

Case Study 2: Ysgol Plascrug

Ysgol Plascrug identified that the self-evaluation process for their learners' independence was critical to the successful development of the proposed curriculum changes. They ensure that pupils have ownership over their learning, and 'Pioneer Weeks' have been developed based on topics suggested by the pupils. These weeks allowed teachers to refine their processes that are central to all learning experiences.

Context and background to the effective or innovative practice

As a pioneer school for curriculum development, the self-evaluation process identified that fostering learners' independence was critical to the successful development of the proposed curriculum changes. This would be paramount in order to continue to develop positive attitudes to learning and to raise levels of attainment, achievement and wellbeing.

The four purposes of the new curriculum became the driving force to ensure that curricular and extra-curricular learning activities being planned sought to develop pupils' independence through:

- a pupil-led vigorous thematic approach to curriculum planning
 - further developing the effectiveness of assessment for learning strategies
 - effective child centred collaborative additional learning needs (ALN) planning
 - further developing the roles and effectiveness of many pupil councils
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Description of nature of strategy or activity

Ensuring that pupils have ownership over their learning was central to the process. Following consultation, 'Pioneer Weeks' were developed based on topics suggested by the pupils and agreed by the school council, for example 'Prehistoric Porthole' and 'Going for Gold'.

These weeks allowed staff to refine their pedagogy, ensuring that the four purposes were central to all learning experiences. As a result, pupils gain an understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn effectively. For example, independent challenges within the foundation phase, inspired by the pupils' ideas, demonstrate how well pupils apply skills independently.

Foundation phase principles were introduced across key stage 2, initially focusing on Year 3. Funding enabled experienced foundation phase staff to work with Year 3 teachers to develop pedagogy. Evolving rich learning opportunities through independent challenges and learning areas in key stage 2 further developed learners' independence. Effective use is made of the local environment and expertise within the community to support innovative learning experiences. This approach is now embedded across the school.

Assessment for learning is central to teaching and learning and pupils apply different strategies to evaluate their learning, which contributes to developing mature and effective thinking skills. Highly effective verbal and written teacher feedback contributes effectively to developing confident independent learners.

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ALN provision is child centred. One-page-profiles provide high-quality individualised provision for specific pupils, supported by highly effective intervention programmes. The staff who support pupils are well informed and support their needs well, whilst developing pupils' independence.

Pupil voice is strengthened through a number of highly effective pupil committees, including the school council, who take on an active part in decision-making. The highly effective 'Bronze Ambassadors' lead activity sessions that develop pupils' physical skills, whilst the 'Cryw Cymraeg' support younger pupils to develop their confidence in using Welsh.

A range of rich learning experiences, which embed the four purposes, has contributed to developing successful independent learners within the learning community.

What impact has this work had on provision and learners' standards?

Focusing on developing independent learners of all ages and abilities has significantly impacted on standards, levels of wellbeing and provision. Pupil voice is at the heart of all planning and they have an increased sense of ownership of their learning.

Successful assessment for learning strategies drive teachers' curriculum planning, ensuring that learning experiences cater for all pupils whilst developing independence. For example, many reluctant writers have overcome difficulties as they are engrossed in their learning. Teachers skillfully use pupils' ideas to provide a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum, rooted in Wales and its culture. In conclusion, themes that highlight the rich relationships that exist between the areas of learning and experience are the most effective.

Pupils are enthusiastic and display an exceptionally positive attitude to learning, knowing that their voice is heard and directly impacts on what and how they learn.

How have you shared your good practice?

The school has shared this practice through:

- the National Pioneer Schools' conference
- a case study presented to local consortia
- county headteachers' meetings
- visits to school by groups of teachers / ITE lecturers

Useful links

<http://www.plascrugprimary.co.uk/>