

FAMILIES MAKING FRIENDS



PARENT AND COMMUNITY LINKING

Building Bridges Pendle lead the Pendle Schools Linking Network (PSLN). The initiative has been progressively growing over the past five years; beginning with 6 primary schools as part of a pilot scheme and now has 21 primary schools and 6 secondary schools taking part; that's 20 active links involving nearly 1690 pupils.



Building Bridges Pendle have also worked hard to develop approaches to connect parents of children taking part in linking initiatives to celebrate cultural identity and community. The 'Families Making Friends' programme is key to this.

How did you start Families Making Friends?

We started by creating a partnership group who met to plan series of get-togethers for pupils and parents and developed a project proposal for schools.



All the primary schools in our network were asked to think about pupils and parents who may be open to involved in a project which entailed coming together a number of time over the course of 4 to 6 weeks. 10 primary schools responded. We sent a revised project proposal to all schools with fixed dates and times for x4 workshops. We then had a response from 6 schools from where parents had agreed to come along with their children.

The relationships with classroom teachers was key to communication within the school ranks and parents, having a teacher 'championing' the project was essential.

How did it go?

The end result went very well. Initially we were not sure about the numbers of parents and the ethnic mix we would have, but eventually we had 72 parents and children who came along to the first social event. The ethnic mix was approximately 60% British Asian to 40% White British.



We found that the expected commitment of four workshops came across too demanding. We changed our approach to focus on the first event with other workshops being optional. We then recruited for each event as we went along. This worked better.

Also having our project running towards the end of last school-term and working after the month of Ramadhan, was 'constricting' the potential timescales we had to work with.

What's the impact been of this project?

The development of positive examples of collaboration between the community sector and schools for complementing young people's development to become active citizens who are able to embrace difference.

A new journey has begun where parents from across the borough who took an active role will advocating the need for cross-cultural engagement. They have also become a resource to build upon to further advance the need for community action and to tackle barriers towards integration.

FEEDBACK FROM THOSE INVOLVED

"Parents tend to live in their own communities and don't always get the opportunity to mix and it was lovely to talk to other mums from different cultures"

"It was lovely to talk to other families"

"We need to provide greater opportunities to integrate"

"It was excellent in how it was set out and how kids bond together"

"A very worthwhile evening"

"Visits to mosques and churches will be beneficial"