

Appendix 10 – Electives school report

Electives Experience Report

Introduction

Bore da, good morning. Thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity to share my experiences with you today. I wish to start my presentation by thanking all members of the school for the support offered to me throughout the duration of the electives experience and, indeed, the experiences I have received on two previous PTEs. Your ethos has definitely helped me develop my practice at the very start of my career and I am very grateful for this.

Context

As detailed in the electives experience handbook, this presentation will take the form of an Estyn report on effective practice, with my personal observations and research contributing to the overall report.

A school located in Pembrokeshire that, at the time of the last inspection in 2016, had 598 pupils on role, aged between 3 and 11 years old. However, upon arrival at the school, I was informed that the current figure is estimated to be 700 pupils, with approximately 33% of pupils being eligible for free school meals. This is higher than the national average. 25% of pupils were identified as ALN in the Estyn report of 2016.

High expectations are held for all children and staff within the school, with staff and pupil collaboration being central to the sharing and development of the schools aims. Currently, the SDP focuses on the development and implementation of Donaldson's new curriculum for Wales, as the school is categorized as a 'pioneer school,' whilst providing a "inclusive, caring and happy environment in which children feel safe, secure, valued and respected." (school handout) This is complimented by the 'Rights Respecting School' ethos which is evidently implemented around the school through its incorporation onto wall display's and assembly talks.

Discussion

Almost all children were aware of what a 'Rights Respecting School' is and what their rights as a child are. The articles detailing the children's rights are written on the displays around the school in child friendly language and vocabulary, with assembly time further contributing to the children's awareness of their rights and responsibilities. In the classroom these rights

are often referred to and incorporated within sessions, in addition to the responsibilities of the children being discussed and considered alongside their rights. I found this pedagogy to be particularly effective in making children aware of their rights and, thus, strongly links to the “ethical, informed citizens” purpose of the new curriculum. (Donaldson, 2015) Therefore, this is a pedagogy that I will take forward in my career.

The numerous wall displays around the school links learner’s work and experiences to the new curriculum and the four proposed purposes of Donaldson’s curriculum. Moreover, all displays are bright in colour, bold in statements and clear in the messages they convey to both pupils and staff. This ties in effectively with the “visible learning” strategy, developed by Professor John Hattie, that is effectively incorporated into each learner’s daily experiences. This is achieved through skill slips and RAG Rating systems that allow pupils to regularly review their work and their performance in the task and identify their strengths and areas for further development. This allows children to visibly see where they are currently in their learning and what they need to do in order to move forward in their learning.

This ability to identify where they are in their learning and what they need to do in order to further their skills can be seen to link with a “Growth Mindset.” The school incorporates Dweck’s “Growth Mindset” successfully throughout the school and learners are aware of the difference having a “Growth Mindset” can make on their learning journey. Dweck proposes that those with a “Growth Mindset” are ready to thrive on challenges in their learning and believe that learning new things and their intelligence can be developed. Thus, they are resilient to challenges and persevere in tasks that sometimes get them “stuck in the pit.” This, after all, is a clear desire of the new curriculum for Wales, that aims to create “resilient” and “capable” learners. (Donaldson, 2015) Conversely, Dweck suggests that those with “Fixed Mindsets” often struggle to embrace challenge as they tend to believe that their skill set is fixed and cannot be developed further. This can be seen to be in contrast to the aims of the new curriculum, including those mentioned by Donaldson 2015 above. Therefore, adopting a “Growth Mindset” could be argued to be a significant factor when developing and implementing the new curriculum for Wales and is a vitally important ethos that I wish to take forward in my career.

Research for the Research Project Findings

The question that I proposed at the beginning of the electives experience was:

“Can being involved in sports influence children’s well-being?”

To research this question and collect both qualitative and quantitative data in order to inform my conclusion, the following methodologies were adopted throughout the electives experience:

“Pupil questionnaire; staff questionnaire; observation and note taking; learning walks; and interviews with both staff and pupils.”

It is important to note that, at the time of writing, I have received 56 responses to the children’s questionnaire and 13 responses from the staff questionnaire.

Initial reflections upon my data has suggested to me that sports and physical activity is very important to both pupils and staff, with 84% and 77% of children reporting that they enjoy taking part in sports and that sports are important to them respectively. Moreover, various reasons were provided by the children that informed their answers to the enjoyment and importance of sports questions, as mentioned in the prior sentence. Such answers ranged from the ability of sports to keep them fit and healthy, to enjoying being part of a sports session for the simple reason that it is fun. This led to the data revealing that 84% of children desired for more sports and physical activity sessions to be provided in the school.

It must be remembered, though, that other children reported that they did not want to participate in further sports and physical activity sessions in school. Some teachers suggested, in their responses, that a greater range of choice in sporting sessions and the further development of a safe environment in which children can fully participate in a sports session without fear of embarrassment may be a way forward for encouraging these and other children to participate in sports. This may help develop children’s well-being further, as some children reported feeling emotions such as shyness and boredom during sports or physical activity sessions. A safer learning environment and choice over the activity and level of engagement required may develop these children’s well-being further, as 80% of children stated that sports and physical activity made them feel happier after such sessions. This finding compliments the opinions of some staff, with 70% and 69% of staff reporting that most or all children have demonstrated an increase in their well-being and their engagement in sessions following a sports and physical activity session.

Interestingly, upon interviewing two Year 6 pupils about their experiences of sports and physical activity, I was informed that they would be interested in “running” a sports club for younger children in the school in order to encourage those children to become involved in sports, whilst simultaneously increasing their well-being. Some research suggests that sports

can have a significant impact on numerous areas of children's lives, particularly socially, as reduced truancy, improved health and fitness and improved attitudes towards learning are just three of many proposed benefits gained by children through their participation in sports.

(Bailey, 2007) Available at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0013191042000274196?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

Therefore, it may be a possibility to develop pupils well-being further through engagement in sporting activities led by peers, rather than staff.

Summary and Conclusion

Once again, I would like to thank all members of the school for their help, advice and support offered throughout my elective experience and through the two previous PTEs. I have successfully gathered data that will inform my extended essay project at UWTSD, in addition to observing effective practice in all parts of the school through the incorporation of a "Growth Mindset" throughout the school. In combination with the UNCRC conveyed to children in appropriate language, children's well-being is promoted throughout the school and children are set to become "healthy and confident, ethically informed" members of society, as Donaldson proposes as the very purposes of the new curriculum for Wales. (Donaldson, 2015)