

Promoting Welsh Language and Culture in Schools.

SJIE5004



Contents

Rationale	Page 3 - 4
Overview of Activities	Page 5 - 6
Evaluation	Page 7 - 8
Appendices	Page 9 - 14
References	Page 15

The Welsh Government (WG), who have been driving their vision of 1 million welsh speakers in wales by 2050 (WG,2017), have realized the importance of engaging schools to reach their goal. The Welsh language and culture has been a contentious issue in the history of the UK, but with the devolution in 1997 its importance has been rebooted. The focus has been on the Welsh language being central to culture and identity for children living in Wales (Gorrara,2020). Schools have become the focal point for ensuring that the Welsh language and culture lives on for many years to come, and that it is in fact key to becoming well rounded, accepting individuals who can contribute to a rich and varied society. Many policies and frameworks have been introduced to support the learning of Welsh in schools including Cwricwlwm Cymreig, Siarter Iaith Framework and the impending National Curriculum 2022.

Cwricwlwm Cymreig, was developed as a result of the Education Reform Act 1988, where there was a call for a nationalised curriculum which “would reflect the culture, environment, economy and history of Wales, and the influences which have shaped the country of today” (WG,2018a). The Cwricwlwm Cymreig could be seen as a constructivist way of learning (Smith,2010) in the sense that it promotes experiential learning that allows the learner to construct meaning and build an idea of their own Welshness. The Siarter Iaith Framework was introduced to give a consistent framework from which schools could implement the teaching and assessing of Welsh learning in schools. There is also work being done outside of schools to ensure the future of the Welsh language and culture such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This act provides a basis for public bodies to think about planning and strategising its inclusion of Welsh Language and culture in its services (WG, 2018b). The National Curriculum 2022 has evolved from Professor Graham Donaldson’s 2015 Successful Futures report. Donaldson, 2015, highlighted in the report that “Our children and young people need to be rooted in their own cultures and to have a strong sense of identity as citizens of Wales”. All learning in Wales is underpinned by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. Article 30 states:

“Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family,
whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.”

Throughout this portfolio an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) school’s Welsh language and culture pedagogy will be detailed and evaluated. This school will be referred to as school A. School A has 150 pupils from 3 – 19 years of age. The pupils have diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Global Development Delay (GDD) as well as physical disabilities. School A has been a pioneer school involved with the writing of the new curriculum. This has given School A the opportunity to give the

perspective of what learning about Welsh language and culture means to children with ALN. The new curriculum is based on experiential learning and this is already the pedagogy in School A. The use of incidental Welsh in School A is commonplace daily. School A's Welsh Language policy (2019) states:

“The school plays an important role in engendering in all pupils a strong sense of their own national identity. Working in other areas of learning experience fosters an appreciation of their Welsh heritage and helps in instilling respect for and an interest in the Welsh language. By doing so, we hope that the children will grow to show equal respect and appreciation for other languages and cultures. “

Bilingual symbolised signs are displayed in all common areas throughout the school and all class names are named after local beaches with the prefix 'Dosbarth' which is Welsh for 'class'. Children have the opportunity to express their feelings and the weather through the medium of Welsh every morning through circle time. There is also a Welsh club which children can choose to join called 'Cryw Cymraeg' and Welsh word of the week and Welsh speaker of the week promotes the learning of the language daily.



Every year, School A participates in a heritage project which ties in with the school's Eisteddfod celebration. The project is entered into a competition run by the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative (WHSI). WHSI use a judging criterion (appendix 1) to allocate a prize to the entry. Each year a different focus is chosen so the children can become immersed in a particular facet of Welsh heritage, culture and language. Teaching and learning in school A follows the Cwricwlwm Cymreig framework. Due to the ALN of the pupils, the project includes varied activities which are fully inclusive for all pupils and their abilities.

In 2019 the subject of the project was 'People who help us'. This topic was far reaching and allowed pupils to explore their local community and learn about safety in an experiential way. School A's project encouraged pupils to find out about people in their local community, especially those who help others. The school council members chose to focus on, and raise money for two specific charities, the RNLI and the Wales Air Ambulance, which harnessed a real sense of local belonging and identity, as well as learning about the emergency services and other people who help us. Participating in these projects allows pupils to expand their Welsh vocabulary by teaching them key words from the topic. The project also enables pupils to go out into the community for visits to places of interest, which has been shown to consolidate learning in a beneficial way (Cameron,2020) and use expressive arts to recreate important aspects of what they have seen and learnt throughout the project. It also allowed for people from the emergency services to come into the school to do workshops with the children, which also built a great sense of community within the school. The project ends with the Eisteddfod and a celebratory exhibition, where parents, carers and stakeholders can come into the school and view the work the children have completed.

The starting point for the project is an activity which allows pupils to activate their prior knowledge of the topic. Simple spider diagram worksheets (appendix 2) are given to the children to show their existing knowledge. The teacher will start off a class discussion and ask the pupils to share their ideas. The way they complete these is dependent on their ability. Some pupils will write in the answers, some will draw pictures and others will select symbols from a word bank (Appendix 3) to complete. Due to the complexity of communication issues of the pupils, it is not always possible to attach the Welsh language to every aspect of their learning. Simple phrases of praise when they have completed their work such as 'Da iawn' are used to show them the Welsh language. For the more able learners, Welsh sessions are used to explore simple concepts such as number, language, introductions and weather. These concepts will then be used across the curriculum incidentally.

Appendix 4 shows a next stage worksheet used with learners who can explore the Welsh language relating to simple things such as colour. In an introduction to this worksheet children will be shown the colours on the

interactive whiteboard and the teacher will model the Welsh word for the colour using 'my turn, your turn'. Then the teacher will ask simple questions to the pupils using the prefix 'pa lliw?' while holding up or pointing to objects within the class. The children are then given the worksheets which have differentiated options of completing depending on ability. Some will write in the answer, some will colour and some will cut and stick the answer into the corresponding box. Each child has an adult working directly with them to model the Welsh words as they are completing the worksheet and to check for understanding. As an extension to this activity, the children can then add this work into their heritage project I pad book and record themselves saying the colours.

During the course of this project the children have the opportunity to go on visits to local emergency services such as the fire station, lifeboat house and air ambulance base. Appendix 5 shows photos of the pupils on the visits. The benefit of such educational visits is that the children get to learn by experience. They try on the uniform and listen to the experiences of the people who work there. Educational visits are important in an ALN setting. The children often have communication and social difficulties and during educational visits they can work on these skills by asking questions and engaging with the external providers. School A also welcomes visitors to the school to carry out workshops with the children. Appendix 6 shows photos of the children taking part in a first aid workshop provided by St Johns Ambulance, a water safety workshop and a road safety workshop. These skills can prove invaluable to the children as it gives them experiences that they can use in real life. Due to the workshops being interactive the children's curiosity is piqued and they enjoy hands on experiences. These experiences also prove beneficial as they are meeting people from their community and learning about how to be safe in their locality.

The culmination of the project is to make a 3D model of what they have learnt about. This is done using various mediums and is a class project. Every child gets the opportunity to work on aspects of the model. They look at pictures and relate to their experiences on their visits to decide what model to make. Some use clay which is beneficial for their motor skills. They get to think about geographical features they have seen and use them as a setting for their models. Appendix 7 shows the children working on their models and some of the completed models.

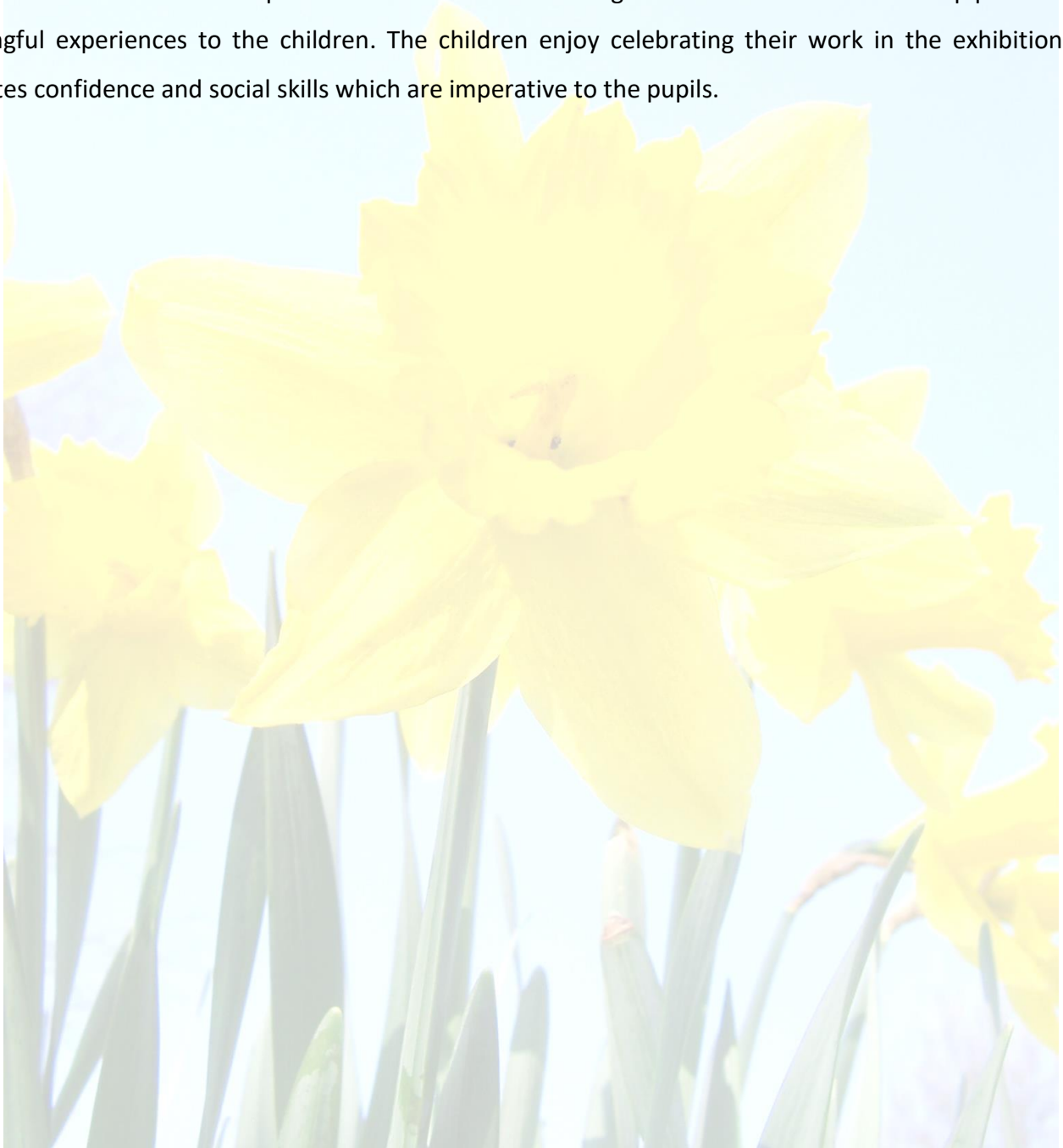
The heritage project is a useful way of engaging children in the culture of Wales. School A utilises its relationships with the local community to ensure that the children experience different activities in a context that is valuable to them. The teachers and support staff's use of Welsh is incidental but there is more of a focus on teaching the culture of Wales as opposed to the language. This is due to the communication and learning difficulties of the pupils. The more able pupils are encouraged to explore the language further and it is evident that school A is good at providing differentiated tasks which match the individual pupil's abilities.

When discussing language acquisition, we can use Jim Cummins theory of language skills. Basic interpersonal skills (BICS) are easier and quicker to acquire compared to cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). According to Cummins, 2016 "The common underlying proficiency makes possible transfer of concepts, skills, and learning strategies across languages". Therefore, by teaching basic Welsh language to children it can improve their language skills in English also. Due to the communication difficulties of the children in school A, staff are constantly wrapping language around all activities. Some children are only just exploring the concepts of language through symbols. In this case it is unclear what value or benefit it is to them to teach them another language. It could be confusing for the child and could also inhibit their language acquisition.

All the activities are underpinned by the Cwricwlwm Cymreig framework which in essence promotes gaining national and cultural identity. In some schools it has been found that teachers following the framework offer tokenistic representations of Welsh culture (ACCAC,2003) i.e. Welsh costumes, daffodils and leeks. The heritage project in school A dismisses tokenism by giving real life views and experiences of the culture and society of Wales and the local area. The project also has parallels with the new curriculum by way of enabling the pupils to become "ethical, informed citizens who: find, evaluate and use evidence in forming views; are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past"(Donaldson, 2015).

It is evident in school A that the staff apply the theories of Vygotsky in their teaching and supporting of the pupils. Vygotsky was a constructivist who maintained that knowledge is constructed via our social interactions and also conceptualized that the teacher or helpers role was to 'scaffold' the learner while they are in the zone of proximal development (ZPD).The whole project is run under the principles of scaffolding; getting the children interested and engaged with the topic, breaking the project up into manageable activities, keeping them engaged in the activities while reminding them of what the culmination of the project will be , staff modelling during activities and encouraging team work with more knowledgeable others (Bates,2016).

In conclusion the Heritage project is an engaging way of teaching pupils about Welsh culture and heritage. Although the learning of the Welsh language is not a top priority for the pupils in school A, they are introduced to the Welsh language gently and at a level that meets their abilities. The project is immersive and covers all aspects of the curriculum. The teachers work hard to ensure that they can provide meaningful tasks and activities for the pupils which fall in line with the literacy and numeracy framework while covering the four purposes proposed in the new curriculum. Educational visits are essential to the project as they allow abstract concepts to become real-life experiences for the children. Being able to interact with workshop providers gives meaningful experiences to the children. The children enjoy celebrating their work in the exhibition and it promotes confidence and social skills which are imperative to the pupils.



Heritage Project 2019

Judging Criteria

Judges will appreciate talking to the pupils and staff involved as well as seeing pupils' work.

KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

- Knowledge and Understanding – the extent to which pupils recall knowledge they have gained in detail and with accuracy; the extent to which pupils apply this knowledge and understanding with confidence; the extent to which pupils can make links and connections within the project and to wider aspects of Welsh heritage.
- Content – The originality of the project or approach; the significance of the contribution made to pupils' awareness of local and/or Welsh heritage issues, for example: local and/or Welsh culture, the Welsh language, sport, science, women's histories, children's histories.

This list is not exhaustive and projects can focus on only one area, and within only a school, community or wider context, such as Wales.

ENQUIRY AND PRESENTATION SKILLS

- Enquiry – the use and effectiveness of enquiry techniques adopted and the validity of conclusions reached. This may include: the range of questions asked by pupils; the range, types, quality and relevance of evidence considered; pupils' understanding of interpretations and representations; the extent to which pupils have developed their own ideas and arrived at valid judgements and conclusions.
- Presentation – The overall quality and effectiveness of the presentation; the variety and relevance of media used; the extent of pupil engagement in the presentation.

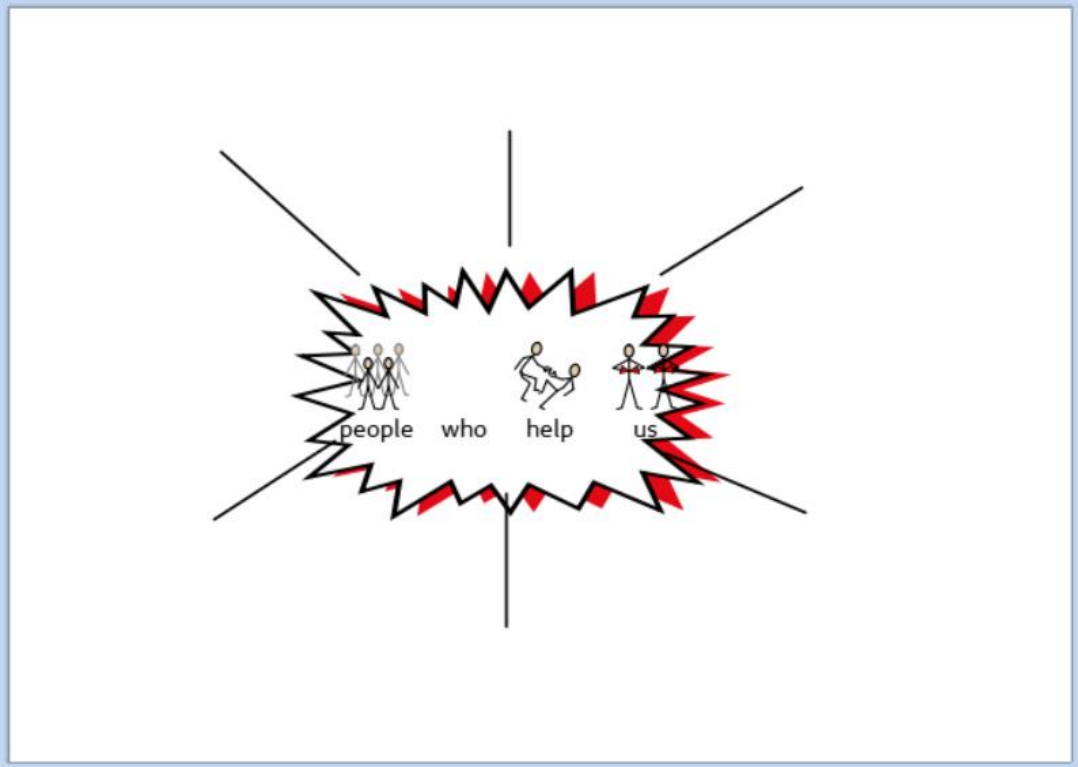
IMPACT AND DISSEMINATION

The extent of knowledge and awareness raised by the project in contexts such as:

- The school itself and amongst parents and carers;
- The local community;
- Other parts of Wales;
- Local and national media;
- Social media;
- Local groups and societies;
- Partner schools and organisations locally, in the UK and abroad.

Judging will be between 1st April and 3rd May.

Appendix 2



Appendix 3

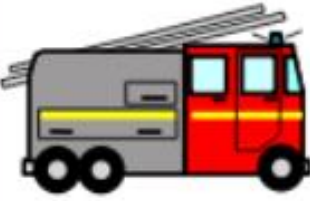


People who help us word bank

 fireman	 police officer	 lollipop lady	 teacher
 paramedic	 doctor	 nurse	 dinner lady

?

pa lliw?

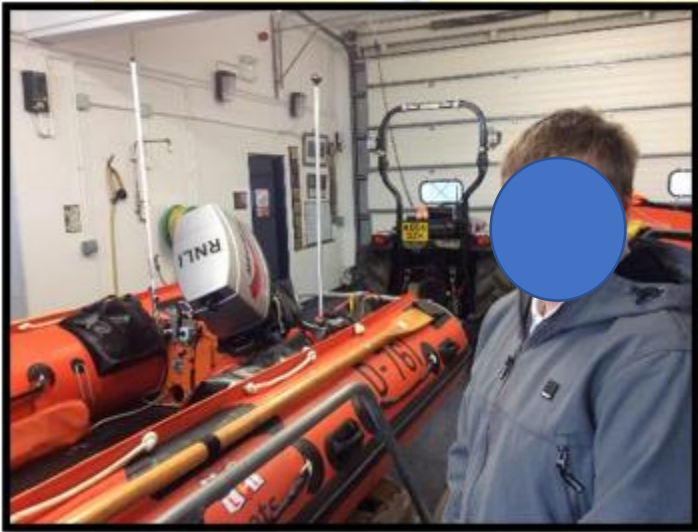








oren	coch	melyn
gwyn	gwyrdd	du



Appendix 6





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