

Case study: Use of the additional professional learning in 2018/2019

Context and background

The school

Cwmtawe Community School is an English-medium secondary school and is part of ERW consortium. The school has 1,232 learners on roll: 17.4 per cent are eligible for free school meals (FSM), 40 per cent have additional learning needs (ALN), 4 per cent have an ALN statement; 1.5 per cent have English as an alternative language (EAL); and 15 per cent are global A* and A grade learners, regarded as more able and talented. The gender split of the school is 51 per cent boys and 49 percent girls.

Designated leaders and members of teaching staff

The leadership team consists of one Headteacher, two deputy Headteachers, two assistant Headteachers and a business manager. Cwmtawe Community School has 73 teachers, and 15 teaching assistants.

Additional professional learning grant allocation

Cwmtawe Community School received £28,818 in the period 2018/19.

How the additional grant was used

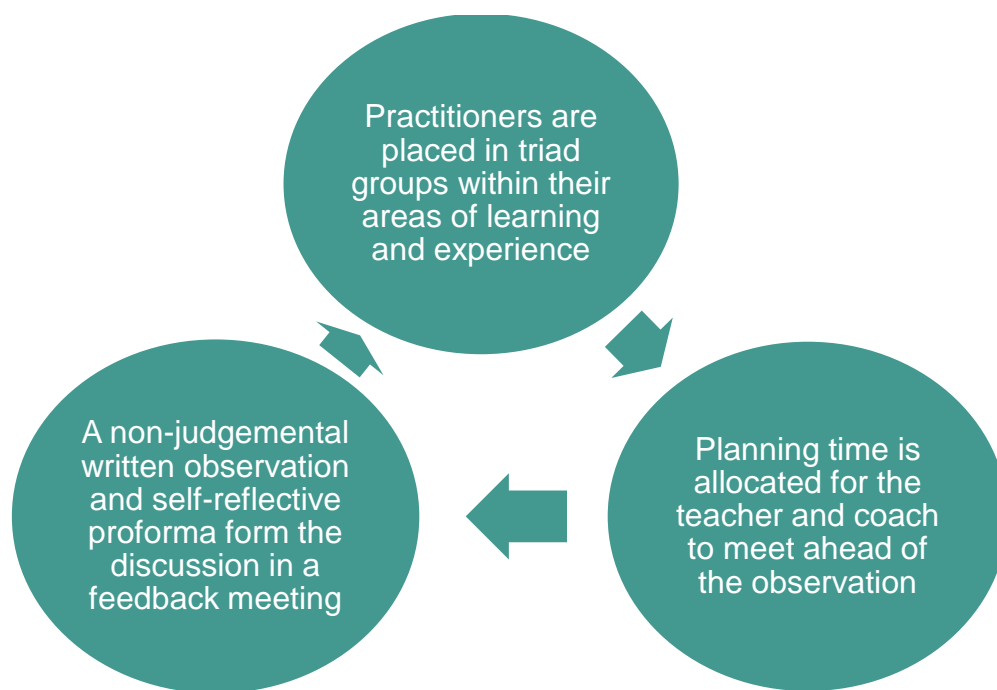
Job shadowing/coaching

The funding received gave staff the opportunity to participate in internal job-shadowing opportunities. Senior leadership team members identified shadow post roles based on whole-school priorities such as assessment, recording and reporting; primary transition; coaching at Key Stage 3; curriculum planning and subject leadership. Each shadow post holder received support throughout the process from a dedicated lead who acted as a coach throughout.

At the end of the cycle the shadow post holder met with their lead member of staff to reflect upon their experiences and to receive written feedback which was then integrated within the school's performance management process.

Support with lesson planning and reflection

Cwmtawe Community School has also devised a structured programme for lesson planning, observation and reflection, as shown below. Each aspect of the programme has a sharper focus on different pedagogical approaches and the four purposes.



Accredited programmes

Cwmtawe Community School has a strong tradition of professionally developing staff at all stages in their careers. The grant has also enabled access to various accredited programmes such as the outstanding teacher, improving teacher and outstanding teaching assistant programmes (OTP, ITP and OTAP) for all staff including teachers and teaching assistants. Staff have also had opportunities to participate with external-led programmes to gain accreditation.

Preparation for the new curriculum

Time has been allocated for staff to plan and take the lead during school INSET sessions to share effective practice. Newly qualified teachers have led sessions on the new professional standards and the new Curriculum for Wales guidance; whilst other staff have led workshops focusing on the 12 pedagogical principles and the Digital Competency Framework.

Further to this, within each area of learning and experience, colleagues have been given time to discuss and reflect upon the new curriculum guidance and to start to plan collaboratively to deliver a Key Stage 3 thematic project.

Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school

The additional professional learning grant has enabled staff to engage effectively with job shadowing roles, resulting in them gaining wider whole-school or departmental responsibility and experience. This has increased staff confidence and has already enabled participants to be ambitious and successfully apply for posts within and outside the school.

Furthermore, through having developed an 'open door' ethos towards lesson observations, an improvement in quality and insightful self-reflection has been highlighted, drilling down to the specifics of effective practice.

The school has also recognised that barriers have been broken down within areas of learning and experience as all colleagues, including teaching assistants, are planning collaboratively and sharing effective practice to support the professional development of colleagues.

Access to accredited programmes and internal training has equipped staff with strategies and skills to become more confident practitioners and become more experimental in planning. A positive impact has especially been seen among teaching assistants who have become more confident in their vital role within the classroom and are able to work with increased independence.

Impact of the grant on learners

Lesson observations demonstrate the continued development of learners' metacognitive skills and their ability to self-reflect in a more meaningful, deeper way.

When discussing the impact on learners, the headteacher said:

'Learners are more independent, taking greater ownership of their learning; whilst levels of resilience are developing. The high quality learning and teaching in the classroom and the vibrant culture of professional learning has resulted in very strong learner outcomes for 2019.'

Lessons learned about professional learning for application to the school

The school has seen the benefits of collaborating across areas of learning and experience (AoLEs), especially for Mathematics and Numeracy and Science and Technology. Joint planning has also enabled the sharing of effective strategies.

Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools

Firstly, through job-shadowing opportunities staff have gained a wider whole-school perspective. Offering these opportunities through an application process has also given the process a higher significance and encouraged staff to consider their own professional needs and possible progression routes. Using coaches who engaged with colleagues outside their subject areas and having in-depth conversations about effective and creative planning, have proved to be a real strength of the school.

Secondly, the school found that by providing scheduled time for joint planning, lesson observation and feedback, the significance of observation and reflection was heightened and a sharper focus on planning has emerged. Allocating a designated time for planning for each AoLE has also helped with arranging staff cover and instilling an ethos of collaborative working and mutual support moving forward.

SharePoint has been a valuable tool for sharing ideas, potential issues and resources in planning for the new curriculum. It has given all staff access to the work of all AoLEs and has promoted cross-area working.

The school also found, for both teaching and non-teaching colleagues, that investing in accredited programmes on a rotational basis increased confidence and morale. The school has benefited from providing opportunities for practitioners to utilise their newly acquired knowledge and skills in order to share with others, following completion of a programme.

Next steps

In regards to next steps, Cwmtawe Community School will be:

- continuing to roll out accredited training programmes for teachers and teaching assistants
- further developing a whole school coaching strategy and ethos within the school following publication of new curriculum documentation, revising and testing lesson-planning resources.