

Case studies

Developing a Fathers Inclusion Project: Kensal Rise Primary School, London

Kensal Rise Primary School in North London runs a Fathers Inclusion Project to involve fathers and male carers in their children's education and school life.

This project was set up in response to the fact that a number of fathers were not involved in their children's school lives – which was often felt to be the preserve of the mother – and that a few specific pupils who were not receiving support from a father or male carer were struggling at school or displaying behavioural problems.

Most of the work is done on a one-to-one basis between fathers, children and teachers, focusing on fathers who have had no or little contact with their children or whose children have educational and/or emotional difficulties. To recruit fathers to the scheme, the main carer (for example, the mother) is invited into the school and asked about other family members; details of non-resident fathers are obtained where possible. The school then telephones the fathers and follows up with a letter.

Many non-resident fathers are involved, as well as resident fathers, step-fathers and father figures such as grandfathers, uncles and older brothers. Individual work is used rather than group sessions or workshops to help tailor support to the individual circumstances of each family, as pupils at the school come from a wide variety of ethnic and social backgrounds.

Fathers are invited to come into the school when they can to talk to teachers about how they can support their child's learning and development, and how they can get involved in the school. For non-resident fathers, the school provides 'neutral ground' for building their relationship with their child. The father may agree to a specific plan, such as regular visits or mentoring.

Fathers are given regular updates about their child's progress if requested, for example by phone. The school has an 'open door policy' so that fathers can come into the classroom or have time with their child outside the class. A fathers' forum is also organised to give fathers an opportunity to share experiences among themselves.

As part of the programme, the school ran a Bring Dad to School day around Father's Day. The all-day event included sessions such as 'Dads at Work', reading and storytelling, science workshops set in the school's wildlife habitat, outdoor games, a fathers' seminar and a Father's Day celebration. Teachers were released from class to support the different activities. Some of the fathers were able to negotiate paid leave from work to attend and each participating father received a certificate which they could show to their employer.

