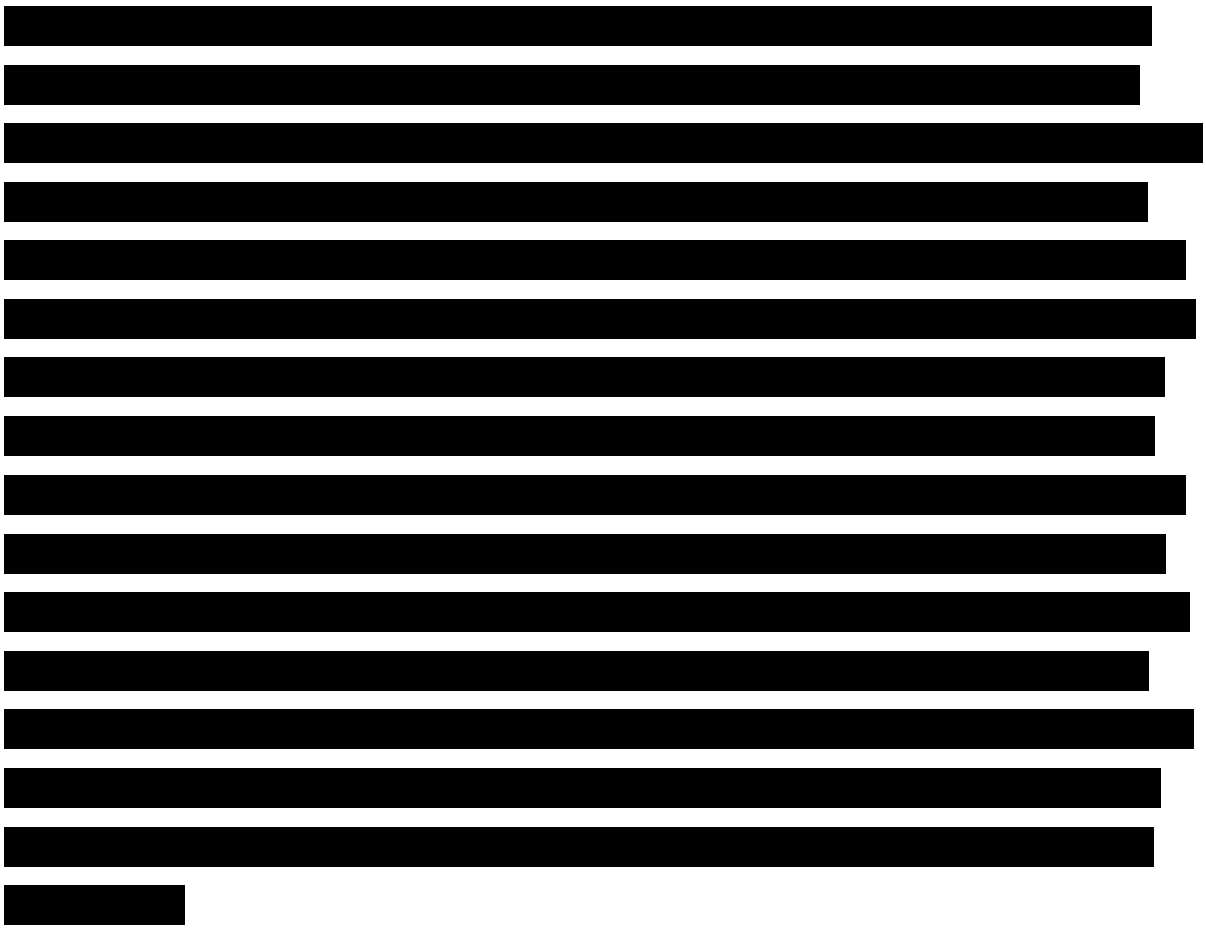
Create a community profile for your PTE1 school. Using relevant literature, suggest ways in which the school could make use of its location and community to support pupil learning.



School X is a rural, mixed gender, English Medium Primary School in the Neath Port Talbot Local Authority. As of 2024, the school has 174 pupils, 82 of which are female and 92 males (Welsh Government, 2024). Leonard *et al* (2001), propose the idea that being a smaller school allows better use of the community as a rich learning environment in a way that larger schools struggle to replicate. This in turn provides opportunities for a stronger sense of belonging and more personalised learning within the school and its community.

The community of School X can also be described as diverse in culture. According to Welsh Government (2024), 19.3% of pupils within School X come from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. This is 10.8% higher than the average of 8.5%

within the Local Authority and 4% higher than the average of 15.3% in Wales. The school's demographic diversity could present both challenges and opportunities for learning. Parker (2015) and Wallace (2023) both agree that racial stereotypes against black children in the 20th century have led to poorer educational outcomes and unfair discipline towards these students. However, Juvonen *et al* (2017) argues that ethnic diversity in schools can allow children from ethnic minorities to feel safer, less victimised and less lonely. In line with this, Estyn (2024) report that most of the children at School X do feel happy and safe during their time at school due to the relationships and respect between the pupils and staff. School X's Visions and Aims (2022) reinforces this idea, explaining how the school aims to nurture strong connections and partnerships with pupils, their families and the wider community.

As School X is located in a semi-rural area and is relatively small, the locality and size can present some unique opportunities and challenges. The wider community comprises of a number of woodlands and outdoor green spaces. However, School X was originally built to accommodate the children in a relatively new housing estate (School X Website, 2022). GOV.UK (2023) states that housing estates can bring opportunities for social interaction and the development of local amenities such as parks and community halls. School X has a park within a 4-minute walk and 0.2 miles of itself and a community centre a 15-minute drive away. Although School X may face some infrastructure or resource challenges that larger, urban schools do not, the close-knit community and tranquil, nature based local area provide children the ideal space to foster connections and improve well-being. Twohig-Bennett and Jones (2018), Mind (2021) and Gilchrist (2019) all agree that exposure to greenspace has a wide range of both physical and mental health benefits. This reinforces the value of the school's physical location and wider community.

Although School X offers a supportive and unique environment that helps support well-being, there has been a decline in attendance in recent years. In 2018, the school had a 96% attendance rate. This dropped to 92.7% in 2019 and further to 90.4% in 2023 (Welsh Government, 2024). Smith, (2024) expresses that the pandemic may be responsible for this decline as many children find it difficult to break the pattern of staying at home or may have detached from school completely. School X should

capitalise on their ability to provide a nurturing and rich community environment as this could help draw students back into the school. Fox, (2024) explains how if a learner does not feel part of their school community, absence is likely to be higher and more frequent. However, if there is active community involvement present, this can boost an individual's sense of safety and increase confidence, motivating children to want to attend school.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) can help to explain the prolific impact a child's school life and community environment can have on them. School and the community a child live in sits within the microsystem level of this theory. This level contains people and environments that have a direct influence on the child, and which interact with the child daily (Guy-Evans, 2024). Hayes, O'toole and Halpenny (2022), Brodie (2024) and Guy-Evans (2024) all agree that teachers and parents, who sit within the microsystem, need to maintain good connections and communication with one another and involve themselves in both of the child's environments to best benefit the child. To further strengthen the connection between School X, the physical community, the pupils and their families, and to aid learning, several strategies can be implemented.

Firstly, due to the high number of BAME students within School X, it is important that the school continues to support and create an inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity and therefore fosters empathy and allows students to learn from one another. As many of the school's community consists of BAME pupils, educators need to understand unique challenges these students face to ensure they feel valued and empowered. This can be as simple as learning to correctly pronounce names of students. Wynton (2020) notes how some professionals do not even try with correct pronunciation of BAME student's names but insists that they must learn to pronounce names correctly in order to be respectful. Thomas (2019) agrees with this sentiment and adds that when people cannot pronounce your name or tell you apart from another person of the same race, it is hard to feel welcomed within the community. Furthermore, Article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enforces that every child has a right to a nationality and a name (UNICEF, 2019).

Article 30 of the UNCRC also concerns minority groups and demands that children be allowed to use their language and celebrate and practice their religion and culture (UNICEF, 2019). One suggestion on how this can be implemented within the classroom environment and be used as a learning opportunity is through celebrating holidays observed within different cultures. Continental Educational Publisher, (2023) offer the idea of creating a calendar to display in the classroom that details holidays observed by the different cultures of pupils within the class. When one of these holidays approaches, teachers can take time to discuss the holiday and do something simple such as creating a holiday themed craft or reading a book about the holiday. Hape (2022) explains how celebrating holidays observed in different cultures can deepen pupil learning by helping children to understand the unique traditions and ways people around them celebrate. This teaches the children to better understand one another and makes the holidays more meaningful for them and their peers.

Including diverse characters and themes in day-to-day reading can also promote a sense of community and foster empathy and understanding between teachers, children and their families. Davis (2024), School Library Association (2024) and Harrison (2024) all agree that representation in children's books can be lifechanging and ensures all children can see themselves and different cultures around them represented. However, there is argument from Monoyiou and Symeonidou (2015) that children's books are still not inclusive enough and still portray racial stereotypes. Although it is important to keep this in mind when choosing specific literature, reading quality books that promote diversity can help create an inclusive community where children learn empathy and can create connections with each other.

In addition to promoting connections within the community through celebrating culture and ethnic backgrounds, School X can use the physical community to their advantage. As previously mentioned, there is a park and large green space 4 minutes away from the school. Furthermore to this, School X is in close proximity to a large country park. There are a wealth of learning opportunities that can be encouraged and implemented using these local areas. Nature based learning (NBL), as described by both Jordan (2022) and Jucker and Au (2022), is an approach that engages children with nature and elements of the environment such as plants, animals and water. Within the country park located

closely to School X, there is a castle, pond, railway, ornamental gardens, adventure playpark, deer heard and farmyard trails which can all be used during NBL (VisitWales , n.d.) Both Jordan (2022) and Jucker and Au (2022) also clarify that NBL can extend to any skill or subject whilst engaging with nature. Within the Curriculum for Wales (2022) Science and Technology Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE) Statements of What Matter, children should understand that there are living things all around us that depend on one another to survive (Welsh Government, 2022). The pond, farmyard animals and deer are an excellent way to deepen learning within this area. This can also be linked back to the children's immediate community through discussing habitats and where different animals and creatures live.

The humanities AOLE can also be implemented throughout the local country park. The 19th century Tudor Gothic Mansion Castle can be explored and allow the children to learn about the past. Welsh Government (2022), state that within the humanities AOLE, children should be given opportunity to investigate and explore to foster curiosity about the past, present and future. Not only can the children see what castles and homes used to look like in the past, but they can gain an understanding of how people in the past lived and how decoration and design has changed (Buildingtalk, 2017). This activity can also be transferred to almost anywhere within the children's community. They could even look at their houses or the school building and compare this with old photos or recounts from older family members. Not only does this deepen learning but fosters relationships between family members through sharing their experiences with one another. Although NBL does have its benefits, it is important to ensure the environment is accessible to all, especially those with disabilities and that the weather conditions are safe (EducationWorld, 2024). As long as these factors are considered, NBL can be a powerful tool to increase attendance, academic and personal achievement (Gilchrist, 2023).

In conclusion, School X offers a number of unique strengths and challenges for using the close-knit, rural community to develop and enhance learning. Through capitalising on the small size of the school and the proximity to greenspace and the local country park and through implementing some or all of the strategies offered by the writer, School X has the potential to foster a strong sense of community. Through celebrating

diversity, inclusion and community, the school can also increase the children's sense of cynefin. Welsh Government (2022) define cynefin as a familiar place where we feel we belong and are reassured by. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure all children feel as though they belong and can learn from their community. By implementing the suggestions made by the writer, the school, pupils and families could potentially benefit greatly. The community can be further strengthened, and pupil learning has the potential to increase greatly through real life, authentic experiences.

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