



# ISAAC NEWTON ACADEMY

## PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT POLICY

*'The more parents are engaged in the education of their children, the more likely their children are to succeed in the education system. Research consistently shows that parental engagement is the one key factor in securing higher educational achievement.'* (Goodhall and Vorhaus 2010)

*'Where child learning becomes family learning, and where educators understand that they cannot meet the needs of children and young people alone, true engagement and shared understanding are developed.'* (NSCL, 2010)

At Isaac Newton Academy we aim to equip every student with the knowledge, learning power and character necessary for success at university and beyond. Parents/carers have a powerful influence that extends beyond their child's formal learning to shaping their child's character, their mindset and levels of attainment. Evidence shows that strong and positive home-school links can lead to improvements in learning behaviours, in completion of independent learning and behaviour and attendance. Effective home-school links can help to develop more confident and socially adjusted learners.

Creating and sustaining effective relationships with every parent/carer is our priority. We particularly endeavour to successfully engage those parents/carers who are hard to reach, in order to support a more active and personal level of participation in their child's learning.

We engage effectively with parents through the following six key activities:

- Building Relationships
- Communicating Effectively
- Reporting Progress Regularly
- Helping parents to support their child's learning
- Involving parents in decision-making
- Extending links beyond the school day

### 1. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

*'Where schools build positive relationships with parents and work actively to embrace racial, religious, and ethnic and language differences, evidence of sustained school improvement can be found.'* (Goodhall and Vorhaus 2010)

At Isaac Newton Academy we invest time in building open and trusting relationships with the families of every child and we work closely with parents/carers, starting prior to their child's transition from their primary school to Isaac Newton Academy and continuing throughout their secondary education.



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This includes:

- Writing to all parents/carers immediately following the publication of the secondary transfer list in the Spring term, welcoming them and their child into the Isaac Newton learning community
- Visiting the home of each child during the Summer term of Year 6 so as to forge links and build the foundations of a lasting relationship with our students' families. This meeting provides an opportunity for parents/carers to share information about their child's culture, background, talents and needs with a member of the Leadership Team and for the Academy expectations to be made explicit to them.
- Organising social events and activities to promote the relationship between the Academy and parents/carers, and between parents/carers, for example, inviting Year 7 parents/carers to a welcome breakfast/coffee morning in the Autumn term.
- Having a clear Home-Academy Agreement in which the responsibilities of parents/carers, staff and students are made explicit and taking time to discuss and clarify it with parent/carers.
- Raising staff awareness of any hard to reach families and exploring ways to effectively communicate with and engage them.
- Honouring the differing backgrounds, abilities, views and outlooks of the school community through, for example, displays, the INA newsletter and Academy events.

### **2. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY**

*'Parental engagement is effectively supported when parents receive clear, specific and targeted information from schools.'* (Goodhall and Vorhaus 2010)

At Isaac Newton Academy we engage with parents/carers through regular, personalised communication and by paying careful attention to the tone set by the physical environment of the reception area and the quality and tone of any written and verbal communication by Academy staff.

This includes:

- Ensuring that the reception area and all other public areas at Isaac Newton are welcoming with an attractive physical environment, clear welcoming signage, and LED screens which display important and current information.
- Expecting front office staff to deal with visitors as a priority and to be friendly, courteous and interact positively with them. We prioritise training and monitor the quality of service provided.
- Ensuring that home-academy communication methods engage all parents by the use of a range of media and forms, for instance, SMS messaging, emails, the INA website and VLE, the INA newsletter, telephone calls and letters. We also translate text into community languages, where applicable.
- Using online technology, including the Academy website and Fronter, to communicate with parents/carers about Academy news and events, Academy policies, students' independent learning and suggesting practical ways in which parents/carers can support their child's learning.



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- Ensuring that the language used by the Academy, in both verbal and written communication, is clear and accessible in order to genuinely engage parents. This includes communicating in plain English and avoiding the use of educational jargon.
- Returning telephone calls promptly, within 24 hours on school days.
- Communicating regularly with parents/carers and keeping them informed of Academy news and events through the Isaac Newton newsletter and Principal's letter to parents/carers.
- Offering parents/carers the opportunity to make an appointment at the weekly Principal's Surgery to discuss any aspect of their child's learning or the Academy.
- Using student organisers for prompt home-school, school-home communication.

### **3. REPORTING PROGRESS REGULARLY**

*'Parents' most important requirements are on-going feedback about their child throughout the school year, and regular feedback about performance and behaviour.'* (Russell and Granville 2005)

At Isaac Newton Academy we communicate regularly with parents/carers about their child's progress, current levels of attainment, behaviour for learning and attendance.

This includes:

- Sending home regular attainment/progress/attendance/BRIDGES reports for each student
- Inviting parents/carers in to meet with their child's form tutor at the end of the first half term of Year 7 to discuss the success of their transition to the Academy, to discuss their report and answer any questions.
- Holding regular progress meetings to discuss students' progress, publicising them and ensuring that hard to reach parents/carers are contacted in advance.
- Communicating with parents/carers when learning is progressing well by sending postcards and letters home, making telephone calls and inviting them to our praise and recognition assemblies and to presentation evenings.
- Contacting parents/carers immediately when there is a cause for concern by making telephone calls, sending emails or letters home, and inviting them to meet with relevant staff and maintaining regular contact until there is a resolution.
- Monitoring attendance at progress meetings and parent events and contacting parents/carers who fail to attend (or are unable to) and making alternative arrangements.

### **4. HELPING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING**

*'Parents should be educated in the language of schooling so that the home and school can share in the expectations and the child does not have to live in two worlds.'* (Hattie 2009)

At Isaac Newton Academy we provide information and guidance to parents/carers to familiarise them with our curriculum, help them to understand the learning process and understand how they can most effectively support their child's learning.



This includes:

- Holding workshops and distributing written guides for parents on key aspects of their child's learning, for instance, how to support their child in developing their BRIDGES characteristics and learning dispositions and how to effectively support their child's reading.
- Expressing clear guidance to parents/carers about how they can most effectively support their child's independent learning (at the annual New Parents evening in September of Year 7 and through information on the Academy website).
- Inviting parents into school to observe and support their child read.
- Providing a Parents' Handbook to help them support their child at secondary school.
- Encouraging families to have the basic home conditions in place to support their child's independent learning.
- Training staff in how to support parents to support their child's learning.

## **5. INVOLVING PARENTS IN DECISION-MAKING**

*'Parents have impact when they participate in the work of the school and school governance.'*  
(Brighouse and Woods)

At Isaac Newton Academy we believe that involving parents/carers as active partners provides benefits for the whole Academy community. We actively seek the views of parents/carers and we welcome and respond to feedback.

This includes:

- Involving parents/carers in developing parental engagement and making it a priority to find out from them what kind of activities and support would be most appropriate and helpful.
- Involving parents/carers in governance and ensuring that there is a parent governor on the Governing Body and that there are effective channels of feedback.
- Consulting parents/carers on a wide range of issues and using a range of survey methods, including online surveys, questionnaires, parents forums and focus groups
- Hosting Parents' Forums on a regular basis on a wide range of topics
- Feeding back on the outcomes of any parental consultations via the Academy website and newsletter and at Parents' Forums.

## **6. EXTENDING LINKS BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY**

*'Building home-school links through out of hours clubs, parenting classes, extended schools and outreach work is a powerful lever for improving children's achievement'* (Statham 2010)

At Isaac Newton Academy we are keen for the Academy's facilities and resources to be fully utilised by our students' families and members of our local community outside of school hours. We also offer opportunities for parents/carers to enhance their own learning.



This includes:

- Enlisting the support of parents/carers for Academy events such as cultural events, performances, sports events and fixtures and drop-down days, and encouraging their attendance.
- Encouraging parents/carers and students' siblings to become part of our extended learning community and to make use of our excellent facilities and resources by attending out of hours classes and clubs.
- Organising support sessions that focus on training in parenting skills and getting parents'/carers' feedback on what kinds of support they would like offered.
- Organising social events and trips for families.

*'Parents need to hold high aspirations and expectations for their children, and schools need to work in partnership with parents to make their expectations appropriately high and challenging, and then work in partnership with children and the home to realise, and even surpass, these expectations.'*  
(Hattie 2009)

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