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FREE GUIDE

The Partner Parent Guide

Understanding pedagogy to support the school and your child

Affi Agbodo



MORIM FOUNDATION · PEDAGOGY FOR PARENTS

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The Partner Parent Guide is based on the *Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™* by Affi Agbodo. It is the English edition of *Le Guide du Parent Partenaire*.

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A LETTER TO PARENTS

To you, the parent, who carries the greatest responsibility of all

This is not a book of education theory. It is a practical guide to help you look after your child's future.

When you chose your child's school, you trusted a promise: safety, high standards, a good future. Alongside that hope there is often a quiet worry that never quite goes away. *Is my child really safe? Is he seen? Is she being prepared for the world as it is, not as it was? Will the pressure crush him, or will boredom put out what is best in her?*

You are not alone in asking these questions. I heard them from parents at the British schools where I served as a governor, and I hear them from the families I meet across Africa. The fears are the same everywhere, because education depends first on the relationship between an adult and a child. Buildings and test scores come after that.

My own path taught me this. I walked into a British university classroom as a lecturer with no teacher training, a shaky command of English and every reason to fail. What I lacked in technique I had received from the Ivorian teachers who shaped me: a sincere heart and real presence. That was all I had. It took me to the highest teaching awards, to leading pedagogy at a British university, and to one conviction: **the most powerful tool in education is the humanity of the educator.**

This short book distils that journey. It comes from more than ten years of practice and research, and from results measured by awards but above all by the paths of thousands of students. The approach it sets out, the Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™, works under a tree in a village and in a classroom full of screens, in nursery school and at university, because it starts from what is always there: the child or student standing in front of us.

My aim is to make you an informed witness to your child's education. You will know what really matters in a classroom. You will be able to tell a school that only instructs from a school that helps children grow. And you will have the words and the confidence to move from worried parent to respected partner.

When you know what to look for, you can check that the promise made to your child is lived every day, not just printed in the brochure. Let's begin.

Affi Agbodo

Award-winning educator

TESTIMONIAL



From his student to award-winning lecturer: a teaching legacy

I arrived in Affi Agbodo's class as a student full of doubts. A few years later I left it as a confident Senior Lecturer, and he is the one who made that change happen.

In front of me, he lived the pedagogy he defends in this book. He saw a future lecturer and researcher in me long before I dared to believe it. He turned my background, which I saw as a difference, into a strength. Above all, he gave me real responsibilities (mentoring, representing students) that immersed me in the world of education well before I finished my degree.

That investment changed everything. When I received the 2025 Student Choice Award, the highest teaching award at my university, I knew I was also receiving his legacy. That honour proves one thing: the pedagogy of heart and presence works. It does more than produce good students; it produces exceptional educators.

Meera Borsara
Award-winning Senior Lecturer in Business & Strategy, Leicester Castle Business School, De Montfort University

CHAPTER 1

The two pillars of a successful education

For your child, doing well and being well go together. Everything else follows from that.

When you chose your child's school, you looked beyond the brochure and the exam results. Whether you put it into words or not, you wanted answers to two questions: *will my child be happy and safe there?* and *will this school really prepare them for the future?*

Those two questions match the two pillars of any good education. No serious school can do without either one, and everything your child experiences at school connects back to them.

The first pillar: the Pool of Trust

The condition the brain needs in order to learn.

Why is this the school's first duty?

A child who is stressed, anxious or feels judged learns badly. Their brain is busy protecting itself, not exploring. The Pool of Trust is the physical, emotional and relational environment that switches off that alarm and tells the child: "Here you are safe. Here you can be yourself."

It is also what you were looking for when you chose the school: a place where your child would be known, respected and protected, where they would not fear bullying, humiliation or indifference, and where they could lower their guard and put their energy into growing.

The second pillar: the Success Project

Preparing your child for the real world, beyond grades.

Why are grades not enough?

Full marks in maths may simply mean the work was too easy. It does not prove that the teacher is excellent or that your child has made progress. The kind of success that matters for life shows up elsewhere: in your child's ability to reason, solve complex problems, work with others, invent, and get back up after failing.

That promise of a future is what won you over. You hoped for a school that would do more than prepare your child for exams, a school that would give them what they need to find their place in the world of tomorrow.

How the two pillars shape the whole school

In a serious school, everything rests on them.

1. They are the school's founding promise. The school you chose committed itself, openly or not, to offering both a Pool of Trust (a safe climate) and a Success Project (demanding teaching). That double commitment is what earned your trust.

2. They are the standard for recruiting and training teachers. A good teacher knows their subject, but first of all knows how to build the Pool of Trust: a climate of care and respect. Then they know how to run the Success Project, designing activities that develop the skills your child will need. Teachers should be recruited and trained to fill both roles.

3. They decide the real weight of the teacher in your child's life. On school days your child spends close to half their waking hours in the care of their teacher. That adult shapes what your child knows, and also who they become: their self-confidence, their curiosity, how they treat other people, how they see the world.

- Without a Pool of Trust, that adult can, even without meaning to, damage your child's self-esteem, feed their anxieties or teach them that the world is all competition and judgement.
- Without a real Success Project, that adult can leave your child bored and stuck, or convinced that learning means piling up marks.

A good teacher holds both. They create a setting safe enough for your child to take risks, and set challenges exciting enough that your child wants to stretch themselves.

The real test

At the end of the year, don't look only at the grades. These questions tell you more.

> **About the Pool of Trust**
>
> - Does my child smile when they talk about their class?
> - Do they feel free to ask questions, disagree, and get things wrong without shame?
> - Do they feel valued for who they are, and not only for what they produce?
>
> **About the Success Project**
>
> - Does my child come home with questions, projects, a new curiosity?
> - Have they learned to keep going when something is hard?
> - Does what they learn make sense to them? Can they connect it to the world around them?

A top mark in maths is a snapshot of one day. A child growing up confident and curious is the work of years, and it shows over time.

Your role as a partner parent starts here. Now that you know the two pillars, you know what to watch, what to ask and, if needed, what to raise with the school. They are the reason you chose it.

CHAPTER 2

The teacher, a craftsman of connection

Behind every child who thrives there is an educator who truly saw them.

Each morning, when you drop your child at school, you hand a person who is still taking shape to another adult. For a large part of each day, that adult will influence how your child sees themselves, how they behave with others and what they discover they can do.

That adult passes on knowledge, and does something else as well: they shape the human climate your child grows up in. You could call them a **craftsman of connection**. Their main tool is their stance, the way they are in the classroom. That stance decides whether the classroom stays a place of instruction or becomes a place where the Pool of Trust and the Success Project actually exist.

To hold up the two pillars, the teacher-craftsman develops two qualities that belong together: a **Sincere Heart** and **True Presence**.

The Sincere Heart: bringing hidden talents to light

A Sincere Heart goes further than kindness. It is an active, demanding kind of care: the belief that every child has a talent of their own, even when it is hidden behind difficulties, shyness or restlessness.



A teacher with a Sincere Heart sees people, not exercise books. Behind a spelling mistake they spot a lively imagination. Behind a hesitant line of

reasoning in maths they see persistence. Their strength is to name what is solid in your child before your child is aware of it.

In the classroom, this looks like:

- **Language that builds.** They criticise the work, never the person. “This part of your essay could be stronger” replaces “This is badly written”.
- **Attention to small steps forward.** They notice tiny efforts and brave attempts, because confidence is built one stone at a time.
- **Fairness without uniformity.** They adjust their expectations to each child, because the same encouragement does not have the same effect on everyone. They give each child what they need to feel capable.

For you, it means your child is not a number. Every day an adult looks for what is good in them and helps them show it. Your child is no longer anonymous at school: they are recognised.

True Presence: a steady point of support

If the Sincere Heart gives direction, True Presence gives the anchor. It means being fully there, in body and mind, during the lesson. This is not watching from a distance; it is a calm attention that holds both the group and each pupil.

A present teacher is steady. Through the strong emotions of childhood and adolescence, they stay the fixed point. Their calm settles storms without any need to shout. They really listen: they hear the words, and also the hesitation in a voice, the worry in a glance, the joy held back in a smile.

In the classroom, you can see it in:

- **Listening that disarms.** When a pupil speaks, the teacher turns towards them, looks at them and gives them time to finish the thought without interrupting. The child feels heard.

- **A group held by calm rather than force.** The teacher knows their own inner state spreads to others. By staying settled, they bring calm back to a restless class.
- **Attention to what goes unsaid.** They notice that "Léa is unusually quiet today" or that "Samuel looks worried". That alertness lets them step in gently before a small hurt becomes real suffering.

For you, it means your child is in a safe setting, with an attentive adult looking after their physical safety and their emotional balance. Your child can then put their bag down, so to speak, and spend their energy learning instead of protecting themselves.

When heart and presence meet

The two stances need each other. A Sincere Heart without True Presence can slide into indulgence, because there is no structure. True Presence without a Sincere Heart can harden into cold, distant authority. The teacher-craftsman combines them:

- They see your child (Sincere Heart) and they are fully with them (True Presence).
- They value your child's effort (Sincere Heart) from a place of calm and stability (True Presence).
- They believe in your child's potential (Sincere Heart) and give them the safe structure (True Presence) they need to develop it.

Your child then feels safe, because the adult is steady, and capable, because the adult believes in them and shows it. The relationship becomes one of trust, and from there all learning becomes possible.

You can recognise this craftsman of connection. You may not see them in the end-of-term grades. You will see them in your child's eyes when they talk about their day, in the confidence with which they take on a new challenge and, years later, in the memory they keep of the person who

told them, through a look and a manner more than through words: “I see you. You matter. You can do this.”

TESTIMONIAL



He made me his colleague before I had even graduated

Affi Agbodo, the author of this guide, transformed the way I understand teaching. From my student days he treated me as a future peer rather than a student.

With me, he put into practice the principles he describes here. He made his classroom a place where, under his guidance, I could mentor other students and even co-design a new university programme. He saw my Chinese background as an asset rather than an obstacle, and gave me a project that became the foundation of my career.

His greatest lesson went deeper: he showed me that real success is measured by the intellectual and human legacy you leave, far beyond titles. That outlook is what led me to become an academic researcher.

In reading this book, you are discovering the tested method of the man who wrote it, a method of which I am, like many others, a living product.

Dr Yichen Xi
Visiting Associate Professor in Blockchain and AI, Beijing Institute of Technology

CHAPTER 3

When the class becomes a community

Your child is not just attending lessons. They belong to a tribe that learns together.

Think about the difference between a crowd and a team. In a crowd, people stand side by side, anonymous, competing for space and attention. In a team, everyone has a role, responsibilities towards the others and a shared goal.

Traditional teaching often produces crowds. The Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™ sets out to build **learning tribes**. In that tribe, your child is a full member of a small society where they grow alongside others. To turn a list of pupils into a community, the teacher acts as a **Co-creating Educator**, using two complementary stances: the Tribe Leader and the Talent Detective.

The Tribe Leader: building the "us"

The Tribe Leader does more than manage a class; they build a community. Before teaching anything, they create the conditions for connection. Their first goal is belonging; discipline comes after.

In practice, the Tribe Leader:

- **Creates rituals of belonging.** A song, a greeting, a particular way of starting the day. These rituals say: "Here, we are part of the same group."
- **Has the class write its own rules.** They don't lay down the law. They help the tribe write its own constitution: "What do we need in order to learn well and live well together?" Your child becomes a citizen of the class, responsible for rules they helped write.
- **Turns conflict into a chance to learn.** A disagreement is not smothered by the teacher's authority. It is taken to a talking circle, where everyone learns to listen, to say what they need and to negotiate a solution.
- **Celebrates shared success.** Not only the top mark, but a team project that worked, a good week, the group effort that helped a struggling classmate understand.



For your child, this changes a lot. They no longer come to “attend lessons” in an anonymous place. They come to contribute to their tribe. They have a place, a voice and responsibilities towards others. They learn that their worth matters to the group too. From this comes a deep sense of safety: “Here, I am not alone.”

The Talent Detective: recognising the “me”

The Tribe Leader builds the “us”. The Talent Detective looks after the “me” of each pupil. Their job is to spot hidden strengths, the ones school reports never measure.

They start from one belief: every child has a gift in an area school does not assess. That talent might be:

- **social**: calming tensions, reaching out to those who are alone;
- **artistic**: a feel for rhythm or colour, a way of telling stories that is all their own;
- **strategic**: seeing the practical solutions in a project, organising other people’s work;
- **ethical**: a strong sense of justice, the courage to stand up for a classmate;

- **resilience**: bouncing back from failure with real determination.



In the classroom you see it when the teacher:

- **Gives tailor-made roles.** They don't just say "You're in charge of the board". They say: "Léa, you're so good at organising, you'd be perfect as project leader for our exhibition."
- **Gives feedback that reveals.** Their comment goes beyond "Good". They write: "Your solution to this maths problem struck me. Nobody else came at it from that angle."
- **Designs challenges that bring out strengths.** They plan activities where the shy child's drawing, the restless child's skill with their hands or the dreamy child's imagination suddenly becomes the resource the group needs.

For your child, it is a turning point: an adult who matters to them points out a strength they did not know they had. Their picture of themselves changes. They go from "I'm good at maths and hopeless at English" to "I have strengths of my own that I can offer others". Self-esteem and the desire to learn are built on that.

Belonging without disappearing

The Co-creating Educator keeps both roles in balance. The Tribe Leader builds a solid, safe setting: the “us”. The Talent Detective makes room within it for what is unique in each pupil: the “me”. That balance meets two needs your child has:

1. the need to belong: to be loved and accepted by the group;
2. the need to be unique: to be recognised for who they are.

In this tribe, your child does not have to erase their personality to fit in. They discover instead that what makes them different enriches the group, and that you can be fully yourself while being someone the others can’t do without. They are preparing for exams, and also for life in society, with confidence, empathy and a sense that they have something to offer.

CHAPTER 4

When lessons come to life

Your child is no longer learning only for school. They are learning for life.

Traditional education often rests on a mistaken idea that wears motivation down: that we learn for later. For the next test, for the end-of-school exams, to "get a good job one day". Knowledge becomes a currency to save up until adulthood.

The result is that maths, history and science become distant abstractions for your child, exercises whose point and beauty they cannot see. They learn because they have to, and their question, "But what's it for?", never gets a good answer.

The Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™ answers with **steeping**: soaking the official curriculum, often abstract, in the real life around your child. The teacher stops handing out separate pieces of knowledge. At every opportunity, they connect theory to the world.

Steeping: giving knowledge roots and wings

The principle is simple: **the brain holds on to what makes sense, and sense comes from connections.** Your child does not memorise isolated facts; they build networks. The teacher creates those connections on purpose.



What does this look like in your child's classroom?

1. Rooted in the local area: the Local Programme. The teacher does not just talk about erosion in geography. They take the class to look at the gullies in the neighbourhood, measure how they are spreading, and ask older residents how the landscape has changed. Geography becomes the story of the ground under the children's feet.

- Maths is used to work out the slope of a hill or the budget for a community garden.
- Language lessons are used to write an article for the local paper about a neighbourhood issue.
- Science explains why a particular plant grows here and not elsewhere.

2. A bridge to culture and identity: the Heritage Programme. History and literature stop being distant timelines. When studying a text, the teacher links it to a local proverb, a regional legend, a contemporary artist from the country. They show that the great themes, such as love, power and justice, also play out in your child's own culture. Your child's heritage becomes worth studying, and they take pride in it.

3. Real problems: the Mission Programme. We learn best when we have a mission. The teacher gives the class a real question: "How can we cut the waste in our school?" or "How can we explain climate change to the younger children?" Your child and their classmates become investigators, engineers and communicators. They use science, maths and language to act, not for a grade. They learn because they need to.

The parent's role: extending the connections at home

You have your part in this. The teacher builds the bridges; at home you can help your child cross them and build new ones.

Questions that connect school and life

- Instead of: “What did you learn today?”
- Try: “What surprised you most today, or what was most useful?”
- Or: “What does what you saw in class remind you of, at home, in town, in the news?”

Activities that extend the steeping

- Read food labels together (chemistry, economics, geography).
- Cook together (maths for quantities, the chemistry of cooking, nutrition).
- Talk about a newspaper article (citizenship, argument, critical thinking).
- Name plants, insects and clouds on a walk (science, vocabulary).

The result: a child plugged into the world

When lessons are connected to life, your child no longer just puts up with their education. They take part in it, and the effects last:

1. **The motivation comes from within.** They learn because it is interesting, and useful now.
2. **They understand deeply and remember.** Anchored in experience and emotion, knowledge does not vanish after the test. It becomes part of how they read the world.
3. **They see the links** between subjects, between theory and practice, between local and global. That is what solving complex problems requires.

4. **They take their place.** They understand that they are an actor, not a spectator. Knowledge becomes a tool to understand, act and contribute.

In the end, steeping is a form of respect for your child's intelligence. It offers knowledge that leaves the textbook and takes root in their own life. It gives them what they need to succeed at school, and to succeed in life thanks to school.

CHAPTER 5

When pupils learn to live together

Handling conflict becomes a lesson in citizenship.

Your biggest fear may not be that your child fails at maths, but that they are unhappy among other children: teased, left out, powerless against unfairness. Traditional schooling responds with a top-down model in which the adult plays police officer, punishing and rewarding. That imposed justice, however kind, does not prepare your child for life in society. It teaches obedience, not responsibility.

The Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™ turns this around: the classroom becomes a laboratory of democracy. Discipline is no longer pressure from outside but an agreement the pupils have made their own. Your child learns to write rules, defend them and live by them with others. That is where their sense of justice, civic courage and sense of responsibility take shape.

Act one: the class constitution

"We, the people of this class..."

It all starts with a founding act. The teacher, as Tribe Leader, does not dictate a set of rules. They call a constitutional assembly and ask one simple question: "What do we need in order to learn well and live well together in this class?"

Hands go up:

- "To be safe."
- "Not to be laughed at."
- "To be listened to when we speak."
- "To be allowed to make mistakes."
- "For our things to be looked after."



From these needs come **rights** (“I have the right to be respected”) and the **duties** that go with them (“I must respect others”). Written down and put on the wall, these principles become the **Class Constitution**. Every pupil signs it, and so does the teacher. It is the law of the class. Your child no longer depends on an adult’s will: they are a **citizen**, a guardian of an agreement they freely accepted. They understand that one person’s freedom ends where another’s begins, because they have felt why it matters, not because they were lectured.

Act two: the Citizens’ Class Council

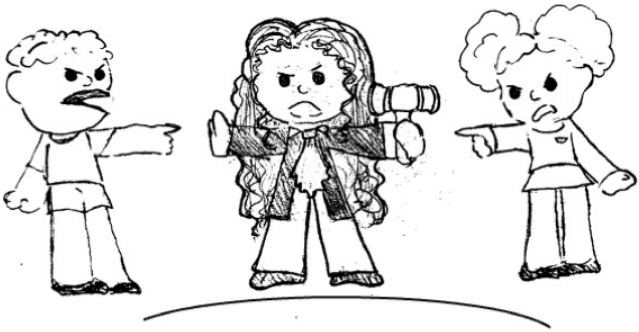
Justice by peers.

Every society has conflicts. What matters is how they are settled. In this class, a regular, structured time is set aside for it: the Citizens’ Class Council.

When a conflict breaks out (a hurtful remark, someone left out, a stolen rubber), it is not sent straight to the head teacher’s office. It can be brought to the Council. The teacher keeps the process safe but does not judge. The pupils act as mediators.

How does it work for your child?

1. **Facts and feelings.** Each side gives their account without being interrupted, speaking in the first person: “I felt hurt when…”
2. **Listening by peers.** The other pupils listen, try to understand and ask questions to clarify.
3. **Looking for solutions together.** The class asks: “Looking at our Constitution, what was damaged here? How can we repair it?” The proposals come from the pupils: a sincere apology, an act of repair, a specific commitment for the future.
4. **Agreement and follow-up.** Nobody is punished; things are put right. The solution is chosen together, and the class checks that it is carried out.



For your child, the lesson is a strong one:

- They learn that their voice counts in solving problems.
- They develop emotional intelligence: they have to recognise what they feel and hear what others feel.
- They practise judgement: with their classmates, they tell fair from unfair by looking at the real effect of an action on the group, rather than at an abstract rule.

- They discover that the most legitimate authority is the one that lets the group work with respect for everyone, not the one that shouts loudest.

The parent's role: welcoming the young citizen

Your child may come home and tell you they were a "mediator" in a dispute, or that they proposed an amendment to the Class Constitution. Make the most of these moments.

- **Recognise what they are learning.** "Helping to settle an argument is a real responsibility. I'm proud of you for listening to both sides."
- **Try the model at home.** In a family disagreement, suggest a small council: "If we had our own Family Council, what solution would you suggest?"
- **Notice the changes.** You may find your child less impulsive, better at defending a point of view with reasons, or able to apologise sincerely. That is more than good manners: it is the start of a citizen's conscience.

The result: a child who builds society instead of putting up with it

This democratic discipline does not just produce "well-behaved" pupils. It shapes responsible citizens. Your child grows up respecting a shared commitment rather than fearing punishment. They learn to speak with respect, not to keep quiet. They don't run from conflict: they learn to work through it and come out with stronger relationships.

By giving them this experience, the school prepares your child for exams, and also for living among other people. It gives them the belief that, together with others, they can make the world fairer, starting with their own class.

TESTIMONIAL



He saw in me what the system did not

Before I met Affi Agbodo, I was a student the system often forgot. Being visually impaired, I had to compensate on my own in class.

He did something different. He looked at me differently. Beyond my disability, he saw a passion for teaching and a leadership potential I did not know I had. He turned what I experienced as a limit into a springboard, by giving me real responsibilities.

His strength? That complete attention, the “Sincere Heart” he writes about in these pages. He didn’t just teach a subject; he saw the person, and believed in her more than she believed in herself. The confidence he gave me has shaped my path.

Now a teacher myself, I try to embody the same stance: to see and bring out the potential of every learner. It is the most valuable lesson he gave me.

Colleen Cohen
Business Lecturer, Halesowen College

CHAPTER 6

Easing fears, building trust

Your seven legitimate fears, and the practical answers of an attentive pedagogy.

Handing your child over to a school takes trust. That trust comes with a natural watchfulness, and with questions that come back in the evening, when your child is quiet or a headline reminds you what can go wrong at school.

These worries are not weaknesses. They come from your love and your clear-sightedness, and it would be wrong to brush them aside. The Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™ answers them directly, without vague promises, through the daily life of the classroom: a strong human relationship, a clear framework and shared practices.

Here are the seven fears parents raise most often, and how this pedagogy responds.

FEAR 1

“That my child is not safe, physically and psychologically.”

The answer: a predictable framework and a social contract.

In a traditional classroom, safety depends on the eyes and reactions of a single adult. Here, the whole group carries it. It comes from the Constitution written together (chapter 5), which sets out everyone’s rights and duties clearly, and from the Citizens’ Council, where wrongdoing is handled by the group rather than by an arbitrary sanction. Your child lives in a place with clear, fair rules that everyone defends. They are protected not in spite of the others, but by them.

FEAR 2

“That my child is bullied, or bullies others, without my knowing.”

The answer: shared vigilance and a culture of openness.

Bullying feeds on silence and indifference. Here, the opposite is cultivated. Through True Presence, the teacher notices small exclusions and unhealthy dynamics before they get worse. Above all, they build an attentive community (chapter 3). In a close tribe, harming one member means harming the whole group. Pupils become active witnesses who can report distress and support a classmate. In that climate, bullying shows up as clearly as an ink blot on the Constitution on the wall, and nobody accepts it.

FEAR 3

“That my child burns out, or becomes anxious or depressed.”

The answer: calm as the basis for learning.

School anxiety often comes from feeling like a number, from not being able to keep up, or from constant pressure. This pedagogy starts by building the Pool of Trust. Morning rituals, recognising emotions and a stable framework (chapter 2) reassure your child. The teacher’s calm lowers the stress of the group. Pupils learn to breathe and refocus their attention. Wellbeing is not a bonus for “after homework”: it is the condition for learning.

FEAR 4

“That my child falls behind, builds up gaps and gives up.”

The answer: the eye of the Talent Detective.

In a system built around the average, a struggling child is often defined by what they cannot do. Here, the teacher acts as Talent Detective (chapter 3). They look first for what works in your child: their persistence, their curiosity about a side topic, the way they help others. They use that strength to tackle the difficulties. Mistakes lose their drama and are treated as useful information. Your child is compared with their own progress, not with other children. Small steps are celebrated, because that is where self-confidence comes from.

FEAR 5

“That my child doesn’t find their place and ends up isolated.”

The answer: a tribe where everyone counts.

Isolation is a problem schools rarely talk about. The Tribe Leader (chapter 3) tackles it through shared projects. By giving each pupil a specific role in a group project (archivist, reporter, mediator, designer), the teacher makes your child necessary. Their contribution, whatever it is, is visible and recognised. The aim is not for them to make “friends” at all costs, but to see for themselves that the group needs them. Belonging grows out of being useful.

FEAR 6

“That school is cut off from the real world and won’t prepare my child for the future.”

The answer: steeping the curriculum.

Your worry is that school prepares children for yesterday’s world. The answer is to soak knowledge in reality (chapter 4). When maths is used to plan the budget for a community garden, when writing lessons produce a letter to the mayor, when science explains a local issue, your child sees the connection straight away. They learn with the school, in order to act in the world, and they develop problem-solving, creativity and critical thinking rather than memorising fixed content.

FEAR 7

“That the school won’t listen to me or take my concerns seriously.”

The answer: open communication, before problems arise.

Mistrust grows when a school is closed and only gets in touch when something has gone wrong. A teacher trained in this pedagogy communicates openly and without waiting to be asked. They don’t contact you only when there is a problem. They organise Knowledge Fairs where pupils present their projects, and discussion circles for parents and teachers. They show you the work in progress, not just the results. You are no longer an intruder at the school gate but an informed partner. Trust is built on that shared openness.

From a school that reassures to a school that gives children wings

These answers are not isolated tricks. They come from one system whose parts hold together: the relationship (Heart), the framework (Pres-

ence), the community (the Tribe), meaning (Steeping) and life together (Democracy).

Your fears are heard. Rather than responding with more surveillance or more procedures, this pedagogy builds an environment where the causes of those fears find much less room to grow.

When you choose, support or ask for a school that applies these principles, you are doing more than buying schooling. You are investing in an environment that protects your child, helps them grow and genuinely prepares them. Your fears turn into an alliance with the school, and the school becomes again the place where the future of the person you love most in the world is built, calmly.

CHAPTER 7

Becoming a diplomat for education

How to move from “worried parent” to “respected partner”.

Your role as a parent does not stop at the school gate. You are not the customer of an education service: you are the school's first partner in your child's education. That partnership can't be declared into existence. It is built day by day, through a particular stance: that of a diplomat.

A diplomat does not arrive in a foreign country demanding change. They observe, listen, try to understand the local culture, and then propose alliances around shared goals. You can take the same stance with your child's school.

Here are your tools for turning worry into influence.

Constructive dialogue: meeting the teacher

The aim is not to win a battle but to build a bridge between two worlds with the same goal: your child's wellbeing and success.

Before the meeting

- **Prepare as you would for an important appointment.** Write down facts ("He often comes home saying he's bored in maths") and your questions, not accusations ("You don't know how to motivate him").
- **Set yourself a clear, positive goal.** "I'd like to understand how we could work together to help Léa enjoy science again" works better than "I've come to talk about Léa's problems".

During the meeting

- **Start with thanks.** "Thank you for seeing me. I noticed the work you did on [a specific positive point], and I'm grateful."
- **Say "we" and speak as a partner.** "We've noticed that... How could we help together?"
- **Really listen.** The teacher sees your child from an angle you don't. What they observe is valuable to you.

- **End with an action plan.** “So we agree: you’ll try [this] in class, and I’ll do [that] at home. Shall we talk again in three weeks to see how it’s going?”

Questions that move things forward

Asking the right question, at the right time, of the right person is a diplomat’s most powerful tool. These questions are meant to open up thinking, not to trap anyone.

> **To the teacher (in a one-to-one meeting)**
>
> - *On the Pool of Trust:* “How do you make sure every child feels safe enough to take part and risk getting things wrong?”
> - *On the Success Project:* “Beyond the curriculum, which skills (creativity, critical thinking…) are you trying to develop this year, and how?”
> - *On your child:* “What do you see as my child’s biggest strength in class, and how can I encourage it at home?”
>
> **To the head teacher (in a meeting or in writing)**
>
> - *On vision:* “What is the school’s teaching vision for the next five years, and how does it show up in classrooms?”
> - *On staff:* “How does the school support its teachers’ professional development and wellbeing?”
> - *On partnership:* “How can parents get involved constructively in school life, beyond the usual meetings?”

Recognising a good learning environment

Exam pass rates are reassuring, but they often mislead. Your best indicator is what you see in your child and in the school.

In your child

- **They talk about their class as "we".** "We decided to…", "We're working on…"
- **They mention classmates and the teacher.** Their stories are full of other people: the class is a living community.
- **They can talk about their mistakes without too much shame**, sometimes even with humour. It is a sign that mistakes are normal in their class.
- **They bring home questions, not only answers.** Their curiosity is being fed.

In the school and how it communicates

- **The walls speak.** You see not only perfect work and lists of rules, but projects in progress, questions put to pupils, first attempts that went wrong and were improved, photos of class life.
- **Communication is regular and varied.** You hear about what is going on (a project starting, a trip), not only about marks and behaviour warnings.
- **There are chances to see the school at work.** Knowledge Fairs, workshops open to parents, special class councils. The school shows its work and is proud of it.
- **The head teacher talks about teaching.** They speak about it with precision and conviction, not only about management and results.

Your new role: an informed ambassador

With these tools, your position changes. You are no longer the parent grumbling at the gate or worrying in silence. You are the parent who:

- observes with goodwill and a clear eye;
- speaks clearly and respectfully, looking for common ground;

- openly encourages the practices that strengthen the two pillars (Trust and Success);
- becomes, for other parents, an example of constructive involvement.

This diplomacy helps your child, and it helps the whole school. When informed, respectful parents ask the right questions and back good practice, they raise the school's standards.

You now have the map and the compass. You can find your way around the world of school as a well-informed explorer rather than an anxious tourist: recognising quality, building alliances and helping, step by step, to create the demanding and humane school your child deserves.

CHAPTER 8

The artisan’s second wind: why a teacher who is well matters

A teacher who can keep going is your guarantee of a good education for your child, year after year.

According to Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace* report, published in 2026, only 20% of employees worldwide said they were engaged in their work in 2025. The rest described themselves as "not engaged" or "actively disengaged".

Every sector is affected. So what about education, where engagement is not a productivity bonus but the condition for inspiring a child, reassuring them and helping them grow?

Picture an exceptional sculptor. Now ask them to carve twelve hours a day, never stopping to sharpen their tools, never looking up for inspiration, never resting. Their work would quickly suffer. Routine would replace beauty, and fatigue would replace finesse.

Your child's teacher is that artisan. Their material is minds and hearts. Their tools are their presence, patience, creativity and empathy. The most precious of those tools is their own balance. A teacher who is exhausted, stressed or disillusioned cannot, however skilled, embody True Presence or a Sincere Heart. They can still do their job, but they can no longer live their vocation.

This chapter is not asking you to feel sorry for teachers. It suggests a simple calculation: **supporting teachers' wellbeing is a direct investment in the quality of your child's education.**

The direct link between the teacher and your child

Emotions spread, especially in a closed group like a class; psychologists call it emotional contagion. The teacher's inner state works like **the thermostat of the room**.



- **A stressed or overworked teacher** creates, without meaning to, a climate of urgency, impatience and anxiety. They listen less, tolerate frustration less and react instead of thinking. Your child feels that tension, their own stress can rise, and they learn less well.
- **A teacher who is well and rested** gives off calm, availability and joy. They have the patience to listen to a clumsy question, the imagination to rescue a lesson that is stalling, and the energy to see the potential behind a mistake. They are fully present, and that presence is where your child's confidence and curiosity can take root.

Three dangers when a teacher is struggling

1. Emotional exhaustion (the "dry heart"). The teacher has no care left to give. They switch to autopilot and treat pupils as a mass rather than as individuals. Your child risks becoming invisible and no longer feeling seen or valued for who they are.

2. Loss of meaning and creativity (the "dead project"). Drained, the teacher clings to the textbook and standard exercises. Lessons become predictable, dull and cut off from life. Your child risks getting bored, losing the wish to learn and deciding that learning is a chore.

3. Cynicism and defensiveness (the "fortress"). To protect themselves, the teacher puts up barriers. They may become curt, less open to talking with parents, and seen as distant or unfair. Trust between parent, child and teacher cracks, and working together becomes difficult.

A pedagogy designed to last

The Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™ treats looking after the teacher as part of the system, not as an outside detail.

- It gives meaning and freedom back to the job by making the teacher an Educator-Creator, free of routine.
- It builds a support community among teachers, the Builders' Circles, to fight isolation.
- Its Module 13, "The Artisan's Second Wind", is devoted entirely to helping teachers protect their energy, set healthy limits and keep their flame alive.

When you choose a school that trains its teachers in this pedagogy, you choose a school that takes care of its most precious tools. You choose quality that lasts.

Your role as a partner parent: three practical steps

You are not powerless. Your attitude and your words have a big effect on the morale and energy of your child's teacher.

1. Recognise the artisan, not just the employee. Thank them for specific things: "Thank you for taking the time to explain that to my child in a different way", rather than a general "Thank you for your work". Recognising their skill feeds their vocation.

2. Be a partner, not a prosecutor. Raise your concerns as a diplomat would (chapter 7). A badly handled conflict with a family is one of the

main sources of stress for teachers. A constructive approach leaves them their energy for the classroom.

3. Support wellbeing initiatives. If the school offers wellbeing training or adjustments, or celebrates its teachers, back those initiatives. Show that, for you, a teacher who is well is part of what makes a good school.

The smartest investment

Over time, what weighs most on your child's success and happiness is not the name of the teaching method, the number of lesson hours or the beauty of the buildings. It is the quality of their relationship, day after day, with **an inspired and steady adult**.

By supporting the teacher's energy, you protect the emotional and intellectual environment your child grows up in. You help make sure that the adult you entrust with so much of your child's day has, every day, the calm, passion and energy to be that point of support and that revealer of talent.

It is the smartest investment you can make. A child's future is not built by teachers who are running on empty. It is built by artisans whose flame is looked after.

CONCLUSION

Your power to influence

You are your child’s first educator.

You are not a spectator. You are your child's first educator, the person who invests most in their future and who answers for it most. These pages have given you keys to understanding.

You can now read what is really happening behind the school walls. You can tell an ordinary classroom from a place where real learning happens, and a busy teacher from a craftsman of connection.

That knowledge is not an end in itself. It is there to act on.

The story you choose

As you close this guide, you choose, knowingly or not, the story in which you place your child's education.

- **The story of passivity:** "The school knows what it's doing. Let's hope it all goes well."
- **The story of mistrust:** "The system is bad. There's nothing we can do."
- **The story of partnership:** "We build alongside the school. We understand the foundations. We support the artisans. And we make sure, with kindness and firmness, that what is being built for our child is solid and prepares them for the future."

That last story is yours. It asks more of you, but it is the only one that gives you a real hold on what happens.

You have the map and the compass. What comes next happens in every conversation with your child, every exchange with their teacher, every look you take at their school. Use these keys. And build, with the people who share the road with you, the education your child deserves: an education of the heart, of presence, and of the courage to learn for life.

FROM MORIM

Dear parents,

At MORIM we share your ambition: to see your child thrive and succeed. For us the two go together, and that does not happen by chance. It takes a method.

That is why our certification exists. We train and certify teachers and school leaders so that they put the two pillars described in this guide into practice every day.

The Pool of Trust, for your child's peace of mind. To learn, a child needs to feel secure. In a school committed to our approach, your child is known, recognised and safe. Our certification gives staff the tools to make emotional and physical wellbeing a daily priority. Your child can be themselves, take risks and grow in a setting built to protect them.

The Success Project, for your child's ambition. Your child is supported by educators who spot and develop their talents. They don't just sit through a curriculum: they build their future with adults trained to develop creativity, critical thinking, leadership and resilience.

By training teachers and supporting schools, we aim to give your child the safe setting they need to dare, and the caring high expectations they need to progress. They succeed because they are well, and they are well because they succeed.

If you think your child's school could take this approach, talk to its leadership or write to us at **info@morim.co.uk**.

The MORIM team



About the author

Affi Agbodo created the Pedagogy of Heart and Presence™. He founded MORIM, which works with governments, universities, schools and employers, mainly in French-speaking Africa.

A multiple award-winning educator, he has fifteen years' experience in UK higher education and teacher training. A former postgraduate programme director and head of pedagogy at a British university, he has designed programmes taken by hundreds of learners from more than seventy countries. He has also carried out academic audit work in Europe and Africa.

He advises governments and institutions on education policy. He sits on the board of Emerge Leadership, an organisation that has worked with more than 70,000 young people and 10,000 teachers in the UK. He was previously a school governor in Birmingham.

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This free guide is part of the MORIM Foundation's **Pedagogy for Parents** resources.

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