

“Family group has helped my son to learn better. In this group we can help one another. We say things to one another that changes how we think about things.”

COMMENT FROM A FAMILY GROUP PARENT, JUNE, 2019

Impact

I visited Old Oak family group on a Thursday morning when a number of parents were present. One woman, whose child had recently graduated and left the family group, had returned specifically so that she could have a chance to describe how much being part of the group had contributed to her son’s learning and development, and helped her as his parent and carer.

Every parent in the group described the positive changes to their child’s learning as the first key outcome to being part of family group.

Each and every parent was able to describe precisely the difference it was making, either in terms of their child’s attitudes to school, fewer absences and lateness at the start of school, or increased participation in school activities.

They also said that the school welcomed them, the teachers



were understanding, and that their children were valued

As I left the group, the children, who spend some planned time with their parents were being brought back into the room by the school-based mentor. One very young pupil, usually shy and reticent, was cross that he was being brought late into the group. He politely asked why he had not been collected earlier. He clearly wanted to spend as much time as possible in the group of parents and children!

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Family and community learning

LEADERSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT



SHARING LEARNING ACROSS THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP
PEER PARTNERSHIP VALIDATED SCHOOL STRENGTH

“We want to help all our children to be successful learners. We know that some children’s lives can be chaotic. To help our children to flourish in their learning, we have to support their families too.” **JOE BROWN, HEADTEACHER**

Intention

Old Oak Primary School has a vast range of pupils attending the school. Its cohorts are very diverse and range from children whose parents and grandparents attended the same school when they were children, to children arriving from around the world.

Many of these children come from families that have often experienced distress and difficulties. Whatever happens at home can sometimes be brought into school. Some families have a negative attitude to education, others do not expect to develop a good relationship with the schools and teachers. These are the ‘hard to reach’ families, who are, by their very nature, ‘hard to reach’ and difficult to involve in their child’s education.

The school has, for a long time, seen its role as the provider of ‘cultural capital.’ For many of its children, school is where they first meet some of the enrichments to life that many other families regard as normal life experiences.

The school says that:

- hard to reach families,
- pupils who do not have the

cultural capital they need to be successful learners,

can often be held back by these situations. They can become, for the pupil, a significant barrier to learning.

The school has responded by developing a range of strategies to reduce the effects of this type of disadvantage.

Joe Brown, the headteacher says, “We think really carefully to make sure that each of our pupils receive what they need from us.”

“It is a team effort to find the right approach that will ‘unlock’ each child. I think that our school should be like a big family. I like the expression, ‘It takes a village to raise a child.’”



"If we work successfully with our youngest children, we know they will be more successful as they get older. We are particularly proud of our communication, language and literacy interventions." **KATIE BROWN DEPUTY HEADTEACHER**

Implementation

The school is creative in its approach to pupils' learning.

The school employs a wide range of strategies, each aimed towards a specific type of child and family need. It works with a number of charities and local providers to provide an enriched curriculum for its pupils.

Many of these activities are provided by the West London Zone, and others are from local charitable sources.

Developing children's cultural capital is also an underpinning aspect of this approach. On many of the school's displays are the examples of the school's curriculum interests. These are as disparate yet compelling as Odysseus and the Song of the Sirens to finding as many ways as possible of reading in pyjamas!

Pupils across the age groups receive enrichment curriculum activities from charities such as:

- Bubble and Squeak - helping with the local food bank,
- London Universities - science topic work from the Imperial College,
- Farms for City Children - providing residential rural activities for children.



A significant amount of support goes into developing children's early speaking and listening skills. When this is added to additional reading interventions such as Beanstalk Reading Support, then the cultural capital begins to pile up!

Close to the school's heart is its specialist interventions for the most vulnerable children and families. Family group is managed by 'School and Family Works.' It is a shared school-based parenting support group where children are set targets that all, ultimately, relate back to success with learning.

Up to eight families are supported at any one time by the family group. Its support does not just come from the professionals, but from parent to parent as they tackle children's needs.