

# The Complete Guide to Welcoming New Families: From Hello to Belonging



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A practical handbook for schools who want to make every family feel valued from day one

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# 1. Why This Matters

Let's be honest – welcoming new families isn't just about being nice (though that's important too!). When families feel genuinely welcomed and connected:

- Students settle faster and perform better academically
- Parents become advocates who recommend your school to others
- Staff spend less time dealing with complaints and confusion
- Your school's reputation grows through positive word-of-mouth
- Retention rates improve, saving significant recruitment costs

The research is clear: schools with strong parent communities see better outcomes across the board. And it all starts with that crucial first impression.

## The Real Cost of Getting It Wrong

When families don't feel welcomed adequately, the consequences are real:

- New families aren't clear about your school's culture and the purpose of your community. Why is the annual fair important? Why should they volunteer?
- Poor onboarding can lead to "enrollment melt" – families who accept but don't show up
- When families don't feel like they belong they are more likely to complain about the school and staff
- Unclear expectations and feeling overwhelmed are top reasons families leave schools
- The average cost to recruit a new student is much more than retaining existing ones.

Here are the top six aspects that can make a good onboarding experience.



- Personalised welcome
- Clear expectations
- Guided experience
- Early engagement
- Mentors or buddy programme
- Continuous support

Here are the main reasons that can make a bad onboarding experience:



- Bland welcome
- WhatsApp/Line offer conflicting advice
- Lack of clear guidance
- Delayed engagement
- No systematic support after joining

The second point Heads of Admissions mention a lot - when the school has worked hard to recruit new pupils, that a WhatsApp or Line group can undo all this hard work by offering new parents messages that are inconsistent with the school branding and objectives.

On the last point, parents often talk about being abandoned after the school has their commitment. This includes being directed to an informal WhatsApp or Line Group. It isn't clear who's who and is often overwhelming.



## 2. The New Family Journey

We mention above the importance of early engagement. Think of welcoming families as a journey, not a single event. Every family goes through these stages:

### Stage 1: Before They Arrive (Pre-Enrollment)

- First impressions from your website and communications
- The application and enrollment process
- Waiting period anxiety ("Did we choose the right school?")

### Stage 2: The Welcome Phase (First Term)

- Information overload vs. helpful guidance
- Meeting teachers, staff, and other families
- Understanding school culture and expectations
- Children making friends and settling in

### Stage 3: Becoming Part of the Community (Ongoing)

- Building lasting relationships
- Contributing to school life
- Feeling confident in their choice
- Becoming ambassadors for your school

Each stage needs different approaches, but the goal is the same: helping families feel they truly belong<sup>1</sup>.

Not all schools can invest to the same degree in their welcoming new family process. In the next section we highlight some budget friendly initiatives, mid-range solutions and best in class experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> The Authors of "Reconnect: Building School Culture for Meaning, Purpose and Belonging" set out the arguments why belonging is a human imperative and a critical component of a school community.

#DSe76ed



### 3. Budget-Friendly Basics

Great welcoming doesn't require a big budget – just thoughtful planning

#### Essential Actions (Low/No Cost)

##### 1. Personalised Welcome Notes

- Handwritten notes from the headteacher or class teacher
- Include the child's name and something specific about them elicited from the application form such as interests and hobbies
- Send before the first day of term

##### 2. Parent Communication Card

Create a simple card ( printed or digital) with:

- Key contact details for different departments
- Where to find important information
- "Who to call for what" guide

##### 3. Coffee Morning Welcome

- Monthly informal gatherings for new parents
- Held in school or local community centre or cafe
- Existing parent volunteers as hosts
- Simple refreshments and name tags

##### 4. New Family FAQ Page

Create a dedicated webpage answering:

- The purpose of the community and how families can get involved
- Common first-week questions
- Uniform policies and where to buy
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures
- After-school activities information
- Local community resources

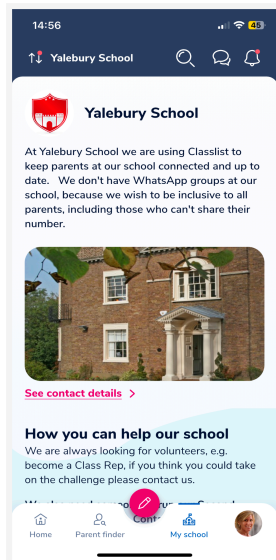
#### Smart Use of Existing Resources

##### Volunteer Parent Ambassadors

- Recruit enthusiastic existing parents
- Train them to welcome new families
- Pair them with newcomers for informal support
- Provide simple training on school policies

## Social Media Welcome

- Share photos of new families (with permission)
- Create "Welcome to our community" posts
- Use school Classlist/Facebook/Instagram to showcase community spirit



**Classlist** provides verified school parents with a digital card accessible on their mobile phones, summarising key school information.



## 4. Mid-Range Solutions

When you have a modest budget to invest in family experience

### Better Communication Tools

#### Welcome Pack Reimagined

Instead of overwhelming paper packets:

- Create a "First Month Survival Kit" one pager infographic with essentials only
- Include a welcome letter from a current parent (see examples)\*
- Add local area guide with family-friendly recommendations
- Provide school calendar with key dates highlighted

#### Digital Welcome Hub

- Dedicated section on your website for new families
- Video welcome message from the headteacher
- Virtual school tour for families who can't visit
- Online forms and document upload facility
- GDPR compliant, professional mobile app for parents to connect and for parent to parent communications

#### Regular Check-in System

- Scheduled phone calls at 2 weeks, 6 weeks, and end of first term
- Simple email surveys about settling-in experience
- Dedicated staff member as new family liaison
- Open door policy for concerns

Send a Welcome Message to the New Members

- Very briefly introduce yourself.
- Give some information about the community and the community spirit.
- Let them know that you are there to listen, understand, and help.
- Make sure that they'd feel welcomed and involved after reading your message.

Example of a welcome message:

Dear [**Parent's Name**]

Welcome to [**School Name**] I am [**name**] the [**role**] and parent of a [**12 year old**] and [**6 years old**] at the school.

We are so excited to have you join our school community. At [School Name], we **bring together** parents, school staff and pupils for regular social activities, so that we can develop a trusted network of families to lean on through both good and tough times.

**We encourage you** to get involved in our events and volunteer even if it's just an hour or so at first. Please don't hesitate to **reach out** if you have any questions or need assistance.

## Community Building Events

Welcome Picnic/BBQ

- Hold in the first week of term. Even before the holidays start so families can meet up prior to the school year.
- Mix of new and existing families
- Organised activities for children
- Informal atmosphere for natural connections

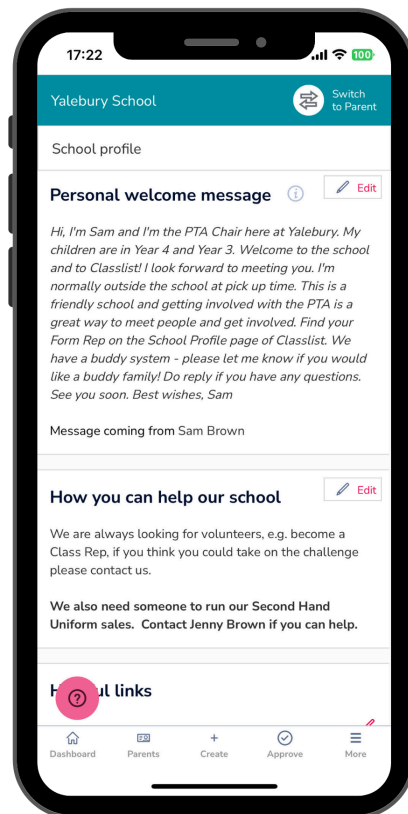
"New Parent Coffee & Questions" Sessions

- Monthly gatherings with different topics
- Guest speakers (local services, school departments)
- Q&A or fireside chat format with school leadership. The aim is to humanise school leaders and not to interrogate them.
- Childcare provided

Family Activity Events

- Movie nights, quiz evenings, craft sessions
- Include all family members
- Partner with parent associations
- Rotate venues and times to accommodate different schedules

A large secondary school Admissions Officer described a successful open day initiative: *"We created a treasure hunt map of the school campus and paired up new families to work together to solve the clues. It was a fantastic way to help new families orientate themselves, learn about the school's history and culture, and make new friends."*



**The Classlist App reaches out to every member when they join.**



## 5. Best-in-Class Excellence

For schools aiming to be leaders in family experience

### Sophisticated Welcome Programme

#### Family Onboarding Manager

- Dedicated staff role for new family support
- First point of contact for questions
- Coordinates all welcome activities
- Tracks family satisfaction and adjustment

#### Comprehensive Digital Platform

Investment in a system with:

- Personalised family portals
- Task checklists for new families
- Integration with school information systems
- Mobile app for easy access
- Parent to parent communication that is safe and moderated
- Parent finder and location map of other families that have opted in to share this information. Invaluable for forging friendships, arranging transportation and children's birthday celebrations.

#### Multi-Stage Orientation Programme

- Phase 1: Before arrival (information and preparation)
- Phase 2: First week (intensive support)
- Phase 3: First term (ongoing check-ins)
- Phase 4: First year (community integration and time to give back)

### Advanced Family Support

#### Specialised Welcome Tracks

Different programmes for:

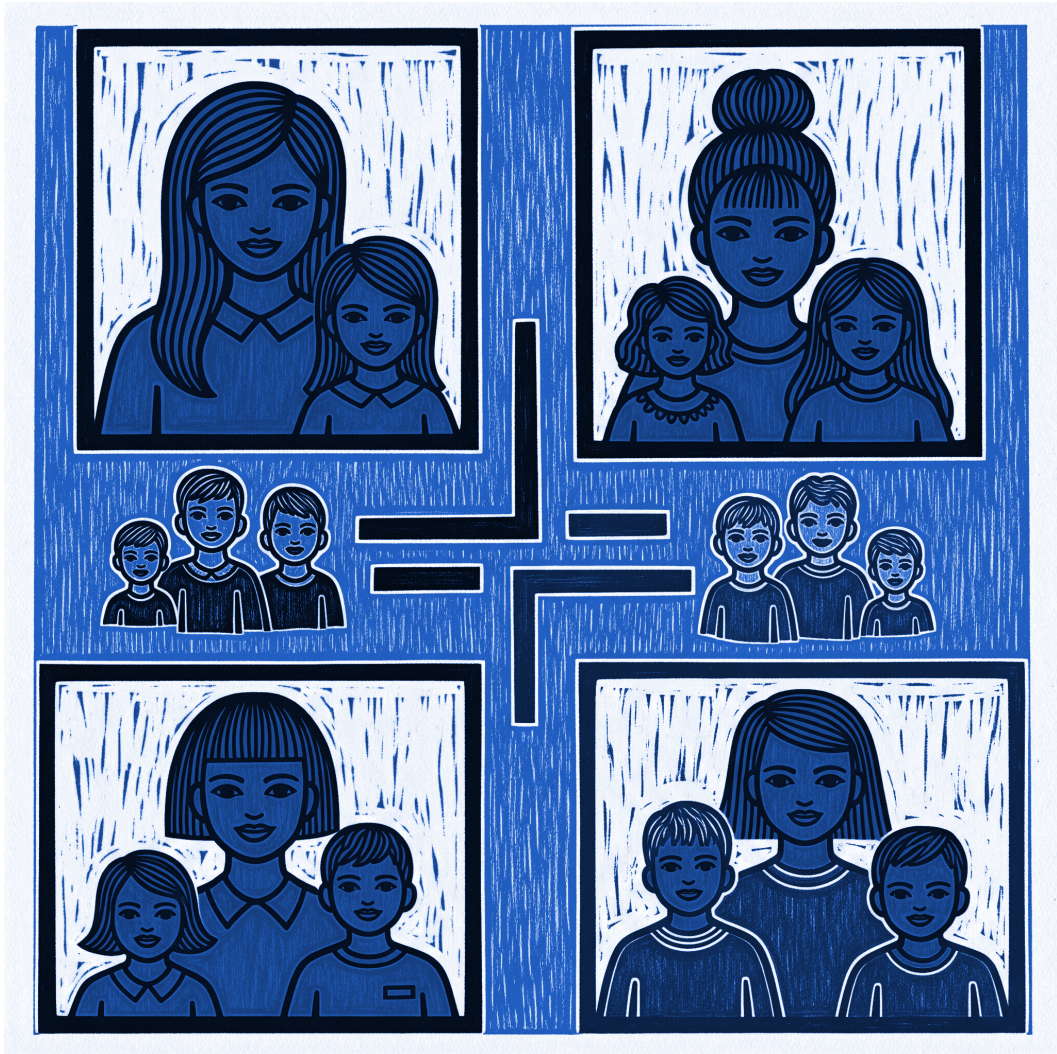
- International families (cultural adaptation support)
- Boarding students and families
- Families with special educational needs
- Military or diplomatic families

## Professional Development

- Staff training on cultural sensitivity
- Community management skills workshops

## Data-Driven Improvement

- Regular family satisfaction surveys (NPS scores)
- Exit interviews when families leave
- Analytics on engagement
- Continuous programme refinement



## 6. Building Your Buddy Programme

Buddy programmes can benefit all types of schools but are especially relevant to international families. These families are not only starting a new school, they are starting life from scratch. The connections they make often last a lifetime.

### Getting Started

#### Step 1: Launch and Recruit

- Announce through newsletters and school communications
- Present at parent evenings and school events
- Use sign-up forms (Google Forms work well)
- Collect volunteer details: location, children's ages, interests, languages

#### Step 2: Match New Families

- Form a small matching team (3 people works well)
- Consider: geography, children's ages, shared interests, languages
- Be flexible – perfect matches aren't always possible
- Aim to complete matches before summer break

#### Step 3: Make Connections

- Crucial: Connect families BEFORE any welcome events
- Provide buddy guidelines and conversation starters
- Suggest meeting for coffee or a park visit
- Share contact details with permission

### Different Buddy Models

To build a strong volunteer pool, consider offering varied roles based on volunteers' availability and expertise. Recognising experienced volunteers through "super buddy" roles can be effective. Schools might also begin with seasonal buddy roles and expand later. Crucially, all buddy roles should be visibly appreciated by both fellow volunteers and school staff (see examples below).

#### Super Buddy

- Experienced parent who can support 5-10 new families
- Often works well as a group chat or meetup
- Good for very welcoming, organized volunteers

#### Traditional Buddy

- One-to-one family pairing

- More intensive support relationship
- Suitable for families with specific needs

#### Seasonal Buddy

- Short-term support for first term only
- Less commitment required from volunteers
- Good for recruiting more helpers

## Supporting Your Buddies

#### Provide Clear Guidelines

- What buddies should do (and what they shouldn't)
- Key information to share
- When to refer questions to school staff
- How to handle difficult situations

#### Regular Check-ins

- Monthly buddy coordinator meetings
- WhatsApp group for quick questions
- Annual appreciation event
- Recognition in school communications



## 7. Using Technology to Connect

How digital tools can transform your welcome process. It isn't just about one way communication, it's about creating a welcoming community.

### The Power of Digital Community

Modern families expect digital solutions, but they also crave authentic connections. The key is using technology to facilitate real relationships, not replace them.

#### Why Traditional WhatsApp Groups Fall Short

- Privacy concerns (not everyone wants to share their number)
- Lack of control over conversations
- Information gets lost in chat streams
- Can become negative or cliquey
- Teachers and diplomatic families often can't participate

### Professional Parent Platforms

#### What Makes a Good School Community Platform

- Inclusive. All families can join and is a safe space where parents are respectful
- Privacy-first design: Parents control what they share
- Moderation tools: Keep conversations positive and relevant
- Easy to use: Intuitive interface for all tech levels
- School integration: Links with your school management system so that families aren't left out and all members are verified
- Mobile-friendly: Works on phones without complicated logins

#### Key Features to Look For

- Parent directory with search capabilities
- Interest-based groups (sports, languages, hobbies)
- Event management and sign-ups
- Volunteer coordination tools
- Welcome campaigns for new families
- Messaging with conversation limits (prevents overwhelming)
- Can collect money for event tickets
- BONUS: A **map** which parents can opt in for liftsharing, playdates and childcare support.
- Translation so language isn't a barrier for being included

## Implementing Digital Solutions

Classlist: The home of positive school communities

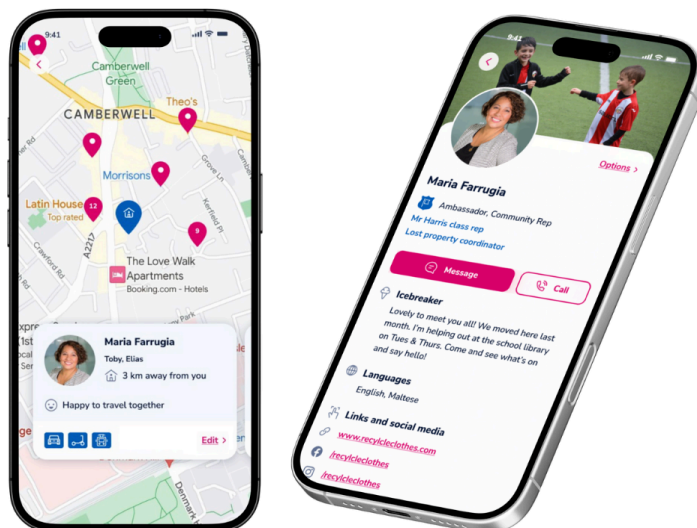
Classlist is specifically designed for school communities and addresses many common challenges:

- Automatic onboarding: New families are added when they join your school
- Privacy controls: Parents choose what information to share
- Guided connections: Find families by location, interests, or children's classes
- Professional moderation: Keep conversations positive and school-appropriate
- Welcome campaigns: Automated messages for new joiners

Getting Started with Digital Platforms

1. Choose the right platform for your school's needs and budget
2. Train key staff on how to use and moderate
3. Launch with existing engaged parents first
4. Create clear community guidelines
5. Integrate with your welcome process

A thriving school community is structured to ensure your school families build **RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER** in a quest to belong and make your school better



The Classlist App includes a map of local families (opt in) and a parent profile





## 8. International Families

Special considerations for global communities

### Understanding the Challenge

International families often face unique challenges:

- Complete change of country, culture, and language
- No existing social network
- Different educational systems and expectations
- Practical needs (housing, healthcare, local services)
- Children adapting to new culture while maintaining their own

### Enhanced Support Strategies

#### Pre-Arrival Support

- Connect with other families from the same country/region. Ideally prior to the school year
- Provide practical information pack (healthcare, shopping, transport)
- Offer virtual school tour and Q&A session
- Share contact with current parent from similar background

#### Cultural Integration

- Buddy programme with emphasis on cultural exchange
- International Days celebrating different cultures
- Language support groups (both learning and maintaining)
- Connections with local expat communities

#### Practical Help

- Supermarket tours (surprisingly popular!)
- Banking and mobile phone setup guidance
- Local area orientation walks
- Healthcare system navigation
- School system explanation sessions

### Building Global Community

#### Nationality Groups

- Create groups for families from same countries
- Share cultural celebrations and traditions
- Support in native languages when needed

- Help maintain cultural identity. Tea/Coffee ceremonies open to the wider community are a low key way of celebrating different cultures

#### Cross-Cultural Connections

- Mixed nationality events and activities
- Cultural exchange programmes
- International food festivals
- Language exchange opportunities

#### A physical space for parents

- Evidence that parents are welcome
- Parents can meet others informally without staff intervention
- Engaged parents are more likely to volunteer their time

*“I had an email from someone from my country and from the grades my children were in before we even left our previous home. I cried! I was overwhelmed with all the packing: The PRE-welcome is SO important.” International School Parent*



## 9. Measuring Success

How to know if your welcome programme is working

### Key Metrics to Track

#### Quantitative Measures

- Retention rates: Aim for 90%+ in independent schools, 95%+ in state schools
- Event attendance: New family participation in school activities
- Response rates: To surveys and communications
- Time to integration: How quickly families become involved

#### Qualitative Feedback

- Net Promoter Score (NPS): "How likely are you to recommend our school?"
- Satisfaction surveys: After first term and first year
- Focus groups: With new families and buddy volunteers
- Exit interviews: When families do leave

### What Good Looks Like

#### Positive Indicators

- New families attending events within the first month. Ideally design these as small events where attendees share a common background or interest
- Parents volunteering for activities in the first term. Ensure the tasks are small and achievable with limited time needed
- Children making friends quickly
- Positive comments in surveys and informal feedback
- Families referring friends to the school
- Families reaching and asking and offering support

#### Warning Signs

- Low attendance at new family events
- Multiple inquiries about the same basic information
- Parents mentioning feeling "lost" or "overwhelmed"
- Children struggling to make friends
- Rise in parent complaints about the school
- Stressed staff on the front line dealing with parents
- Families questioning their school choice

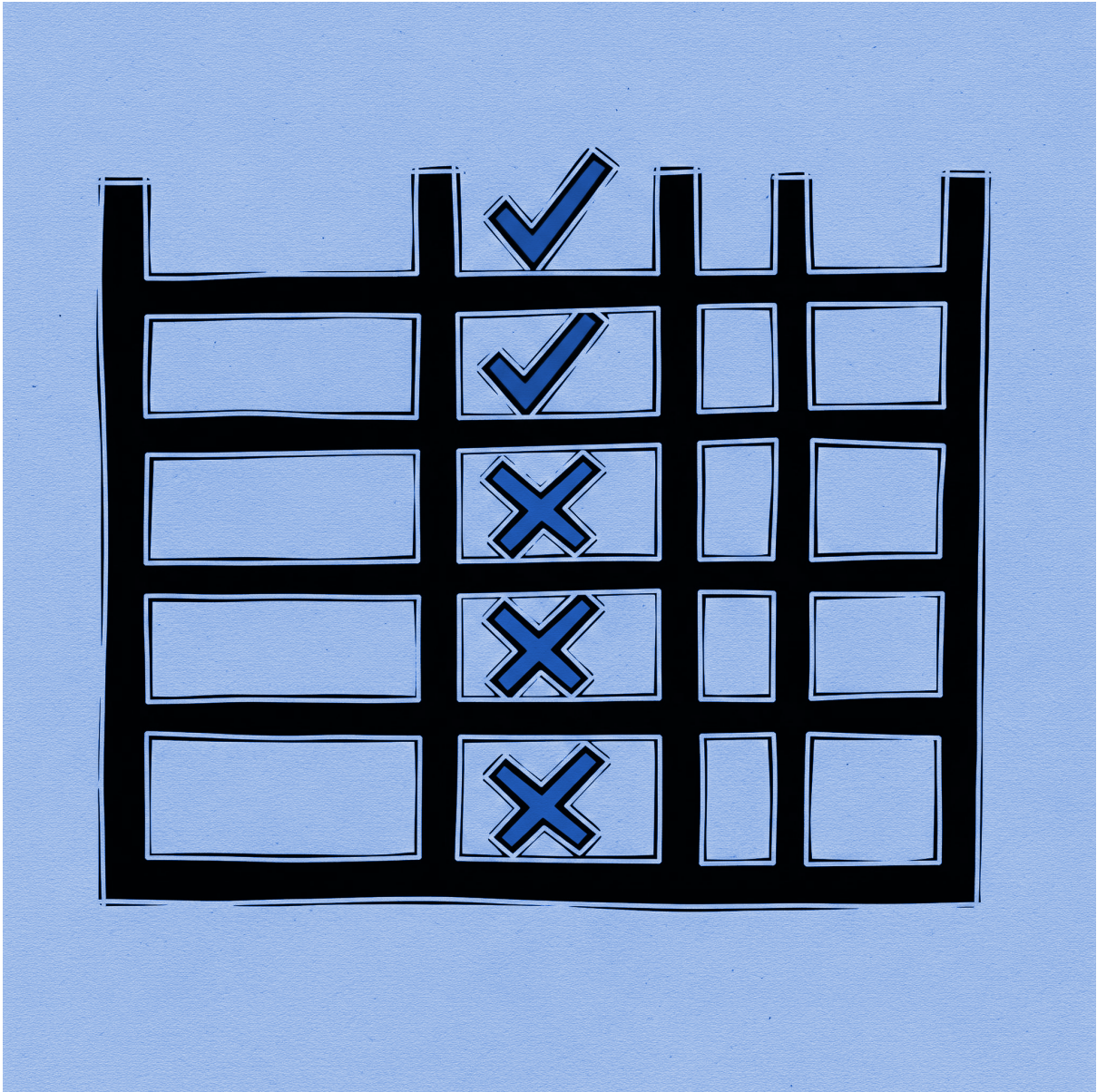
### Using Data for Improvement

#### Regular Review Process

- Monthly check-ins with new family liaison
- Termly analysis of survey feedback
- Annual review of entire welcome programme
- Staff feedback on what questions they receive most

#### Continuous Improvement

- Adjust based on feedback and data
- Test new approaches with small groups
- Share successful strategies across staff
- Celebrate successes and learn from challenges



## 10. Quick Start Checklist

Get started this week with these simple actions

### Week 1: Foundation

- Audit your current new family process
- Create simple "New Family FAQ" page on website
- Design basic welcome letter template
- Identify staff member as new family contact
- Set up simple feedback collection method (Classlist has Net Promoter Score Survey tool built in for school staff to use)

### Week 2: Communication

- Create parent communication card with key contacts
- Write "Tell Me About Your Child" form
- Plan first new parent coffee morning
- Recruit 3-5 volunteer parent ambassadors
- Set up basic buddy matching system if resources permit

### Week 3: Community

- Schedule welcome events for new families
- Create student buddy programme guidelines
- Set up regular check-in schedule
- Design simple satisfaction survey
- Plan the first cultural celebration event. Draw on the school's founding story and history for inspiration<sup>2</sup>

### Month 2: Enhancement

- Evaluate feedback from first initiatives
- Expand volunteer ambassador programme
- Create digital welcome hub on website
- Develop specialised support for international families or families where the local language isn't their first language
- Set up measurement and tracking systems

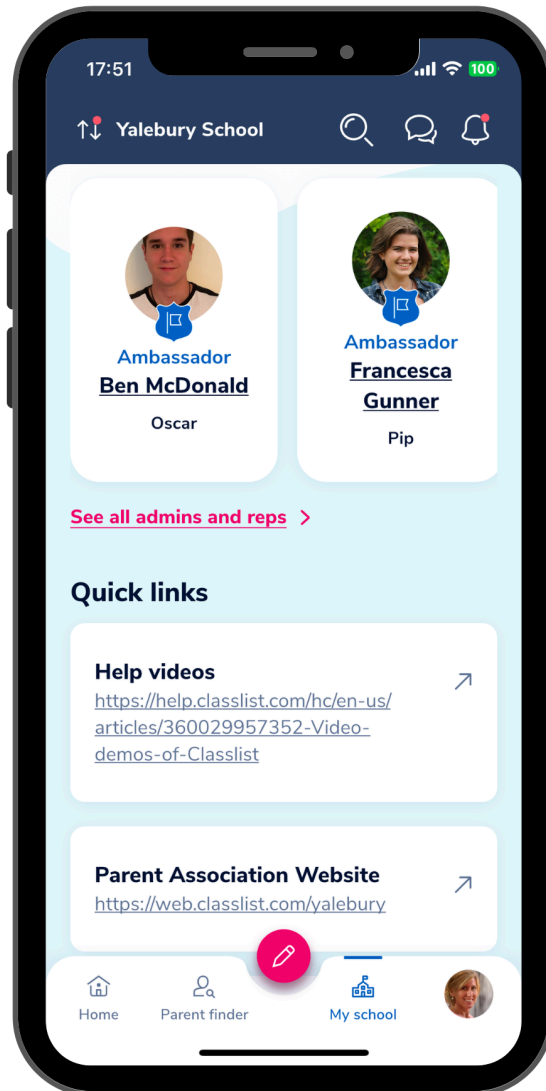
### Month 3: Excellence

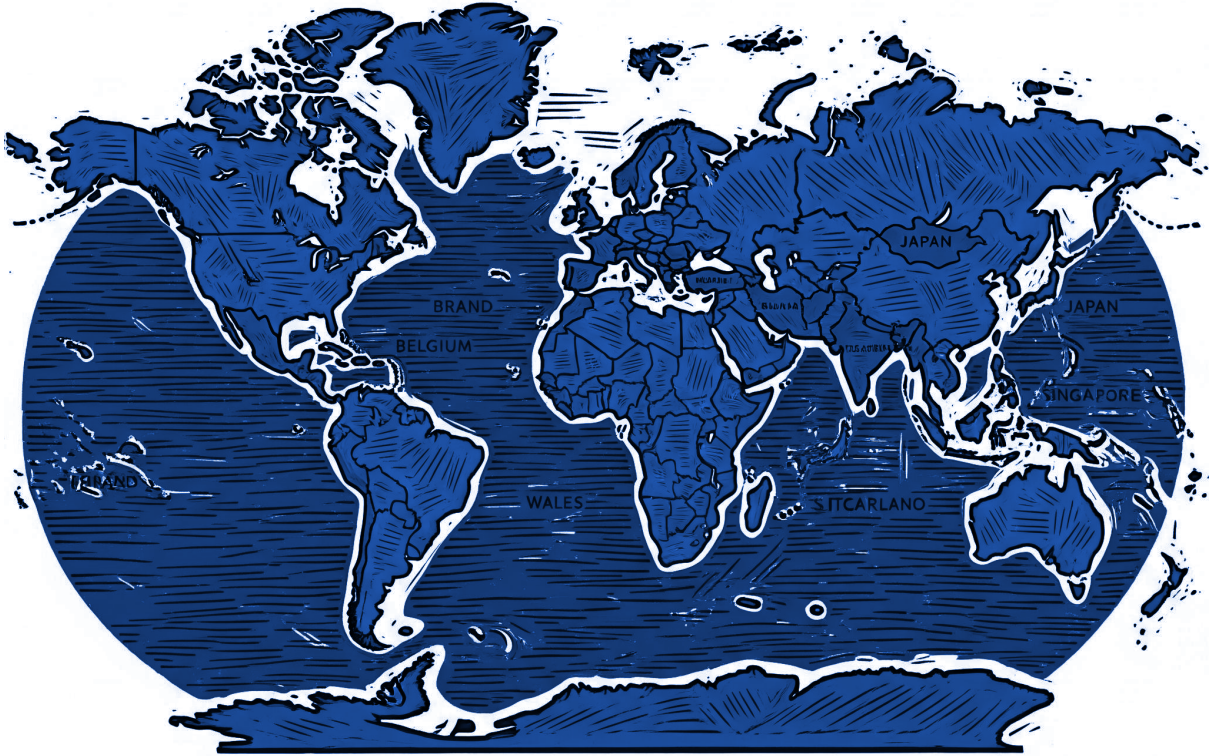
- Consider digital community platform
- Establish advanced buddy programme
- Create comprehensive orientation programme

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<sup>2</sup> "Belonging: The Ancient Code of Togetherness" by Owen Eastwood highlights the importance of the organisation's history, shared goals and simple rituals to build a sense of belonging.

- Develop staff training on family engagement
- Plan annual welcome programme review





## 11. Case Studies: Schools Getting It Right

Real examples of successful family welcome programmes from around the world.

### ★ Case Study 1: Large Co-Ed Private School (Atlanta GA): Comprehensive digital and community onboarding

#### The Challenge

As a large and prestigious independent school, this school needed to ensure that hundreds of new families joining each year felt fully informed, supported, and connected to the school's extensive community and resources, preventing feelings of being overwhelmed or disconnected.

#### The Solution

This school employs a comprehensive onboarding strategy blending digital resources with robust parent organisations:

##### **Digital Foundation:**

- Detailed "New Family Guide" and password-protected portal
- "New Parent Portal" with essential forms and checklists
- Structured orientation sessions for various grade levels

##### **Community Connection:**

- Active parent organisations: Upper School Parent Association, Lower School Parent Association, and an Athletics Association
- Multiple pathways for engagement and volunteer opportunities
- Clear communication channels for different interests and needs

#### The Results

- Streamlined information delivery reduces family anxiety
- Multiple parent organisations provide various engagement options
- New families quickly find their community within the larger school environment
- High retention rates and strong parent satisfaction

#### Key Takeaway

Combining robust digital platforms with active parent organisations creates multiple touchpoints for engagement. Large schools need multiple pathways to help families find their place.

## 🌟 Case Study 2: Welsh Primary School (UK): Dedicated family engagement transforming challenging circumstances

### The Challenge

This Welsh Primary serves an area of significant deprivation with high rates of free school meal eligibility and Additional Learning Needs. The school struggled with low parental and family engagement, which impacted student wellbeing, attendance, and attitudes to learning.

### The Solution

The school appointed a dedicated Family Engagement Officer (FEO) who implemented a holistic approach:

#### Proactive Outreach:

- Home visits before nursery entry
- Practical support including Foodbank vouchers when needed
- Close collaboration with external agencies for parenting courses

#### Structured Engagement:

- Led a Parent Council for ongoing involvement
- Monitored and celebrated attendance improvements
- Provided holistic support beyond just academic matters

### The Results

- School attendance improved significantly, matching or exceeding similar schools
- Parent questionnaires showed 100% parent satisfaction and feeling well-informed
- External inspection praised the FEO's effectiveness in impacting pupils' wellbeing
- Strong school-family relationships built despite challenging circumstances

### Key Takeaway

A dedicated staff member focused solely on family engagement can be transformative, especially in challenging contexts. Holistic support that addresses practical needs builds crucial trust and engagement.

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## 🌟 Case Study 3: An International School based in Belgium: Fostering community for international families

### The Challenge

As an international school with families from over 70 nationalities, many relocating from overseas, this school faced the challenge of ensuring new families felt immediately welcomed, supported, and integrated into both the school and wider Belgian community.

### The Solution

The school implemented a multi-faceted approach centered around dedicated spaces, events, and volunteer networks:

#### Physical Community Hub:

- A dedicated on-campus parent centre with lounge, café, and activity venues
- A space for language classes, clubs, and parent talks

#### Structured Welcome Events:

- Annual New Families Day providing connections with staff and other families
- Families of the school, active parent volunteer association
- Support that begins even before families arrive in the country

### The Results

- Parents consistently describe initial interactions as "very warm and friendly"
- Recognition for "supportive community ethos"
- Successful integration of highly mobile international families
- Strong parent volunteer network that sustains itself

### Key Takeaway

For international communities, dedicated physical spaces and empowered parent volunteer networks are crucial. Creating a "home base" helps mobile families establish roots quickly.

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## ☀️ **Case Study 4: A Boarding School in Switzerland: Digital excellence for international boarding families**

### The Challenge

As a boarding school with a significant international student body, this school faced complex challenges of onboarding families and students relocating from different countries, involving academic, social, and extensive logistical support.

### The Solution

The school provides comprehensive digital and logistical support tailored for boarding/international families:

#### Centralised Digital Hub:

- Welcome Portal with essential tasks, documents, and resources
- Tailored content by division and residence status
- Detailed orientation schedules for each division

#### Practical Support Systems:

- Packing lists, dorm assignments, SIM card assistance
- Allowance management and laundry instructions
- REACH software for tracking student whereabouts

### The Results

- Smoother transitions for complex international moves
- Reduced confusion through centralised information
- Enhanced parental peace of mind through tracking systems
- Improved student and family adjustment to boarding life

### Key Takeaway

For complex international boarding situations, robust digital systems are essential. Comprehensive online resources addressing practical concerns can significantly ease family anxiety.

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## ☀️ Case Study 5: Co-ed All Through School in South East Asia: Leveraging digital platforms and a robust buddy system for a large international community

### The Challenge

With over 5,000 students from more than 90 nationalities across two campuses, this school faces the significant task of welcoming a large number of new families each year and ensuring their smooth integration into the school community.

### The Solution

The school utilises a community platform designed especially for schools (Classlist) and a well-structured Buddy Programme, driven by the PTA, to support new families:

#### Classlist New Families Group & Welcome Event:

- A dedicated "New families" group on Classlist serves as a central hub for information and questions, helping new parents navigate the numerous school communications and avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- The PTA organises a Welcome (Back) BBQ for both new and existing parents, fostering early connections at the beginning of the term.

#### The Buddy Programme:

- Established seven years ago and refined based on feedback, the Buddy Programme provides crucial peer support for new families.
- A Buddy Programme coffee morning was hosted, with significant attendance, indicating the programme's popularity.
- Over 300 new parents request buddies within the first month.
- The PTA implements a rigorous system that goes beyond initial matching, providing buddies with instructions and guidance, and encouraging follow-up with their matched families.
- The PTA monitors matches and sends reminders to existing buddies to prompt ongoing support, ensuring no one slips through the gaps.
- Volunteers report feeling more supported and are likely to sign up again.

#### Recruitment & Matching Process:

- Buddy recruitment takes place in May/June, with most matches made before the end of the school year, and continuing throughout the summer.
- Different categories of buddies are available:
  - **Super buddy:** Supports 5-10 new parents, often facilitating group interaction.



- **Traditional Buddy:** Supports 1-2 new parents, offering more focused attention.
- **Seasonal Buddy:** Supports one new family with the expectation of ongoing assistance throughout the first term.
- The matching process concludes by the first week of August.

### The Results

- Significant positive feedback has been received from both buddies and new parents.
- New families appreciate the support and connection offered.
- Existing parents find value in helping newcomers and often volunteer again.

### Key Takeaway

For large, diverse international school communities, a combination of a user-friendly digital platform for communication and a well-organised buddy system with clear guidelines and ongoing support is highly effective in welcoming and integrating new families. Different levels of volunteer commitment can also increase participation.

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## ☀️ Case Study 6: Scandinavian International School: Transforming an ad-hoc system into structured success

### The Challenge

This school had a very informal buddy system that wasn't working well. When existing families moved on, there was no follow-up, leaving new families without support.

### The Solution

The team created a structured approach with clear processes:

April Launch: Two Google Forms running simultaneously

- Form 1: Existing parents (nationality, location, children's ages, interests)
- Form 2: New families (priorities for matching - grade level, interests, or location)

Summer Matchmaking: Team of 3 staff members work through matches

- Start with easy matches, tackle specific requests later
- Continuous matching throughout summer holidays
- Close process by first week of August

The Buddy Boat Event: Creative welcome event

- 3-hour boat trip with food and networking
- Guest speaker (this year: a parent who wrote about being a 3rd culture person)
- Crucial detail: Each family meets their buddy BEFORE this event

### The Results

- Clear structure eliminated families falling through cracks
- Pre-event buddy meetings created genuine connections
- Popular annual event that families look forward to
- Successful integration of new families into school community

### Key Takeaway

Structure + creativity = success. The pre-event buddy connection was the game-changer. Hosting the event on a boat allowed the team to emphasise unique aspects of Scandinavian culture. The event's defined start and end times required punctual attendance and sustained engagement from participants.



## 12. What These Schools Teach Us

### Common Success Factors

1. Leadership Commitment: All successful schools had strong leadership support
2. Clear Processes: Structure reduces anxiety for both families and volunteers
3. Follow-up Systems: Initial connection is just the start - ongoing support is crucial
4. Technology + Human Touch: Digital platforms facilitate but don't replace personal connections
5. Practical Help: Supermarket tours and local orientation are surprisingly valuable
6. Flexibility: Systems that accommodate different needs and volunteer capacities work better

### Key Lessons

- Pre-event connections are crucial - don't let the first meeting be at a big event
- Different volunteer levels work better than one-size-fits-all
- Group support can be more effective than individual pairing
- Follow-up systems are essential - don't assume connections will continue naturally
- Practical help is often more valuable than social events alone

## 13. Final Thoughts

Welcoming new families isn't just a nice-to-have – it's essential for thriving school communities. Whether you're working with a shoestring budget or have resources to invest, the principles remain the same:

Listen, connect, and care.

Every family wants to feel valued and know their children will thrive. Your welcome programme is often their first real experience of your school community. Make it count.

Remember: perfect is the enemy of good. Start with simple, authentic approaches and build from there. The families joining your school this year will thank you for it.

# Welcoming families on Classlist

Other ways to welcome new families with Classlist

- Invite families to Classlist before the summer so they can ask questions and make friends before school starts
- Set up your personal welcome private message from a parent Ambassador. It is automated to send to new parents after they join Classlist, starting a one on one conversation
- Set up an interest group for your cohort of new families so they find people in other year groups who are new too
- Host welcome events - early in the term, small and very regular eg weekly drop in coffees in a local cafe. Classlist events means you can select the class without leaving any families out. The event location map helps orientate families new to the area.
- Encourage 'hello, hello, hello' - ask existing families to say hello to 3 people each who they don't know - they may be new, or may not be! The parent finder is the perfect way to find new families. Check out the map and find those that live nearby.