

# The West Partnership presents:

## Craighead Primary, East Dunbartonshire

### Engaging Parents during the Pandemic

*This storyboard details how the team at Craighead Primary School, in East Dunbartonshire, maintained their work on parental engagement during the pandemic. We hear how the school employed a reflective and holistic approach to parental engagement work amongst their school community.*

#### What was the problem?

The pandemic caused mass disruption to our entire education system, with uncertainty and, in some cases, anxiety widespread across school communities. Nevertheless, learning continued remotely for most, with only a minority of pupils continuing in-person learning. The team at Craighead have worked on parental engagement for a number of years, and quickly realised how crucial getting parental engagement right during the lockdown would be. With remote learning and transitions on-going, parental engagement had never been more important.



#### Why is this important?

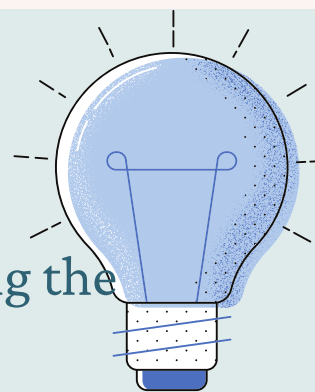
Parental engagement, often used alongside concepts like parental involvement and family learning, refers to the various ways in which parents engage with their children to support their learning. Research has found that parental engagement interventions can improve the attainment of the pupil and may influence the attainment of siblings too. With pupils at Craighead working remotely, the engagement of parents in their children's learning gained further importance.



#### Aims of the change to practice

The response of Craighead had three main aims:

- 1) To focus on the wellbeing of pupils and families during the pandemic
- 2) To support families in remote learning and consider how to effectively report information to parents in a rapidly changing situation
- 3) To embrace a reflective approach that would rapidly learn from interventions



#### What did you do?

To focus on wellbeing, the school recognised the need to support those who were in the midst of transitions activities. For those families who were about to enter the Craighead community, virtual tours of the school were provided until restrictions were lifted, allowing in-person tours. For P7 pupils who were about to leave Craighead, online meetings and tours were facilitated by the team. Health and wellbeing calls were made throughout the pandemic and the team identified pupils for whom enhanced transitions were necessary. The school made a concerted effort to utilise technology to support families in remote learning. Like many across Scotland, the school used Teams as a learning environment that could be used to disseminate learning materials. To respond to the immediate needs of pupils and their families, the school adopted a twice daily live check in. This was also adjoined to fun activities like 'Twilight Tales' and 'WhizzKid Wednesdays', the latter involving a live quiz. From January 2021, the team at Craighead hosted live assemblies. To engage parents, the school used a wide range of technologies. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were all used to increase the schools online presence, with Glow surveys used throughout to understand the needs and wants of the school community. The way that the school has reported information to parents has developed as the pandemic as unfolded. Throughout the pandemic the school have used a variety of communication channels to keep in touch with parents, but they have also developed learning and wellbeing packs that have been delivered to the homes of pupils.

#### What happened?

Throughout the pandemic, the school have been reflective and open to trying new interventions. They are keen to note that many of their changes to practice were inspired by colleagues from other schools. Nevertheless, the school has also looked to find ways of capturing data around learner and parental engagement. This qualitative and quantitative data allowed the school to adapt its practice at various points during the pandemic. For instance, the school collected data on how each pupil had been engaging during the initial lockdown. The team considered how this might be improved and created the live check-ins and the informal activities to improve engagement. These interactive responses to pupil needs saw learner engagement increase across all cohorts. The live assemblies were also well received, with 108 of the schools 248 pupils attending the first meeting before attendance rose to 75% (approximately just under 190 pupils). The use of Glow surveys allowed the school to understand how their changes were received by the school community. The school found that uptake in completing the surveys was significantly higher than when they had been tried prior to the pandemic with paper surveys handed out. A similar picture emerged regarding the school's parent workshops, which had previously been completed in person. The team noted that uptake had increased significantly in comparison to in-person workshops, with the team believing that online delivery provided a level of flexibility that improved accessibility for their parents.



#### What are the key points you have learnt?

The team at Craighead have reflected upon their change to practice and have identified a few key points. Firstly, as mentioned above, the team recognise the value in working collaborative with colleagues across education to identify potentially helpful interventions. Secondly, the team emphasise the need to be responsive to feedback. The team believe that the positive feedback they have received from their school community has been a reflection on their willingness to identify and respond to school community needs. At times, the team has had to identify weaknesses in their existing practice before collaboratively looking for solutions. Thirdly, the team recognised the importance of a school culture which encourages staff to develop professionally. Many of the technologies that the school used were not being used prior to the pandemic and staff had to quickly learn how to use such tools effectively.



#### What next for the project?

The team at Craighead have identified a number of next steps. Firstly, they will continue with their reflective approach that involves consultation with all aspects of the school community. Secondly, they will continue considering the ways in which online interventions can aid learner and parental engagement. Given that online parent workshops were well received the team are considering continuing with this approach post-pandemic. This will also extend to family learning events.

