

Starting at my Feet

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My school:

On the 6th of January 2016, my placement school in Gowerton was opened. The school is situated on a section of The Elba playing fields which allows for easy access to large sports fields and facilities. When opened by the Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of the City and County of Swansea Councillor David Hopkins, staff and pupils celebrated the joining of two schools onto one site. This £6.8 million venture was funded by the Welsh Government and the City and County of Swansea.

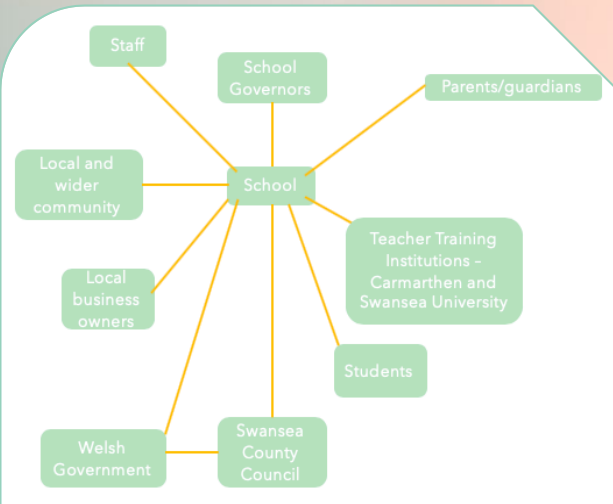
Throughout the building stage, staff and children were encouraged to maintain involvement by speaking to the builders from Interserve Limited to discuss the build and their vision for the school as well as taking photographs to document the build. Pupils also decided to leave items in a time-capsule to be buried at the new site, with the hope of the historic occasion being remembered through Welsh history.

The school sued local contractors to build the school and maintain community involvement. The company reported reaching their “100% target in student work experience placements and overachieved in their targets for apprentice completions”. This furthers the schools vision for continual community involvement. Additionally, alongside the construction workers, the schools staff arranged a football tournament , managing to achieve £2’000 for the school. a huge project such as this created jobs in the area in addition to providing young people with apprenticeship opportunities. It is clear that community is at the heart of the schools vision.

“Friends of Gowerton” (FOG) sees key stakeholders (see image) come together to form a committee. Unlike the PTA I experienced in Primary School, the FOG involves local people with or without an immediate connection to the school. For example; business owners. The FOG communicate via social media groups chats to advertise local events and organise events.

What the FOG does....

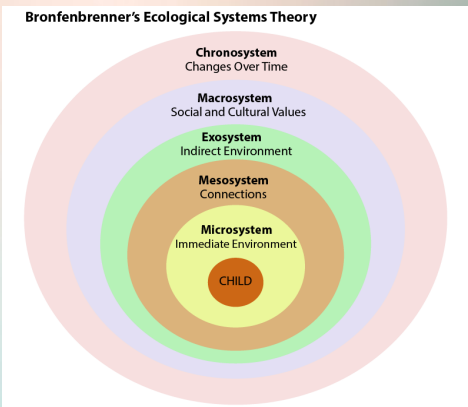
- Develop relationships with local businesses, the Co-op sponsored the school for a year raising £8’500 and helped to promote healthy eating by donating fruit
- Low price uniform shop
- “Gowertots” playgroup run in the school hall in conjunction with the local Church
- Arrange for authors and illustrators to visit
- Forest school development



My placement school understands the importance of strong relationships between home, school and the community. Donaldson’s vision for increased digital competency in education is recognised by my placement school therefore they make use of apps such as “Seesaw” and “ClassDojo” to update the parents/guardians on their child’s homework and progress.

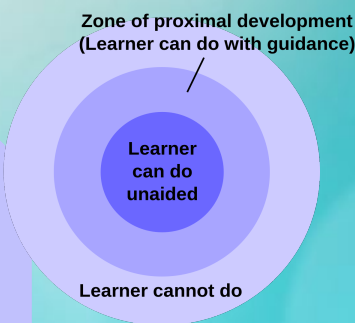
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model

Bronfenbrenner’s theory suggests the environment the children live in has the most profound effect on their education. Each level refers to the varying interactions children have throughout their lives from their home to the area they live in. Things they experience at home will have an effect on their behaviour in school and subsequently the relationships they form . For example; a child who witnesses abuse at home will be reluctant to form friendships at school and have difficulty trusting adults.



Impact of Curriculum 2022

With the new national curriculum being implemented in September 2022, The Welsh Government states that teachers will not be told “how to teach”, but rather “the essential knowledge and skills every child should have” meaning teachers have freedom to mould the curriculum to suit their learners needs (BBC 2014). Therefore both teachers and learners will lead autonomous lives thus “ready to play a full part in life and work”.

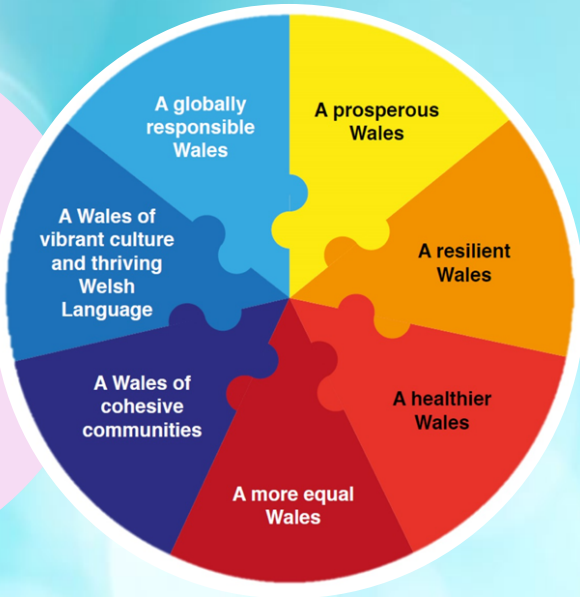


How the school is organised...

The school is organised into 12 classes all named after woodland creature this is because of large class sizes. For example; Year 1 is split into two classrooms, Year 1 Dragonflies and Year ½ Ants. A particular feature I love about the school is their “Learning Street”. Situated between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 1 and 2 the “Learning Street” consists of various seating areas with computers, library and music corner. This area allows mixed ability learning outside of the classroom. For example; every Monday morning all the classes join to practice flashcards. Vygotsky’s theories on scaffolding and peer tutoring encourages mixed-ability learning using the “Zone of Proximal Development” and the idea of a “More Knowledgeable Other”.

Gowerton

In conjunction to the Welsh Governments national plan to promote well-being through new legislation within the well-being of Future Generations Wales Act (2015), Swansea aims to reduce poverty and its impacts by “empowering local people through involvement and participation”. This again outlines the importance of community involvement.



Gowerton Ward Profile:

- Approximately 5’100 (2017 statistics)
- Area – 7.65 km2 (2011 census)
- Population – 48.4% Male and 51.6% Female
- Population Density – 671 people per km2
- Major employers – Swansea Council (schools) and local centre businesses
- Bordered by – Loughor, Dunvant, Penclawdd, Fairwood, Cockett, Kingsbridge, and Killay
- People owning their house with a mortgage or loan – 34.9% - demonstrating low poverty rates
- Employed (part-time and full-time) – 57.2% with only 2.5% of people unemployed

Inclusive education means the school and classroom is accessible to all students , disability or otherwise. Therefore allowing them to participate in every aspect of education. This links to Donaldson's purpose of being “ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued member of society” for those who need additional support; as a result of a physical disability, learning disability or cognitive disability most main-stream schools schools have an ALENCO (Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator), alternatively additional needs schools are available. For inclusive education to be effective, teachers must understand good practice and additional learning needs. Positive attitudes towards inclusion is important to creating an effective, inclusive classroom (Savage and Erten, 2015).

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