



Family Literacy Project

Family Literacy Project: *Improving Attainment and Progress through Family Engagement*

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“Literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all, and essential for eradicating poverty.”

UNESCO

(<http://www.unesco.org/en/education-ar/themes/learning-throughout-life/literacy/literacy-important/>)

Overview

Project Aims

- To improve students’ attainment by engaging families in the learning process.
- To improve students’ attainment by improving the literacy of their families.
- To make families part of the school community.

Rationale and Project Outline

Some new arrivals and families with EAL within the UK struggle with their literacy and English language to the detriment to students’ attainment. This intervention works with families to address this issue and raise student attainment. It does this by:

- focusing on low level literacy families.
- providing support to reduce a range of barriers including language.
- developing shared learning between families and students.
- enhancing reading within EAL families which results in families being able to access and support their children within school.
- improving confidence with spoken English for EAL families.
- providing the basics for continuing learning.
- identifying families’ interests to develop and push the curriculum.



Family Literacy Project

Impact

Short term:

Staff's weekly access to families results in improved pupil behaviour leading to raised attainment.

Students teach to and learn with families using peer learning techniques. This raises attainment and consolidates learning.

Long term:

Through continuing attendance, both families and students improve their English language and literacy.

Families establish a learning network that is both supportive and community based. Amongst the families, friendship groups can be formed which aspire to enhance the English of both themselves and their children. By working collaboratively, families can become more active citizens and provide a more supportive role in their child's education, thus raising aspirations and achievement.

Parent comments

"I am so happy to be coming to English classes. It makes Parents' Evening so much easier"

"I have been in this country for 32 years and never learnt English - until now!"

"I now have a part-time job thanks to the Family Literacy Project!"

"I can help my daughter with her homework now!"

"I got 10 out of 10 in the spellings! My son will be so proud!"



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Student comments

“Miss did my mom come?
How did she do on the
spelling test? We studied
on Saturday and Sunday!”

“I’m glad my mom comes and gets
homework. Now she gets what I
have to do!”

“Sometimes, I didn’t understand the work
in lesson. But when I started to teach my
mom, I knew I had to know it really well. It
made me work really hard. I understand it
now!”

“I’m really glad my mom comes... I
don’t speak my mother tongue that
well so now I can speak to my mom in
the language I am comfortable in.”



Family Literacy Project

How To

What do you need to make the Family Literacy Project work?

Ideally, a school needs:

- A suitable area for families to study (preferably away from the rest of a busy school)
- Dedicated staff who must be regular as families need consistency
- Access to either laptops/desktop computers with internet access
- Access to a suitable learning platform i.e. Little Bridge/ RM Books/ library
- Family Support Worker/ Community Worker – these will act as a first point of contact for families
- ICT support
- Contracts
- Text messaging service
- Assessments
- Phonic builders.

Ideally, families need:

- Access to laptops/desktop computers so families and students can access sound files/learning platform
- Access to internet for Little Bridge or other programmes
- Little Bridge work books (for homework)
- Time to complete the set task (at least 30 minutes a week)
- To watch at least one English speaking show per day
- A strong commitment to learning
- The desire to share learning so families complete a learning task together.





Family Literacy Project

How to set up the Family Literacy Project step-by-step

FIRST CONTACT	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify a cohort of learners (through your Family Support Worker, SENCO or your EAL teacher).2. Inform the students and send the student home with a flyer.3. Use the Family Support Worker to make contact with the families.4. Book a room where families are at some distance from the rest of the school.5. Set a clear date to commence sessions.6. Inform families via text messaging of the start date and time.
THE FIRST CHALLENGE	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Once parents are informed and present, provide a short presentation on what the FLP is, what is happening and why it is important.2. Hand out legal ICT documentation and contracts for families to sign and collect in.3. Set up an informal discussion / assessment to attain levels of English (this could be as simple as families completing a mind-map on what they like to do or giving an indication of interest outside the school).4. Families to complete a questionnaire about themselves allowing you to access the families' general reading and writing skills.
FIRST SESSIONS: STARTING WITH THE FAMILIES	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce families to Little Bridge or whichever learning programme is being used. Ensure ICT support is available to help with any technical issues.2. Distribute logins to families so they can log in and access learning from home. All families need to start with Level 1/the beginner's stage.3. Provide relevant audio files on USB cards. This allows access to spoken English in the home.4. Give all families a work book for Little Bridge (this will be used mainly for homework).



Family Literacy Project

THE FIRST ASSESSMENT

- 1) Families to be given a questionnaire styled paper to fill in. By comparing this to the previous questionnaire given, this will help you assess the progress made by families.
- 2) Units of Little Bridge also offer assessments. Focus on the level where families are working and allow progression as necessary e.g. Rena is working on Little Bridge at a Level 2 stage, so she would need to complete the Level 2 test. However, Shindy is working at a Level 1 stage so she would need to continue with the Level 1 content).

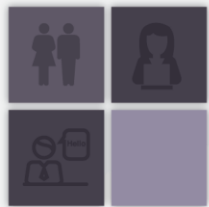
PROMOTING SHARED LEARNING WITH THE STUDENTS

Students at Shireland Collegiate Academy are invited fortnightly to join their families in the learning journey. Students become the 'teachers' which raises their confidence and gets them focused on learning. This also sets the stage for continued learning at home.

1. All staff are informed of the project and which students will be impacted.
2. A clear timetable to be distributed for the term allowing for careful planning and to ensure students do not fall behind.
3. Hold a pre-session where students meet with staff and expectations are given.
4. Students are given a family pass out to attend sessions.
5. Students to work with and support their family members. However, it is important not to let the students do the work for their families.
6. Fortnightly sessions to commence with the students.

KEEP THE SESSIONS GOING AND KEEP ASSESSING

1. Continue with family and student sessions.
2. Ensure you monitor families' progress and allow movement when necessary. Allow families to move up a level once competence is demonstrated. Progression can be identified through assessments (see below), homework and Little Bridge / other online platforms.
3. When ready, give reading tests every half term.
4. Give verbal feedback on homework / additional work completed.
5. Give a visual/colour-coded feedback to demonstrate progress.



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READING MASTERS

Families who have achieved over a reading age of 8 on at least two reading Hodder tests will need to be introduced to RM Books or the school library.

1. Staff to select books appropriate for reading level.
2. Monitor family/student reading.
3. Families to complete tests on each book read.
4. Create a book mark for reading.

Families who read 6+ books independently to receive a book voucher from Amazon/Waterstones/WHSmith so families can start their own collection of books.



EXTENDED HOMEWORK

- Domino (Rosie's dog from Little Bridge) is to visit families for a week at a time.
- Families to complete a diary about what Domino has been doing over the week (crib sheet will be distributed with the dog). This encourages families to write down and share their experiences.
- Families can use digital images to support their learning if they are able to/wish to.
- Collect in crib sheets and create a local area book about Domino which will be collated and distributed by the end of the programme.



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What else aids Family Literacy?

TRIPS

Trips can create a positive learning environment for families and students.

Possible trips include:

- Seasonal trips (i.e. the German markets at Christmas).
- Local library – use Domino for pictures to keep the atmosphere light hearted and fun.
- Summer trip – seaside trips so families can share in a UK beach adventure.
- Museums / London / local sports events / theatres / cinemas / bowling experiences etc.

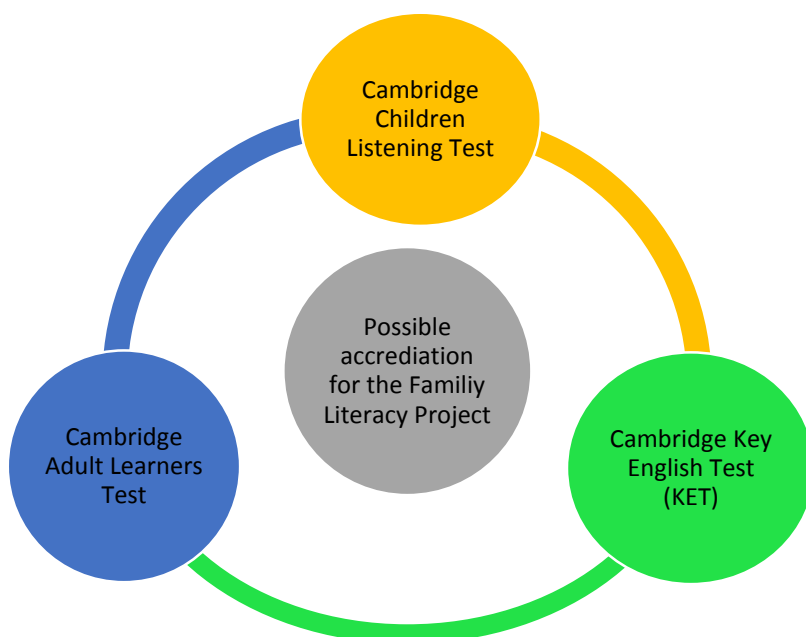
ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Families could take part in other 'clubs' which would promote further English skills and cohesion within the group.

Possible sessions include:

- Cooking classes – aids spoken English, reading English following instructions.
- ICT- families have the opportunity to use and develop their basic ICT Word/Excel skills.
- Numeracy – can involve local banks and basic budgeting skills.

How can the Family Literacy Project develop?



Family Literacy Project

Appendices

Appendix 1: Possible Software:

Little Bridge



Little Bridge is a safe secure site where young learners can explore a virtual online English-speaking environment. They can create their own characters and customise their own room in Little Bridge.

Little Bridge allows families to access many of the amenities open to them in a safe environment where if they need to repeat a phrase or check pronunciation they can do so at their leisure.

This piece of software has worked particularly well with our families as they are accessing the same resources that support their child's transition into an English speaking school. The children are able to be the 'experts' with their families to support them in their learning journey.

Little Bridge has allowed our families to develop their competence in English listening, reading and writing.

RM Books



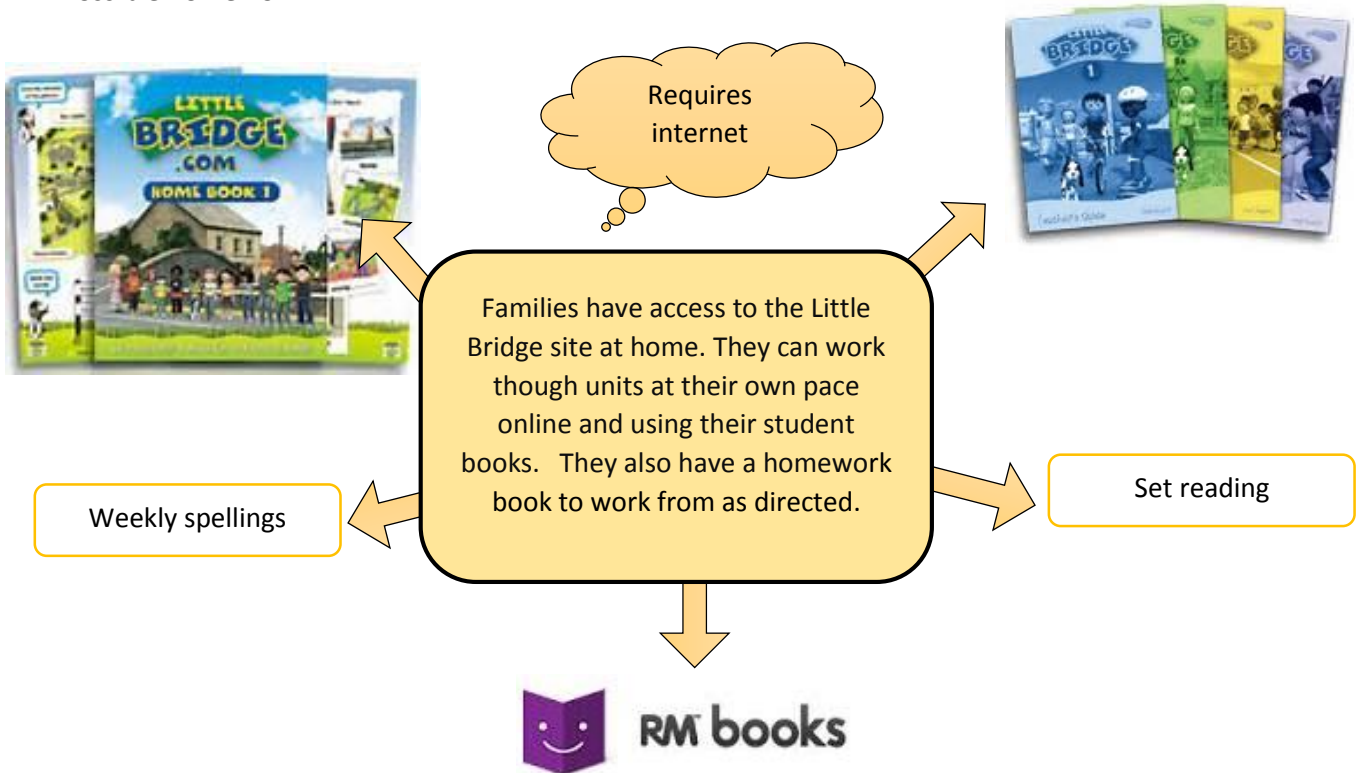
RM Books is an online library that allows learners to access a wide variety of texts alongside additional teacher created resources, such as quizzes, video clips and audio files. As RM Books are an online resource, families can complete work set at home.

Once families become more able at reading, RM Books enable teachers to assign books electronically to them. These would be assigned according to reading ages and interest to ensure families can access them. Families are then given the opportunity to read these texts in their own home.



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Possible homework





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Appendix 2: Resources

Contracts & Agreements



The Family Literacy Project Learning Agreement

The Family Literacy Project is an opportunity for parents and their children to work together to learn English at Shireland, using software adopted within the Academy such as RM Books and Little Bridge. This is a great opportunity to be part of your child's education whilst having fun and learning together at the same time! On completion of the project parents will be awarded with [*"The YESsmethwick Citizenship Award for Parents"*] which can be used to showcase your skills and efforts to improve employability.

Sessions will run each Wednesday morning in thebetween 9:30am and 10:30am starting from [date].

By participating in The Family Literacy Project you agree to:

- Attend all sessions outlined by project leaders.
- Arrive on time for each session.
- Inform [staff name] before the session if you are unable to attend.
- Ensure all the necessary equipment is brought to each session.
- Behave in an appropriate and respectful manner to other parents, students, staff and the Academy as a whole.

I accept and understand the terms and conditions of The Family Literacy Project Learning Agreement

Name: **Signed:**

Date:

If you have any questions please contact _____



Family Literacy Project

September 2014

Ref: SMG/AC

Dear Parents

Multimedia Permission

Shireland Collegiate Academy produces a number of internal and external publications. These include our prospectus, Learning Gateway Portals, website, photos, videos, documentaries and newspaper features.

Many of these are enhanced by the use of photographs of our families and so we would like your permission to use any such multimedia if the occasion arises.

Yours sincerely

.....
.....

Multimedia Permission.

I give permission for any such multimedia to be used by Shireland Collegiate Academy.

I do not give permission for any such multimedia to be used by Shireland Collegiate Academy.

Signed Name Date

.....



Family Literacy Project



Parent Equipment Loan Agreement: Headphones

As part of The Family Literacy Project, headphones will be required to use within the sessions. A payment of £3 is required up front should you require a set.

As a member of The Family Literacy Project you agree to:

- Take full responsibility for keeping your headphones safe and in a good condition.
- Any loss or damage to your headphones will result in you purchasing a new set.
- It is your responsibility to bring the headphones to the sessions when required.

I accept and understand the terms and conditions of The Collegiate Academy Trust's Equipment Loan Agreement.

Name: **Signed:**

Date:

Please sign and return this agreement to.....





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The text messaging service...

The text messaging service is important when keeping in contact with families. Weekly text messages should be sent out to keep families informed about the sessions coming up.



NOTE: Do not make the text messages too complex as families may struggle to read them.



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Assessments

Assessments are very important and will need to be completed on a regular basis...



Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

NOTE: Families need to feel they are making progress and this will need to be celebrated.

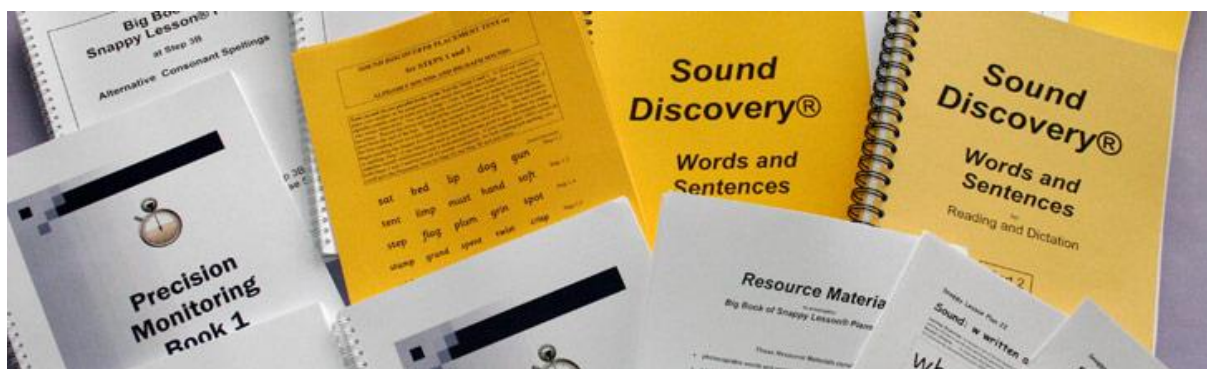
Children's Name and Ages

First Name	Second Name	Age

Interests and hobbies (What do you like to do?)

Phonic Builders

For families who are not yet able to access Little Bridge or other learning platforms will need to learn basic phonics.



Family Literacy Project

Local advertising



The purpose of the **Family Literacy Project** is to aid the breaking down of barriers when supporting families and their children through developing their English. At Shireland Collegiate Academy we tackle this by working with the students' families and guardians.

We aim to:

- * develop shared learning experiences between families and students.
- * enhance reading within EAL families which will hopefully result in families' support for the education of their children.
- * improve confidence with spoken English for EAL families.
- * develop a shared love of reading
- * provide the basics for continuing learning.



How?

We use the online learning platforms of Little Bridge and RM books that can be accessed out of school
Regular spelling tests.
Termly reading (comprehension) tests.
Monitor and support families' in their English language development.

Why?

Developing English to a good standard means success in learning and success at school and in exams

Families become more confident when meeting with teachers whilst developing their basic ICT skills.
Families learning together means they support each other




NOTE: Let your school community know what you are doing. Distribute leaflets during Open Evenings and Parents' Evenings. You could also give them to local community centres to hand out.



Family Literacy Project

Extended Homework

FLP Homework

 You have me for a week. Complete the diary entries below so you can share with the class what we did. Try and write in complete sentences.
Ex: Today we went to do shopping at...

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Saturday _____

Sunday _____

Monday _____

NOTE: Families enjoy this project as they get to share with others what they have done during the week. Many will also take pictures of visits with Domino in tow.



Family Literacy Project

Appendix 3: Case Study - Shireland Collegiate Academy

Setting up the Family Literacy Project:

Shireland Collegiate Academy started the Family Literacy Project in February 2014.

Dedicated members of staff played a vital role in the set-up of the Project. To begin with, two members of staff started up the Project in an available room which was easily accessible for families. The members of staff included a Teacher of English and the Family Support Worker. As the project developed, other teaching staff, teaching assistants and a SENCO have also agreed to volunteer time to the Project. All members of staff play a vital role, ranging from teaching to assessing.

As Little Bridge was already a key part of our curriculum for students with EAL, staff involved already had a sound knowledge and understanding of the Little Bridge software.

With this knowledge, we followed the steps outlined previously and began bringing families into the Academy every week.

The Family Literacy Project today:

We currently have 16 families attending weekly with an average attendance of 91%.

The families that attend are from diverse backgrounds. The majority of families speak two or more languages, before even beginning to learn English. Our families represent a cross section of our school community; we have families from Nigeria, Gambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Yemen, Ecuador and Hungary.

Students regularly attend sessions, and are happy to do so.

Progress and students:

The impact this has had on the students have been two-fold:

1. All students who came into the Academy with no English and whose families attend the Family Literacy Project are now using Little Bridge and have a Hodder Reading Test age. 88% of the same students have made over one year's progress in their reading ages since the Family Literacy Project began.
2. Students are aware that families are in the Academy. This has improved the behaviour of students within the Academy, both inside lessons and outside. Students are also proud of their families' desire to learn English.



Family Literacy Project

Progress and families:

- Due to regular attendance families have seen their reading improve enough to the fact that we now have 6 families who are ready to move on to RM Books.
- All families with the exception of one (who started in September) now know the alphabet, their basic phonics and are ready for Little Bridge.
- Four family members have made noticeable improvements on their Hodder Reading Tests. One family member has improved their reading age by 2 years in just over 4 months.

