

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

Context and background

The school

Albany primary school is an English medium school in Cardiff and is part of the Central South Consortium (CSC) Joint Education Service. The school has 418 learners on roll: 23.7 per cent are eligible for free school meals (FSM); 17.9 per cent have additional learning needs (ALN); 72 per cent have English as an alternative language (EAL); and 15 per cent of whom are global A* and A grade learners, regarded as more able and talented. The gender split in the school is 51 per cent boys and 49 per cent girls.

Designated leaders and members of teaching staff

The leadership team has seven members of staff. There are 20 teachers in Albany Primary school, as well as 23 teaching assistants.

Additional professional learning grant allocation

The school received £7,616 in 2018/19.

How the additional grant was used

Action research and collaboration

The new professional standards for teaching and leadership include an increased focus on action research. To ensure the staff at Albany primary had the necessary skills to demonstrate the new requirements, the leadership team approached the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) unit at Cardiff University to develop a bespoke school professional development programme that focused on professional learning and educative mentoring.

To ensure staff were given sufficient time to fully embrace the learning platform, a number of inset days and extended twilight sessions were allocated to the programme.

At the start of the programme each member of staff was tasked with identifying one challenging issue to be the focus of their research in class. Working in small discussion groups, issues were identified with examples such as 'teaching coding' and 'the case of effective use of provision in Year 1' being prime examples of future workstreams.

Staff continued to collaborate with each other and utilised the school's working relationship with Cardiff University to gain access to quality research and supporting documentation. Case studies were also created and shared with course leaders for feedback.

Each subsequent inset day was used to build on each individual's work, changing the discussion group membership each time to encourage contrasting views and therefore greatly improving the quality of professional dialogue and research.

At the end of the programme all staff created a poster of their work, which showed not only their starting point and end point but most importantly the journey they took to get there and the research used to support it.

Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school

Developing research skills and self-directed study.

Staff highlighted the positive impact mentoring conversations and research had on practice in the classroom. Teachers were more confident in using effective and purpose-led research to impact learning and teaching.

Below are some examples of the quotes taken from individual posters:

'During this professional learning programme I have critically developed my understanding and thinking of differentiation in Mathematics lessons. This has challenged me to become a better practitioner and has helped me to develop my practice in line with the new teaching and leadership standards.'

'Pupil voice can have a key impact when improving behaviour – not just through the design of reward/sanction systems but through being valued and heard.'

'I have learnt the importance of reflective discussion time to identify what is/isn't working. I have also found that having research-based information to support development across the school can make change more impactful.'

Lessons learned about professional learning for application to the school

Collaboration with external partners

Working with Cardiff University gave the school the opportunity to develop a bespoke programme. The programme gave continued support and advice to guide the teachers through their research journey.

Although the cost of working so closely with Cardiff University was not sustainable in the long term, staff at Albany Primary will use their new gained skills to continue the mentoring and research work through designated INSET time in school. They intend to keep in contact with university staff on a regular basis to seek feedback on the effectiveness of their research work going forward.

Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools

The school learnt that effective collaboration can happen within school through mentoring, with other schools and also with wider partners, in this case Cardiff University.

As a result of their work on the programme, Albany primary has implemented a much greater emphasis on reflection and opportunities for professional dialogue in professional learning activities. The school INSET diary has a significant number of twilight sessions based around reflection and professional dialogue around school priority areas.