



The Engagement and Involvement of Parents and Carers in the Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts Programmes.

Parents and carers play a vital role in both the Every Child a Reader (ECaR) and the Every Child Chance (ECC) programmes. Their involvement, support and encouragement make a huge difference to how the children participate in the programmes and the development of their self-esteem.

Parents/carers need to be consulted and their agreement gained before a child can be given the one-to-one intensive support of Reading Recovery or Numbers Count. Most schools have a written agreement with parents/carers which has to be signed before the support can be given. All parents carers should be invited to watch their child's lessons – early on in the child's programme, later on to see what progress has been made, and towards the end of the programme. Recent research has shown that the single most important factor in children's attainment is whether their parents believe their child can succeed. Seeing their child progress in Reading Recovery or Numbers Count will develop this all-important belief.

Each day after the one-to-one session in Reading Recovery the child will take home a familiar or favourite reading book and a message/sentence that they have written. After a Numbers Count lesson the child will take home a familiar homework activity or a favourite game. Parents/carers are encouraged to take an interest and participate in the reading of the book and the remaking of the sentence with the child or mathematics game. This supports the child's learning and helps to forge a link between school and home.

Where parents/carers are reluctant to take part in these activities it may be particularly important that they watch a lesson, so that they can see how the activities they do at home are a part of the lesson and help their child's learning. Schools have found that it helps if the parents/carers are supported to understand that the lessons follow the same format everyday and so the activities the child brings home will also be similar each day. In Reading Recovery, each day the child will bring home a book and a sentence and sometimes the child may bring home the same book. Although the child has the choice of book sometimes one book becomes a favourite. The teacher will try to give different books to choose from each day, but the important thing is that the child will be able to practice new skills with a familiar book. In Numbers Count the child may bring home similar activities each day or the same game. The more opportunities the child has to practice the better they will become and their self confidence will improve. Being able to share their learning with those who care most for them is a special opportunity for both the child and the parent/carer.

Where possible meet with parents and carers on a regular basis to update them. Many Reading Recovery and Numbers Count Teachers use a diary which they write on a daily basis and send home with the book and sentence or mathematics activity. In this way the teacher and parent/carer are able to have a supportive dialogue. Questions can be asked and issues clarified. The diary can also be used to make sure parents are aware of the improvements the child makes and understand how to support the child during and after his/her participation.

Some parents/carers may have literacy or numeracy difficulties themselves and may ask for support. It is useful to know what is available for adult learners in your Local Authority so that you can advise them on appropriate courses or people to contact.

Other parents/carers with difficulties will not wish to confide in the teacher and may refuse to help with the daily activities. It is important to respect the wishes of the parent/carer and yet still enable the child to get the support necessary. Sometimes an older child from the family can support the child with the familiar book and sentence. If this is not possible, a Teaching Assistant, or volunteer helper from the school may be willing to help before school, at lunch time or before the child leaves school for home. Many schools have found creative ways of ensuring that the child receives the support they need.

Reading Recovery and Numbers Count Teachers should try to talk at least once a week to parents/carers. Many teachers are available each day but if a specific day/afternoon is identified an informal session can be organised where some reading or phonic games are introduced that parents can make and play with their children. For example, Manchester LA have developed 'Pebble Bags' which contain games and activities for parents and children. These materials are currently focused on phase 1 and 2 of Letters and Sounds. ECaR schools in Manchester have these materials and use them in different ways; some give the Reading Recovery children a Pebble Bag to take home at weekends. This enables children to consolidate phonic skills, build confidence and play games with family and friends.

Over the course of the Reading Recovery and Numbers Count Programmes teachers and parents build a relationship and it is important to mark the change when the child has successfully completed the programme and their lessons are about to come to an end. Some Reading Recovery and Numbers Count Teachers make an event of the child's 'graduation', celebrating the achievement with the parents/carers. There is a case study of one school's very effective approach at www.everychildcountsuk.org. Explain to parents/carers that their children have done really well but also how very important it is for them to continue reading with their child or talking about numbers on a daily basis.