

### **An individual reflective response to the Professional Teaching Experience**

During this assignment I will be reflecting on my professional teaching experience (PTE), which has taken place over the last 3 weeks at Model Primary School in Carmarthen. Leading up to my PTE I was excited to put all my knowledge and experience into practice and to establish and adopt my teaching style and personality. I was fairly confident about the prospect of teaching. However, I was a little anxious about meeting my co-workers and how I would fit into their working environment. I was eager to demonstrate my ability, commitment and enthusiasm. I was surprised with how quickly I became part of the schools 'family' ethos and I took the opportunity to listen to invaluable advice and guidance from my experienced co-workers.

For the first 3 weeks of teaching experience I was in year five. The year has 58 pupils which are separated into two class of ability. I was concerned about getting to know 58 children in such a small amount of time. However, in the first week I set myself a target of using this observation week to get to know the pupils and to start building relationships by taking an interest in their hobbies, personalities and their academic ability. This links to QTS standard S1.2 where it highlights the importance of ensuring relationships with learners are built on trust and respect to maximise their learning potential. (Education Wales, 2009). Rudolf Dreikurs, (1972), believes that humans have a primary need to belong and that relationships built on mutual respect encourage pupils to behave positively in order to achieve this goal. If pupils can not gain their goal of belonging then this encourages negative behaviour.

After the first week I was eager to get started, I wanted to start leading activities and gain some meaningful experience. I believe that you can only learn so much from watching and I wanted to start practicing my strategies and developing my skills.

For the second week I was asked to rotate a single lesson throughout the whole of year five. This gave me a good opportunity to get to know the pupils and I found that by rotating the same lesson, it allowed me to become comfortable and confident in what I was teaching. I felt I was able to then focus my concentration to class management and the language I used to address the students. Although I lacked experience in a variety of curricular coverage I was able to use my daily reflections to improve and adapt my next lesson. (see appendix 1). By the end of the week I felt that

my lessons ran efficiently and I had started setting boundaries and expectations. Following PTE1, I have set myself a target of getting to know the children during PTE2. I will achieve this target by creating homework for the children (see appendix 2 and 3). This also allows me to communicate with the parents. This covers QTS standard S1.4 where it recognises the importance of fostering positive relationships with parents and guardians and QTS standard S2.7 They know a range of strategies to promote good behaviour and establish a purposeful learning environment.

Implementing what I had learnt from the previous week helped when it came to whole class teaching, however I initially struggled to regain the attention of the pupils after transitions. Getting the attention of a whole class is very different to getting the attention of a small group and I really benefited from reflecting on these lessons to establish what worked and what did not. 'Reflecting on our own thinking and practices helps us to understand the complexity of the classroom choices and decisions that are faced routinely everyday' Pollard, (2014 pg 23). I started to realise a class of children can become very loud and I found that the louder the class got, the louder I got. This was becoming unproductive as in the end I was just adding to the noise and the children were not listening. Over the next week I used the advice given to me by my mentor and class teacher and practiced different techniques and strategies to find out what worked. I learnt that changing the tone of my voice and silence worked very effectively. I also learnt that having a good relationship with the pupils, taking the time and effort in establishing positive relationships and high expectations is really important. This can be attained by a clear, effective behavioural system. This is something that myself and my mentor highlighted as a target to concentrate on. I feel that after a few lessons I had set firm boundaries which allowed me to give slight freedom to the pupils learning, allowing them to get excited and talk between themselves which gave me the ability to be able to stop the class and have silence when I asked for it.

Before my PTE I relied on my experience working one to one with children with behavioural issues and believed that it would give me a good skill set in working with children in schools. However, I learnt quickly that although there are many similarities, I also found I had a lack of confidence in disciplining and giving effective consequences. It is important to establish authority. Pollard (2014, pg 178) draws attention to this 'Establishing authority over a class is partly about self-belief, in the sense of acting with confidence as a teacher'. On reflection, I feel that my previous experience had given me a lack of confidence in disciplining pupils due to an uncertainty of how they would react.

After my first observation I was set a target of maintaining high expectations of behaviour and effort. I came up with a behaviour system which encouraged pupils to engage. Pavlov cited in McLeod, S, (2018) states 'Positive reinforcement strengthens a behaviour by providing a consequence an individual finds rewarding. The removal of an unpleasant reinforcer can also strengthen behaviour'.

This links to QTS standards S3.3.9 They set high expectations for learners' behaviour and establish a clear framework for classroom discipline to anticipate and manage learners' behaviour constructively, and promote self-control and independence (Education Wales, 2009).

Something I was very anxious about leading up to placement was speaking the Welsh language. Before starting the course I did not have one word of Welsh so I lacked confidence in pronunciation. I was concerned that I would look silly in front of the children and I would lose the respect of the class. This was something that was picked up by my mentor who gave me a target to include Welsh phrases when teaching and speaking with the pupils. She highlighted the importance of including Welsh into my lessons. It not only links to QTS standard S2.2 (iii) where it states that learners should be given an opportunity to develop Welsh culture, economy, environment, history and linguistic characteristics. (Education Wales, 2009) but following Donaldsons, (2015) report, he highlights the importance of the inclusion of Welsh in the curriculum 'The cultural, cognitive and practical benefits of learning Welsh as a living language provide a strong case for its inclusion as a compulsory element in the school curriculum'. This is also supported by Welsh Assembly government (2010) 'The vision of Iaith Pawb in 2003 is to create a bilingual Wales'. This is something I have grown to appreciate more as my PTE has progressed. Being immersed in the schools I have really enjoyed watching the passion and pride the Welsh have for their country. I have been lucky enough to be apart of St Davids Day, the Eisteddfod (see appendix 4), and the Welsh rugby team winning the grand slam in the six nations. This has made me really want to be apart of it and I now truly understand the importance of the Welsh language and culture. My mentor was understanding and very helpful and suggested I focus on one key phrase a day so that I am confident in several incidental phrases by the end of my PTE. In order to achieve my target, I decided to be honest with the pupils. I told them that I was still learning Welsh and I would appreciate it if they could help me. I think this worked really well. It relieved me from the pressure of trying to pretend I know Welsh and ease the stress of looking stupid with how I pronounce words. It also challenged the children and got them to start using Welsh phrases and words. I used a

tally chart and made it a competition between myself and the pupils (see appendix 5). I included five Welsh phrases. I found this helped and I feel that I have become more confident in my incidental welsh. However remembering to use the chart while teaching was challenging when my mind was focused on delivering an effective and meaningful lesson.

Overall, I feel that my PTE has been a great experience and through effective reflection I have learnt a lot. 'Dewey believed that reflection begins in a state of doubt or perplexity which, for teachers, is most likely to be encountered when working with learners, particularly new or unfamiliar learners. When we are faced with difficulties and uncertainties in practice, when things don't go according to plan or don't fit with the theory, we may feel powerless and unable to resolve the situation. For, Dewey, however, these are key moments for learning; we can reflect on these problems to solve the perplexity and learn from it'. (Scales, 2012, pg 10-11)

I feel that this is a really important quote. There have been times in the last 3 weeks that I have been anxious and worried about situations, but what I have learnt that it is through those experiences I have gained invaluable experience and by effective reflection have been able to develop my skills and practice for the future.

### **Reference list**

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McLeod, S. A. (2018, Oct 08). *Pavlov's dogs*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/pavlov.html>

Pollard, A, (2014) *Reflective teaching in schools*. fourth edition, London, New York.

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## Appendix 1

# Model Beirniadau Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)

## *Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model*

**Dyddiad/Date: 05.3.19**

**Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/Critical incident (focus): Oracy and ICT group work first lesson**

| Profiad/ Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <p><b>Teimladau/<br/>Feelings</b></p> <p>Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?<br/><i>What are your feelings regarding the experience?</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>I was a little apprehensive about starting the group work. I had prepared for a week, thinking about room layout, introduction, management, tasks, making sure technology worked. I was excited about getting started and putting all my knowledge and planning in to practice.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Cofio a Deall/<br/>Remember and Understand</b></p> <p>Allwch chi restru'r agweddau ar y profiad dysgu a aeth yn dda?<br/><i>Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?</i></p> <p>Pa elfennau o'r profiad dysgu oedd yn siomedig?<br/><i>What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?</i></p> | <p>The layout of the classroom worked well. However the projector lead was not long enough so that the projector could not be moved back to make the powerpoint larger. The children were all positioned so that they could see the presentation.</p> <p>The task sheets that I had prepared had worked well so that they children could clearly see the learning objective and success criteria.</p> <p>The issues I faced were that we had limited amount of time. After the first lesson, I realised I had to condense the introduction. This was mainly to explain what the purpose of the activity was and to highlight the success criteria. As it was my first lesson I realised that practicing your language and presentation of a lesson takes practice and it is easy to 'ramble' on.</p> <p>I became aware that ICT can fail very easily and take time and attention from the teacher to fix. The problems that arise from this is that the children start talking between themselves while they are waiting and think the teacher hasn't got control of the class.</p> |

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| <p><b>Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/<br/><i>Evaluate and analyse</i></b></p> <p>Beth fyddwch chi'n cadw'r un fath i sicrhau dysgu ac addysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?<br/><i>What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?</i></p> <p>Beth oedd achos yr elfen siomedig bwysicaf?<br/><i>What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?</i></p> | <p>After reflecting on the first lesson I will learn to keep my point clear and simple. I had a tendency to repeat myself as I did not feel the children understood because they gave no response. Using thumbs up/ thumbs down, gives me the reassurance that they are listening and understand. In the future I will keep to clear and simple instructions.</p> <p>Another thing to consider was the time between presentations. Due to technology being slow, logging on and off took time. This meant that the children had nothing to do which could be a cause for concern. Trying to keep them focussed on the activity and engage in conversations about the presentations.</p> |
| <p><b>Casgliadau a chymau gweithredu/<br/><i>Conclusions and actions</i></b></p> <p>Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r materion siomedig a nodwyd?<br/><i>What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?</i></p> <p>Beth ydych yn mynd i'w wneud nesaf?<br/><i>What will you do next?</i></p>                                                                             | <p>To help me overcome with the issues raised will be practicing teaching methods. Learning ways of communicating and delivering a lesson while on my teaching practice.</p> <p>To make things run smoothly I will log onto Hwb for the children to maximise time. I have also noticed that the children tend to press buttons and things that slow things down.</p> <p>Be prepared for ICT failing. Have a back up plan. Get another computer nearby that is charged and turned on. Also prepare questions and things to keep the pupils engaged and busy while you are sorting out ICT problems.</p>                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Y profiad newydd / <i>Transformed experience</i></b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Appendix 2



Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Miss Theakston, I am a student at University Wales Trinity St Davids studying on the BA Primary Education degree with QTS. I will be spending the next 2 weeks teaching your child/children alongside Mrs Hawkins and I am really looking forward to getting to know all of them.

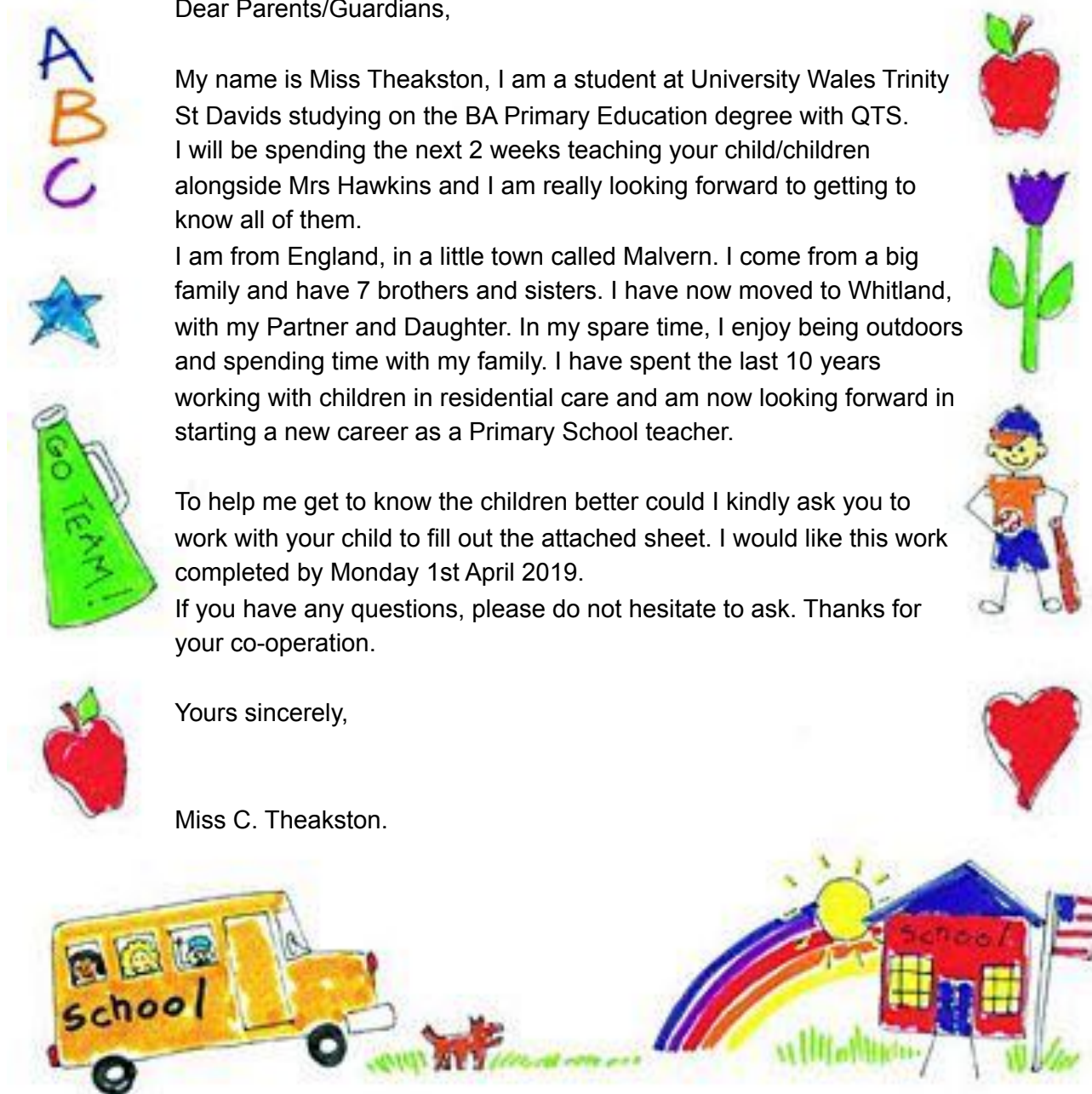
I am from England, in a little town called Malvern. I come from a big family and have 7 brothers and sisters. I have now moved to Whitland, with my Partner and Daughter. In my spare time, I enjoy being outdoors and spending time with my family. I have spent the last 10 years working with children in residential care and am now looking forward in starting a new career as a Primary School teacher.

To help me get to know the children better could I kindly ask you to work with your child to fill out the attached sheet. I would like this work completed by Monday 1st April 2019.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Thanks for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Miss C. Theakston.



Appendix 3

**ALL ABOUT ME**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Year \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Here's a picture of me.....

**MY HOBBIES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MY FAMILY**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MY FAVOURITE FOOD**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MY BEST FRIEND**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**MY FAVOURITE ANIMAL**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 4

## Model Beirniadau Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)

### *Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model*

**Dyddiad/Date: 22.2.19**

**Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/Critical incident (focus): Eisteddfod**

| Profiad/ Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>Teimladau/<br/>Feelings</b></p> <p>Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad?<br/><i>What are your feelings regarding the experience?</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>I was excited to go into assembly and see all of the children in their outfits and performing their parts for St Davids Day in the Eisteddfod. I was interested in seeing how all the year groups come together and the different levels of ability.</p> |
| <p><b>Cofio a Deall/<br/>Remember and Understand</b></p> <p>Allwch chi restru'r agweddau ar y profiad dysgu a aeth yn dda?<br/><i>Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?</i></p> <p>Pa elfennau o'r profiad dysgu oedd yn siomedig?<br/><i>What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?</i></p> | <p>I really enjoyed the assembly and could see Donaldsons vision and recommendations, however, it was hard to know what the songs and poems were, as they were in Welsh.</p> <p>It was also hard to know which year group was performing.</p>               |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/<br/><i>Evaluate and analyse</i></b></p> <p>Beth fyddwch chi'n cadw'r un fath i sicrhau dysgu ac addysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol?<br/><i>What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?</i></p> <p>Beth oedd achos yr elfen siomedig bwysicaf?<br/><i>What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?</i></p> | <p>I really liked how all the school came together to appreciate the efforts of each years performance. I really enjoy seeing the passion and pride the welsh have for there country and this makes me want to be part of it. I feel that until now I have been quite detached from the welsh culture.</p> <p>The cause of the disappointing elements was due to me not speaking Welsh.<br/>Also the children and teachers watching are all aware of which year group was which so there was no need for them to introduce their year at the start of the performance.</p> |
| <p><b>Casgliadau a chymau gweithredu/<br/><i>Conclusions and actions</i></b></p> <p>Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r materion siomedig a nodwyd?<br/><i>What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?</i></p> <p>Beth ydych yn mynd i'w wneud nesaf?<br/><i>What will you do next?</i></p>                                                                             | <p>I will continue to make an effort to learn the Welsh language.</p> <p>As I continue working in Model school i will become aware of which year is which. However, this had no effect on teaching.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Y profiad newydd / <i>Transformed experience</i></b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Appendix 5

| Promoting Welsh         |   |    |    |    |    |                             |   |   |   |   |    |  |
|-------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|--|
| Trainee Teacher: .....  |   |    |    |    |    |                             |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| Week of training: ..... |   |    |    |    |    |                             |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| WELSH THAT I WILL USE:  | M | T  | W  | T  | F  | WELSH THAT PUPILS WILL USE: | M | T | W | T | F  |  |
| BORE DA FAWR BLANT      |   | 1  | 11 | 11 | 11 | DOLCH                       |   |   | 1 | 1 | 11 |  |
| EAFOD FAWB              |   |    | 11 |    | 11 | CHROESO                     |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| GWRANDWYCH              |   |    |    |    |    | GAR I FYNID IY BACH         |   |   | 1 | 1 | 1  |  |
| RYANT ACHI              |   |    |    | 1  | 11 | OS GWELWCH YN DDA           |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| DANGOS PŴN I FI         |   |    |    |    |    | ESGLIBORWCH FI I XT WDE MŴ  |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| De awn                  | 1 | 11 |    | 11 | 1  |                             |   |   |   |   |    |  |
| Dolch                   |   |    |    | 11 | 1  |                             |   |   |   |   |    |  |