

Written response - A proposal for a school community project

My chosen community project will focus on developing intergenerational relationships within the local community and aim to benefit and improve pupils' wellbeing and social skills by providing the opportunity to create, maintain and develop relationships with older members within the local area. Developing intergenerational relationships has been shown to result in several positive benefits, including improvement in children's attitudes towards older adults, better communication and interpersonal skills, promotion of academic achievement and children's improved behaviour within schools (Lyu et al., 2020). The focus of my community project is based upon the benefits of strengthening intergenerational relationships and will specifically look at developing the relationships between School X's key stage 2 pupils and residents within the nearby local care home. This project opportunity will not only aim to benefit pupils, but the care home residents as well. An example of a similar project in practice is a partnership developed between a care home in Blaenau Gwent and several of the local primary schools, who found that the residents of the care home now "get up and have better personal care, in readiness for the children visiting" (Ffrind i Mi, 2022) and PRN anti-psychotics prescribed to residents have had a 100% reduction rate (Ffrind i Mi, 2022). As well as this, the partnership also found that pupils enjoy the visits so much that children's names must be drawn at random to decide who will visit the care home due to all the pupils wanting to visit, and pupils state that they want to work in the care home when they are older (Ffrind i Mi, 2022). The development of these community relationships has been shown to not only benefit pupils and members living within the local area, but the school as well, with the Welsh Government's family and community engagement toolkit stating that "community partnership working can support the school's family engagement work, strengthen a school in other ways and enrich school life" (2015), meaning there is high chance of guaranteeing a positive impact on all members involved within the project.

Intergenerational relationships, by definition, refers to relationships "including or involving people of different generations or age groups" (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 2024). Strengthening and developing these types of relationships, especially those between young people in schools and elderly residents in local care homes, has been shown by several studies to have a substantial number of positive benefits for both pupils, care home residents and the local communities in which they are based. This is the main motivation behind my school community project, as I feel it is important that pupils have the opportunity to feel and see the positive impacts not only on themselves but on community members as well as the whole school.

The positive impacts that intergenerational relationships can have on pupils are huge. They include improvements in communication and social skills, increased empathy and understanding (Bright Horizons, 2024) and improved school attendance and academic achievement. Developing pupil's skills, such as their social skills, is important for many reasons, as it enables them to improve within a wide variety of other factors such as empathy, emotional regulation, problem-solving skills, and decision-making (Srakocic, 2022). Intergenerational relationships can help to "promote social and emotional development" (Femia et al., 2007) in pupils as they provide an opportunity to engage in conversation and learn interpersonal skills from older members of the community. Introducing pupils from School X to residents within the local care home can also help to build social skills and self-esteem in pupils who may feel pressured or intimidated within the school environment to engage with their peers, as care home visits can help to provide a much lower pressure environment for these pupils. Care home visits and intergenerational projects can also help to educate and give pupils an insight into developing understanding, empathy, and respect towards older community members as they "can help to bridge the gap between age groups" (Heiser, 2022). Building on these relationships can allow pupils to have more positive attitudes towards care home residents and better understand them too (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). This is beneficial to pupils for several reasons, for example, a 2009 study found that "children with more positive attitudes toward older adults were more likely to seek their help" (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019) meaning that in future, these children are more likely to be able to turn to others for help and improve their own problem-solving skills as a result.

As well as benefiting pupils, intergenerational relationships can help to meet several needs within the community, particularly for elderly community members, or in this case specifically, care home residents. Many studies have shown the socio-emotional benefits that intergenerational relationships can have on care home residents, with one 2007 study finding that residents were "happier and more relaxed on days when they could interact with the children" as well as showing improved self-confidence, and 97% of residents who participated in the study reported that they had benefitted from these interactions (Wendland & Parizet, 2022). These findings suggest that introducing opportunities for interaction between local care home residents and School X's key stage 2 pupils can have a significant positive impact on happiness and self-confidence, among other social and emotional factors for these members of the community. As well as residents' social and emotional well-being, research conducted in several studies shows that intergenerational interactions can also improve the physical health of care home residents. A clinical trial conducted in Switzerland found that elderly members in residential living, when paired with pre-school aged children, were "able to not only maintain but increase physical health" (Minghetti et al., 2021) as well as this, residents gait performance improved, and they also had lower blood pressure (Minghetti et al., 2021). These findings are

significant as improved physical health can allow care home residents to be more independent, rely less on mobility aids and reduce the risk of falls. Providing pupils from School X and local care home residents with the opportunity to form relationships with each other can also lead to care home residents feeling that they are able to make a valuable contribution to the community from developing an active role in children's lives (Earl & Marais, 2023). A sense of belonging within the community is extremely important, especially for elderly members, as developing a sense of identity within a community can provide not only a feeling of belonging but can also reduce feelings of isolation and provides the chance to reach out for support as well as connect with other community members within the local area.

My community project will aim to develop intergenerational relationships within the local community by introducing school visits to the local care home. The main aims of this project are to increase a sense of community within School X and improve the wellbeing of pupils and other members within the community.

Improving the wellbeing of pupils and local community members can be considered by many as vitally important, especially when considering the current wellbeing statistics in Wales, which have shown an overall decrease in average mental health scores from 50.9 in 2016 and 2017 to 48.2 in 2022 and 2023 when using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Welsh Government, 2024). My project will set out to provide a foundation in order to help develop a closer school-community relationship by developing initial connections between School X's key stage 2 pupils and residents of the local care home. Using case studies, looking at the results of similar projects, and gathering primary data will help to ensure that the project can be as effective as possible and have the intended impact within the community. The main intentions of my project are to help cause a positive knock-on impact for pupils and local care home residents by forming strong intergenerational relationships which have been shown by a variety of research to improve several positive wellbeing aspects across all ages.

My project will take place by selecting pupils from different key stage 2 classes within School X and travelling to the local care home on a biweekly basis. The nearest local care home, which is home to 26 residents, is a five-minute walk from School X. Having the care home located in such a close vicinity to the school ensures that there are no travel costs involved, there are far fewer health and safety risks in terms of transportation, and there is no unnecessary time spent travelling to and from the care home. The location of the care home in relation to the school also provides an opportunity for care home residents to travel to School X to participate in activities such as watching school performances and assemblies as well as take advantage of School X's larger spaces for activities which may require more room. Whilst there are no transportation costs involved within the project, considerations still must be made in terms of

staffing and having the correct staff to student ratio, timings and ensuring that visits to the care home are not having a negative impact on staff or any other opportunities within the school, and the budget put towards any activities with pupils and residents to ensure that the project is as successful as possible.

In order to measure the impact that my project will have on pupils and community members, I will use a variety of methods to assess the effectiveness of my project. These will include interviews, questionnaires, and learning walks, and will help to ensure that my project meets its intended aims.

Due to my project involving the measurement of pupils' and care home resident's emotions, I feel it is important to collect a variety of both qualitative and quantitative data to make sure that I am measuring the impact of my project as accurately as possible and taking into consideration how pupils and care home residents feel the project has impacted them.

I believe an effective way to gain insight into how effective my project is and how pupils and care home residents feel the project has affected them will be to use interviews, as this allows an in-depth insight into personal feedback. When interviewing pupils in particular, I will use unstructured interviews to ensure that I am able to ask for elaboration on answers to not only correct misconceptions but collect more detailed information into the impact of the project and how much of a positive effect intergenerational relationships can have on pupils. As well as interviews, I will also use learning walks as another way of measuring impact, as they allow staff within the school to provide outsiders feedback through observation as to how effective of an impact the project has had on pupils and care home residents. Learning walks are "short and informal visits to a classroom, in which senior leaders [or other staff members] focus and observe any specific area of education and then offer detailed feedback" (Short & Main, 2021). Learning walks can enable valuable insights into aspects such as pupil behaviour, environment, and engagement. I believe learning walks will be an effective way to gain a clear insight into the behaviour and engagement of pupils before, during and after my project takes place as they provide an opportunity to observe crucial factors into measuring the effectiveness of my project and how well the project aims are being met. This is due to learning walks being less likely to result in the Hawthorne Effect, as they are significantly less pressurising for those being observed in comparison to a formal observation. As well as learning walks, I will also use questionnaires to help measure the impact of my project. This is because interviews can be easily adjusted or adapted so that they are appropriate for both pupils and adults, but the same questions can be asked. This allows for comparisons between both groups to be made, which can help to evaluate the effectiveness of the project for the separate groups involved and whether they have the same or differing results. Questionnaires can also provide qualitative or

quantitative data, depending on how detailed the responses required are, so if more information is needed on particular impacts of the projects, questionnaires can be adapted in order to accommodate this.

In order to fully evaluate my project, which focuses on developing intergenerational relationships between School X's key stage two pupils and local care home residents, I have conducted a SWOT analysis (see Appendix) to assess any of the project's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats which may be involved. A SWOT analysis is a "framework to help assess and understand the internal and external forces that may create opportunities or risks" (Peterdy , 2023) for a project. Internal factors look at strengths and weaknesses of a project, such as pupil engagement or budget limitations, and external factors look at opportunities and risks such as strengthening school-community relations or misconceptions of care homes. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a vital aspect of conducting any project as it opens the opportunity for any risks and weaknesses to be addressed and make the most of a project's strengths and opportunities.

Within my SWOT analysis (see Appendix), one of the strengths I identified was that pupils could contribute to the improved wellbeing of care home residents within the local community. This strength plays a huge part in my project as improving the well-being of pupils and local community members is my main aim. Studies claim that these interactions between pupils and care home residents "can decrease older people's loneliness, delay mental decline, lower blood pressure, and even reduce the risk of disease or death" (Cole, 2018). Pupils also benefit from these interactions, with an intergenerational scheme in the United States stating that "confidence also improved in these settings, as did [children's] vocabulary and socialisation" (Cole, 2018). Whilst there were a number of strengths within the project, my SWOT analysis (see Appendix) also revealed some weaknesses within the project. These included potential staff and time limitations, and the chance for care home visits to have an emotional impact on some pupils. Staffing and budgets can often be limited within schools, however, in order to combat these potential weaknesses, I have chosen to utilise the proximity of the local care home so that budget costs do not need to go towards transport. The care home visits will also take place every two weeks rather than more often to ensure that staff have adequate time to plan visits and that visits to the care home are unlikely to have any negative impacts on other projects or regular trips within the school. Conducting a SWOT analysis (see Appendix) allowed me to analyse several internal factors within my project, but also allowed me to see a number of external strengths and opportunities. These included the opportunity for strengthening school-community relationships and providing a foundation for the development of other projects and collaboration with local community members. Forming an initial school-

community relationship with residents of the local care home could lead to other community members volunteering or participating within care home activities, and pupil visits have the potential to gain input from further connections with other community members and organisations. Whilst there are several opportunities within my school-community project, there are also a few external threats and challenges which may impact the success of the project, the main threat being any potential stereotypes and misconceptions about care homes from parents and guardians of pupils. A way to combat these stereotypes and help to get parents and guardians on board with the project is to provide evidence on the benefits of intergenerational relationships and provide parents with regular updates and activities which take place during visits to the care home to help parents and guardians feel more at ease.

Overall, the impact intergenerational relationships can have on pupils' wellbeing and social skills by providing the opportunity to create, maintain and develop relationships with older members within the local area can be considered significant by many. Pupils are able to gain invaluable knowledge and skills as well as hugely benefit other community members, particularly residents living in the local care home. This project also provides a foundation for other school-community projects to be introduced to School X, by collaborating with other community members and organisations in order to build up a stronger sense of community.

Appendix

SWOT analysis:

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL (within the school)	Strengths - Pupils contribute to improved wellbeing of care home residents within the local community. - School can act as a community 'hub' in future projects. - Can encourage other members of the community to visit care homes.	Weaknesses - Limited staffing. - Time limitations. - Budgets - Emotional impact on pupils, some may find visiting a care home challenging.
EXTERNAL (outside the school)	Opportunities - Opportunity for strengthening school/community relationships.	Threats - Stereotypes and misconceptions from parents and pupils of care homes and the elderly.

	- Develops intergenerational relationships within the community. - Provides a base for the development of other projects/collaboration - Can help to educate pupils and gain insight into history and life experience.	
--	--	--

References

Cole, A. (2018) *Children in care homes: 'it makes residents feel more human'*, *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/12/children-care-homes-residents-feel-more-human> (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Bright Horizons (2024) *Benefits of intergenerational relationships*, *Bright Horizons UK*. Available at: <https://www.brighthorizons.co.uk/family-zone/family-resources/blog/2022/05/benefits-of-intergenerational-relationships> (Accessed: 13 May 2024).

Earl, E.J. and Marais, D. (2023) *The experience of intergenerational interactions and their influence on the mental health of older people living in residential care*, *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10321637/> (Accessed: 14 May 2024).

Ffrind i Mi (2022) *FFRIND I MI: Case study*. Available at: <https://www.ffrindimi.co.uk/casestudy> (Accessed: 04 May 2024).

Femia, Elia.E. et al. (2007) *Intergenerational preschool experiences and the young child: Potential benefits to development*, *Science Direct*. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0885200607000348?casa_token=22fV41lIPuoAAAAA%3Ak-k2C8xFGjb_0z82to0Bp-rCNAJQF4qqFBd-FWNs-iVopjKZi-Zh9pGnQly52YupMniUaJUeq7-i (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Giraudeau, C. and Bailly, N. (2019) *Intergenerational programs: What can school-age children and older people expect from them? A systematic review*, *European Journal of Ageing*. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6728408/> (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Heiser, D. (2022) *The Case for Intergenerational Connections*, *Psychology Today*. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-right-side-of-40/202210/the-case-for-intergenerationalconnections#:~:text=Intergenerational%20connections%20can%20help%20to>

%20bridge%20the%20gap,joy%20and%20fulfillment%20for%20both%20young%20and%20old.
(Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Lyu, K. et al. (2020) *The implementation and effectiveness of intergenerational learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from China*, *International review of education. Internationale Zeitschrift fur Erziehungswissenschaft. Revue internationale de pedagogie*. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7787929/> (Accessed: 01 May 2024).

Minghetti, A. et al. (2021) *Beneficial effects of an intergenerational exercise intervention on health-related physical and psychosocial outcomes in Swiss preschool children and residential seniors: A clinical trial*, *PeerJ*. Available at: <https://peerj.com/articles/11292/> (Accessed: 14 May 2024).

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionaries (2024) *Intergenerational adjective - definition, pictures, pronunciation, and usage notes | oxford advanced american dictionary at Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com*, *Intergenerational adjective*. Available at: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intergenerational (Accessed: 07 May 2024).

Peterdy, K. (2023) *SWOT analysis*, *Corporate Finance Institute*. Available at: <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/swot-analysis/#:~:text=SWOT%20stands%20for%20S%20trengths%2C%20W%20eaknesses%2C%20O,may%20create%20opportunities%20or%20risks%20for%20an%20organization>. (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Short, J. and Main, P. (2021) *Learning walks: A guide for school leaders*, *Structural Learning*. Available at: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/learning-walks-a-guide-for-school-leaders#:~:text=A%20learning%20walk%20is%20a%20short%20and%20informal,area%20of%20education%20and%20then%20offer%20detailed%20feedback>. (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Slakovic, S. (2022) *Why Social-Emotional Learning Is So Important for Kids Right Now*, *Healthline*. Available at: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/social-emotional-learning-important#what-is-sel> (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Welsh Government (2015) *Family and Community Engagement Toolkit*, GOV.WALES. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-toolkit> (Accessed: 04 May 2024).

Welsh Government. (2024) *Mental well-being (national survey for Wales): April 2022 to March 2023*, GOV.WALES. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/mental-well-being-national-survey-wales-april-2022-march-2023-html> (Accessed: 15 May 2024).

Wendland, J. and Parizet, L. (2022) *Benefits and challenges of intergenerational child daycare and senior programs or facilities: A systematic review of the literature*, *Science Direct*. Available at:

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0003448722000634?ref=pdf_download&fr=RR-2&rr=8839670f3ae93daf (Accessed: 14 May 2024).