



# Start at My Feet



## School Context:

School A is a large primary school with 646 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11 in 23 classes, two of these classes are in the on-site learning resource base for pupils with an autism spectrum condition.

## How does the school encourage families to support the different areas of learning?

### - Regular parental engagement sessions:

These link with what their children are being taught in class, making parents more involved in their children's education to better support learning at home. Educators have also noted that in some cases what is being taught in class is foreign to parents and carers, so they also end up gaining new knowledge and skills.

### - 'ELSA family program':

An opportunity for families to approach the school with any concerns regarding their child's engagement with the school. Allows families and the school to work together to improve their children's engagement. The school can also refer families to relevant outside agencies if there are any concerns, such as mental health.

### - 'Find out Fridays':

Group sessions where families can discuss issues within the community that may be impacting their children. A range of professionals are invited to these sessions to help support parents, such as a local doctor, or the school ALNCo, and the local PCSOs are often in attendance.

## How does the school engage with the community to support learning?

### - Empathy Walks:

Pupils were taken on 'Empathy Walks' around the local community, where they look at their surroundings in a more empathetic light. For example, if they saw an elderly person alone on a bench they would consider how they might be feeling and what they could do to maybe help, as well as taking note of things such as litter on the floor and how that makes them feel. The pupils also decorated pebbles with positive messages and designs to put in public places to make others happy, something other members of the community have also joined in on.

### - Clubs:

School A has clubs which are open to staff, pupils and the community. Such as the community choir. The choir is currently multi-generational and has a wide age range.

## How does the school work with families before a child starts school?

### - Home visits:

Before a child starts school a home visit is conducted. This allows the school to meet the families and see what resources, like toys and books, are available at home and how the school can support them.

### - Parent & toddler group:

The family support officers run weekly parent and toddler groups, which gives new parents in the community an opportunity to get to know and build a positive relationship with the school before enrolment.

## How does the school work with parents, carers and the community?

### - The 'Leaf Project':

The school's catchment area has high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity, so the school has, in partnership with a local college, set up a scheme to help participants gain qualifications. Unemployed parents, carers and members of the community are invited to volunteer twice a week and gain recognized qualifications through an accreditation program. The school pays the fee for the qualification, and the program has enabled over 100 people into full-time employment, generating over £5 million for the local economy so far.

### - Family support officers:

Assist with any issues parents or carers may have, school-related or not. They perform home visits or check-ins with family when necessary, and can also assist in families accessing support from third parties such as benefits. The support officers have a strong relationship with the families in the school, so there is no fear of judgment when discussing problems, making communication between homes and school excellent.

### - Working with outside agencies:

The local police visit weekly, allowing discussion of any issues or concerns within the community and early interventions on behaviors. School A has also worked with the local doctor's surgery to run children's vaccination clinics within the school.

### - Parent Governors:

When designing the curriculum the parent governors worked with the head teacher to assess the needs of the children based around the community, and the governors consider themselves representatives of the community within the school. The governors also did research into the surrounding area such as unemployment, what sectors most families work in, diversity and what experiences the pupils don't have.

## Culture, faith and economic context:

### - School of Sanctuary:

School A was the first school in its county to receive a national School of Sanctuary award in recognition of its efforts to be a safe and welcoming space for all. Within the school, there are refugee pupils from countries such as Ukraine and Syria. Staff have been trained in embracing diversity, recognizing the differences in religions and the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

### - Promoting Welsh language and culture:

The use of the Welsh language is promoted consistently throughout the school, and educators often make use of incidental Welsh. Pupils are also encouraged to embrace Welsh culture and heritage through the study of folktales and links with the local community such as Castell Carew.

### - Take what you need trolleys:

These trolleys were introduced to classes in 2021 inspired by the poverty in the local area, and contain items parents, learners and educators had highlighted as necessary. These are donated items including toys, coats, clothes and cleaning products. There are also clothes available for adults, that would be suitable to wear for an interview. These trolleys are also open to the local community.

### - Loaning library:

The school recognized that some students did not have access to devices or at home to complete homework due to families' financial situations, so they set up a loaning library. This means that all children have access to a device on a loan.

### Encouraging celebrations of culture:

There are multiple displays across the school that show where pupils in the world each class, for example, one is titled "many cultures, one world". This highlights the school's positive approach to diversity and encourages the children to respect each other regardless of their origins.