

Case study: Use of the additional professional learning grant in 2018/19

Context and background

The school

St Andrew's is an English-medium primary school and nursery in Newport and forms part of the EAS School Effectiveness and Improvement service for south east Wales. The school has 595 learners on roll plus 78 part time nursery children; 36.2 per cent are eligible for free school meals (FSM); 36 per cent have additional learning needs (ALN); 45 per cent have English as an alternative language (EAL) with 40 per cent being new to English. The gender split in the school is 54 per cent boys and 46 per cent girls.

Designated leaders and members of teaching staff

The leadership team has four members of staff. There are 25 full-time equivalent teachers in St Andrew's Primary School, as well as 32.5 full-time equivalent teaching assistants.

Additional professional learning grant allocation

St. Andrew's received an additional professional learning grant of £11,006 in 2018/19.

How the additional grant was used

The grant was used to allow the school's leaders and teaching staff to access the Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Programme (ETLF) delivered by EAS and the regional professional learning schools. The purpose for engaging with the programme was to encourage staff to further engage with the new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership, develop the school as a learning organisation and to develop the whole-school monitoring and evaluation systems that would support a whole-school change to a transformational curriculum.

School leaders engaged with a four-day programme that included a whole-school evaluation and leaders engaged in triad work with other schools. The programme led to the school identifying that it needed to use professional practices to drive pedagogy and that they had to consider the pace of change and use professional learning opportunities in bite-sized chunks.

Middle leaders participated with four sessions that gave them the opportunity to become more familiar with the standards and self-reflect against both the teaching and leadership strands. The most positive impact of this professional learning was that it increased confidence to monitor and engage in professional dialogue with other staff members.

Teaching staff engaged with the standards and the Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Programme at a simpler level, with the main focus on pedagogy. They had an opportunity to self-reflect, and based on the results observed, practice in two settings on their most under-developed strand. Nine out of the ten teaching staff engaged with the programme needed to develop creating authentic contexts for learning. Staff had to focus on their own practice and were grouped with peers for challenge and support.

Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school

Colleagues responded positively to being given the opportunity to visit other settings.

They are more familiar with the professional standards and this has supported the school in managing whole school curriculum reform and design with a raised awareness of the pedagogical principles and four purposes.

Impact of the grant on learners

Assessment for learning was a priority when monitoring the school development action plan, and evaluation processes have shown a positive impact on learning and teaching. Progress on the impact on learning and teaching continued in the Autumn Term. Rigorous monitoring systems highlighted that learners felt more involved in planning their learning.

Driven through school-development planning, marking and feedback had been reviewed and amended. This has led to reduced workload for teachers and provided more immediate and purposeful reflections on learning. There was also a notable change in self- and peer-assessment with these becoming a more integral part of learning and teaching.

Lessons learned about professional learning for application to the school

The school found it hard to manage the volume of teachers being out of school at the same time, although visiting other settings was considered an advantage.

Whole-school professional learning activities could be undertaken in future and although staff appreciated the time for professional learning, they also want more autonomy in future research and collaboration.

Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools

It is felt that the professional standards, the Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework (where adopted) and the results of the Schools as Learning Organisation survey should become an integral part of the school's professional learning activities, along with staff self-reflecting and engaging in peer and triad work to support the process.

Next steps

The next steps will be for the school to provide staff with more autonomy to engage with action research and a whole-school focus on 'Spiral of inquiry'" to underpin professional enquiry.

Teachers will be grouped into Professional Learning Communities and be allocated time and a share of the professional learning grant to fund research materials.