# 

# **Leading Parent Partnership Award Case Study**

# **School name:** The Nobel School

# **Location:** Stevenage, Hertfordshire

# **Brief summary of your school:**

The Nobel School is a very exciting and vibrant school with 1,473 pupils on roll, covering the full age and ability range, the majority of whom continue their education into our flourishing Sixth Form of 300 students. The recent rebuilding programme means that we have a ‘state of the art’ £38 million 21st century school.

Nobel has a strong local reputation and has been significantly over subscribed for many years. All visitors to Nobel comment on the unique atmosphere and strong positive relationships between staff, students and parents. Furthermore, our most recent Ofsted report confirmed that the school was a good school for the second time. February 2018-Ofsted inspection: ‘*Nobel deemed to be a good school with Pastoral Development and Welfare judged to be outstanding practice*.’

# **Why did your school decide to take the Leading Parent Partnership Award (LPPA)?**

# Whilst embarking on the LPPA started as an opportunity to provide Ofsted evidence and an endorsement of what we already had in place, it turned into a much greater examination and reflection of our practice at the school.

Nobel has always been an outward facing school having been involved in community cohesion work and as a hub for the extended school’s initiative. Completing the LPPA has cemented our belief that continuing to develop parental involvement is vital, and as a consequence, we have developed parental involvement to a point where it has ceased to be ‘bolt on’ to the school’s work, but instead has become the bolt!

**What particular issue(s) did the LPPA help you to identify?**

Some parents did not feel comfortable engaging with school and in particular attending parents’ evenings. This was particularly the case for the harder to reach families who often perceived that it was not worth attending to have ten appointments with different staff just to be told similar negative messages.

Parents also wanted to be able to raise issues to help make the school better, or at least have a platform to communicate more. They also wanted to give feedback and to know what the school’s response to issues was.

Lastly, parents wanted more opportunities to get involved in learning themselves.

**What changes did you make as a result of this?**

**Changing our approach to parents’ evenings.**

As a school we already celebrate the top 10% of student progress by inviting families in for ‘Nobel Celebrates Success breakfast’. This involves students attending before school for food, drink and certificates with photos that included the Headteacher and all family members. This was seen as very positive by all. However, we hadn’t considered the event’s relationship to the rest of the feedback that we gave to parents and carers. As a result of consultation with staff and families we now run parents’ evenings in the following way after data drops:

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| --- | --- |
| Top 10% progress | Attend NCS breakfast with families and do not attend parents’ evening. |
| Next 20% progress | Receive commendation letter and parents evening optional. |
| Next 60% progress | Invited to standard subject parents’ evening. Online booking system allows parents to control appointment times. |
| Last 10% progress | Invited by separate letter to attend on a different day in the same week as standard parents’ evening for a 30-minute partnership meeting. Data on attendance, behaviour, rewards and attitude to learning are all discussed with actions and support jointly agreed. This is revisited with the family after half a term. Parents do not attend the standard parents’ evening. |
| Follow up | Form Tutors follow up with emails or calls to absent families. Any family with whom we have not managed contact is sent a ‘Sorry to have missed you’ postcard encouraging contact. |

# **Since achieving the Award, what direct impact(s) has the LPPA had on developing parent partnerships and pupil achievement?**

* We now have Nobel adult volunteers working in the library, as invigilators and to help shape home-school assessment information.
* Parent’s Forum is in place, active and has helped refresh the school vision.
* Parent Pitstops deliver short 45 minutes training sessions across the year (like twilight CPD for parents/carers) on a variety of topics selected by Parents’ Forum.
* Since embarking on the LPPA process there has been an increase in responses to the annual parental survey with 98% of parents agreeing, or strongly agreeing, that the overall experience at the school is good.
* In the recent Ofsted inspection (2018) parent view survey, 94% of parents said they would recommend the school to other parents.
* Targeted parents’ evenings are proving to be more effective. We now have 100% contact using the differentiated approach.
* We use a wider range of methods of communication home to ensure maximum coverage.

# **What are your next steps?**

1. Fully develop our centralised feedback system using office 365-Forms and with it an increase in parental feedback.
2. Develop further our partnership with the Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service. This will extend parent access learning to include accredited courses in Maths and English at level 1 & 2.
3. Development a ‘Super Curriculum’ that aims to engage families in cultural opportunities to support ‘in school learning’ in a more structured way, but outside core school hours.

# **How would you describe the whole experience from start to finish and achieving the award?**

The LPPA is really straight forward and incredibly useful. There are good online resources as a starting point and someone is always at the end of a phone to help. Schools can have as much, or as little support as they need. For me, as the co-ordinator, having a small group to help review progress each term was useful and helped keep things on track. I used a parent governor, and a support member of staff who was also a parent to help me. This kept the group manageable and focused. Early on in the process, we made the LPPA a part of the school development plan and had specific actions for our various teams and subjects. This ensured it wasn’t a one-person crusade. Assessment was a very positive experience. Our assessor had vast experience and clearly had read both our evidence base and the website. There was a flexible approach to the programme for the day that facilitated evidence verification and parents, students and staff all exited interviews feeling extremely positive. Achieving the award and being described so positively really lifted everyone at the end of the term.

**How would you recommend this award to a school thinking about undertaking the process?**

This award works for all schools regardless of progress to date. For a school just starting on the development of parental engagement, it is a comprehensive framework that can be substantially supported by external experts. For schools with much already in place, it helps identify gaps quickly, helps shape development work incrementally and also allows endorsement of existing good practice. For those schools who have extensive established good practice, it’s a health check and great Ofsted evidence.

For all schools it makes a statement about intent with regard to parental engagement. Schools are often described by parents as islands that have drawbridges to keep parental contact limited. We feel that the LPPA offers an opportunity to fill in the moat!

**Lastly, please provide a short testimonial from your headteacher.**

We were delighted to start seeking LPPA status about 18 months ago. It has proved to be a very uplifting and rewarding process; it has encouraged us to challenge what we already do and to seek new ways of further developing our vital partnership with parents and carers.

We are thrilled to have gained this prestigious award. It further confirms our values and ethos. We are a positive community and thriving school; this award helps to confirm that view.

***Headteacher, The Nobel School, Stevenage***