

March 2010

Becta leading
next generation
learning



“I’m stuck can you help me?”

A report into parents’ involvement
in school work at home

“Mum, Dad – I’m stuck! Can you help me with my homework?”

It’s a plea that will no doubt sound familiar to parents up and down the country. Most parents are aware of the important role they can play in supporting their child with their school work at home, but for many this is a request they don’t look forward to.



Supporting your child



Niel McLean,
Executive Director,
Becta, the government agency
for technology in education

When a child moves on from straightforward ABC and times tables, it's often 'back to school' for parents as they struggle to try and get their head around complicated topics like long division and modern language verb conjugations. And while it's important that parents allow children to learn to work independently outside of the classroom, the right level of support delivered effectively, can help reinforce and complement the work that has gone on in the classroom.

But what happens when what and how a child is taught by their teacher in the classroom is something that is unfamiliar to the parent?

Classrooms have changed phenomenally in the last 20 or so years. With changes in the numeracy and primary strategies and the change in technologies from blackboards to interactive white boards, cassette tapes to video conferencing and exercise books to netbooks – the methods, tools and techniques teachers employ have evolved dramatically. This has had a huge, positive impact on learning – making it more engaging, inspiring and impactful for our children. But for many parents, and I count myself in this group, dragging up memories of revision and

swotting many years after leaving school, can be a real struggle and leave you feeling unable to properly support your child.

For children too, being told how to do work one way in the classroom and a different way at home can cause them to feel confused, to say nothing of how frustrating it can be for teachers when pupils come back to school bemused.

So what's the best way to address this and offer support?

Over the past few years, Becta has been working closely with schools and families to highlight how the effective use of technology across the curriculum can not only help to make the learning experience more rewarding and fun for learners, but also allow parents to better engage in their child's learning, keep up to date about what they are learning and how they are learning it.

Becta has commissioned the "I'm stuck – can you help me?" report, part of our Next Generation Learning campaign, to explore the challenges parents face when their child asks them for support with homework and look at how modern technologies can help them better support their child to make this process far more enjoyable and beneficial for all.

In this report and on our website we have highlighted some inspiring examples of how schools are using simple technologies to extend learning both within and beyond the classroom.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Technology enables schools to share current teaching methods and curriculum content with parents, arming them with all the information they need to effectively support their child at home.

These schools are already reaping the rewards with parents being more engaged and pupils feeling a greater sense of support at home, all of which has a positive effect on their performance in school.

We hope that this report can help other schools, parents and children understand the benefits of Next Generation Learning and inspire them to take one step closer to the future of learning through technology.

What is Next Generation Learning?

Next Generation Learning is a government campaign initiated by Becta, the government's agency for technology in education, which promotes the positive use of technology across the school curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom. It enables parents, teachers and children to take charge and use technology more effectively. If you're a student, it lets you learn how, when and where you want; if you're a teacher it allows you to extend learning within and beyond the classroom, increasing engagement with parents and learners, and if you're a parent, it helps you get fully involved in your child's education at a time and in a way that suits you.

OnePoll was commissioned by Becta to conduct a survey of 2,000 children aged 9–13 years old and 2,000 parents of children aged 9–13 years old to assess how they approached learning and school work outside of the classroom and look at how they currently used technology within learning. The research was conducted online between 30 January 2010 and 4 February 2010.

You can find out more by visiting

 www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk



Parental pressures

Almost a quarter (22 per cent) of parents 'frequently' find themselves unable to help their child with homework and revision because they don't understand the topic their child is learning in class.

Providing support and advice when your child gets stuck with their homework comes with the territory for the majority of parents. 84 per cent of parents said their children ask them for help and advice with their school work and revision at least once a week, with more than half (52 per cent) being asked for help most or every day.

But for a significant 83 per cent of parents this has proved a challenge; they have found themselves unable to help because they don't understand what their child is learning, they have forgotten the topic from their school days or they are not up to date with current teaching methods. Almost a quarter (22 per cent) of parents say they are frequently unable to provide support. Dads are most likely to struggle – more than one in three (35 per cent) finding it difficult to engage with their child's learning, compared to one in eight (12 per cent) of mums.

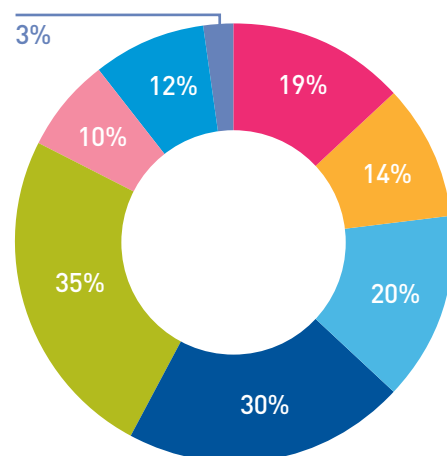
This inability to help can have a significant emotional impact on parents with many suffering embarrassment (19 per cent), frustration for not remembering how to do activity (30 per cent) and for some, it causes them to turn their backs, stating that it is not their job to help with school work and support learning at home (20 per cent).

When asked how difficult parents found it to provide help and support for their child outside the classroom, almost one third of parents (30 per cent) said they found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult', highlighting the pressures many parents face when it comes to supporting their child with their homework.



THE STATISTICS

How did you feel when you were unable to help with your child's schoolwork?



- Embarrassed
- Like a bad parent
- I don't think it's my job to help with their homework
- Frustrated that I had forgotten things I had learnt at school
- I wished I knew how the teacher was teaching it, so I was able to help
- I felt stupid that my child understands things I don't
- Annoyed that the school hadn't told me what they were learning so that I might have been able to help
- Other

Children's confusion

More than half (58 per cent) of children say their parents often confuse them when they try to help with homework because they explain things differently to the teacher.

45 per cent of children say their parents find it hard to understand how best to help them with school work and revision and more than one in three (37 per cent) say they are sometimes unable to complete work outside of the classroom because there is no one able to help. For 38 per cent of children, this can result in their homework taking 30 minutes (or more), longer to complete than it normally would do.

These findings are most pronounced in children aged 11, those in year 6 and most likely to be preparing for SATS, with 60 per cent strongly agreeing that their parents find it hard to help with school work and revision and two in three (67 per cent) saying their parents can cause additional confusion when they do try to help.

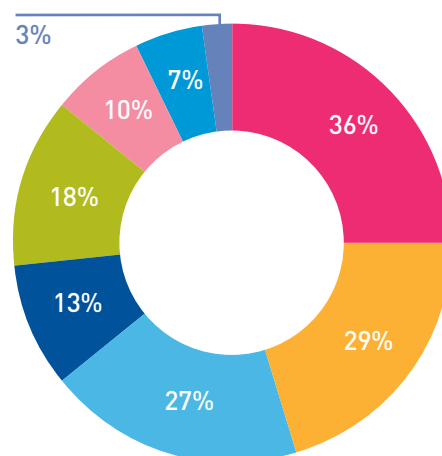
Almost a quarter of parents questioned (23 per cent) say their child frequently gets stressed and concerned if they cannot complete work set outside of class, heaping even more pressure on both parent and child, with this figure rising significantly to 39 per cent of 11 year olds.

In a similar way to their parents, this inability to complete a set task and get the support they need at home can have a significant emotional impact on children. As well as experiencing stress, children admit they often feel embarrassed (29 per cent), like they are no good at the subject (27 per cent) and for the majority (38 per cent) it causes them to want to give up and walk away from the assignment entirely.



THE STATISTICS

If you get stuck and are unable to get extra help at home, how does it make you feel?



- Frustrated – I want to give up
- Embarrassed, I don't want to admit to the teacher that I couldn't do it
- I feel like I'm no good at the particular subject
- I'm not bothered/I don't care
- I feel like I'm not as clever as my friends and classmates
- Angry that no-one can help me
- Annoyed and frustrated at my parents for not being able to help me
- Other



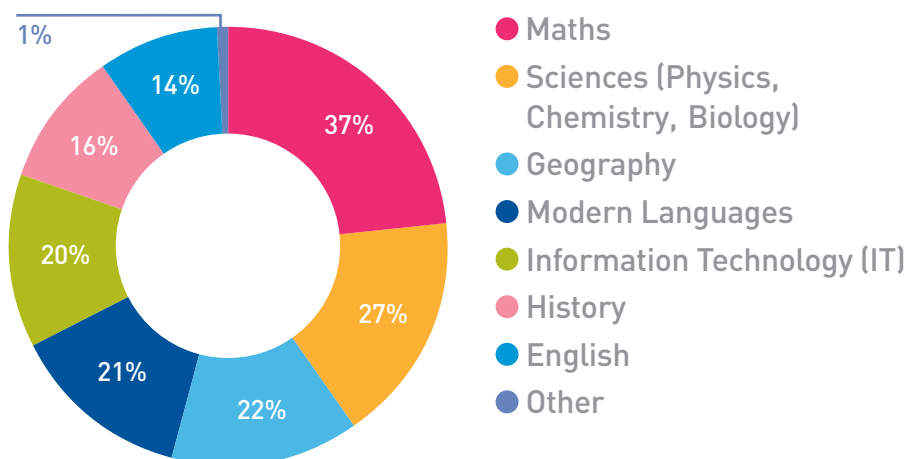
Troublesome topics

Feedback from both parents and children highlights that it is the same four areas of the curriculum that they find the most difficult to understand.

Maths, science, geography and modern languages – highlighting a need for more parental resources in this area so parents feel better equipped to help.

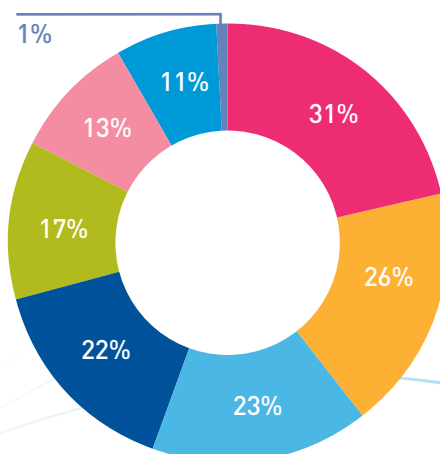
PARENTS

Which subjects do you find it most difficult to help your child with?



CHILDREN

Which subjects are your parents the least able to help you with?



Share and support

81 per cent of parents would welcome support and guidance on how best to support their child's learning at home.

Our research highlights that there is a desire and demand from parents for more information and advice on how to extend their child's school-based learning in the home.

80%
Parents

- 80 per cent of parents want to provide their child with more help and support at home.

81%
Parents

- 81 per cent would welcome support and guidance on how best to do this.

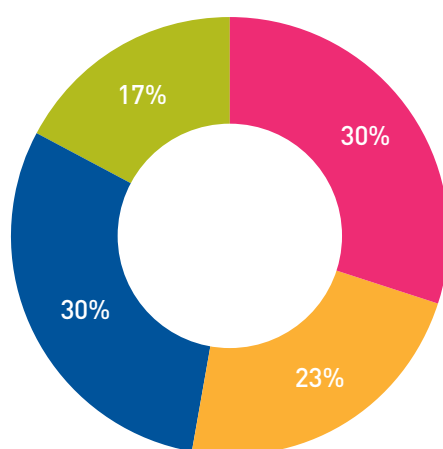
79%
Children

- This demand is mirrored by pupils with 79 per cent of children saying they would like their parents to know more about what they are learning in class so they can provide more support outside the classroom.



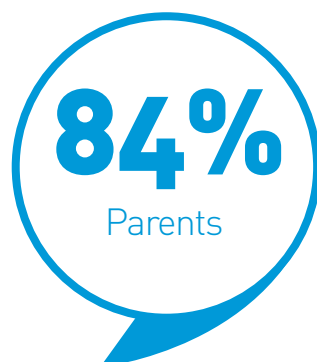
Used effectively, technology can provide parents with a fast and accessible way to learn more about their child's education, with tools like the school website and learning platform acting as a great resource for sharing information and updates about a child's learning, topic areas and performance. Parents can use these resources to arm themselves with the knowledge that allows them to take a more active role in their child's learning and helps them feel more comfortable and confident about the topics their child is learning in class.

But despite the wealth of opportunities technology can offer schools to enhance learning at home, it seems many are not engaging parents through technology with only one in four (25 per cent) parents receiving information about their child's learning via online tools.

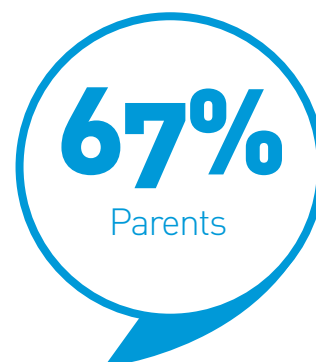


Does your child's school provide you with any resources that enable you to help and support your child?

- No, the school doesn't provide us with any resources
- Some, but not enough
- Yes, a little
- Yes, they provide a lot of resources for parents



- 84 per cent of parents reveal that their child's school provides them with 'little' or no resources to help support their child's learning at home so there is huge untapped potential which schools could be taking advantage of to help improve parental engagement.



- 67 per cent of parents say they already use the internet informally as a research tool to help them better understand what their child is learning at school. If schools can engage with these parents via secure online resources, engagement levels could be even higher.

Case studies



HOW TECHNOLOGY HELPS

Technology has dramatically changed the way teachers teach and pupils learn and can make it easier for parents to get involved too. School websites and learning platforms provide teachers and parents with a fast and flexible resource where they can share information and be updated about what's going on in class. Technology allows parents to tap into their child's education at a time that suits them, with tools like the learning platform making it easier to share background information on what the child is learning in class.

You can find out more by visiting



ANSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

"Partnerships are essential for children to make the most of their learning opportunities at school. The link between the home and school is a cornerstone to effective education partnerships. Parents want to take an active role in their children's education and the school works hard to make the most of this valuable relationship. However, it is essential that there is a consistency in teaching styles and techniques.

To this end, Anson offers training sessions for parents on subjects such as maths so that they can be informed of the ways that we teach different processes. Each parent is then empowered to support their child at home. Our learning platform provides links, materials and tutorials for the child and parent to work through together. There is no doubt that helping parents to support their children has had a significant impact upon learning outcomes as well as developing even stronger links between the school, parent and child."

Jeff Smith, Headmaster,
Anson Primary School.

"I've rediscovered the joy of learning with my kids. I didn't know what they meant when they said they were studying 'lines of symmetry' but we had a look at the examples on the learning platform, it clicked and we did it together."

Parent, Anson Primary School.

Case studies



THE CHALFONTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

“The Chalfonts Community College has been using virtual platforms and video conferencing tools for more than five years now to engage students and promote good quality teaching and learning. We have started to develop a series of online subject based video conferences that are aimed at developing parents’ understanding of the courses their children are on and the type of work that is expected from them. We also offer online meetings aimed at arming parents with strategies to help their children through the difficult exam times.

Staff present from the comfort of their own homes and parents can interact through a chat box which allows them to ask questions and give instant access to their ideas. These events are slowly developing across the curriculum and have received excellent feedback from the parents involved.”

Greg Hodgson, Teacher and Senior Leader, The Chalfonts Community College.



RADYCLIFFE SCHOOL

“There’s a real value in training parents in the use of ICT and the ePortal system as it allows parents access to support their child in their education. You’re not just shipping them off to school and leaving the teachers to do all the work, you’re playing an important part by supporting and reinforcing what the staff at the school are doing as well.”

Parent, Radycliffe School.



MONKSEATON HIGH SCHOOL

“My daughter and I find it fun sitting together and learning together using the online resources provided by the school, because I am learning new things and I’m finding out what my daughter is doing at school. I can have better conversations with her and a better understanding of what she is learning so I can help her out more than I ever used to be able to.”

Parent, Monkseaton High School.



About Becta

Becta is the government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. It aims to utilise the benefits of technology to create a more exciting, rewarding and successful experience for learners of all ages and abilities, enabling them to achieve their potential.

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