

Case study: Use of the additional professional learning grant in 2018/19 and 2019/20

Context and background

The school

Bishop Hedley Catholic High (BHCH) school is an English-medium school in Merthyr Tydfil and is part of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSC). The school has 519 learners on roll: 20.6 per cent are eligible for free school meals (FSM); 28.5 per cent have additional learning needs (ALN); 27.7 per cent have English as an alternative language (EAL); and 20 per cent are global A* and A grade learners, regarded as more able and talented. The gender split in the school is 46 per cent boys and 54 per cent girls.

Designated leaders and members of teaching staff

The leadership team has 22 members of staff. There are 29.8 teachers in BHCH school, as well as 5.6 teaching assistants.

Additional professional learning grant allocation

The school received £11,694 for the period between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

How the additional grant was used

Staff training – preparation for the new curriculum – Digital Competence Framework

BHCH carried out a staff digital skills audit using Aspire2be to establish the current level of professional learning (PL) needed to meet the requirements of the Digital Competency Framework (DCF). After evaluating the results, the school decided to use £8,000 of the additional PL grant to train staff in using Google for Educators to increase digital competence and confidence.

Initially, twenty staff were identified to undertake the training and they were split into separate Google and iPad groups. This allowed the trainees to be eventually become the trainers within the school, to share knowledge and train other members of staff.

The school successfully rolled out Google for Educators with each teacher creating a virtual google classroom for every class they taught. Teachers were able to create and mark assignments electronically with feedback given and recorded instantly. A parental contact facility was also included that notified parents/carers via email when a homework assignment was given, improving the engagement between school and parents/carers.

The additional grant money gave the school the ability to fund the digital training without sacrificing other PL identified from performance management processes.

Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school

The implementation of Google for Educators enabled staff to work both smarter and more efficiently, and it had a genuine positive impact on learning and teaching. It enabled the effective and secure flow of data between departments that resulted in faster decision making across all areas of school life.

Using Google for Educators extensively across the school assisted in preparing the staff to address elements of the new curriculum, specifically the DCF and various dimensions of the four purposes.

Impact of the grant on learners

The impact of the grant funding has enabled learners to learn in line with the technological advances in today's society. Some of the benefits included:

- ability to work at own pace
- instant feedback from teachers
- ease of access through availability of file on their own network drive
- Google version of word processing, spreadsheet, presentations programmes
- improved communication with teachers.

The rollout of Google for Educators more than met the learner requirement in developing their digital competence skills. Learner digital leaders were linked with departments and trained groups of new learners, developing their collaboration skills and improving their confidence to work with learners outside of their year group and from other schools. As a result, learners were engaged with Erasmus + in a Robot Dance project alongside pupils in Finland and Spain, gaining invaluable learner experience not just academically but socially as well.

Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools

The ability to roll out the digital training as a whole-school approach had an enormous impact on BHCH school. As learners were brought on board at the same time as training the teachers, staff were able to witness the immediate positive impact of learning and teaching in the classroom.

The provision of additional PL funding to address an element of the National Mission was invaluable in preparing both staff and learners for the requirements of the new curriculum.