

Review of Learning at Home

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4. What does learning at home look like?

'Schools are often unaware of how parents engage with their children's learning and either undervalue this engagement or do not respond positively. Providers should recognise that parental engagement includes a wide range of activities, including learning at home, school-home and home-school communication, in-school activities, decision making.....and collaboration with the community'.

(Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011)

4.1 Examples of learning at home

Defining the range and complexities of learning at home is challenging as it can overlap across aspects of learning undertaken with parents, families, peers or practitioners. Schools which are engaging effectively with parents often operate within the widest definitions of parental involvement, parental engagement and family learning (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011). In consultation with practitioners for this Review, learning at home can include:

- learning at home / homework activities
- families learning together
- helping parents
- sharing learning
- decision making
- communication methods

Below are examples of learning at home as identified by practitioners in Scotland and from inspection findings.

Examples of learning at home – from practitioners

Learning at home / homework activities	Sharing learning
Family challenges/challenge cards, adventures with Teddy, board games, shopping, lego building, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) challenge, pick and mix homework, sacrament preparation, model making, newsletter, powerpoints on favourite/interesting things, cake decorating – taking photographs, 100 things to do before you're 13, transition teddy, trips, woodland walks, numeracy / literacy bags, cook at home bags.	Nurture groups, Maths recovery lessons (with children), child led workshops, outdoor learning, stay and play, open afternoons, homework fun challenges, Primary 1 learning at home reading block, class assemblies, careers day, talk time homework, shared learning exercises (Art/IT – practical), open days, home visits, celebrating what parents already do - sharing across the wider school community, directory of parental skills.
Families learning together	Decision making
Family learning events or homework club, PEEP / bookbug, parental reading programme, photography club, outdoor learning, cooking, crafts, work with fathers, Gardening groups, family nurture projects.	Reviewed reading policies, review and planner, tracking achievements, personal learning planning, target setting, GIRFEC review meetings.

Helping parents	Communication methods
ESOL, learning at home guidance – leaflets, parent packs, workshops, videos, cafes, home-link worker, parent mail/text messages, homework clubs, notes of intended learning.	Show my homework, website, twitter app, homework app, Glow, RM Easimaths, leaflets, learning logs, e-portfolios*, learning letters, consultations, social media, e-learning journals.

*It should be noted that pupils can struggle to access the necessary technology both at home and in school to enable them to take e-portfolios forward throughout their learning journey. Consideration could be given to placing greater emphasis on the learning taking place at home being the information recorded by pupils and families.

Examples of learning at home – Inspection Findings

Learning at home / homework activities	Sharing learning
Learning at home bags, building on achievements from home, homework tasks with family members, Ted's adventures at home, home-link initiatives, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), travelling dolls, lending library.	Class reward system, home-school sharing of achievements, child led workshops – informative learning opportunities provided by teachers.
Families learning together	Decision making
Family homework group, Parent-child homework club.	Parents encouraged to support learning through parents meetings, work with school to address issues, target setting in user friendly language.
Helping parents	Communication methods
Stay and play sessions, parental workshops, open days, special events, planned support for parents on supporting reading at home, written materials on what child is learning, information booklet on supporting at home.	Online learning journals, daily conversations, interactive online resources, blog, learning profiles, home-school diaries, text messages, noticeboards, photographs.

4.2 Case study examples of learning at home

In order to better support practitioners, Education Scotland has developed the [National Improvement Hub](#) (NIH). This is an easily accessible portal designed around the needs of education practitioners, providing interactive digital content and tools to improve practice and increase the quality of learners' experiences and outcomes.

Links to case study examples of learning at home are provided below. These have been selected from different local authorities and cover a variety of themes and approaches to learning at home. Some case studies were sourced through inspection findings and others were identified from the 2017 National Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) challenge pilot.

National Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Pilot 2017

Fifty establishments participated in the National STEM pilot which aimed to support 3-18 approaches to STEM learning and teaching within five school clusters across Scotland. The pilot allowed Education Scotland to develop new partnerships and approaches to building capacity for STEM learning. This included:

- Trialling of a draft STEM self-evaluation and improvement framework
- Cluster networking and training events
- Introduction of the Improving Gender Balance in STEM Project
- Developing new career-long professional learning approaches to improve digital literacy in schools
- Developing cluster-wide approaches to STEM
- Partnerships with Skills Development Scotland, STEMNET, SCDI, SSERC, Generation Science and Institute of Physics.

Government Ministers made a manifesto commitment to roll out nationally a cluster approach to STEM. This is being undertaken within the context of the national STEM Education and Training Strategy for Scotland. In light of this, it was important, to learn from the experiences gained through the pilot to help scale up approaches that proved successful to better help school clusters across Scotland. Outcomes of the National STEM project at the end of the 18-month pilot phase included an increase in:

- parental confidence – building up knowledge to support child's learning
- parental involvement and link with the school – utilising parents' skills
- parental engagement in their child's learning – greater in-depth discussions at home
- wider family network being involved - intergenerational learning
- greater understanding of curriculum
- children and families repeating experiments at home or trying new ones
- family science clubs/homework clubs
- volunteer helpers

The STEM [Education and Training Strategy](#) was published by Ministers in October 2017. The strategy sets out the vision for STEM education and training for the next five years under the themes of excellence, equity, inspiration and connection.

Learning at home case studies

[Killin Nursery](#) – example of how to engage and support young children's learning at home.

[Bankton Primary School](#) – how to build capacity in parents to become active learning partners.

[Glenlyon Primary School](#) – using weekly homework to focus on listening and talking to improve learning at home.

[Lismore Primary School](#) – encouraging wider achievement, learning at home and improving home/school partnerships.

[Mearns Primary School](#) – helping parents to support their child's learning at home.

[St Bartholomew's Primary School](#) – programme to increase children's confidence in early literacy skills with the help of their parents/carers with a particular focus on phonics.

[St David's Primary School](#) – parents and children spending time together on a 'try at home' task.

[West Kilbride Primary School](#) – using 'science boxes' to encourage parental engagement in children's learning at home.

[Craigie High School](#) – strategies to help parents support their child's learning.

[Largs Academy](#) – helping parents understand the Broad General Education, Senior Phase, teaching strategies used in school to enable them to support their child's learning at home.

[Ailsa Family Learning Centre](#) – family learning programme which promotes healthy cooking, eating and helps develop family learning strategies in the home environment.

Family learning case studies

[Glasgow Clyde College](#) – creative approaches used to engage parents with little or no previous experience in science.

[Renfrewshire](#) – Pizza Reading – an early intervention family learning project that helps families to develop their skills and confidence using a holistic social practice approach.

[Dundee](#) – family literacies learning project.