



Key benefits:

- Immediate, positive impact on parental engagement
- 99% of parents engaged within two weeks
- Re-enforces classroom learning at home
- Improves pupil attainment
- Reduces the workload for teachers
- Fully GDPR compliant

About Heronswood Primary

Heronswood Primary is a school of 407 pupils aged 3 to 11 based in Kidderminster near Worcester. The school's ethos is to give children a true, emotional connection with their learning, as it is then that they will achieve the highest standards. One area which has been a challenge for the school is engaging parents in their child's education. To deliver on their ethos, the school needs to have high levels of parental engagement so that pupils, parents and teachers work together to ensure that every pupil in every class reaches their full potential.

The challenge

One area of focus for this year at the school was improving parental engagement. They wanted every child's parent or carer to be aware of what was happening in the classroom. To understand what the pupils were learning and why it was necessary. But, with a higher than average levels of parents with English as an additional language, communications sometimes proved tricky. As Rhoda Pierpoint, Headteacher at Heronswood Primary explains:

"Many of our parents have English as an additional language. For some of our pupils, English is not a language spoken in their homes. Sending home letters about the curriculum or rewards was not working as some parents couldn't understand them. This created a further challenge as often then parents were only receiving some basic information from the school. They had little understanding of what was happening in the classroom, what learning their child was doing. Also, a further challenge for us was that in the current pandemic giving out actual reward badges is best avoided due to distancing, but they are needed as children's esteem needs boosting after so much time out of school.

The school looked at various parent messaging systems and chose MarvellousMe for their school, as:

"Safeguarding is a top priority in our school; we needed to find a system which would help us be in daily contact with parents and carers safely and securely. I reviewed three systems for parental engagement, and only MarvellousMe fully passed our GDPR assessment."

One-Touch Technology

Parental engagement can have such a positive impact on a child's education, and Heronswood was on a mission to ensure that every child went home each day to parents or carers who were aware of what they had been working on in class.

The traditional methods of sending letters or rewards badges home are not appropriate in the current pandemic, as Rhoda says:

"Social distancing makes it difficult to put badges on a uniform and sending books home physically is another one best avoided. But it's a time when rewards and home/school contact are needed more than ever. As parents want to be kept informed, and children's mental health is a real concern after so much time out of school. With MarvellousMe, we can send messages of reassurance home if a child is struggling, we can message homework or reminders, and we can also give out single or whole class badges in a few clicks. It's so visual that even parents who have English as an additional language can understand everything. It's the perfect solution. "Also, regardless of the pandemic MarvellousMe has got me thinking, in the age of one-touch tech, should we be giving out reward badges? Technology surely means that we can have quicker and easier ways to deliver rewards and messages to parents and carers instantly."

A unique approach

After completing the GDPR assessment and comparison to other products, Heronswood chose the MarvellousMe App to support teacher to parent engagement.

“We are a forward-thinking school in terms of technology, and we looked to see what was available to help us improve parental engagement. We found the MarvellousMe app and could see that there is nothing else on the market that is as intuitive and parent friendly.

“Society is all technology-based, not all have internet or devices at home, but 100% of parents have access through a smartphone. It’s not about me sending a letter home anymore; it’s about contacting parents in a familiar format which they can easily respond to.”

Fun to use

With any product, the key to user engagement is that it is fun to use. MarvellousMe is easy for teachers and parents to use, and the colourful reward badges mean that the children are engaged and enjoy the conversations it sparks at home.

“One reluctant pupil is now running to his mum each afternoon asking which reward badges he’s had today. It is so lovely to see him now fully engaged in school. “Teachers love it – that can easily and quickly send through the reward badges to parents and carers, and our TAs also has access.”

Top of the class

For Heronswood, using MarvellousMe has transformed parental engagement. Parents now know which rewards their children have each day, what they have been working on so that parents can start positive conversations with their children at home. Transforming parental engagement doesn’t take long with the right edTech, as Rhoda says:

“In two weeks, we had 99% of parents and carers signed up to MarvellousMe, and we’d received thousands of high-fives, showing that they are engaged in their child’s learning in school.

“As a Head Teacher, I love that I can create specific groups for my pupil premium or EAL children and monitor parental engagement and send specific messages. It’s great for sending the whole school messages to our 407 children. I sent a message about face coverings at the school gate, and the following day the majority of people were wearing them. It’s quick, instant and effective.”

Rhoda says that MarvellousMe is also helping in other areas; parents seem to love it:

“Messages are quick and easy – don’t forget PE kit tomorrow. Marked improvement in the number of pupils who forget PE kits and less stressed parents running home to get them.”

Reducing teacher workload

As any teacher knows, school life is hectic with minimal hours in the day to pack everything in. Throw in the pandemic and teachers are stretched to their limits. At Heronswood, teachers are a little less stressed thanks to MarvellousMe, no more writing ‘read for 20 minutes’ in the pupil’s home diaries, as Rhoda says:

“Previously teachers wrote in 30 home school diaries. MarvellousMe saves so much time. Now, Teachers can say, today we

read Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Please ask your child about the characters. Or your child should read for 20 minutes today. For our reception class, the teacher can send a voice message saying, “Today we’ve learnt the sound ‘ffff’ ask your child to show you some things around the home beginning with the sound ‘ffff’.” It’s a fantastic way to help parents support their child’s learning in the right way.”

They can send one message to the whole class in one go. Very impressive, and our teaching teams find it very helpful. For parents, it’s great that they have it immediately to hand without digging around in school bags for books. We can also set reminders for when homework is due.”

Parent power

Heronswood previously struggled with parental engagement, using Facebook and another Parent communication app, but they were still only hitting about 70% of our families, Rhoda says:

“The process of implementing MarvellousMe was straightforward, the support was brilliant, and within two weeks, we had 99% of parents engaged, which is wonderful. The parents love the app, they enjoy seeing the rewards badges coming in and can have meaningful conversations with their children about the school day and what they like most is that the notification comes straight to their phone.”

Parental engagement has such a positive impact on our children and helps parents and carers understand the importance of school learning. Heronswood has taken badges one step further;

“We have our own personalised badged for our school and also one for our academy trust, Rivers. It’s lovely that we can have these to send out to our pupils who demonstrate our school values.”

Looking ahead

As a school using EdTech to help reduce teacher workload and improve parental engagement, what’s next?

“I think that parental engagement has a positive impact on attainment, so I’m looking forward to seeing the results. We can already see that parents have a better understanding of the work being done in the classroom and that they can see the importance of school. I think that attendance will also improve, although ours is pretty good anyway.

“If you’re struggling to engage with parents due to social distancing, MarvellousMe is a great way to break down barriers and keep in touch with parents daily. It’s a quick and easy way to virtually bring parents into school life in a safe and socially distanced way.”

“There is nothing on the market that is as quick and easy to use as MarvellousMe. MarvellousMe is quicker, smarter and better.