

A Head Teacher's Story: Getting Parents Engaged



Background

My name is Steve Kernan. I'm a family man, with 2 children. I've been Head teacher at Newington Academy, in Kingston upon Hull City, since 2013.



Our school is an exciting and fun place and we are extremely proud of our Victorian building that is now 139 years old. Our numbers have grown dramatically and we have 349 pupils, with over 55% being eligible for free school meals. We became a sponsored academy in September 2012, forming part of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).

Engaging parents in their children's education has always been a priority for us. We all appreciate the big impact that parents have on their children's happiness, motivation and learning outcomes. However, like for most schools, connecting with a diverse group of parents has always been a challenge for us.

Before

We've tried many ways. Our website, social media and general communications systems have worked well, but they are really designed to provide general information about the school and our events. They just aren't personal enough for parents, or specific about their children's learning.

Our shopping list for the best parent engagement solution was demanding. We wanted something that teachers would enjoy using (and certainly not add to their workload); that would excite and inspire all parents with simple and only good news; that was easy to set up and maintain across the whole school; that enabled us to track consistency through every class; and that would provide evidence of our parent engagement success.

We heard about MarvellousMe from other schools in the AET group, and since launching a few months ago, we haven't looked back. We have already engaged well over 80% of our parents, with many of them having partners and grandparents connected as well. MarvellousMe is a family engagement solution.

BOOM!

We hear fabulous comments from parents all of the time, and it's fantastic to hear them speak with their children in a more positive, inquisitive and endearing way about the school day.

Our teachers and children love MarvellousMe too. Teachers use it mostly in plenary sessions, just 3-4 times a week, with the children excited to send good news home and to tell their parents how well they are doing. Children now even ask for MarvellousMe time, and teachers relish our Hi5 competitions. (Parents Hi5 teachers through the MarvellousMe app to say 'thank you'. They can't message teachers back, or see teachers' contact details.)

For the SLT and me, MarvellousMe gives us special powers too. We can use it across the whole school, to share good news with any parent, or all them, in seconds. We can also set up priority school badges, to help teachers encourage and celebrate our core values, and we regularly track and report on how well teachers and parents are engaging, enabling us to keep parent engagement consistent and ongoing.

MarvellousMe delivers everything we wanted and more. It's the best thing we have done to engage our parents.

Steve Kernan, Headteacher

