



Our journey in EYFS has taken us from 5% GLD in 2013 to 67% this year. We also continued to focus on closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils: 2017 data showed 65% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the GLD and 67% of non-disadvantaged pupils achieved the GLD. In 2016, this was 16% disadvantaged v 51% non-disadvantaged. A number of factors have been key to this, including highly effective leadership and management, staff-training and improvements to the outdoor area. Furthermore, we also looked at how we were involving parents, or (more importantly) engaging them. Involving parents being more of a 'doing to' approach and engaging them, more of a 'doing with' approach. Of course, we had a number of initiatives in place with parents' evenings, open afternoons, newsletters, transition meetings, the Whale Hill app etc. We have always had fantastic relationships with parents, but we felt that we should be giving parents more opportunities to participate in the educational process positively at home and at school.

We looked at this as a whole school as we were aware of how parental engagement often declines as students age, but for this case-study we will focus on EYFS. Initiatives included:

- More focussed transition meetings which included activities for parents, fridge magnets for them to display children's work, expectation, routines etc
- Parent Passport to encourage parents to attend meetings and events. Parents could get their 'passport' stamped for each event attended and exchange each stamp for a pound to spend towards trips or uniform. This was discontinued after a year as it was deemed to have no impact on parental attendance, but it has been successful in other schools.
- *Marvellous Me* allowed us to share and celebrate the pupils achievements.
- *Seesaw* has overtaken *Marvellous Me* as it allows us to send videos, photos and notes to inform and showcase the children's learning to parents. They have a clearer understanding of expectations for EYFS children. Comments from staff are clear and we will often include next steps - parents can immediately see what their child has done well and points for development. The vast majority of parents have signed up and this and it is an extremely effective way of celebrating and communicating with parents.
- Phonics Mornings/Afternoons and Maths Mornings/Afternoons were organised for parents/carers to share activities and resources. Activities were all based around things that could be done at home without parents/carers having to buy resources. Maths story books were shared too.
- We found that the dads of EYFS pupils were a little harder to reach. As a result, we host 'Dads and Kids' workshops where dads are invited along to share ELGs, storytelling, phonics activities and maths-through-play. We then put our healthy school status on hold and have take-away pizzas, parmesans and chips together! This is run by a male member of staff as we thought it may put some of the more anxious dads at ease.





- Nursery storytime sessions take place fortnightly where parents are invited to listen to stories with their children and buy a copy of the book for £1. We found that parents were more likely to utilise something for which they had paid, albeit a nominal fee.
- Parent/child Zumba sessions were introduced in Reception to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Year Five Digital Leaders have been trained and put on sessions to share Early Years educational apps with pupils and parents. We knew that parents used tablets with children at home, but rather than 'fight it', we decided to promote appropriate apps and talked about suitable 'screen time'.
- Stay and Play sessions started in Nursery where parents come along to play sessions half-termly.
- Home-Loan scheme launched in Nursery. This is a library system where parents can borrow books from Nursery.
- Grandparents' Afternoons take place as grandparents are often the 'first port of call' for pupils, especially when parents are in full time work. Grandparents played with their grandchildren and staff showcased a range of 'learning through play' activities.

It is often difficult to quantify the success of improved parental engagement as there were so many other factors that improved in Early Years. However, there can be no doubt that it boosts achievement and has contributed to our much-improved GLD. It has also strengthened our relationships with parents even further. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and reinforcing the connection between home and school really has made us a great community of learners.

