

Case Studies



Estyn: Ysgol Cynwyd Sant – Improve Literacy Through Creative Learning

13 Dec, 2016 in Bridgend / Improve pupil outcomes in KS2 / Improve pupil outcomes in literacy / Local Authority / Medium of Delivery / Phase / Primary / Reduce the gap – vulnerable pupils / School / Strategic Areas / Welsh Medium / Ysgol Cynwyd Sant tagged Arts Council Wales / key stage 2 / Literacy / oral / performance / technology / vulnerable pupils (updated 30 days ago)

Ysgol Cynwyd Sant plans exciting creative learning activities to develop pupils' literacy skills. As a holder of Creative School status they cooperate with the Arts Council in their planning.

Number of learners: 306

Age range: 3-11

Date of inspection: October 2016

Information about the school

Ysgol Cynwyd Sant is situated in Maesteg in the Borough of Bridgend. There are 306 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 40 nursery-age children. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. A few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Approximately 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Sixteen per cent (16%) of pupils have additional learning needs.

Context and background to sector-leading practice

The school provides excellent art experiences for pupils. This was recognised by Estyn in a Good Practice report on the Creative Arts in 2015. Ysgol Cynwyd Sant was the first school in Bridgend to be recognised with the Creative School status by the Arts Council in 2015, and as a pioneer in the field in 2016. This leads to exceptional creative work in the classroom, sharing best practice with other schools, and professional development of a very high standard for staff. The school has also established a studio to provide multimedia artistic experiences of a very high standard for pupils.

Description of nature of strategy or activity

The school co-operates very effectively with the Arts Council to plan exciting activities in order to develop the literacy skills of pupils in key stage 2 who had underperformed in the Foundation Phase. Particular attention is given to developing the oracy skills of this cohort of pupils, in addition to their self-confidence and creativity. Teaching strategies place a clear focus on developing members of staff as creative practitioners. Schemes of work pay beneficial attention to developing pupils' thinking skills by encouraging them to be creative. In order to inspire the creative nature of staff and pupils, the school believes strongly that the fear of being

wrong needs to be removed first. This is at the heart of the school's pedagogy in order to develop a creative learning community that is willing to try. A good example of this is the series of short films that were created by pupils under the title 'Come and learn how to...'. The culmination of this work was the film night in the school hall, with parents as the audience, to celebrate the pupils' work and to present a DVD to each pupil.

What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?

Each child had made very good progress in their oral skills following the project. Notable progress was seen in the achievement of boys and vulnerable pupils. Following the project, 82% of pupils attained their targets for the term earlier than expected, and 100% make very good progress in the performance element. Subsequently, the school set more challenging targets in order to improve pupils' oral skills further by providing creative activities of a very high standard.

Pupils' views were considered following each session, and staff adapted plans to ensure a high level of commitment and extensive motivation. As a result, notable progress was seen in pupils' self-confidence. In addition, more able pupils made very good progress in their information and communication technology skills, as they developed new skills relating to the use of green screen.

How have you shared your good practice?

- Participating in national events in co-operation with the Arts Council
- Preparing case studies on behalf of the Arts Council
- Internally, by providing very effective opportunities to develop nearly all pupils' creative skills across the curriculum
- Celebrating pupils' work by displaying it on the school website
- Showing the films on a screen in the school foyer for visitors
- Film nights for parents
- Facilitating sessions to share good practice across the county
- Giving presentations and leading workshops in 'Closing the Gap' conferences

Links:www.ysgolcynwydsant.co.uk

This case study has also been published on Estyn's website



Cynffig Comprehensive School – Co-construction: ‘Teaching Teachers to Learn and Learners to Teach’

30 Nov, 2016 in Bridgend / Cynffig Comprehensive School / English Medium / Improve pupil outcomes in KS3 / Improve pupil outcomes in literacy / Local Authority / Medium of Delivery / Phase / Reduce the FSM gap / School / Secondary / Strategic Areas tagged co-construction / FSM / Gary Wilson / key stage 3 / Peer Assessment

Context and background

Our key stage 3 year groups included a high number of boys, with 59% of our Year 9 learners eligible for Free School Meals. Barriers such as a lack of engagement and poor motivation meant boys were not participating in lessons and largely deselected to engage with the learning process and environment.

Recent research has linked improved boys attainment to choice and competition. Gary Wilson in particular refers to engaging boys in dialogue about their learning and to let them know you're 'on their case'! To this end we decided to create a large 'all boy' group which was team taught. We talked specifically to them about their strengths and equally as passionately about their development needs as learners. Together, we decided we needed to change the climate and culture, and recognised that they had a part to play in their learning. When boys identified being 'bored' and 'not bothered' as reasons for their non-participation in lessons we decided to make them responsible. A group of boys within the class were identified whose responsibility it was to create lessons for the class with the two teachers.

Nature of strategy/activity

The group were gathered and informed of their new privileged role as co-constructors. They were asked to attend lunchtime and afternoon planning sessions during which they would plan lessons they believed would inspire and engage our learners in the learning process. We were amazed at their commitment and inspired by their dedication and enthusiasm. Everyone turned up to each session they were asked to attend!

We adopted the slogan 'Teaching teachers to learn and learners to Teach' and collaborated on pedagogy, lesson activities and resources. Together we created a bespoke lesson plan which demarked a structure that the boys identified as workable and workworthy! Learning objectives were referred to as 'Missions' and time for reflection and metacognition 'Pit Stops' 'Shoot out' and 'Extra Time' identified opportunities to show and extend their learning building on the concept of stretch and challenge. A peer assessment form was also devised.

The group have since become a learning mentor group who now advise students on their learning as well as teachers on how to teach!

Impact on Provision

In one year the number of boys who achieved Level 5 rose to 18.6%. The number of boys achieving Level 6 rose by 22.3% and those achieving Level 7 increased by 4.1%.

Furthermore, co-construction formalised access points in our learning provision for previously disengaged groups of learners. This resulted in greater participation in lessons not only for the co-construction group, but all learners.

The principles of co-construction now form the basis of our lesson planning and subsequent scheme of learning.



Pencoed Comprehensive School – Words Give Us Power!

24 Nov, 2016 in Bridgend / English Medium / Improve pupil outcomes in KS3 / Improve pupil outcomes in literacy / Local Authority / Medium of Delivery / Pencoed Comprehensive School / Phase / Reduce the FSM gap / School / Secondary / Strategic Areas tagged Extended Writing / FSM / Literacy (updated 54 days ago)

Context and background

Due to the national priorities of closing the gap for eFSM and non-FSM pupils and the publicised success of our school in this area, it was decided that we would focus on empowering learners via development of their academic language. In turn, this would support the pupils in accessing texts and more challenging activities. It was felt that there was a presumption that pupils understood academic vocabulary. By developing learner awareness of the definition of the word and then applying it in the correct context (ie. 'owning' it), it would enhance their understanding when reading texts, support their engagement in the STAR reader programme and, furthermore, have an impact on their extended writing in literacy rich subjects.

Nature of Strategy / Activity

During the spring term, the Words Give Us Power! project was launched with two form groups. It is worth noting that form groups within our school are organised as a key stage vertical grouping, therefore both groups consisted of Years 7-9 pupils. Furthermore, the form tutor groups were selected based on the data that demonstrated that eFSM pupils were placed within the form groups.

Both teachers involved in the project ensured the project was 'launched' with learners. Pupils were told that they were involved in an exciting new literacy project and the form groups had been specifically selected.

Expectations were set out clearly to pupils – what they needed to do and how they would be monitored and tracked.

Time was spent with learners discussing the difference between academic words and subject specific words. Due to the vertical nature of the groups, older learners appeared to have grasped this concept more quickly than Year 7, for example.

To engage pupils in the first stage of the project, pupils were encouraged to either select an academic word independently or rely on a lucky dip. It is envisaged that as the initiative develops, pupils should have more autonomy while reading or when listening in lessons to assess opportunities to identify, apply and 'own' the word.

Pupils were asked to record their academic word in their planner and to feed back by a specified date. This process has continued with staff-pupil dialogue proving to be imperative to the success of the initiative.

Impact on Provision

Due to the late stage in the academic year that we were approached to launch the project, there was insufficient time to gain quantitative data to demonstrate measurable improvements in standards.

However, pupil feedback was mostly positive and many pupils were eager to tell us how and where they had 'owned' the word. As the project is rolled out next year, we have strategies which will support tracking and evidencing pupil progression:

- Whole school awareness – teaching staff to clearly identify when academic words are used to support learners. The History department is focusing on this for the new academic year.
- Establish formalised reward system, eg links with house system to facilitate pupil engagement. Pupil voice would also enhance this – what rewards would pupils value?
- Formalise collection of evidence – all teaching staff to testify/witness 'owning' the word prior to pupil feeding back to form tutor.
- Longevity of initiative – quantitative analysis of written outcomes would be beneficial, eg a baseline assessment of learners at the start of the academic year with a mid point assessment of writing and an end of project assessment of progression. The spring term was impacted by an assessment fortnight and a two week collapsed timetable for the whole school Learning Core programme.
- Literacy/language champions in form groups to support the form tutor in motivating, encouraging and engaging all learners.



Estyn: Brackla Primary School – Making Parents Partners in Learning

23 Aug, 2016 in Brackla Primary School / Bridgend / English Medium / Improve attendance / Local Authority / Medium of Delivery / Phase / Primary / Reduce the gap – vulnerable pupils / School / Strategic Areas tagged attendance / estyn / Family Engagement / family engagement officer / family learning

Context and background to sector-leading practice

In 2012, Brackla Primary School worked with the local cluster of schools to employ a Family Engagement Officer (FEO). Initially, this was successful in developing opportunities for families to support their children. However, as the FEO worked in six schools, the time spent in each school was limited. Therefore, in 2014, the school released a cover supervisor for one day per week to help develop the role further. This meant that the school could introduce some additional programmes such as family values, family learning, outdoor learning and play, international cafes and Welsh and Play. In 2015, Brackla appointed its own part-time FEO further to enhance and extend the effective partnership between families, with a specific focus on helping parents support and improve their children's learning further.

Description of nature of strategy or activity

F@B: Families at Brackla

Part of the school's vision is to foster partnerships, where families (parents, carers, grandparents, older siblings) are key partners in the learning process. In September 2015, following consultations with various stakeholders, the school re-launched Families at Brackla (F@B). Leaders designed a new programme of events based on mutual priorities. These included refreshing many of the existing programmes, including Family Learning, Reading Café, Literacy and Play, and Numeracy and Play, and introducing new initiatives such as 'Chill and Chat', daily 'drop in' sessions, 'Stay and Play' for nurture pupils and 'Family Active Zone'.

A variety of teaching and support staff are involved in the planning and delivery of the interventions and programmes on offer, all of whom have received specific training. Workshops for families have included focusing on the specific skills of teaching reading and mental calculations. The school developed links with the local college to offer basic and advanced literacy and numeracy classes for families.

Leaders established a Family Forum with the aim of involving family members in influencing the strategic direction of the school. They meet half-termly focusing on topics such as the School Development Plan, specific approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy and National testing. This has resulted in improved discussions between home and school and a significant increase in attendance at workshops on offer.

The FEO also supports targeted families with low pupil attendance. This involves drop in sessions, discussions on the phone and face-to-face, and working closely with the headteacher and the Education Welfare Service.

Leaders strongly believe that effective communication with families is essential in order to build positive relationships. Staff use a wide range of tools to communicate with families, provide them with information, and recognise and celebrate the life and work of the school. These include weekly bulletins, F@B monthly newsletters, Twitter, The Life Channel, internal digital signage, external notice boards, school website, texts and emails.

What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?

- Family engagement at Brackla Primary is now a fully embedded whole school strategy with nearly all stakeholders understanding and supporting our school vision very effectively. This has led to improved standards across the school. For example, nearly all pupils that attended literacy and numeracy based

programmes with a family member, made better than expected progress in literacy and numeracy.

Read the full case study on the Estyn website

Further case studies can be accessed via the following link:-

http://case-studies-cscjes.org.uk/?s=&absc_mode=and&absc_search_cat%5B%5D=752&absc_search_cat%5B%5D=734&absc_search_cat%5B%5D=730&absc_search_cat%5B%5D=732&absc_search_cat%5B%5D=726