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Engaging families

Discover how using technology for learning
can benefit the whole family

The support and involvement of families can make a crucial difference to learners' success. Technology offers practical, effective ways to engage families, keeping them in touch with a learner's progress and encouraging learning beyond the classroom.

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This is Next Generation Learning:

engaging families

Using technology together as a family can make a major difference to a learner's achievements. But it can also bring about wider benefits. Encouraging family and informal learning can be a stepping stone to further learning, qualifications and more rewarding work.

The availability of Home Access Grants can provide computers and the internet for families who may not otherwise have access to this technology.

Many schools, colleges and skills providers are also using technology to engage and talk with parents through online information. Above all, keeping learners safe online, at school and at home, needs the active participation of families.

Becta provides expert advice and practical support to help you make the most of technology. Find out how we can help you:

- support family learning
- give all learners access to technology at home
- involve families through online reporting
- keep learners safe online.



WHAT'S INSIDE

This booklet explains how technology at home or in a learning environment can help the whole family engage in learning.

Technology at home for Learning

Children with access to technology at school and in the home have a greater chance of achieving better grades and ultimately finding a good job.

When young people use technology to support their learning at home they do better in national tests.

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the facts & figures

There is real disparity in access to technology at home.

95%

of parents in a recent survey think that technology can help their child learn.

97%

of children from social class AB have internet access at home.

69%

Only 69 per cent of children from social class E have it.

Home access to technology can:

- help children to learn in the way that suits them best
- support their homework and revision
- help parents to build at home on what their children are learning at school
- enable children to explore their creativity and develop questioning minds
- make learning more inspiring for all
- reach those who are hard to reach in other ways and those at risk of missing out on the benefits of computer technology
- add value to family, informal and extended learning

- generally increase the use of learning platforms and technology-supported learning
- change methods of setting and assessing homework and coursework
- improve dialogue between parent and school about their child's learning
- encourage family learning, and informal learning for the parents or carers.

The government wants all pupils in state-maintained education in England to be able to have access to computers and the internet for their education at home.

The Home Access programme is providing the initiative and funding to help achieve this. After a successful pilot in Oldham and Suffolk, the programme is being rolled out nationally. Looked after children and those who need assistive technologies to help them use computers will be included. Eligible families can apply for a Home Access Grant to buy a package from approved suppliers.

The Home Access programme will initially target years 3–9 (ages 7–14) and aims to provide encouragement and funding to over 270,000 households by March 2011.

Case studies



FAMILY LEARNING WITH HOME ACCESS

Rebecca couldn't afford a computer and internet access at home. She and her son Evan had to visit the library if they needed to go online. Since they got their Home Access package, both have benefited. Evan uses their computer to complete his homework and he really enjoys playing maths games on the internet. Rebecca has even taken an online maths course so she can help Evan with his homework when he goes to secondary school.

HOME ACCESS

NEXT
GENERATION
LEARNING



EXTENDING LEARNING

Kit has been in foster care since he was 11. He left school at 16 and wants to do a Diploma in Technical Theatre. Before getting his Home Access package, Kit had to use his friend's computer or the ones available at his college. He always felt he was being left behind because he didn't have his own machine, especially when it came to completing coursework and accessing the college's learning platform.



Read on to find out more about how to communicate better with families through online reporting...

» ACTION PLAN

Look out for Home Access in your area. Encourage parents and carers to get internet access at home so it's easier for them to become involved in their children's learning.

Find out more



www.homeaccess.org.uk

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Communicate

better with online reporting

Every school in England is now expected to offer online access to information for parents to support their children's progress: all secondary schools by September 2010, and primary schools by 2012.

the facts & figures

8%

of parents surveyed in 2008 were kept informed through online reporting.

80%

of parents say they see the benefit of regular parent-school contact.

60%

of teachers think that parents believe their job stops at the school gate.

58%

of school leaders believe ICT has improved the school's ability to involve parents in their children's attendance.

16

Parental interest in their child's learning is the single most powerful predictor of achievement at age 16.

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A green circular callout with a tail pointing to the left, containing the text '42%' in a bold, sans-serif font.

42%

of teaching staff say 'invisible' parents lack the confidence to approach them to discuss their child.

A green circular callout with a tail pointing to the bottom-left, containing the text '67%' in a bold, sans-serif font.

67%

of parents would like schools to use technologies such as text messaging and the internet to communicate with them more often.

Building a 21st Century School System, (DCSF)

ICT provides a convenient way for parents to access up-to-date information about their child's learning, anywhere and anytime they like. Schools can use a wide range of technologies – for example, management information systems, learning platforms, websites, assessment systems, text messaging and telephony systems – so that:

- they can record and report information in a timely way as part of learning and teaching practice
- they present information that is meaningful to parents and improves communication between parents and learners
- communication with parents and between staff is more manageable and complements face-to-face discussions
- schools have more opportunities to work in partnership with hard-to-reach parents
- parents are more involved with their child's learning, which drives improvement
- staff can develop flexible working practices that help them mentor learners and meet parents' demands.



“The most special person in this is the child. They’re benefiting at home, they’re benefiting at school and together you’re working as a team and that’s why this is an incredibly special tool.”

PARENT

ANSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

“This system allows us to save time by providing high-quality, meaningful information for the minimum teacher input. The anytime, anywhere aspect of online reporting allows teachers to have greater control and flexibility of the use of their time.”

DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

LONGCROFT SCHOOL



“Technology has enabled us to bridge the gap between home and school. Web technology such as blogging, podcasting and the school website has informed parents of the work their children are doing at school. This in turn has meant that our parents are better informed and prepared for parent/teacher meetings and parents evening.”

HEADTEACHER

CLUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

“It opens a dialogue. It allows me to be more engaged, be more involved with what they’re doing and I don’t feel I’m waiting to find out what’s happening; I can actually make the first approach.”

PARENT

DJANOGLY ACADEMY



Read on to find out more about involving families in keeping learners safe online...

»» ACTION PLAN

Consider what information you hold about your learners, and what is appropriate to share with parents in a meaningful and timely way. Use Becta's Information Management Strategy framework to help you assess this and find out what your school should be doing to protect personal information and minimise the risk of data being misused.

Find out more



www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/parentsaspartners

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Engaging families in **safeguarding** learners online

Children are growing up in a technological age and are likely to be more comfortable with technology than most adults are.

the facts & figures

69%

of learners aged 7–11 claim to be aware of how to keep safe online, but only 34 per cent can give an example of how to do this in practice.

35%

More than a third of 12–15 year-olds now have internet access in their bedrooms.

49%

Just under half of parents use internet filtering or parental controls.

17%

One in six users (about 17 per cent) aged 5–7 are mostly left to use the internet unsupervised, but this rises to 60 per cent for young people aged 12–15.

With increased access to technology at home, an important part of engaging with families is advising them about how to keep safe online and how to talk to their children about the importance of being safe and responsible.

Here are some strategies for involving families in their children's internet safety within and outside school, college or other learning provider:

- Consult them on internet safety, and, where possible, involve them in developing relevant school policies.
- Inform them of the precautions you are taking to ensure a safe ICT learning environment. Make them aware of the standards of behaviour and acceptable use of ICT that learners are expected to keep to when at school or college.
- Distribute the 'acceptable use' policy to help reduce fears about new technologies.
- Help them understand how to promote internet safety at home by sharing information about good practice.

In the common inspection framework for further education and skills 2009, safeguarding is one of the linking grades and is considered to be essential to assuring the quality of the development of young people and adults.

Case study



MAKING SAFETY AND SAFEGUARDING A PRIORITY

East Lothian Council, a small local authority serving a diverse population, is involving parents in e-safety. It has a clear vision of ICT's role in school improvement, and ICT is part of its overall plan. The area has a high level of computer ownership, but parents' understanding of e-safety used to be patchy.

The authority developed a plan – working with police, parents and children – to promote a balanced understanding of the risks and simple measures to counter them. The approach ensures that children feel confident about using technology.

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Read on for some practical hints and tips...

“A letter has gone out to all parents, both as a ‘this is what we’re doing as a school to be aware of online safety’, but also as a prompt for the parents to ensure they have got all the parental controls in place at home, and are being as vigilant in the home as we are in school.”

PARENT/GOVERNOR

“If someone goes on a chatroom being rude or something you can just tell your parent and if you’re on MSN you can block them or delete them.”

LEARNER, AGED 8

» ACTION PLAN

Review your approach to safeguarding children to ensure that you are working effectively with parents, and that they receive guidance on how to work with their children in using technology safely at home.

Find out more



www.becta.org.uk/safeguarding

Tools & support

» MAKE A SCHOOL COMMITMENT TO THE NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHARTER

By signing the Next Generation Learning Charter you will show other schools, parents and pupils your public commitment to providing better learning opportunities through the effective use of technology. This will help families and school partners understand what you intend to achieve through technology and how you will do this.

Make your commitment to engaging parents through technology by signing the Next Generation Learning Charter:



[www.becta.org.uk/
nextgenerationlearningcharter](http://www.becta.org.uk/nextgenerationlearningcharter)

» DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY FOR PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

To realise the benefits of technology for parental engagement, you need to look closely at your school or college's capabilities and create a development plan. You can use Becta's self-review framework for Schools or Generator for FE and Skills providers, to help you assess what ICT resources would suit your needs and give value for money.

Sign up for the self-review framework or Generator:



www.becta.org.uk/selfreview
www.generatorfeandskills.com

» PLAN WITH BECTA'S ONLINE REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The online reporting framework contains four strands against which schools should review their current practice and consider ways of making progress towards online reporting.

• Policies

Embedding online reporting in school improvement strategies:

Update your wider school policies to reflect parental engagement, including online reporting expectations. Schools are expected to review policies, such as those on assessment, attendance, behaviour, SEN and reporting.

• Parental engagement and dialogue

Consulting parents and shaping their expectations:

Schools are expected to have consulted parents and learners in deciding what information is timely, meaningful, useful and appropriate. Information that explains to parents how they can best support their child's learning should be readily available over the internet.

• Staff involvement

Developing professional practice that enables online reporting:

All staff should be aware of how online reporting will affect their professional practice. They should have access to support for securely recording and sharing personal or sensitive information that may be reported to parents.

• Exploiting technology

Using innovation that harnesses the range of technology available to schools and parents:

From surveys and parents' feedback, schools should know what technology is available and most appropriate for keeping parents informed. Schools should have considered how to use these technologies to manage information and communication with parents more effectively and efficiently.

Use the online reporting framework to work towards the 2010 and 2012 government expectations:

 www.becta.org.uk/engagingparents

» USING THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK TOOL

Using data effectively is a key issue for school and college managers. Alongside integrating computer systems this will help your school or college run more smoothly and efficiently, with potential cost savings. Becta's tool will help you make more effective and secure use of your data.

To improve the quality and security of your data:

 www.becta.org.uk/schools/informationmanagement

» FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE HOME ACCESS PROGRAMME

All schools in England can get involved in the Home Access programme.

To find out about the benefits of Home Access and what you can do now:

 <http://becta.org.uk/homeaccess>

» KEEPING YOUR DATA SAFE

We have published a series of good-practice guides to help your school to secure sensitive and personal data that you hold for learners, staff and other individuals.

To find out the practical steps you can take:

 www.becta.org.uk/mis

Click on data handling security guidance.

» SAFEGUARDING YOUR LEARNERS

Giving learners the tools and knowledge to keep themselves safe in a digital world must be a whole-organisation responsibility. You should take action to help learners and staff to stay safe.

To find out how to safeguard your learners, check out our advice on establishing your policies and for engaging families in the process:



www.becta.org.uk/safeguarding

Find lots of useful resources at

www.becta.org.uk/engagingfamilies

All references are on the Becta website.

Millburn Hill Road
Science Park
Coventry CV4 7JJ

Tel: 0800 877 8777
Fax: 024 7641 1418
Email: customerservices@becta.org.uk

www.becta.org.uk

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