

How we made our state-private partnership thrive

Leaders at Haileybury College and Haileybury Turnford reveal the key ingredients to their partnership's success and how it supports best practice in education for both schools

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State and independent school partnerships have been tried and tested in many different forms. While some partnerships have flourished and achieved notable outcomes, others have been unable to achieve lasting impact.

In some ways that is no surprise, as partnerships have to be more than just a marketing exercise or a chance for two schools to do the same educational trips together. It has to be about long-term goals and ambitions that help both schools evolve and thrive.

It's something we at Haileybury, a co-educational independent boarding and day school in Hertford, and Turnford School, a co-educational secondary school eight miles away, have aimed to do since forming a partnership in 2015, and that continues to this day.

It's no secret that at the time, Turnford was looking to transform its curriculum, teaching practices and pupil conduct, and had a "requires improvement" rating from Ofsted.

At the time Haileybury's sponsorship meant new-found opportunities for its pupils and a new identity to mark this positive shift.

Fast-forward nine years and both schools have seen marked improvements from this synergy.

Recently, Haileybury was again graded as "excellent in all areas" by the Independent School Inspectorate and Haileybury Turnford was awarded its first "good" Ofsted rating in 2022. In return Haileybury has benefited from, among other things, Haileybury Turnford's professional expertise in mentoring and close community links.

We believe these are the ingredients that have helped us to create a powerful partnership:

Long-term initiatives

For our union to achieve lasting impact, schools need to work on long-term projects

This means while valuable one-off experiences, such as day trips and lectures, do occur, the core focus has been on embedding long-term initiatives that enrich the curriculum for all pupils.

For example, the head of Latin at Haileybury delivers the curriculum in that subject to Haileybury Turnford's Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts. This subject was not previously offered, and these groups of pupils are now planning to sit their Latin GCSE exams early, at the end of Year 9.

Science is another area of collaboration with our joint Year 7 Steam (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) programme. This provides pupils from both schools with opportunities to work together collaboratively.

In addition, Haileybury Turnford's sixth-form pupils participate in Haileybury's popular Model United Nations programme and sixth-form partnerships include support for university applications and successful Oxbridge entrance.

Schools looking to do something similar must ensure that long-term thinking and true cross-school engagements are baked in from the start.

A partnership for staff

It's equally important for partnerships to benefit all colleagues, which is why we are committed to offering our educators opportunities for professional development and collaboration.

We have hosted joint staff events, run staff networks, facilitated peer-to-peer coaching and launched teaching book groups, where some staff have studied educational texts and discussed their findings.

We are also both championing reading and oracy, and have cross-school Inset and staff training days planned too.

The key is to ensure that our initiatives encourage and cultivate best practice and ensure teachers at both schools continue to develop their pedagogy, which directly enhances the pupil experience.

Evolution

Partnership is all and this means that both sides have to move forward together.

For us this has meant that, through the trials and tribulations of the pandemic, the changing education landscape and the evolving needs of our schools, we have adapted our partnership to provide vital support to each other and ensure we are on the front foot of upcoming changes. That's why we have appointed a staff member at each school to drive the relationship forward and ensure our collaboration continues to facilitate exciting and impactful developments.

For any other private-state schools considering working together, it is important that both are equally committed to not just setting up a partnership but managing its growth and evolution, to ensure it delivers for years to come.

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