



JMC House  
c/o 89 Park Street  
Aylesbury  
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HP20 1DU



## **DIAMOND STANDARD**

**Ty Gwyn Special School**

**Investors in Families: Re-Accreditation Visit  
Thursday October 10th, 2019**

**Sue Davies**

**Peer Assessor**

**Ty Gwyn Special School** was assessed on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The day was an extremely positive celebration of the high-quality family and community work that is evident and visible across the School. Ty Gwyn is the first school to produce a film based on the many exciting activities that happen at Ty Gwyn on a daily basis. Investors in Families is very grateful for the hard work of the school. The evidence presented clearly meets the requirements of Re-Accreditation for Investors in Families and was a pleasure to review and discuss. During the Re-Accreditation process, the work of the school was judged to be exceptional. Family and Community Engagement is fully embedded into the school and it is evident that the school works hard on its journey towards excellence. The assessor was very pleased to award the school the:

### **INVESTORS IN FAMILIES DIAMOND STANDARD**

Evaluation for this standard was made, because in all the 7 core aims of the Investors in Families Framework, the school met the values and ideals of the Framework at the Diamond Standard. The school can evidence this standard of work has been maintained for many years. It is a pleasure to view the work of the school, to meet the school community and view the exciting film.

Ty Gwyn Special School devotes a great deal of time working with parents and encourages very positive relationships with all stakeholders and customers. Partnerships are a key element of the success of the school. It is clearly a two-way process. Great pride is shown in the school and it is clear that the school community greatly values what the school does and the way it values its families.



Families are the key partners in school improvement. Staff ensure that both children and parents play a very positive role in Family Engagement strategies. The Assistant Head Teacher leads on Family and Community Engagement processes, and she ensures that the whole school are focused on placing the school at the heart of the local community. It is evident that the Senior Leadership team has a clear vision and has developed very successful strategies to engage the community which shapes and develops the work of the school. They provide direction and ensure a wide range of staff are part of the successful Family Engagement journey. Distributed Leadership ensures the strategies permeate the whole school. It is a major focus in the school improvement journey.

Communication in the school is excellent. Parents feel they are very well informed and are a valued partner in the life of the school. The Friends of Ty Gwyn raise large amounts of funding for priorities identified by the School Council and other groups of children who help shape the life of the school. This, along with parental feedback, is a powerful tool in the development of Ty Gwyn Special School. The Friends Association raised £40,000 during the last academic year to provide an outdoor gym. This was in response to a need that the School Council had identified. The Friends Association is a very proactive partner of the school.

The school holds an extremely wide selection of Parental Workshops and have developed a wide range of Home-School Partnerships. Sewing classes (Ty Gwyn Stitchers) is very well attended and a successful parent group. They make articles to sell to raise funds and have purchased their own sewing machines as skills have developed. They also organise an end of term buffet with dishes from each country that is represented in the Sewing Club and is a greatly valued event. Coffee mornings and information sessions that the school and parents organise are hugely successful. The events provide an opportunity for parents to meet and develop relationships and friendships. The school also trains the local community to ensure they fully understand the needs of the young people with whom they work. They also run English as an Additional Language course for parents to support the diverse community that Ty Gwyn serves. This is extremely successful and supports parents in being able to support their children in school. The school provides a mini bus and creche for siblings to support families where English is not a first language. Families are therefore encouraged and happy to attend the school ensures that they are engaging each and every family. The school is extremely focused on responding to what parents want.

The school benefits from a very proactive on-site Counsellor who visits homes and provides support for young people and their families. She is always available and ensures that if a parent says, 'I need help,' it happens. The Counselling Room provides a venue for support that families need. If the parent finds accessing the school difficult, then the Counsellor will make home visits. The school is very good at keeping families together through working and initiating meetings with a range of partners to support families. They aim to be a one stop shop; with nurses, dieticians, neurologists, physiotherapists, adult services, speech and language services

among the many services available on site. The school liaises closely with a range of agencies to ensure that families have access to agencies that are required for family support. They work closely with the National Autistic Society and provide training for staff and families. The school is a tremendous support to the local community and the door is always open. Transition events Post-16 are very well attended and there are bespoke packages prepared for the young people identified as a result of their needs.

Transition into the school is also extremely successful. The school has produced Transition Protocols and a detailed admissions pack. The school makes many home visits to children accessing nursery and reception provision and build trust and a positive relationship with parents prior to the children starting school. For young people coming from other schools, staff visit previous provision and have a clear understanding of needs before the children arrive. Trained staff deliver the Incredible Years and Early Bird training to families to ensure they are supported in developing strategies to work with their children at home. This is a twelve-week parenting class to support families and signposts families to the relevant agencies that can support their children. This is delivered to fit in with the family's timelines.

The school has a range of very proactive pupil groups that promote Pupil Voice across the school. They are at the heart of all school developments and shape policy and curriculum development. Ty Gwyn also operates very successful after school and holiday activities, free of charge, which provides respite for parents and structured play and leisure for the young people. This is organised and run by the School Counsellor, who fully understand the needs and requirements of the participants. All the needs of the young people who attend are met. There is a focus on enjoyment and allowing young people to develop their social and life skills.

The school has a dedicated Family Centre run and organised by two totally committed staff who give their complete focus to the families and pupils of Ty Gwyn. They organise the Sewing Club, the English as an Additional Language Training and a wide range of other training opportunities for parents. They are also there for 'just a chat' if needed. The Centre offers the creche facilities that families find so helpful to allow them to attend the many and varied training opportunities that the school provides. The ladies attend hospital appointments with families and support families to access the Family Learning Library that supports parents at home.

The school has produces homework bags for young people who have complex medical needs and will be in hospital for some time. These are greatly valued by parents. The school responds to what parents want, as they have identified in the Annual Review meetings.

Parents and Governors clearly feel the school is very welcoming and that they can contact the school at any time. Communication lines are very strong. A parent said, *'This is a listening school. They will do anything they can to support us and the children.'* Young People and Family Wellbeing is very much at the heart of the school. The Governing Body is a very proactive partner. Family Engagement at Ty Gwyn is a fully embedded whole school strategy with all stakeholders understanding and supporting the school's vision. The school evaluates all

aspects of its work, and this evaluation feeds into the ongoing school improvement planning. The school operates a very successful Open-Door Policy. The community are invited into school at every opportunity, and any issues are dealt with immediately. Children's wellbeing is taken very seriously, and regular opportunities are provided for families to share learning activities. Families are very much at the heart of the school. Communication is key, with everyone on the same page for the benefit of the young people. All communication to the school is very positive and there is clearly a great deal of trust between the school and its families. The school has now produced an excellent film which highlights and exemplifies the wonderful work that takes place in Ty Gwyn daily. The school is an inaugural member of the Network of Special Schools for South Wales. We are delighted with the continued progress that the school makes in relation to Family and Community Engagement. It is clear that the school's leadership greatly values their work within this area of school development. It clearly highlights that with focused leadership, Family and Community Engagement can drive school improvement.

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 **DIAMOND STANDARD** Re-Accreditation. The school community benefits from staff who are totally committed to supporting young people and their families. Many congratulations to the staff who worked so tirelessly to achieve the Re-Accreditation. Investors in Families is very grateful for your hard work. Please, let us know when you are having a party!!!

**Sue Davies (Peer Assessor) - Congratulations!**



**Executive Director, 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
- Challenge Adviser

The importance of family and community engagement is clearly evident at

**Ty Gwyn Special School**

**Celebrate!**

**and**

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