

# Let's stay CONNECTED



As pupils hit their teens, parental engagement in their education can often start to drop off – so we asked schools what they do to keep families on board for the full journey...

“Parents absolutely love ParentMail and the feedback we have received so far is very positive. They love being able to read messages, respond to forms or book parents’ evening appointments from their smartphone! It’s such an efficient way for them to keep on top of their school needs.”

**Lisa Penn, office manager, Astor College**



“Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), such as Edmodo, Showbie and Firefly allow teachers to set, mark and feedback school and homework for students, as well as allow parents to view this. It’s a very simple but an immediate and effective step to increase parental engagement. Similarly, apps such as iTunes U, where teachers can record videos for student use with homework or revision, allow parents to view these and support their son/daughter, if needed.”

**Chris Handley, teacher of philosophy, RE and ethics, Sybil Andrews School**

“Our parents are a sociable bunch, so we work closely with the PTA to put on quizzes, retro discos etc. throughout the year. It keeps them connected!” **Anon**

“We are shameless about using bribes – sorry, ‘incentives’ – for things like returning forms and registering for pupil premium funding. A £20 Amazon voucher goes a long way...” **Anon**



“The best technological method we have found to engage parents is a homework app, such as Show My Homework or Frog. This software allows parents to view the homework their child has been set, and access the resources needed to complete it. Our parents love being able to keep track of their child’s workload and see their feedback, and consistently give it top ratings in our parent surveys. In terms of software-based learning, we use a variety of packages and sites, including Memrise, Kahoot and Seneca. We empower parents to support their children with revision at home by demonstrating these programmes at our parent engagement evenings; families are usually delighted to realise that, with so many opportunities for online learning, the age-old teenage excuse of ‘I have no homework’ can no longer be used.”

**Louise Hamilton, deputy headteacher, John of Gaunt School**



“A really popular online system is Go 4 Schools. It’s where teachers store all of our information on the children but parents can also see a select amount that relates to their child, such as grades throughout the year for each piece of work they do, as well as estimated grades and house points. It means they don’t have to wait for parents evening and make the effort to come in, or try to organise a phone call with a busy teacher, to find out how their child is progressing. And there’s no excuse for them not knowing. I’ve taught quite a few forces children whose parents are often moving around, so their family time is quite precious.”

**Cheney Payne, head of humanities, Linton Village College**



“We are trialling ‘black box thinking’, inspired by Matthew Syed’s book and the use of black boxes in the aviation industry. Incidents of accidents on planes are extremely low and this is attributable to a no-blame culture that is open to learning from problems that occur. When students underperform in an end-of-topic assessment, we contact the parents to ask them to work through our ‘black box thinking’ questionnaire with their son/daughter to find areas to work on, such as study skills. This is then discussed with the teacher. Parents are finding this approach very helpful as they work with their child to find strategies to make better progress.”

**Dr Richard Grime, head of science, Ripon Grammar School**

“Social media is crucial for us. We have employed someone whose sole job is to manage our Twitter and Facebook feeds; and she’s worth every penny.” **Anon**

“We use Groupcall to enter into a two-way communication with parents. So recently I put out something I was considering, they were able to respond, and I was able to say “the responses so far are... and there are these concerns raised...”, and then when we reached the decision, I again used Groupcall to say “thank you so much for your feedback; because of what you have told us, we won’t be implementing this”. It was really powerful to have that two-way communication, which I never could have via another means.”

**Dr Annabel Kay, headteacher, The Warriner High School**