

Elton Primary School
School Lane
Elton
Chester
Cheshire
CH2 4LT



FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2014

Introduction

Elton Primary School in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire West, signed up for the Family Partnership Award in March 2011. Due to a change of Headteacher, who took up post in January 2013, the school gathered the evidence from March 2013 to present in a portfolio, and planned an appropriate programme for the final on-site assessment day, which took place on 6th February 2014.

The Headteacher, Victoria Carr, led and oversaw the entire award process within the school. Other staff and personnel including parents, governors, and other key stakeholders, took responsibility for contributing evidence for the Portfolio, in order to meet the six key aspects of family partnership working. Jo Wright, the Headteacher's PA, ably assisted this process and collated the evidence and organised the programme for the assessment day.

Beryl Oliver, Associate Educational Consultant for Educational Consultancy & Management (ECM) Solutions was the external assessor. This report summarises the highlights of best practice, observed and heard about during the on-site assessment day. It also reflects good practice evidence, viewed during the scrutiny and analysis of the school's family partnership portfolio of evidence and information on the USB stick.

The programme for the on-site final assessment

The on-site assessment took place from 9.30am to 2.45pm on the 6th February 2014. The programme included the following:

- Meeting with the Victoria Carr, Headteacher and Family Partnership lead, and Michelle Massey, the Family Partnership Governor to discuss Family Partnership award process.
- Meeting with parents at reception class "Stay & Play" session.
- Meeting with two parents (Friends of Elton).
- Meeting with Victoria Carr and Jo Wright to discuss evidence gathered for the Family Partnership portfolio.
- Tour of school, including viewing Children's Centre, ICT suit. In addition, viewing school displays and noticeboards.
- View adult learning course "Family ICT" in the ICT suite. Opportunity to meet the course tutor, Assistant Headteacher, and speak with parents.
- Verbal feedback to Victoria Carr on findings from the day.

Portfolio of evidence

The portfolio, and accompanying evidence submitted for the final assessment off-site, was extremely well-organised, and presented to the highest possible standard, and brought together a good range of appropriate evidence. Victoria Carr and Jo Wright must be congratulated on the production and cross-

referencing of key sources of evidence for each aspect of family partnership working.

Aspect 1: Ethos, vision and policy

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios and reinforced, observed and reported on during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice are as follows:

As you approach the main entrance there is a most attractive and stunning piece of art which shows a canal boat and gypsy caravan to depict the inclusive ethos of the school. The artwork contains hand prints of everyone that attended the school when it was produced. Even though these hand prints are small, children are able to point out their own.

The grounds of the school are litter-free and well cared for.

The assessor received a warm welcome from the reception staff at Elton Primary School. As she entered the school, she was impressed by the displays and seating area for parents and other visitors to the school. In this area was a live channel screen which captured school life experiences both in and out of school, which gave a 'feel good' factor.

On a reception table, there are safeguarding postcards, which invited parents into school to discuss any issues or concerns. They were user friendly, clear, and easy to respond to.

The school is very rightly very proud of its artwork, and it is a strength of the school, having received the Artsmark. A teacher from the UCEA was involved in an art project for multicultural art week. Pupils sculptured musical instruments, produced ceramic work, and made a totem pole. There is also Elton the mythical bird which is a wonderful art sculpture and a prominent feature of the school.

The school motto is "DREAM TEAM" and underpinning that motto is the school's mission statement which is "love life, love learning, always aiming high". The welcome letter to parents attached to the prospectus states:

- *"Elton Primary is all about inspired, nurtured, happy children having fun and working hard in all areas of school life."*
- *"At Elton we offer high quality teaching, and guaranteed progress in a stable, stimulating, inclusive, diverse, and caring community."*
- *"Our staff, children, and Governors strive for excellence in everything we do."*
- *"We recognise the importance of your active participation in the school life of your child."*
- *"We pride ourselves on being a friendly, open school, where all members of our community take part in evaluating our progress and driving forward."*

The prospectus states the school vision for Elton School is *"to provide a nurturing, yet challenging environment where children and staff are valued and inspired to achieve and succeed"*.

There are nine school aims which include:

- *"To provide a caring environment through example and guidance, in which children can develop social attitudes which reflect a respect for cultural diversity and concern for others."*
- *"To provide opportunities for parents to be involved with the education of their children in strategic decision making."*
- *"To promote an active partnership between parents, governors, and teachers, and encourage links with the community."*
- *"To be responsive to individual, matching teaching to pupils' abilities and attitudes, and developing each child to his/her full potential in conjunction with parents and carers."*
- *"To provide an inclusive environment in which the teaching and learning achievements, attitudes, and well being of every person matter."*

The school last had its Ofsted inspection in February 2012, it found *"Achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management are good"*. Another relevant finding is that the number of traveller families is well above average, and rising.

The report stated *"The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the progress their children make in the school and the inspection endorses this view."* It also stated *"Pupils and most parents and carers are very positive about the school and the way it prepares pupils for the next stage in their learning"*.

One area of improvement was to *"engage more effectively with all groups of parents and carers to better explain the schools expectations and actions in adapting to its changing intake."* The Family Partnership Award has helped the school address this area.

The school has a Parental Involvement Policy which states in the overview section:

- *"We aim to provide an ethos in which teachers and parents are encouraged to support each other in the education of the young people in our care."*
- *"Our intention will be to welcome parents and involve them in the work and life of the school"*.
- *"We believe where that where parents are partners in the process of education the learners thrive and do well."*

Amongst the objectives are:

- *"To welcome parents to join in the work and life of the school as partners helping us to promote the schools aims".*
- *"To create clear and effective channels of communication with parents".*
- *"To build on the work that parents have done with their children and to enable them to continue to support the learning process, both in and out of school."*

A strategy used will be that parents will be encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school in many ways, including:

- *"Working in classrooms with children or in support of teachers".*
- *"Helping with extra-curricular activities and school visits".*
- Being involved in social and fund raising activities.

The Headteacher is the Family Partnership Coordinator, she wishes to develop the following:

- *"Helping to develop a whole-school family-friendly culture and ethos in partnership with key stakeholders including families."*
- *"Develop, in conjunction with the Children's Centre, a good range of family learning and recreational activities and workshops, designed to engage families in supporting their child's learning and well being."*
- *"Enable teaching and support staff to develop effective communication and joint partnership working with a diversity of children's families."*
- *"Help to recruit and train family volunteers, family mentors, and family champions to support new families and those who are harder to reach".*
- *"Work productively with community partners and external agencies to ensure appropriate resources and opportunities to enhance Family Partnership working and family learning".*

The Headteacher believes that *"the ethos of the school will be one in which parents and staff, are mutually supportive. As a result, learners will benefit in their development, progress, and achievement. The partnership will give learners the best opportunities to benefit from school. Our links with parents and the community will be used to help to promote community cohesion"*.

The huge mural, as you enter the school, mentioned previously, was created by West Kirby artist Jim Flemming. This exceptional work, is 42 feet long and 8 foot high.

A report about the mural in the Chester Chronicle has a comment by the Headteacher who said *"the mural is designed to promote the school's inclusivity, every child and member of staff have – literally – had a hand in the mural's*

creation. The leaves on the tree on the design are formed from the hand prints of everyone in the school." Mrs Carr went on to say "it encompasses everything about Elton. Ince church, which was featured in the Domesday Book, Helsby Hill, Essar, farming, and a traditional Romany Gypsy caravan". Another report in the Travellers times from December 2013, Mrs Carr is quoted as saying "to demonstrate the importance of recognising and celebrating every individual in our diverse community, we decided upon a visual depiction of inclusion, the fundamental ethos of Elton Primary".

The Headteacher states "Our ethos is such that partnership working underpins all that we do and the views of our parents are an integral part of our policy making and decision shaping".

There was good evidence of policies including:

- Community Cohesion Policy 2014
- Health and safety policy 2012 (due for review 2014) – this covered risk assessments, staff training, etc.
- Whistle-blowing Policy in line with the local council.
- Parental Complaint Policy – review date 2014.
- Safeguarding Policy, this is a robust policy which states "all members of our school community are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children". There were many sections to the policy including, recruitment, volunteers, conduct of staff, photographing children, etc. The policy is to be read in conjunction with other policies regarding the welfare and safety of children. For example, code of conduct, anti-bullying, initial care, physical intervention policy, drug and substance misuse, children missing in education, and Cheshire West and Chester Child Protection procedures.
- All staff have had basic awareness training in safeguarding, and the Headteacher and designated Deputy, have had full training, and attend all case conferences, etc.
- There are procedures in place for parents and other volunteers.

After reviewing all the evidence presented on-site and off-site, this aspect of family partnership working has been fully met.

Aspect 2: Leadership, management and coordination

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios and reinforced that observed and reported on, during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice include:

The Headteacher believes in a team approach including all staff, teaching support staff, office staff, canteen and dinnertime staff, ground maintenance. There is a monitoring programme for staff with a different focus each week:

In the spring term, the focus was on:

- Lunch and break time behaviour.
- Literacy book and planning scrutiny e.g. all marking as per the policy, differentiation evident in pupil's books.
- A learning walk, looking at writing across the curriculum.

Others planned include:

- An inclusion learning walk.
- Homework scrutiny.
- Pupil voice interviews – passion for learning focus.

In place also, is a robust lesson evaluation programme, with the Headteacher observing a lesson in every classroom. The Headteacher herself is observed, and an open and honest discussion follows all the observations.

The Headteacher also believes in allowing her staff to trial new initiatives and encourages them not to be afraid of failing. If staff attend a course, they feedback by planning something they have learned and team teaching it with every teacher.

All support staff have level one and two in Maths and English which they have achieved at Elton, showing clear support for Continuous Professional Development. This is a great achievement, and has been celebrated in school. The Teaching Assistants are mainly local people, and therefore good ambassadors for the school.

The Headteacher shows much enthusiasm and energy for writing bids and the school recently acquired £8,000 by Cheshire West and Chester Council for its ICT suite. It has been given lottery money, and the Headteacher has also managed to secure funding for paint from Spar and GrowHow. Essar contributed cash for computers, and Jaguar Land Rover provided man power. The volunteers from the production plant came, and were in school for two weeks during the holidays, to repaint the reception area and corridors. Arkwright gave money to decorate the outside of the school; and Alan Williams helped to render the wall. During the visit the Headteacher was in the process of applying for a NIACE & Ofsted joint project illuminating excellent practice in Family Learning.

NIACE lists what it considers to be the hallmarks of excellent Family Learning provision such as:

- *“Engaging families in learning together”.*
- *“Empowering families to take control”*
- *“Family learning recognising context and culture.*
- *“Starting from a positive not deficit model”.*

- *“Planned, funded, and delivered, at a strategic level, whether local or national”.*

The assessor wishes the school every success with this bid, and feels it is a good step to follow on from the Family Partnership Award.

In the portfolio, there was the thematic overview of Year Two's work, which included SEAL, Golden time, Science, Music, PE, ICT, Geography, and RE. The SEAL programme was aimed at boosting confidence with work on *"It's good to be me..."* and also on feelings and on how best to cope with them.

This went on to show a good example of medium term planning targeted at a group where there were twenty-one boys in the cohort. The learning was targeted to engage the boys in active learning. The theme chosen was space and planets. The SEAL theme building on the last theme of *"getting on and falling out"* was *"going for goal"*. Circle time is used as one method of delivery, as well as working in pairs to improve listening skills and developing gross motor skills. The next topic was *"travel, trains, and travel agents"*. The work would start off with a mind map of travel; work in the summer term would be based around relationships, communication, and imaginative play.

Some of the themes of the assemblies link up with the SEAL programme.

Elton is keen to promote learning opportunities for its pupils, and a good example of this is the peer teaching which is carried out in ICT, Year 5 support Years 3 and 1, and Year 6 support Years 4 and 2. Another example is that Years 3 and 4 have had the opportunity to be part of a choir at Chester Cathedral.

Pupils from Elton have visited the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre in Widnes. The Year 5's took part in two hands on workshops. A report in the News Chronicle said the visit was sponsored by Esso Oil UK, as part of an ongoing programme of engagement with pupils in the local community and Catalyst. The class teacher said *"the children enjoyed all aspects of the day, the workshops were superb and the galleries too"*. The aim of the visit *"to show global science can be interesting and fun"* said the Head of communications and community of the Centre.

The Headteacher and the school have recently forged links with the local church, and the children had a service in the church at Christmas. They brought in their unwanted toys to be distributed around the community for less fortunate children. They also made angels which were used to decorate the church.

Children are also signposted to the Eid Festival which takes place at Ellesmere Port Civic Centre.

The school has recently introduced Teams; these were being drawn up at a lunchtime meeting when the assessor was present. The scheme allows pupils to

win points for such things as good manners, helpfulness, voluntary work, etc. This scheme runs alongside the Merit system which is for academic success.

The Headteacher has a real passion *“for advancing children and families”*. She believes this *“passion, leadership and drive for family work, is evident across all that the school does, and an integrated part of our collaboration with the Children's Centre as we aim to improve outcomes for all”*.

As a result of this, the school has appointed a Family Partnership governor. The assessor met with the governor who showed her the record of visits she keeps about her involvement. She took part in a parent panel meeting. The governor was very impressed by a parent's comment which said *“Mrs _____ was very complimentary of the actions school is taking to involve families, in particular, the parents being invited in for school lunch with their children, curriculum evenings, and formal and informal feedback sessions. The parents said there was also improved communication on the website, Headteacher's blog, newsletter, and were impressed by the community involvement in the mural.”*

The parent went on to say that because of this better communication, parents wanted to do things to get more involved.

The governor has also taken part in a monitoring session which involved a learning walk. In addition she comes in once a week to hear the children read.

After reviewing all the evidence presented on-site and off-site, this aspect has been fully met.

Aspect 3: Communication and information sharing

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios and reinforced, that observed and reported on, during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice are as follows:

The Community Cohesion Promotion Policy states *“Our school is a thriving, cohesive community, which has a vital part to play in building a more cohesive society. We are responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of culture, faith, ethnicity, and social backgrounds. We believe this to be especially important to our school, since our catchment does not reflect a broad diversity of cultures. We therefore consider it an important life-skill to teach our children about community cohesion issues”*.

Equality and excellence

- *“Our tracking systems enable us to evaluate progress of different groups and to tackle under performance by any particular group.”*

- *"Through our regular questionnaires, pupil voice interviews, and parent panels for pupils and parents, we monitor incidents of prejudice, bullying, and harassment. We have not yet had any incidents, but if they do take place, they will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate behaviour and discipline policies."*

The school works closely with the Cheshire West and Chester Parent Partnership Service who help parents with their problems in some of the following ways:

- Help to express concerns during meetings.
- View schools.
- Complete forms.
- Signpost to any relevant information or other organisations that may be able to help.
- Hold various information events about special educational needs throughout the year.
- *"To support our work, we have trained volunteers called Independent Parental Supporters (IPS), who complete an accredited training course and receive ongoing training and supervision".*

The aim of the service is *"to empower parents and carers by providing a confidential and impartial source of independent advice and support."*

In addition, as part of inclusion and parental links, Elton set a GRT Parental Engagement Survey in Autumn 2013. Twelve families were consulted. It was interesting to read the positive comments about what the school does well.

- *"Helping with anything I come in to ask."*
- *"Teaching the kids."*
- *"Keeping them under control."*
- *"Children like their teachers and are learning well."*
- *"Inclusion"*
- *"Looking after them"*
- *"School dinners are the best she has ever had at any school."*
- *"Giving extra support to children who need it."*

Further questioning found only half of the parents had attended a parent's evening or curriculum evening, and only 33% had access to the internet. 58% did not use a mobile phone for text messages, and out of the 42% who did, 33% was by a child in the house. Only 33% would be interested in an adult education class to improve their reading and writing skills, but only 17% would attend the Children's Centre for classes, (even if a creche was provided).

The school keeps records of GRT parents, and notes of important information, e.g. Non-readers, so that other methods of communication can be used, and there can always be sensitivity when speaking to these parents.

As part of communication to parents, Elton produces a newsletter called "Dream Team" with information and dates for the diary. Successes are also celebrated in the newsletters, for example, the school's launch of "Mathletics" during September 2013, which is linked to the reward system. In addition to the newsletter, the Headteacher writes a weekly blog which is very popular. It is written in a very parent friendly style.

The school has an excellent new website, which is user-friendly and well thought out. On it are useful features on the proms, NSPCC, Remembrance Day, Parliament week. It also includes the school prospectus, newsletters, yearly calendar of events, school policies, etc. There is also a section for parent's and the Children's Centre.

The Headteacher said *"Communication and information sharing is pivotal to our successes with parents, and is executed in a range of ways – blog, newsletter, formal letter, website, school bags, noticeboard, oral sharing, plus we are investigating text and emails too"*.

During her tour of the school, the assessor saw a display of signposting leaflets which included:

- Domestic abuse (Written in both English and Polish).
- Assisting schools to support children of offenders.
- Victim support information.
- I-HOP – a Barnardo's initiative – a national one-stop information and advice service, and free helpline for all professionals working with children and families of offenders.
- Leaflets provided by Cheshire West and Chester Parent Partnership Service, advertising free information days for parents and carers who have children with special educational needs requirements, supporting their transfer from primary to secondary school.
- Leaflets on health related matters.

On the tour, the assessor noticed there was a parent information board for the Children's Centre. In addition to this, there was the Family Partnership board, explaining their work and activities. There was a small room where children could get one-to-one dedicated time either for learning difficulties or EAL work. One child had come straight from Poland to school, and needed one-to-one. Displays in this room are multi-lingual.

In addition to this, there were examples throughout the file of translations in to polish of information letters and on the USB there were photographs of the

bilingual assistants working with children, and word banks and other displays in dual language.

The school is fortunate enough to have two school halls, which is ideal for family events, concerts, and assemblies.

Elton is a thriving community with active and caring parish and church members, providing support and facilities for all age groups. The assessor saw that one area has an extended canopy which adds extra outdoor play opportunities for the younger children. The Headteacher spoke of a recent project involving parents renovating parkland, which lies adjacent to school. Several parents approached the school for support. The Headteacher said: *"We have worked alongside them to formulate a grant bid, a design, and also involved children in selecting the design and evaluating it. This has escalated into involving governors and local parish councilors. A 'real' project, involving all stakeholders."* This is a good example of an inter-generational project.

There was an excellent ECM display, identifying how the five outcomes impact on learning e.g. "Be healthy" links to the Street Dance after school club. The school nurse is also available to talk to children and their parents at Key Stage One.

Elton is a Read Write Inc model school, where children have the opportunity to explain their learning to visitors, which increases their self-esteem.

The Enjoy and Achieve outcome, emphasises 'residential' e.g. Delamere and Conway residential, both providing outside learning opportunities.

Making a positive contribution includes the inclusion award, the Artsmark and the Family Partnership work. In addition the Eco Warriors, who work alongside the site manager, raise energy awareness and improve the current energy grading. French teachers come in from the secondary school UCEA to enrich the curriculum. The Cheshire fire brigade course help teach children safety and respect.

Elton Children Centre is linked to Elton Primary School. It offers a wide range of services, support and activities to the local community. A leaflet showing activities is available.

After reviewing the evidence on-site and off-site, this aspect of family partnership working has been fully met.

Aspect 4: Partnership in practice

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios, which reinforced that observed and reported on, during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice are as follows:

The school has worked hard over the last twelve months to promote and foster productive partnership.

The Headteacher stated *"The infrastructure for ensuring that partnership working took place, has taken a year to realize. Since my arrival in January 2013, we have purchased IT equipment, refurbished the room where parents can work, engaged in research with families about 'what' they'd like to learn and establish links with the Children's Centre; all to ensure it not only happens, but is sustainable"*.

These are some of the strategies now in place:

- Parent panels.
- Consultation with families on all issues that affect their role in supporting children's learning, behaviour, and well being, at home.
- Families will be invited to complete an annual questionnaire to inform decision making.
- The school works closely with the Children's Centre to provide a room where families can enjoy social networking with other families, as well as meeting with external agencies and school staff, who provide support for families.
- The school keeps families informed on their child's progress and achievements, etc.
- The school provides family-friendly information on its website, in addition to planning to offer a confidential text messaging service for families, and email communication.
- The school offers families a good range of appropriate and relevant family learning opportunities including enjoyable family, social, cultural, and recreational events.
- The school provides training and support to family members who opt to be volunteers.

The school also has an active Learning Engagement team to help pupils be ready to learn to the best of their ability. The team offers assistance and advice to families in a number of areas. Signposting adult education classes and family support. In addition to this, the team work closely, with the schools large Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community, to ensure attendance is maintained, and their concerns or worries are listened to. The school also has a minimum of two of the team members in school, each day. There is also a parent's guide to improving attendance and punctuality, called 'reducing absence'.

The Learning Engagement team are:

- Active listeners.
- A guide.
- Professional friend.

- Reliable.
- Approachable.
- Non-judgmental.
- Supporter of pupils, parents, and carers.

The school has started an excellent initiative called 'The Parent Panel'. Over the course of the year they select a random number of parents and carers, to invite into school, to attend a parental consultation. The subject of each meeting differs but the aim is to have the meetings during the daytime to help those selected to be able to attend. Parents are invited to be on the panel from across the school age range. Subjects under discussion so far have been:

- October 2013 – School website and adult learning – The outcome of this was to include a letter section on the school website to advertise what vouchers the school are presently collecting e.g. Morrisons and Sainsburys.
- Ideas for adult learning such as accounting, basic level Maths and English, and Microsoft Office. The Headteacher is to meet with the Adult Learning Coordinator on the 1st November.
- November 2013 – School prospectus – The outcome of this was to produce a short marketing brochure which is straight to the point. All information in the current prospectus to be used as a new starter pack.
- A children's section within the new starter pack would help the transition by familiarising children to school.

Examples of further Parent Panel meetings include:

- SEN
- Athletics
- Adult Education
- iPad Technology
- SRE/SEAL
- PE and after school provision
- Safeguarding

One new initiative started this in 2013, is parents and children having lunch together. This has taken place so far with Key Stage 1 and Year 3, but because of its success it's going to extend across all years of the school. The scheme helps promote good eating habits and healthy food.

Parents comments on lunches include:

- *"I think the reception is a great idea for the children to show their parents their lunch time routine. The food was lovely. Would happily pay for _____ to eat hot dinners. Thanks for the hot meal, really enjoyed myself."*

- *"This was a great idea, have enjoyed it so much. It was really nice seeing where ____ has lunch and how well she mixes with other children. Food was lovely and a good variety. Will definitely try to persuade _____ to try school dinners. Many thanks."*
- *"Great idea – ____ was so excited about having his mummy and daddy round for lunch, and from a parent side – it was great to see a glimpse of ____ school life, thank you".*
- *"Had a lovely lunch, we thought it was a lovely idea. So good to see where ____ has his lunch and see how he manages it. Food was lovely."*

The literacy and numeracy curriculum evenings held so far have been a huge success judging from parent feedback:

- *"We found the evening to be very informative. It was great to see how Read, Write, Inc works and how much fun ____ has learning. It was a help to learn how best to support ____ learning at school with our help at home".*
- *"Very interesting and informative. Effective techniques that I have since tried with ____ and do indeed work."*
- *"I found the evening really helpful to understand how to approach teaching ____ to read. Some good tips and methods for us to try at home to help support her learning. Great to take ____ to and enjoyed her showing me how to do the exercises around the room. A beneficial hour spent. Thank you".*

Following a parental questionnaire, all comments and suggestions were given careful consideration and the following was decided:

- Purchase and populate a 'user-friendly', effective website, which will alleviate all issues with communication, if parents are proactive, and school designates a member of staff to populate it.
- Produce a yearly calendar of events. (Paper newsletters will still be issued, as some parents may not have a computer.)
- Organise an afterschool club, with all ages in mind.
- Look into organising a summer holiday camp/club.
- Purchase a large, vandal proof, noticeboard outside the gate. (This will have photographs of all key staff and governors, as well as information from the Children's Centre and pre-school.
- Designate one staff member in charge of charities.
- The equality plan will be published annually on the website.
- The behaviour policy will be published on the website.
- Change the way the school reports to parents.
- Mrs Carr will not be available for appointments at 8.45am, but instead will be visible on the yard everyday she is in school, to 'Meet and Greet'.
- Provide families with practical strategies and approaches to enable them to support their child's learning, behaviour, and wellbeing at home.

- Encourage families to actively participate and contribute to Multi-Agency meetings, when necessary (TAF/CAF).
- Provide families with information and skills to access community activities, events, and family support services (TAF/CAF).

Following the parent's questionnaire's, one parent sent in a letter because she wanted to expand on the questions, the letter supported the school but made suggestions to improve such things as letters home, more parent's evenings, and an issue regarding assemblies. The letter had some useful suggestions such as a home-school comment book for the Headteacher, to consider.

The school is aware of the barriers to Family Partnership learning and the strategies used to overcome these barriers are:

For EAL:

- Key Documents translated
- A member of staff EAL trained
- Support from Chester Blue Coat.

Some of the strategies used for parents who have a negative personal experience of the education setting are:

- School open evenings.
- Maths and Literacy curriculum evenings.
- Headteachers weekly blog on newsletter.
- KS1 parent lunches.
- Stay & play at reception.

For young, unemployed, often single parents, there are:

- Links with the Children's Centre.
- Teacher/parent's home visits.
- Adult learning classes.

There was good evidence of all these strategies.

The preschool produces a prospectus for the 'Wise Owls Out Of School Club' whose mission statements includes *"Our out of school club aims to care for the children of Elton, working in partnership with all families, in providing high quality care and education programmes during term times"*.

The club operates a breakfast club, 8am – 9am. It also has an after school club, 3pm – 6pm. The club is open for children aged 2 to 11, attending Elton Primary school and Elton pre-school, there is a charge for this service.

Parents sign a contract when they enroll their child, one section of the contract states *"I will work in partnership with the club to ensure my child behaves appropriately and with respect"*.

The Headteacher's wish is to include the community in school life, and the school now runs adult education programmes, both in the day and, it is hoped, in the future, the evening.

The assessor talked to two parents who were also employed at the school, as a Teaching Assistant and HLTA. The assessor talked to parents about their role in working with parents to raise money for the school. This group is known as the 'Friends of Elton'. They said they had decided they wanted to do this because they found there was no money for the extras, for example, new books, etc. The successes have been:

- The summer fair, which is held after sports day because sport attracts many parents to watch their children take part. The summer fair, then has a 'captive' audience, and people are prepared to help by selling raffle tickets and helping out. Ex-pupils often return for sports day and the school fair.
- Details in the minutes from June 2013 on arrangements, show that Elton make good use of parental contact, and local shops e.g. Bodyshop, Sports Direct, and the local riding stables. There is a very robust risk assessment for the summer fair, especially for use of the bouncy castle.
- Shopping trip to Liverpool One.
- Quiz nights.
- Fashion show.
- Harvest festival.
- Photo shoot (for which the school gets 20% of the proceeds).
- OAP visit and refreshments.
- Bingo nights.
- Children's discos (3-4 times a year)
- Leaver's barbeque and celebration assembly, where awards for sports, academic, and other successes are given. (Friends of Elton help to fund the barbeque).
- At the leavers' assembly, the children receive the journal, which has been completed for them by staff, since they entered the school. They never see it until they leave and it causes great excitement and hilarity when they compare their self portrait of when they were in KS1 to their self portrait in Year Six.

The money raised has helped fund a new reading scheme for the children, and also funds ice cream treats, when they go to the theatre. The success of the events are monitored, and parent's opinions sought. The local shops are very supportive of their work, and Spar donate tea, coffee, and mulled wine for the OAP afternoon tea, which is an annual event. Elton is a very close knit

community, and the local post office is always willing to put up posters about school events, and a lot of information is passed on by word of mouth.

During her visit, the assessor, joined a group for family ICT. An outside course tutor had been running the course, but during the session the assessor observed, the Deputy Headteacher was jointly taking the group with the tutor present, and relating the work to what their children would be learning in school. They were using tablets and the Deputy Headteacher was teaching them ideas from a course he'd been on the previous day, and was also informing them about free educational apps. There were eight parents in the group, and their children were going to join them at a later stage for a learning together opportunity.

The school has 40 iPads and they are used almost every lesson. For example, they can be used in Music and Dance, to photograph work.

During the session a member of the Careers Service team arrived to give a five minute talk on the support the Careers Service can give parents. For example, they can get help with writing a CV, they can get course advice, and it may be even possible to get funding for courses.

Parents told the assessor, that they have joined the ICT class for the following reasons:

- *"To keep up with my child."*
- *"So I can help my child."*
- *"To keep up with my young son but also his sixteen year old brother."*
- *"To set up my own email account."*
- *"When my child asks me a question, I can help them look things up."*

The tutor told the group the next session would be on internet safety and a police officer would join them to answer queries regarding the dangers misuse of the internet. The assessor noticed an e-safety policy displayed in the room.

There was also evidence of a course to take place in April 2014 on family finance involving basic budgeting and the opportunity to speak to representatives from CAB and from the Debt Advice Service. There is a creche to be provided by Cheshire council.

The assessor also visited a stay and play session, which was a delight to see. There was a real feeling of inclusiveness, with Teaching Assistants, students from the University of Chester, parents, teachers, all working collaboratively and inclusively. It was difficult to identify the Teacher, as they were working together on an equal basis. The assessor saw examples of block play, which had been in use since September. These huge wooden blocks were being used for role play, and to build whatever comes in the child's imagination.

During the session, when speaking to a parent, she said it was nice to see where her daughter was up to in her learning, *"it gives you peace of mind, all you see is her coming out of the door at the end of the day, it's nice to see the activities and gives me some idea of what to do at home"*. The parent said she found out that the children answer registration in a foreign language, Spanish, French, or Greek – this was a surprise to her.

Her daughter said she was building a palace for Princess Ariel to live in, and was totally absorbed by the task.

The class teacher told the assessor that the children take home 'wow stars' which are for parents to write their child's successes at home so that the teacher gets a fuller picture of the child, for example, *"_____ got her 10 metre swim badge on Saturday at her new swimming club, well done"*.

Another parent had written on a star *"_____ made a fantastic stage out of wood in the garden and made mummy a Lego Blackpool"*.

The children are encouraged to take books home at the weekend.

Another item discussed was the option of a FoE Facebook page. Parents are to investigate and report back to Headteacher. Care needs to be taken to ensure the page would not be open to abuse.

The school holds two parent's evenings each term: one for Maths and one for Literacy, where parents can see the resources their children use, and the children demonstrate some of the strategies they use. Sessions are held for Key Stage One and Key Stage Two, and parents have found this useful for support in reading and writing at home. There was evidence of excellent attendance at each parent's evening. A record is kept, which allows the school to contact any parents who do not attend.

When children start school, parents are offered a fifteen minute home visit. Children make half day visits to school before starting. There are a selection of worksheets available so the child is involved and can write about themselves, friends, and what they are good at, and can do.

The USB had photographic evidence of parents and families engaging in family learning and adult learning. There were other pictures of children in the support room learning English. In addition, there was photographic evidence of children enjoying themselves in a 'Dances from Around the World' project. There was a lovely photo of the canteen staff and children and parents eating together.

After reviewing all the evidence presented on-site and off-site, this aspect of family partnership working has been fully met.

Aspect 5: Early intervention

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios and reinforced, that observed and reported on during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice are as follows:

Elton is willing to lend to books to toddlers before they start school and parents can come into school and exchange these books.

A new initiative to support transition is an open evening for pre-school children. Parents and carers are invited to come and view the school facilities, meet the staff, and parents can then get help with their online application.

As part of the transition to Elton, Year Six have written a welcome letter. The letter tells the newcomers about the curriculum, what happens at break time and lunch time. In addition, the school clubs are mentioned.

"Every day, we have literacy and numeracy, and our afternoon lessons vary. We have a great Maths website called 'Mathletics' where we play Maths against the world. In our ICT suite we have iPads and exceptional computers. This gives us a better education in ICT."

"At play time, we are allowed to buy food such as toast for 10p and juice for 30p. We then have one hour at lunch time..."

"On Thursdays, a French teacher comes in from a high school to teach Year Three..."

Year six 2012-13 secured places at six local high schools and academies.

The majority of Elton children move on to UCEA, where there is a carefully planned induction programme, and where Key Stage Three curriculum "*builds on the nurturing that took place at primary school, ensuring a successful transition into academy life, and learning*". The new pupils will spend a significant amount of time with the same teacher and the thematic approach used will build on the approach from primary school.

There is a floor dedicated exclusively to Key Stage Three to help to create a nurturing environment and a sense of community.

Another example of good practice regarding early intervention, was reported in The Travellers Times: "*Staff and governors have received cultural awareness training and there are three members of staff dedicated to supporting our Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller families on a day-to-day basis. They attend regular GRT forums run by the Local Authority's Traveller services, sharing best practice with other schools and gaining skills to support the various, complex, and additional needs of these families*".

There were excellent examples of learning engagement with a Gypsy Roma Traveller family, who had four children in school in Reception to Year 3. The problem was lateness and absences through illness, especially the youngest child. At a multi-agency meeting attended by father, the following was discussed:

- The health concerns of the youngest child.
- Logistics and time management around getting four young children to school on time.
- The Headteacher was able to grant family permission to enter the school through the main entrance to avoid meeting a family member with whom relations were not good.

The results were positive, weekly updates on attendance were monitored by the EWO and shared with father. In the following academic year, autumn 2013-14, attendance and punctuality were exemplary. Further monitoring will continue.

Team Around the Family meetings are child centered, including the important views of how the child feels. They can write or draw their answers, and at the end of the form there is a reminder to the child that *"I am a very important person"*. Meetings are held with the Catch 22 support worker, a Health Visitor, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist. All needs are considered – child, parents, family, including environmental needs.

The Team around the Family work closely with CAHMS, to support behaviour management. Support is given if a house move is necessary; support is given for a move to a specialist school, and support from a 'buddy' system, are all strategies investigated.

There was an example of a planning meeting showing input from the parent, teaching assistant, subject teacher, and SENCO. There was clear action to be put into place including:

- Arriving at school on time.
- Continuing with small group work.
- Use of eczema where necessary.
- Parents working with the healthcare team to keep a food diary for monitoring for allergies.

The Headteacher states: *"As a body of staff, we are always aware of issues with families early on, and these are identified by Office Staff, Teacher Assistant's, Midday Assistants, Teachers, and Students, and any interventions are actioned by myself, with the support of my team, or signposted correctly"*.

After reviewing all the evidence presented on-site and off-site, this aspect of family partnership working has been fully met.

Aspect 6: Effectiveness

The well organised index for this section is an accurate account of all the evidence produced in the portfolios and reinforced, that observed and reported on, during the visit. Key findings and highlights of the good practice are as follows:

The school has many things to be proud of, including the achieving the Inclusion Award in July 2013. The report stated *"The strong leadership team and committed staff have high, appropriate expectations of themselves, one another and the children in their care"*. The school has also achieved the Artsmark Silver Award and the Healthy Schools Award.

Ofsted commented in 2012 *"A very positive climate for learning exists within the school"*.

There was clear evidence of the children's views regarding the numeracy lessons. The comments showed enjoyment of the work with the children marking their own work, and sometimes each others. 'Mathletics', a recently introduced programme, was a favourite. The children loved the teachers' praise and progress comments.

Comments were made by the pupil voice on literacy:

- A Year One pupil commented *"I like the books, they're fun. I like working with my partner and taking it in turns to read"*.
- Another comment from a Year Three girl says *"I like reading with the teacher. She asks us questions about what we've read. I read three times a week and at the weekends. If we read a lot we get a prize"*.
- A year Five girl said *"I like that the books have numbers on instead of colours, I have targets in my book which the teacher writes to help me improve my writing"*.

Views from parents attending Year Six parent evenings were sought, typical comments were:

- *"Very pleased with ____'s progress, helpful to find out where we need to help her in her education"*.
- *"Very pleased with the continuation of teacher from Years Five to Six"*.
- *"Very pleased with ____'s progress, I feel that she has tried a lot hard since moving into Year Six, thanks for your support Mr _____, I'm pleased that you are approachable."*

In the portfolio there was a lovely letter, from a mother whose son had passed the 11 plus with 96%. She said: *"We are sure that the strong teaching and support our son has been given at Elton, his own ability, and my husband's tutoring, has resulted in such a great score"*. It is hoped that the boy will get his first choice of Wirral Boys Grammar. A reply from the Headteacher, Mrs Carr

says *"I am delighted he has done so well and agree with you that a good working relationship between home and school and high aspirations on both sides can provide the right environment for children to achieve success in all areas"*. The Headteacher then went on to ask permission to celebrate the success in a school newsletter, she commented *"I love a good story"*.

In the feedback from the Family Partnership meeting, parents suggested having an open evening for reception children prior to the submissions date for September. This is to go ahead, and there was evidence of clear actions for delivery of this in the minutes from September 2013.

The school has started tracking data for Years One to Three, which will then make it's way through school.

The school has completed the action points on the Parent Partnership action plan, with further work planned obtaining more parent communication feedback in April 2014, and more working with CWAC Team in 2014 to share ideas. The impact of the action plan should be more parents improving their own education, which in turn will impact on the education and aspirations of their children.

- The wider community will access facilities and resources in school.
- Parents with EAL will access key information in their home language.
- Elton's reputation as a hub for learning will be established.

A comment by the Headteacher on effectiveness states: *"The effectiveness of our working practices may not be seen for years to come, nor may it be tangible but on a more superficial level, the feedback we have 'snapshots' of here, should give an indication that it is appreciated and making a small difference in a number of lives"*.

The school should be congratulated for the progress made on Family Partnership in the last twelve months. The work will be an ongoing process, with the following intentions:

- Start a 'Lad's, Dad's, and Grandad's' group.
- Continue collecting data on parents' attendance at classes.
- Continue close liaison with the Children's centre, where is it planned to run a basic skills class.
- To continue to record and photograph Family Partnership evidence, and to keep records of anecdotes and success stories, for future reference.
- Continue to focus upon strategies to improve attendance for persistent absentees.
- To set up a text messaging system.

After reviewing the evidence presented on-site and off-site in the portfolio, this aspect of family partnership working has been fully met.

Overall Outcome from Assessment

The external assessor Beryl Oliver, wishes to thank the Head Teacher, governors, staff, pupils and parents for all their hard work over the last twelve months, in contributing to the self-evaluation and evidence gathering processes. The on-site assessment day was a delight, with good evidence that was observed and heard about first hand.

Congratulations to the whole school community for achieving the national Family Partnership Award. The award is valid for three years.

Associate Educational Consultant

Beryl J. Oliver

**Director of Educational Consultancy & Management (ECM) Solutions
signature:**

Rita Cheminais

Date: 25/02/2014