



Investors in Families: Accreditation Visit The Hollies School Thursday 1st December 2022

The Hollies School was assessed in person on Thursday 1st December 2022 for their Investors in Families Accreditation. The morning was a positive celebration of the quality family and community work that is evident and visible across the School. Key members of staff, Headteacher, PTA, family members and pupils were all actively involved which was fantastic to see. The evidence presented clearly meets the requirements of accreditation for Investors in Families and was a pleasure to review and discuss. During the Accreditation process, the work of the school was judged as Amethyst within the old Framework and Bronze within the new framework. Family and Community Engagement is embedded in the school and it is evident that the school has worked hard on its journey towards excellence. The assessor was very pleased to award the school the:

Amethyst Standard

The Hollies is a special day school, maintained by Cardiff City Council. Currently, it provides education for 123 pupils aged from 4 to 11 years. Next September this figure is due to rise to 150 pupils. Nearly all pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most pupils who attend the school have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and there are currently 47 pupils with English as an additional language.

As part of the accreditation process we were able to speak to a parent and two grandparents who described their role within the school from a PTA perspective and also of that of a Parent/Grandparents. The PTA has a positive impact on the school community and brings together family members and staff that work on joint initiatives such as the Christmas Fayre and gardening. This demonstrates positive partnerships working collectively for the whole school community.

The feedback showed that relationships are built from day one and the school works hard to commit to their families. One parent said that their child has thrived since joining the school in personal, social and academic development. Feedback also highlighted their children learning new skills they did not think was possible and that the children flourish and grow. It was both heartwarming and insightful to hear how the school had changed their families lives. From a parents perspective there are many opportunities to become involved in the school and learn, grow and develop for themselves as individuals. Families are offered regular coffee mornings that provide opportunities to meet and socialise, share ideas and actively promotes friendships. This also provides regular focused mornings which cover topics such as The

Hollies curriculum, PTFA, Woman's Aid, Disability Sports Wales and Diwali. The school will now look at parent voice which can lead onto further training. Families said that they feel comfortable and confident coming into school and described the school as "perfect, amazing and inclusive" which is wonderful to hear. There was further evidence from 12 family members that clearly demonstrated the schools commitment to supporting families. The feedback demonstrated that the school was excelling in providing the best possible health, keeping pupils free from abuse and safe. 100 % agreed that the school engages well and communicates effectively through keeping up to date and providing varied support for families. Further testimonials describes the school as "amazing, supportive, nurturing, outstanding and phenomenal". These testimonials speak volumes about the holistic support offered to families and the wider school community.

There is an Open-Door Policy, communication in the school is excellent and The Hollies use a wide range of communication methods including, Class Dojo, Email, Website, school newsletter, and an informative Twitter page. These communication platforms work particularly well as it encourages open communication and improves the home school relationships. Parents spoke positively about the importance of Class Dojo and the sharing of learning. Because of some of the communication needs of the pupils, parents don't always get feedback or conversations on what they have done through the day. Dojo allows families to be part of the school day and witness first hand, the activities and learning taking place. Families have stated that they are more engaged and have increased opportunities to learn at home through the information shared on Class Dojo. There is a comprehensive Parent section on the School's website and there is also a designated family room within the school. The school have also created The Hollies Directory which is such a simple, innovative yet impactful activity. They identified a need to collate suitable sporting and leisure activities in the community specifically for the needs of the school community. This has impacted on family's financial circumstances through accessing charity groups and discount schemes. It has enabled families to be more informed and provided an increased opportunity to engage in a wider range of sporting activities, which then impacts on wellbeing, health and social life. What a wonderful activity which has really benefited the whole school community. Relationships between staff and parents/carers is strong and it is evident that The Hollies have worked hard to build and maintain trusting and open relationships.

Relationships start at the very beginning of the pupils journey. A new initiative has been implemented is a RAG pupil Profile which provides an extensive overview of each pupil. This co-constructed document combines information from families which feeds into Positive Behaviour Plans, IEP's and learning objectives. These profiles provide an important opportunity for families to become involved with their child's support from school at the earliest stage and are continually updated. The Hollies School is a specialist setting for learners with Autism and have a range of strategies to address potential barriers to learning and to support communication. The Hollies utilised parent input and co-created a booklet called ASD Strategies for Families which contains glossary of terms and strategies used within school. We were very impressed with this engaging activity that empowers parents and improves wellbeing and confidence.

Building relationships is key. It is important that there is a consistent approach between home and school and The Hollies School are achieving this. The school is very good at keeping

families together through working and initiating meetings with a range of partners to support families. A multi facet approach has been used to ensure consistency is used to support parents/pupils and staff's wellbeing. Strengthening the Links meetings facilitate effective communication between professionals and the school to ensure that interventions are well aligned with the needs of the pupils and the families. This is another example of positive partnerships working to improve the lives of The Hollies School community.

Parent voice is important to the school and is now directly impacting the planning and development of opportunities for families within school. Every September a Family Support Questionnaire is sent out to all families that highlights their interests and needs. Information received then feeds into the training support programme for families for that academic year and the 'other' column helps shape the questionnaire for the following September. Workshops, training and talks are offered based on the requests which improves the knowledge, understanding and skills of families. This is an excellent example of parent voice and positive parental learning. Parent training workshops are offered to support the needs of families whose children have autism and additional learning needs. A comprehensive and holistic suite of workshops have been offered including: Sleeping, Toileting, Sensory Integration, Behaviour, Edible Playground, Communication and many more. This clearly demonstrates understanding of need and has impacted on many lives – excellent.

One area that The Hollies are excelling in is identifying a need and implementing an action. This is highlighted with the creation of APPEAL (Autism Parent Programme, English as Additional Language). This inspiring activity was introduced due to the numbers of EAL families joining the school. This programme enables school to reach communities that could potentially be excluded due to a language barrier. Over 4 weeks, families come together with a translator and licenced trainers to receive information regarding their child's diagnosis and as a result are upskilled and better informed. This reduces fear, anxiety, isolation and are better supported. We can clearly see the impact of these wonderful outcomes. This links in with the interpreting and translation support offered within the school. School staff have been identified as interpreters for families which has been welcomed by families and staff. Not only does this build relationships and improve communication but is also inclusive and supports positive partnerships. We were very impressed with the creation of Family Games at The Hollies. This truly inclusive event brings together pupils and their families having fun together within the school environment. This links in so many important outcomes such as health, wellbeing, nurture and engagement. We look forward to seeing this progress year on year.

The Family Engagement role within the school has made such a positive impact on meeting the needs of the school community. It has proven to be vital in building and maintaining relationships. The role is varied and is constantly developing. The Family Engagement role links in with a whole school approach to Family and Community Engagement and it is evident to see across the school. Staff really do understand the needs of the school community and excel in offering that wider holistic support. There is clear evidence of the inclusive nature of the school and an emphasis on positivity and strength. This commitment and development in supporting their pupils, families and whole community is lovely to see. The Family Engagement Worker has implemented activities that supports financial capabilities within the school community. The Focus on Finances Month in January is an incredibly supportive and

informative activity which highlights the schools ability in going 'above and beyond'. A school uniform bank allows families to access free school uniform and allows for recycling of clothes which teaches important lessons. The Family Engagement Worker has also implemented a school saving club working alongside the Credit Union. Although small numbers have accessed this, the next steps can be based around promotion and increasing participation. It is an excellent activity that teaches valuable life lessons and increases the school community's opportunities.

There is sustained evidence that The Hollies are constantly planning and developing for the good of the school and wider community. They use innovative approaches and strategies which are tacked and measured. This is an important part of the school's success, collating the impact and always striving for the 'what next'. The school has identified some wonderful next steps on their journey and we are very much looking forward to seeing these in action.

It was a great pleasure to meet the school community and celebrate the work of the school. The school has clearly met the identified core aims of the Investors in Families Amethyst Accreditation. The school community benefits from staff who are committed to supporting young people and their families. Many congratulations to the staff who worked so tirelessly to achieve the Accreditation. Investors in Families is very grateful for your hard work.

Yours sincerely,

L. Woodhouse

Mrs Lynsey Woodhouse
Director of Investors in families



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HOW TO USE THIS LETTER

Celebrate Success and share this good practice via:

- The school website
- Newsletters
- Social media

with

- Governors
- Staff
- Families
- Visitors
- Estyn/ Ofsted
- Challenge Adviser

The importance of family engagement is clearly evident for all at The Hollies School

Celebrate!

and

Please let IIF have details of how you promote gaining the award.



The Hollies recommendation examples – as a generic guide to improvements

1. Consider a Family Engagement Strategy and a Family Learning Strategy. Families will have a clear understanding of expectations and offers (you can see a guide on the iF Padlet)
2. Transition – Transition Programme such as Smooth Moves, Smart Moves specifically for parents
3. Family Fun bags – Family learning and engagement activity – loan bags for weekend
4. Parent Forum/Parent Council – Develop a new working group made up of families from each year group. Families shape training, plan activities, review policies and consider further opportunities
5. Parent and Carer questionnaires – Could you offer these termly? Consider different themes: Communication, Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, Community etc.
6. Family Finances – Talk, Learn, Do Programme, Programme, Finance and budgeting workshops
7. Evaluate – Monitor and evaluate all engagement, has it had an impact? How has it made an impact?
8. Updated parent section on Website full of resources, signposting, iF, Questionnaires, Home learning

The Hollies specific recommendation examples based on activities assessed

1. **RAG Pupil Profile** – Could you build on this and offer Family profiles? This could include important information about families interests and hobbies.
2. **Transition Policy** – This could outline what parents and carers can expect, how the process works, explain how they are involved. Smooth Moves Programme for parents.
3. **ASD Strategies** – We would love to use this as an example activity to iF schools. How can you build on this? Are there other booklets that could be co-produced for other topics/areas?
4. **Newsletter** – Finance/Support/handy hint section would be wonderful here especially with rising costs
5. **Interventions** – Consider how families are informed, involved and updated regarding progress. Pre and post questionnaires or face to face/telephone contact.

6. **Feedback** – Gather feedback that could be captured to provide quantitative and qualitative data to highlight the important outcomes made. Monitoring and evidencing on impact
7. **Workshops** – Amazing to gather parent feedback and views on what they would like. You could also have a suite of core content offered to all for example – new ones could include: Internet Safety courses for parents, Care for the Family Parentalk Programme, Family Fortunes and Animate Learning from Campaign for Learning, Talk Learn Do programme.
8. **Edible Playground** – You could build on this and offer cooking on a budget, healthy eating sessions.
9. **Enrichment days** – Utilise parents skills and interests, invite parents to lead on cultural days, for example cultural craft, dance, cookery. One School created a blanket of nationalities to display in the school.
10. **Family Engagement Role** – Publicise this on the school website and regularly on Dojo. Do they know the support you can offer?
11. **Strong Participation** – Consider a strategy to engaging more parents and carers. Personalised invitations from the pupils, publicity, planning, timetabling events etc.