

Case study: Use of the additional professional learning grant in 2019/20

Context and background

The school

Stanwell School is an English-medium secondary school in the Vale of Glamorgan and is a member of the Central South consortium (CSC). The school has 2,012 learners on roll: 4.9 per cent are eligible for free school meals (FSM); 2.5 per cent have additional learning needs (ALN); 6.8 per cent have English as an alternative language (EAL); and 20 per cent are regarded as more able and talented (MAT) learners. The gender split is 50.8 per cent boys and 49.2 per cent girls.

Designated leaders and members of teaching staff

The leadership team has seven members of staff and the school also has 27 middle leaders. There are 124 teachers at Stanwell School, as well as 17 teaching assistants.

Additional professional learning grant allocation

The school received £68,657 for the period between April 2019 and March 2020.

How the additional grant was used

Staff training – preparation for the new curriculum/leadership development

Most of the grant was used for the further development of the school's internal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme.

When discussing the programme, Mrs R Connor, Assistant Headteacher, said:

'This is a programme that has been written by senior leaders in the school and aims to address our specific needs in response to *Education in Wales: Our national mission*, schools as learning organisations (SLO), effective change management, enquiry, professional practice and pedagogy whilst also further developing a coaching culture. The aim of this programme was to empower, inform and enable our whole teaching staff to understand all elements of *Education in Wales: Our national mission* and make links between professional learning (PL), pedagogy, practice and change.'

The PL grant was used to release all teaching staff (in cycles) to attend weekly, bespoke PL sessions. As part of these sessions, all staff have received training on the principles of coaching, and are now actively coaching colleagues through individual enquiry projects. The development of the CPD programme has been facilitated by the school's learning and teaching team. The grant has been used to expand the team and has created a Partnerships Co-ordinator role and two Lead Practitioner roles in order to increase capacity for delivery of this model. The PL grant has been used to upskill facilitators and they have attended numerous conferences and INSET provision to enable them to plan and deliver this model effectively.

Part of the PL grant has also been allocated to the sustained development of staff in relation to planning and preparation for compliance with the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018). This has included release time for ALN cluster lead commitments and also further training of ALN staff (Level 7 training and MASEN).

Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school

The school's extensive commitment to the internal CPD model has had a huge impact at a cultural level but also in developing a research informed and enquiry-driven focus across all areas of the school. The shared understanding of pedagogy has enabled staff to approach planning for curriculum design with a research-informed approach. The enquiry projects have enabled staff to try out new approaches to pedagogy and curriculum design and reflect on the impact of change within their individual practice.

As part of developing an enquiry culture, the school enquired about the impact of its CPD sessions with staff and used evaluation responses to influence planning of further cycles. Evaluations of 2018–2019 sessions showed that the overwhelming majority of staff members found the CPD training day useful. Similarly, the majority of staff gained a better understanding of the new curriculum and/or found using *Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction* useful as a framework for improving learning and teaching.

There was also a notable jump in understanding of the new professional standards for teaching and leadership, from 54 per cent in the previous year, to 87 per cent.

Impact of the grant on learners

Learners have been actively involved in the approach and have been at the centre of all enquiry projects. Many of the enquiry projects completed by staff indicate positive impacts on standards especially in terms of subject specific terminology and knowledge acquisition.

Pupil voice has been an essential enquiry tool and pupils have reflected on the school's approach to thematic weeks and have also been involved in planning initial responses to What Matters statements across all AoLEs and core purposes in all Key Stage 3 thinking-skills sessions.

Lessons learned about professional learning for application to the school

This is constantly evolving and the school is continually reflecting upon its own enquiry findings in order to develop effective and bespoke CPD which addresses the needs of the staff. Staff have developed their approach to planning for thematic weeks in line with pupil voice and have also benefitted from developing a step by step approach to enquiry. They are now open to developing their approach in line with more academic approaches to study. The school has learned the value of coaching in developing an approach to PL and that this underpins effective development in PL at every level.

Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools

Stanwell has developed a collaborative approach to this work and is constantly sharing practice in this area. While the school is very keen to use their own PL journey as a guide, they continually point out that through effective enquiry and coaching, the value of PL comes from identifying a unique approach for each school and each demographic.

Next steps

Stanwell School plans to do the following.

- Continue with its internal CPD model.
- Next year, the school will introduce additional models of coaching, whilst developing and reflecting on enquiry and launching cycle four of enquiry projects for all staff.
- Use CPD sessions to explore the place of an individual development plan within responsive teaching and also further clarify decisions and plans in relation to the curriculum.
- Map organic whole-school links during the next academic year, once each AoLE has a more finalised approach to curriculum making.