

Rubina Bhatti Statement - Nomination

My name is Rubina Bhatti. I am from Lahore Pakistan. I came here in England after marriage in 2000. I came here with so many hopes and so many opportunities and prospects in my mind. When I reached here I planned I will carry my studies and pass my driving test to settle in England in a proper way as I believe when you move into a different country you have to work very hard to bring yourself up in that new environment.

After a month of arrival I got pregnant. I was feeling very low in my health and on top I was supposed to do all the housework in a house of 8 family members. Anyway my first baby born and then only two and a half month later I got pregnant with my second child. I got in such a miserable condition that I actually started to believe that I will never be able to fulfil my dream of getting some education and independence in UK again. I was so busy in raising my kids that sometimes it took me one to two months even to go to town although it was only 5 minutes away. I could not go to doctor or travel on my own as I just lost so much confidence by staying inside. Then almost 6 years later I had my third son.

It was almost 15 years after I left school in Pakistan when one day I got a call from my son's school in Redhill if I was interested in joining Family Learning Language Course. I said yes thinking that might enable me to help my little son who was in reception at that time. The first day when I went to that class I was overjoyed to see that I can get a qualification in English language. I had a lovely class and we made friends with each other. Everybody was so helpful and understanding. I use to wake up earlier than usual on Fridays so I could finish my housework and all other obligations for that day before I go to the class. I went to the class even if I or my children were sick. I got a certificate as well for 100% attendance.

During this course I learnt so much about UK and its special religious and cultural days and festivals. It was like I never lived here before. I didn't know about education system that much especially the job market and how to enter in working life but now I can actually talk to people on these topics and many others which I learnt during this course.

This course not just changed my life but kids' as well. My youngest son Sulaiman when started this course with me he was suffering from speech difficulty very badly. He was so low in confidence that he hardly made any friends he hardly stood up in the class and talked. He was very quiet in the class. Since we started learning together everybody started to notice subtle changes in him. I started using some techniques and to enhance his learning abilities I showed him different websites which we showed or told by Maria during this course. By the end of that course he had many more friends he started asking questions in the class. He was getting stickers regularly and got 1 head teacher award for his brilliant phonics as well. Now he is in year 1 and trying hard towards average grades for his age. I

also started helping my other two boys during this course. My oldest son has improved in every subject since then. My middle son also managed to get a place in Reigate Grammar School. I helped him to prepare for the test on my own because I could not pay for the tuition. I started helping my kids to succeed in life mainly by the knowledge and confidence I got from this course. Even my husband is trying to do some courses in future.

Before even finishing my course I started voluntary work at St Matthews School in my son's class. In July I took my exam and passed the reading module of a level 1 Functional Skills English qualification. As far as the influence of this course on me is concerned I will say starting this course has changed my whole outlook towards life. I have gain back trust on myself. Now I am always thinking positive and forward in life. I can travel alone. I am making and taking appointments not just for me but my family as well. I can now face those people bravely who took advantage of me and tried to make me fool.

I did two more courses after that course one was (Preparing to help in school level 1) and the other was (Microsoft Word Skills). I have also got a place for (Preparing to help in school level 2). In January I am doing another course in Microsoft Excel. I am doing another Family Learning course so I can take the writing and speaking exams for my full Functional Skills qualification. My ultimate dream now is to become a teaching assistant in a school.

In the end all I would like to say is that never lose hope in life and try to make it even better because only positive and better persons can make this world a better place to live. I firmly believe if I can do it so can others.

Rubina Bhatti – Tutors Statement

Rubina Bhatti attended a 30-week Keeping up with the Children (Language) course at St Matthews Church of England Primary School in Redhill, Surrey in 2012-2013. The course was provided by Family Learning Programmes, which is part of the adult learning provision in Surrey.

The main objective of Family Learning Programmes is to develop the skills of parents/carers and children together. One of the reasons why some children struggle at school may be the lack or amount of appropriate support they get with their school work at home. Family Learning courses are set up in partnership with schools and children centres who invite “targeted” families: families who will get the most benefit from the opportunity to access this kind of free learning because, e.g. parents have lower academic skills or do not have English as their first language.

There are two types of courses: Wider Family Learning (WFL) and Family English, Maths and Language (FEML). WFL courses aim to encourage families to learn something together, e.g. Cooking on a Budget, Family First Aid, Managing your Money, Steps into School, etc.

FEML courses aim to help parents/carers understand how English and maths are taught at school and thus to increase their ability and confidence to support their children and to improve their own skills. They also offer learners the chance to gain qualifications (e.g. Functional Skills) and to receive guidance on how to progress to further learning or employment.

Rubina was invited to a Family Learning Language course at St Matthews because her son, Sulaiman was very shy and quiet in class and his teacher thought that he and his mum, whose first language is Urdu, could benefit from the opportunity of learning together. It was a “joint” course, which means that in the first 90 minutes of the session parents worked with me (Family Learning tutor) and children worked separately with a school teacher, and then there was a 30-minute joint session where parents and children worked together, e.g. sequenced a story, wrote a card, decorated a biscuit, made a finger puppet, etc.

Rubina was very keen to attend the course as she had not had the chance to do any formal learning since she arrived in the U.K. 12 years before. She had been busy raising children and looking after a rather large family where her own needs were not always given priority.

She never missed a class and always did the home activity I set for her and Sulaiman. She had a thirst for knowledge and applied everything she heard in class to improving her own and her child’s skills. In addition to covering topics related to the children’s learning at school and life in the U.K., parents also prepared for the reading module of the OCR Functional Skills English exam at various levels. Rubina passed the Level 1 Reading module in June. She is now attending an adult only Family Learning Language course working towards the outstanding Speaking & Listening and Writing modules in June 2014.

It was absolutely fascinating to see how profoundly an opportunity to learn could make someone’s life change for the better: Rubina’s self-esteem grew quickly and she started to feel confident enough to sit down and learn not only with Sulaiman but with her two elder sons, too! A few months into the course she said she would really like to help out at the school. I encouraged her to

speak to Sulaiman's teacher and she has since started volunteering: she works two days at the school reading with children and helping in the library. To be better equipped for her voluntary role, she has done a Level 1 Preparing to Help in School course provided by the Workers' Educational Association and has applied to gain the Level 2 qualification, too. When she heard about the opportunity to enrol on a Microsoft Word course, she immediately applied for it. She is about to do a course on how to use Microsoft Excel in the next few weeks.

She wants to train to become a teaching assistant.

Her learning has had a positive impact on her family, too: all her children are doing better at school and even her husband is considering going back to college. She is also happy to share information with others about volunteering and learning opportunities.

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I feel privileged to have been able to see Rubina's transformation from being a woman whose primary task in life a little over a year ago seemed to be looking after a big family to being a woman who is planning to become a teaching assistant. Without the opportunity of attending a Family Learning course, Rubina may have never had the confidence to learn with her children or to talk to the school about volunteering there, let alone think about pursuing a career in education. The opportunity presented itself when the school invited her to the course but it was up to her to make the best of it. Her enthusiasm for and commitment to improving her skills and then using these skills to help others are quite exceptional. I believe Rubina is a true ambassador for learning and thus a worthy nominee for an individual award.



Rachel Bown – Adult Award Winner

‘Hello, my name is Rachel. I am 36 years old and I have 5 children aged from 15 years to 5 years . I did Family Learning English in a big hall in Wrecclesham and I passed that in March 2012 – now I am doing functional skills in English (the exam has changed) . **I did the course to help me help my children at school with homework.** I hope to do a level 2 and then go on to college and do a nursing course. I am also doing a Family Learning Maths course. **I now help out at my children’s school and I think that this course has helped me a lot! Thank you for reading about my opportunity to improve myself for me and my children.**
RACHEL ‘



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