

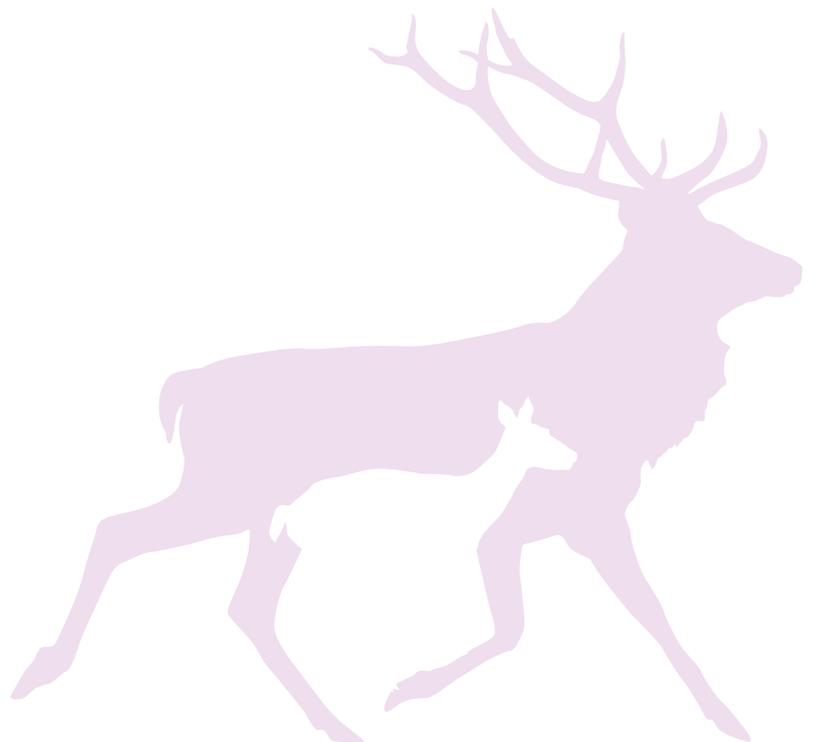


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# YEAR OF THE DAD



## HOW FATHER-FRIENDLY IS YOUR SCHOOL? – SETTING THE STANDARD



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Prestonpans Infants School actively engages dads in all its activities, knowing that fathers and male carers are as important to children's early years as mothers. The school has collated their inclusive practices into a benchmarking tool that can support other schools to 'father-proof' their curriculum and activities.

*It's a philosophy, an ethos, a way of being. It's how we view parents; we view them as two partners. We always have time for dads, we're not judgemental, we know and use their first names and we make them feel comfortable.'*

Alison Cameron, Depute Headteacher, Prestonpans Infant School

### AIMS

Prestonpans Infants School ('Wee Pans') is strongly committed to two principles: that children learn best when parents/carers and school staff work together; and that dads need to be as involved as mums in their children's education.

To continually improve its relationship with dads, the school has developed a tool to benchmark "How Father Friendly is Prestonpans Infant School". The tool aims to support the school assess progress on making father and male carers feel comfortable in the school and be fully involved in their child's learning. It also supports the identification of any areas for development that could further improve the school's relationships with fathers.

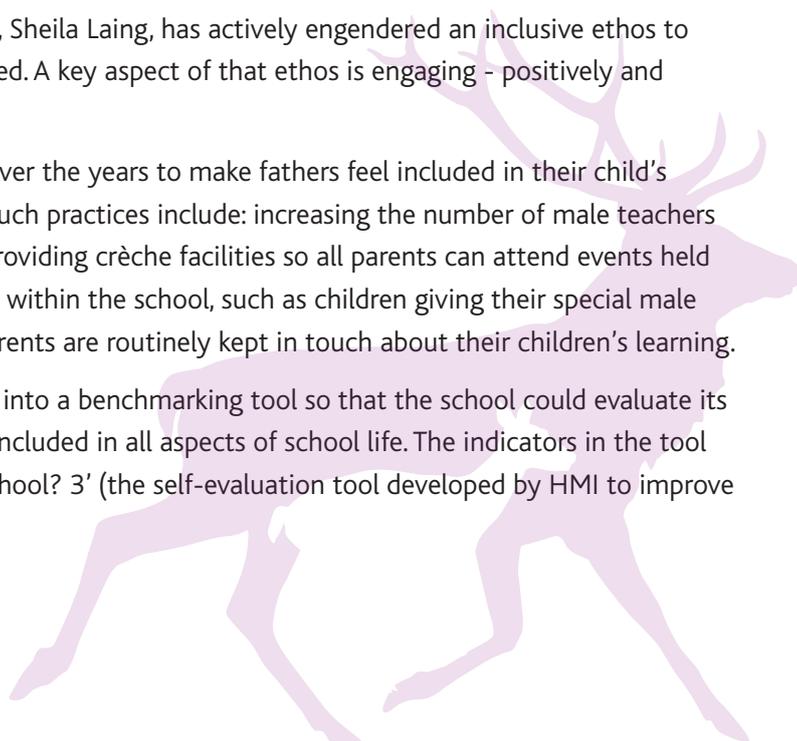
Through 'How Father-Friendly is your School', Prestonpans Infants hopes to inspire other schools to develop a more inclusive environment for fathers and male carers, and ultimately create the best learning environment for children.

### THE PEOPLE: THE PROJECT

The Headteacher at Prestonpans Infants School, Sheila Laing, has actively engendered an inclusive ethos to make parents and carers feel welcome and valued. A key aspect of that ethos is engaging - positively and proactively - with dads and male carers.

The school has developed a range of practices over the years to make fathers feel included in their child's education and comfortable within the school. Such practices include: increasing the number of male teachers (5 out of 13 teachers at the school are male); providing crèche facilities so all parents can attend events held at the school; offering activities on Father's Day within the school, such as children giving their special male carer a 'pizza' back massage; and ensuring all parents are routinely kept in touch about their children's learning.

In 2015, these practices were formally collated into a benchmarking tool so that the school could evaluate its progress on ensuring dads and male carers felt included in all aspects of school life. The indicators in the tool were aligned with those in 'How Good is our School? 3' (the self-evaluation tool developed by HMI to improve practice in Scottish schools).



The tool covers a range of areas, from administrative practices to curriculum content, as illustrated by the following examples:

- The 'Parents Apart Directory' is regularly updated so all parents, including those who do not live with their child, routinely receive information about their child's welfare and progress;
- School resources display positive images of fathers in education and learning;
- Children have an awareness of different family circumstances and feel valued no matter what their own family composition;
- Staff are trained to understand how they can contribute to father-friendly practices within the school.

## THE DIFFERENCE

The tool has focused the school's management team on 'father-proofing' and highlighted to other staff what 'father-proofing' looks like in practice. The school's active stance in engaging fathers and male carers has paid dividends. A recent focus group held with fathers endorsed the view that they feel welcome at the school and included in its activities:

*'As a father, I am very proud of the school and am very, very much looking forward to the next couple of years that my son is here.'*

*'The staff are very welcoming to dads all the time and know us all by name. You're on first name terms with them...it's the fact they can go down to the parents' level whether you're a mum or a dad.'*

Fathers with a child at Prestonpans Infants School.

In addition, staff cite examples of fathers who have been supported while their children have been at the school, who return at a later date to engage with the school and give something back, by for example, offering activities for other dads.

Through making the school available as a resource and actively promoting local events, Wee Pans also supports dads' organisations in the community, including Dadswork, which regularly sees 400 fathers and children turn up to their 'Go Mad' events.

The tool was developed as a generic resource so it can be used by any school. It is currently being updated to ensure it aligns with the recently published version of 'How Good is our School? 4' and will then be made available on the school's website and to other settings. The teachers involved in the projects are at pains to stress, however, that the tool is not a tick box exercise, but a tool to be used in schools where there is a genuine desire to create a more inclusive ethos.

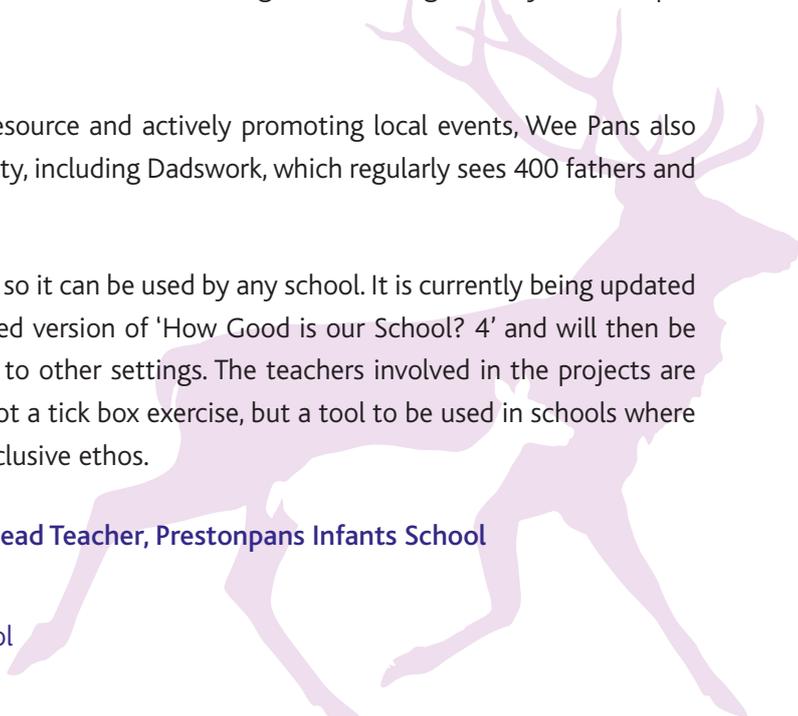
**More information: Alison Cameron, Depute Head Teacher, Prestonpans Infants School**

acameron@prestonpansinfant.elcschool.org.uk

Chris Wilson, Teacher, Prestonpans Infants School

cwilson@prestonpansinfant.elcschool.org.uk

Telephone: (01875) 810 028





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