



ECEY5006 Leadership and Teamwork in the Early Years

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Table of Contents

Basic Acknowledgement format of AI tool use:	2
Group Presentation.....	3
Scenario:	3
Meeting Schedule and Agenda:	4
School Head Teacher and Meeting Chair - Emily	5
Progression Step 1 Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead – Natasha	10
Progression Step 1 Teacher and EY Curriculum Lead – Maka	14
Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) - Barbara.....	18
Progression Step 1 Teacher (Nursery) and Wellbeing Lead – Nicola.....	21
School Head Teacher and Meeting Chair – Emily	25
Concluding points:	25
Reference List	27

Basic Acknowledgement format of AI tool use:

I acknowledge no use of AI Tool throughout this study.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated text as my own work.

I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Group Presentation**Scenario:**

A monthly leadership staff meeting for the Early Years department for our non-maintained nursery and Progression Step 1 class from the maintained primary school in Wales.

Meeting date: 28.11.2025.

Time: 5.00pm via Teams [Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 341 493 190 511 29

Passcode: Bs7Ef7ux

Attendees:**Roles:**

Emily

School Head Teacher and Meeting Chair

Natasha

Progression Step 1 Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead

Maka

Progression Step 1 Teacher and EY Curriculum Lead

Barbara

Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)

Nicola

Progression Step 1 Teacher (Nursery) and Wellbeing Lead

Meeting Schedule and Agenda:

Meeting Welcome	
- Welcome - Confidentiality/ housekeeping reminder - Review of outstanding actions from previous meeting - Confirmation of receipt of meeting agenda for this meeting	<i>Headteacher</i>
Agenda 1:	
- Overview of current school position/issues, specifically EY dept - Focus – recruitment of new teaching assistant to be employed for EY dept	<i>Headteacher</i>
Agenda 2:	
- DBS Checks - Employee training - Health & Safety risk/injury specific to EY dept - Safeguarding concerns - Updates	<i>Safeguarding Lead</i>
Agenda 3:	
- Effective communication with professionals. “National Professional Learning Pathways for ALN.” - Exerting control over the school’s decision-making process. - Effective documentation of pupils. - SLT – High quality, rigorous specialist support (with case study).	<i>ALNCo</i>
Agenda 4:	
- Outdoor learning and Forest Schools - Welsh Language	<i>EY Curriculum Lead</i>
Agenda 5:	
- Update on whole-school wellbeing strategy, - Mental Health Awareness - Week activities - Staff support pathways and collaborative approaches across ALN, safeguarding and curriculum.	<i>Wellbeing Lead</i>
Concluding Points	
- A.O.B - Action Plan - Thanks	<i>Headteacher</i>

School Head Teacher and Meeting Chair - Emily

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining this Teams meeting. Before we start on our agenda please can you confirm the following with a thumbs up.

Have you all got a secure connection and joined via Hwb, in line with the Welsh Government video – conferencing guidance (**Welsh Government, 2020**)?

Everyone: Give thumbs up

Have you all joined in a space that meets GDPR requirements, and your phones are on silent? (**UK Government, 2018; Welsh Government, 2023**).

Everyone: “Yes”

Lastly, has everyone received the agenda sent on the 17th November and there are no outstanding actions from the previous EY meeting on the 24th of October? (**Welsh Government, 2005; NASUWT, 2025**).

Everyone: “Yes, no outstanding actions”

Great, thanks all.

The meeting will last 35 minutes. I appreciate this is outside your normal working hours, and Maslow’s hierarchy framework theory reminds us, that staff also have basic and psychological needs to meet if they are to continue to thrive as effective leaders (**Maslow, 1943; Zhou et al., 2024**).

A benefit of this online meeting today is that the minutes will be transcribed from the audio recording, I will circulate these to your Hwb email accounts later tonight and update Mrs Jones, our deputy, who is unable to join us.

Ok let’s get started, recent National Education Union data suggests staff wellbeing is at its lowest since 2019 (**NEU, 2025**), so I want us to be proactive. If anything is affecting your wellbeing or your ability to work safely and effectively, please come and see me. I offer an open-door approach, as recommended by (**Leadership Trust, 2024**) because accessible leadership helps build trust, communication and early problem-solving.

It has been a very busy start to the new academic year, and I'd like to begin by recognising your hard work. You consistently go above expectations, supporting our pupils, their families, and the wider community.

We often receive positive feedback about your professionalism, communication and teamwork, which reflects strong multi-agency practice (**NSPCC, 2025**). This is supported in research on collaborative teamwork (**Stacey, 2009; Gasper, 2010**) and systems leadership (**Whitaker, 2018; Harris, 2020**), all of which show that well-aligned practice leads to better outcomes for children (**Aubrey, 2011; Mason et al., 2025**).

When collaboration breaks down, it can lead to safeguarding issues, as Dixon *et al.*, (2022) highlights.

As you know, working in education, *especially Early Years*, is fast-paced, and opportunities for praise and recognition can be overlooked (**Holmes, 2025**). I want to thank you all for your dedication in maintaining a positive environment for both staff and children. This reflects Handy's concept of '*task culture*' (**Handy, 1993; Jeanes, 2019**), and your collaborative problem-solving continues to show adaptability to the needs of our children.

Can I also ask that you continue offering recognition within your own team briefings? This has a real impact on morale (**Laar, 2015; Hunter, 2019**), especially during busy periods.

Everyone: "Yes, of course"

Thank you everyone, I am eager to introduce a '*shout-out*' section in our monthly staff update email. I feel that this would further support morale, particularly with our part-time and support staff such as the catering and office team who do so much for the running of our school (**O'Connell, 2023**). Thankyou Maka for your class letter sent to the caretaker last week for his help in preparing your new outdoor learning area. These small gestures – especially from our children - mean so much and don't cost us anything! Perhaps something we can consider for Irene's team in the kitchen post-Christmas lunch?

Nicola: “Lovely idea, I have noted that down and will email all staff to suggest a class thankyou card or letter?”

Maka: “Perhaps this could be part of a literacy learning objective that week – Christmas is around the corner?”

Great idea! Let’s suggest this in the next school council meeting and give the children autonomy in deciding how they would like to thank staff. That aligns well with our Rights Respecting School vision for 2026 in achieving gold status, particularly Article 12 on pupil voice and Article 13 on creative expression (**UNICEF, 2024**). This may seem like a challenge, but Locke and Latham’s goal setting theory emphasises that clear, specific and challenging goals can drive progress and that we all have a role to play, especially as department leaders in motivating the school to achieve this (**Locke and Latham, 1990**).

A few general updates then post our last meeting – I can confirm that attendance has improved across the school over the last month after the newsletter reminder– particularly in nursery which is fantastic! Although it is not compulsory for our students to attend nursery sessions (**UK Government, Education Act 1996**) we know that the benefits of starting both regular routines for our young children's holistic development so that they are school ready is of upmost importance (**Peckham, 2016; Welsh Government, 2025**), especially for our afternoon learners as research shows that attendance issues and are often more prevalent in this group- which has a direct link to learning and development (**Dorrian, 2021**) - *so well done Nicola and your nursery team!*

As discussed in our previous meeting, we have been experiencing issues with the new interactive whiteboard screens across the school, particularly in your classroom, Natasha. The IT contractor has assured me that they have inspected all units. If anyone has any issues or would like further training with the new equipment, can you email me before next Wednesday as I have the IT support partner on site to inspect and assist with training if needed.

Everyone: “Yes, thank you”

I know that there's a few self-proclaimed 'tech-dinosaurs' amongst us (*including myself*), and we can often get out our '*de Bono*' red hats on before feeling positive in the face of adapting to new technology (**de Bono, 1985**)! We must try to demonstrate positive attitudes so that we are confident facilitators of DCF in our classrooms to support learning in this curriculum objective (**Welsh Government, 2022**). I have already requested training myself, as your leader, I will always be prepared to undertake new learning and carry out duties as you all do daily – I feel this is an important attribute to demonstrate to your teams to allow for a strong sense of shared responsibility and teamwork so that we can grow in knowledge and competency together, this aligns with Eleanor Roosevelt's principles of Servant – Leadership (**Roosevelt, 1960; Coats, 2022**).

My last agenda point then today- we have Miss Javed starting on Monday she's our new Higher Level Teaching Assistant, please ensure planning and staffing ratios are checked before then!

When recruiting, I use McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (**McGregor, 1960**), to identify where their motivation lies. This is important when hiring for our early years department as your passion for the development and care of our young people really shows, and I am keen to maintain this level of practitioner quality. During her onboarding and settling stage, let's make Miss Javed feel welcome and confident in her new role. I know that last year we had some staffing complications in nursery when Miss Phillips reduced her hours. The team found it difficult to adjust to the temporary assistant and were reluctant to engage with new routine. There were some issues with personality clashes, along with differences of working styles and opinions. Therefore, I am keen to promote expectations from the off- set please, especially during the *forming stage* of this new team as outlined in Tuckman's model of group development (**Tuckman, 1965**), and to ensure that Miss Javed feels valued and respected in her new post and that her contributions matter (**Rodd, 2020**).

Natasha, thank-you for assisting our secretary with the onboarding documentation in relation to DBS and EWC registration as per Welsh Government guidelines (**Education Act, 2002; Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014**).

Before I hand over to Natasha, I'm going to switch briefly into a more *autocratic* style to keep our onboarding process efficient, as Lewin's leadership research suggests, sometimes clear, direct instruction is the quickest way forward (Lewin *et al.*, 1939). I will send the action plan from tonight's meeting to your hwb emails, please contact me if there's any discrepancies.

Natasha, please diarise Miss Javed's health and safety walk with the caretaker on the morning of the 1st of December.

Natasha: "Yes, I'll get that booked in."

Barbara, as she'll be working across Nursery and Reception, could you meet with her to go through key IDPs and support plans?

Barbara: "Of course, Tuesday morning works for me."

Maka, she's completed her TALP modules (**Welsh Government, 2021**) but will need support with Curriculum for Wales expectations. Please oversee her curriculum induction and update us in the next meeting.

Maka: "No problem, I'll take the lead on that."

Nicola, could you make sure she's added to the wellbeing notice board and included in staff socials?

Nicola: "Absolutely!"

Thank you all, the way you divide tasks so naturally really reflects Belbin's team-role theory (**Belbin, 1981**).

Barbara: "Your clear direction really supports us, it's a great example of transformational leadership in practice" (**Eaton et al., 2024**).

Thank you, Barbara, but as we know, there's no 'I' in team.

Right, Natasha, over to you for safeguarding.

Progression Step 1 Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead – Natasha

Thank you, Emily. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that some of what I share may be sensitive. If anything we discuss is triggering in any way, please feel free to ask for a pause or speak to either Nicola, our Well-being lead, or me afterwards for your own self-care. This ensures that, as a leadership team, we create and role-model an environment where we feel psychologically safe to engage (McKinsey & Company, 2021; Greer, 2024). This approach helps ensure that our whole staff feels safe and supported to speak openly, especially around safeguarding matters.

The World Health Organization (2024) reminds us that

‘Nearly 70% of people globally will experience a potentially traumatic event during their lifetime.’ Our leadership culture must reflect an awareness of that reality.

Nicola: “Absolutely, check-ins help us avoid re-traumatisation and strengthen the sense of safety needed for staff to engage confidently, allow time for emotional processing, as a framework for trauma-informed leadership (Fisk & Daoust, 2025; Wyatt, 2025)”.

DBS:

Firstly, I would like to bring to your attention that all Disclosure and Barring Service annual checks have been completed, in line with *Keeping Learners Safe* (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Our new HLTA has been advised to register their DBS on the update service within 30 days of receiving their certificate. This aligns with national safer recruitment practices (The Richard Inquiry, 2004; Cleary, 2012; UK Government, 2025).

We do have one gap; our secretary is not on the update service. Their 3-year certificate expiry is 5th January 2026; therefore, a new DBS check will need to be in place for the new term.

My recommendation, supported by safer recruitment best practice PATA (2021), UK Government (2025a), would be to start the DBS process check next week, in case there is a delay in the process, and stress the importance of registering with the government update service.

Although Estyn (2024) does not require long-serving staff without a three-month gap in service to undergo routine checks, our school's culture of safeguarding excellence goes beyond minimum compliance to ensure the ongoing suitability of our team and safeguarding all children in our care. If there is a delay, then a risk assessment will need to be completed.

Having a proactive risk management approach promotes safety in the setting and for children. It creates a culture of risk management in which risks are anticipated rather than dealt with in a reactive, firefighting manner (Torp, 2015).

Training Update:

All current staff are up to date with mandatory safeguarding training, including Prevent duty, Female Genital Mutilation, Cyber bullying, and domestic abuse.

This means we continue to meet our responsibilities under Care Inspectorate for Wales Standard 13 Welsh Government (2023a) which requires robust induction and ongoing training, as well as the *Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales* Welsh Government (2023b), which emphasises that to become enabling adults, staff must be supported by having current and relevant professional learning.

Our new HLTA is booked on a Category B safeguarding course on 2nd December as part of their induction. I also recommend that the HLTA complete the Wales Induction Framework Social Care Wales (2025) to support their transition from the EYFS approach in England to our Welsh pedagogy, to build confidence in delivering Curriculum for Wales expectations during inspections.

Allen *et al.* (2015) argue that this style of transformational leadership is beneficial in a school environment because it promotes staff growth and helps create a shared vision. Whilst Davis (2023) emphasises that it empowers staff, supports professional development, and aligns them around shared organisational goals, leading to improved performance and motivation. However, Yukl (2013) cautions that transformational leadership can overlook the importance of clear instructions, procedures, and regulatory expectations, which are essential in safeguarding and compliance-driven environments such as ours.

Audit:

I have completed an audit of the on-site accident and existing injuries forms. We have seen an increase in accidents on the jungle gym, mainly reported falls from the balancing beam. There were also some minor accidents on the exercise equipment caused by the Reception children.

I want to open this up to you all. What are your thoughts on outdoor supervision around this area, please?

Maka: "There are staff usually in the playground."

Barbara: "Ah, but this morning one staff member was called away to deal with an accident, leaving the area unsupervised."

Nicola: "Since it is a safety concern, should we update the risk assessment, gather feedback from our teams, and review at the end of the week?"

Great idea! Let us create a temporary rota to ensure this area is consistently supervised. We will gather staff views by the end of this week, agree on actions, and review them at the next meeting. This approach reflects Senge's (2010) Systems Thinking Model, recognising patterns in accidents, sharing perspectives, and making decisions collaboratively to improve safety. However, Fayol's Classical Management Theory would argue that where immediate safety risks exist, an autocratic leader directive approach should be used, as consultation could delay urgent action (Fells, 2000).

The audit also highlighted two children with a pattern of repeated accidents in the setting and at home. Looking at the data, these tend to be around bumping into equipment or tripping over their feet.

Barbara, would you be able to review their developmental profile, particularly physical development, and touch base with parents regarding hearing and vision checks, please?

Barbara ALNCo: "Of course, please send me the details after the meeting."

Safeguarding concerns:

We have recorded 10 cases of concern to the local authority since the last meeting. All cases have a 'no further assessment' result; however, we must still record concerns in children's care books, no matter how small the concern. Please remind your teams that everyone has a responsibility to safeguard and a duty to report, and that early reporting prevents issues from escalating, in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; Safeguarding Wales, 2023). Research supports a distributed leadership framework, especially in safeguarding children. Having collective responsibility rather than relying solely on one person empowers staff and fosters professional collaboration (Spillane *et al.*, 2001; Shal *et al.*, 2024).

New Safeguarding Update – Cuckooing:

Finally, local police have highlighted an emerging safeguarding concern in our area called cuckooing. This is where criminal gangs take over the homes of vulnerable adults, often where children are present. Staff may hear children mention unfamiliar adults staying in their home, so early awareness is essential.

Training on this will be available in December. In keeping with a feedback-informed approach, Argyris (1996) and Fullan (2006), we will invite everyone to complete a post-training self-assessment via the QR code.

This will help us understand actual levels of knowledge and confidence, rather than making assumptions from a leadership perspective. These results will guide any further safeguarding of Continuing Professional Development and reflect the needs of our team (Guskey, 2002).

Closing:

Before I hand over to Maka, does anyone have any questions, reflections, or concerns?

Everyone: No.

I also ask each of you to cascade key messages from today to your teams, ensuring consistency across the department, and gather feedback, particularly around outdoor supervision improvements. Thank you for your collaboration; it strengthens our safeguarding culture.

Progression Step 1 Teacher and EY Curriculum Lead – Maka Outdoor Learning/Forest School

Thank you, Natasha. As part of today's meeting, I'd like to outline key areas for our school to focus on in order to ensure the Curriculum for Wales is embedded throughout learning and practice. **Welsh Government (2023d)** highlights that one specific area that needs to be focused on is children learning outdoors. This term we have continued to build on and develop our use of outdoor learning and Forest School and made some great progress. I would like for us as a school to keep building upon these skills and really focus on how we use the outdoors to contribute to children's holistic development. According to **Tinney (2023)** the Curriculum for Wales strongly focuses on the benefits that outdoor learning has. An outdoor learning report by **Welsh Government (2023e)** suggests that outdoor learning is not only beneficial academically but also improves health and well-being. Similarly, **Waite and Aronsson (2022)** found that meaningful outdoor learning has a positive effect on pupils' overall well-being. This links nicely with your department Nicola, perhaps we can look at this together taking a collaborative leadership approach (**Rodd, 2013**) and focus on how we may use outdoor environments to support pupils who may be experiencing emotional pressures or poor mental health?

Nicola: "Absolutely, Maka. Outdoor environments can be incredibly grounding for children who are experiencing emotional pressure, and this aligns strongly with the Health and Well-being AoLE. I welcome working collaboratively with you (**Rodd, 2013**) to build outdoor emotional-regulation activities into our plans for *Mental Health Awareness Week*".

Great, thank you Nicola. I recently completed Forest School training and what I learnt helped me to adapt and enhance my practices so the children could get the best out of their learning. **Knight (2013)** and **Dabaja (2022)** highlight that Forest School encourages children to take risks and connect with the world around them supporting Froebel's theory that interacting with nature supports children's holistic development (**Josephidou and Kemp, 2022**). After completing the training there have been some positive changes and I can absolutely see this in my practice when working with the children. The training has allowed me to see learning through a different lens and I am now able to support the children in all areas of learning through the use of the outdoor environment. The findings from **Rekers and Waters-Davies (2021)** highlight that Forest School training helps teachers find new ways to enhance the children's experiences contributing to their engagement within their learning.

Moving forward this term, the Forest School Association has offered us the opportunity to train more staff through training provider **Cambium Sustainable Ltd (2024)**, I would like to offer this training to Nicola and Natasha. If you are happy to approve of this Emily?

Emily: "This sounds very exciting Maka, please could you send me an email directly with the details so I can review finances and staffing?"

Yes, of course, I will get that over to you early next week. In the meantime, having completed the full training myself, I would encourage all staff to receive some informal training and support from me following **Burns 1978** transformational leadership approach, building their confidence in teaching in the outdoors and encouraging them to use it more regularly (**Davies and Ryder, 2016**). Perhaps we can arrange this for one of our weekly staff meetings, if that is okay with you, Emily?

Emily: "Absolutely, sharing our skills and knowledge is how we develop and grow as a team".

That's great, thank you, Emily. This style of leadership will motivate and engage staff, helping them reach self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (**Maslow, 1943**).

In order to enhance our outdoor learning space, we could take a visionary leadership style approach, according to **Karwan, Hariri and Ridwan (2021)** this style of leadership gives clear direction on what the vision is, why it matters and how it will be achieved. This will give us the guidance we need to create the best learning environment we can for the children. I would also like to let all staff know I'll be putting together a document of outdoor learning ideas and how they link to Areas of Learning and Experiences (AoLEs) and the progression steps across the curriculum (**Welsh Government, 2022b**). I'll be sharing this document on a shared google drive so that everyone can contribute and add their own ideas which all staff will be welcome to use in their planning, taking a democratic leadership style (**Lewin, 1944; Goleman 2017**). It would be great to have a range of ideas before we head into the spring term, and I look forward to hearing them.

Welsh Language

Before we move on, I would like to touch base on our use of the Welsh Language and will discuss this in more depth during our weekly staff meeting next Wednesday. Following our Estyn Inspection last year, one of our main recommendations was to improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills (**Estyn, 2024a**). Whilst we have made some progress and use incidental Welsh well in the classroom, we need to work collectively and take whole school approach using Welsh throughout the day and in all areas of the school encouraging pupils to do the same.

It is important that we incorporate the Welsh language into our practice as it supports children with their cognitive and social development and helps them to be more connected culturally (**Baker and Wright, 2025**). This also creates a sense of belonging.

As you know to support the whole school in their Welsh language learning we have set up the pupil-led Criw Cymraeg team. This also reflects Carl Rogers person centred approach (**Swan, Chen and Bockmier-Sommers, 2020**). I have been working with the Criw Cymraeg team and meeting with them once a week during break time. This gives children the autonomy and freedom to lead and take on more

responsibilities aligning with a Kurt Lewin's traditional laissez-faire leadership style (**Lewin, 1944**).

In addition to our already established token system, the Criw Cymraeg team have come up with the idea of introducing Tocyn Iaiths - Welsh tokens. A Tocyn Iaith will be worth 5 points instead of 1, which teachers and the Criw Cymraeg team can give out to pupils using Welsh. Using rewards to encourage positive behaviour will follow a transactional leadership approach (**Burns, 1978 cited Burns, 2004**). This style of leadership provides the children with clear guidance and standards which will result in better outcomes (**Lawrence, 2024**). The Criw Cymraeg have also suggested that during our pupil of the week assemblies the pupils who have received the most Tocynnau iaith from each class will take home a Siaradwr yr Wythnos certificate, which will further motivate pupils as they may receive further praise or rewards at home as well. This reward system follows McKinsey's 7S's (**Suwnada and Nugroho, 2022**).

Nicola: "That's a great idea Maka! I look forward to implementing this as it will encourage the pupils."

This brings me onto my next point, the Criw Cymraeg team have also said they'd like to lead short sections of assemblies using the Welsh Language. This is something that will definitely get pupils on board and encourage them to use more Welsh around the school. This is an empowering leadership style as it gives the children more responsibility (**Cheong, et al, 2018**). Perhaps they can work with the member of staff leading next week's assembly, if you can oversee this, Emily?

Emily: "Ohh I'm leading the assembly next week, Maka! I very much support this idea and will arrange to meet with them as well as brushing up on my own Siarad Cymraeg!"

That's great to hear, thank you Emily. Taking a collaborative leadership approach working with both staff and the children will ensure we improve in this area, according to **Lawrence (2017)** using a collaborative leadership approach will allow us to work together as a school and share our ideas, helping us embed the Welsh language into everyday practice.

In addition to this I would also like to recommend that all staff complete the Camau free online course, it is easily accessible and will help to boost staff members confidence in using the Welsh Language (**Social Care Wales, 2025**).

Emily: “Thankyou Maka. Over to Barabara for Agenda 3 please”.

Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) - Barbara

I wanted to thank you Emily for allowing me to speak in front of you all on behalf of the responsibility I am undertaking for this school. As a team, we must carefully consider the ways in which we promote a shared working culture in our Early Years settings. (**Strehmel et al., 2019**).

I was fortunate enough to take on this duty in January 2021. This has been a critical moment for individuals like me as the Welsh Government made a statutory requirement for all non-maintained schools in Wales to designate a person, to be known as an Additional Learning needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo), who will take on the responsibility for co-ordinating provisional support for pupil with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in their learning environment (**WG 2024**). The ALNCo plays a key role in facilitating leadership skills across the school team.

It is important that the ALNCo communicates effectively with the SLT and governors to ensure that the school is fulfilling its aims and objectives under the Equality Act 2010, the Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET), and the Additional Learning Needs Code for 2021. This is an integrated, “collaborative process of assessment, planning, and monitoring” of support provided to ALN learners which facilitates early, transparent interventions. All children or young people regardless of their severity of learning disability are entitled with statutory support called individual development plan (IDP) in fulfilling their holistic development (**WG, 2022**).

I think it is necessary to reinforce that as an ALNCo, I am obliged to advise, supervise, and train staff about embedding different teaching methods that are highly suitable for pupils with ALN (**Pembrokeshire City Council, 2025**). I must aid their understanding about the interdependent nature of care and education. This is a leadership trait that I must show in this profession (**WG, 2019**). Since the new rollout of the ALNCo, the

Welsh Government has funded development for a “National Professional Learning Pathway for Additional Learning Needs” scheme across the entirety of Wales (**Coram Pacey, 2024**). This system sets out to focus on the implementation of effective, early interventions for pupils with ALN in early years settings. To cultivate a pedagogical leadership in the school community, prioritising children's growth, wellbeing, and learning (**Gwegoled Cymru, 2021; Fonsen et al., 2023**). An evidence-enquiry based approach is expected from professionals to ensure that support is allocated to pupils with ALN (**Hwb, 2023**). This aligns with one of the purposes for the New Curriculum for Wales, which is to allow pupils become confident individuals in their lives (**Education Wales, 2022; WG, 2022c**).

Barbara: Just to confirm with you, Maka and Nicola, as because you have students with ALN, do you want to undertake this course?

Maka: “Yes”

Nicola: “Oh yes please”

Barbara: If anyone else is keen on taking this course, then I will share this link with you all so that you can sign up for it.

Emily: “Thank you so much for this information, Barbara, as with Maka’s Forest School training information, would you be able to send me the information by email please as you know we have some tight budget restrictions this year. It might be a case of sending fewer staff that can then feedback post training?”

Barbara: Thank you Emily, I will get that over to you.

However, it is important for schools to ensure that ALNCo's are fully involved in influencing the decision-making process of the school (**WG, 2023c**). For example, De Bonos 6 Thinking Hat theory is a simple, effective parallel thinking process that allows professionals to see how students can become more productive and mindfully involved (**Hightower, 2019**). In spite of this, critics like Salem argue that De Bonos theory can be time consuming. For this process to work, it is key that everyone in the classroom works together (**Karmakar et al., 2024**). Moreover, the ALNCo has a pivotal role to play in the

school community, making sure that they collaborate with the SLT, and to place high-quality support for pupils with ALN (**ADYaCh, 2025**). Enabling learning is an integral part of the New Curriculum for Wales, and it has been developed such that professionals can create a pedagogically inclusive curriculum in their settings (**WG, 2019; Education Wales, 2022**). Similarly, ALNCo's must liaise with, and "provide relevant information to pupils and their parents about the learners ALN and the ALP being made" within the microsystem (**WG, 2020a**). They may wish to explore how pupils with learning needs are embedding strong relationships with professionals in the microsystem (**Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Antony, 2022**). Therefore, reflecting on my role as an ALNCo, staff must share good practice and establish direct collaboration to ensure integration of all early years' settings within wider early years services (**Bulter, 2016**). To obey a rigorous moderation of assessment and curriculum planning. Whilst taking into account certain circumstances that pupils with ALN might potentially encounter (**Donaldson, 2015**).

On the other hand, professionals, like me, are often adept at making thoughtful decisions as to what is the best way for pupils with ALN to develop in the impetus of their learning environment. Traditionally, there has been a significant emphasis on documenting the support the pupil needs. (**WG, 2018; WG, 2022d**). Ensuring compliance with the article 23 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 (**UK Government, 2015; UNICEF 2018**). Reflecting upon Schon's belief that professionals must demonstrate an ability to communicate with others and intervene to support pupils with ALN (**Pitsoe and Malia, 2013; Ang, 2022; University of Hull, 2025**).

Barbara: Ladies, we should reinforce to pupils in our assembly that ALN students are just as unique as other pupils. What do you think of it?

Everyone: "Oh yes, that is a good idea".

Barbara: *We can review this idea on the 5th of January.*

Lastly, the ALNCo must ensure that they can secure the best possible services, such as Speech and Language Therapies (SLTs) for ALN pupils to give them high-quality,

rigorous provision as required (**Swansea Council, 2025**). Personally, after encountering a lot of pupils with ALN, I noticed how essential it is that professionals can create a pedagogically inclusive curriculum (**WG, 2022e**). We are expected to have a new pupil diagnosed with osteogenesis imperfecta, a genetic disorder which causes his bones to become brittle. Whilst I am in the process of visiting his previous setting, I will hear more details about his condition. I will report this to Emily and Nicola. We will spend some time with parents of this pupil to show the school site. I hope that his transition from Nursery to Reception will feel at ease, given that he will stay in your class Nicola.

I hope that as a team, we can be transparent and honest to ourselves. Amidst the challenges we may face, reflecting on Lencioni's pyramid of five levels of dysfunction of a team, it is important that we can work together in trust, realising our plans for the future (**Zartler, 2017**).

Nicola: "Thank you, Barbara. Please keep me informed after your visit to his previous setting — I'm very happy to work with you to ensure his transition into Nursery is smooth and well supported. This aligns with Spillane's (2005) model of distributed leadership, where shared professional responsibility strengthens outcomes for children. I'll also prepare an individual well-being support plan so his emotional and physical needs are fully considered during his settling period."

It has been a pleasure to speak with you all as a ALNCo. I will now give Nicola the floor.

Progression Step 1 Teacher (Nursery) and Wellbeing Lead – Nicola

Thanks, Barbara. As you know, Mental Health Awareness Week begins on the 14th of December.

As a school, our approach reflects Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943): children cannot fully engage in learning until their emotional and psychological needs are secure.

Recently, we've noticed increased anxiety and low mood during transitions, so our week will include creative activities, mindfulness and time to talk to provide a safe, supportive environment (Anna Freud Centre, 2021; Welsh Government, 2022f; Foundation Years,

2025). This also supports onboarding for our new HLTA, with well-being check-ins forming part of her induction.

We've designed the week to be enriching *and* realistic. Research highlights common challenges in school well-being programmes, such as costs, staffing capacity and meeting diverse needs (Public Health England, 2019; Education Endowment Foundation, 2023; Foundation Years, 2025). To address this, we've balanced external providers with in-house sessions and ensured activities are inclusive and adaptable, in line with Welsh Government (2022f) guidance on proportionate, child-centred approaches.

Our planned activities reflect a collaborative, whole-school approach to well-being. On Monday, Elizabeth from *Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds* will deliver yoga and smoothie sessions, funded through our PTFA partnership — a strong example of community collaboration supporting pupil well-being (Welsh Government, 2022).

We're also introducing daily reflection time to support emotional regulation and metacognition, drawing on reflective models such as Gibbs (1988) and Driscoll (2007).

On Thursday, Creative Crafters will lead a sensory art session, and the Reception team have adapted their sport and craft activities in response to last term's feedback — ensuring equitable access and avoiding children having to choose between sessions (Estyn, 2024b).

All activities align with the Health and Well-being AoLE within the Curriculum for Wales (2022), supporting emotional literacy, physical development and self-regulation. They also reflect Bruner's (1977) scaffolding theory — children take risks and learn more deeply when they feel emotionally secure.

From a leadership perspective, I'm drawing on Goleman's (2000) emotional intelligence to model empathy and relational leadership, (Goleman, 2017), while promoting the EAP (DfE, 2023) to reduce emotional labour pressures. This aligns with Rogers *et al.*, (2015) humanistic focus on valuing lived experience.

Maka: "That links nicely with the Health and Well-being AoLE, doesn't it?"

Nicola: Exactly — when pupils feel emotionally supported, they're far more able to engage, take risks and access the wider curriculum (Bruner, 1977).

Barbara: "That's so important, Nicola. Some of our children with additional learning needs express stress differently. Are you planning any resources for staff to identify those subtle signs?"

Absolutely, Barbara, and your point links closely to ALN practice. Some of our neurodivergent pupils express stress through behaviours that can easily be misunderstood. The resources I've selected from Barnardo's (2025) and the NSPCC Learning (2025a) focus on emotional regulation and trauma-informed practice, helping staff distinguish between emotional need, sensory overload and behavioural communication. This aligns with Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory, which emphasises how early experiences of trust and autonomy support long-term resilience.

To support staff as leaders, I'm also drawing on Path-Goal Theory (House, 1971) by identifying and removing barriers that hinder well-being, such as stigma, workload pressures and lack of time. Providing emotional support and clear guidance helps motivate staff towards shared goals, which Northouse (2022) highlights as central to effective leadership.

Building on Natasha's earlier safeguarding update, particularly around Cuckooing, we will also include guidance for staff on recognising emotional or behavioural indicators of wider family vulnerability. Strengthening emotional awareness enables earlier identification of safeguarding concerns and contributes to maintaining a trauma-informed whole-school culture.

Natasha: "Thanks, Nicola. Strengthening staff confidence in recognising those subtle emotional signs really supports safeguarding."

Absolutely, Tash. That reflects distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), with each of us contributing our expertise to strengthen shared practice. It also aligns with Catalytic and Empowering Leadership (Pielstick, 2000), enabling staff to take ownership of early identification and support.

To extend this, we'll invite staff to take part in short reflective sessions after each activity, drawing on Gibbs (1988) and Driscoll (2007). Reflection is central to pedagogical leadership (Moyles, 2006) and supports ongoing professional learning across the team.

Emily: "I love that idea, reflection is something Estyn often comment on in their inspections. Have you linked this plan to our self-evaluation framework?"

Yes, absolutely. Estyn (2021) emphasise that well-being is integral to effective learning and leadership, and our plan aligns directly with those expectations. Our approach to staff support, including the EAP, also reflects recommendations from the Anna Freud Centre (2021) for early years settings.

- For evaluating impact, we'll be using the McKinsey 7S Model (McKinsey & Company, 2008) to ensure that our systems, leadership style, staff development and shared values are aligned with our well-being priorities, supporting consistency across the whole-school approach without placing additional workload on staff.

Maka: "That's quite comprehensive. How will we involve the children?"

We'll use the Thrive (2025) approach to support emotional development through play, stories and creative expression. Activities such as our 'Worry Monster' boxes, yoga and a gratitude wall encourage what Vygotsky (1978) describes as the social construction of knowledge, helping children develop emotional language through interaction.

Each class will also hold a short circle-time discussion, which reflects Black and Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid by balancing 'concern for people' with 'concern for results', ensuring we prioritise both emotional safety and learning outcomes.

Barbara: "That sounds wonderful. It's also reflective of Transactional Leadership (Burns, 1978), establishing mutual trust and clear expectations between leaders and staff."

Yes, and alongside those transactional elements, I'm also drawing on transformational leadership (Bass, 2008) to inspire the whole team to see well-being as a shared

mission. This links with reflective practice leadership (Rodd, 2013), encouraging staff to continually evaluate what works.

We're also incorporating empowering leadership by giving teachers autonomy to design and share their own well-being activities. Where appropriate, this includes elements of Laissez-faire leadership (Lewin, 1939; Leadership Success, no date), promoting trust and professional independence.

Finally, we'll evaluate the impact of the week using Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, using reflection to inform planning for next term. This collaborative, multi-leadership approach shows how safeguarding, ALN, curriculum and pastoral care work together, demonstrating distributed leadership across the setting.

School Head Teacher and Meeting Chair – Emily

Emily: “Thank you, Nicola. This approach really ties leadership, learning, and well-being. What really stands out today is how our different leadership styles complement each other. As Likert (1961) suggests, high-performing teams draw on participative leadership, and that's clearly reflected in how each of you contributes to decision-making. By combining clear structures with shared responsibility, we continue to strengthen our culture of care, safety and professional growth. This also aligns with Aubrey, Godfrey and Harris's (2013) findings that effective early year's leadership promotes equity, shared responsibility and improved well-being across school communities.”

Concluding points:

Thank-you again everyone for your time this evening and valid contributions to our meeting. Before summarising our action points, are there any other matters you would like to discuss?

Everyone: “No”

Just a couple of points from me, I won't be on site on the 11th and 12th of December as I will be attending the ASCL Cymru annual leadership conference (**Association of**

School and College Leaders, 2025) and so Mrs Jones our deputy has made herself available should there be any queries over those days.

I am in the process of planning for our INSET day next February and with my aim to better understand and support you all – I am liaising with a specialist in organisational psychology and behaviour who can help us explore personality types based on the works of Myers and Briggs (**Myers and Myers, 1980; Myers and Briggs Foundation, 2024**). I am currently reviewing research relating to this theory as it has been criticised for ‘*pin holing*’ conceptions (**Stein and Swan, 2019; Randall et al., 2017; Pittenger, 1993**) compared to the other more spectrum-based models such as the ‘*Big Five*’ (**Costa and McCrae, 1985; Kabigting, 2021**) which I feel could be more reflective and useful in applying to assessment of an educational team. I will update you on developments with this in the January meeting and welcome any thoughts or experiences you may have of this to see if you also feel it beneficial to our school.

Thankyou everyone, the minutes for the meeting evening will be circulated early next week to your HWB email accounts, if there are any discrepancies, please let me know by Friday the 5th next week and keep an eye out for your action plan email. A reminder that our next meeting will be at 4pm, *in school*, on Monday the 5th of January, thankyou again for your continued support and contribution.

Meeting adjourned at: 5.45pm, enjoy the rest of your evening!

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