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For more information on the **Central South Consortium** or if you would like to contribute to this newsletter, contact us at [communications@cscjes.org.uk](mailto:communications@cscjes.org.uk) or call 01443 744500.

Sign up here to keep up to date with the latest news and updates from the region in our weekly school bulletin and follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

## Getting Ready for Curriculum for Wales

*Louise Muteham, Central South Wales Challenge Development Officer at Central South Consortium*

Hopefully by now you have started to feel a buzz in the system around #creatingthecclimateforchange. By April 2019 all schools need to be at the developing section of the readiness tool so that they are able to enact the draft curriculum.

To support this schools can access Curriculum for Wales Training Materials. CSC has produced a series of presentations to support schools in developing the curriculum for Wales. They are designed for you to deliver to your staff. They can be used as a series of three presentations or in isolation depending on the current needs of your staff.



**Presentation 1 - Essential knowledge:** This [presentation](#) has been created to ensure that all schools in CSC know the essential information relating to curriculum reform. The content of this presentation is a minimum requirement of knowledge for the Autumn Term of 2018. All staff in schools should be familiar with the information provided.

**Presentation 2 - Bringing it together:** This [presentation](#) has been created to ensure that all schools in CSC are able to see and exploit the links in curriculum reform. There are a number of significant changes taking place; this should allow staff to consider the professional learning they will need in order to enact the curriculum for Wales.

**Presentation 3 - Pedagogy:** This [presentation](#) is designed to encourage schools and practitioners to develop pedagogy in readiness for the curriculum reforms. It seeks to allow schools and practitioners to refine their policy and practice in a meaningful way

that secures the best outcomes for learners. It is designed to promote and facilitate professional dialogue, not to prescribe or model pedagogy. Through engaging in the presentation schools should be able to begin talking about pedagogy in their setting and developing a shared language in order that they can begin to engage in professional learning that best meets their needs.

### **Curriculum for Wales Readiness Menu of Support**

As part of the CSCs commitment to a self-improving school system a [menu of support](#) has been created to show schools the support that is available for different aspects of reform. There is no one recipe for school improvement; leaders need to critically consider their needs and the professional learning offer in order to make decisions about what best meets the needs of their school. The menu shows different professional learning activities and how schools may engage with them, for example, a school might develop pedagogy through their SIG, attend a hub programme to support the leadership of learning, use cluster working to develop assessment and a pioneer school could be supporting them to develop innovative learning experiences. For schools in challenging circumstances bespoke support can be arranged.

For any further information please contact Debbie Lewis, Senior Lead for Teaching and Learning on [Debbie.Lewis@cscjes.org.uk](mailto:Debbie.Lewis@cscjes.org.uk) or Dawn McGowan, Project Manager on [Dawn.McGowan@cscjes.org.uk](mailto:Dawn.McGowan@cscjes.org.uk)

## **Supporting NQTs through the Statutory Induction Process**

*Heather Jones, External Verifier for NQTs at Central South Consortium*



Many of our Newly Qualified Teachers have started their first few weeks in schools across the consortium full of optimism, passion and excitement. However, many of us experienced teachers are all too aware of the realities of teaching in the real world. The good news is that 90% of NQTs in Wales are employed within 6 months of completing training (on contract or short term supply work). However, only 70% are still in the profession after 5 years. A survey conducted by the EWC (April 2017) found that 33.6% of Welsh school teachers planned to quit in the following 3 years and 88% of teachers said they couldn't handle the workload. The Guardian (July 2017) reported that a quarter of all teachers who qualified in 2011 have already left the profession.

Many students leave ITE awarded with QTS thinking they have the skills needed to prepare them for what lies ahead. They have had classroom based experiences and been involved in educational research, but for many it's not until they enter the classroom for the first time as a qualified teacher that they realise the knowledge and skills they need to meet the expectations on them to fulfil the role effectively and be accountable for providing the best education to children. Starting out as a NQT can be incredibly challenging!

No one would argue that the difference between a good and bad teacher has a huge effect on levels of learner achievement and attainment. When new teachers are not prepared for the realities of the classroom, schools – and children – pay the price.

We at Central South Consortium realise the responsibility we have to build on new teachers' enthusiasm and foster their development properly. If they are to remain in the profession and become high calibre educators, they need to feel supported and fairly treated by their colleagues and employers. Provision of quality mentoring support should equip new teachers with skills and habits to provide a firm foundation for career-long professional development.

The school based Induction Mentor has a key role in monitoring, supporting and making fair and evaluative assessments on the conduct and efficiency of a newly qualified teacher against the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (at induction level). Induction Mentors across the consortium receive training that clarifies their roles and responsibilities, which are fundamental to positive and effective induction. In undertaking their role, they provide and co-ordinate support including coaching, mentoring, and identifying needs and strengths against the standards for induction. They provide opportunities for professional dialogue that encourages NQTs to reflect on their practice and record their professional learning experiences through written reports and records via the Professional Learning Passport. Trained External Verifiers quality assure roles and processes in schools that employ NQTs to ensure they receive a high quality experience that is fair and equitable allowing rigorous and consistent assessment to take place at the end of the induction period.

In addition to schools' own induction programmes, the Consortium funds the Aspire Programme that provides high quality professional learning for NQTs across Hub schools. This programme, written and facilitated by experienced classroom practitioners focuses on curriculum reform, Welsh Government national priorities, the National Mission for Wales and the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership. The six session programme provides insight into professional research, provides examples of good practice, shares teaching resources and ideas and allows the opportunity to collaborate and network with others setting a platform for long term professional development. The sessions are also a vehicle for additional support in the induction process, through guidance on reflective practice via the Professional Learning Passport.

Taking on the role of an Induction Mentor or External Verifier can be one of the most rewarding experiences in a leadership or teaching role for an experienced practitioner, presenting an opportunity to analyse and share expertise, and thus furthering their professional development. We owe it to our NQTs to provide them with the necessary support to assist them in becoming highly effective practitioners. Personally, as an External Verifier and co-ordinator of IMs and EVs, I feel hugely privileged to have a role that includes working with Newly Qualified Teachers and their mentors.

We are unlikely to 'keep hold' of all our teachers currently in their first year of teaching, but there is a lot we can do to ensure we have provided them with the necessary support and training that gives them a 'good start' on their career pathway. The new standards emphasise the importance of professional learning and the personal responsibility of a teacher to engage actively in the continuous refinement of their own practice. Having passed induction, the first part of a newly qualified teacher's journey may be accomplished (and deserves a 'pat on the back' for getting there!), but teachers can't afford to become complacent. To be competent in the profession, learning must be an on-going process that continues throughout a teaching career.

The right to education should indeed mean the right to a qualified teacher, but this does not refer to a teacher who simply has a qualification. Professional learning doesn't stop at induction and teaching is a profession not mastered in the first year. It may be more apt to say that the right to education should mean the right to a teacher who is proactive in ensuring they are the best they can be throughout their career.

# Creative Learning across Central South

*Dan Allen, Regional Officer for Creative Learning through the Arts at the Arts Council of Wales*

*'It has made me far more open to change and being flexible with the way that learning develops. Having the confidence to change track or go with their [pupils] ideas has been a noticeable change in my approach to learning and teaching... Oracy and writing skills have improved for the learners we were targeting but there were some learners who we hadn't specifically targeted who really shone in this project too! Giving the learners scope to assess their own learning was really interesting and their comments and reflections truly show how much they got out of the project.'*

Classroom teacher, Central South



As we move into the final academic year of the current model of the Lead Creative Schools Scheme it is the perfect time to reflect on the progress that we have made with schools since the launch of Arts Council of Wales' 'Creative learning through the arts – an action plan for Wales' in March 2015. To date, in the Central South region alone, 115 schools have been Lead Creative Schools with a further 16 schools engaged with the programme through our School-to-school support strategy; 350 teachers from the region have attended our 2-day intensive training course on creative learning; in excess of 5000 pupils have benefitted from a Lead Creative Schools project; £1.9 million has been invested in schools through grant payments, creative agent time and staff training. The headline figures are impressive but merely scratch the surface of the impact, experience and expertise that is being developed across the region.

Our approach has been simplistic, yet effective. Schools are matched with a Creative Agent to diagnose a challenge on their School Development Plan and to prescribe a creative practice as a possible 'cure.' After carefully constructing a project framework and selecting Creative Practitioners, classroom teachers then work with one or more artists to bring the bespoke plan, and the curriculum, to life. Benchmarking pupils in relation to attainment, attitude to learning and creativity allows schools to reflect on the progress made 6-14 weeks later during the evaluation period.

Teachers are sharing with us that they are seeing improvements in pupils' persistence, collaboration and confidence as well as improved attainment outcomes. However, in addition to this, many schools are reporting that the scheme has helped to make them 'ready' for the new curriculum. We have examples of projects that address the 4 core purposes as well as linking to one or more of the 6 AoLEs. In addition to this, many projects have had the DCF and professional learning for staff built into the framework of the project.

We have seen learners develop their numeracy skills to prepare them for the end of the world, the Victorians brought to life through role-play, space explored through documentary film making and radio stations created to develop oracy. Pupil voice has allowed learners to drive the direction of classroom activity and teachers have found themselves in the role of learning facilitators, observing the conditions that create the most impact in their classroom. In each case, the Creative Habits of Mind and the High Functioning Classroom, models that we use to



support pedagogy, have highlighted that authentic and relevant learning experiences boost engagement, confidence and ultimately over time, attainment.

This academic year our main priorities are: to re-engage with Round 1 schools, the majority of whom have had a year away from the programme, to explore how they have further embedded creative learning across the curriculum; to work with a2 connect and the consortia to explore how we can continue to influence creative learning approaches at both classroom and strategic levels.

There is a lot to celebrate, but there is still some way to go to really embed creative learning, in all its forms, across the curriculum in preparation for 2022.

If you would like to discuss the various Arts Council of Wales opportunities currently available to schools or if you would like to know more about the Lead Creative Schools Scheme approach please do not hesitate to get in contact with [Ian.McAndrew@arts.wales](mailto:Ian.McAndrew@arts.wales) or [Dan.Allen@arts.wales](mailto:Dan.Allen@arts.wales)

## Parent Power

*Ryan Morgan, Headteacher at Trelewis Primary School*



Over the last 2 years, with a complete change of senior leadership at the school, our school has been through quite a period of change. Change is always an aspect of school life that many are often hesitant to embrace however, what our journey at Trelewis Primary has shown is that change is best implemented when it involves all stakeholders within the life of the school.

In order for our school to be able to secure strong leadership that would lead the school through this change, it was important that not only were pupils, governors and Staff involved in the future direction of the school, but that Parents played a key part in securing the future vision and direction of the school.

As a then 'new' school leadership team, we agreed that in order to secure improvement it was vital that all stakeholders within the school were able to contribute to, and be involved in the school improvement process. In order to do this, the school secured open channels of communication and created a community that all stakeholders could engage with and feel a part of, particularly parents. The leadership team began promoting an ethos of 'Parents as Partners' and established a new vision for the school, which aimed to establish a 'Child-centered school at the Heart of the Community'.

The school identified initially that communication was the first barrier to be addressed. It felt it was important to provide all stakeholders, particularly parents, with information that could be easily accessed. The school ensured that communication with parents was clear and available in a range of formats, including text messaging, social media and a new school website. Regular newsletters and news updates also ensured that parents were provided with clear communication, as well as providing business cards to parents listing INSET training dates and term dates. This immediately began to address issues surrounding communication between the home and the school and provided an opportunity to ensure that the 'Parents as Partners' ethos was regularly promoted.

Following the school's work in improving communication, an initial survey was sent out to all

parents in order to identify further areas that the school could begin to address, to remove further barriers preventing parents from engaging with school activities. From the analysis of responses, the school identified that many parents felt they were unable to approach the school and that, as a result, they did not feel able to support their child's learning well enough.

The Headteacher of the school, Mr Morgan, began to establish a regular, visible presence around the school and strategies were implemented in order to ensure that parents felt they were able to approach and work with the school, in order to secure ongoing improved standards for pupils. This included establishing an open door policy, where parents were able to speak with members of the school leadership team on the phone or in person where concerns arose, providing a practical means of direct communication.

As a starting point to improving parental engagement, regular coffee mornings were held, in order to begin removing barriers that were preventing parents from engaging with school activities. The coffee mornings provided a relaxed environment where parents could attend the school and meet with members of the school leadership team in an informal way. From feedback received during the coffee mornings, the school was then able to identify the support needs of parents further. This included supporting them in developing their child's literacy and numeracy skills, which was addressed through a strategy called 'Learn with Me'.

The 'Learn with Me' sessions provided regular opportunities for parents to work alongside their child within the school environment in a workshop style format, along with their child's class teacher. These sessions gave parents strategies and ideas about how they could better support their child's ongoing development at home. For example, one of the 'Learn with Me' sessions linked to classroom work about the Chinese New Year. During the session, pupils spent time with their parents looking at different healthy foods to make a Chinese stir fry. Pupils were supported to cut vegetables to various lengths, reinforcing mathematical vocabulary such as 'longer than', 'shorter than', and 'equal to'. This allowed parents to understand how tasks carried out at home, such as cooking, could be utilised to promote and develop pupils' numeracy skills.

Other 'Learn with Me' sessions focused on areas including developing pupils' writing skills, investigating the outdoors, and phonic development. Each of these sessions provided a platform for parents to engage with the learning process and to raise questions or suggestions as to future events that could be run, in order to support their child's learning better.

The school also engaged with external agencies that have experience of working with families. This provided further opportunities for parents to become involved with their child's learning. For example, a regular 'Reading Cafe' was established at the request of parents, where they were provided with opportunities to come into school and learn about strategies that they could use to support their child's reading skills at home.

As a result of the strategies implemented, we continue to see a far greater level of parental engagement, and parents feel more able to approach the school with any concerns. We believe that parents are now being provided with opportunities to support better their child's learning and ongoing development. An evaluation of responses from a review survey sent out by the school highlighted that nearly all parents now feel able to approach the school with questions or suggestions. We believe that this was a marked improvement on initial survey outcomes.

The strategies have also had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, as a result of parents becoming more involved in the school. In the most recent pupil attitude survey carried out by the school, most pupils mentioned that they have a positive attitude towards school.

The school has better refined its improvement process to involve all stakeholders actively, which is ensuring a continued focus on improving pupil standards. As a result of a wider evidence base,

gained from improved engagement from all stakeholders, we now have a more robust and accurate picture of its performance. This 'robust and accurate picture' was identified by Estyn during our recent inspection, where the school secured a judgement of 'Excellent' for leadership and management.

The school continues to work closely with other schools within the local area and with schools outside of the Local Authority, who visit the school to observe good practice and discuss how they too can take their practice forward. At Trelewis Primary School we continue to ensure our school improvement remains at the heart of all we do as we, like our pupils, continue to ensure that our school is 'reaching for the stars!'

## The Future of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

*Mandy Esseen, Strategic Adviser at Central South Consortium*



In the context of the huge changes on the Welsh educational horizon, consideration for the health and wellbeing of learners is, unsurprisingly, very important for consideration by all educational stakeholders. And this includes learners' sexual health and wellbeing.

Personal and Social Health in Education (PHSE) has traditionally embraced this priority but it hasn't always delivered a) what learners really need to know and learn or b) what learners tell us they actually want to know and learn. As a result of the work by a Welsh Government steering group, there is now a report on the [Future of the SRE Curriculum](#) that recommends the very best practices for

schools to embrace Sexuality and Relationships Education (SRE). Over the next year, work will continue to test those recommendations and to formalise a 'Living RSE Curriculum' (SRE will be known as RSE in future) that speaks to Curriculum For Wales and the new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

On 19th and 20th September, 2018, ten schools representing the Primary, Secondary, Welsh language and special school sectors came together at YG Plasmawr High School to kick off a year long RSE project, aimed at discovering what that Living Curriculum might look like.

Using the [UNESCO Sexuality and Relationships Guidance](#) lesson objectives, and stimuli drawn from previous work with learners across the region, the two day training was led by Professor Emma Renold and Dr Ester McGeeney from Cardiff University. All activities rose out of global research documents that teacher participants engaged with in order to inform their responses and professional learning to support the rest of the project. Teachers considered some key aspects that many may consider 'new to sex education', such as sexuality, gender identification and safe relationships – as well as the more 'recognisable' aspects of contraception and sexually transmitted infections.

Teacher participants were unanimous in their recognition of the calibre of the RSE training and their enthusiasm for the follow up stages of the year long project. Up to half term, each teacher will conduct a creative audit in seeking the opinions of learners and teachers about current sexuality and relationships provision, asking how fit for purpose it is for the future.

Following a half day sharing event, teachers will then undertake enquiry led action research projects in line with the UNESCO lesson objectives. Working with groups of learners and

teachers, their research journeys will be captured as 'digital stories' for future practice sharing and will be supported by Professor Renold and Dr McGeeney. In February 2019, the teachers will meet once more to start shaping their findings about RSE for recommendation to Welsh Government.

In the summer term of 2019, we plan to organise an Equity, Equality, Wellbeing and RSE Conference that will be open to academics around the globe, as well as teachers in the region to attend and present at. This will be an opportunity for our teachers, and perhaps some of our learners, to deliver talks, workshops and symposia on evidence based findings regarding recommended approaches to RSE teaching and learning alongside other experts. What a high calibre finish to what will be a prestigious and influential project that will help shape a new, living, RSE curriculum in Wales in the future.

## Reducing Teachers' Workload

*Katy Edwards, Headteacher at Palmerston Primary School*

*'Marking has evolved into an unhelpful burden for teachers where the time it takes is not repaid in positive impact on pupils' progress.'* (Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group March 2016)

Teaching is such a rewarding career but statistics show alarming rates of people leaving the profession. Evidence shows that excessive workload is impacting on teacher recruitment and teacher retention. The Education Workforce Survey's final report indicates that 34% of school teachers would like to leave the profession within the next three years.



At Palmerston Primary School, we have been working together as a team over the last two years, helping to support teachers on their journey to reduce workload across Wales. We have worked closely with the four Consortia to create a support programme that helps implement the Reducing Workload agenda endorsed by Welsh Government and Estyn. We focus on using assessment for learning strategies effectively and efficiently. We are also incredibly passionate about bringing common sense back into teaching, evaluating what really works and has impact on pupil progress.

Our role has been to create a day's training and a series of modules which will help all schools become more proficient at feedback strategies, create the right culture to enable this to happen and ultimately reduce our workload. In readiness for the new curriculum, assessment for learning is paramount within pedagogy and we are on a mission to improve teaching, learning and wellbeing. Donaldson states that 'Good teaching and learning means employing assessment for learning principles'... and 'encourages children and young people to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.' The strategies we look at will enable teachers to make best use of their time in the class, reduce workload and have impact on wellbeing for all. The programme encourages action research, as well as supporting schools becoming 'Learning Organisations'.

We are committed to delivering this important message across Wales and will continue this work for the foreseeable future. We meet with the four Consortia to review and analyse the programme on a regular basis, to ensure our messages are the most up to date. Reducing Workload is not a quick fix but we are determined that together we can help form solutions, whilst maintaining the



need for rigour. The programme is running throughout Wales and if your school would like to be part of this journey, then the current courses are available on [Cronfa](#).

## Welsh WWI Education Project in National Lottery TV Prize Surprise

*Elizabeth Berry, Deputy Headteacher at Thornhill Primary School*



The Armistice Cantata is an intergenerational education project written by twenty one children in Year 4 and 5 at Thornhill Primary. The work was written in conjunction with the Goldies Cymru charity as a follow up to the 'Sing and Smile' project they have been working on together since 2015.

At the start of the summer term 2017 staff worked closely with the Goldies Charity to plan a project which would commemorate the end of WW1 but which would also reflect the four core purposes of the new curriculum. Using the pedagogical principles set out in the 'Successful Futures' our more able and talented writers and musicians were given the

opportunity to visit the Glamorgan Archives to find out about life during the war and impact that it was having on the lives of ordinary people in Cardiff. On return to school they worked with their talented teacher, Mrs Claire Holcombe to identify key themes that they could use to tell these important local stories.

Over a period of a few weeks the children wrote a narrative and musical where the children appear on stage together with a 'Grandma' figure in a 30-minute production named Armistice Cantata. The cantata tells the story of the challenges of WW1 through artefacts and photographs. The children wrote their own lyrics for the musical using the melodies from popular songs from World War One and selecting themes that were important to them such as the role of women and the relationships between mothers and sons. The project gave them a real and relevant reason for learning and they are extremely proud of what they have achieved. The skills which they developed as a result of their work are wide ranging and with their names at the top of the printed scores they can certainly call themselves lyricists!

Since writing the Cantata the children have won the Welsh Heritage Schools Award 2018, the National Lottery Education Award 2018 and they have also been shortlisted for the Welsh Heritage Angel Award which will be announced in November. The BBC visited school to make a film for the National Lottery Awards 2018 featuring a surprise visit from Welsh singing sensation, Katherine Jenkins. The film showcased the inspirational work of Armistice Cantata and celebrated the hard work and dedication of the staff to the project.

The Armistice Cantata is now available for schools to perform with their own children and is available from the Goldies Cymru charity.



For more information go to [www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/awards](http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/awards).

# Approaching the Role of Lead Practitioner in Religious Education

*Catherine Rees, Head of RE at Pencoed Comprehensive School*



Like all heads of department, I am extremely passionate about my subject and pedagogy. When my line manager approached me regarding applying for the lead practitioner in RE role, I jumped at the chance. In addition to being Head of RE at Pencoed Comprehensive School in Bridgend, I have held a number of different roles within the school and I felt these experiences would help me in this role.

Originally the criteria was to work with red and amber schools, but I also realised that with significant changes approaching with regards to new specifications, this would be a fantastic opportunity to network and meet other heads of departments. When we lost our subject advisers there was very little opportunity to meet with other practitioners. Additionally, I had been fortunate to work with Qualifications Wales in accrediting the new GCSE specification and I knew that there were significant changes ahead. I hoped that this opportunity would allow us, as schools and departments, to learn from each other. I was also aware that whilst we were an established department with 3 subject specialists, this wasn't always the case with other schools and if I could do anything to raise the status of RE and support those heads of departments I would.

I am now approaching my 3rd year as lead practitioner. The role has evolved over time. Originally, we were supporting red and amber schools, but we were then asked to hold networking meetings based on the identified regional need for the subject. I think this has been the particular strength of the role of the lead practitioner. During my first year in the role, I worked alone, but during the second and third year I have worked with Lisa James, Head of Religion and Philosophy in Cardiff High. This has allowed us to share responsibilities and also expand our networking circle. We have jointly held a number of networking meetings over the last two years and will continue to do so this year. Meetings can vary, some may have a particular focus and in others we may ask our colleagues to share good practice. One thing Lisa and I recognised quite quickly was how proactive we needed to be in advertising our sessions. As current heads of departments we appreciated how hectic a school day can be, how difficult it can be to be released from school and how much time it can take to create and implement new resources and initiatives. As a result, we always: contact heads of departments directly to inform them of any forthcoming meetings; publicise via social media and other outlets; and hold sessions between 2-4pm, as it became apparent that this was the best time of the day to do so.

The focus of our sessions was preparing for the new GCSE and A Level specifications - I think all of our colleagues agreed that the new specifications have been very challenging. Lisa and I make it clear in meetings that we do not have all the answers, neither are we claiming to be excellent practitioners, but it is more of a collaborative process where schools and departments can learn from each other. In addition, we have tried to build a culture where staff do not feel they are alone and that help is only an email away. Setting up a working party, where we can share the workload and take responsibility for planning certain resources for the new specifications has been a particular success. As requested by Welsh Government we have a networking site on Hwb, where colleagues can access the resources we have created. However, we have found that not all schools are using Hwb and we need to continue publicising this area. I must stress that we wouldn't be able to do this if it wasn't for schools being willing to share their resources and, as a result of this, my students and my practice have benefited also. We recognise that what works for one cohort or school may not work for another, but both Lisa and I hope that in our role we have allowed staff to

share and learn from each other.

Numbers are continuing to rise for our networking meetings and what is pleasing to note is that we have new faces joining us all the time. Following every meeting, our colleagues are asked to complete an evaluation and the feedback has always been overwhelmingly positive. We also ask those attending what they would like to focus on during the next meeting and endeavour to prepare resources accordingly. I personally thoroughly enjoy my role as lead practitioner. I enjoy meeting other heads of departments and teachers of RE and I hope those who have attended our courses have benefitted too. We have such fantastic schools in the region and amazing RE departments and learning from each other has been at the centre of everything we do. I hope that through our work as lead practitioners we have helped and supported departments and in turn have been able to raise standards and levels of attainment of all our students.

We would love to see you at our next RS meeting this year. Come and join a vibrant, supportive and creative network of teachers!

## Developing Outdoor Learning for KS2

*Gethin Still, Teacher at Brackla Primary School*



At Bridgend's recent Festival of Learning event, we shared some of our good practice with colleagues from other local schools in the Bridgend county area. Our practice we were particularly keen to share was that of the development and impact of outdoor learning in KS2.

Outdoor learning is often perceived as an exclusive activity for teaching children in Foundation Phase. The idea of it in general, supports the Foundation Phase ethos of play and is therefore dismissed when teaching children in Key Stage 2 favouring a more structured approach to learning. But how are children supposed to transfer and develop the skills learnt through outdoor learning if that teaching approach is abandoned when they reach Key Stage 2?

Our school journey started following an outdoor learning audit in the spring term of 2015. It was decided that foundation phase would take a more structured approach to outdoor learning activities. Each group would have a designated day of the week (e.g. Muddy Monday, Wellie Wednesday, etc.) and a set of ground rules were established by each class along with risk assessments to ensure safety. Further down the line, following a learning squad project in 2016, outdoor learning was implemented in Key Stage 2 on a half-termly basis. Fast forward a year and Key stage 2 progressed to having activities run on a fortnightly basis.

In the event held in late June, we divulged into the logistics of the sessions, starting with the fact that children are given the opportunity to lead their learning at the start of every new topic. When discussing subjects of learning, children are more inclined to volunteer ideas of how their learning could take place outside rather than in the classroom. By encouraging the children to be independent with their learning allows them to take ownership and responsibility of the tasks they have suggested.

The core of our session however, was to emphasise the benefits of outdoor learning that have been evident to us here at Brackla Primary. The sessions encourage children to develop so many skills such as self and peer assessment, collaborating with others, problem solving, promoting literacy and numeracy skills that are fundamental at any age of learning. Perhaps outdoor learning is more valuable for older children considering the rise in children's sedentary activities and negative mental health issues. An article written by Whitebread (2017) highlights the various

research indicating the benefits play has on children's well-being and holistic development.

The extended opportunities for independent learning are creative and challenging and as a result, nearly all pupils make good progress. Most pupils have developed a greater resilience towards more challenging activities and learning opportunities. There has been an increase in pupil engagement during outdoor learning activities, with nearly all pupils remaining on task for extended periods of time. It has enabled children to develop problem solving skills, and apply them to other areas of the curriculum.

As a result of this developing focus in Key Stage Two there have been evident changes in behaviour towards learning. Children who find it hard to sit in class and understand certain abstract ideas and concepts, have been vocal about preferring a more creative, kinaesthetic approach to learning. Outdoor learning has been one of the key successes at Brackla Primary which help us continue our move on the right track towards supporting and reflecting the ethos of the forthcoming new creative curriculum.

## Professional Learning - Not One Size Fits All!

*Rhian Milton, Assistant Headteacher at Cadoxton Primary School*



As a pioneer school for professional learning and curriculum development we are committed and determined to achieve the vision set out in Successful Futures. The four purposes drive not only our day to day practice but have become our learning dispositions and incentives for change; they are at the heart of all we do and a measure of our success. In order to take steps in the right direction we need to be 'brave' and challenge that dangerous phrase 'We've always done it that way!' Grace Hopper. After all the motto by which we live at Cadoxton is "You only truly arrive when you accept you never will!" We need to value professional learning and this takes commitment to becoming not just a school that is a learning organisation but creating a culture where it is habit and a right!

Our own vision is 'Learning and growing together, being our best forever!' In order for this to be realised, we need to allow staff to further develop pedagogical approaches through informed research and apply in the practical sense; in the classroom. Are humans learning the right things? Are they learning them in the right way? And if not, why not? Kindling The Flame. Dec 2017. This document gave us our questions for inquiry; but going to visit the International School of Amsterdam gave us our insight and direction. The intention is clear; we are to become curriculum designers but this practice is not easy and needs dedication and constant reflection, we can't have a one size fits all approach to learning for staff or children, it has to be bespoke and relevant to our unique context.

Rather than learning through Inquiry we wanted to be active participants in the inquiry process. For the learning to be at a high level, the SLT collaborated with the Teaching and Learning Partnership (TLP Wales), who have a vast understanding and experience with Inquiry to work with us to tailor make a professional learning programme.

"When we seek to make sense of the world around us, we wonder, we plan, we analyse, we create, we reflect. At its very heart, inquiry is all about thinking – thinking in order to make meaning." Kath Murdoch.

We needed to create the 'time' and 'space' for sustained shared thinking, learning and most importantly reflection to happen. We created a trusting environment with equality at the starting point of the journey. We created a studio at the top of our school to give teaching staff space,

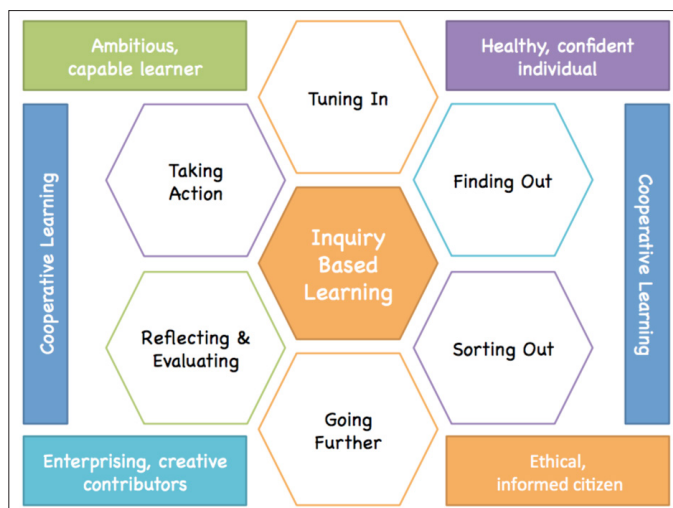


created time by changing our daily routine and structure radically.

We considered which day the learning needed to happen, and together decided that a Thursday in Cadoxton should look different and feel very special. The teachers engage in Professional learning every other week and then planning, preparation and assessment the following week. The timings always allow time for reflection on the learning alone or with colleagues, the next steps are planned at the end of that session. This reflection happens in a learning inquiry journal and captures the journey, documenting the thinking and evidence it in the same high quality way that the children are expected to.

So what are the children doing? They share lunch with their teacher in the classrooms to allow relationships to build and foster. The children go to mixed aged enrichment learning experiences which challenge them to persevere and try something new. Such experiences include; gardening, sewing, cooking, basketball, dance, music and are always driven by the pupils voice and linked to developing the 5 creative habits of mind. They are planned and organised with the right balance of external expert practitioners and our learning support assistants who bring their own passions and talents to school. This process has been logistically challenging but exceptionally rewarding!

Inquiry learning is all about giving children the skills, the dispositions and the opportunities to investigate – to find out information, make meaning and take action based on what is discovered. In collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Partnership we have created a structure for curriculum design based on research into inquiry based learning.



## Professional Teaching Awards Cymru 2019



Do you know an outstanding teacher that deserves recognition? Is there someone at your local school that needs celebrating? Are your teaching staff leading the way in technology or using Welsh language? The Professional Teaching Awards Cymru are back for 2019! Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams is looking for the very best education professionals that Wales has to offer and those that have made a real difference to their school or education setting.

There are ten categories this year including Teacher of the Year, Headteacher of the Year, Inspirational use of the Welsh Language and, new for 2019, Youth Work in Schools so there is plenty of opportunity for your school to get the recognition that they deserve.

If you're a teacher, student, parent, employer or colleague and know someone that would be worthy of a Professional Teaching Award you have until midnight on 30 November 2018 to make a nomination online at: [www.gov.wales/teachingawardscymru](http://www.gov.wales/teachingawardscymru)