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in a Tyneside County Borough.*

P. J. Hoben

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THE RELATIONS BETWEEN PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS AND PARENTS IN A TYNESIDE  
COUNTY BOROUGH

BY P.J. HOBEN

VOLUME TWO

THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

1973

SUPERVISOR MR. BEVERLY SHAW Bsc.(Econ), A.T.C.

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APPENDIX G

THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER ONE

Headteacher One Transcript Tape recorded 55 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Well, I think it depends on the area your school is in. My attitude would probably be very different in a different school, but I don't think the majority of parents are really very interested, at least not here. That's been my experience with the Parent Teacher Association anyway.

I think they're most of them interested in their own children but not in school or education generally, beyond that.

Q.2. Do you think most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No, not here. Again, I think they're interested in their own children but not in being really very involved with the school apart from that. They certainly weren't very interested in the educational side of the Parent Teacher Association.

Mind I think it might be different in a different area.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I don't think I would want parents too involved in the classroom. The teachers get plenty to do already. Coming up to get information about a child's progress or about a problem, but that's different isn't it? Certainly not with reading or things like that. I don't think they know enough about it. Anyway the teachers wouldn't like it would they? It would be very off putting for say a young teacher having other people in the classroom.

No, I don't think I would have parents in the classroom for anything like that.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Well have one, but the original initiative came from the school we took the majority of your children from. I took not quite half their pupils to my new school and he had a Parent Teacher Association running there. Mind it was definitely running down - there's no question of that, but I circulated my parents and he circulated his and we had a joint Parent Teacher Association. Then we broke away after a year. We had decided to run it together and if I wanted to take up the option I could and it would give me a little bit of experience. He got speakers on, and even down there, the social events, the pies and peas supper and things like that ~~hundreds~~ there - but if he was talking about Nuffield Mathematics - well a mere handful there. That was out of over a thousand parents and probably there would only be twenty-five parents there.

I've had no experience as a teacher but I certainly had the same experience with mine. The run down was simply due to lack of interest. My Parent Teacher Association went quite satisfactorily for a number of years but theirs died a natural death. Mind we've had the same experience. We circulated the parents asking what sort of talks they would be interested in and what would be the best nights for them - the nights were fairly even. But again if we had a whist drive we got a lot of people. If we had an

educational talk it was badly attended and we tried to get varied speakers for them. All we have now in fact is an annual trip to the pantomime.

With the other one, when it first started this was the social centre once a month. There were no working men's clubs then. There were the pubs yes, but there was nowhere where they could take their wives and there weren't as many women working then. There was a monthly dance of the Parent Teacher Association and they got interested in it. Some of the parents there, their sons and daughters had passed through college and were teaching. It was just like being interested in the church men's fellowship or something like that.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. There are other things in the school, that the parents can come to without having a Parent Teacher Association. There's a harvest festival service every year and the parents are invited. Sometimes there are as many parents in the hall as children. This speaks very well of the service - the mothers who are not there will bring the grandmother along. If any of the parents want to talk to the teachers there's all playtime and probably ten minutes afterwards. We have an Easter Service, a carol service at Christmas, with hymn sheets, where the parents are invited to join in with the singing.

You get to know from these - the feeling that the parents are behind you and that we're doing a grand job and so forth. You get them saying as they go out - 'there's no need for me to come up here. I know how happy the bairn is.' That everything is going grand. There's no problems at all'.

Then there's the pantomime trip, I'll meet them all there. And we have a musical afternoon for the old age pensioners. At any one of these functions any parent has my full permission - not at the old folks do of course - to discuss anything they want with the teacher.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I would say this to a young head.

In most schools a parent can get into school without passing the headteacher's door. The cases in our school where this happened, the parent wanted to tell the teacher some trivial little thing. 'I'm sorry Johnny's off he's got chicken pox.'

The first thing I would lay down is that if parents don't want the formality of seeing me before seeing a teacher well and good. But the moment any parent comes in to play war, some complaint at the teachers' door - it's no comment, see the headteacher. I don't want them blackballing any teacher in front of a class and usually by the time I've talked to them they know that little jimmy is not the idol they think he is. But listen to every complaint and if you've made a mistake admit it and apologise.

I would say to a young head. Give these instructions to your teachers - if any parent comes up for anything else but something trivial, if they are coming up on a complaint or 'why don't you do this?' - just say 'please see the headteacher'.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

- A. Yes I do. I do this probably a few weeks after we start in September. I invite all the parents of the first year children to come up to hear what the school's aims are, what we're trying to do, what our plans are and how we organise the school. If they have any questions I'll answer them. So they know right from the beginning what sort of a school their children are in. I think it is important that you let these parents know that you know what you're doing in the school. It's most important that they feel this fellow knows what he's talking about. Naturally we tell them, in the past, what we've done in regard to football, netball and the eleven plus - what proportion of children they can expect to get the eleven plus.

Last year I had to explain thoroughly, in our school the first years are unstreamed but they are planned unstreamed. In the first week they get tests and are tabulated in rough academic order. I share them out between the two classes giving them a similar number of good children, average children and remedial readers. In the second year they are streamed because of the eleven plus. I told the parents what I was doing and they were delighted. They saw the fairness of the thing - children have been in the infant school different lengths of time. The parents can see the fairness I think.

- Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

- A. We use the standard written reports twice a year. They can also get information from me or the class teachers. I have the second year parents in as well to remind them that a child being fifth in an unstreamed class who goes into the 2A class will probably be ninth or tenth.

- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

- A. Well I'm in favour of open days provided they are not show pieces and providing the teachers are not bulldozed into plastering the walls with art and stuff that means nothing.

I think an open day should be held only once a year. In a junior school I would say it should be held during the day, although it does prevent those parents who are working from coming along, but I don't think it's fair to drag teachers along to school at night time. It might be different in senior schools. There you have to make more effort to get both the parents of the boys and girls along to talk to the teacher and career master about what job the boy is suitable for. Therefore you've got to make more effort to catch the parents and make more effort to get them in. This might mean having it in the evening.

- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

- A. Oh yes - no appointments. If a parent wants to discuss something with the teacher, for example, if a child in first year suddenly decides that he doesn't want to come to school in the afternoon. The teacher will know the situation better than me. Right, I'll go and take the class and the parent and the teacher can get together in my room. I'll give them about fifteen minutes and ask if they've found any solution. If the parent has come to discuss something really genuine I'll take the class and the teacher can see the parent in private.

- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Well a teacher cannot get on with their work if parents are allowed to come in anytime. A teacher's got a heck of a lot to get through in a year to start with, particularly young teachers would feel uncomfortable about it, with someone else in the classroom.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I wouldn't ask any teacher to do this. I might do it myself sometimes. If there have been problems I have gone down to the home myself - not often - but I have done it.

I think teachers have got enough to do already and the reception to a teacher could be unpleasant. If the teacher expressed a desire to do it, I would think about it very carefully and weigh it up. What sort of a family is this? Will they receive a good reception or not? It would depend on the circumstances. I would never ask a teacher to do this.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes, in certain subjects. If there is a parent who is a good pianist and is in the area and able to come in often, it's the same as having a peripetetic pianist. I would welcome someone like this.

I would welcome any parent to assist in coaching the boys for football or cricket, or I would welcome any young parent any young mother for training girls for netball. If there was a father good in model making, I would invite him to a handwork lesson if he was available.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I can see some value in it. We don't have anything like that before the child enters the school, although as I've said already we do have the first year parents up after the children have started school.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so, how should it be obtained?

A. I would say that if a child is happy in school and suffers no problems at all, shows no indication of being upset by anything, living a normal happy life at school I would say I couldn't care less, or rather I could care if I found the child was putting on a brave face and had an unhappy home background.

I wouldn't be inclined to delve into any case like that because in ninety-five cases out of a hundred they are happy at home. But if there was a child who we knew was bright and intelligent, was going back, losing heart, then we definitely do make enquiries about this sort of thing.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Well there are two hundred children in the school and that involves four hundred parents, given that each child has two parents. Although you can leave the fathers out they're working.

At these things like Easter Service, Carol Service, Harvest Festival we get a hundred to one hundred and twenty mothers. There's well over fifty percent of the female parents.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, we don't keep any record.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Some schools have an open day and that's the end of it. The teachers can't talk to all the parents at the open day. After the open day the school's barred. You've had your chance to talk about all the problems during open day. A teacher can't talk to thirty or forty parents during one afternoon. I think it's better to let them come and see me at any time. This relieves the strain on a teacher when we do have an open day.

Mrs. --- knows very well about her boy, his writing is poor, she's been up and discussed it. 'He's a shocking writer isn't he?' I say, yes he's a shocking writer but I'll show you some of the other children's writing in the class, because when they come up they think they're not being taught to write properly. So you send along for a set of books and say help yourself, have a look at these. Little Jimmy is a shocking writer he's the worst in the class - some of them are letter perfect.

This proves to the parent that either little Jimmy is not trying, or it might prove to the parent and the teacher and the headteacher that he's not quite co-ordinated and we've got to watch him a little more carefully.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, apart from the Parent Teacher Association. The parents in my area really look forward to coming into the school, have a bit of a sing with the children and have a bit of a walk around. They probably just have a walk around the corridors and have a look at the wallboards, at friezes and the projects that they've been on with. They might have a few words with the teacher but any other difficult problems have been solved long before by coming and talking personally to me and after talking personally with the teacher when I've taken the class.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWO

Headteacher Two      Transcript      Tape recorded 35 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I believe there are other ways of involving parents. I prefer the parents to be able to come into the school, as and when they like, to see who they like. I find they don't abuse this and they come up at any time to see me. I've been here nearly fifteen years and the first person I refused to see was last week when I was particularly busy and it was about a very minor affair indeed. Her reaction was rather unpleasant unfortunately, but on no other occasion has a parent been refused access to me and the teacher if necessary.

There are occasions when invitations are sent to the parents to come in throughout the course of the year. Each parent gets the opportunity of coming and seeing the teacher about problems, progress, appointments are made for parents. There are open days and they respond happily to this. We used to do things in the evening. We had one open evening and we got so many we couldn't cope.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A. I think so, but when you talk about involvement I don't think they want to involve themselves but they want to be kept informed and they are interested whether they are 'A' stream or 'B' stream. The majority of parents are interested, although the degree of their interest varies. Some interest is superficial and little followup occurs, but they come and I confess I was a little surprised to see this even some from backgrounds where you wouldn't anticipate them being interested.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. Well I certainly wouldn't consider that they should be allowed in the school in the classroom. If there was any special purpose to underline a child's limitations so that the parent could really see how poor their work was in this direction, or in order to stimulate the parent to participate at home, again I'd be quite happy, but not necessarily to go into the class in the reading lesson. I feel this sort of thing could be a distraction to everybody. I think in the classroom only if it were necessary to prove something.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Quite candidly I much prefer the way I do things - the informal way. A Parent-Teacher Association, well the parents are only in for a certain time, then they're in and they're out and I've seen so many Parent-Teacher Associations die natural deaths. I've attended Parent-Teacher Association meetings where the attendance has been about twelve parents, where speakers have been invited (these were in the area where I've attended as a guest) and the

people whom you get in such associations are not necessarily the ones whom you want. Very often they become purely a social basis. These are not the aims that Parent-Teacher Associations usually set out with.

I've no experience of one as a teacher but I've seen and attended them and I do prefer very much informal methods.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. By meeting the parents as they come in, as simple as that. They get to know you and you get to know them. You can establish a relationship that is far closer, because, in a Parent-Teacher Association, you're very often at one end while you may circulate you don't necessarily get the opportunity, whereas if they come in individually, you have their attention and they have your attention.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Well this may sound trite, but I would say - always be particularly courteous, whether this is of any significance or not. A head is in somewhat autocratic position and sometimes they have been known not only to carry it on in school but out of school.

I think by treating parents in such a manner you get their support, their confidence. I don't say you've got to do it deliberately, it's something a head should do naturally.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I know I get circulars from secondary heads where this is put down in written form but I'm not sure that that gets home. The test is the school itself. I would think that the parents, by seeing the school and learning about it over the course of time, recognise the aims-they stand out.

They get to learn about the organisation, streaming, etc. Although I think this is rather inclined to blow up ones impression of a school as something that is very complicated and highly organised.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We use written reports twice a year but again parents are invited separately to come and meet the teachers. At certain times, they are given as long as they require. There's usually a day set aside for one year and they go to the class and they talk to the teacher and they can talk to me as well if they want.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

- A. Oh yes! I don't put on any show, no concerts and things like that it's merely an extension of the invitation. They can come in anytime during the afternoon the teacher is there they see the children's work. The major work of the school in art and craft is all in the hall so they get a picture of what school is really like. We have it during the day now because previously we couldn't cope with the numbers that came at night.  
We split it into year groups now each on a different day. I think once a year sufficient - at the end of the year.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Yes, they can come in and see me at any time and if they want to see the class teacher that can be arranged.  
Besides this parents are invited up to see the class teacher and get as long as they like. Each year group is invited separately in one day.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. I suppose it would be very nice but I can't see that it would serve any purpose.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. I would oppose this on all kinds of grounds. For a head to visit such a parent if that parent is not sufficiently interested to come to school then that parents wouldn't welcome the head or the teacher in their home. Apart from that it could be a great embarrassment for the head to go into their homes. I know that this has been spoken about but I wouldn't be particularly happy about going to visit parents in their homes particularly parents who don't feel they want to come to school.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. There's danger here. I'd be quite happy <sup>at</sup> to use their skills after school but not during the day profession problems would normally arise there.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. It wouldn't do any harm. I've never done it. Quite candidly, there's the problem of time. It's something I'd be quite interested to do given the opportunity. I haven't had it or taken it.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. This leads to too much probing. Again while this helps you and leads to greater understanding I wouldn't think it would be wise to develop this theme very much. A teacher is a teacher, this does not necessarily mean they have the ability to weigh up positions accurately.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. To give a figure would be difficult, but certainly a very large proportion attend here. When we had it at night they were queueing to get in and quite honestly there was a surge to get in. Eighty percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No we don't. I know which ones don't, even if we don't keep a written record.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think each part makes its own contribution. The fact that they come in huge numbers to the open day doesn't mean that that is better than the individual coming to see me or the teacher. It serves a different purpose. I wouldn't separate out any one.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, nothing at all.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THREE

Headteacher Three Transcript Tape recorded 61 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I fully believe in the involvement of parents but I can't say I believe in exactly the methods Plowden suggests. In general, parents should be involved with the school - when all's said and done it's their children - therefore the school should be open to them.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. Yes I can say the greater proportion of parents are anxious to know what is happening to their children in school and not only what is happening, but why it is happening. My experience is that the majority want to know why.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I don't think so if they were genuinely interested. Mind you, I wouldn't have them in where they were hearing reading whereby they were taking the part of the teacher - that's what it amounts to. I wouldn't have that.

But if a parent wishes to come and find out how we do things and why we do it that way, that is a different matter. But having a parent coming in and taking a small group for reading, why not go a bit further and have one coming in to take a small group for Maths or P.E? The teacher could eventually go home.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. My reaction would be no! because the vast majority of Parent Teacher Associations are more concerned with the social side of life than in the actual teaching and educational side of school life. My experience has been that if you are talking to a Parent Teacher Association and I'm talking from actual experience as a parent. My experience was that when the staff said we're going to hold a whist drive and dance because we want some funds to go on a school trip you could not get into that hall. It was packed!

But when they said our next monthly meeting (and they had a proper printed form every term) someone is coming to lecture on different types of reading you were lucky if you got one percent of the parents there. Anything social yes - anything educational no.

If a school is run properly and I flatter myself that mine is from a parents' point of view - the door is wide open to any parent to come to school, father or mother, together or separately. I make this stipulation whether they come in peace or they come in war, come to me first and don't thrash it out on the street corner or in the corner shop. If they have a grumble they can see me at any time.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. As far as I'm concerned when I say to the children we are having a sports day tell your mams and dads I judge by the response of parents - fathers and mothers, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, neighbours - we reckon we have two and a half parents per child.

I now find it necessary to have my parents day split in two, one day for the Fourth and Third year and one day for the First and Second year because of the number of parents who turn up, therefore they are interested. If I say to a child I want to see your mother I can guarantee they will come - and this is all without a Parent Teacher Association.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Always be honest if you've made a mistake, be prepared to admit your mistake and be prepared to apologise - don't attempt to stand on your dignity, that to me is more important than anything else. Be prepared to see them at all times. You must remember we are we are tied to a job from nine to four and most of us are not over keen on being involved after four o'clock - parents are in a similar position. Fathers are tied to a job - mother may have young children to look after or a part time job. They may have aged parents to look after - we don't know all the circumstances. We've got to fit in with them in the same way as we expect them to fit in with us.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, I do it when it comes to Parents Day. We fling the doors open at 1.30 and parents can surge in, look around the room, look around the school, talk to the teachers. They poke their noses in the desks, play war with the child, play war with the teacher if necessary, look at the books, etc. and generally have a good time.

Then I ring the bell. It is a signal for all parents to come into the hall. It is a signal for all children to get out into the field. It is the signal for all staff to get into the staff room, close the door, brew themselves a cup of tea and get their second wind.

While that's going on I go into the hall, get up in front of the parents alone and tell them what the school has done in the past twelve months and what we hope to do in the next twelve months. If any of the parents want to get up and ask me questions they have a right to.

This is better for junior children than publishing booklets and suchlike.

These parents are ordinary working class people and they are frightened of authority in any shape or form, especially when it's written down on paper. They don't like the formal approach. They'd far rather you slapped them on the back, accepted a cigarette from them - or gave them one - something like that. In a middle class school you'd have to have a different approach. The approach I have, I think is suitable for my school. There are schools in the town where even my approach would be too formal.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We give written reports twice a year, not the standard ones - an individual report twice a year.

They get a report twice a year before they see the teacher. It's amazing, I had a parent of a fourth year child come in and she had every report the child had had in the school. This is typical of the kind of parents I deal with. She knew what was in them.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes. We definitely have one at the end of every school year. I would like to fit in at least another one. To me you've got to make some formal arrangement in the evening. After all it's a school, let's have it in school time with school atmosphere and let them see that schools are not the desperate places some of them still think.

They'll look around and say 'It's different to when I was at school'. One woman said 'You taught my husband and he was just saying last night you're not the man you were!!!'

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. I don't have appointments. It's no good saying to a parent come up ten o'clock next Wednesday, we don't know their commitments. I'm prepared to leave what I'm doing.

If they want to see the teacher I invite them to see me first and say 'Peace or War' and if it's war well come on let's hear your story. Then we'll have it out. I want to know what its all about.

I tell them on Parents Day 'The door's always open'. If it's impossible at that moment, I give them a cup of tea.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I've tried it during education week. We arranged for each year's parents to come in for assembly each morning and then seeing their children at normal work. We averaged eighty parents per morning which takes some organising on their part to get in for nine o'clock. It was a huge success.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. There is a value in it depending on why you want to go and see them. It would certainly give you the opportunity to see lots of things we don't know about parents although juniors will tell any Tom, Dick and Harry about home. There are still some parents you don't know about, you'd have to be very careful.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. You're rather coming up here against what some people would call non-union labour. You'd have to be careful you didn't tread on another parent's toes.

I'd be very careful about that.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I think it's a very good idea. This is an extension of what happens at the secondary school. It happens at my children's secondary school.

If a parent comes to me and says 'my child's coming to your school in September, I say have a seat, tell me what you want to know'.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so, how should it be obtained?

A. As much as you possibly can. You get quite a lot from the children if you sort the wheat from the chaff - experience is the only way and a good memory. You hear a tremendous amount from parents when you get them talking by being friendly.

C. Impact (how Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Taking any particular class, when it comes to parents day nearly all will be represented.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. We don't keep a written record but we know.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the two approaches go together. The 'open door' helps parents day. The parents feel there is someone in the school who is prepared to listen to them and that they are made welcome when they come.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No I can't think I've had anything where the parents attitudes has made us change anything. As I said, we've had to change the form of open day because of the enthusiasm generated and the number who turned up - we had to split it into two.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FOUR

Headteacher Four Transcript Tape recorded 64 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Oh yes I think you should make a conscious effort, it should be part of your aim, but the difficulty is you mustn't be condescending in trying to involve them in the affairs of the school. It ought to be a natural process. You have to look at your aim of course and say what is my aim in education. You want to develop the child as an individual, that's the first aim, but much more important you want to develop him as a member of society - taking what would be the parents place in primitive society - parents now put this responsibility on society.

You don't know very much about the child unless you involve the parents - You have the class five or six hours a day and your opinion of the child is probably very different from the parent. Very often parents say I don't know how you manage him, he's terrible at home - yet often he's a very nice child at school.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No, but I think they might be a bit afraid.

An example springs to mind of a woman whose child had been excluded because of a verminous head. I wrote her a letter worded in a very casual way, asking her to come in and see me at any time and she came up two or three days afterwards and she was trembling like a leaf. I could see she was agitated. She said 'when I got the letter I wondered what was up now'. She had been under pressure from the nurse, the attendance officer, the probation officer who had also involved the children's officer.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I don't think I would particularly want the kind of approach where parents hear reading or things like that. There may be some parents expert enough but I think the number of parents able to handle children correctly for things like number and reading are very few. I don't think I would want to involve the parents in the actual process of teaching and learning.

The teachers would have to be very special too to be able to cope with other adults in the classroom. I find it very difficult to make small talk, I have to make a conscious effort. You know how teachers tend to close up when anyone walks in the classroom.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. My immediate reaction would be to try and put them off. I can see that a Parent Teacher Association could be a big help particularly in a school like mine in a deprived area. We don't get much in the way of requisition allowance - you have to stretch for everything. They could certainly help in the provision of a tape recorder or a V.H.F. radio - this sort of thing.

But quite honestly I cannot see that it would have great value where the education of their children is concerned. I think there is a lot of condescension whenever you talk to parents in the mass. I feel as though I have to adopt a certain attitude, I'm the head teacher and you are the parents. I feel as though I'm

talking in a patronising way which isn't me.

I haven't had any personal experience as a teacher, just what I've heard. This may well have put me off, of course. Things worked well when they were first formed but the people who took over were the kind of people who would be interested in their children anyway. The people who you really wanted to involve didn't come.

I think the staff would accept it - they are never in a hurry to get away. I don't know I've never really tackled them about it.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. I think the way we find out in our school is that very often you get nice letters of thank you. After a trip the parents will write a nice note saying thank you for giving Jimmy a nice day or something like this.

They do come in when you ask them to come in and see you.

Q.6. What advice would you give a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. On every possible occasion I write to parents, I never get the clerk to do it, in a very informal way in my own handwriting, no 'officialese'. I use phrases like 'pop in and see me'.

I think different types of parents need different handling. In a middle class school most parents would be very aggressive in their approach. This is not the case in my school, I think they are keen for them to get on but they are more concerned for them to be happy in school, being treated as individuals not as numbers. Not the handle being turned and something churned out at the other end.

Most of them are working class but sensible people, easier for a head to get on with.

C. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, but again, I think it has to be done on an individual basis. The teacher has to know and to a certain extent the children have to know. When the parents are invited up for parents days you've got to tell the parents exactly what you're trying to do and how you're trying to do it.

Not booklets, no! Even open days have a formality about them which is self defeating. The people know that at quarter past ten they are going to meet the teacher and the teachers have qualms about meeting them. The parents are not at ease - on this day we talk.

My two lads went to the Grammar School and the staff up there tried to tell you what was happening, but you always felt as if you were being talked down to and really this was a form of words they had memorised and this was a placatory way of putting peoples minds at rest. I wouldn't waste my time doing that. I'm sure this has affected my attitudes to formal arrangements of this type.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We have a formal exam at the end of January, this is something I have taken over, I don't know if I'll continue it. There is a

marks list sent out. There are no words, just marks, number of children in class, position in class. These were blanks here when I came and I don't think you should change things too rapidly. I'm not too happy about it. I don't think it means very much to the majority of parents. I think it means much more if you say I'm pleased with your Joyce's reading.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Yes this is the kind of approach I would like. I think the kind of open day where you discuss the child's progress should be fairly early in the year. Of this kind I think one a year is enough. We have other ones where the parents can see children's work and plays and musical items just where the parents can be happy - perhaps one or two of these a year but I wouldn't want any more than that I think. I don't want to a sort of chairman as it were talking to the minions.

Where you're discussing the child's progress they should be during the day I think there's an atmosphere for business then, the other kind we have during the evening. I changed the form of the open day this year. When the students were in I had freed one class a day and had that class' parents coming in that particular day - the teacher was available all day. I asked them by letter what was the most convenient time for them to come so they all got about ten minutes. There was no waiting, no great queue of people waiting. You see them for about half a minute and you say the same old things to them.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangements for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. When I sent the marks lists out this year I said that I felt on this occasion it might be better if we had a formal arrangement of times. On 18th February one class' parents could be seen and asked parents to indicate a time. At the same time I said they could pop in and see me. Not many of them did incidentally! I think they're still frightened of headteachers. I find the men tend to stay standing. You have to ask them twice to have a seat and they sit on the edge of the chair as though you're some ogre they can't really talk to. Almost invariably they mention their own school days - how different things are now! I think this attitude of fear is still there.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I think you've got to think of your teachers here. I can think of teachers who would just dry up, who couldn't bear the thought of parents being in their classroom. I don't think I can see any great value for the school in this.

When I take parents along to meet the teacher I always take them into the classroom. I knock at the door and go in, I don't bring the teacher out - the parent goes in, they see the actual classroom situation. But I can think of a lot of teachers who would just shrivel if contact like this was common.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes.

A. I would say that I would never ever visit a parent. I might change my mind but I think this is an invasion of their privacy.

I would be highly annoyed if a headteacher visited me. If my children's headteacher just knocked at the door for a chat I would think is he wanting to see what kind of a house we've got or what kind of a family we've got. I would feel as though there was some element of probing going on. You can only put yourself in the situation and I wouldn't. I always refused as a teacher. There's an exception to that. Whenever there's an accident I take the child home in a car and ask the mother if she would like to take the child to hospital, or if it's not convenient, I would, but that's the only time.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes. We're doing local surveys at the moment and I have suggested to the staff if there is anyone with special knowledge of a postman or a policeman the children could drop a note and ask them to come and speak. In this way I think it would be appropriate to involve parents.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and the class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I think it might. Although I don't really think it's necessary. My concern is more for the boys hearing tales about their secondary schools not being the kind of place my boys think it is.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Well, I know in the case I was telling you about of the woman whose child always had vermin in her hair it was very useful. I got a lot of information through the nurse and the welfare officer although I must say it was embarrassing when the woman actually came up, in case I put my foot in it. I think it's only really useful in cases like this.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. About eighty percent where we had set a time on this individual basis and invited them - on medical inspections it's about the same.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Yes, we do. This proved useful when we had the medical inspection. I think those children whose parents don't involve themselves in things like this feel very out of it and very apprehensive especially when they are going into a room with a nurse who is very often an ogre to these children whose parents don't come.

These are the very children who should have the support of the teacher. I asked the male teacher to go in with the boys whose parents had not come and the woman teacher to go in with the girls whose parents hadn't. The Doctor refused to have them in. I said 'I don't have to give you an explanation, Doctor, I'm the headteacher of this school and this is the way I want it to happen'.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. The one where you take every possible chance to write to a parent

although it's a very slow process. You've just got to take the opportunity as it comes. You can't make opportunities you'd be trivialising the thing, the parents would say 'god, fancy inviting me up for a thing like this'.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. It's very short. Not really apart from the sports day. I wanted to involve the parents on the sports day. I've got permission to change to a local field. Which means I can arrange a sports day and if it's wet tell the children to tell their mams and dads it's not on today, it's tomorrow or something. Previously we had to have buses and travel quite a distance.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FIVE

Headteacher 5      Transcript      Tape recorded 45 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Everybody probably thinks their school is different and it happens to the other fellow. Perhaps with the kind of parents we have the answer would be no - but they do take an interest. I think it is true that parents should be involved more in schools, yes!

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.      I think so. We always find they turn out in force. You always get the ones who won't come. But generally speaking they turn up for maths things, and for infant reading - things like that they're interested. Well not most, but not just the people you would expect whose children are going to the grammar school. Yes, I think I would say most of them.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I don't think I would let them in the classrooms. You need to be careful. I wouldn't mind them helping with the library, that sort of thing. I haven't done it for the simple reason I think you've got to be careful. We encourage them to come up but we don't actually involve them in the classroom. I think I would draw the line at them being involved in the classroom situation.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I think I would ferret it out carefully and see what the staff said and try. I've got no experience of a Parent-Teacher Association. I don't know if you get them from the headteacher. I could say to the staff do this and they would do it, but you wouldn't know if they would do it because they wanted to do it, or because I had suggested it.

My knowledge is based on what I've heard from other people. I would call a Parent-Teacher Association something where we get together and talk about education. I'm not saying you shouldn't have social events, but they should be together. From what I've heard, if you have a talk about maths it's poorly attended, but if they have a social event it's well attended.

I think it could be overcome. There's no reason why you couldn't have a talk for half an hour and then have a social evening.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      The only way I know is by a general feeling - the fact that the parents will come up and discuss school problems. I feel if I've done nothing else in the school I've built up a decent relationship with parents. They can come up about most things - they've come up about quite fantastic things - their own personal problems and the children.

We've got ninety families in the school and at the last reckoning every parent has been up at least twice in the four years I've been head.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. My first idea was to get the parents in. Having talked to the parents they didn't know what the children were doing insay modern maths, - they thought they were just playing with bits of wood in fourth year. That was when we decided to have proper talks in the afternoons and the evenings.

The only advice I would give to a headteacher would be to see what the situation is in the school and play it by ear.

I've been in a few schools and I think different parents have different attitudes. The people here think they can come up and ask me anything - passports, anything. Whether this is right or wrong I don't know. Our parents are just ordinary working class people - I'm from a working class background myself so I have a certain affinity with them - I don't feel I'm talking down to them. On the other hand I don't feel I have to to 'kow tow' to them.

They're passionately involved in feeling they want their children to get on - these are the other type of parents. But I've never had a parent who has said if we don't get an eleven plus there's something wrong.

C. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, this is one of the things I do on parents day. I give a report on speech day. What I try to do is tell them what I'm going to do and what I hope to achieve - after the vicar's prayers.

We've only a small school. We only get fifteen new admits each term, so on a Friday afternoon they come up to school for three or four afternoons before they start.

I take the parents into the library after they've brought their child up and say look at this school. I say at this school this is what we try to do. I tell them about gym shoes, etc. and I always say to them, "Look, if there's anything wrong come up" I'd sooner they came up and had a row with us than talk about it on the street corner.

But I can't see you could do this with five hundred. If you've got sixty or so children starting every term like one of these big infant schools well you cannot get the parents in informally. Every school is different - I think you have to find your own solution.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Yes, once a year instead of reports they can have an interview with the class teacher. I'ts during the day - I take the class and they have ten minutes in private in the staff room. We send out a form and fix an appointment they're better than reports. We don't use written reports. You've got to be honest with parents and you don't want the whole neighbourhood listening

like in an open day. We get a good response - there hasn't been a single child whose father or mother hasn't been in. It hadn't always been like this. I think it gradually dawned on them.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, we have open days I'm in favour of them. We have one day where the parents can come and look around. I reckon about once a term would be ideal. If you can count things like harvest festivals where we let them stay on and look around but they don't need to quiz the teachers now. I've had experience of open days both as a parent and a teacher and I think these queues of parents waiting to see the teacher cause all the trouble.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes as I've just said they're guaranteed a private ten minute interview with the class teacher and they can see me as well if they wish. Besides, when they're in the staff room you can give them a cup of tea in decent surroundings. They can tell us things we need to know about the child - it's not just a one way system.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Yes, we've done that once - but we didn't get a lot of people mind. I think the parents here like to be not entertained, that's too strong a word, but displays and little Harry to say that's my work, that's my drawing.

But we did try this when they had the Home and School Council Day, 10th October, 1968 - no special lessons or displays, just to see the school in action. I invited the parents to come up for 1.45, 2.15 and 2.45. I talked to them first in the spare classroom about what they were going to see. We had a good response from parents and several people without children at the school came in.

We haven't tried it since - but I wouldn't mind. The younger staff didn't mind - but the older teachers didn't like it. I think it was just their early training.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. There are the ones you worry about I certainly agree - I can see value in it but wouldn't like to be the person who did it.

I feel as if - these are the problem families - the nurse comes in and says she is frightened to go into the house - smells and things. Whether it's just my imposed ideas I don't know - we do go to some houses.

If I wouldn't go myself I wouldn't ask a member of staff. It depends on what you want to achieve - the social workers go in - I think it's more their job - the educational welfare people can get in.

Being the person I am I couldn't go. I'm only guessing, but I think the people who don't visit the school are problem families anyway - who have social problems and to go there - well!

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Do you mean display boarding this kind of thing? I think you've got to be careful - there could be fair criticism if you let some come in. If you can do it so that other parents don't feel these are being favoured or think that because I'm not good at woodwork I can't contribute anything to the school.

If you had a Parent-Teacher Association it could be a natural development - the other parents would realise it was a natural development - the other thing is a different issue.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I think so - I see no reason why. I think the junior schools should - but I think it's a good idea say in the summer term to invite them up on an evening or an afternoon. Once they start on the school ladder twice in their life time, once from the infants and once from the juniors, they start a new school. Mind some schools give them a fortnight or so to settle down first and invite them up.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. I think it does - I think you pick a lot of things up in passing. The needlework class is a great one for picking things up. They'll tell the teacher lots of things that are happening at home - mind I don't think it's fair to write these down in a file.

We ask the parents the fathers occupation, things like the father's occupation when they come up.

Q. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. We had one hundred percent this year for the first time ever - but I would say it's a steady eighty percent normally.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. The class teachers do - this is how we can check.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the personal interview - its taken a long time to percolate through - but they've realised it's the one time in the year when they can have the class teacher's individual attention.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No never - there's no real rivalry here. In a middle class school they're all worried about how they're going to get to the grammar school. I was the same about my child from a parents point of view - I realise it's wrong. I play down the Eleven Plus here but I was in a terrible state. I tell them here it's not the end of the world here but they won't buy that there - they know the system.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER SIX

Headteacher Six      Transcript      Tape Recorded 51 minutes

A.    Motivation    (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A.    Yes, I think you should bring parents into the school - you've got to work with parents to make a whole family. I think the more you can involve parents the better, providing they don't interfere with the actual teaching and discipline of the school.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.    The good parents are interested - the ones who are interested in their children are interested in what's going on in the school. But then you have the other parents who are not the slightest bit interested in what's happening in the school and comparatively speaking, not interested in their children and I don't think you'll ever get them into school.

        I would say the majority are the first type who are anxious and are interested in their children.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.    It's difficult having parents coming in, say, for reading. It's one thing hearing a child read, it's another thing teaching them to read. Where parents can help a child to hear sounds they can't necessarily teach a child to take a word to pieces and build. They don't necessarily know phonetics or when to use whole word methods.

        I don't think I personally would object to parents coming into the classroom, whether my teachers would agree with me is another matter. I have had parents in on one or two occasions when I was teaching, mostly fathers helping with handwork. I haven't had mothers in classrooms, but as extra escorts in school excursions, things like that.

        If they started to interfere with the teacher that would be my limit. The teacher is the trained person in the classroom. I would welcome help from parents. They would have to respect the teacher and not interfere at all in discipline.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.    My reaction - my personal reaction would be yes - it helps the school funds - it's as simple as that. I've worked in one and we get quite a lot from them in extras which the authority wouldn't provide.

        You get social occasions when they all come along, you get educational talks when comparatively few would turn up and this is where it died pretty much a natural death.

        If I was starting one I would not do anything initially without the support of the existing staff. You have to understand that married women naturally can't give up anything like as much time. I don't think they're against it in principle.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. My parents I ask in preference if they can write in and say, in two days can I see Miss X who is teaching my Johnny and can I have a talk - so they can see the teacher and have a talk.

At least once a year every parent in my school who wishes to, gets the opportunity of a private interview with the teacher and I mean absolutely private - with teacher first and then me if they want to. All these are timed and fixed so that there are no children, they are taken out and looked after. They would get about a quarter of an hour each. I object to Mrs. Smith listening over Mrs. Robinson's shoulder to what the teacher is saying about Johnny Robinson and then go and tell Mrs. Jones. I loathed this when I was a teacher and I find my system works very well.

Most of them do want an interview. The big snag is sometimes they say I can't come in Friday I shall come in such a day. Then I've got to write and say I'm sorry you can't come on that particular day you've got to wait.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Be very, very cautious - get to know them before you say anything. You can have people who are genuinely interested - you can have people who appear interested so that they can make propoganda out of what you say.

You have to be very, very careful with some of them. I had a parent asking why isn't this done, why isn't that done - why didn't your predecessor do this if you're doing this - why have my children had to wait so many years for this to be done for them - and then he made capital out of it. He was well known of course - and then you got no support at all from him after that.

He used the school for what he wanted. As a new head, if you've got any sense, you will consult the existing staff, especially those who have been there for some time, and just find out, for your own information really, who's who.

C. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, I have the parents of the children who are coming to me as first year's I normally have the parents in with the children - remember there's two different set ups here. I was in one school where the infants, junior and secondary were all in one block, contact was easy. The infant children knew the junior teachers because they saw them every day and the junior children knew the secondary teachers.

I called meetings here towards the end of July so I could have a talk with the parents about the aims of the school and talk to the children about the behaviour I expect of them when they came in. I told them what we were doing and how they were expected to do it and asked for co-operation.

Regarding organisation, this school has been rigidly streamed 'til I got here. I came to the conclusion, based on experience in a one stream school, that it wasn't fair to stream first year's on a test given in the first fortnight on a test given in English and Maths and reading. After all, we're fed from three infant schools. What I've done, I've taken all the children who have

had two years and one term in the infants in one class and the other ones who have only had two years in the infants are in a younger class.

I've only had one person who complained about it. She was a teacher and her husband was a teacher. The child had had only two years in the infant school and was bright. She thought it was unfair and wrong and said he was in a lower class - her child could keep up with the older ones. He has now moved to another school.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. I've cancelled written reports as such because I don't think they're worth the paper they're written on. To say a child is fair, could do better, not trying, good, is, in my opinion, a waste of time. If I use a written report again they will be written reports of quite a length, e.g. Johnny has mastered addition, hundreds, tens and units, subtraction with carrying figures, multiplication by 3, 4 and 5 understands this concept. He can read such and such a book and a reading test shows he has a reading age of so and so which is quite good for his age.

I have parents in so we can talk about it, so we can talk about the child instead of a written report because a written report takes up so much of the teacher's time. I don't think the old type of written report is much use candidly. Some people can't help being top. I remember a boy who was very poor academically and we were doing some spelling, he got three out of ten right and it was a wonderful achievement for him, another lad gets ten out of ten, sits back and says they are easy.

As long as we have the Eleven plus we have to have streaming at the top end anyway.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Yes, I'm not having one this year though, I want to get my feet under the table first being recently appointed.

I don't think open days should be like the old ones where parents stand around and talk to the teacher and see what Johnny's doing. My idea of an open day is where something is going on in the classroom whether they're having P.E. or something. A normal lesson where parents see what is going on - craft, art, something like that. I don't think they should put on a special show for parents, it gives the wrong impression - it should be a normal working day - except for parents coming in and standing around. I know it's still false, but it's nearer to what is normal. Anything else, like a concert, well and good, but put on in outside of school hours, at night time.

Possibly one open day a term would be it, possibly in the middle of term during the day because some work should have been done by then and then you can change if you want.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangements for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes we have a system where they can come in and talk instead of a written report, at least once a year in absolute private with the teacher and then me if they want to.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. You can have parents in too often - not in a classroom situation just observing - if you were going to have them in to do something as an ancillary well and good but not just wandering around. Let's be honest, some of them look on it just as free entertainment. The teacher is there to teach and get Johnny along and whether Mama thinks it's good or not well! This is where she can come up too often and Johnny can say, 'I'm good my mother comes up', though it's very often the case that interested parents produce interested children - no doubt about it.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. It's duty. I've done it. Some of them will welcome you very apologetically - they were going to come along but - they would have liked to come along but. I don't know if it's because they feel their own shortcomings or not. I think with some of them it could be that they themselves feel inadequate.

It didn't really have any effect when I did it, I can only really remember one who came along afterwards. They're still shy - you occasionally get an anti-teacher one but most of them are shy. They feel that their own education is so lacking that they don't want to meet an educated person. It's embarrassing for them. They don't know who they are going to meet there. The class usually cuts across a whole social range and they feel that some of the better educated people will look down on them and won't talk to them. They feel out of it.

They mainly feel this because of their lack of education and yet a lot of this particular type are willing to sacrifice for their children. I've had one or two talk about this. As a matter of fact I had one come up to register his son-as it turned out I'd taught the father.

He said 'You know I don't really like going out, I wasn't a very good scholar and I don't like mixing with folks that are better than me.' This is his attitude. He is perfectly happy with his own set. He wants his children to get on but he feels that if he pushes himself in he is going to undo what the school is doing. He said 'You know, I cannot even talk proper.' I think this is very important with a lot of them. They talk dialect and have great difficulty in speaking correct English - to speak or write it. It is an embarrassing position when they meet people who are better educated than them.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Oh yes, it's handy that, I'm trying to involve some parents now in games - see what we can get. In any shape or form, cash or kind, help or anything!

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I have them up and I also send out staff to the infants to meet the children they will be teaching and have the children up here in the following week, so they won't come in in September as strangers.

After we've had the teachers out and the children in, we're then having the parents in alone and we're going to talk to them. I think that when I went from the infants to the juniors it was a terrific step, it wasn't as big going from juniors to secondary because we all played in the same yard.

They're coming to an entirely different building nowadays. Anyway we'll see how the system works well this year.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Yes. Ask the parents. I have no hesitation in asking parents if they wish me to know anything about the children's background - especially medical. I've got one boy, now he's an epileptic - the mother won't admit it at all - never comes to school.

I nearly always ask when I'm admitting a child, the father's name which you have to have for the record and they usually say if they're separated or divorced, something like that.

I always ask the parents' occupation, always - purely for my own records. I think it's a great help especially assessing children - you'll know that children usually do better from a higher social background - for forecasting anything and very often the response from the home. I think I've got to get information especially medical information from the parents.

Parents very often talk when they come in, one father said somebody I'd taught said he's twenty-seven now with five children he said 'I've been a bad ..... I know that I've been inside'. I told him he had to pull himself together, the children didn't ask to be born and you're responsible for them.

I had another one in talking about their boy couldn't understand what was the matter with him - just wouldn't do what he was told - what could I do about it? I sent for the class teacher - yes he had gone off the rails in school. Eventually we traced it to the source. He's in the second year but he was associating with fourth years and his mother won't let him do the things that fourth years do so he's playing up at home. You get a lot in like this. You become a father confessor to a lot of parents.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. I would say a good seventy percent. There's no doubt about it, they are keen.

For the private interview, higher, pushing eighty percent. I would think very few didn't come.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, I don't keep a record because I don't know why you want it. Mind I keep a record of the parents who come along to see the teacher but not for normal things.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the private interview, that's been the most successful from my point of view and the parents. Most came up, as high as eighty percent. In one class for example, poor academic ability, I think there would be only about half didn't come but that was the worst. Most in general who didn't come up came at some other time - they had genuine reasons for not coming.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well up to now its been formal sports with parents cheering their own individual child. I had a word with the staff and we've changed the system - each child is going to be involved more or less the whole time. I personally didn't like the intense competition.

We haven't really had to change anything because of problems with parents.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER SEVEN

Headteacher 7      Transcript      Tape recorded 56 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Well, I'm not quite sure what extent Plowden recommends involvement about parents, but in general, yes. If you take the trouble to try and interest parents you can usually get the majority with you.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.      I don't know that the majority of parents want to be actually involved with the school at the junior stage. I think most of them are ambitious for their children but are quite happy to leave the learning side to the school.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      Well, I wouldn't let them do things like that - hear reading I mean. This implies that they are really teaching them to read and that's not what they are doing. I regard the teaching of reading as most important in the junior school, I wouldn't have parents doing this.

I don't want parents involved in the classroom. No, not in the classroom. I don't mind them knowing what is going on but not sitting in a lesson, no. The classroom would be my limit. You see you've got a child and an adult together in a learning situation and the adult is a teacher - there would be confusion about this.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I wouldn't pour cold water on the idea - I'd try to point out all the pros and cons. I think you've got to be awfully enthusiastic about Parent-Teacher Associations to run one, you know. My experience of them, in two schools, was that the parents who were enthusiastic came - they were the ones you knew you had on your side.

I think my experience of them as a teacher made me indifferent towards them. I wouldn't for the world belittle working class parents but I don't think they can keep a sustained interest to run a Parent-Teacher Association. I can get parents interested for the odd time when I'm going to start something new or when the new children join the school. I always have the parents in then. If we are going to start a new line or approach to something we would ask the parents to come. You see a Parent-Teacher Association is too formal. You need a sustained effort and it would end up with the social events being very well attended and the others not.

My staff are not the least bit anxious to have one. Of course, with an all girls' school, the majority of the staff are married women and there's a very close relationship between the staff and the children and the staff and the parents. You see a teacher will say 'You know I haven't seen that parent before' as though it was an unusual event, you know. I haven't found such close

relationships in mixed schools.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. In my experience if the parents have a grievance you'll hear about it. If you don't hear about things well - I think this is a characteristic of the British people you know. If they have something to complain about they'll complain. My experience is that if there's something wrong you'll hear about it pretty quickly and if there's something wrong with the school the parents will hear about it pretty quickly too.

The old pattern of where the mothers' went and did their shopping every day in the corner shop is gone. Most parents are working now.

Q.6. What advice would you give a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I think you must take parents into your confidence. I think headteachers are not sufficiently inclined enough to take parents sufficiently into their confidence. I think you've got to have an awful lot of trouble to explain why you're doing things you can get them along with you.

If you're dealing with an irate mother you do get this occasionally. You've got to listen to them even if they go round, and round and round and very often calm the turbulent spirit. They say the teacher did so and so and so and so and so. I do listen to them and they do know they can come and see me at any time. I think you've got to be helpful and patient and not make hasty judgements.

C. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Well, in the first year during the first couple of days the mothers usually bring them in and I tell them the usual things about good manners and that, while they may be the only child in the family there are usually over thirty in a class and they've got to learn to get on with others.

For example I wrote to all the parents about the B.B.C. sex education programmes explaining about them, that they weren't the kind of things they had been reading about in the papers and this year only two mothers said they didn't want their daughters involved. I certainly think you should let the parents know what is going on of course the most difficult thing to explain to parents nowadays is the change in the teaching of maths and science. I think every head now has trouble with this in a junior school. The parents get very perturbed about it. And it's not only the parents - the poor child is between the teacher and the parent.

I know some secondary schools mainly, issue booklets about the school but this is not my idea of the family atmosphere there should be in a junior or infant school. I don't think it's really necessary.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. I don't have a formal written report with so many in the year and

position, because in a junior school, with the kind of teaching you have now, I think it's soul destroying for a child who has worked well and made progress to be told she's still a certain position in that year group. I don't think the junior school is the place for that.

Directly a teacher or anyone notices a child's work is getting poorer I ask the parent to come and see me. We have all the books in and I say now look, that's the kind of work your daughter could be doing if she was doing justice to herself. I don't tell them whose book it is.

By the end of the third year they are streamed and they have the Eleven Plus, so have a bit of movement.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Oh yes, but I don't have the kind of open days where you have displays of beautiful work - saying my child's done this - not that I think a child shouldn't be praised. It's more instead of a written report so that parents can talk to the teacher. We have had four or five by the summer term by the time everyone's had one. We find fathers now are much more interested than they used to be. I think the best time is during the day, I know some people work it so that they have it during the day. Some nights are bingo nights aren't they? I have had in the past children saying my mother couldn't come she's gone to the bingo. I have them during the day although I have waited until half past five, quarter to six until a parent has come. We do this and they appreciate this.

At the end of the half of the open term, that's the summer term, I always have a meeting for the first year parents. The first couple of weeks they're a bit dazed you know. The child takes a letter home. There are various things need going over in the first year. We have it about half past three to four o'clock, that half hour at the end of the day is quite long enough you know it takes quite a lot out of the teachers.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. I always tell parents that they can come and see me anytime, I don't have an appointment system. Quite a lot of them do come up and know this. I say give me until after half past nine in the morning and try not to come on Friday afternoon.

Sometimes the parents ring me up, or the child brings a note, but more often than not the parent comes up themselves. Our school is such that the parents often see the teacher before they see me - I never mind that. The only thing I insist of my teachers is that they tell me that the parent has been. I don't want to be landed with a situation to arise and I know nothing about it. I always tell them if you're in trouble let me know before you're up to your armpits.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I don't think parents want to do this - I don't think the children want this. There's problems with staff of course. Going through my staff I know the extroverts who couldn't care less who watches them and the ones who even when I'm in are feeling come in, what do you want, I want to get back to this. Let's face it, when you

observe it's not a natural situation - I don't care who's come in to see a teacher teaching they never see a natural situation - the relationship between a child and a teacher when there's no other adult there.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I think that is where the welfare services should be used. If the parents never come to the school I wouldn't visit the home unless I knew there was a real difficulty where they couldn't come to school. I don't think I would like the teachers doing this either unless you had an extra specially trained member of staff doing this.

Now a member of staff will often call if there is a serious illness but that's not the same. I think if a parent is not interested and won't come to the school no matter what happens and a teacher notices a child is not being properly cared for I think it's a case for the welfare service. They're most helpful. I just have to get on the 'phone. We had a case sorted out very quickly last week. I'm sure most schools don't use them nearly enough. I don't think the parents like the idea of him coming to see them.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Well now, I've said it already, I don't believe in parents coming to help with reading, now what special skills? I think if they're a good pianist they should be paid the rate for a job and be a peripetetic pianist. It shouldn't be a parent coming in. Mind you I have had parents come in to talk about their job for instance. Very often the fathers will make all sorts of things for the girls to bring in and show the class teacher and the mothers too make things without coming to school to talk about their job.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. Well I don't have a system for the parents - I don't meet the parents before the children start but the children coming in, yes. I visit the infant schools myself.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Well this is a very tricky one - how do you get the information? Well I make great use of the school nurse, she has good contacts with the health visitor. This is an example of using the welfare service isn't it? The doctor of course has documents I'm not allowed to see. The medical card has the father's occupation on - I'm not allowed to see this, I don't know why. The school medical card has nothing on but the dates of the medicals. Well we find this out from the children. You have to be careful about information from children though, you can get a distorted picture of the home.

When a teacher takes a child home if she's sick or my school clerk has to, well you get the picture then, they'll say what a lovely home or I hated to leave her there.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Well last year I think there were about two parents in the school who didn't come, about ninety-nine percent I think. In the case of the fourth year medical where the mother came with the child - in the last few years every parent had made an effort and has come with their daughter. Or, if a mother couldn't come to something she made arrangements with an aunt or her mother, or in some cases the father, or made some arrangements with a neighbour. And in the majority of cases if the mother couldn't come she took advantage of some other occasion to come and see me.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Well yes. I have my own filing system and none would understand it but me and I list it. The teachers know which parents are not coming - the children hate it - they say 'She's coming, she's coming'. One particular mother, she's had three daughters at the school, she never came.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Probably the open days. They're very successful in terms of numbers although I feel that in an all girls school the relations with the parents are probably easier.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. I cannot really think of anything.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER EIGHT

Headteacher 8      Transcript      Tape recorded 39 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      I certainly think you've got to involve parents to a certain extent. I agree with that, but myself I don't agree with Parent-Teacher Associations. Parents have got to be involved, the only trouble is more often than not, you don't get the parents you would want to see. You get the parents of children where there's nothing much to discuss - they're getting on quite well.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      That's very hard to say - some are certainly. At a church meeting some parents did indicate that they would like to see more of what was going on in the school. Really you could say it was a small proportion who put this forward.

I don't think there is a great demand for more involvement. The only thing you can go on is when we had our first open day - this year we had about a hundred.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      Myself I wouldn't like parents coming into the school and helping out in the classroom. I just can't see I could see them helping with reading - I wouldn't like this myself.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I'm not keen on Parent-Teacher Associations as such. I'm just going on what I've heard from schools that had Parent-Teacher Associations - teachers who have been involved.

Mind it's only in that form. I believe in parents being involved - they should take an interest. I think parents know pretty well they can come in and talk to me if they want to.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      That's rather difficult. I suppose in one way if they aren't a lot of complaints. You see a lot of parents in the infants. I suppose if as a child goes through the school and there are no complaints - I suppose you can say things are going pretty well.

Q.6.    What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A.      My experience was when I was first appointed there were quite a few parents coming up ready to do battle. I think with a new head they try him out - certain ones. This was rather strange, I think I had more coming up like this at first than I've ever had since. I think some of them try to see how far they can go and what they're like - that's the impression I got - I may be wrong.

Of course all parents are different - there's no general rule. I think you've got to feel your way.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, I think so - particularly if you have some indication that they're not happy about something that's going on - or some method - maybe they've got hold of the wrong idea.

I think it's particularly important with a new type of school - like an open plan one where newspapers have given the wrong impression.

Normally I'm not against it - if a parent asks I'll explain. That was really one of the ideas for the open day so they could see what was going on - and how it was done. I should think booklets would come into more when a new school is opening or when a child is moving to a secondary school. Mind every term at the end I send out a newsletter telling parents what's happened and what's going to happen, from time to time there are letters go out about other things.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Up to this year we've done it by reports - normally twice a year half term and then in July. Reports can become very stilted - excellent - could try harder - this doesn't tell the real picture you know.

If you can talk to a parent and say 'He's not really very good at his school work but he's really making an effort this year' - you can't write all this down properly.

I've come to the conclusion that written reports are a bit of a waste of time - you can discuss points with a parent much easier and they can question you about what you say.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. We now have one open day where the parents can come along and see the school in action. I told the parents it wasn't a time to actually discuss the children with the teachers but actually see the work going on.

This term we're going to have a period in the evening when the parents can come along and discuss the children with the teachers. There will be no children there. It will be after they've had their tests - this will be instead of reports & written reports. We're trying this for the first time.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. If a parent wants to see me, they can come in and see me. Parents do this occasionally - they don't need an appointment. If it's something they want to discuss with the class teacher I say - have a word. It doesn't happen very often but it does happen sometimes.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I wouldn't have any objection to this. I've never been asked. It might interfere if a whole crowd came along at once. But if a parent said they would like to see their child at work well why not?

I think most teachers wouldn't object - some teachers might feel awkward - I suppose we all would to some extent. But if it was happening regularly I think they'd get quite used to it.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I think you'd have very great difficulty finding teachers who would do this - it would have to be a teacher who was really dedicated.

Myself, I feel it would have to be something really special. I'm really not in favour of this business of going around visiting homes rather like priests going around - you don't know what sort of welcome you'd get. If you went to see these parents who are not interested enough to come along to school - I wonder even if you went along to them would it make any difference.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Well, I've never had this offered to me as a matter of fact. I think you'd really have to judge each case on its own merits - it could be very acceptable at times I daresay.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. This does happen in our school. Very often a parent will bring a little boy or girl who is to start school months beforehand. I say come along to the class and meet the teacher and the other children quite a few of them do this. This is quite common at our school.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so, how should it be obtained?

A. Well, it's very useful to know a child's home background but very often you just can't get it. You can't just go about asking questions - you just can't ask a parent outright! Sometimes you just don't know the background at all and I can't really see how you're going to find out. For example if there's a broken home you just find out by accident. You do get to know quite a lot one way or the other either someone happens to know the family. Second and third ways otherwise I don't know how you get to know without asking embarrassing questions - they might be offended - it's difficult.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. There were about a hundred for the open day, it's hard to say what percentage - there would definitely be children who had none there. I should think most though.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, I haven't got any record, no.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I would say the open day up to now. I should say it's successful because it's an opportunity for them to see what's actually going on in the school. When they can just walk from classroom to classroom and just see what they want to see.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No - there haven't been all that many school/home activities but there's nothing I can think of offhand that has had to be changed.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER NINE

Headteacher Nine      Transcript      Tape recorded 36 minutes

A.      Motivation      (Why)

Q.1.      Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Yes. I think the involvement of parents is an essential to the good running of a school in a community. How can you really know the children and their potential and their weaknesses unless the parents are involved?

Q.2.      Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.      I think a lot of parents are anxious for more involvement in the school. I think a lot of them have misguided ideas about what involvement in the school should be. I think a lot of them feel an enmity to the school and want to break into the school routine in an aggressive way - instead of a constructive way. When I'm talking about parental involvement, I'm thinking in terms of them doing something for the child. I think if you weed out those parents who have this feeling of not belonging to or being concerned with the school in a friendly way whose involvement would not really be in the interests of the child because they have some misguided ideas about it. I'm not at all sure it would be the majority, but I'm sure that parental involvement can be useful if the majority did want to constructively.

Q.3.      What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      That's a very bald question! I think that involvement in the work done in the school like reading could be a useful exercise. So that the parents would get to understand how the youngsters were doing - from this point of view. And to provide some good foundation for the parents to assess the child's potential and compare the child with others, that sort of thing.

But it opens a door that leads to very dangerous areas that I would have to give a lot of thought to how far it should go, but it's quite obvious that we're not approaching that door yet - we're a long way from it. I think that parents sitting with their child while lessons are going on and watching them perform and as a result of questioning or even following instructions by the teacher would be a very useful thing, but the actual involvement of the parents in teaching is a question that should be looked at much more carefully.

Q.4.      If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      Well, it wouldn't be very favourable to start with. I would question them very closely as to their motives and as to their ideas about what a Parent-Teacher Association should do - what should be its function? But in general terms and my experience is pretty wide now, I haven't come across a Parent-Teacher Association that did much for children academically.

It does a lot of good in money raising and that helps academically indirectly, but directly, I haven't seen any useful constructive Parent-Teacher Associations - in terms of the academic thing. But I would say it can do some good among some parents in

terms of their relationship with the school generally, but it isn't going to do much good with the parents who are not involved.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well, we have a distinct advantage in that we are a church school and consequently I have contacts and an association with parents we wouldn't have otherwise.

We have a first class counsellor for the school in the school in the priest who if I have a problem with a child here - he will know the background of the parents far better than a teacher-counsellor would because he is involved with them socially, religiously.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. It requires the exercise of infinite patience. Be as pleasant as you can - when you're feeling grim, you've got to make them feel that you're delighted to see them - all this sort of thing.

Always have an emergency exit handy so that an aggressive parent cannot catch you!

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh yes. I think every opportunity should be taken to explain to them what the purposes are of any kind of activity - as far as you can get them to be interested.

I think personal interview is the best way of informing them. I think individual parents coming up to see you serves a very useful purpose but I think group interviews serve a better purpose because parents are less inclined to talk to you as an individual as they are in a group. One asks a question and that gives the others confidence to ask questions and these tend to be much more pertinent when they are in a group of two or four or five.

On the other hand they are prepared to talk to you about matters which are much more pertinent when you see them individually. But I think the best method for disseminating knowledge about, say the school curriculum, is a small group.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Well first of all we have the old idea of the written report. I've just signed a couple of hundred. They're really not very informative. The reports themselves are really a sop to satisfy a demand from people who are not really interested. There's the classic example of the report with the comment on 'carelessness has improved.'

I'd far sooner the parent came up talked to you, or if necessary sat with that child in class - this is the best assessment the parent could have if that child's ability at that time. They're comparing their own child with others - this is far better.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Not at all - if open day means any parent can come in on that day

It's chaos - just leads to complete disorder.

- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. They can come and see me at any time and they are always welcome. With teachers well you might have a young girl just out of college facing an irate parent and she is not likely to be equipped to handle an angry parent. It would be far better if the angry parent came to me first then I could placate them on the other hand I would like to see parents talking to teachers - they do. I have feelings of disquiet about this but I don't know what can be done about it.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Yes.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Yes. I would think where the need arises but I find I'm in association with almost every parent in the school anyway - through the church if not through the school itself. I think it could do some good but I'm doubtful if a teacher should interfere in the social, financial or domestic problems in a home. They might be taking on responsibilities they are not equipped for - in fact very likely they wouldn't be equipped for - especially young teachers. It's a question of who the teachers and headteachers are and what their purposes are in visiting the home. I can't see it would do any harm-it could give the head or class teacher some idea of what the background is.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. The more the merrier.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school? Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. I've been inviting the parents of the new starters along this term because children in coming to school without being informed beforehand, can be terrified of things like just where the toilet is - it's a matter of tremendous importance to them - it can sap all their confidence. I would think it would be less important in a junior school but I can't see why not.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. As much as possible. Well again I have access to a first class counsellor, the priest, and there are organisations where if there are problem families information can be obtained - the welfare officer, etc.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Well on the one open day we had about 400%!!!

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Talking to small groups of parents.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. One and one only open day where I was inundated by parents from all over. I've nothing against them but they just took the school apart. They went round the classes collecting their child and their children's friend and marshalled them around with them until there were no children in the classrooms but bodies of parents and children moving around all over the place and no amount of requesting, demanding, begging or pleading would restore order. There was not enough time for parents to talk to teachers nor were the circumstances good - no, no more.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TEN

Headteacher Ten Transcript Tape recorded 32 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. No, parents are interested in the part of school their children are in. When they're infants they're interested in the infants. When they're juniors, in the juniors and so on. Their interest disappears as soon as their child leaves that part.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. Yes, because they feel they should be able to air their views more about the school, the curriculum, what's being done and in general complain about the teacher's moods.

Q.3. What kinds of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. If the parent was very interested and the class teacher liked it, I would have no objections at all. My objection would be if they became involved in appointments as a manager or things like that.  
If the parent is an expert in something and discusses the subject in an interesting way and can keep the children interested, alright! Or if the parent can get involved with the child's homework.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. In general it would be no, because of the Parent Teacher Associations I have known start with a flourish but after an initial spasm they don't keep it up. I don't think you'll find two in the town. I've no experience of one myself. These are just ones I've heard about from colleagues.

Q.5. How can you be sure there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well you've got an informal organisation, even if you haven't got a formal one like a Parent Teacher Association. That is, you're always available for the parents to see and they can put their views informally which they often do and some of them talk better informally like this than when you're part of a crowd. I think it's better informally. You hear more and they put their views far more happily and contentedly than they would in front of a crowd.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I don't think you can make a general rule. Each person is a completely different individual, different children, different affection for their children, different views to which they're entitled. The only general thing would be always listen. They need not necessarily get any change out of you. You can talk yourself into trouble very easily, so listen.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes. I think in general most parents know the aims of the school are concerned with the well being of the child, and that things in school have changed since they were a child even though they can scarcely understand some of the methods used now. If a child is happy and content the parents usually are too.

Yes, they should know about the organisation of the school.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Well, we have written reports and we talk to them about the children when they come up and say Mary's doing alright. We don't use the standard ones. We give an individual report on each child, not class position or anything like that. I believe giving an individual letter for each child which just deals with that child.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. I am yes. I think they should be held at least twice a year. Perhaps one at Christmas and one in the summer. We have displays and recorder groups, things like that. I think the child should take the parent round the school, see their sister and show them their classroom. They should go round the classes and see the work. That's the whole idea of it.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Well if they ask to see me they can at any time and they can see the class teacher if they want to. They're allowed to come in at any time for this. I like them to give me some notice. Though if they want to see the class teacher, I'd take the class.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Quite impossible, because if you have the children and their parents together in the classroom the children can't behave normally.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. No, I don't think so, unless you receive a specific invitation. If they don't come to see the school you can't very well force yourself upon them. I would write a letter to them, I think, and invite them in for a chat. Of course being a church school you meet most parents on religious occasions and at get togethers at various times.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. I think it would depend on the parent. I would be inclined to try them out. They might be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. It

would depend on the individual wouldn't it? I think you would have to try them out for one day or so.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in primary schools?

A. Well here we let them go and meet the teacher and see the classroom when they register the child and if the child is still nervous and timid we let them come back a couple of times before they start school.

I would think there's some value in a situation like this, depending on the size of the school.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Oh yes, but you must remember it's highly confidential of course. Sometimes the parents tell you, sometimes the kiddie.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. About forty-five to fifty-five percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, but I think the teachers would know which ones came and which didn't.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Just talking to the parents. Simply talking and listening to parents. Open days are alright but I don't think they're the sort of place where you get much chance to really talk to parents. We only have open days twice a year - where some parents are coming up to see you right through the school year and they can generally tell you something about the child that's useful.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Oh no. Only the open day I think was too long, very wearing for the staff, we'll probably make the time shorter next time.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER ELEVEN

Headteacher Eleven      Transcript      Tape recorded 53 minutes

A.    Motivation      (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school as recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I don't think as a Parent Teacher Association it's worthwhile - Parents coming into the school, yes, but I would prefer parents coming into the school individually. I'm not in favour of 'parents days' because I think you get teachers sitting with perhaps thirty parents waiting in a queue. That way the teacher feels upset. But in general I like to see parents come into school to discuss anything that's happened, or to discuss their child's work, or tell you various things about health or behaviour.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. I'd say the majority are not - A few are but the majority definitely not. I don't think they want more involvement. I think they're quite interested in what the child's doing but I don't think they want to be involved.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. No, I don't want them in the classroom. I would draw the line at them coming in for anything involving the child's work. I don't mind them coming in for example to help with a jumble sale, fair enough, but on the actual educational side, out! For one thing they don't know enough about modern day methods. I think they're just working in the dark as far as what we're doing is concerned.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. My immediate reaction would be no, but I'd put a proviso on that. What do they mean by a Parent Teacher Association? If it is a social club my answer is no, I'm not interested. You see I only have the experience as a teacher in my first school where when I went there was quite a flourishing one going. Once a month they had a whist drive and dance to which I never went. It's rather awkward when you're not married, you're just high and dry. It was very well attended.

Also they had a week-night meeting where they had a speaker like the Medical Officer of Health, the school librarian, the Chairman of the Education Committee. My experience was that these were very poorly attended. There was only a handful of parents came to these. I felt anything that was social - we used to have a visit to the panto, you could get two or three busloads for this. I'm firmly of the opinion that they wanted to go to the pantomime but they're just too darned lazy to organise their own family to go - this is great you see, you've just got to produce your money and the head does all the booking, etc. - It's an easy way out.

They always had a Christmas social. I went to that, excellently attended a sit down supper but to me this is not a Parent Teacher Association. If a group of parents approached me and wanted this

type of Parent Teacher Association I just wouldn't be interested.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. I don't think you've got many ways of knowing. To be honest you've just got to encourage the parents as much as you can. We still have, I don't know I'm going to do it this year, a meeting in September after two weeks in school, of the parents of the first year children and the teachers who take those two classes, the deputy and the head.

I give a talk on the aims of the school. We had a cup of tea and an informal talk. It's getting progressively smaller attendance. We stressed to them we would see them at anytime except Monday morning or Friday afternoon.

If a parent comes in you can say thank you for being interested but really this sort of thing is the only way you have of knowing.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I would first of all say, if it was an angry parent let the parent have its say - When you know they're really coming in to do battle let them talk.

While they're talking you get all your points marshalled together and when they've exhausted what they've got to say then you start and be very firm. I think the firmer you are with them the more definite (if they're coming to do battle) the better.

If they're not coming to do battle well just listen to them and talk to them the way you would with any other adult. If they come up with what you know is a very definite complaint and justified complaint I would be very careful what I said - Listen carefully and do your utmost to prevent it going any further. I would go round and round and round to try and calm the parent down.

C. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, this is what we did at the first year meeting. Because the numbers are getting smaller, I'm toying with the idea of not a booklet I assure you, but a list of the rules and the things we are trying to do. I can't make my mind up what to do in September whether to have a meeting, I've always found mind I think at the meetings, that it's been well worth it - The personal thing is better I think.

I always try and explain things like streaming too.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We use the written one, the standard authority one - I make no bones about it it's a shosker - should be revised. We've been thinking of having a duplicated one of our own - things like mental and mechanical arithmetic is out of the Ark, you cannot do it.

We used to do it at Christmas and Summer but we don't have them at Christmas.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. I'm not in favour of open days, no - The teacher with thirty parents can't give them more than a couple of minutes each. The teacher can't do justice and the parent can't feel that they're getting a fair crack of the whip. That's one reason. Secondly, I think you tend to put up the work of your best children - often touched up by the teacher - dare I say. I don't think it's a fair representation of the work done during the year and it's an awful lot of work for your staff and really it's not very necessary. I would rather the parents came in individually and saw the work and really discuss it.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes, if they want to come up they can, I keep stressing this. They're welcome at anytime. If they want to see the class teacher they can see them in my room, I wouldn't have a parent talking to a class teacher with a class sitting there and without seeing me first.

I find parents coming up and if they're angry and determined to see the class teacher I say, 'just sit down, Miss... will be here in a moment'.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Not particularly, if you're going to have every parent of every child in the class there. I think it would depend on the parent. I can think of some parents of children in my school who I wouldn't mind coming in and seeing the child work. Others I can think of would come in and be useless.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Well, personally I wouldn't want to do it. I know it's a new idea but I personally would never want to go. The only time I would go to a child's home would be if I were taking the child home if they had an accident at school.

Occasionally there would be value in this but as for spending an evening going around visiting those ones who won't come I would not. I would advise a teacher against it, I think, although I wouldn't take a dogmatic view. I would advise them to think very carefully. I think you could get into some very nasty situation, very nasty. I'm thinking of my own parents of this type.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. I think it would depend on the particular parent and the particular talent. As I've already said if it was a talent for organising - helping with jumble sales, yes, but I don't really want parents involved in anything to do with the actual learning situation in the classroom. That requires a trained professional.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and the class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. We do it when they have been in school a week. You don't know much about the child's ability but at least when a parent is talking about Julia you have a vague idea who Julia is.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. I think it can be very enlightening. You have to be very careful of course. You can let yourself in for a great deal of trouble. I think on this you've just got to pick up the snippets when you can and how you can.

The needlework lesson is a very good lesson for this. It's a lesson where you can't go around the class. I can guarantee before I start I'll get all the history of a family, the babies that have arrived, the whole story. They seem to talk about things like this.

And from their writing you pick up an awful lot here if they are writing about home.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Well I've never organised an open day but the first year parents fourteen out of fifty-four attended. The year before twenty-four out of fifty-odd.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, not really.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. The sports day. We sent a proper duplicated invitation. We had a considerable number more than one hundred and eighty children. Every child put a chair out, two hundred children and they were nearly all filled.

I think they can bring the little ones and we had some there who wouldn't come to any other kind of meeting of any description.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. The Parent Teacher Association fell through because of that - Well it fell through when I became head. It was getting poor - even the social functions were becoming poorly attended and then I was on the committee. I became head and I didn't approach them, partly because I didn't want to become involved in a social evening sort of thing and for domestic reasons I couldn't give much time. They didn't approach me for almost three years. Then the treasurer passed on to me the little bit of money left in the funds. His child had left the school and that was it. It just died a natural death. If they had been willing to approach me I would have been prepared to discuss it - but they didn't even approach me. It wasn't as though they didn't know.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWELVE

Headteacher Twelve      Transcript      Tape recorded 49 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes. I feel that particularly in a school like ours parent involvement is particularly necessary. If we don't know the child's background we can't give the child the help that so often needs.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. It's a difficult one. Certainly in the case of the children in this school the parents are interested. At least a good ninety-five percent of them are, but they are quite prepared to leave the child's education to us. They're interested in the right way. If we ask for help we get it, and I do really mean that. We do get co-operation from the parents.

We do of course get a small percentage of parents who we never see and we would like to see. They are the children who are in need of care and don't get it at home. We can only help to a certain degree if we know the circumstances.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. We would allow parents in the classrooms I think if we had facilities for it but our classrooms are very small. We're terribly over crowded.

Parents come and say I know my child's work is not up to scratch can I help with the reading? I say yes but really only to a limited degree unless you know what you're doing. If we feel a parent can assimilate what we tell them and is able to help we would let them. We ask them to help by taking a book home.

Parents in the classroom though would raise problems. Would the teacher be willing to have them? Let's face it, all teachers wouldn't. I don't think I would have any objections, provided the parent concerned was qualified to do this. I mean capable of doing it - not a paper qualification.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I have mixed feeling on this. Most Parent Teacher Associations seem to degenerate into fund raising efforts. Now our parents are very good in this respect. Our school fund is in a very healthy state because the parents have helped. I put it to them that the Authority can't give much help with educational outings and I feel that our children need to go out as much as possible - and they've been very generous in supporting efforts that we've had - plays, jumble sales. This sort of thing.

They've responded well without a Parent Teacher Association. I don't want parents running my school. I feel they aren't qualified to do so and I'm just afraid that if you have a Parent Teacher Association you might get one or two strong willed verbose people who would try to run the whole thing and try to run the school.

I'd rather not have a Parent Teacher Association than have to squash people like this. No. I've had no experience as a

teacher of one. I think all heads are in the same boat. We're frightened to start one because we know that the others we heard about were not a success.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well, we do invite parents to come in at any time when they have any problems. We have two open days every year. One for the lower school and one for the upper. Apart from parents going into classrooms consulting with the teachers about the work we put on a concert and I have a talk to them and with them to tell them what has happened during the year what I hope to get in the future. I ask them to co-operate about putting labels in coats and if they have any problems which they want to discuss with me or the teacher to feel free to come up. A lot of parents do this because this is very much a neighbourhood school. You can be sure if anything happens to a child here the whole school knows about it in a very short time. This is a good thing. We have many ways of gauging parents' opinion.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. It often happens that a parent or parents come here in a belligerent mood because something has happened to their child and the first thing I do is say 'look try to calm down and let's discuss'. Because there are always two sides to everything. I've never failed yet to get on good terms with parents and many of them come in a fighting mood at times, but all go away satisfied that we haven't been brutes to their children. They've heard the wrong facts.

My advice would be never deliberately antagonise a parent. No matter how rude they are or how much they are opposed to the school. It's in our interests and the child's interest that we should get on good terms with the parents

#### B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes I do. Again whenever I have the parents up I talk to them about this. Last year I told them that our teaching methods were very different to what they themselves experienced in school - That there are not many class lessons. The children work in groups. That they discover for themselves. Parents find this hard to take in at first but they've been invited to come up and see the children working.

On numerous occasions I've taken parents into class and said 'look they're all moving around there's talk but the children are working'. The parents regard this as quite a revelation. I tell them that this is to enable the children to work at their own speed and their own level. This was necessary because we had gone non-streamed in the first and second year and some of them were worried about this - My child is bright, will she learn alongside the children who are not so bright? I've shown them the work cards they do and they're all very happy about it. The parents of the poorer children I think appreciate this more - That they're working with the brighter children. The parents are very much happier with the set up now.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. No, we have used written reports in the past but not now. We didn't feel happy about this. We felt that sometimes it was unkind to really put down in writing what you really felt about a child.

This year we're having an open evening where the parents can discuss the child with the teacher. The teacher will have the child's marks and assessment and there will be conversation between the two - There will be no written report at all.

I've already had confirmation that the parents like this because we've had two or three parents already who, when they heard about the open evening, said 'that's grand my husband will be able to come'. This is a matter of involving the whole family, not just the mother.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Very much in favour of them. We are having an afternoon concert for the parents where they will not be able to go in the classrooms but will be able to see work. They will then have this evening meeting with the teacher. The child will not be there, so the teacher can talk freely.

We have it for first and second years and third and fourth years separately because we feel that we can't get all the parents in the hall. I think you should have them more often than we do, but life here is hectic because of the physical conditions.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. I tell them if they have a particular problem and they want to come up and see me and they want to involve the teacher then my school clerk looks after them while the teacher comes up here.

I don't like parents going straight to the classroom and talking to the teacher either inside or outside. I prefer to get away from the classroom atmosphere, I think the teacher relaxes more and so does the parent. Then we have the open evening as well of course.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I would love them to be able to do this. We have nothing to hide here - We've tried to create a happy working atmosphere. We would be delighted if one or two parents came for this but it's a question of numbers, physical conditions and some teachers remember don't feel relaxed enough or competent enough when someone else is there - Most of my staff I think would carry this off well but not all, it's a question of personality.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Yes, I've done this on several occasions. I found that I was made welcome after an initial coldness. I was allowed in rather reluctantly in most cases but once we talked, this was between five and six o'clock and I made a point of waiting till then so the father could be in. We cleared up misunderstandings and I've had much better co-operation from them when I've done this.

They say it's difficult for them because they've got babies etc., and some of them were reluctant to come because they felt inferior. I went to great pains to tell them that we're very happy to see them and talk to them.

I had a father here to tell me that he has to go to court and he wanted his son to be off. He said I like to come here to talk to you it gives me confidence.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes if they offer them and we feel that he or she is the right person. We run a table tennis club. One parent asked if he could come up and help and I said I would be delighted because I know he's the right kind of chap. I have to be very sure that I'm making the right choice of course.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I don't think it matters so much here because most of the children know me before they come here. I'm often in the infants' school. Most of the parents have fairly large families. It is a family school. They tend to have brothers or sisters here anyway.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. I think it's very important if we are to do our best for the child. This is a very tight community and it's surprising how much I get to know without asking, from the children themselves and other people. The information comes without probing. Children talk freely. They talk to me in the playground for example which is very helpful.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. A good ninety percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Rather interesting that you should ask this. We haven't in the past but this time we are. This time parents are going to have a special appointment and we're going to ask parents when they come if they think this is better than the old system. At the same time we will know which parents haven't been.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think without doubt the open day. Although it's difficult to assess this because a great deal of my time is taken up interviewing parents. Being a community school the parents do live on the doorstep and they pop in if they have any problem at all. I see many more parents I'm sure because of this. This is where a lot of information comes from and helps to build up a good relationship.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, we've had no real problems here.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTEEN

Headteacher Thirteen      Transcript      Tape recorded 48 minutes

A.    Motivation    (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.    It can be worthwhile I think. It all depends on the district you're in. The particular area in which you happen to have your school built. Some parents - you can make every effort in the world to involve them and they just refuse to be involved. In fact you can spend your time chasing the parents of delinquent children and they just won't come.

          In a good district you can get much more co-operation with much less effort.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.    By and large I would say yes. The time has passed when school was centre and home was another centre and there was no overlap. I don't honestly think even here the majority are interested. We have visits here instead of a formal open day and I get eighty percent. Children have parents coming to visit them and enquiring about their work.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.    I wouldn't have any limits I think on these 'calling in days' I call them. We have them in for an ordinary assembly to get them involved. They then follow that class through all the lessons that class normally takes. They sit with the children, inspect the desks. If the class is doing P.E. they walk into the hall and see what type of P.E. they're doing. They involve themselves in the written work. They sit next to the child and listen to the teacher. I don't think there's any limit I would place. I don't think it's advisable. If they're interested they want the whole broad picture.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.    Negative. I think that though this is lorded to the skies in theory very often it attracts the wrong kind of parent. First of all it attracts the parent who is interested and who you would meet in any case. It doesn't attract the people you would really like to get after. There is no way really of doing this. Secondly I've experienced in schools, as a teacher, where we've had Parent Teacher Associations and we found it was the vociferous ones and the ones who like to compensate for something lacking in their own working lives who want to become committee members. A lot to say and grasp a little power.

          The two I was involved with didn't degenerate into social events or money raising events but I did find there were one or two very talkative parents I wished hadn't joined and one or two whom I didn't see who I would have preferred to be members. Therefore I'm not in favour of a formal association. My argument is, as a head, I think I have enough people over ~~me~~ as it is.

There's the director and all the ancillary staff - interested members of the Education Committee who are managers and I've got the inspectorate. I don't go out and tell my doctor how to practice medicine, or my builder how to lay bricks and I see no reason why parents should come in and tell me how to run my school. Parent Teacher Associations tend to get to the point where it's their children and they know better than you.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well you can never be certain. One human being can never be certain that their relationship with another is successful. There are marriages where each partner thinks the other half is doing well and the other half is fed up to the teeth.

The way I encourage it is that whenever parents come up to see me I try to be available. I try not to keep them waiting. This is easier in a small school. They drop in without an appointment about anything at all. We get about eighty percent at open days. There are sports days where we often have more parents there than children. We bring parents into the school about camp. We see them of course when they come into school to see the nurse or doctor and frequently they have a chat to me about something else.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I don't think you can lay down a rule or generalize. Quite frankly I used to think that if ever I was promoted head the one thing that terrified me or shall I say caused me a continual worry was how I was going to deal with parents. I didn't really look forward to this aspect of the work and yet it's just developed naturally. I find they come in to see me about a variety of things. You've got to feel your way because you see a parent walking in and you don't know whether they're going to play the band about some teacher - it might be an enquiry it might even be a little bit of praise - occasionally. You just get to handle them as you find them and play it by ear and minute by minute. If you can see them as they come when they come listen to them. I've found in this school the majority of parents are receptive and co-operative really. You get to try not to be the old schoolmaster of 1890 or take a stiff attitude.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Well there again I think this on a council estate would be a bit off. They would think I was talking down to them - using big words like that. It might be alright at middle class schools. If they asked me why we did certain things I would be prepared to tell them.

When I get a casual admit not a big batch I give them a rough outline of the organisation of the school - why we do stream some classes and not stream others. I don't think I would go into the principles of education with every parent who came in, any more than a doctor would go into why he was prescribing a certain drug to cure your headache.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We use written reports twice a year - the standard ones. I use them in two different ways. We only have one annual examination June or July. We send out a report that shows marks gained in every branch of a subject like English, Reading, etc. and the position that child gained in the class by gaining that amount of marks.

We also comment on their attitude to work and anything else we think is necessary. We encourage them to have study at home if we think this is necessary. I myself read all the teachers reports and add my own comments where necessary.

Mid year we send one out although we haven't had an examination. It's a kind of interim report to give parents an idea of what is going on with their child in that particular class. This is consolidated at the end of the year by the examination report.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. In principle yes, I tried to involve the parents and we had a craft exhibition and we had handwork, needlework, art in the hall. Then I started a little talk which I found the parents were not very interested in. My talk used to be at the start and frequently it was interrupted by latecomers. I tried it in the middle but they would rather look than listen.

I extended this to work of all kinds. We had bits of choir and displays and I found it was all like a big three ringed circus. So I thought why not let these parents see a school doing as near normal work and lessons as possible. This is what happens now.

On the last report I submitted to my managers I mentioned all the extraneous things we have at school and I said I wonder what kind of results we would get from a time and motion study to find out how much time was left to do the ordinary classroom teaching. If you had one a term the parents wouldn't arrive. I think that's too many. I have a feeling that if I had one half yearly I wouldn't get the eighty percent attendance.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. If they request to see the class teacher I just bring the class teacher in here. We've done this dozens of times. The class teacher is heavily involved during open day. If there's an enquiry about behaviour or attitudes to work or they are complaining or puzzled I frequently say the class teacher knows the position better than me and ask them to come in here.

I don't support the idea of parents coming in to the school unknown to me and going straight to the teacher. This can lead to some of the more obstreperous parents involving the teacher in a very unfortunate situation. Frequently if I sense they want to see the teacher and it's something petty, like dinner money, I show them where the teacher is out in the corridor. If it's something important I have the teacher in here. Mind I never leave the teacher in here alone. We have a three-way conversation.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Not really. I think providing the parents have access on open days, and ours isn't a formal type of one anyway. There has to be a limit to the number of visitors. The school time is interrupted enough already for all sorts of different things.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I have on one or two odd occasions visited parents in their homes, on the occasion of serious sickness or injury. Never on educational grounds. This may not suit the theorists but I think they're embarrassed than anything else if you see them in their homes.

I think the liaison should be in the school. If it's about matters scholastic it should be in the school.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes, but at the same time as a professional I don't want to see the place cluttered up with a lot of unqualified 'do gooders'.

I would say no with the three R's, I would say keep them out of that. They could be involved with craft or music, by jove we need someone for that but not in the basics. You would find yourself in deep water there.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. Yes it's worthwhile but we do it the other way in. We send the first year teachers to the infant school. I haven't addressed the parents of the intake before.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. In some cases it's almost necessary. This is one of the cribs I have about our present system. That we're not supposed to enquire about the father's occupation and yet if any child is unfortunate to be involved with the police we are the first person they write to. It can crop up in conversation with the parents but I don't quiz the children.

Primary children like to talk and in the needlework lesson the atmosphere is conducive to an exchange of confidences I suppose.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Eighty-five percent usually. Four out of five which is quite an achievement when you think of all the working mothers there are now. I see the parents of first year boys Tuesday morning, first year girls Tuesday afternoon and so we work through the week. We would be flooded out otherwise it would be too difficult to control. The following year I alternate them.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No I don't. The teachers would know but we don't write up dossiers on them. I could ask any teacher - have you seen the

parents and they could say Oh yes, or Oh no, we never see them.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Well the open door policy just encourages the people who find it necessary to come here. It makes it easier for them but it certainly doesn't bring everyone in because about seventy-five percent of the parents never think it is necessary to come of their own volition to see me. Their child is working along normally, getting satisfactory reports and being fairly happy here. They just let it alone.

I would say the calling in days were most successful because after all we do get four out of every five.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No none at all. Sometimes there's been a fair amount of inconvenience on say sports day because of the vast amount of parents who have come but I wouldn't dream of cancelling anything because of this - but in general they're fairly co-operative.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FOURTEEN

Headteacher Fourteen      Transcript      Tape recorded 38 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes in general but I don't agree with the Parent-Teacher Associations. I think they encourage the type of parent who wants to start taking the school over. Our parents aren't well enough up on education to be involved. Anyway, I think it very much depends on the kind of area the school's in.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A. No I think the majority are not. Some of them are barely interested in their own children, never mind what they're doing at school.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I would encourage them to come up if they had a problem but not doing anything in the classroom. That's the teachers business. The classroom door is my limit when it comes to getting involved.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I would want to know why they wanted one and what they thought it is for. No I'm against them. They are simply social clubs. I've no experience of one as a teacher but I think it depends on the area. I could see some value in some areas, but not here.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. You can't really. You can just tell by the parents who do come up and talking to them when they come to parents evenings - things like that.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. To remember that a headteacher is a trained qualified professional and not to let them walk all over you. If a parent is prepared to talk reasonably, well and good, but if they are abusive I would say get out and come back when you're prepared to talk sensibly. If they won't go I pick up the telephone and say I will inform the police and have them removed. You're entitled to the same respect as a doctor or anyone else. They wouldn't tolerate it. I don't see why headteachers should.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes I think they should know what the aims of the school are. I try to explain them to them when they come up. We're thinking of issuing a booklet on the lines of the Diocesan one.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens' progress in your school?

A. We have written reports. Not the standard one - one of our own. The other is very badly set out. Not enough room on them. You have to keep crossing things out.

The interested ones can always see me or the class teacher but me first. I want to know what it's about.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so, how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, once a year I think is enough. We had a performance of Oliver, very well attended. The open day wasn't though.

They should be during the day I think as a rule.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. They can always see me or the teacher in private if there's anything they want to see the teacher about. I want to know first. It may be to 'lambaste' the teacher or something in private. I always say if a parent comes here send them to me. They can come anytime. We're not too big for that.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Well, they get that opportunity here if they come up. If they want to see the teacher I take them to the teacher-they can see what they're doing. If they're willing to stand and watch them-they can see what's going on.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. There might be some value in it but I certainly wouldn't let any of my staff visit the homes. It's not our job to go to their homes. It's their job to come here. You've got the danger - just imagine some of my young girl teachers going to some of these homes or some of the men going. You never know, you might get attacked. No, I would never visit homes. It's a social workers job.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Well now, we have a perfect example here. We have a rabbit in one of the classrooms and one of the parents built a rabbit hutch. I'll accept offers of help, but not offers of interference or to tell us how to teach.

If we had some parent who had an interesting job or an unusual one I would be happy for them to give a talk.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

- A. No I don't think it's necessary. In our case and in most schools they've got brothers or sisters in the school who tell them all about it. They know the teachers.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh yes of course. Here that's half our trouble home background. You get children coming late but I've been careful because if children come late there there's a reason and the reason is the home. They're looking after their younger brothers and sisters. The parents could be off to work.  
Some of the parents would be mad if they heard some of the things the children come out with. What they said - what happened last night - it just comes out spontaneously.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Fifty parents out of two hundred and odd - about a quarter.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. Oh no.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. For getting them here the musical was the most successful one. The other things you only get a quarter so that's been the most successful.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. Not really we haven't been in the school long enough to meet any.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FIFTEEN

Headteacher Fifteen      Transcript      Tape recorded 65 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I'm definitely in favour of parents being involved but I'm not in favour of formal Parent Teacher Associations. Get them in as much as you can for open days. Invite them to come and see you if and when they have problems, preferably by appointment, except in an emergency. Oh yes, you've got to get the parents in and on our side. There's only one way to get them on our side and that's to let them in and see.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. I would say they are - most of them. There are some who couldn't care less of course. They prefer to get them out of the door and have done with them. I honestly believe in my present school the majority are.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. No, I don't think I would have parents hearing reading or anything like that. This is a big question. I think they can come in and tell us what they can and we can tell them things. If they can give us any information which will help us to understand the child and if we can give them information about the child's progress. But not involving them in learning and teaching - Lord No!

I would never make anything rigid or inflexible. Anything that won't bend will break. I had a parent who was a teacher and volunteered to take a class for us when we were short staffed.

If parents can help you with sport, things of that nature, by coming along and supporting, you, providing transport, things of that nature - this is good, this is vital. They're really involved.

We had a parent come in and showed us some pictures he had painted.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. This is a difficult problem because in Parent Teacher Associations you have the problem you have in all organisations nobody wants to be an official. You can't find secretaries, you can't find treasurers. If the headteacher has to do these things it's a dead loss.

I had experience as a class teacher of one and one of my big objections was that we spent a lot of time sending out letters and collecting money to do with their social side. I wouldn't consider any time spent on administration for an educational topic was a waste of time, but when it's a whist drive or dance even when the proceeds will indirectly benefit the school, it irritated me.

Well I wouldn't snub them or pour cold water on the idea but I would take delaying action until I retired! I think the tail tries to wag the dog. In the initial stages it went well the one I had experience of. We had people of all sorts in to give a talk

and got a fair attendance but at some of these the staff outnumbered the parents. When we had whist drives or dances you couldn't get turned round. They put plenty on. Our Christmas parties got to the stage where the poor children were being so entertained they didn't have time to enjoy themselves.

You never get at the hard core. Only those who are interested in their children and in ours the officials seemed to carry on even after their children had left the school.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well, if there is a good relationship it must be there because you see, hear and meet parents. If you haven't got a relationship, you haven't got a relationship therefore you cannot know that it doesn't exist - except by its non existence.

If there is a good relationship you must be aware of it. I meet the parents all the time coming here in the car to school. They come up to the school for parties, carol services. We have open days they come up to the school. I encourage them to come up to the school if they have any complaints. I get plenty of parents coming up to see me. In fact at times I have to put my foot down. I think they look on me as an ombudsman - anything that happens in the area they come in to see me.

We got £73.50p. for Save the Children Fund if the parents were against us we wouldn't get that. That's just one little concrete example.

With most parents you can get good relationships but anybody who expects to win them all is an idiot.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Don't stick your neck out too far. Don't go looking for trouble. I always try and explain the ideals of our school and invite them to come and see me personally if they have any complaints rather than listen to tittle tattle.

I think there's only one way to deal with people and that's to tell them the truth. You must be very careful about what you say - but you must say what you mean and mean what you say. Don't make any threats you don't intend to carry out or any promises you don't intend to keep.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh definitely. In the ideal situation when children are admitted in bulk from the infant school I like to have a meeting, after giving them a couple of weeks to settle down. I have a meeting of first year parents to have a chat and maintain continuity. If I know who my first year teachers will be they will go to the infants school we explain to the parents that there is continuity.

We explain that in maths our methods are slightly different to those that they were accustomed to as children. Our ideas about dress, discipline. How the school is organised. What two North or two South means.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. When we have a test each child will get a written report to take home showing their marks, usually before parents' day. The parent can come along with a certain amount of information. When they come in they have a look at the exam. papers and what's in their desk, their books. The teacher is in the class and if they've got any questions they can see the teacher.

The only trouble with open days like this is you get one or two parents who try to monopolize the teacher.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, about once a term ideally. I think it's unfair to expect teachers to come back in the evening. I know there isn't any one way of overcoming the problems. I know this precludes the fathers. I prefer to have them during the day when the children are there. If the teachers do a good day's work they've done enough. If the parents are really interested one of them can come during the day. It will depend on the community you live in. The days of just the father working are over but if there's a lot of unemployment they can both come.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. I encourage parents to come up at anytime. They know this. They can always see the class teacher if they want to. Of course I want to see them first. They may be angry about something and the teachers have to be protected.

They can see the teachers on open day of course and talk about the child. Most of them do.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I don't think you can ever have a normal school working day when you have parents in. It's an artificial situation isn't it?

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I can see a lot of value in it but I can also see a lot of danger. I'm not sure I'd be happy about a teacher coming to see me as a parent, unless it was for some specific reason. It's fraught with danger. Especially in the type of home where the parents are not interested in the children.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Oh yes, I think so. We always accept offers of help. I can't see anything to object to in this. We had a man who was a part-time artist asked if he could come in and show his pictures to the children.

Another boy said his father had made a spiral of paint. You know the thing shown on a schools maths programme. You hang a tin of paint above on a piece of string and let it swing it makes a spiral pattern. This father had done one in black board with yellow paint. A beautiful piece of work - we accepted it.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. We have the parents in and I talk to them a couple of weeks after the children have settled in.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Oh yes it's imperative but you have to be careful how you do it. You must obtain it from a parent. You mustn't ask a child questions about its home background. They'll tell you the lot.

I do ask parents when a child stays for dinners if they can give me an address where I can contact them - this sort of thing.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Well over fifty percent. Probably seventy or eighty percent. That's just an impression. Certainly some of the teachers have had nearly a hundred percent. That's a representative - not necessarily both the parents. If each child is represented by a parent I consider that a hundred percent representation.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. We don't keep a record but I think the teachers know. They can tell from the children's reaction.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the idea where we used to have a display of handwork, needlework and art in the hall and a formal meeting with the parents which I had when we first started in Nuffield work. Some of them are a bit disappointed I don't have this every year. But some parents could be coming in the fourth time and you don't want to be boring them all the time with the same sort of stuff every time. But there's the difficulty of setting up something like this when the hall is used for dinner and we had lettings in the hall every evening. You couldn't leave the stuff up. These are the physical facts of life. It puts you in a straight jacket.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well I wouldn't change just because of parents reaction. If I was doing something and I thought it was right I wouldn't change it no matter who thought it was wrong. We wouldn't change our system because someone objected. We would examine it to see if it was being done properly.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER SIXTEEN

Headteacher Sixteen      Transcript      Tape recorded 56 minutes

A.    Motivation      (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I don't think parents should be fully involved in school. I think they should be invited to school as they are to my school. For example, we've had in the parents of the children who went on the school holiday at Whit and the work was on display and they like this sort of thing. We have them in at various times during the year for a carol service, or a coffee morning if we want to raise a bit of money. Anytime they want to come to see the teachers they can and we get on very well really. Sometimes I invite them when the children have their turn at swimming to see how they're getting on and they like that sort of thing but I'm against a Parent Teacher Association. That sort of thing.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. Well, I think parents nowadays are very concerned with what their children are doing but they don't really want to be involved. They're interested and they like to see the work the children do and they like to see their own children in concerts. Mind our parents help but I don't think many of them really want to be involved in the school work. They always say 'Oh well the teacher knows best'.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. Well I wouldn't have any parents in at a lesson. I wouldn't have any parents as escorts on school trips. The teachers like to have absolute authority. They felt this would undermine their authority. They might want to have a go at the parents child.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Well I think first of all I would consider the parents who made the approach. Were they really genuine in their interest in the school or did they want one for some end of their own? In my experience of Parent Teacher Associations you get the few who want to be on the Committee and tell the others what to do. I think I might talk to them but I might try to dissuade them.

Yes I've had experience of one as a teacher and they only wanted one for the social side. The dances were very popular. The other things weren't well attended. I think they die off. It started with real enthusiasm - and mind it really was a money raiser - no doubt about that. The ones you want to get at, you only see at the dances - The other ones who are interested - Well, they would come up to school in the ordinary way.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. By the parents' attitudes - you can tell. One of the parents said the other day 'every time I come up to this school I feel lazy, everyone seems so busy'. I thought what a nice compliment

Several of the parents come up and they write letters to say thank you for all the teachers have done. We're fortunate being an all girls school - There's a nice atmosphere in the school and the parents can sense this.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Each parent has to be judged on her merits. You get the parent who might 'con' you the first two or three times and you find they're quite a different person. You have to take each person on their merits when they talk to you - Sometimes of course you can be deceived.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh yes. I have addressed the parents and told them how the school is run because we have two unstreamed classes. They can't understand this. After second year they are streamed, chiefly because of the 11+ but I think at that stage the clever ones make friends with the clever ones.

I have to tell the parents what I am doing, then they accept it.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. I issue one written report a year, my own. We have geography, science, religious knowledge, history and general subjects. Then we have English language and intelligence. We have proper intelligence papers we set. We put the marks on the report - Of course they are not worked out to quotients and we put their reading age.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Oh yes. I have one open day a year when six hundred people try to get in. I tried an experiment once. We had first and second year open day and then third and fourth year open day and one of the teachers was good at music and we put on an operetta. I thought the parents would have turned out in their hundreds, but the hall was only half full. We only had the parents of the children who were in the operetta others, a few, came but not many and the staff were worn out.

Now we have one parents day for the whole lot. We have a gymnastic display and some singing and dancing. They can go round the school and talk to the teachers but not a set interview.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Well they can come at any time not by appointment. I have a rule if a parent comes up to play war with a teacher she must see me first, but if she comes up just to talk to the teacher and I'm not available the teacher would just talk to her and tell her how the child was getting on. We've really had very little trouble with parents. Maybe two families that's all.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I wouldn't have a parent in the classroom at all. I think this makes a completely false situation.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Oh! I would hate it! I don't see really why teachers should reduce themselves to being social workers which I suppose we are in school, but not like health visitors. Mind the teacher could if the child was ill.

I think the parents who don't come would regard the teacher simply as a damned nuisance if she went knocking on the door, so they're best let alone. You do the best you can for the child in school.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes we have accepted things like that - maths apparatus, nail boards, things like that. We'd say thank you very much. Can you make some more?

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I would quite welcome it, but it would be difficult to arrange wouldn't it? I think if a parent came and said my child's coming to your school would you mind telling me about it - I would tell her how the school was run and take her round but I wouldn't have a mass thing.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Yes, very important. Of course you can't be 'nosy' and ask. Sometimes the parents will tell you. Sometimes, especially a woman, can find out in needlework lessons. The children gossip - You see these are chatty lessons and it's amazing the amount of information you can get.

Sometimes knowledge comes to you in odd ways. We had a child who came in broken hearted because her mother had hit her for taking a chocolate biscuit. Well we gave her a cup of tea and tried to find out about her family - It was the usual thing a broken home. When the mother came up about something else I asked her and she said oh yes I was vexed and she shouldn't have taken the biscuit.

I stopped getting information about the father's occupation. I didn't feel somebody should be able to look in the admission register and say oh her father's a labourer. I don't know whether I like this. I think some people are hampered by their father's occupation. People say oh yes he's a sea-going engineer, lovely, but oh he's a chipper and painter in the docks. He's not so good.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Oh, two-hundred percent at ours. You cannot move at open days. They love coming. If the fathers' are shift workers they come. We always have open days on Wednesdays, shop half day closing.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Oh no, never. We never check up on the parents like that.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Well, we invite the fourth year parents to the carol service and they all turn up. We invite the first year parents to the Harvest Festival. Sometimes we put in a concert to raise money and get a good turn out.

The open day for numbers. Some people who wouldn't come to a carol concert unless their daughter was on will come. We let them see the work they can go to their own child's desk.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well, the only thing we had to alter was this three days for parents days. We only ran it one year, never again. The staff were too tired for one thing.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER SEVENTEEN

Headteacher Seventeen      Transcript      Tape recorded 46 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. It all depends on what area and what type of parent a school was dealing with. Those who could appreciate the opportunities the school was able to offer the child - you could bring them into it.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No, I don't think so. Most of them are quite satisfied to leave the education of their children to those who know more about it - the majority. There are one or two of the more anxious parents who do more harm than good by interfering. A parent can be concerned about their child without wanting to be involved with the school.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. No, I wouldn't have parents in the classroom. The teaching is for the teacher. The parents part is when anything affecting the child's welfare is concerned. They should do their part. The teachers and the schools should do their part. If at anytime the two overlap, well the parent can be brought in. I think the classroom would be my limit.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I would ask what their motives were in the first place and be absolutely sure the school was going to benefit from anything they were going to give financial wise, social wise, before we would allow them.

I have had no experience of one as a teacher. I think maybe in a rural area where society is more closely knit, such a thing could be of more benefit than in a town.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. The day that parents refused or are not willing or don't come up to discuss mutual problems you would have to start thinking what was wrong with the school. You can tell.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Always have the door open. Never shut your door to anyone. You can't butter up to one kind of parent and browbeat the other type. A parent is a parent. It is the nine to four hours with which we are concerned with children and we don't treat children from different homes differently, so you can't treat one parent differently from another.

## B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. If they are interested they should be told this is true. They should know what the school is trying to do for their children. If you invite parents up on a parents' day, this is not the opportunity for the head to give a long speech on the aims of his school. Surely the parent can see what is happening in the school and what is happening about them. Any child can take home a message or his impressions about what is happening about home every day for four years of his life.

A parent should know the organisation of the school. As long as there is grammar school selection in a town, a school should do its best for the children it considers grammar school material. But at the same time it should do just as much for children of less potential who are just as important to society in general.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. We use written reports twice a year to take home. One which our particular school has evolved over a number of years. There's no competitive basis in it - no class position, the child is competing against its own potential. A mark if its work is very good or satisfactory or if we consider a child is not working to its full potential. In this case we invite a parent to come up to find out if there are any circumstances at home of which we know nothing about.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, as long as the parent is prepared to come to discuss the child's work, the attitude of the child towards the school, or any problems we might want to raise with the parent, but I'm not in favour of the kind of open day where the parent is entertained by concerts and a cup of tea.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes, the head's door is never shut. The parent can come up at any time to discuss any problem the parent wishes to discuss. On rare occasions if we have a problem, they can see the teacher at anytime. If it is a complaint they must see the head teacher first. If it's for a normal business concerning the teacher and the child they are at liberty to go and see the teacher without seeing the head.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Well, if they are sufficiently interested there's no reason why they cannot come at anytime. If they wish to come up without a special invitation there must be a reason. I wouldn't be in favour of them sitting in with a lesson with a view to seeing what sort of education the school is providing for their child, because as a competent staff we are competent to judge ourselves as a team.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I would be against it. I don't think that teachers should encroach upon childrens or parents homes. Perhaps social workers, but I think homes should be a private place - unless a parent invites a teacher - It's a different matter, but even then there's a danger of favouritism. The children saying the headteacher or teacher came to my house.

Without invitation they shouldn't. I think I would be wary of it even under those circumstances.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. This is another dangerous one. You're up against a professional one. Are you going to have unqualified teachers in? We have outsiders like the police coming in - but parents? You could ask a parent who was a skilled photographer or musician to give a short talk but I'd rather they helped with a school club, rather than the educational part of the work.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I don't think it's really necessary but it's always open to them to come and see the head or the teacher. I have been astounded sometimes when I've seen the mother of some children, real terrors, roughly clad and then see the mothers all dolled up. It let's you see how far there's any equality inside the home or whether they are just out for themselves.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Yes, but what kind and how do you get it? You have a good idea when something's wrong but you can't probe too deeply.

We had a child who in a R.I. Lesson who said his idea of heaven would be a delightful place where you could go in and not expect to find arguments and fighting going on.

You're <sup>on</sup> very tricky ground here. You can't talk in front of other children. All good teachers do ask or find out the parents occupation, but it's surprising how many children don't know.

### C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16 What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. The main thing we have parents coming to is the sports day and we get a surprising attendance. We have always been surprised at the number who attend.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, we don't but we know which ones are likely to come and they nearly all come for the medical examination this is when we get them. Overly ninety percent of them come.

We take the opportunity of having a word about education with them - the ones who haven't been.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Well the most successful thing is not communicating directly with the parents, but saying well your father or mother might know something about this.

Many of the parents get involved in some of these tricky little maths question.

I think it's far better when they come in at anytime, no special preparation for them like an open day.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school-home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Not really.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER EIGHTEEN

Headteacher Eighteen      Transcript      Tape recorded 41 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      To a certain extent. I think parent participation in school life has got to be carefully regulated by the headteacher. I think you get some parents who, once they get their toe inside the school try to take over. It depends on the type of parent.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      Well now this is a debatable point. It's a loaded question isn't it? If you ask any parent about their children they say, "Oh yes I'm very anxious for them to get on", but basically I think quite a lot of parents - they're not really bothered.

I think the majority are keen for them to get on. Perhaps it's the parents wanting to see an extension of themselves succeeding where they haven't.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      Yes, I wouldn't have parents coming into the classroom at all - not as a regular thing. I think it's a dangerous precedent to allow parents to come into the classroom and take any part in a lesson at all. If you've got a very domineering parent - more likely to be a woman - what chance has a young teacher straight out of college got?

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I'd be very careful. I think I'd say yes, but I'd have quite definite ideas ironed out before I said yes, go ahead. First, I'd want the finances looked at by myself not by an parent and then I'd want an agreed proportion of time spent on educational things, not just on social things.

I was a parent in a Parent-Teacher Association so I thought I could see both sides of the coin. It developed into a social club that was all. As far as any educational value was concerned I think it was almost nil, except the head took the opportunity to milk the parents association for money for school activities, which was a good idea of course.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      I think you can tell by the attitude of the parents. If they're coming up with a bellicose attitude I think a head would be worried if this happened over and over again. To me it seldom happens and the same with most heads.

Most of them come up wanting help and don't just mean help with clothing, things like that. They come about problems concerning the children who are often very different at home to what they are at school.

Q.6.    What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I think if you're going to do anything unusual at school to let the parents know, either by holding a meeting and I don't know if this is such a good idea for something like modern maths. I don't think you get a very good turn out. The attitude of parents would be "Oh modern maths it's not up my street", but if you wrote a little note I think this would be a good thing. Whether parents want to be involved or not they at least know what's going on. Especially boys don't say much at home about what's going on at school. I think a parents' day is a good idea. I can get three hundred parents in the hall and put over - for example - we've had a lot of boys wearing jeans. I mentioned this on parents day three years ago and we had a good response. You'd have the same dividend with long hair - a little boy hasn't the sense to look after his hair properly, particularly with swimming lesson. A word to the parents is often better than a word to the boy. Always keep the parents informed.

#### B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. To a certain extent. If you get too educational about the matter parents wouldn't understand. Talking to them on parents day is probably the best idea.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We did use the standard written report but they were misunderstood to a large extent. Now we use a marks list. The parents get this they're much more conscious of how they're doing. Of course it has the class position in and any remarks by the class teacher or me.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I think once a year is enough. We hold an open day at the same time as the girls school. We do this because if we held separate open days we'd probably get about five-hundred parents in the school at once and we just couldn't accommodate them. We play tricky. It's amazing how many fathers come.

We always have them in the hall first and I talk to them for about fifteen minutes. Tell them about what's going to happen in the afternoon, or anything that I want help with, and any co-operation needed has always been forthcoming. They wander round the classes. We lay a cup of tea on.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes, they can come up at anytime they all know this. If they're worried about anything just to come up. They don't need to make an appointment. They can see the class teacher, they can see me first and the class teacher can see them in my room and I'll nip along and take the class. I like to see them first. I like to know what's going on. You've got to protect your staff, especially the young ones.

- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. I don't think so. I think it would be a completely artificial atmosphere. They wouldn't see a normal lesson. I've laid on a typical French lesson mind, parents were interested in what was going on. It went down well even though the parents didn't understand a word of it.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. I can't see anyway of getting in touch with them apart from a social worker. I think it's best left to a social worker. There's some houses I wouldn't like to go to and I certainly wouldn't ask a teacher to.
- I don't think it would make them come to open days. I think it might make a difference and make them feel that heads and teachers are approachable and if there's anything wrong they can go to the school. This may be the only effect.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. This again is dangerous. It's like a perepatetic pianist. They're pianists only - they're not teachers. If any parent had any particular skill, if he was a good talker and had been to sea, I would be quite prepared to have him in and give the boy's a talk.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. I don't know whether it's necessary really. In the case of an infant school there's been no liaison between school and parents at all. This isn't so at a primary school. Very often the infants coming up are brothers of children you already have.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes, I would obtain it myself or through the school nurse, I don't know how else you could obtain it. You get to know a lot about boys when you're taking games or a field expedition. You learn an awful lot.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. I should think getting on for a hundred percent. This is why we have it on the same day as the girls. We've got to protect ourselves somehow.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

- A. No, but the teachers nearly always know which parents haven't come and they nearly always mention it later on. They know a mother's coming. The child is looking around and if a child is looking out of it obviously there's no one coming.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I think personal interviews with the parent without the child being there is the most valuable. I think the parent opens out more. If the child is there, the parent feels bound to take his side.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organizing school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. This B.B.C. sex programme. I thought the best thing to do would be to get the parents along and talk to them then I had second thoughts. It was live and I didn't really know what was going to be on. I wrote a short note and if they wished the child to see these I was willing to show them. About a quarter were quite strongly against so I just let the matter drop. Mind if it had been a girls school I would have pushed far harder.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER NINETEEN

Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I'm not quite sure to what extent Plowden recommends that parents shouldbe involved but parents must be involved, but to what extent, is something the head has to decide - I think this is an individual matter for each school. It depends on the type of children - the type of parents you've got.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A. I wouldn't say most - possibly a third are really interested in the education of their children but whether they'd want to be involved in a parent-teacher association or something like that I don't know. Most of the rest couldn't care less, they can't look after them they can't manage them they admit this now.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. No, I don't think hearing reading anything like that. Some of the parents haven't a clue - they buy the wrong books, they don't know enough to be involved.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. The first thing I'd have to do is consult my staff and we'd have to try and find out what we know about these children and their parents and see if it was a suitable thing.

Unfortunately the first headteacher in this town to have a parent-teacher association abandoned it. He went to another school and did not have one. The parents ran the Association not the teachers - it became a social thing. They did raise money for certain things - they bought a tape recorder then they turned round to the children and said, 'Are you using the things we have bought for you' - they're starting to dictate what should happen in the school which is a bad thing.

I've had no experience myself but I know the man who started the first one and he regretted it. In some parts of the country it could be a good thing provided you have enough parents interested. But parents could assist in the way of giving money this is the point - they could help but not if they are going to dictate. The wiser parent can do all they like buying books and helping at home and they realise that if they have got good teachers and a good headteacher they will know what they are doing.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well you soon know by the attitude of the parents who come in. I'm thrilled to bits to think how nice some parents are who may have come in with some slight grievance but has gone away thanking me or what I have done - this has happened time and time again. Of course you get the odd one who won't listen to reason.

Unfortunately they don't know much about education but education is one of the things that everybody thinks they know about - they've all been to school - this is one of the problems.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I don't know I'd give them any advice. A headteacher has got to make his own way like anyone else.

I don't think you can work to a rule - you mustn't get the parents antagonistic but unfortunately when there's any trouble you can nearly always trace it back to the home background.

You don't say this directly to a parent, it's a case of using practical psychology - I think a headteacher has got to use more practical psychology than anyone.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I don't believe in sending out a lot of literature in the junior school. I don't think you want to get them involved in what methods you're using. I allow even the teachers a fairly free hand. It's no good involving teachers or parents in a method they don't understand.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We'll have half yearly examination. We don't do a full report on that but the children are able to take the marks home. We give a full report at the end of the year, the standard one.

One or two of the parents who are concerned and want to see about progress, I keep records of all the examination marks for the four years.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Well I've seen two kinds of open days as a teacher and the first kind was just a wash out, just an entertainment - singing, a small play, just a show off. This is all very nice these accomplishments which have been rehearsed. My parents are allowed to come in anytime they wish and report to me and if the teacher is willing to have them in they can - but usually they just want to talk to the teacher.

I'd rather see the parents come in informally and I've allowed some of the teachers to fix a kind of rota. But not for the whole school at once - at the convenience of the teacher.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Anytime provided it's convenient.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. They should if they wish. But this again depends on the teacher. Certain teachers are not at their best under observation - Other people are at their best.

I wouldn't stop a parent but whether the teacher would have them in and this could be distracting in some classes to the children.

Most teachers are suspicious because of the general feeling that always exists between the general public and the teacher. This may be something deep rooted. The teacher has always been the boss figure and many parents still have this idea of being 'nooled' by the teacher at school by someone with a victorian training, ages ago.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. No, I think this is a very dangerous thing. If a visit has got to be made it's got to be made through either the school welfare officers or the school medical service. I don't think a head or a teacher should ever visit a home on matters concerning welfare, not in education.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Well, it all depends what they want to do. There are many ways in which parents can help. A tradesman parent of a child still supplies the school with what he considers to be waste material but which we consider to be first class material we couldn't afford ourselves. This sort of help could be encouraged. Anything else like a pianist is not necessary.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. We do this too. It's done through the infant school. Letters are sent to parents and they are invited up not to listen to a dialogue or soliciting, but to see the first year at work and they can gauge the school from this.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. I think, without prying too deeply into the private life of mothers and fathers, we should be aware of any special circumstances regarding the home background. Especially in these days when there seem to be more broken homes than ever before.

The information is always second hand or by remarks which have been dropped. The school welfare officer may be able to augment any information we may be able to get, but often a child can get right through the school having problems which we can't probe.

Children will only tell you what they want to tell you. Often you never hear of a divorce until the mother is going to re-marry and the girl is going to be a bridesmaid.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Very high, anything from seventy-five percent upwards.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. I don't, it's too big a school to keep this sort of thing. But the teacher can always tell, they can sense the child whose parent doesn't come. The negative approach is much more positive than the positive approach.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Well, I think that the people in our area know that the door is open and if there's a specific problem they know they're always welcome.

We give them an invitation anytime during three days purely to discuss work but not to see a display of work. You're getting the parents who are interested. It's a national problem that you never get the parents you really wish to see.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, in a big school the problem is that the younger children can disrupt any sort of entertainment you're putting on for the parents. Therefore we don't think it's worthwhile putting on any sort of sit down entertainment for the parents. A cup of tea as you're passing through the hall is alright. The concert type of thing at parents day we've discarded altogether.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes I do. The more parents are involved with schoolwork and the children, quite obviously, the better the education the school will give. Very often, if you know the parents, you learn a great deal more about the children. Sometimes when you meet the parents, you can see the difficulties that some of the children have to fight against.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. Yes I'm sure they are. As far as I'm concerned the majority are. They call and ask how they're getting on and to be frank several have asked why we haven't got a Parent Teacher Association!

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. We don't go so far as to have parents in to hear reading or anything like that but we try to involve parents as much as we can. It's not very easy.

They can come up at any time to school. They don't need to make an appointment. They can go in and see the child's work and occasionally we've had one or two stop in to see part of a lesson to see what sort of thing is going on.

No one has ever asked to come in and help with reading. I don't think if a parent was enthusiastic I would really place any limits on them.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. No one has ever requested one. They've asked why we haven't got one. I've always felt we should have one. I must admit, I'm sure they are of value. Properly run they are. There's too much of us and them about schools. It might help to break this down.

I've never been in a school that's run a Parent Teacher Association, perhaps that's why I'm afraid of them.

I've talked it over with the staff. We have twelve teachers and about four were keen. The rest didn't fancy it. I think for me, the initiative would have to come from the parents. I think that's wrong. But that's the way it would have to be for me.

Properly run a good Parent Teacher Association would be a tremendous boon to both the parents and the school but the trouble with one or two that I've heard of, not in this town, was that they developed into social events. I think that's something you've got to watch.

I think it would probably be parent led, so the officers would have to be carefully chosen. But then again the parents would probably choose them. I don't know!

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. We keep them informed of what's going on. Little letters are sent out and I tell them on parents days that they can come to school

at anytime if they feel worried about anything - not to telephone for an appointment. They can come at any time they like.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Well I think perhaps the best advice I could give them would be to listen to what they have to say because very often they tend to start to tell you something and you tend to 'blanket' them out. But I think you should listen.

The parents of children who aren't in such good homes don't seem to want to come up as often as the others. Very often on parents day even if they do turn up it's a very perfunctory appearance.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Now what do you mean by that? Oh yes that's very important - the organisation particularly. They get very worried about that. When I first came here it was all streamed and we decided to unstream the first years. In fact there are still people who think they are in 1A if they go to a certain classroom. The parents still do - no matter what you say to them. We had a parents meeting and told them the reasons for unstreaming. Now this year we're unstreaming the second year and I expect it'll be exactly the same again. I'll not be able to tell parents. They won't listen and no matter what I call the classes if they go to a particular teacher they'll think they are in the 'A' stream.

But it is very important they should know what's happening.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Yes we send a report. We've changed it three times and still don't like it. No, we don't use the standard one. In fact I'm very doubtful about written reports. We do it twice a year. We used to do it three times, but I think once a year would be enough. I think it's far better when they come up and talk to the teacher.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I think they're very good things. We've had three this year and we'll have one more. One thing we don't try and do is concerts or anything like that because it has to be done in the evening. Parents don't go to school during the day while the children are there to hear them sing songs. They want to see their work and how they are getting on and can they do anything to help.

They don't want to sit on a chair and see them perform. We run ours on two days. Half the parents come in on one day and half the other. We give them appointments so they can have half an hour or twenty minutes with the teacher however it works out.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangements for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. If they come up, they come up to my room. I asked if the secretary could work all morning instead of two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon so that if anybody did ring I could say come up in the afternoon when my room's empty.

Now, if they wanted to see the class teacher well that's a bit dodgy! Sometimes they want to see the class teacher and I want to be there at first, at least to see how things are going. I like to protect the staff from irate parents, but if things are going nicely I leave them in my room and go down and look after the class.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Well now we've never done this on a mass scale of course, but one or two parents have asked to and they have stayed. Now whether if more of them asked I suppose it would be good but whether it would be possible? We've had so few that have asked. The teachers didn't seem to mind.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Well I'll tell you a story about that. There was one family where we had sent several letters and no one came so I thought I'll go round and see Mrs. ---. So I went round and I knocked on the door and there were two women standing next door. I heard one of them say 'I wish I was a blonde.' She appeared at the door and I think she had lots of callers. I wish I hadn't gone! I went another time to take her coat back and I've never been back again. I didn't get in. We stood on the step. I've only been to two and once again they didn't ask me in.

If a child is poorly I take them home and they always ask you in, no matter what sort of children they are.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. We accept offers of help from dads particularly. For modern needlework pictures, they make the frames. One father whose girl has now left the school still sends one in occasionally. It's always been dads. They've turned out science stuff, electric generators, circuits that sort of thing.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. I should imagine it would, although we do see a fair bit of the infant parents with the schools being so close. I do invite them in before the change.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Well it's a bit awkward that you generally pick it up by hearsay. You can't always trust it. But to know all is to understand all. There are some poor children you tend to jump on. If you only knew the troubles they had!

We do get the father's occupation passed on from the infant school. Perhaps the infants have always asked.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Very good indeed. I wouldn't say a hundred percent, but in an ordinary open day I can only think of one child who didn't have someone there. It could be aunts or granny.

I think it's because of the area we draw from. I don't think it normal.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No but we know because we send out invitations with the time for appointment so we know if they don't come.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Well once again I must admit and it's a pity, but although I tell them they can come any time they like, they say 'yes thank you', but I still think I still have a feeling they don't come as often as they would like to.

There's a division there between us. Open days are good and you do see parents but really that's not the best way. I would prefer them to come up but only about twenty percent come up. There's a lot that don't. So although the one's who do come up probably get a great deal more satisfaction, the number is so small it's reduced in value because of the small number who do take advantage of it.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Not really.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-ONE

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I think a lot of the Plowden recommendations about this are impracticable, I don't think they really know how an ordinary school works under difficult conditions in difficult buildings. I think there's a lot of good in the recommendations but a lot of them just wouldn't work in this building.

I would be wary in this particular school. I came from a school which served people who came from slum clearance and wanted something better for their children. There were some very bad families, but on the whole they were anxious that their children should do well - go to grammar school. There were times they would come up ready to tear the teachers limb from limb, but on the whole once you got them on your side, they backed you.

I find here in this particular district the emphasis is on one thing only, Eleven Plus - the children must get through the Eleven Plus at all costs. A lot of them have their children coached and any success the child has is due to them and any failure is the fault of the school and they're very quick to criticise.

On displays after school, we have parents evenings twice a year. We have an open day. We have a Christmas effort we ask them to. I find certain groups come for one reason only, to get into cliques for one reason only - to shred school. They want old fashioned exercises. If the child is not getting them they are not getting a fair deal.

We put in hours of extra work in at Christmas on what was really a first class effort. Out of all the parents only one came and said she enjoyed it.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No, I think they're only interested in the end result. They would rather little Johnny was given some formal homework and they would check it over briefly and possibly criticise. That's as far as I think they want to be involved.

At my last school one mother used to undertake washing the football strips another three provided refreshments for the teams. Another group used to make costumes for the play. Father would knock up a puppet theatre. We don't get this here. I know I sound anti-parent but quite a lot has happened to put my back up. I think it is largely due to this Eleven Plus pressure. One mother said this year 'he'll get that uniform if it kills him'. Another said 'he's got to pass, do you think I'm going to be the only one in the street'. It's not for the good of the child. It's a kind of status symbol.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school.

A. I would not want them in the classroom. I must admit as a class teacher I would have disliked this. I would accept if they wanted to coach games or help with Christmas plays.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. There was a Parent-Teacher Association here at one time and it was disbanded. The last head warned me and the staff who were here then. Decisions were made without consulting the staff or head and he found once a whole activity had been organised in the school without him ever being told, which of course is wrong.

No, I wouldn't have one. I would like to see more activities with parents, I would like to have more parents evenings even in informal things, not formal things, just ordinary work. My experience of them is that they get away from work and they become a social thing.

I've had experience as a teacher of an organised Parent-Teacher Association. I had a friend who had one and it had to be disbanded. It actually got to the stage where they demanded by petition the resignation of an extremely hardworking and dedicated teacher who had been there for a number of years. It caused an awful lot of disturbance and distress. A certain set were against this teacher. It was with the permission of the Director that it was disbanded.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Don't you think that by meeting them in smaller groups you get to know them better but if you have three-hundred and fifty parents turn up its the same ones who come and make themselves known to you each time? I prefer to ask say twenty at a time so the teacher and myself can give them more time. It's frustrating if you've a rather quiet type of parent comes along faithfully and never gets a chance to speak to anyone.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. However awkward they are when they first come you have to be prepared to try and get their co-operation. It's their child in your school. This was the hardest thing I had to learn to do - to count not to ten but to twenty - to keep your temper no matter how irate the parent. I find its a good thing to say 'I'm so pleased to see you'. Children are easier to deal with than parents.

#### B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, we regularly send out letters and notices to parents telling them what we're doing and why we're doing it. It takes a lot of paper and a lot of time. Sometimes a lot of it is just read and dropped in the fire, but I think it does good in many cases.

We have regular meetings about camp and if we are using some new method for say maths we always send out literature saying why and how we'd like them to co-operate.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Well, on an open day the parents can look at their children's books - they're left on the desk. We also have a parents evening where the parents are given about ten minutes for a private interview with the class teacher. We also send out a written report.

- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Yes, but I think you've got to adapt your open day to suit your school. We don't have the parents in the classroom on open day. We have a parents night when they can come in. We do this twice a year. The children leave their books on the desk. There are times when the parents want to talk about their children without the children being there.
- We have an open day when we put out displays of work. Each class put on some type of work they're doing. Last time we concentrated on assemblies. We had children from each class with their work displays and they explained them to the parents.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Yes - if they come I try to make time for them. I would prefer them to make an appointment. Some of them do ring up and it helps.
- If it's to see a teacher I ask if they can make an arrangement, because it means taking a teacher away from a class.
- They see the class teacher on parents night. We ask what time between half past six and half past eight they would like to come. We give them an approximate time.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. You mean should a parent just be able to come in and go in and see a maths lesson? No, I don't see it would serve a useful purpose. For one thing don't tell me you can teach a class as well with someones mother sitting in the back. The relationship between the child and teacher is different. For a young teacher it would be off putting. I would have hated it!
- It would be like me going in and watching some surgeon operating. After all there's a part to every job that you have to learn. I think this is wrong.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. We've got a particular family - because the boy was not in an 'A' stream the father sent word to say he'd washed his hands of him. If you send a slip to say would they like to come for an open night or tickets for a Christmas Service you simply get a paper with the two words 'not interested'. I can't see any value in visiting people like this. In fact I think you would get a resentment that you were interfering with their privacy.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. I was used to a man at my last school who helped to coach the football team. We have a drama club and we would welcome anyone who knew about lighting or something with open arms.
- We've also had people who come in and talk about their job - it worked.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

- A. We've done it. The last one was a very clever little boy who moved here but had asthma - very nervous. He came along with his mother. I took him round the school to meet the teacher he would have - take the newness off it.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. I think you've got to be very careful. Some things are brought to your notice without looking for them but I think it's very wrong to pry. After all it is their private life.  
Girls come out with the most surprising things about hire purchase and fathers drinking habits but I think you've always got to remember that they go home with the most alarming things about school and it's just as likely that the things they say about home are just as exaggerated. I object to recording things. I think this is wrong.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Here about ninety-five percent.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. Yes we do and we usually find it's the same lot who usually don't come.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. The parent evenings, more so than the open days. Then you really find out things about the children. You've really got a chance to talk to the parent while on the open day it's the children performing. There's not much contact between teacher and parent.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. Well I'm seriously thinking of disbanding the Christmas thing. The work put in by the teachers and children was enormous and yet only one parent gave any sign of approval. One man came to see me and said to me "Why didn't you arrange your seats in a tier system? You know like the Theatre Royal." This is the sort of reaction we got. It was a very poor response indeed from parents. The old people who we put things on for are a most appreciative audience.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-TWO

Headteacher Twenty-Two Transcript Tape recorded 51 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes. I don't go all the way with Flowden mind. I disagree with the suggestion, mind it wasn't an adamant suggestion, that you visit the homes. I disagree with that. Otherwise, I think most of the ideas are sound. About home visiting my idea is that if a teacher is working well in school they're doing quite a lot of out of school activities - camps other types of work. I think they've done enough.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No. I think the ones as a whole you don't really need to see like to come up. The ones you very much want to see don't come up. At the same time eighty-five - ninety percent are interested and want to come up but you have about ten percent who don't - hence the suggestion of going to their homes.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. Well I feel it's not so much the limits I place it's the physical limitations imposed by the building. Take my own building - no hall. Therefore it's very difficult to put on certain types of parent activities. We sometimes can use the secondary hall. You have the obvious physical limitations of an old school such as mine - ninety years old I believe.

And I think the other is really up to the head with his staff. There's an attitude among my staff that an artificial type of parents day isn't much use. For parents to go round and see classes depends on a) does the head think it's sound? and b) what's the teachers reaction? I could name teachers who shudder at this others are very much for it. I think it's mainly the younger person who has a different outlook and probably in many cases wouldn't mind. Your older teachers tend to regard classrooms as holy sanctuaries. They don't like it, why? Because it's never been done.

I see no harm, nothing but good in classroom visiting.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. That's a very mixed question. I don't think they are necessarily all that marvellous. I know some of them have done wonderful good things even as far as building swimming baths. On the other hand some have tried to run the school.

You tend, unless you're careful, as you do at all meetings, to get the certain few who tend to be the treasurer, the secretary, the chairman, possibly for their own ends rather than the fulfilment of what Parent-Teacher Associations mean. I think it can be well run and sound. On the other hand I think you can get the co-operation without it. If you want a definite answer I think I would do without it.

I've had no experience of one as a teacher. Every head I've worked for has been adamant about not having one. I've heard of one where they bought a tape recorder which was used for certain things by certain classes and it wasn't used by two classes and

there was uproar from the parents about why their children were not getting the use of the apparatus they had bought. There is the danger of over involvement by parents. I think that if they give something and they have any faith in the head or the staff they should leave it at that. If they haven't this faith I don't think they should be involved.

I should imagine my staff would be against it. They give a whole week at Whit and give a lot of their time. I think it's unfair to involve them with too much more.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well you can't tell, let's be quite definite, unless you have close links with parents in other ways besides a Parent-Teacher Association. They come up at least once a term in my school and they are fully involved in things like the Christmas Nativity Play. They join in. They are invited up on the more formal academic work side, the reports, the interview with the teacher, many school functions - the camps, film show of the camp.

They also come up in the summer where we try to put on modern dance, P.E., mannequin parades, we vary it.

In other words I have also welcomed them. I never really turn a parent away. I see a lot of them.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. It would depend on your catchment area. Let's be quite blunt. In this way, if you have a poor environmental catchment area you've got to use the gimmicks to get the parents up - the novelties, variety and not worry if they're not interested in Nuffield maths. Get them up. If they'll only come up to see their daughter in a play, well put on a play. You can get your ideas across then.

Your first class professional type of home or skilled will come to more formal academic parents days without gimmicks, without a show, they will come up to Nuffield maths or anything like that. The interest is there.

In the labouring class and manual working class if you see twenty percent of their fathers that's it.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes definitely. I think as I do they should be met before they come to school I think they should be invited from the entrance. I've found this that many of the ideas that build up in the infants and the parents about - 'wait till you get over there' - disappeared when they met you. I get ninety percent of the parents at the entrance.

I think you should explain your attitude to examinations, to the eleven plus, to streaming, What sort of reading you teach. What ideas you have in modern maths - this sort of thing. I think all of this should definitely be done. It's very important.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. I give one full written report and it's not the usual useless report. I've made my own which has such things as ability to work alone, how co-operative with other children, term work not just examinations - not marks - not these useless phrases. It's kept, the report and the four reports are kept in a book for the whole school years. Each child has a file. It doesn't now go home. The parent sees it when they come up in the afternoon. We send home sometimes to ask them but mind out of two hundred and fifty only five who didn't see it which is pretty good.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes. I'm going off the one now, because at the end of term, we have camp, putting in for the flower show - so much going on, changing classes. I've had one open day at this time every year but this one. I'm paying more attention now th the start of the year and the middle of the year and running down perhaps the one at the end of the year. You can't tell them too much at the end. It's rather too late isn't it? Perhaps one in each of the first two terms.

I vary the format. We've never done the same two years running. I say a few words about the highlights of the year. I've had good co-operation. They leave their babies at home. We find they do listen. We have a cup of tea with them. Then they can go round the classes the schools open to them. We always put a lot of art in the corridors. It's not just dress for them coming. We had a maths display one year - complete Nuffield maths right up through the stages.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Each parent is given the opportunity to have a completely private interview with the teacher. This is arranged and timetabled. They read the report and sign to say that they have read it. They can see me in private too if they feel there is anything that they're not happy about.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Yes if it was possible in the building. I wouldn't in mine really because I couldn't. The teachers are very handicapped, screens, they'd be all going through one teachers room to get to another - wouldn't be fair.

Not by prejudice - no it's just the physical conditions that make it impossible.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. It depends on the amount of time you have available. I feel in our school we move heaven and earth to get co-operation from parents, always written word going home, every encouragement given to come up, everything possible is done and if they still won't come up - Well there's a limit. I can't say it's wrong. If you've got a head who is willing to do it good luck to him but I think I've done enough. I think it should be a follow up by other agencies. There should be someone else to do this.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes I've done this. I've had it in carpentry. I was doing a lot of the modula patterns and I needed blocks. One father brought in thirty, beautifully sawn, all ready for us. Another one made a dozen crooks for the nativity play - seemed elated that he could do something.

I think they will help if they are asked.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. Yes, I have a meeting for the parents of the new entrants to explain general school policy. I think I've already mentioned this - not before they start but very shortly afterwards.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Provided it doesn't become snooping - it's difficult. You haven't got Counsellors in primaries so you rely on your Welfare people. It's marvellous how you can find out. Mind in certain areas. You find out for instance if the father has left home. There's not much you don't find out without unnecessary prying. It depends how close knit the area is. It would be more difficult in other areas I imagine.

Certain things do slip through though. One child I didn't know was on tranquilisers and his drowsy sleepiness wasn't laziness or a couldn't care less attitude. It was the effect of the tranquilisers. I didn't know. Now there is something that should have been handed on.

### C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. I've actually had a hundred percent in one year - every family. But I've never had less than ninety percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Yes, each teacher has a list of times for interviews and we carefully tick off when each parent has been. The report is signed. If they haven't signed the report they haven't been up. We invite them up later. Obviously you weren't able to come during the afternoon set aside etc., etc. Perhaps you would like to suggest another time and generally you get them by doing that.

You keep it up till it does work. Even if they come up most briefly, snatch a pencil and sign the report. At least you've seen them.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Each has its point. The pre-school meeting prepares the way. I want my child in there sort of thing. The detailed report we hope makes the parent say, by goodness we know where we stand with this report. It tells us what we want to know.

Perhaps the fact that they know I'm available at any time creates a good atmosphere. Yes, open days too of course and they must treasure the actual time with the teacher who knows the child so well - but these things all help.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No. If there's been any snag it's been purely physical with the building. Never the parents. They've co-operated a hundred percent.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-THREE

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes, I think the involvement of parents with schools is worthwhile. After all, the parents are the ones who know the children best of all and schools must allow for this. I would not necessarily agree with all that Plowden recommended. I do not agree that a Parent-Teacher Association is necessary to have good relationships with parents.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. I would think that all parents are interested in what their children are doing in schools and the majority would wish to be involved with anything their own child is doing.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. While I would welcome parental interest I would not approve of parents being involved in the teaching or learning process in school - no - not with reading. The classroom would be my limit for this. No, not when it comes to the actual teaching. This needs skilled people.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. My reaction would be no. Although I would certainly discuss with them their motives for wanting one and what they thought the object of a Parent-Teacher Association was. I'm afraid parents need educating about schools and education before Parent-Teacher Association's would achieve anything which was of value to the school.

The barriers between schools and parents need breaking down more before a formal organisation like a Parent-Teacher Association would be a worthwhile proposition I feel.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well to some extent the parents are putting trust in the headteacher and school when they hand their children over to them. But I think parents know if things are not right. Parents these days are pretty vocal, but a relationship must be built up where parents feel they can come along.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I don't think you can generalise about parents. They are all different. The less labelling the better. You have the extravert type who is uninhibited about expressing their feelings to you. Others are much more diffident. A headteacher has to deal with all different types of parents. There are no rules.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, parents should be informed about the aims of a school. Parents generally can sense the aims of a school are primarily concerned with the good of the child. A school should of course circularise parents about what is going on in a school and the teachers should be made aware of what the aims of the school and education are. Young teachers are not always sufficiently professional in this respect. It has to be pointed out to them.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We use written reports to the parents. The standard report forms once a year. Parents can of course come up and discuss their children's progress if they wish.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes provided they are not simply a show - not a display of untypical work done specially for the occasion - concerts and performances and the like. Parents want to know what their child is doing in their class and in their work.

We have not had one for two years due to staffing problems, but I should think once a year would be sufficient. I feel they should be held over a longer period than a day, ideally say a whole week.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Parents are welcome to come at any time and see me in private. I should allow them to see the teacher if this were necessary.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. At infant level perhaps, but otherwise no. A school simply cannot cope with unexpected people in the classroom. There is little enough time already and so many other demands on school time.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Yes, I think there is real value in visiting parents. One can sense very quickly what kind of a home it is. There is a certain atmosphere about a good home. I do this frequently and think this is very important in underlining the value that parents place in teachers.

I think even now most parents still have great respect for teachers, providing you have done nothing to interfere with that respect. I have very strong feelings on professional behaviour which I try to instil in young teachers. I have never been refused admission to any home I have visited.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. In certain circumstances and it would depend on the type of parent. If I judged them to be suitable types of people and what kind of help it was. One has to be very careful about the type of person one allows to be involved with children.

- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. When a child is registered by the parent to start in the infant department I invariably take the mother and child down to the classroom to meet the teacher and the other children and tell the parent about school rules and aims.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes, one can discover a great deal of information about home background by visiting. No, not information from children. It is very easy for a teacher to encourage children to confide these sort of things. I personally deplore this and discourage it.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. A very high proportion.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. Undoubtedly personal contact with parents by home visiting and meeting parents individually.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. No.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR

Headteacher Twenty-four      Transcript      Tape recorded 45 minutes

A.    Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A.    Oh yes, very much so. It's of great benefit to the child. The centre of the school is the child and the interest of the parent and the home in the school is very beneficial to the child. It also helps the teaching staff in their job.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.    I've just come from Nottingham where generally speaking there is much more parental involvement with the school. I've only been here a short time but I wouldn't think the North East is a part of the country where the home plays a very active part in the child's education, or the child's life at school.

I would say parents are crying out to be involved. I can only go by my own particular school. The response, and we had two parents meetings last week - there was almost a hundred percent. All the parents I've talked to are very keen to help. They have the same aim as we have, obviously, to help the child.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.    I can't think of any at the moment. You see I've been involved in things like Parent Teacher Associations for years. It's something I'm very interested in, although I haven't any experience here. I don't see any limits at all, in parents helping that is. Of course you can go to extremes, where there arises the question of whether a person is teaching or helping - a problem of professionalism, but if you mean parents helping the school - no I don't think I would have any - The problem is getting them in. There are limits from the parents point of view - getting them into the school is an achievement.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.    My reaction would be to encourage them and their interest and try to build it up. I did form a Parent Teacher Association in my last school which was very successful. Of course it doesn't have to be a Parent Teacher Association. You can have simply a Parents Association - There are such things, if that is what you want.

The social side was better attended yes, but I wouldn't use that as a criticism of a Parent Teacher Association, I think that's fair comment. It's obvious surely - Most people prefer to go to a cinema to see a film rather than listen to a lecture in archaeology. Again, you will get the odd few, who won't attend anything no matter how hard you try. This is no excuse at all for not having one for the majority who are interested and will attend functions. They are entitled to be considered surely. I know a common criticism of Parent Teacher Association's is that parents try to interfere with the

running of the school but I have had experience of quite a number and this has not been my experience. I have never known a parent who tried to interfere with the running of the school. Of course to run a successful Parent Teacher Association you need almost a hundred percent backing from your staff.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well, the main advantage of a formal system like a Parent Teacher Association is psychological. The parents feel that they have an organisation that allows them to do something about their interest.

If you haven't got some system for involving parents with the school in some way, the answer would be that you have no means of knowing really. There are of course all kinds of ways you can bring in the home and school together. I think in this area the attitude is that the parents are frightened to come to school. They think they will be a nuisance.

At our parents meetings I asked them why so few had been up and when I said I felt neglected, in a jocular way, they laughed. They hadn't even been up to complain about anything.

I had parent meetings in the evening last week. One for each year group deliberately so that we would have small groups. I didn't want a big crowd packed in the hall. I find they're not used to this idea of being involved with the school in this way.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. There isn't any specific formula for dealing with parents really, except that one could say that for a child to be properly educated, the partnership between the home and the school must be such to make parents feel that they are helping in a useful way in what their child is doing at school. A school must make parents feel that they are welcome and that their views are of importance in decisions about the child and that they are given all the information possible about their child at school.

Here again formal organisation has the psychological benefit of making interested parents feel that they are playing an active rather than a passive role.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh yes! Parents surely must be informed about the aims of a school - This is obvious. And organisation too - They need to have things like non-streaming for example, which we have, adequately explained. Provided parents are given explanations about the reasons for doing things and if they realise you have the interests of the child at heart, they will accept your explanation.

There are many different ways of providing this type of explanation. All of which serve some purpose in the overall pattern. Small parent meetings I feel are perhaps one of the best ways as, it is a two way process, with the parents being given the opportunity to ask questions.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Each parent is given an interview in private for ten minutes to a quarter of an hour with the class teacher and if necessary, me. We send out and give them a choice of time and the parent indicates which particular time is suitable. Each parent is given the child's report to read and take away with them. The written report for the junior age group classifies general subjects on the five point scale. I feel parents want some indication of their child's ability, even though the report is an individual one. There are two sections for each subject. One for attainment and one for effort which I regard as more important.

The five point scale runs from A for excellent, B Very good, C Average, D Below average, E Very weak. We have to explain this side to the parent as the school is unstreamed and they are disturbed by C, with its connotations of streaming. We also include a section for social attitudes. In the infants we supply a written report to parents who request them. The categories here being very broad - basic skills and manual control, play and creative activities, physical activities and social development. I include on the report a section on which the parent can put any remarks or information they think would be helpful.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Yes, in general. Although I think it should not consist of specially rehearsed activities and should be only part of a programme. The type I would favour would be where the parents could see displays of work showing the natural progression of work through the school from the infants through the junior stage, illustrating the child's development.

The work displayed would not be labelled with individual names, but perhaps 'boy aged nine years'. I should think once a year would be sufficient for an open day of this type.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangements for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Yes, as I have already described each parent who wishes to can have a private interview by arrangement. I am always available to see any parent in school and if necessary, the class teacher.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Yes, although the problem here I find is to encourage parents to feel welcome to visit the school. In my experience parents are interested in doing this and do not abuse it.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I can certainly see some value in it, although I'm not sure that headteachers or teachers are the best people to do this. You see the type of family you mentioned who never ever come to school, no matter how much they are encouraged would quite probably already have other social problems. They will very probably be already visited by quite a number of various social workers. In a sense they are probably overburdened with advice from a number of people and I'm not sure that in cases like this it isn't best

for one person only to be concerned with a particular family - a trained person who may be able to build up some useful kind of relationship with them and gain their confidence. I'm not sure that adding more and more people to the list of people visiting them with various kinds of advice is necessarily a good thing.

- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Certainly. I suppose there could be some areas where there could be professional problems but in general I have found most parents anxious to help in any way they can.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Yes, we have had parent meetings of this type. The child and parent when registering are shown the area where they will be working and meet the teacher and the child is allowed to handle the equipment.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so, how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes indeed. The more you know about the child the better job you can do in education. This is why I regard close contact and a mutual interchange of information with parents as important.  
In cases of physical or material disadvantage, close co-operation with the welfare authorities is essential I feel.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Just about a hundred percent so far at the various types of parent meeting we have had up to now. They are very keen indeed, although to be fair with it being a new school and what they regard as a new 'type' of school. I think perhaps they are very curious about us.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. For the private interviews yes. We would know which parent did not appear for this as they are carefully timetabled and each parent receives an invitation.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I feel that it is necessary to have a complete programme as it were for co-operating with parents but what we have attempted so far I feel the individual parent interviews have perhaps been the most successful.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. Not really. I think the parents are most anxious to see and to be involved with the school in any way they can. Perhaps in the past they have not been accustomed to this and are consequently a little shy when they do visit. Of course one always gets the odd extrovert, but in general in this area I feel this to be true  
We had a number of parent meetings last term, in the evening

for example, where I deliberately kept the numbers small - year groups at a time and they were seated in small groups at tables spaced about the hall. I addressed them first and invited questions but found the parents, even the obviously well educated ones, very reluctant to speak. I deliberately introduced controversial subjects like the eleven plus and comprehensive schools, but still found this. I told them we felt neglected as no one had been up to see us.

It may well have been that I talked too long or bored them, but this hasn't happened in other schools in other areas. I feel that the traditions in this area have made parents apprehensive.

We have had a lot of them in later to tell us how much they appreciated the meetings. Yet as I say, they were very quiet at the actual meeting.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE

Headteacher 25      Transcript      Tape Recorded 62 Minutes

## A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Oh I definately agree there's a lot in it! Interest in parents is worthwhile cultivating in any shape or form - providing you've got it in perspective and the parents don't try to take over and say I want my child to learn this or that - or I don't approve of modern maths - I want my child to learn tables. A situation like that would create a deadlock. Our experience with parents though, is that their interest is very worthwhile. They're unaware sometimes that their own child is not progressing academically and they're interested and willing to co-operate with you.

    You get the very very odd case like one man said 'I don't care how naughty he is if you tell me he's clever.' We haven't experienced any bad feelings about this at all.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      I think they like to come to school - they like the social side of it. They see an atmosphere at school that they have never known. When they were at school they sat in desks. They're 'tickled' at the idea of children moving round the school. If you invite them in - it's better if they come in informally but I find a lot of parents don't like to bother you. They like to talk to each other.

    Last term in the nursery they had two coffee mornings and the mothers just swarmed in. They're interested in coming to school. They're interested in seeing their own children and their work. The most ordinary of parents can feel a sense of achievement if they feel their child is getting somewhere.

    We had a case of a child of five who was not making the grade with reading. We had him tested by the educational psychologist - his I.Q. is only about sixty-eight. But that mother was anxious to have the child coached to read - you get this kind of interest. In this day and age the parents who are not interested are very very few - at the infant stage but of course the gap hasn't started to show, especially with non streaming. By the time they approach eleven plus the gap starts to show. The parents may think if he's dropped behind - well he's just not going to make it so why worry.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I wouldn't have any limits. I would encourage parents to do anything at all that they were willing to do. We had one mother who came in one half day every week and went into the classroom. I never asked the teacher what she was doing but I know she was hearing reading. It would have to be a very, very, poor parent who couldn't help a child in some way. You might get a parent who was more musical than the teacher and if that parent was willing to sing why not? There are some things that parents have real ability in. I wouldn't stop a parent doing anything at all that they could.

    We've always had a helpers scheme. We put a foolscap sheet up in school during open day or anytime that parents are in school and say sign up if you're willing. We always get a few parents

who will come and tidy up equipment. They may not want to hear children read but if they wanted to I wouldn't stop them.

The only snag is that in an area like this any woman who can is looking for paid employment. I remember a crowd of them cleaning some equipment and one of them laughingly said 'Is there no pay for this?' It was a joke, but I could see her point. She could be getting money for something like this - we've got to be realistic.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Well, I would quite welcome it - I certainly wouldn't put a damper on it in any shape or form. Unfortunately ours is not a very alert area - we've a very poor estate housing, very low paid workers. At the infant stage the children are only in school two years and the period is not long enough to maintain parents interest.

I would very much have liked to have a Parent-Teacher Association in our school, but when every member of your staff is a married woman with children and some of them travelling in from outside the town - you have to be sensible. If parents asked I would certainly be willing to start one and be willing to work it with them myself.

I've had no previous experience myself as a teacher of a Parent-Teacher Association. I've heard of people who say parents attempt to take over. I think if I said 'Look I definitely want a Parent-Teacher Association, most of my staff, not all, would say 'Yes let's get on and do it.' - but I know I would be placing a burden on them.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. You can assess it. You have links. With us having a nursery every parent is coming up twice a day. You get to know them and maintain it through the infants. I have a political contact with the parents very often I go to the womens section of the Labour Party - all the women are there.

You have to rely on what you hear. You yourself can sense if you're in tune with people. I know in our area there wouldn't be any woman, even if her problem had nothing to do with school, who wouldn't say will you listen to me. It might be an eviction - it might be trouble at home. If this sort of thing is happening I don't see how you can be out of tune with people.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I would say always listen to them. If a parent comes up very aggressive I would say 'Sit down, have a cup of tea. I know you're angry but we'll talk about it. You can say what you like, call me what you like but when you've finished I expect you to listen to me!'

By the time they've drunk a cup of tea there's very little rancour left. I think you must realise in dealing with parents that this is the person who has priority of right with the child and you're secondary. The child is precious to the parent - more precious than it can be to you. Coming to the end of my career I wish I could have learnt all this earlier - that parents have rights. It's up to you to cope with parents - you're not going to help by being aggressive. I would be inclined to say that all round you couldn't be too gentle with parents.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, if parents understand what you're doing they're more tolerant. Schools came up against this situation when they introduced I.T.A. Unless you explained to the parents what you were doing there could be trouble. You have to also involve them a bit in the organisation. Say your changing over from a streamed to an unstreamed school you'd be foolish to do it without explaining what you were trying to do and make them aware of what you're doing.

Mind the number of people who question you are very few. I had an example when we changed to vertical grouping. One child's mother raised a terrible row when the other group moved up, said 'Here she is with admits.' She was the only mother who made a fuss.

I don't issue booklets. I invite the parents in in groups to explain and for them to ask me questions. With a booklet, unless you put a questionnaire in, you don't get a response back. This has worked in our case. With changing to vertical grouping we'll have to have the parents in very early in September and let them see that the children are not working as they did in the fives class but they have the advantage of the same teacher.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. No, we never have reports. We have the parents in once a term and allow them to go through the child's books and talk to the teacher. If they're not happy they can come and see me. I'm wary about written reports they never told anybody much - what does satisfactory mean.

Besides, I don't think you can assess the ability of any child at any stage in half a dozen sentences. If a parent sees a gradual improvement in a book that's far better than us sitting down and writing good progress has been made.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Oh yes, I'm all in favour of open days. I was going to say the more the better but you couldn't really. In an infant school I can see nothing wrong with having parents in at least once a term.

We've always had them during school time. It's a very odd occasion a child hasn't a visitor on open day - a grandmother if the parents aren't available. You might even get a father dashing in at night saying 'can I have a word now.' It would probably be wiser to say 'we'll be in again at night six to eight' but I don't think it's necessary at the infant stage.

We vary them. Sometimes we say all parents can come and go round the classrooms. Then sometimes just the parents of one class for example to hear singing for the Festival or movement - anything like that.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

- A. Oh anytime - we allow the parents in anytime. We allow parents to walk into school we have chairs they can sit on. I would stop what I was doing anytime to see a parent.
- There is a disadvantage, a parent could monopolise a teacher for half an hour. There could be a waste of time for the children's point of view, not the parents. Sometimes they don't see me I accept that what they want relates to the class teacher. The teacher will let them come into the classroom never leave them standing at the door.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Oh yes, this happens frequently.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. It would be an advantage if these parents wanted to accept you. We have a few like this and on occasions when someone has had to go home with the child they've found the child was grabbed and the door shut where the teacher was quite willing to talk. I think the general trend here is that they don't want the teacher. Whether some of these parents still regard teachers as from a higher social background - you see they may not let anyone into their houses. You see people who have maybe no carpet - they probably don't let the woman next door in anymore than they'd let the teacher in! They probably don't regard the teacher as a friend although you've never actually done anything to make them feel otherwise.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Certainly - as I think I said before if you have a parent who is more musical than a teacher why not? We have a helpers scheme anyway and if these helpers have particular skills or talents as you say - so much the better isn't it? I would certainly use them.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Yes, but we have the advantage of a nursery when anybody comes in who hasn't seen it I take them in and show them the admission class. The disadvantage of this is - some schools talk about bringing parents in the last week of term but when you have forty children in a class - what do you do? The teacher's just not free. There's lots of things you would like to do.
- We do say to the parent if the child's making a fuss don't bring her in till ten o'clock or stay with her for half an hour or whatever time suits you and do this for a fortnight or so.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. A child can tell you an awful lot in their free writing. The more you know about a child the more tolerant you can be. We take note of all social problems. It does help if you know the child has a stepfather. Sometimes the mothers tell you. At the nursery stage the mothers tell you anything - they've had a nervous breakdown.

One little boy in the nursery last week said there was merry hell in our house last week, my dad was telling my brother off. Here's a four year old knows about a problem concerning his brother - knew his parents were concerned about his brother.

Most women are quite willing to talk about their husbands. They don't mind telling the defects - they certainly don't cover them up.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. I would say easily ninety percent! The other five percent or so would have grandparents coming. It would only be the odd five percent who didn't have somebody there. Very, very, few who don't attend. Out of a school of over three hundred - on an open day only perhaps half a dozen children who didn't have somebody there and this is from a poor community.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, but you know. At nursery everybody comes with a slight drop off at the infant stage.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the coffee or tea break is the happiest-it breaks the ice. You're moving about among the parents from table to table chatting to them. They talk more freely to you. I think if you stand up and address them it tends to become very formal and you're not as relaxed. Both sides aren't. You're talking at them and they're being talked at. The more informal the better. They'll tell you things then they wouldn't at a more formal meeting.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well, we don't have parents into a Sports Day at the infant stage. We have had but you have inquisitions into who won. Somebody hasn't given our so and so his prize. They forget that the teacher's watching forty-they're only watching their own. I would say we stopped them coming to Sports Day for this reason. That's about the only time we ever discourage parents.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

Headteacher 26 Transcript      Tape recorded 60 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Oh yes, I believe in parents being involved as much as possible with school - it's their children we're dealing with. I do think the response depends to some extent on the area your school is in though.

        The school gains too, you can learn so much more about the children and help them. There's still a lot of parents though who think they aren't welcome at school. I can see why, because of past attitudes - the parents still look on the school as some kind of authority.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      Yes I think they are interested - the majority I mean, but again it depends on the area the school is in. We have parents who have so many social problems at home they haven't got time to be much involved with school even if they wanted to be.

        I think they want to be involved and it's up to use to show them how.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I wouldn't have any limits on an interested parent. I'm most unprofessional I suppose but I want parents in the classroom working and helping and seeing what's going on - this is a semi open plan school. The more help we get of this type the better.

        Even with reading although we use I.T.A. and the parents couldnt really help here I suppose they find it a bit baffling I think.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I'd have to think very hard - it may sound surprising after what I've been saying but I'm not really in favour. You get the kind of parents joining who are interested enough to come up anyway the other kind wouldn't join. They might come up if it was in a more informal basis.

        No I've no experience myself but some of my friends (teachers) were involved with a local one some years ago. I don't want something that is purely social occasions, or for raising money.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      Well if you have alot of mothers in for one reason or another and in an infant school you have - you can sense it. You would be able to tell by the attitude of the people coming in.

        You certainly wouldn't get many parents coming to things if they were unhappy - we barely had room to dance round the Mayple at the May Day Pole dance that we invited parents to.

        Anyway we get parents in here for all sorts of things - filling in Social Security forms - it's amazing what they do come up for sometimes.

- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?
- A. I would say always listen to what they have to say and always find time to see them - it's no good saying I'm teaching I can't see you come back later - they might not come back.  
Some parents may have taken a long time getting up the courage to come up to school and be so put off they might never come back - always see them.
- B. Organisation (How)
- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?
- A. Oh yes parents should certainly be told about the aims of a school. I wonder sometimes about what is the best way - written stuff perhaps? Although of course with an infant school mothers are always coming up to register their children. I try to explain to them then about our aims.  
Yes you have to explain about organisation. We are family grouped here and you have to explain why you're doing it - the advantages I mean. When we first started it we had to explain to a mother bringing in an admission of say seven why they were with children of five - that while they were helping the younger children they weren't doing 'baby' work.  
Some of our mothers were very worried when we first changed over - there was a rumour that all the seven year olds were going back on baby books. One of the teachers had said to a mother 'You don't think after all the hard work I've spent teaching your child to read I'm going to put him back on his first book do you?' 'Oh', she said, 'I suppose not' - this seemed to convince them.  
I did have a talk for parents on modern maths but I realised they didn't understand a word I was talking about - it's difficult!
- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?
- A. No, we have no written reports. We do have a parents evening where a parent can come and talk to the teacher about the child. We don't timetable it - I set aside a couple of evenings and tell the parents they can come up anytime during certain hours.  
Infants like taking things home. I often say to a child take the reading book you've just finished and show your mother, let her hear you read it. Or we'll wrap up a bit of art work or written work and let them take it home.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. No I'm not in favour of open days as such they're far too formal. I think displays and set pieces are very artificial. I would like the parents to come in at anytime and see what a school's normally like.  
Well, how often depends on whether you think you need them or not - I don't like them at all.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

- A. The parents can come in at anytime to see me or the class teacher - I'll take the class if they want to see the teacher.  
I often see them passing my door. They just nod and say I'm going to see Miss So and So. Then we have the parents evening where they can have a chat with the teacher.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Yes very much so - I don't like these special occasions for seeing work that is. It's alright for harvest festivals or carol concerts.  
I like the parents to come in at anytime help if they want to and see what's going on.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Yes very much so, I'm a believer in this. I've done it myself, although I must admit not always on educational grounds, illness or because I wanted to find something out.  
They've always received me well although I'm trying to think if the ones who never visit tend to keep you on the doorstep. Oh yes, I think they do they say they hadn't time and make excuses. I don't know whether they did in fact come up after it.  
I think the important thing is it lets them see your a human being. Some of them have weird ideas about what headteachers are like. I'll give you an example - one mother had a little girl with a very bad speech impediment but would not come up to school to discuss it and never took her for any treatment. I visited her about it and told her that our own child had not really talked properly until nearly five, merely making unintelligible noises and what a relief it was for us after taking her once a week to Newcastle for treatment when she finally began speaking properly. She was amazed and said 'what! you mean your little girl couldn't speak properly and you a headteacher!' I don't think she'd realised it was a physical thing. Yes it has value - if nothing else it helps them to see that you have problems and children and are human like them.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes, as much as possible although I don't think we have any talented parents but help certainly. We have parents helping always and we go on frequent visits we encourage them to help in every way they can.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Yes it would - we have this system here already. We have no proper catchment area of course but we have various ways of collecting possible admissions through the children etc. and we either send a message through the children or write inviting them to come up and see us with their children. I talk to the parents and the children get used to the school we have one little boy who has been in four times already. We did it a whole morning at first but now we restrict it as the mothers get a little restive and the children don't want to go home.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?

A. Very important - the more you know about a child's home background the more you can help him particularly when he has problems at home and quite a lot have here broken homes and the like. Your school welfare officer can help a lot if he's good and your welfare assistant usually has a lot of local knowledge.

The problem is obtaining information. I use every possible source, the school welfare officer, the children's officer and all the welfare services I can. Although it's not always easy and can sometimes be unpleasant. We had a boy for example who was having great difficulty with reading and I suspected he had very bad sight. I rang the clinics and around and asked about the information on the clinic medical card about his eyesight and found out he was classed as partially sighted. He should have been on the special register but had not been put on. He should certainly not have been at this school at all. He isn't now, but the doctor was furious and said the information was confidential and should not have been given to me. I think there had been a mistake, so really the information of this nature you have access to depends on how hard you push and the attitude of the doctor.

I'd like to build up a proper dossier but of course you have to be careful - look at this recent row about schools keeping written records. We do know the father's occupation we ask it in the admission register.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Over fifty percent, it's built up. I can remember a time when we had ten at one thing - but over fifty percent now I think.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. Yes, we try to I would like to build up a proper file about each child. I like to know who comes and who doesn't.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the open door - parents being encouraged to visit whenever they want to is the most important thing. It's a gradual process though - you have to build the whole thing up slowly.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Not really. The only one is we take the children on frequent visits - like the theatre, the airport etc. and we encourage parents to come and collect 4p. per week although of course no child is stopped going for money. I sometimes have to tell mothers who are not paying who I think can't that they're being unfair to the child. It's good for the mothers too, some of them have never been to some of these places either. We have a trip to the pantomime as well each year.

I sometimes have problems with parents giving children sweets or crisps. I don't allow this and sometimes find they have them at the back of the bus that sort of thing.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

Headteacher 27      Transcript      Tape Recorded 39 minutes

## A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      In general yes, although I think you've got to be very careful about parent involvement - it's alright in theory.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      Well it's only in their ignorance they might be anxious for it. I don't think our parents are actually capable. It depends very much on the area the school is in.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I would definately say I wouldn't have them interfering educationally at all. I think at infant level certainly, it's not necessary, although I suppose at all levels it's the same. They're very quick to catch on to a person who's inclined to be what I call softer and in the classroom atmosphere the children would all be wanting to go to the parents.

I think it's important that there's one person in charge of a classroom and a little child could become confused about who is really in charge. If we have any students in the children prefer to go and ask the students for things, for example, always wanting to leave the room when the teacher won't allow them to because they've already been. I think this sort of thing would happen with parents in the classroom. The classroom door would be my limit, especially with the experiences I've had with my parents.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I would immediately allow them to do so. I've never had any actual experience myself but the only ones I've heard about, eventually like a lot of other societies it's become a little closed shop as regards the committee - I was here first sort of thing. If you have a very capable few its alright as long as their children are in the school but then you haven't anyone left to carry it on.

I knew of one where one of the parents was a very capable and forceful teacher and she more or less started and organised this parents association. It was fairly good for the four years she did it, but then her child moved out and she lost interest. There wasn't anyone as capable to take it over - she was the old fashioned type of teacher. This was years ago and she literally did run the parents association.

I would have no real objection. I never have any objection to any kind of scheme a person would try to start. In fact if I think they've got sufficient enthusiasum to do it I would let them have a bash at it.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. Well the only way I know is by personal contact. Every term the new admits have been brought the previous term to have their name put down. I have a little talk with the parent then and show the child the room that sort of thing. I say would you come in say a month or three weeks before the actual date of starting and what kind of things they can be occupying the child with meanwhile.

Of course mine is very much a family school being on an estate and I've been here fourteen years now so it's a case of a lot of them I know all about them because I've had their whole families. In some instances I send out to tell them of any new developments and the first morning of term I have a talk with the parents and tell them various things. Not to take any notice of what the children are saying, not that they're telling lies-it's that they're only telling things as they see it. If they have any doubts about anything not to hesitate to come up and see me I'll never refuse to see them. Not only to come when something bad is happening but to come when there's something good that sort of thing. I get more parents up with the bad points than with the good I may tell you but I never have any problems with this sort of approach.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. It depends on the area I think. My area is the parents come up very aggressive so I immediately have to take the wind out of their sails more or less.

You've got to tread very warily till you know what type of person you're dealing with and that can vary very considerably even in one school. In my experience I can honestly say you don't really know what type they are until they come up with some complaint. You can have thought what a very nice person how charming and nothing has gone wrong for a year or two years, then a tiny little thing and they're on the defensive for themselves and the child and they come up to attack you. We've had some very nasty situations ever nothing. For example, 'you've shouted at my child'; 'you're not going to shout at my child', or 'you've shown up my child.' To me it's just ridiculous. I don't see how you can show up very small children. I think you've got to be very, very careful and it's getting worse.

When I first started teaching it was entirely different. The attitudes are getting worse. You can't do anything against their child and in your opinion you're not doing anything. You may be only correcting the child.

For example on parents day we have singing in the hall first and because of our previous experience where they did not control little children at all to such an extent that the singing was ruined - we've had to say sorry no children. We gave the tickets out a week beforehand so that they had plenty of time to make arrangements. To my knowledge if they want to have a hairdo they can get the children looked after then. Even then we have to lock the doors and allow only one entrance, because if we don't we have parents in with children so we lock the doors.

I was in the entrance and saw a girl about ten who had been in the school with her auntie - the mother was working. When she saw me she didn't say anything just stopped outside and the auntie went in to the singing. Then I went to the class rooms after the singing and there's this girl looking at her sisters work. I said 'here you should be at school I can't allow you in this school'. Now there were parents in this classroom but I don't know what you're supposed to do whisper? - but she went out. Then Tuesday morning irate

mother - 'I'm not going to have you upset my child, shout at her', all this. I said if she's fit to be in this school she's fit to be in her own school. I didn't know she was here she said. I said she's your child and your responsibility. She went off shouting.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I think there's no reason why they shouldn't be. I did have a little talk to them about the Nuffield Maths - not to expect formal sums, that sort of thing - or teaching capital letters before five. Taking them on outings - this sort of thing.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. Well, we don't use written reports at all. At anytime at all they can come up and see me and then the class teacher and we can tell them anything they're wanting to know.

Then after the children have reached a certain stage in reading, usually about six and a half, we let them take their books home. I'm not in favour of it before then. I think that's what the teachers are there for. Teachers are there to teach. They're not there to be relieved by the parents.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I'm in favour - I think they're a very good thing. For one thing you get a chance to show them the nice things, like the art and junk work and model work, or singing or an exhibition of P.E.

We have two really, because we have the carol service where they go in the classrooms and see the Christmas decorations. Then we have the one in July too where we have the open day - so we really have two you could say.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Well, the parents know that if there's anything that they're anxious about at all they can come up and see me. I would never refuse to see a parent. They know this. They can see the teacher too to discuss the child's work or progress if they want to.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I personally don't think it's necessary because lets fact it, they are a distraction. Times short enough - we haven't got enough time with the children as it is. If anything does happen though and a parent comes up I sometimes say go in and sit in with them. I never stop parents if it's a genuine thing.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Well, I think with certain types of parents if you went and knocked

on their door you wouldn't get in. But anyway we have a hundred percent coming to open days. If we don't have the parents we have the aunt or someone.

I wonder why the situation seems to change between the infants and juniors?

- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. I don't see why not, providing it's something that they're able to help with.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Well every term when the new admits come in I have a talk to the parents and ask them if they would like to see the classroom and take the child down there and see the teacher and the other children. I think this is a big help. I tell the parents various things about the school too and what sort of thing they should be doing with them - taking them on outings this sort of thing.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. There again I think you use everything that happens to glean information without being inquisitive. But an Englishman's home is his castle. I don't think it's anybody's business to probe too much but if you do have hearsay of anything you think well - that's what we thought.
- If there's anything wrong as far as the marriage is concerned or the husband drinks too much they tell you everything & you don't have to ask. In fact they come and ask your advice but sometimes I think they just want to tell someone.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Near enough a hundred percent.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, because the thing is I don't really need to. It's only perhaps one or two and it's probably a family who never come to anything and they stick out anyway. I've probably had someone before or I know the woman can't come because she's working.
- They know though if they can't come one day they can come the next. We do try to accommodate them.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. Definitely the open day and the carol service because they want to know how the children are getting on.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities?  
If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Only the letting of children come. If they had kicked up rough about this I would have stopped, because it just ruined the singing. There's still one or two trying it on, but they are a minority. I say to all of them it's their fault I've told them it's not me. They won't control the under fives.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

Headteacher Twenty-eight Transcript Tape recorded 41 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. The old idea of the teacher on the inside and the parent left on the outside that's gone, thank heaven for that. I can only speak for here and here we do what we can to get especially those parents we feel we need in the school. We try and get those parents in who believe in the teacher and the parent working together.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. Here no. I think the ones anxious for more involvement are in a minority. I think this is affected by the area the school's in isn't it? Most of them here are content to leave the educational side of things to the teacher.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I wouldn't have parents in to hear reading or anything like that unless it was with a child who could already read fluently and all that was wanted was for someone to hear this child read a story.

It would have to be a different type of school to this. I wouldn't feel the classroom door was the actual limit but you'd have to watch it very carefully.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I'm not sure that a Parent-Teacher Association is the way to go about it. This can create an artificial thing. I've been in a Parent-Teacher Association on the Committee. I found it tended to concentrate on the dance etc., the social side - the whist drive on a Saturday. They worked hard and we got a tape recorder and various things from it, but I don't know that that's really what it is all about - that parent-teacher relations are about that.

I would think if we had one here a group of parents would really get down to it, work hard at it-but they're not really the ones you want to get interested.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. I don't know. I suppose by the fact that parents know what goes on. We meet them straight away in an infant school. I have mothers in here regularly to discuss things.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I think you have to start from scratch and build things up. I don't think you can generalise.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes. For instance we tried vertical grouping last year. I had a parents' meeting and told them exactly what I was doing. I changed it and told them again why. I think if you put people in the picture about things it helps. They have to know that you care.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. No, they come up. We don't have an open day as such. We have a concert when they come up and they are free to go round and ask. A lot of them come up at odd times to ask.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. No, I think they're just artificial. There's a whole lot of stuff put up on the walls that doesn't really have anything to do with the years work in my experience.  
I think parents should be able to come and see normal work. We have a coffee morning when they can do this. How often? - September, Christmas, Easter. We have the coffee morning on a Saturday morning with a bring and buy sale. The parents are there and you can talk to them without the children being there.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. Not a set time or anything. In fact if somebody comes in they can see me or the teacher. If a parent has seen a teacher I expect to be informed about it.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Yes, within limits. I think this is better than an artificial kind of open day-providing the numbers were small.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. There are two homes I'm going to pop in to tomorrow. I only go for a reason. I don't think we have the right to just go. It may do more harm than good. I think you've got to be careful about this.

Mind with one, although I had a reason for going, a parent I'd never seen for ages, I got a much better reception than I thought. We chatted and after that she came. It worked there.

Perhaps with some of these people the parents themselves didn't like school - I don't know. We had a grandfather come here with two children a short while ago. He went before I came and I asked the two children if they had come by themselves - he'd left!

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. It would depend. We were given a bird table thing - daddy had made

it but hadn't painted it - we needed another parent to paint it. This was alright.

Although I think the young teacher can easily be swamped out by the elderly woman coming in - hearing them read - there is a time and a place. It's our work and anyone who comes in to help us do our work better, okay.

- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. No, not formally. Only when they come to put their names down I see them all. I usually introduce the child to the classroom and the teacher but I don't have a formal system.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes. Well if I don't know, and I know quite a lot of what goes on around here, I walk round you can see the area.  
My welfare assistant gets to know a lot and the children are a source of information. One of my boys had been very naughty for a few days and I wondered why - there was a separation in the offing, we found this out.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. About seventy-five to eighty percent on an open type of day
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No. We know who doesn't come.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I should think possibly the coffee morning. They can do something to help there - come and wash up or provide things for a raffle. We've only had one so far. We had it so we could buy some sort of rocking horse for the little ones. We had the coffee morning and a rocking horse was given and a slide. So in fact we used the money for a paddling pool and other things.  
Once you show an interest. They do respond if you show an interest. In this area I think it's better that way. In some areas you would find parents more ready to involve themselves in the academic side, here it's the social side I think.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. No not really.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER TWENTY-NINE

Headteacher Twenty-nine Transcript Tape recorded 53 minutesA. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. I'm not awfully familiar with the Flowden Report I haven't read it through. I must admit. I don't really think parent involvement is worthwhile. I don't think I would care to have parents working inside the school which is the idea isn't it of parents coming in and helping with the children? I don't think I would like that I think possibly parents could come in and help with open days that sort of thing.

I don't think I'm keen on parents coming in and working in the school or the class. I wouldn't be in favour of that.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. No, I don't. I think it's only a minority who are.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I would draw the line at helping in the classroom anything like that - hearing reading something like that.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Obviously I would consider it very carefully. I don't care for Parent-Teacher Associations but if a group approached me I would pay attention to what they said. It would be wrong not to listen to a group of parents who suggested that a Parent-Teacher Association was started - I've never had this happen mind.

I've had no experience as a teacher of one, the knowledge I have - there's only been two in ..... and when they ran these activities at night they were seeking for people other than parents. I know people who have been approached will you come to our whist drive - fund raising.

I had a slight knowledge of one because I was in the tennis club of one. I don't think they knew I was a teacher and quite honestly I wouldn't like it to happen in my school. From what I heard I thought they were taking over a little bit too much. Several of the parents there were in the Parent-Teacher Association - they took too much for granted. I think it was just a parents association.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. I'm quite definite about this. I think as you enter a school there's a certain atmosphere and I think as parents enter a school there's a definite atmosphere of their attitude towards the school. I have no doubts about this whatsoever. As parents come into a school you can tell their attitude at once.

I do have parents frequently in our school. I should think the parents have been in our school four times this term by invitation and we're packed out. We haven't got enough room in the hall for them. I feel this sort of thing wouldn't happen -

it would fall down if there was a formal organisation.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Be sympathetic. I would suggest. Never be aggressive, even if on an odd occasion there was an aggressive parent. I would never be aggressive in return.

I wouldn't think different classes of parents need different treatment. I think people have the right to the utmost politeness whatever class they come from. The working class appreciate it more than the middle class I think. I haven't been in a school where it has been predominately middle class in my teaching career.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes I do. I think it's best done when the children are admitted. You always get the parents there and the group is fairly small. You tell the parents when they come into school then - it's better than a big organised meeting.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. No, we don't use written reports. The parents come into the rooms and look at the children's work. I encourage parents to come in if they think there are any difficulties and the parents who do come up say 'I hope I'm not disturbing you' and I say 'This is why I'm paid - this is my job to help you.'

A piece of writing doesn't really show much does it?

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time.

A. Oh yes I'm in favour. We have an open day at least once a term and very often like this term we have three open days - but we usually have something on at the time. Maybe before play. I invite the parents into the class afterwards, so they do get into the school frequently. Once a year is too much like a special effort. This is the time we're going to see what the work is like sort of thing. I prefer it at least once a term.

For example we had one on World Children's day which was very successful indeed. We had two hundred and fifty parents in. We had one hundred and eighty children in the school. We had a service and a collection among the parents and raised £10. We had a little stall and sold Save the Children tea towels and things and afterwards we told the parents they could go into the classroom and talk to the teacher.

This last open day we had, which was prize day, I gave all the children who go into the junior school a prize - a book and this particular time it was a beautiful day I said the children could go out on to the field so that the parents could have a better opportunity of talking to the teachers. The children were not in the classroom like normal.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. They come in at anytime - of course it's more difficult to see a teacher. I'm sometimes a little doubtful about this. Parents

sometimes ask teachers who are in their probationary year and who know very little about it.

The young teachers I'm afraid may be saying entirely the wrong thing to the parents. In fact it's happened where the parents have been right - the teachers have been wrong, but I couldn't really say this.

Apart from this, I wouldn't have any objection to a parent wanting to see a teacher, although I think it's better if they come and see me first.

- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. I think if parents come in a lot they're going to see the children working in the classroom and they're going to see the atmosphere of the school.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. I think you would have to be very careful about this. I have called at houses occasionally. At infant school if a child is feeling poorly this is the opportunity that doesn't occur so often in other schools and very often I take them home.  
They will say 'come in', not that you always want to come in. I think if parents see you are really caring for the children even the poorest of parents sometimes love their children. If a child is dirty and unkept I think a person tends to assume the child is unloved. I don't think it's always true.  
As far as I know I can't think of any parent who never comes - grandma or someone will come.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. That would depend on the individual I think. You'd have to be careful.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Not to a great extent, but they do come and put their names down and as far as I can I take them down to the classroom and show them the room and say this will be your teacher. I try to show parents things - it's worthwhile.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes it's important, but you have to be very careful about where you get the information. You can't really listen to gossip can you?  
There's a lot of advantage I'm quite sure. I don't think one half of the world knows how the other half lives, very often. I don't think you always realise what terrible situations people have sometimes of sickness alone - what parents have to cope with - their own sickness or grandparents.  
I do think you can very easily not know what the situation is in a home. I think if you're sympathetic a parent will often tell you quite a lot.  
Of course infants have no inhibitions about telling you what is going on at home.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. If I said a hundred percent that wouldn't be true but nearly, well over ninety percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. I certainly make enquiries about if a parent has attended or not and why. Of course you do get an odd one who doesn't come but most of them will come to the next one.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Sometimes it's difficult to tell which is the most successful, on the open day when they can all come and also the free access are equally important. I wouldn't like to say which is most successful. I think one depends on the other.

Some parents will come to an open day because of the numbers who probably wouldn't come up themselves.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well, I think parents can want to run things too perfectly. I don't have parents in for sports day for example.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY

Headteacher 30      Transcript      Tape Recorded 38 Minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      I think some of it is - I believe in involving parents with the children to some extent because education is the growth of the whole personality and therefore the home and the school both have a part to play-therefore they should get together.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      Yes,I think the majority are. I must confess I haven't tried a Parent-Teacher Association though.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      Yes,I think I would have limits. I've got a few reservations about letting parents in on everything and anything.

I think the classroom door would be my limit the teaching situation.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I would want to know why they wanted one and what they were going to do and what benefit it would be to the school and not just another little social club - what their motives were and what good purpose it was going to serve.

I've had no experience of a Parent-Teacher Association before I was a head, but then not many infant heads have them. I've always felt that so long as we have open days and keep an open school in so much as I always say to parents,'now look if there's anything you want to know,or anything with which I can help-come along' and they do feel that they can come along and they do feel they can, it's an open school from this point of view. I feel that if you have this kind of relationship with the parents a Parent-Teacher Association is not necessary, unless you have it as a social thing, which I wouldn't agree with.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      I think you do know you can't help but know. In an infants school parents come in for all sorts of reasons - you can't help but know. I feel very closely linked with our parents.

Q.6.    What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A.      I don't think you can be catagorical about this you know I think you have to take each parent as they come. You see it's a funny week to be asking this, I've had trouble with parents this week at school and in a way I've felt they've interfered in something trivial - two children having a fight. I had already disciplined them.

I think parents nowadays are inclined too much to set up battle royal on behalf of their children in things which would be better left to the school. If you'd asked me this last week I wouldn't have said this but I was very upset about it I did say to the staff. I shall think twice about having open days - it had nothing to do with them - it was something that had happened in my school in my school time. They were very unpleasant about a triviality - pulling each others hair - but it's the trivialities which reach the television screens nowadays.

I would perhaps now have reservations about being too liberal about allowing parents in if coming in means interference in internal school matters but for coming in and seeing what goes on, talking over problems-this is invaluable.

We seem to have a lot of broken homes and I have a lot of children with behaviour problems because of it and I would prefer parents coming in nattering about these sorts of problems-it's a big help.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about eh aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, I think so - you could probably tell them when the child was admitted - sometimes with parents individually but I always have a short talk with them altogether.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens' progress in your school?

A. No written reports the parents can talk to the teacher on open day or of course if they can come up at anytime and enquire.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I am providing they're not too much of a showpiece. I prefer really parents to come in and see the situation as it is and not something that's put on for their benefit.

We just open the school and invite the parents in. The children are in the classrooms and the parents wander around during the day. We usually end with a little concert - the parents like it - but whether it's of any real value I would question. I might change that next year. You see I have to have three open days, my accommodation is very limited I have a very small hall. I have wondered if it would be better to have one day and allow parents to come in anytime during that day. It might be more of a strain mind for the teachers - and not have any singing or anything.

At the moment we have two classes at a time an hour-they walk round see the work talk to the teacher and end with a bit of singing.

I have one like that and one at Christmas more a carol concert and Nativity play - more a social sort of thing.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. They can come at anytime to see me but if it's anything like the childrens work or something I think I can't answer as well as the class teacher can, I always bring the class teacher along and let them see the parents.

- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Yes, I think it could be useful, my problem would be numbers - we have an old building - lack of accommodation. Yes, better in many ways than having a special day.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. This is something I've never done not like that. I can see that it could be valuable there are some parents you don't see.  
It doesn't seem to be a problem in my school-I see most parents.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes - I'd have no objection.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. When the parents bring up their children to register them I take them to see the classroom and the class teacher. I think this of value.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes - I think if a child is being very difficult in some way and shows behaviour problems - it can be done tactfully and diplomatically - it can be done in the right way. One can send for the parent and have a chat and see if there's something it would be helpful for us all to know.  
I think I would discount information coming from the children a bit - take it with a pinch of salt.  
Mothers come very regularly to me-I think I should take a degree in social studies or something, more and more my job seems to consist of talking to parents, about their problems that are not really connected with the school - marital problems which do affect the children yes. One mother comes up often because she says she has no one else to talk to.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. About ninety-five percent I think - ninety to ninety-five percent anyway. We organised a sports day for World Childrens Day and made £40 sold tickets to children. I sold two hundred and seventy tickets before the day dawned.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, but being a comparatively small school and a family sort of school I do know more or less.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think the coming in at anytime is most useful.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Not really, although I'm in favour of involving parents. I think one has to be a little careful if they start interfering. This was the first sports day where we had invited parents, it went well but of course one never knows.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-ONE

Headteacher 31      Transcript      Tape Recorded 42 Minutes

## A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Yes, in general I would think so, although not in what I would call the professional activities of the school. There are so many other ways in which parents can help.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      No, but of course it depends on your area doesn't it? I wouldn't say the majority here were interested in involvement, interested generally yes, that's a different thing. They'll come to open days and carol concerts but so many mothers have so many other things to occupy them - large families for instance.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      The limits I mentioned before. I would not approve really of parents being involved in the classroom in the actual learning process. Teaching is such a skilled job requiring training-the real appreciation of a child's needs. Other jobs in the classroom non teaching jobs I mean - cutting papers, mixing paint could be better done by ancillaries I feel.

The physical difficulties too of course-with anything up to forty children in a cramped old classroom such as we have-there really isn't enough room for the children and the teacher. I think the classroom door would be my limit.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      My reaction would be quite favourable I think generally. I spent some years in Canada and was involved with a Parent-Teacher Association and saw what it could accomplish for the school. They had in guest speakers - they were very good at organising that sort of thing - paediatricians, people like that. It was very good for example in organising things which the children could learn outside of school hours - for example on Saturday morning the children could go in and learn puppetry. All this was organised by the parents.

Although again I feel it depends on the area I think - informal contacts work much better here.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      Well, by the reaction of the parents who come in I suppose and we get plenty. I encourage the parents to come in at any time with any problems, I like to think of it as an 'open door' approach where they can come in at any time.

I also give parents a slip with the school telephone number and encourage them to ring up if a child is absent or get someone else to do it for them. A lot of mothers ring up now-this kind of contact seems to be really used.

- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?
- A. That's a difficult one. Always listen I think and never to get angry, it never does any good. Always listen to what a mother has to say and give them a cup of tea, try to discuss any problem in a quiet way without rancour. Very often you can explain the schools side of it this way although there are always two sides to everything. And if all else fails I suppose to agree to differ - you have to get on with and co-operate with parents - it's why we're all here I suppose.
- B. Organisation (How)
- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?
- A. Yes I do, although without going into any great educational detail. The best way again I feel is by informal contacts - you could print expensive booklets but probably only about twenty-five percent would read them.
- Yes, you have to explain about the way you organise things like I.T.A. which was already established when I arrived here. I had a mother asking if her child would ever learn this way and I was quite frank with her and said 'I have never taught this myself and if it doesn't seem to be working rest assured I will discontinue it.' The child however made very good progress in fact she rang me up recently to tell me she's top of her class - she's taking her Eleven Plus this year.
- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?
- A. No, we don't have written reports. I feel at the infant stage children develop at such very different rates in all sorts of ways you cannot really report on a child like this.
- The parents can come up at anytime and enquire and on open evenings like tonight they can have a word with the class teacher about the child. It's much more satisfactory talking to each other - I feel you both can help each other.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Yes, we have one now like tonight and one at Christmas where parents come in to hear the carols things like this - they're very fond of it.
- Well we tried it during the day but it's very difficult to keep the children occupied so we have it in the evening now - I feel it's much better.
- We have a general display of work including basic subjects - maths, writing, to try to show the progression achieved through the school and a guest speaker the parents seemed to be very interested - we have a welfare worker here to talk tonight.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Oh they don't need an appointment - I believe in the 'open door' - they can come in anytime. They can always see the teacher if necessary too, and of course they see us on open evenings.

- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Well, there's great difficulty here. Again there's hardly enough time for everything that already goes on in school, doctor and medical visits, etc. I don't think the physical conditions would permit it anyway.  
After all our most important function is still to teach and for the child to make progress isn't it? I don't think really there's enough time in the day left for this.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Well, I think this sort of thing is much better done by trained social workers and then again better by mature people with children of their own if possible who have some understanding - real understanding.  
I can't imagine what a young girl of twenty or so who has read a book about it can achieve really - the idea of them going to homes giving people advice I find rather incongruous I must admit.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Oh yes, any help that you can get you should accept I feel - never refuse.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Yes we do - after the parent comes in to register the child I ask them if they would like to come in and bring the child before they start. I feel it does so much good in settling the child in before they start school.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes, I suppose so but you must not pry. Of course children, particularly infants will tell you a great deal, but you must always try to lean towards the child I believe. Sometimes of course parents do tell you things they ask all sorts of advice here.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. About two-thirds to eighty percent here.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, we don't keep any written record as such, but of course we know I suppose who never comes - the teachers do.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I think the 'open door' allowing parents up at anytime to talk to you about anything. The success of your other functions probably depends on this I think doesn't it?

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities?  
If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, not really, possibly only when we go on trips you can have problems about which parents you select to come with you - numbers are restricted of course by the number of seats. This can cause jealousy.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-TWO

Headteacher 32      Transcript      Tape Recorded 35 Minutes

## A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Not entirely. I like my parents not to be afraid to come into the school and see me or talk to the teacher. I like to know the background of the child but there again, I don't think there should be too much involvement.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A. Yes, for the most part they are. I'm very conscious in my school, anyway, that they're interested in the effect of the school on the children.

Different areas have different attitudes. I've been in different parts of the town where the attitudes have been entirely different. The children are all the same but it's amazing the difference in the attitudes of the parents in different areas of the town.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. No, lets not have too many complications - in the school my limit would be the classroom. You have fair sized classes still and you can't have a parent coming in and disturbing a class. I think it's up to the headteacher to help more than a parent. After all what qualification has a parent to become involved with a class? After all a parent is going to want its child to be the focal point - I'm sorry no.

I like the idea of the parents being interested but not in the classroom oh no!

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. Very difficult - once you allow parents to become involved they could take over along their own little line of interest rather than what's good for the school.

I've no experience as a teacher but I have heard about the two that ran in the town and I've thought oh dear, I wouldn't have liked to be involved. Quite awful, not terrifying but appalling, perhaps, to see a situation where a parent can just walk in on you and after all with just their own child in view.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. It depends on you yourself. I'm quite sure that the parents in my school know that they can approach me at anytime. They know that I'm philosophical and that I as a headteacher if I'm not like a mother to the children well I'm like a grandmother and anything I do is for the good of the child.

They know they can come and talk to me. Sometimes they come a bit upset but they know I'm going to listen to them. I don't want them to interfere and harass the teacher - they must come to me and even in wet days I say 'come in the cloakrooms. I say don't block the passages it's not fair to the children it upsets them.' You have to be fair to all the children, not just those children whose parents are anxious.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Listen. Take them aside listen to what they have to say when you've got them in your room. Don't let them blow their top. Very often a parent will come in upset but let them have their say and let them have the benefit of your own experience. Let them think it over and very often you will find they will calm down and see reason.

Sympathize with them. I don't think I've had anyone who's gone out really vexed - you're a peace-maker too.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I do let my parents know that the aims and organisation of my school is such that everything is done on the fairest basis and to help each child to take its place in society. One of the main things in my experience is to get the child reading.

I have been quite exhausted at times explaining these sort of things to parents. One mother wanted her child removed because we were using I.T.A. I spent a long time explaining this to her she eventually wanted the child to stay and she's coming on very well and reading very fluently. I think parents like to feel that the organisation of a school is the best.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. Now we ask them to come in it's much better person to person - you can have a two way talk - it's a two way business. I like to set a standard. The children go home and say I should be in bed by seven o'clock even if I'm not asleep. Children should have someone who will say what is right and what is wrong.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes certain kinds of open days. For instance I'm not having an open day with my younger children. I'm saying to the children ask your mummies to come tomorrow morning to see me, because if you have parents all crowding into the school together some will not come forward - or some will monopolise the teacher. If the parents are told, they can come up anytime.

My oldest children, we're having all the parents up next week and have the junior school headteacher there. We're giving each of them a present-a book prize. They've all tried in their own way and the junior school headteacher is presenting the books.

We will have a couple of songs for the parents. They can come and have a word with me after, we have one every year.

The parents of the fives are invited up after the holidays when those children settle in their classes. They can come up and meet the teachers. It's better having the parents coming in at the start of the year when you can say Johnny is a bit lazy, than at the end of the year when there's no hope.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

- A. The parents know they can come up anytime. I have my parents coming up and saying can I just go and see the teacher or can I have a word with you first about Johnny.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. You know teachers have got a terrific amount to do. When you consider the approach to work in an infants school all the grouping you have. Would you like to be observed every step you take?  
If you're a normal hardworking teacher it could be offputting couldn't it? - no, I don't think so.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. You do get every parent coming up at some time in an infant school. If the case of parents who don't come - this is where you should rely on your welfare officers. I have marvellous co-operation with mine and because of them I have had some parents up. I think it's better done by them.  
I think it's good that a heads a head-someone who is there. Why should I go to someones house because say a mother won't send her children to the clinic or school? You have got the kind of person who would say she's been to my house not yours and feel boosted because of it - it's not right.  
Why should a parent get notice by being awkward?
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. In certain circumstances yes. A year or two back we had parents help with the last school trip - that was one circumstance.  
I think you have to be careful about other things like pianists say, wouldn't you? They help with angels wings and things like that at Christmas plays.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Yes, we do when they are registered. I say come and see our school they meet the teacher and see the classroom.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh yes, - you ask. I say your child is coming into my care I want the best for your child as you want the best. Is there anything I should know? You get all sorts of things told to you. I don't encourage gossip I say your marriage is your business.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. I'm always overwhelmed. At the Nativity concert I felt touched and amazed the place is packed, more so even than the other times.

- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. I don't keep a record but sometimes they come up on other occasions if they're working or something like that.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. The Christmas one I think for numbers and letting them come up at anytime.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. Not really-none that I can think of.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-THREE

Headteacher 33      Transcript      Tape Recorded 35 Minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Yes, I think so - of course there's some parents you don't get any further with. The parents that you'd really like to contact, that you need to contact don't always come and I don't know that it would be easier if they did.

We do have an open school here. We have no Parent-Teacher Association but we always invite the parents when they bring children in from the beginning. I always say 'Do come up, see the teachers and see me.' Well the only ones who come are the parents of the children who are progressing well and there's no need for them to come. In general though, I suppose it's worthwhile.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      I think the majority of parents are. We do find on things like sports day they're anxious to come. That would be the majority I think.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I don't know that parents are really equipped to hear reading properly. We do allow children to take their reading books home and we find when they come back the parent has said 'he's read twenty pages last night!' No, mind our classrooms are so small we can hardly fit the children and the teachers in but I think the classroom door would be my limit.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I've got very mixed feelings about Parent-Teacher Associations. I think they tend very often to become social clubs. To again be honest I've never been involved in a Parent-Teacher Association - it's what I've heard from other people.

About the two that ran in the town, yes. I prefer parents to come in individually. You can get down to bedrock about that particular child and I don't think you get that with a Parent-Teacher Association. Mind I think their money raising efforts do very often help the school. I may be old fashioned but I think the school is our concern.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      Just the attitude of parents when they come to see you I suppose. If they have a friendly interest and you very often get praised for things you're doing in school. I think it's just a feeling you get in general. I suppose every school is the same - you get a certain number of parents who are antagonistic to the school.

Infants schools are very involved with parents anyway in the normal course of things, registering, medicals, etc. I don't really think we need anything more formal.

- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?
- A. I think you have to approach each parent differently. It's the same with children you can't generalise. It's the same with parents.
- B. Organisation (How)
- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?
- A. Well, I think that might apply more to secondary schools don't you? Our aims I suppose are to teach them to get on with other people as members of a community. The parents would be aware of this I think.
- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?
- A. Well, we don't use written reports. We have an open day I think we had two last year. We said the parents could come between certain hours and they were quite free to go to the classrooms and ask the teachers about the childrens progress. This year we had to cancel it because of the medical exam. We still have parents coming up though and asking teachers how their children are getting on. When parents come up you can hear various reasons why they think the children may not have made progress that year. You wouldn't get that from a written report. I think a percentage of our parents wouldn't read a written report - this certainly happens with circulars we have sent out. They have been torn up and put in the fire.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Not altogether. You get far too many parents wondering what other children are doing. You know so and so is not doing half as well as so and so. It can cause quite a lot of jealousy.
- When we have one we have very little room so we can't have any displays of work set out in the hall. Teachers are in the classrooms with the normal work they have been doing all the term on the walls. We tell parents they can come between the hours of perhaps 10 to 11.30 one morning and the hours of 2 and 3.30 in the afternoon.
- Last year we found they all tended to come at the same time and stayed the entire morning. With forty odd children in a classroom and forty odd parents and aunties and grandmothers it's absolutely chaotic. So last year we decided we would have to think of some other method. This year we've had to cancel it so it hasn't arisen.
- If you had time and space I think you could have them once a term.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. They can come anytime. It can be very inconvenient often but I see them. If they want to see the teacher I would allow them to go to the classroom, or if it was something very private I would take over in the classroom.
- Q.11. Do you think parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

- A. Again it's just an impossibility physically here. In theory I think it might be quite a good idea. To see how they are learning. We do have parents coming to ask us about these modern methods you know. They usually say it was different in my day - 'well I' leave it to you then.'
- I might be prepared to try it if we had the space. I think it might be better from the open day to give - say half a dozen parents an appointment and spread it over a longer period.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Judging by the homes some of our children have got I don't know about this. We don't go visiting as such. You see in an infant school I have occasionally had to take a child home and very often I'm met with abuse. Perhaps for having allowed a child to dirty himself. I think the homes like this you'd want to contact - I don't think you'd be very welcome there anyway!
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes, I think possibly so. It hasn't here because we're not in an area where we could expect a lot of help. There are certainly a handful of parents who we like to help with odds and ends.
- You'd probably have to have permission from the Education Committee I think. You'd have to pick your parents very, very, carefully, a lot of parents would be quite content to take the place from you.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. This happens - a parent comes here to register a child a few weeks before the child is due to start school and I usually take them to see the teacher I think will be taking the child. The teacher talks to them, I talk to them and usually show them round the school.
- I think this is worthwhile. Sometimes they have brothers and sisters in another room we go and visit them too. Usually I spend about half an hour with each child when it comes to be registered. It does help a lot. They've touched things. They come back quite happy usually although again it's very time consuming.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh yes, I think this is very important. We find out in all sorts of ways sometimes it's gossip from neighbours who think they should come and tell you what's been going on.
- We had one case where the mother had gone off and the father was a bit unstable but doing his best. He was at work and these children were actually scavenging in the dustbins. They should have been having free meals. A woman came and said she had actually seen them eating the food she had put out for her dog and thought it was about time we knew.
- I contacted the authorities. Of course the children tell you all sorts of secrets but there's usually a bit of truth in it. If it's anything harmful to the children we usually pass it on to the nurse and she investigates.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. About seventy-five percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, we don't keep any form of record. Sometimes we do send a note to a child's parents asking to see them and there's not many would refuse a request like this.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think letting the parents come anytime. On an open day you haven't really got time to see anyone. Letting them come in anytime I think is the most successful from our point of view here.

You can't talk very privately when you have a classroom full of parents on an open day. Perhaps you're discussing a child's disabilities or laziness - you don't want any other parent to hear this. I always say please do come in at anytime and I find this more successful.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. Well, on our sports day this year we took them to the local park and we had to bring them back early and brought them back to school. The parents were not involving themselves at all. They all had young ones with them and they'd come for a day out and expected the teachers to look after the under fives too. These little ones, there must have been fifty to a hundred of them just running in and out of our races. They had bottles of juice and kept enticing our children away from their teacher.

We found it just absolutely chaotic. We kept on gathering up groups of under fives taking them back to the parents and saying would you mind keeping them out of the way. Not a scrap of notice taken. In the end we got so frustrated we just packed up early. Really it was so chaotic with parents not one of them made any attempt to help us at all. Instead of three hundred children we had five hundred.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR

Headteacher 34 Transcript      Tape Recorded 41 Minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      I believe in co-operating with parents but I can't see that a Parent-Teacher Association would do any good. You get so many married women teachers now who haven't the time to give to it and it would all fall on one or two - the same people time and time again. The same thing happens with parents. You get the same few parents involved every time and very often it's not the particular parents you would like to be involved.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      They're interested and anxious certainly. Mind I would never ask the parents to do things I think they have perhaps enough to do as it is. But if ever we have anything on they turn up and they're interested. If I was bothered about children and sent and asked the parents to come up they've never failed to turn up. I don't know whether the majority are anxious for more involvement with schools - they're interested yes - they like to know what's going on and how things work and they find this out from us in their own way and our own way.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      Well, you see to me this business of coming in th hear reading - they can hear the children read at home. Our way of hearing reading is not the parents way of hearing reading while we're hearing we're teaching as well. Parents very often just tell the child the word - we'll use the word and find it out somewhere else - we'll come back to it.

I don't think I would be happy about parents being involved in the classroom in the learning process - that's a skilled business.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I'm not terribly anxious about it. I wouldn't give an answer myself. I'd have to involve the staff. I've never found or thought that a Parent-Teacher Association was a vital part of a school. My parents know that if there's anything they want to know about the children or they're anxious about the children they come and I'll give them the time. I think it's better informally like this.

I've no previous experience of one personally but I knew of one when it was started it began with quite a lot of gusto. They arranged outings - I don't know if that's the point of a Parent-Teacher Association to have an outing. I think it's part of normal work I think.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      I think it's something you assimilate. Before my children start school the mothers generally bring them along. I talk to the mothers then - sometimes the fathers come.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I think you've got to be prepared to listen to the parents and get their point of view. You have to explain to them what you're trying to do. I explain what we're trying to do in reading and how to help with reading. The parents are interested.

I think anyone taking up a headship has to be prepared to talk to the parents. I don't think you should try and push parents. You have to relay anxieties - one child works faster than another.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I don't see why they shouldn't be. Well, our aim is to help the children to learn as much as they're capable of in a happy atmosphere. I encourage the parents to take an interest.

I think the best way to inform the parents is informally. I think this is the best thing to do myself.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. We don't give written reports. I think it's a mistake to commit things to paper when children are so young - they change from term to term.

We see the parents from time to time and we have two open days a year and some of them come in between. I think it's better talking to them, you can explain better. I think sometimes a written report means very little to a parent and if you can go and get some of the children's work to show them that means more to them.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Oh yes - we organise them in various ways. Sometimes we've had an entertainment type using the children's practical work - singing, dancing. We never prepare set plays anything like that. Sometimes we've had different classes doing different things, one doing P.E., one doing dancing, singing that sort of thing.

Last year we organised them on the basis of people who help us - milkmen, postmen, that sort of thing. We had one called a day in school, started with getting up in the morning and different bits of routine in school - some were measuring up, some were dancing, some were shopping. This year we thought travel was interesting. We try to keep it under half an hour - poems and songs about travel in different ways - walking, engines, aeroplanes, that sort of thing.

After that the parents have a general look round and then make a bee-line for the children's desks to see their books and work and the teacher manages to have a word with most of them. At least twice a year we have open days.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

- A. The parents know that if they want to see me they can come up at anytime and I'll see them. I would say we'll go across and see the class teacher she's more in contact with the child than I am. I think it's important that the child's teacher is able to talk to the parent.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. We've never really done this although often the children are busy doing something when the parents are in. They show them what they've been doing. The children get enough interruptions to tell you the honest truth. There are so many times they're away from school with mumps, chicken pox, bad colds.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. It's a very small percentage of parents who don't come in, in the infant schools it's not a real problem. I think it's better to send for them individually they'll come - I've never had a parent who hasn't come if you've written. I would say over the years the parents have become more interested.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes, I don't see why not. It would depend on the kind of help and the particular individual who offered.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. When the parents come to register the children, I invite them and the children to come and see the class and the work that's being done, the children busy doing things. The children are usually very anxious to show the other children around - the shop and the library. I think it pays dividends. Some of the parents if it's their first child-they've never been in the school or seen what goes on or seen the work the children are doing.  
It seems to work very well. When the parents bring them on the first morning we never have any trouble at all.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. It's nice to have it on occasions I think. The difficulty is getting it - you can't really go round asking people. I think you can soon sum up. If I think there's something in the home background and I have the opportunity of talking to the parents you can find out what it is in conversation.  
We had one little boy, for example, who became very aggressive. I sent for the parents and they both came - they'd had the same worry. The mother was having another baby and I think they just told the child too soon about it - the time was interminable.  
We find out a lot from the children-you've got to be very discreet-you find out things the parents would never dream of. It's just that you've got that knowledge in the background you don't just make use of it - it helps you sometimes to understand what's what.

C. Impact (How Well)

- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. A hundred percent. Infants do pressurise their parents to come - tell them what to wear too. I think in the eight years we've been open I shouldn't think we've had six children whose parents haven't come.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. I find out who hasn't had a parent there. If there's anybody hasn't the teacher knows. You can ask and find out sometimes. If the mother was working we'd ask her to come another day.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. Well, a thing we did two years ago-we did it twice and found it was very good-we had no entertainment. I sent word out that the school would be open from ten to eleven-thirty and two to three-thirty on two afternoons and they could come at anytime on those two afternoons and this I think was better. The time was spread out-they didn't all come in a bunch and the teacher had more time to spend with them. I found this was the most successful and the teachers liked it too. You see it meant there were less coming at one time - some came in the morning and some in the afternoon. But it meant they didn't hear any of the singing and the poetry and they like a bit of entertainment. We haven't done it since but we'll do it again.
- I like to vary the pattern-I don't think you want to do the same thing everytime. We do have them in quite a lot at functions over the year and they feel they know the school and they know the teachers.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. I've never really had any problems with parents about school/home activities.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-FIVE

Headteacher Thirty-five Transcript Tape recorded 32 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. You have to have the support of the parents in what you're doing if it is to be worthwhile but if this means having to have something official like a Parent Teacher Association, I'm not sure about that. Any parent can come here and is told that I will see them at any time, but as for having official Parent Teacher meetings, no!

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A. I think there's a big division here. I think the parents who are already interested want to be in but the ones you really want to get at never come. I think the percentage of these types will vary with the area that you're in. Here I would say the interested ones about three-quarters definitely.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. When it comes to teaching activities I draw the line. I don't mind parents coming in to see what's going on, to listen yes, but not to do the job.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I don't really know. I'd want to know what they thought it was. If it was going to help with school activities, yes, but if it was going to involve all these social activities outside of school the way some of them do - I'm finished. This is not it at all.

I've no experience of one myself, just what I've heard about generally that the ones you really want to get at never attend anything like this - mind it's a small number among schools.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. The way parents feel free to come into the school I should say. Here they just walk in when they feel like it. I always tell the parents turn up if you want anything.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I don't think you can generalise - you've got to take the parents as a person the same as the child.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. I don't see why not. If they want to know aims or things like that. The same with organisation, if they wish to know something

they are welcome to come and discuss it.

- Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?
- A. Not in the infants, none that I've heard of anyway use written reports. They come in and see and discuss them. We haven't had the room but we've managed once a year, but anybody can come about their child's work and are shown their books and can see the class teacher. You get a much more comprehensive view of the thing this way than a written report.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Yes, of course
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangements for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Well there's the open day of course and if a parent wants to they can come up at anytime.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Well yes but I wouldn't say you can all come on a day, it's a question of numbers, you couldn't do it. In principle I suppose it's alright.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Well these people who never ever come are very difficult to get at and are very obstinate. I think they would regard this as an intrusion. They've got people going already - welfare people. I don't think it would help the relationship very much at all.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes as long as the help offered is not in a teaching capacity.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Well it's been a question of space in the past we haven't had the room. But when they've come to put the names down for the next term I've taken them to meet the class teacher and the room and let them see the whole lot. In principle it's alright, it means on the first morning they're not going into a classroom full of strange children. They know the furniture and the toilets. It helps the parents too. Some of the parents are as upset as the children. They want to know where they're going to leave them and who they're going to leave them with.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes the problem is how to obtain it though. You get a certain amount from the child obviously because little ones will chat away. You can gather quite a lot about the background from the child not only from what they tell you but the way they're kept,

if they want to take their books home, this sort of thing.

Some women will talk about their husbands but these are isolated cases. It's usually some kind of domestic upset.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. I would say a good seventy-five percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No but the teachers know which ones wouldn't come. I couldn't tell you except for very few but the teachers could tell you straight away which ones never come.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. Each kind I think appeals to a different kind of person. The ones who are shy will come to the open day, but are not going to be involved with the teacher. They come in a crowd of people and go in a crowd quite happily. The other type will come in at anytime.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. We haven't had any problems with any open days we've had.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-SIX

Headteacher 36      Transcript      Tape recorded 48 minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Yes, I do. I think there should be some contact with the parents. If you know something about the background you can do more for the child - you know why that child is the way it is. If you get to know the parents it's amazing how this helps.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      I wouldn't say the bigger percentage. In this school we find the professional people - the parents of children from better background, yes. The child from a more deprived background we never see the parents - the ones we'd like to see more of. In this school the parents who want involvement would be a minority because we've got less of that kind of child.

          Although mind of the children from poorer homes I wouldn't exactly say those poorer homes are 'that council estate'. Some of these children are well turned out and have parents who are keen - not as interested as the others but they do come up and see me.

          The more deprived children-I hardly see the parents at all unless they want free clothes or something like that.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      No, I wouldn't have parents in the school to help with reading or anything like that. It's alright having an ancillary helper when that's needed but not the parent. The parent in a school is too involved then. Mind, I have open days and carol concerts when the parents can come in and talk to the teachers but I always tell the parents they can come to school at any time at all they like but I prefer them to come between two and three in the afternoon, otherwise I'm involved in the classroom.

          I wouldn't like them in the school helping, no!! I think the teacher would feel they were more of a hindrance than a help because they haven't had the training a teacher has had - even in reading, say. We let the children take their books home but not in school. No, I think they could be more of a hindrance than a help.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I'd be interested. I've never been approached and we've never ourselves done anything about it. I'm a bit wary myself, never having been involved in one myself before. It can get out of hand a bit if the parents take over completely and some parents complain that the school has too much say in them, so you would have to be very careful how it was organised. It would have to be a happy balance between the two.

          I think on one hand the parents can see the needs of the school. They can help if the school needs equipment - that sort of thing. You get some ideas too from parents what they feel about

methods - things like this. You can get good ideas from the parents about their needs and the childrens needs. With a Parent-Teacher Association though, I think it's got to be handled very delicately.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. I think in the contacts you have with the parents on open days and when they come in - you can tell by their attitude.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. Well, I think just be diplomatic - it's as simple as that. You haven't got to talk down to them which is a fault some heads make I think. They treat parents as though they were children, which is ridiculous. Mainly to be diplomatic I think.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh yes, I do. For instance in this school we do I.T.A. I think the parents should be told right from the beginning what the aims of the school are and if you've got any methods that are different from other schools like I.T.A. you should explain them.

I think the best way is to talk to them. I used to get the parents for half an hour before the dentist came and have a really good talk with pamphlets and a blackboard and show them the I.T.A. and the new maths.

I've been thinking about having an afternoon for this with the parents of the new admissions. Of course I don't get all the parents - just the interested. For the dentist and my little talk I would get maybe a quarter sometimes. But I think parents should know what's going on in a school - there shouldn't be a big gap between them.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. We don't use written reports - we have the open days and I always issue an open invitation. If they want to know how their child is progressing they can come at any time to the school.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. I do. I think they're a good contact. We have one at Christmas and at the end of the school year.

We send out an invitation to come between say two and three-thirty and usually we have the parents in before the break and they can wander round the classrooms and talk to the teachers. At the break the parents can go into the yard with the children and see exactly how they play.

Then we go into the hall. Then we show songs, a little play, - requests we have sometimes because the children go home and tell the parents little songs they are doing. It's very informal really. We split it in two and have the parents of the younger ones, what we call the fives and the sixes, so we don't have a huge crowd at once. At Christmas we have the same arrangement.

- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Well, I always tell the parents they can come at anytime to see me, but the best time is between two and three in the afternoon. Other times I'm usually involved in the classrooms. There's the open day as well.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. I do. This is another thing I've been thinking about. Of course they have this open invitation to go anytime. There's so many working mothers now though that very few take advantage. I've been thinking about putting a little notice saying they can come in some afternoon so parents can come and see what their children are doing. Perhaps give a few ten minutes so there's a parent or two in the classroom at once. You couldn't have it all the time though you'd never have the time.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Oh no! Well I've only done it where a child has been ill and I've had an excuse to go but I think parents are a bit on edge if you go to their homes. They'd think you were 'nosy parkering'. I've never had the evidence to say it would do any good.  
I've never experienced it but I've sent someone to see about a child and they've never got across the doorstep. In some cases they have and they've not wanted to sit down the homes have been so dirty. Some people wouldn't realise in this day and age how filthy some homes are.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Yes, say a father is good at woodwork or something or if I was pushed for a pianist-if I was allowed to.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. This is our policy. When a child is registered I always say to a parent now bring the child up, you can come back at the end of November. Some come mornings, some come afternoons, I take them all round the school and see what the children are doing and meet the teacher they will be with. The parents very much appreciate this. I still don't see all of them but I tell them to spread the word around.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh yes. The nurse can give you a lot of background on families. If you think anything needs following up you can always get the parent up to school and have a discussion with them.  
If I think the child has some problem and you have no information I generally contact the nurse at the clinic and ask her to investigate it for me - or she can contact the Welfare people. That's the way I do it.

C. Impact (How well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. A jolly good percentage. Ninety-five percent? Particularly at the end of the Summer term - even the one's you wouldn't expect. We still get a small percentage who never come.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, not exactly. It tends to go in families in this school. You know exactly which one's don't.

We have one family where she never even brings her child to register or start school. One of the older children comes with them, - very unusual mind. I've never met her even on an open day. Mind she keeps them beautifully - well fed, well clothed, but she never comes to school.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I don't know. I wouldn't say one was more successful than the other. They are all successful in their own way. We have most of the parents, the bulk, at the open day at the end of the Summer term but I think you need the other things too. You need this constant sort of involvement with the parents, but this Parent-Teacher Association business - I'm not to sure about. I think people coming and going is better.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, we haven't had any problems really.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN

Headteacher Thirty-seven Transcript Tape recorded 37 minutes

A. Motivation (Why)

- Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?
- A. You've got to have the support of the parents for what you're doing but as for running an official Parent-Teacher Association - I'm not sure about that. All the parents who come here are told that they're welcome to come at any time to see me or the teachers but as for having formal parent-teachers meetings - I've left that alone.
- Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?
- A. I think you've got a big division - the parents who are already interested want to be in but the ones you really want to get at never come.  
I think the proportions vary an awful lot with the area you're in - about three-quarters are interested here. The rest are up to a point and some it dwindles to nothing.
- Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?
- A. Where it comes to a teaching activity I draw the line. You need a skilled person. Coming in to see what's going on, to listen, yes - not to do the job.
- Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?
- A. It's a tricky one that. I wouldn't really know. Provided it was kept strictly to the interests of the children or getting them in for talks on school activities yes, but if it's going to develop as it does in a lot of schools, this is not my experience mind but what I've heard, into a social affair - no, I'm finished. It's not what it's for.  
The ones you really need to get at don't come to a thing like that - it's a small number mind depending on the area - it's a comparatively small number.
- Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?
- A. Well, the way they feel free to come into the school is an obvious way - here they just walk in if they feel like it. We encourage the ones who want to come and send for the ones who don't if we want something
- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?
- A. I don't think you can generalise. You've got to take the parent as a person - different reactions from different parents - half of them are a bit nervous when they come you've got to start and drag them along and make them feel at ease before you can do anything. The other half are free and easy - perhaps have had children here before. This happens in any school - they know

their way around. You can't make a general rule like that.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Why not? I don't gather them together and say look you've got to listen to my aims but if they want to make enquiries about it - alright!

Anything they want to discuss about the school I'm prepared to discuss it.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Not written reports, not in the infants. The parents come in and discuss their work - we haven't had the room in the past but anybody who comes about their child's work is shown their books. You get a much more comprehensive view talking than in a written report - numbers weak, reading average that sort of thing - it doesn't mean anything to the parents - they have no standards to go by.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, of course. I think the best one I've worked with was where you had the parents coming in on an ordinary school day - not exactly by appointment, they knew that you asked so many in one day - a semi timetabled sort of thing but not individually, and they just saw the class work. That was every term and worked quite well.

And then a big show day where you have all sorts of displays and everything that goes on in the evening and that worked very well indeed.

The ones we've had we've had to split - boys parents one day, girls the next or at Christmas for carol service.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. The parents are told that they are welcome to come at anytime to see me or the teachers.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Yes, in small numbers but I wouldn't say you can all come to this class on this day - that's too much - but in principle, I think it's alright.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Well, some of these parents who don't come are so difficult to get at and I'm afraid that they're so often the kind who would regard that simply as an intrusion. People go in already, social workers mainly, already go in. I don't think this idea would further relationships very much at all.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

- A. As I've said before as long as it's not in a teaching capacity- this is where I would stop.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Again it's been a question of space, a physical thing, but when they come to put their names down, I take them to meet the class teacher- take them to meet the children in the class - let them see everything. They know what they're coming to then they're much more at ease. Yes, it helps the parents too - they've never left them before. They want to know where they're going to leave them and who they're going to leave them with.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes, if you can do it in a tactful way. I mean you get a certain amount from the child- obviously little ones will chat away. You can gather quite a lot about the background from the child - mam wants to see what I'm writing, this sort of attitude shows through. In isolated cases the mothers will talk about their husbands if there's been some particular upset.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. A good three-quarters about seventy-five per cent.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, we don't. The teachers know - rather which ones never appear this is obvious - I could tell you very few, the ones who never come.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I think each kind appeals to a different kind of person. The ones who are nervous or shy about coming to school, will come to an open day, but they don't want to be involved directly with the headmistress or directly with the teachers. They'll come in with a crowd of people and go out that way quite happily, but they wouldn't come in individually.  
The ones who are eager will come in at anytime.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. We haven't had any trouble with parents on open days- we've had those we can manage.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT

Headteacher 38      Transcript      Tape Recorded 58 Minutes

A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      Well I don't have them in too often - two or three times a year. We have them in at Christmas and open days things like that. We did have one coffee morning and we were nearly killed in the rush. They didn't seem to be interested in what was going on in the school, just to gossip and smoke and have a cup of coffee.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A.      Well, I haven't found that they are. Of course it could be the particular area the school is in. I think in a better area people might want involvement but certainly I don't think the people here are too keen.

I think it's a minority here - not that they've ever been antagonistic or anything like this. They would be interested in how their child is getting on but it ends there.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I know some schools have parents in to hear reading but we don't have anything like that. Nobody has ever offered here. I suppose I would be quite willing if they did. Mind you it would depend on the circumstances and the individual. There would be some who would be perfect pests and others who would be alright. Mind you I've taught in Canada and in the States they get too involved don't they?

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I wouldn't like it! Well quite honestly and truthfully in Canada you got just a few parents who came-the same few 'How's my Jimmy' or whoever. That was all there was to it. And then they were wanting to play bingo and I had more to do with my time. I was quite prepared to go and work with them but I found equally the parents you wanted to see never came.

I didn't find in Canada that they wanted to take the school over, but you do find this more in the States. There of course they can stalk into the classroom at any time and stand around and listen and watch and interfere I understand. Then again they also have control of the purse strings.

This didn't happen in Canada, but as I say the Parent-Teacher Association experience I had I didn't like. I've had no experience of them in this country.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      I do have them in as I say a couple of times and in an infants school you can't help having contact with parents-they come in and out. On the first morning of term I speak to them and say that we're very happy to see them about any problems whatsoever. I go over the general running of the school, all the things that go on and say I'm very happy to see them if there's anything at all they want to see me about.

They collect their children and you have a word then. I really do have quite a bit of contact with them in that way.

- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?
- A. Well, I had a friend newly appointed and she had a bad experience. I felt she was too dogmatic. I think you have to be diplomatic in your dealings with parents. You can't just bulldoze your way through. You can get into really deep water.
- She was having an open day at Christmas - a Carol Service and she said there were to be no babies - because it ruins the whole show. But on my open day I organised a little nursery for them opened a classroom and used girls from the senior school. But she stopped the proceedings and everybody with babies out! One took great exception to this and caused a great furore - I think she went to the office. She got this terrible letter from the woman demanding an apology. I thought she should just be diplomatic and say she was sorry but did she realize how much training was put in to train the children for a performance like this. I think later some people with babies had crept in at the back. I think diplomacy is a good general rule - no one wants to stick their necks out and become headlines in the Sunday papers.
- B. Organisation (How)
- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?
- A. Well, yes to a certain extent - otherwise you won't get very far if you want to involve them will you? I think the best way of doing it is just talking to them informally as they come in and out of the school.
- I think you should also explain about organisation. it's no good keeping them in the dark. You're dealing with their children and you hope they're interested as you're interested - if they understand your point of view they're more likely to be co-operative aren't they?
- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?
- A. We don't use written reports. They talk about it when they come in. I always make a point of sending for a parent if a child isn't progressing - if perhaps a child is going to have to have special education or if a child isn't working to full potential. I would send for the parents in those instances. I mean I would never let the child go right through until the open day at the end. I don't think this is fair. I send for the parent and say I hope you realise he isn't progressing as he should, or is there any reason why. Home circumstances - broken homes or something.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Oh yes. I send a written invitation for them to come to school. At Christmas for instance - we usually put on some sort of a Nativity play which involved the whole school. Then I say the children have done a lot of handwork etc. - if you'd like to see round the classrooms your very welcome. I ask them to be out before the children are dismissed. I like them out before half past three.

In summer they generally come into the classrooms first and then go outside for a breath of air and then back in the hall for a short performance.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see your or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. No appointments. If they want to see me and come in I do my best to accommodate them. If they wish to see the teacher I would go and take the class if I thought it was necessary.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I couldn't see anything against it. I haven't done it but I wouldn't be against it. We have students, we have visitors of various kinds already.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. I've done some home visiting but only for a specific reason like sickness or something gone missing.

I think the business of visiting for educational reasons is more to do with counselling isn't it? They do have a system in Canada called a visiting teacher. I think this sort of thing is more their role than a normal teacher or headteacher. I think this business is more for a specially trained person. It wasn't always pleasant I understand. Sometimes they were booted out or chased by the dog.

I didn't like it in Canada. When you were invited out to tea or lunch this was fairly common, particularly with Jewish people and the Mormans. I think it could make things very awkward-I never went. They had been used to knocking on peoples doors too but I put this straight the first time. I said don't you ever dare to come knocking at my door again. They had been used to it I think.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Oh yes. I mean fathers could be very useful for mending wheelbarrows things like that. If they start infringing on what would be a professional role then keep them out I think. But in general if you were having a tea or a sale or something like this, well you would need parents wouldn't you? And at Christmas time I have had the odd parent in to butter scones, make sandwiches etc. You need help on occasions like this.

Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?

A. Just that they do come to see me when they come to register the child but we don't have a special meeting when they all come. I occasionally take them to meet the teachers but not always, it isn't always convenient. They wander in.

If you wanted a system like that you would have to have special registration days but it isn't always practical to take the child into the classroom. They could be doing anything going into prayers or anything. If the Authority wanted this you would have

to have special registration days and say the headteacher would like you to come and register sometime during the next three days or a week and then you could do something about it. But then there are other problems until last term I had to teach.

Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background. If so how should it be obtained?

A. I do, this is very important. You've just got to glean information along the way and it's surprising how many mothers feel ashamed that their child has some kind of defect and they won't tell you. The mentality of the council mother, not all of them, but they feel it's a reflection on them in some way. A mother started a child a term or two ago he was an epileptic - she never let on. That's ridiculous - what's a young teacher to do? It's not fair. They don't always tell you about broken homes.

Mind they often do come and tell you if their husband has left them, particularly when they want free meals or some kind of social help, because they can't manage. When they start school I ask who is the guardian and I ask the father's occupation.

C. Impact (How Well)

Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Millions, you should have been here last week. We put out enough seats - every seat was full and there was still a queue. Well over the ninety-five percent I think.

I ask in the hall whose mother came and it's the odd few who are not represented by someone. We have a lot of fathers and grandfathers too.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, I don't keep a record but we know. You could count on one hand practically whose mother hasn't come.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I've only done the open day set up. I certainly think this was the most successful.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?

A. It was the school/home week I think where you got four pence per head so we thought right we'll have them in for a coffee afternoon.

What I wanted them to do was have a cup of tea, meet the teachers and come into the hall to see the children performing. They wouldn't move out - they weren't interested. In the main they just wanted to chat to each other - just a general chit chat. As soon as this happens I'm not interested any more - I'm finished. I'm very interested if they're interested educationally but I'm not interested to be drinking tea and smoking with them.

A head was telling me last week that children nowadays don't play or do things for themselves the way they used to. We used to be able to do Cinderella and it was marvellous - not now - they all want to be entertained. This particular head thought to

combat this that-when it was someones birthday she would ask them to bring a packet of biscuits and they could invite their particular friend into the Wendy house and serve a little tea party and practice conversation. Well, next thing she had the mothers coming up - 'We'll bring all the food and you can have the party.' Let's out the mothers you see saves them having a party. You see what I mean they're quite happy to pass the buck and teacher can organise it.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER THIRTY-NINE

Headteacher 39      Transcript      Tape Recorded 46 Minutes

## A.      Motivation (Why)

Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      I think it's essential in an infant school to have parental involvement. It can be of great benefit to the school but I think one must be wary that they don't become too involved in something that they don't understand.

Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.      I think our parents would be willing to be more involved than they are - the majority.

Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I don't think parents should be involved in hearing reading or in any kind of lesson participation at all.

Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      I would thank them for their interest but I wouldn't be prepared to start a Parent-Teacher Association having been involved in one in a previous school which developed into what drives and things - purely a social thing. A very small percentage were interested in or came to educational meetings. The majority weren't interested in the school and teachers putting over new approaches to education. Mind this was more than fifteen years ago - the parents attitude may have changed now. I've found that in this particular school when I.T.A. was introduced the parents were interested in hearing more about it. I would think the tendency now is for more parents to be interested in new education methods and approached but I wouldn't myself like a formal organisation like a Parent-Teacher Association.

Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      Well this is hit and miss. I judge it on the parents reaction to open days, harvest festivals, Christmas activities. They support them well. You can just sense an atmosphere at these sort of things.

Q.6.    What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A.      I've always found it best to demonstrate exactly what your aim is and the things that we require and not just to send a note home now and then saying 'We don't want any children wearing long trousers' - this doesn't work. You have to give a reason - why it's not healthy to wear long trousers in school. This works - to explain everything to them.

## B.      Organisation (How)

Q.7.    Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Oh, I think so. I think the majority of my parents here are interested in having things explained. Some parents have forgotten the learning that goes on behind infant activities like playing shops. They've found out about organisational things like changing back from I.T.A. I didn't ask their opinion or anything.

I find the best way of informing parents is open days, when they come up I usually have a word with them either before the activity starts or after - when the children aren't there. I find over and over again that when a letter is sent out about interest or information, out of seventy or eighty, twenty have lost it or forgotten about it.

I find the best way is to tell the parents when they're here and those that don't come - well you hope they do get a letter.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. We have no formal written reports. We talk to the parents about this during open day and we have one at least every term or some sort of activity that parents can come to.

I always tell them then and when the children are being admitted that they are at liberty to see me or the staff at anytime but I always say will they come before school or after school so they don't interrupt lessons. Otherwise we might have a stream - well not a stream, but two or three all coming together.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I've always invited them to go right round the school not just to their own childs classroom. We usually try to have a sing song or a bit of P.E. or drama, something they can see - this might not be good thing but we try and combine it with going round the classrooms.

I would think one a term is a minimum to keep in touch with parents - some parents you never see except on open days. Other parents you see nearly every day and you can have a chat then. Some parents you never see whose children are average, they're not especially naughty or especially good or ill - anything like that. You may never see them except on open days.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)

A. They don't need an appointment. We've never stopped anyone seeing me or one of the teachers. There are so many mothers working now you have to try and fit in. We don't get a lot mind - I ask them if they have any problems or worries will they come after school.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. I think, although not from experience, because I've never actually seen it done or tried it, but I have a feeling that it would cause too much interruption. It would still be a false atmosphere. We get this when we have students in, or an H.M.I. or a visitor anyone apart from the teacher. It wouldn't be normal.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

- A. I think the type of parent who never visits the school at all - we would probably know about from the Health Visitors, the Welfare people. These people would consider it an intrusion. I think this would be more detrimental than beneficial.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents.
- A. I have asked for help from fathers who were willing to help us out with making things - we got no offers! Any help that was offered by parents I'd accept - absolutely!
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Most of our parents bring their children and put their names down before they start school, mostly weeks or even months before the start.  
I always have a talk with them and take them round the school and show them the classroom. I think it helps the children. The parents like it. In fact once I missed out on it and the parent said I haven't seen round. I also take the opportunity to tell them things like the Authority don't provide gym shoes and to put their names in coats.  
I think, of this terms reception class, there was only one mother I hadn't seen before the first day.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. I think knowing is a great help. The real problem families we're advised about by the Welfare people - they seem to be having more liaison with the school than they used to. The Health Visitor would come and see me with a really bad case before the child starts school.  
There's no way really you can find out much about the average family though, unless they're in some sort of trouble with the Authorities.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. I would say between ninety-six percent and ninety-eight percent of mothers - we don't get many fathers. We do get some fathers if it's their day off or they're not at work but not many.  
I would think only two or three percent of the children are not represented by somebody and then they'd probably come some time.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, we don't do this. It would be interesting that but I haven't done that. I think we know the ones who don't. It's usually the one's you never see you want to see - either because the child's neglected or gets no encouragement at home or is especially naughty. It would be interesting to talk to them to see if you could glean any information about why.

- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. Well, we had a very poor response to the request for fathers to help at the start of the year. On the other hand we've had a very good response to anything we've done to raise money - jumble sales - the last one raised £8, and the open day of course.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. The only difficulty with parents really is when we have a Carol Service which is a very popular open day. They bring toddlers and babies. I asked and got no response, orally that was. Then I put it in writing and said that while I realized it was difficult we couldn't have babies in arms and toddlers. That's the only difficulty we've had really.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FORTY

Headteacher 40      Transcript      Tape Recorded 55 Minutes

- A.      Motivation (Why)
- Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?
- A.      In general, yes. We must have a close relationship with parents to do the best for children. The relationship is easier in infant schools I suppose and here it's more on a family basis. The social side plays a great part in the infant curriculum you know.
- Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?
- A.      Oh! indeed, in this school I would say they were. After all a mother hands over her child to a stranger and it's only natural. I would be concerned - I would want to know what sort of a teacher my child was having.
- The majority of parents I have been fortunate to be concerned with here, are anxious for involvement or shall I say there has never been any great pressure from the parents to be deeply involved but there has always been a great interest displayed - that's the way I would put it.
- Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?
- A.      Well, I would naturally listen if a parent had any sound ideas or suggestions. I would consider it deeply. You have a family relationship where one or another can come and talk or discuss something.
- My limits would depend on the child, the parent, and the situation. I would judge each case on it's merits and decide if it was good for the child, the children and the school as a whole.
- Fathers could be brought in as well as mothers in many ways in an infant school - mending apparatus this sort of thing - or if he was artistic we could use his talents. Or if a parent wanted to give a hand at putting up Christmas decorations.
- Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?
- A.      My reaction would be first of all to listen to what they had to say and I would ask them to come at a later date to discuss the matter again. I would consider very seriously whether it was going to be for the school and what benefit the children as well as the teacher would get out of it.
- I've had no experience of working in one myself in a school that had one in operation. I would approach the matter cautiously, naturally, but I think a lot has to do with the environment the school is sited in. You would have some places where you could start a Parent-Teacher Association and wouldn't get a very good attendance and on the other hand you'd get the type of parent who would be very interested. It would depend on the neighbourhood in which the school is sited.
- Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

- A. Well, you have other occasions where you come together socially. We have open days and occasions where you entertain, Carol Services and efforts throughout the year.

You can't be sure of anything at all you can only work towards. It's something I think one knows you know by contact and by how parents approach you. If they come or here quite a lot of parents ringing up. It's more like a parent ringing up and you can say 'how are you.' I know the background of most of the parents and children.

You can try to establish a good relationship in a social way like that.

- Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

- A. One must always treat them with courtesy naturally and make them feel welcome. Be it from the lowliest to the highest let me put it like that. In some areas you get a very mixed - not a good cross section. It doesn't matter whether Johnnie's mother comes in her apron and curlers in to me she has to be treated the same way as if Mrs. Brown rolls up in her Jag. and her fur coat. 'Can I help you?' should be the first thing said to a parent I think.

- B. Organisation (How)

- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

- A. Well, I feel that a parent has a certain amount of right to know what is going on in school. For my part when the child is brought to school for admission I do try to give the parents a brief outline. They sit down we have a talk. I put it this way to my parents 'the school door is open from the time we open till we close.' They're welcome to come in anytime.

I don't want any ceremony at all I want the relationship to be free and relaxed. We have had two or three instances where the parents have come in to discuss matters which would affect the emotional side of the child. I feel information can be given without going to great depths about it - we have a parent-teacher association it's there.

- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

- A. We don't use written reports. We do keep individual records of the children but there's no written report goes out. The child's parent is free to come in at any time. I can open my desk and tell the parent about the general progress of the child then bring in the teacher who can add her bit to it. The personal touch is the thing.

- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

- A. Oh indeed! We take in an admission in September, Christmas and Easter. I feel that in September let us get in have a fortnight or so then have the parents in. We don't have it in the normal 'open day' manner. This is purely a social occasion where the parents come in and meet the child's teacher and can have a chat

and say 'He's having a lot of trouble with his ears at the moment' or something like that. We get to know all sorts of little things. It's a good opportunity to get to know parents. They flock in and go anywhere and the teacher meets the mother and father and gets a better understanding whereby she can help the child.

At Christmas we always have something like a Carol Service and after it's over we invite the parents to wander round the school. The teachers can have a chat then. Then at Easter I intend to have a service when the parents can come in again, and look at the Easter handwork.

We do have two open days then and then at the end of the year we invite them in again for a pure and simple entertainment one. Three a year.

- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Yes. If there's anything arising out of the general running of the school. The parent comes to see me first, this is something I insist on-I don't approve of a parent going directly to a teacher. I like to know what's going on in my school-I'm answerable for it.
- If it's something that involves the teacher the teacher can be freed and we can sort it out in private whatever it maybe. There's ample opportunity here for private discussion of problems with parents.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Well, within limits-I suppose it would have to be small groups; we don't have anything like this apart from registering.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. I would say in my experience there is something wrong usually domestic problems. I have visited homes where children have been ill but I've never - well those cases are few and far between here.
- I don't think it would make any difference-I think these kinds of homes visiting is best done by Social Workers. In one case I can think of, the father is not there - there is an 'uncle' living there. If there were some way the situation could be improved, I don't think it could be by me visiting - not from my point of view.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. I don't see why not. You would have to be careful about the individual cases I suppose.
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. We do this. When the child is registered they are invited back at a later date. We have had all the children in last week who are coming in in September. They have all been in. They've met the teacher, seen the class, the child has sat in a little chair.

I think this is of real value, although I find more children now are going to play-school and they have a more independant attitude but it's still necessary. Our local junior school has had all our older children up as well.

- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. I like to know as much as I possibly can about the home background. Obtaining it is where having a good relationship comes in and it's useful to have a stable staff in the school. They become part of the neighbourhood of the school. You get to know a lot about domestic circumstances.
- Children tell you a lot. I say to parents you have no private life once they start school it all comes back to us written in their newsbooks. What daddy did. One child's mother for example was ever so proud of the new car and he put down how much a week, how much deposit!
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. I would say a hundred percent nearly. I've only had one child whose parents didn't come out of the whole school. We have it over two days, aunties, uncles, grandmas, we couldn't accommodate them all.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. It would be unnecessary. It's a personal record. I know and I could tell you who didn't. I know who's coming and I know who's not coming.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. So far they've all been successful, I couldn't pick out any one. From my point of view it's very difficult to pick one thing out but then you must consider this neighbourhood. I think the environment of the school plays a very important part.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. We've never really had any problems - there's nothing comes to mind. If I had problems something would have immediately jumped to my mind but there's nothing at all.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FORTY-ONE

Headteacher 41      Transcript      Tape Recorded 49 Minutes

- A.      Motivation (Why)
- Q.1.    Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Flowden Report is worthwhile?
- A.      Certainly. I think the more parents are interested in what their children are doing in school the better for the children. In general I'm certainly in favour I think provided it was well controlled.
- Q.2.    Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?
- A.      I suppose so. I've never asked my parents to do anything. I think if we were organising something you would tend to be selective and say well she would be quite willing to help.
- Q.3.    What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?
- A.      To me if your child needs help you can come to me and we talk together about what we can do to help the child but I can't see parents coming into school or the classroom to help say with reading - no! It's not a parents job.
- Q.4.    If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?
- A.      Well, provided the association was used to obtain things for the school we can't get everything we like. But there is a danger like in some schools of parents coming into school and attempting to take over and tell you your job. I would restrict it to visiting experts - that sort of thing.
- I've had no experience of one myself as a teacher but I know of schools that have had them and to me the parents used to talk too much among themselves. If they had a problem they should have gone to see the headteacher and say "Look we feel this way." They would gang up on a teacher if they didn't like his methods. I think the head must exercise very tight control.
- Q.5.    How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?
- A.      Well, here for a start, when they come to register we take the child up to the classroom. A month before they start school I have the children in to meet the teachers. Now the mothers at this time can stay in the hall-they don't have to go to the classroom if they don't want to. If they have to go shopping I tell them go shopping and come back at a certain time. I tell them all about the school what we except.
- Then if they want to see me they can either ring up or come in but not to be put off if it's not immediately convenient and on the other hand not to be shattered if I ask to see you. I have a lot of parents in for this and harvest festivals and at Christmas for a play. Easter this year we didn't bother and we have them in the Summer. You can tell parents feelings from these contacts without a formal organisation.
- Q.6.    What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

- A. Just sit and listen and know all the facts before you say anything! Let the parent go on and on and on if necessary then sort it out.
- B. Organisation (How)
- Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?
- A. Well yes, I think they should know. I think in an infant school probably when the mothers first bring the children to school but informally I think anyway. No, not booklets or anything like that.
- Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?
- A. No actual written reports as such. What we tend to do is write a report about each child. Then on our open day give them not a written report, although I have on occasions handed out what I've written down and said thats what I think, and if there's anything they can come back later and we sort it out.
- Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?
- A. Well, you tend to get everybody to come to an open day to see about their children. I was just saying it would be better next year if we had an open day before Christmas so they could tell us about the children and in July we could tell them.  
We're open from two to four on an open day. We try to stagger it a little with times so they don't all come at two o'clock.
- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. Well, if they come in they can see me or the classteacher or both if it's something that's not going to last too long, but if it is we ask them if they can come back at three-thirty.
- Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Well, we have so many visitors in already! It would be a grand idea but you already are starting to feel well let's have some time to ourselves and let's get on.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. Well, with parents who never visit the school I usually try to contact them through the school nurse without me actually going. She usually knows both parents and the family situation.  
I can't see that me or members of my staff visiting homes would do much good. You wouldn't be welcome anyway. They would be saying "She's got them at school what more does she want"! I think they would consider it prying and trying to tell them what to do with their life.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. Well, I have heard of parents helping with costumes for plays and things but we haven't had that here but I've no rooted objection to parents helping I think.

- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. I usually take the parent and the child to see the class at work but I do it individually, not on a formal basis and tell the parents about things like putting names on clothes and general rules. I certainly think it helps to make the first day at school easier for the child. I do this about a month before the child is due to start school. They can meet the teacher although if the mother doesn't want to go she doesn't have to - she can come back later.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh yes. The nurse lives in the area and knows the problems. But finding out about home background is so difficult isn't it? Very often you find out things too late - you think if I'd known that sooner.
- Children tell you a great deal, but you have to be very careful how you use it. For example, I had a child whose father went to sea, he told us about his ship and the places he had visited and the presents he brought him when he came on leave. It turned out his father was in fact a teacher and yet this had gone on for two solid years. He had a wealth of information and yet when we asked the mother no one in the family was seagoing - it was all made up.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Well, Harvest Festival we put a restriction on it. We have a small hall and a large school. One parent stipulated for second year children.
- Open days we stagger times through the day and split it in half. About two from each class who don't come and then some of those come later on at different times.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. Yes, we have over the last two or three years made a note of the parents who don't come. It tends to run in particular families. We know which ones don't come.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. Well, the Christmas concert we have to give twice so everyone can see it and get in. I don't think it's any one particular thing, though, it's just you welcome the parents in general.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. No problems really except the parents are very competitive here. They like their child to be top dog. I had one parent in last year - I thought what on earth is she talking about? It turned out the teacher had moved her child from one group for talking too much from a group she called group one to one she called group four. There was no top or bottom group at all really.
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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FORTY-TWO

Headteacher Forty-two      Transcript      Tape recorded 43 minutes

A.      Motivation      (Why)

Q.1.      Do you think that the involvement of parents with their children's school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A.      To a certain degree but I would have a lot of reservations about it. I think we've got to encourage parents we need their help in a lot of ways but I do think we should work together and parents shouldn't be allowed to take over too much.

Q.2.      Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their children's school?

A.      Well, I would say here most of the parents are very interested in what the children are doing. We don't have a Parent-Teacher Association or anything like it, but if we need help we just have to send out and the parents are very good. They don't overstep the mark.

When we organised a sale to replace equipment the parents were marvellous, they did a terrific amount of work - all sorts. Even the fathers came and helped to control the crowds coming in and another father helped to count the money.

We have a happy relationship with parents but they don't have a stranglehold on the school which I think it could if it was too close.

Q.3.      What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A.      I don't think I would have parents in the school to do anything. The parents of our children are keen to help them and we encourage them to, but at home not in the classroom.

When we have our new intake in we usually invite the parents up after about six weeks to see them when they are settled in and the teacher has the opportunity to talk to individual parents. Some parents are more anxious than others, but it's an opportunity to tell them how they can help but I don't think it should involve them in school.

Q.4.      If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A.      No, I wouldn't want a Parent-Teacher Association in the school. It would be too harrassing. I think it's a happier kind of association that we have where it's potentially there when needed. It's always there this link and I don't think we need a Parent-Teacher Association to further it. I've had no experience of working with a Parent-Teacher Association myself before I was a headteacher.

Q.5.      How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A.      Well, you can tell in lots of ways. You can tell by the attitude of the parents. Sometimes we appeal to them not to do something - for instance when the new children arrive for the first week we let the parents come in with them and come into the yard with them and stay at one end and watch. Now yesterday we said to them the time has come when we want to make the children independent and stand on their own feet. By all means bring them and take them home, but don't intrude on the school premises now. We feel this is the time when it should be stopped.

They went, most of them are very good and they take this and they do it. I feel that they understand our problem as well. I feel you can judge parents feelings to the school and you can sense it very easily.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. I think I use a school as I use my home and if parents come to see me I think they should be treated nicely and listen to their position. I think in this way you win them over.

But if you start off antagonistic, or refuse to listen to them it permeates the whole parent atmosphere. I think parents should be made welcome as we receive guests at home.

If a parent is angry and this sometimes happens, you can sort it out but sometimes you have to take a firm stand. But generally I feel they should be free to come and see you and it's up to the head to control that.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. No, not really. I think you've got the parents trust that when the child leaves school to the best of our ability we've equipped it ready for the next stage.

When I have the parents up after the first six weeks that's the time I get all my little points across, but it's mostly to do with the running of the school - putting names in clothes - things like that, so that our part of the work runs smoothly. It can be chaos if you haven't some method of organising the children's clothing. If the teacher has some point she wants to raise with the parents, we work together on this.

I always tell them if there's anything they want to discuss not to haggle about it but to come and talk it out.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their children's progress in your school?

A. Well, we have no written reports. As I say we have a parents day. At the Christmas one we don't show work we show Christmas handwork, the decorations but we do it on four separate afternoons because of the size of the hall.

There's always that opportunity if a parent wants to ask about a child's progress. In the Summer we have a parents day then and that's the time they find out about a child's progress.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what time?

A. Oh yes. Although it's very tiring and very heavy work for the staff, they like it too. They like to see the parents. I think if you've got this happy atmosphere I'm talking about, the parents come wanting to hear what you've got to say and if it isn't all good they want to do something about it.

A lot depends on your school building. Because of the size of the hall when parents day comes along we can't put any show on for them, there's no seating. We solved this problem by using a tape recorder. Previous to the open day we have taped singing and items right throughout the school. We play this - it lasts about an hour and a half and we play it while the parents are moving

about - we say this is class so and so, so the children know when to send the parents out to hear it.

We have the open day in the afternoon usually for about an hour from two o'clock.

- Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private? (by appointment, anytime, etc.)
- A. They can see me and if it's necessary I bring the child's teacher along and we discuss things.
- Q.11. Do you think parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?
- A. Well, I don't think so with little ones. They don't concentrate for very long. I think this sort of thing would defeat it's own object.
- Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?
- A. I couldn't see any value in this at all. We have very few parents who don't come but we generally know why.  
I think if those very few parents who don't bother with the school it simply wouldn't be worth it. I'm thinking of one family in particular where neither the father or the mother care very much. You wouldn't be welcome. I know it would be worthless.
- Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?
- A. No, I think if anything is offered, for example to make something for you I don't think any offer should be refused. I think that would be unkind but I don't think we would seek it. When we have asked for their help it has been for the reason of making money, to get something but nothing like playing the piano or something like that, no!
- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. Well, when the parents come to register you talk to them but you must understand in a big school - for example I've had four here this morning - we have more than one reception class we admitted seventy-three. You couldn't be pulling a teacher away to leave little ones all the time. If they all came together I suppose it would be alright.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background? If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Yes it's important. We generally can find out for ourselves it becomes very apparent so quickly. Little children talk and they tell you about themselves. This is one of our aims to make them engage in conversation and let it all come out before they put it down on paper. So they're not here very long before we have a good idea of the home background from the children themselves.
- C. Impact (How well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?

A. Nearly a hundred percent.

Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?

A. No, it's never really been necessary. If a parent sends a note saying I can't come please can I come some other time, I usually say well pop in some morning but don't make it very well known because we don't want to encourage it.

Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?

A. I think it's a combination of things that makes it successful? What suits one parent may not be right for another-I think you need a combination.

Sometimes if a parent has no problems I may not see them until an open day. I like them to know that it's free for them to come in. We don't lay ourselves out for them to come in but on the other hand they're never made unwelcome, put it that way.

Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? if so would you care to comment on them?

A. No, not really.

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NUMBER FORTY-THREE

Headteacher 43. Transcript Tape Recorded fifty-nine minutes.

A. Motivation (Why)

Q.1. Do you think that the involvement of parents with their childrens school recommended by the Plowden Report is worthwhile?

A. Yes, I think the idea behind involvement is good but the people who make these proposals in Plowden and other reports haven't done the job as I'm doing it every day.

But in my experience of an infants school I don't think you can run it at all without the parents being involved and the relationship between the parents and the school and the regard that the parents have for the school matters tremendously. To begin with, most parents particularly in the reception class, bring their children to school and they collect them. They take this opportunity to come and see me to discuss problems.

Talking about involvement it's surprising the number of parents who come to the school to see a head about things like marital problems or problems about Social Security. Even old people in the area come for advice about Pension forms.

Q.2. Do you think that most parents are anxious for more involvement with their childrens school?

A. Oh yes not all, some couldn't care less but the majority are. If you didn't watch them in a school like mine they'd be an infernal nuisance because they want to know what page Johnny is on in his reading book and where they can buy it because they don't understand 'Look and Say' and the children get into an unholy mess - or because the next door neighbours child is on a higher book. They do interfere if they can get away with it. There's very great jealousy among them. You've got to calm them down and reason with them.

They seem to take a long time to accept anyone.

Q.3. What kind of limits would you place on parental involvement in your school?

A. I think here by and large you've got to take a common sense attitude. I have one particular parent I have had a row with about bringing a child to school every day and taking her into the classroom and sitting her down and this was a child due to go to the junior school. About reading you have to point out to them that the children use 'Look and Say' methods-they can read their own books but not the evening paper. I would say if your not happy come in and see what she reads - they are at liberty to do this anytime.

I wouldn't object on principle to parents in the classroom but I wouldn't say to parents you can come in and hear your children read anytime you like. Any school day is short, you can't have parents sitting about in a two hour afternoon impeding the work - it doesn't make sense.

Q.4. If a group of parents approached you with a request to start a Parent-Teacher Association what would your reaction be?

A. I would discuss with them first what it was they had in mind - I wouldn't have cheap entertainment. If they wanted to meet and discuss with the staff the things we could do to improve the school alright but I wouldn't allow them to dictate to me whether I did I.T.A. or didn't do I.T.A.

I've had experience of a Parent-Teacher Association when I was teaching in London and I have knowledge of one in the area where they get fabulous amounts of money. The staff are being bludgeoned into having garden fetes on a Saturday and bring and buy sales - that sort of thing to get equipment for the school. I wouldn't do that and I wouldn't have parents asking me to have a Parent-Teacher Association to do that sort of thing. If I happened to think that what they wanted would benefit the children and the school next I would discuss it with the staff quietly. Several of them like me have to run a house and do a full-time job and it's not very easy. But I would discuss the pros and cons with them and have a bash and start it in a very gradual way perhaps once a month, but if the staff said no we're having nothing to do with it, I would explain to the parents and that would be that.

I think that we as teachers should never allow ourselves by the Authority or the Government or anyone else to insist that we have Parent-Teacher Associations. If you give some parents an inch they'll take a yard. I have a very good informal relationship with the parents which well might be spoilt by quarrelsome elements in a Parent-Teacher Association. I definitely wouldn't have something which became just a social club, with dances, whist drives, things like that. I cannot see for the life of me that it does any good for the children or the school and I think in this day and age you can get from the Authority most things that you need without having side shows.

Q.5. How can you be sure that there is a good relationship between a school and parents?

A. If there's anything wrong I know the children pretty well and as a head I can tell if there's anything wrong in the home by the child's behaviour. If you're a good psychologist you can.

In the same way I do go out into the yard every day. I don't have a notice up 'all visitors see the head', I think they should, if I see a parent if it's a friendly thing I just say 'go and see the teacher.' I can sense if there's someone trying to make trouble, you just know. It's something that when you've been in schools as long as I have is like an added sense. The parents here would be the first to come to me personally if there was anything wrong. It's surprising now as well how many of them are on the telephone. I get a tremendous number of calls about all sorts of things from parents.

I always take children home who are ill and you get a surprising number of infants who have minor accidents and in this way you get into quite a number of homes and the parents learn to take your word for things.

Q.6. What advice would you give to a newly appointed headteacher about dealing with parents?

A. The main advice would be not to be a new broom and sweep clean. If you went into a happy well run school to leave it like that for at least a year and if you were bursting at the seams with new ideas just to introduce them slowly.

It's no good going at it like a bull in a china shop. It would antagonise the parents, particularly if they had had respect for the head whose just left. I think a head is an utter fool who gets notoriety in the press for saying things like - no girl can wear trews that sort of thing - you've got to use common sense.

If any head made radical changes in a well organised happy school it would be fatal.

B. Organisation (How)

Q.7. Do you think parents should be informed about the aims and organisation of a school? If so what is the best way of informing them?

A. Yes, within the limits of their comprehension. I'll get a lot of parents in with the new starters and I try to get on good terms with them straight away and tell them what's what and what we're trying to do. We never keep a child in under any circumstances - that if a child doesn't come home in time to look for them.

I ask them to co-operate by putting on labels in coats and about ordering dinners - just common sense ordinary things. If they find out that you genuinely have the welfare of the child at heart and are not talking a lot of hot air, they will co-operate.

I tell them how we organise the classes - we let the children work at their own ability rate - we group them according to age of birth. The parents know they have no source of complaint about allocation and I find it works pretty well.

We always give the children a duplicated note about anything out of the ordinary like a days holiday and the parents appreciate this - or if school hours change because of dark nights. We let them see the children using apparatus for modern maths if they're curious and they usually go away satisfied.

Q.8. How are parents informed about their childrens progress in your school?

A. No, we don't use written reports. Reporting progress is a proper inquest every time we throw the school open. The child is requested by the parent to take everything out of the desk and they go through with a toothcomb all the work the child has done and what is displayed on the wall - the child goes and points out her work in a frieze. We're right down to brass tacks with regard to the work the child has done.

Quite frankly I don't think it's very sensible to give infants a written report. It's a constantly changing position even more than weekly. The top of the class could change from week to week.

Q.9. Are you in favour of open days? If so how often should they be held and at what times?

A. Yes, I'm in favour. I do them in different ways. I do a lot of things by ear, and the staff I have. I don't have any top show for parents day.

I like a parents day at Christmas because the Christmas handwork is very well worthwhile. I say to the staff, we're going to have an open day - there's nothing done for the open day at all. We give the children a note saying when it is. We haven't got the hospitality allowance now. We put on somethings like percussion but it would just be things we have done all the term or three songs or P.E. - just the ordinary everyday work you could see on any day.

I would say ideally every term, but recently I've only had two a year.

Q.10. Do you have any arrangement for parents to see you or the class teacher in private?

A. Well, for example, we had a mother up last Monday morning very distressed and I was at that particular moment taking a class but I left it to go and talk to her.

If there's anything personal at all I would bring the teacher and parent into my room. But if it was something about work I would take them to the classroom and say to the teacher 'would you mind if this lady saw the child's work.' But any difficulty we would go to my room. I would see a parent anytime. I've never yet failed to get the teacher and mother parting on good terms.

Q.11. Do you think that parents should be given the opportunity to observe their children during a normal school day as distinct from special occasions?

A. Well, during our parents day one at least we have the school running normally doing normal work, but quite frankly I don't think it's possible - you see what teacher is normal with people watching them or what children are normal? If you've got two parents sitting in or anybody the atmosphere is not the same - it's a disruptive element. I don't think you can let parents see a school working normally other than throwing the school open to all and sundry on a parents day. We have no artificiality on our parents day - it's not a put up job. The school day and the school term is so short that if I said just come in anytime the school would never be free - you just can't have that.

Q.12. Can you see any value in a headteacher or a member of staff visiting parents in their own homes?

A. Well, I've never met anyone who doesn't come - we have the opposite problem. I have to say this ticket is for your mammy and daddy only because we get aunties, uncles, grandmothers, neighbours, the woman next door and we cannot provide room for all of them.

There is not one child that I have known here who hasn't had parents up but I don't think as a general rule the head or teacher should visit the home unless it's a case of emergency like sickness. You cannot make fish of one and flesh of another. You could so easily be accused of favouritism. I think, without being snobbish, you can become too familiar with some parents. I think it is essential that unless you have a Parent-Teacher Association. School hours and out of school hours should be distinctly separate. I couldn't be seen visiting a parent in one street - time would prevent me visiting them all. I don't think it's feasible and I don't think I'd be very popular with my staff if I asked them to visit homes, unless in exceptional circumstances of course - other parents would accept this.

Q.13. Should a school accept offers of help from parents with special skills or talents?

A. Yes I do definitely. We did a play at Christmas that had the whole school in it and some of the most surprising people made wonderful costumes and lent all sorts of things. This was offered spontaneously and I think this is a golden opportunity for co-operation. I don't think there's much opportunity or very many times apart from Christmas and things like that where the parents can help.

Whenever help has been offered to me I've always accepted it with thanks but I cannot think in my school apart from Christmas and looking after pets when the parents can help.

- Q.14. Some infant schools have a system which gives parents an opportunity to meet the head and class teacher before the child enters school. Would this be worthwhile in the primary school?
- A. The parents on the day we start registering for the next term always meet me and the child always meets me. I have a talk to the parent and child depending on how the child is acting I always say 'would you like to come and see the little table where you will be sitting' and take them to the reception class and point out the facilities we've got and introduce them to the teacher. This happens with me automatically. You do then get to know about the child.
- Q.15. Do you think it is important to obtain information about a child's home background - If so how should it be obtained?
- A. Oh definitely. I never obtain it at all it's always given to me by the parents. An awful lot of people in all walks of life and all age groups are just bursting for someone to talk to. They'll come in and tell you the most surprising things. A broken home always causes behaviour problems, particularly with a boy. I don't seek it it's given to me. Also a child's medical history if it's anything out of the ordinary.
- C. Impact (How Well)
- Q.16. What percentage of parents normally attend functions organised by your school?
- A. Well, mine it's over a hundred percent. We have a lot of men stay off work to come. In my school there's no child who hasn't had on a parents day two, three or more visitors next door neighbours - they call them auntie - the lot. I've no problem there at all.
- Q.17. Is there any record kept of which parents attend?
- A. No, because I'd know. They flock to that particular child's desk. I put three o'clock on the last parents day and when I went back at one-thirty there were queues of parents waiting with prams. you can't keep them out. The problem is not the one's who don't come.
- Q.18. Which of the methods you use for involving parents have proved most successful?
- A. I don't think any particular thing or incident is more important than another. By and large it's your attitude to the children and the parents and the atmosphere of your school. I think if you try to create a thing like this it's artificial. I have a very good relationship with the parents many of whom went to this school. I'm part of the fixtures and they know I have the welfare of the children and the school at heart.
- Q.19. Have you had any problems organising school/home activities? If so would you care to comment on them?
- A. Not because of the attitude of the parents not at all.
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