



St John Lloyd RC Primary School

Professional Learning & Inquiry Case Study

‘Welsh In A Year’ sabbatical

Context and background to the effective practice & professional Learning

St John Lloyd RC Primary School is situated in an area where the Welsh language is not spoken widely. The school has always sought to promote the Welsh language and encourage the development of pupils' skills. However, leaders realised that a key factor in pupils making good progress was the level of confidence and skill possessed by members of staff. For the school to have significant impact, it had to address the fact that many staff had the desire to teach Welsh well but did not have the confidence to do so. Our journey began by encouraging teachers to think about taking the opportunity to apply for the Welsh sabbatical course – Cymraeg mewn Blwyddyn. This led to one member of staff, Mrs Jones completing the course and consequently, disseminating good practice and utilising their enhanced skills to develop the language skills of all staff.

Description of nature of strategy or activity

Welsh sabbatical

The opportunity to apply for the ‘Welsh in a Year’ sabbatical was instrumental in the school's ability to positively develop use of the Welsh language at the school. The course significantly improves Welsh language abilities and enhances staff members ability to deliver Welsh language lessons with greater confidence. One member of staff was successful in obtaining a place on the course and has been keen to ensure that the skills and experience gained are employed, not just in her own class, but across the entire school. The teacher, who completed the course in 2022, was placed into a Year 3/4 class. The staff member found the sabbatical course highly intense, but thoroughly enjoyed the experience and recommended it to others. The school feels that language teaching of any kind is best done by a specialist, one who can provide an excellent language model to others, and the Welsh Sabbatical course gives teachers the skills to do this. The fact that the school now has a member of staff who has completed the course means that it can continue to build on the strong language progress it has already made as a school. The teacher has been able to share new techniques, strategies, and a wealth of resources from the course.

Assessment

The school wanted to gather evidence to develop a clear, honest picture of what pupils could and could not do, in terms of spoken Welsh. The staff member listened to learners, which helped her to see easily where the areas of development were in each class. She

carried out a baseline assessment during the autumn term and noticed that many of the easier language patterns, for example saying your name and where you live, were strong across the school. However, it was clear that, as language patterns got more difficult or demanded the extension of sentences, far fewer pupils were able to speak with confidence. It was also noticeable that there was a clear weakness in pupils' ability to ask questions independently. The process of gathering this data enabled the school to clearly see the areas of need within the school and particular cohorts. Thus, enabling a plan of bespoke support to enhance Welsh second language could be put into place.

TA Training

Through post-sabbatical funding, the school allocated time to enable the trained staff member to assist teaching assistants, modelling best practice in a supportive manner. Support has been supplemented by training sessions for teaching assistants which has been invaluable in ensuring a whole-school approach to the school's vision. During sessions, teaching assistants were introduced to key phrases and vocabulary which are useful within and outside of the classroom. Training packs were also provided and include links to videos and recordings, which aided pronunciation. Teaching assistants were encouraged to view training sessions as an opportunity to practise in a 'safe space' without judgement, in order to foster confidence. They were asked to set a personal language target and then to evaluate their own progress after a set amount of time. This approach is firmly rooted in the understanding that all learners have different starting points and require targets which are both measurable and achievable. The response to training has been highly positive and staff have embraced the opportunity to develop. With future post-sabbatical funding the school intends to continue this training, recognising that it is important to keep language skills 'on the boil', so that it can build on progress.

Fostering an appreciation of Welsh culture and tradition

Alongside the development of spoken Welsh, the school has worked towards ensuring that Welsh language, culture and tradition are embedded in every area of its life. It feels that it is important that Welsh is not viewed as a subject which is simply 'in a box', but one that is reflected in all that they do. There is an expectation that Welsh is used within all lessons as well as outside the classroom, for instance when greeting families at the school gates, on the yard, during assemblies and incorporated into all displays. The school also places a high value on events that promote Welsh culture such as 'Shwmae Day' and the annual Eisteddfod.

A holistic approach to Welsh is something the school feels is strongly upheld in the new curriculum. With this in mind, the whole school has planned lessons as part of its 'cynefin' (Habitat) approach which builds on the knowledge of different cultures and histories of Wales thus allowing pupils to develop a strong sense of identity and understanding how this is connected to and shaped by wider influences.

These thematic contexts recognise Wales' diverse linguistic heritage and culture, and its connections with the rest of the world. For example, pupils learn about cultural diversity,

values, histories and traditions via the contributions and experiences of different individuals that are significant for them (e.g. Betty Campbell, Marquis of Bute and Welsh Martyrs).

The annual Eisteddfod is an opportunity to showcase pupils work to the whole school community whilst reinforcing a sense of cultural identity and pride in their Welsh heritage, language, and traditions.

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

The work carried out has had a significant impact on the provision of Welsh language, heritage and culture at St John Lloyd. This has resulted in a marked increase in learners' standards. The profile of the Welsh language and culture has been raised in every aspect of school life and there is a palpable sense of positivity towards the Welsh dimension as well as pride in what has been achieved, and can continue to be achieved. The difference in attitudes and confidence is marked and is borne out in the evidence from staff and pupil voice activities.

How have you shared your good practice?

Post-sabbatical funding has allowed teaching assistants to cascade their training effectively. It has helped them improve their language skills and develop a greater fluency in the language. They now have more confidence when speaking to the children inside and outside of the classroom. St John Lloyd is also part of a Welsh SIG group working alongside others in order to share good practice more broadly.