of our families have benefitted directly from our coffee mornings and workshops, the response has been fantastic. We pride ourselves on our achievements and we want to continue to offer the best support possible. (outcomes)

help



Some feedback from families...

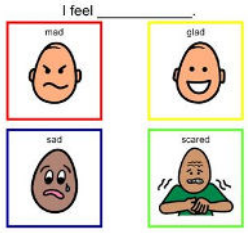
Feedback from parents has been excellent. They really appreciate what we have to offer as a community at Arbour Vale School.

"We attended the sleep course and made changes to the bath time routine.. This really helped with bedtimes" - *parent.*

"I learnt some good ideas which I am going to do myself.. not use gadgets like mobile phones and not watch TV or use the computer just before going to bed" - *Student.*

"The parents' sessions are the best thing the school has ever done for us, they really make you think about yourself and how you have to change or adapt to help your child. It's great to see that there are other people in the same situation as us and that nearly made me cry - It was such a relief." - *Parent.*

Some of our courses and workshops..



Oral hygiene

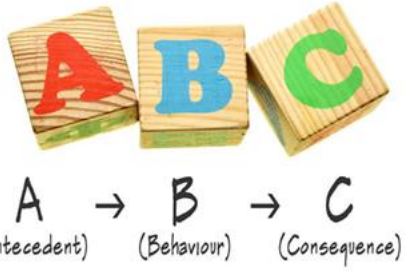
Sleeping Difficulties

Makaton

Toilet Training

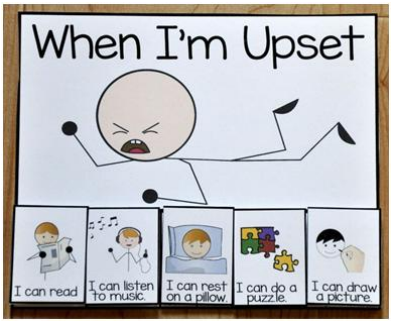
Understanding Autism

Who is in Charge?



Waldon Approach

Behaviour Management



Parent Engagement Award

Arbour Vale School are pursuing a Parent Engagement Award. We applied for this in February 2020 and are taking steps to achieve this goal.

Why?

We are passionate about engaging with and supporting our students and their families. We have been actively working on this over the past couple of years and believe that our unique school needs the recognition it deserves. We are good at what we do and have invested a lot of time into forging crucial links with local charities and Autism groups. We have built valuable relationships with charity partners with the specific intention of helping our families access the service and support. We have been able to help our families directly by maintaining a dialogue with them, engaging with their concerns and by offering them the workshops that best reflect their needs.

How is Covid19 significant in this?

The Covid 19 pandemic has proven that as a school we are robust and able to continue supporting our families, despite the severity of the challenges faced. Throughout lockdown, Arbour Vale school staff have consistently offered support and reassurance to families. Teachers have been communicating with individual families on a weekly basis, they have been engaging with parents regarding home school topics and support systems have been in place to help those most vulnerable. Throughout this period, our Parent Engagement lead, Kevin Hughes and Lyuba Kisel, have continued to maintain vital support links between our support charities and the families who need them. Many families have required more help during this time and we have been there to facilitate this.

Throughout lockdown, Arbour Vale has welcomed children on site following government advice and guidelines. Supporting our families and engaging with them throughout this time has been essential. The incredible effort of staff has given families the reassurance they needed during these difficult times and it is due to our successful community spirit that we have been able to achieve this.

How we are adapting online

To ensure we can continue to offer the best support possible to our families, we are making changes and adapting our strategy. Covid19 has taught us that we need to have a bigger online presence and support structure in place. In situations where face to face contact is not possible, we need to have a reliable online infrastructure to engage with our families. This includes the use of social media as a driving engagement tool.

Arbour Vale School

The maintenance and development of our school website has become more important than ever. It is a vital communication platform containing important resources for families.

Arbour Vale School has launched its own YouTube channel in response to growing demand and the need for greater online communication tools. Parents can use this as a valuable resource of information.

YouTube

twitter

Our Twitter feed contains up to date essential tweets!

We are setting up a video conferencing support group specifically for our parents. Courses will be led by one of our partner charities 'Parenting Special Children'.

zoom

Email continues to be our primary digital tool for direct communication with families. It provides the privacy that social media cannot provide and enables one-to-one communication.

The Plan

…what do we need to do?

1. Kevin and Lyuba have completed the Award Action Plan.
2. The plan and supporting information is now being shared with the rest of the school. This includes **staff**, **governors**, **charities** and relevant **organisations**.
3. As a school we are doing a fantastic job engaging with our families, however, we will only be successful in achieving the award if we can show specific evidence of engagement across all areas of the school.
4. In order to do this we are proposing that working groups of staff across the school contribute by integrating some additional parent engagement strategies. We need to get the parents more involved and we have identified some specific areas where this is possible. This compliments work already taking place across the school and will strengthen existing engagement with parents.

Why should we put in the extra effort?

We are already doing a fantastic job engaging with our parents. We are a unique school, facing unique challenges and we deserve to have the recognition for the hard work we are putting in. With just a few additional strategies, we could achieve this award and help raise the profile of Arbour Vale School. Our families will benefit from the additional support, our students will flourish and we will benefit from recognition we deserve.

Proposed
working party groups

Tim O'B, Dean G, Rachel S, Neil S:

School website, Twitter updates, school YouTube management, interactive screen, funding for next year's courses, clear external and internal symbols/signs/directions throughout the school.

Sarah B, Rob S, Sarah M:

Induction sessions for parents, assemblies involving parents.

Admin & office staff:

Evaluation of parent visits, office presentations.

Sarah M, Julie Foot, Marie - Claire, Lucy W:

Parent tours, feedback from CIN meeting and other relevant meetings, lead safeguarding sessions for parents.

Kevin H, Claire S, Ellie B, James P, Matt D, Marie-Claire:

Data evaluation, Survey Monkey, parents evening evaluation, market day evaluation, primary/secondary/ Post 16 shows and events, feed back from ARs etc.

Charlene W, Rachel A, Lyuba K, Rachel S:

Specific targeted training for parent workshops and individual families, e.g. Literacy, Numeracy, Waldon, ICT and Makaton. Working with partner charities to run exiting and new courses.

Why should we achieve the Parent Engagement Award?

To summarise a few points so far...

• Our staff recognise the importance of forging relationships with parents and the positive impact this can have on children's lives. We want our students to flourish.
• Many of our parents face unique situations and we work proactively to give our parents the hope and support tools they need. We feel passionately that our families should not be suffering in silence.
• We offer our families an extensive range of workshops, educational courses and coffee morning style support groups.
• We encourage parent engagement at social events such as Market day, Christmas shows and sports events.
• Our teachers and support staff communicate with families on a regular basis and provide feedback to families face to face as well as though diaries. During the pandemic much of this became telephone and online based.
• We are actively growing our online presence and digital engagement with families through a variety of platforms including our website, YouTube, Twitter, Zoom and email.
• We are doing an incredible job engaging with parents and we deserve some recognition for the hard work we are putting in.

Please feedback your ideas...

Let's do this!

Arbour Vale School