



Working together, parents as researchers

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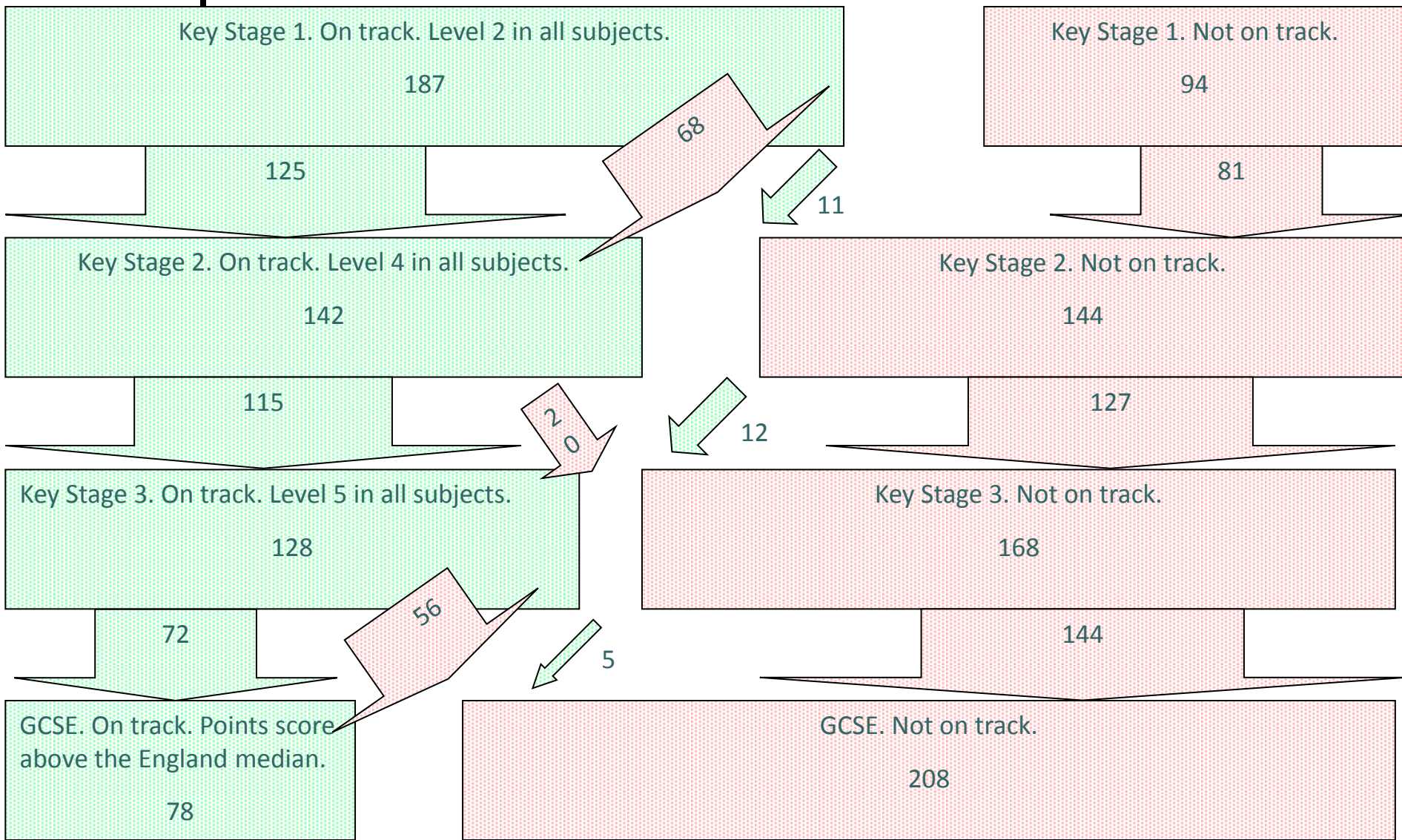


Working together, parents as researchers

The projects

- Ore Valley project – funded by Ore Valley Forum
- Communities Research – funded by Higher Education Funding Council for England
- Children's Centres and Family Learning, funded by CUPP and Ore Valley Forum
- ESCC Parent Researcher Projects funded by ESCC
- All are mixed-methods, with analyses of data, questionnaires and interviews

How Ore Valley children (don't) progress through school





Working together, parents as researchers

- Pivotal moments
- Early years need careful attention
- Current cohort of 17 year olds in Hastings is 'up for it'
- Disengaged still finding it hard – danger of a lost generation
- Transition to HE is still not in everyone's sights, particularly for learners on vocational programmes but this is changing



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Turning Point – Connected Education

- An innovative and unique form of action research using parents and young people as peer researchers. It enables parents and young people directly to define and influence the development of school policy and practice. By engaging parents as researchers, Connected Education is able to reach those parents most in need and least engaged with schools and the learning process (Turning Point, 2011: 11)





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- What aspirations parents hold for their children and to what extent are these influenced by their own life experiences
- How Children's Centres can capitalise on the willingness of parents both to support their children and their Children's Centre
- How Children's Centres can minimise the barriers faced by some parents in engaging with their children's learning
- How Children's Centres can reach parents whose children need the most support
- How Children's Centres can facilitate positive parent/child interaction
- Who in Children's Centres and the wider community can make a difference to parental involvement



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- Questionnaire design
- Parent volunteers recruited
- Parent volunteers trained
- Pilot of questionnaire by parent volunteers
- Recruitment of parents (first attempt!)
- Recruitment of parents (second attempt)
- Analysis of questionnaire responses
- Focus group questions identified from analysis
- Focus group participants recruited (first attempt)
- Focus group recruited and undertaken (second attempt)
- Analysis
- Report writing

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- We now know that it's not a myth to find it hard to engage parents in East Hastings!
- Reaching parents is not easy
 - Data Protection Act
 - Non statutory provision
 - Timing, crèche facilities



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- Use of internet and mobile phone
- Go where parents are
- Administrator's role is key
- Time given beyond original allocation
- Commitment of partners
- Ongoing willingness to undertake research and development



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- Parent volunteer now employed in the Children's Centre
- Centre about to introduce Facebook for parents
- Keen to use social networking to engage parents in further research and development
- Parent researchers now in demand for other projects



Parental Engagement Project 2012- 2013

Aims

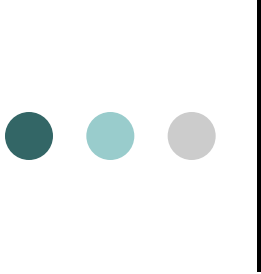
- Identifying the critical interventions required to raise standards
- Identifying the barriers to learning and the levers to secure success, including more effective partnerships with parents
 - Working with parents to deliver interventions and establish sustainable approaches for longer term improvements
 - To increase the confidence and engagement of parents in supporting their children's learning
 - Schools to develop a deeper understanding of all parents' views on school, learning, communications, and to use this understanding to improve and enhance parental engagement
- Provide professional development for school leaders in setting up and implementing a small-scale research project



Parental Engagement Project 2012- 2013

The project had two phases of implementation:

- Phase 1 - Parent Research including targeted families in receipt of Free School Meals
- Phase 2 – Schools' implementation of actions in response to the findings of the study



Which number best reflects your feelings about reading with your child?

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3				Cluster 4		Cluster 5		
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%			Freq	%	Freq	%	
1 = Least +ve	2	2	1	2	3	3	1 = Least +ve	1 = Least +ve	1	3	4	5	1 = Least +ve
2	8	8	3	5	8	7	2	2	0	0	15	17	2
3	22	23	8	14	25	23	3	3	5	14	33	38	3
4	24	25	15	26	72	67	4 = Most +ve	4	5	14	34	39	4 = Most +ve
5 = Most +ve	41	42	29	51					5 = Most +ve	26	70		



Planning small scale research project

Overall confidence in helping children at home **but:**

- More **information**
- More **contact**
- Willing to attend **workshops** or similar
- Concerns about **what exactly is expected** (and the reverse, thinking they are doing the 'right' thing at home when not)
- Not reaching the **parents who themselves are not confident in their own skills**



Phase II - Small scale research projects

Communication

- Parent noticeboards, parent friendly websites



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Small scale research projects

Parental participation:

- Visits/visitors : local library, gallery, bookshop
- Talks, courses, workshops (with/without children), training forums and social activities (during/outside school)
- New spaces for parents - with shared ownership of decoration and furniture selection
- Reading clubs



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Small scale research projects

New technologies:

- *iPads, Alphasmart* keyboards and *Kindle* electronic readers





Parent engagement project 2012-2013

Advantages of working with parent researchers

- Parents were happy and willing to do the survey
- Parents liked having parents interview them although sometimes *too* familiar, i.e. friends with the PR
- Once parents opened up, their opinions and thoughts flowed freely and were really useful
- Anonymous and “being parents ourselves helped with honesty”
- Generally very well organised by Project Lead. Venue arranged by Project Lead – community centre, vouchers for tea/coffee provided
- Teachers *very* engaged on results – meetings planned with parents
- We did our interviews on a progress review day – maybe this helped as parents were already coming into school



Case studies

“...One ‘hard to reach’ family were school ‘refusers’. Now they’re regular volunteers, coming in doing the garden... finding others who can be involved from the village... and will stay in the playground and chat to others [parents].”



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Case studies

“...A welcome framework to develop better engagement with more difficult to reach parents.”



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Some benefits of the research project

- Parental engagement: relationships, honesty, feedback and understanding
- Improved literacy/reading levels/strategies
- Engaging parents as researchers and attracting new parents/ Parent Researchers' confidence



Some benefits of the parental engagement research project

- 65% of Project Leads stated that the project had changed the relationship between the school and parents. With a significant outcome in shared decision making
- 100% of Headteachers and Project Leads wanted future involvement with similar programmes that develop these communities of practice.

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Thank you and please ask questions

