

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

## Context and background

### The school

Ysgol Aberconwy is an English-medium secondary school in Conwy and is part of GwE, the School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales. The school has 796 learners on roll: 18.5 per cent of whom are eligible for free school meals (FSM); 30 per cent of whom have additional learning needs (ALN); 1 per cent of whom 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 eight members of staff and the school also has 19 middle leaders. There are 54 teachers in Ysgol Aberconwy, as well as 12 teaching assistants.

### Additional professional learning grant allocation

For the period 2018/19 and 2019/20 the school received £45,000.

## How the additional grant was used

The grant funded a number of initiatives to develop research techniques, pedagogy and coaching skills, within the school and across their cluster.

When discussing Ysgol Aberconwy's professional learning package, Ian Gerrard, Headteacher, said:

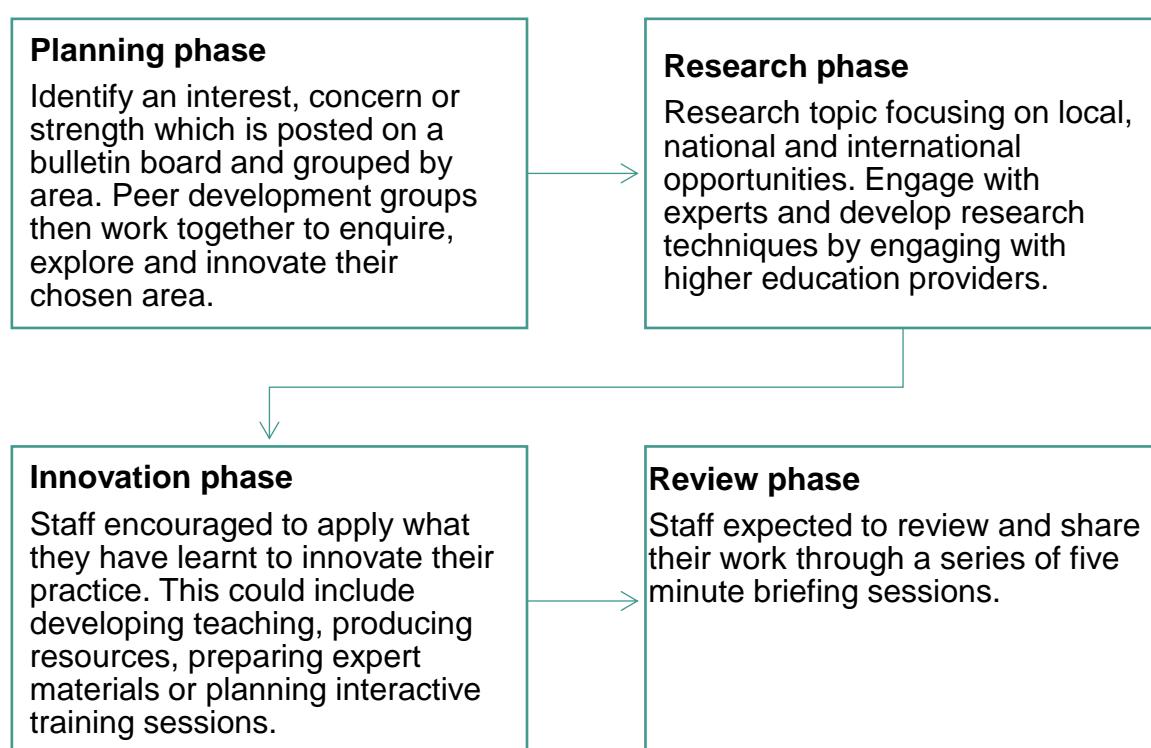
'At Ysgol Aberconwy we have developed our professional learning package alongside our primary cluster schools. Over recent years, we have developed pupil voice together, and in response to the new teaching and leadership standards, and in a drive to improve the quality of teaching, staff have trained all teachers in primary clusters in Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement programme (TEEP). This has provided a common language for learning and teaching across the cluster.'

The cluster has now moved on to developing a group of staff to promote high standards in learning and teaching in all cluster schools, and develop leadership opportunities for staff. Two members of staff from each primary school have been trained to TEEP Level 2, alongside staff at Ysgol Aberconwy. This will enable staff to keep the profile of learning high in all schools.

These staff then took time to research ways of evaluating staff practice and sharing ideas in a more efficient way and plan to use the Information Reporting Interface Service (IRIS) to share good practice and review ideas across the cluster, as well as provide a tool for all staff to use for their own self-reflection. Staff have been given the opportunity to visit other schools in order to examine practice, develop ideas for the curriculum and plan for its introduction.

### **Innovation cycle**

Ysgol Aberconwy has also devised their own 'innovation cycle' to develop staff research techniques. This cycle consists of the phases shown in the diagram below. Funding has supported staff release and training in research techniques.



### **Impact of the grant on colleagues across the school**

#### **Learning, teaching and planning**

There has been a renewed focus on learning, teaching and planning, with an emphasis on a learner-centred curriculum. There is increased collaboration at cluster level. All schools use the same language of pedagogy when planning and developing teaching.

A learning and teaching policy has been developed with the leaders of all of the schools. This has allowed the conversation to develop further and is a result of the research undertaken by staff from Ysgol Aberconwy and primary schools.

The policy has been extended to focus on homework. Conversations take place with parents and carers, governors as well as the learners themselves. Ideas are evaluated and practitioners are developing their collaboration and leadership by sharing and then leading projects via the funding available to them.

### **Professional learning and leadership**

The main focus of Ysgol Aberconwy's 'Innovation cycle' is rooted in the 'professional learning' and 'leadership' strands of the professional standards. Staff are encouraged to engage in research and furthermore, to develop the skills to do this effectively.

### **Impact of the grant on learners**

Learners have been more involved in planning their learning, supported by ideas from staff research. Learners now better understand the process of learning and are able to analyse their own progress. This has meant that Ysgol Aberconwy is developing more responsible and aware learners. Their ability to understand assessment and peer assess work is in development.

### **Lessons learned about professional learning for application to the school**

There have been lessons learned in all schools. The first of these is a common vocabulary and set of aims. The focus was to put learning and teaching at the heart of everything and develop the skills of all staff. This has enabled schools in the cluster to target innovation across the cluster.

Staff need to be guided and enabled to develop themselves and direct their own learning and practice. The development of a coaching approach and the embedding of a research philosophy is ongoing and needs careful planning and training.

### **Lessons learned about professional learning to share with other schools**

On a practical level, as a TEEP training school, Ysgol Aberconwy is able to offer advice and guidance on the effectiveness of the programme in delivering the four purposes for learners.

When considering Ysgol Aberconwy's opportunities to share practice with other schools the headteacher said:

'We hope that other schools can learn from our experience. The 'innovation cycle' we have established to enhance research is easily transferrable and presents a simple introduction to research.'

It is important for schools to recognise that a coherent plan, focussed on a small number of well thought out developments across the school workforce or cluster is more impactful than a scattered approach of smaller initiatives targeted at individuals. This is largely because shared language, goals and purposes are needed to drive the change agenda forward and to meet the challenges we face.'

The school's plans can be found at [www.aberconwy.conwy.sch.uk/school/general-info](http://www.aberconwy.conwy.sch.uk/school/general-info)

## Next steps

Ysgol Aberconwy will:

- continue to develop relationships with other schools in their cluster and collaborate to form policy and practice to improve standards. The school recognises the significant challenge of preparing for the 'new curriculum' but is committed to learning together through research, shared experience and training
- share the outcomes of its 'innovation cycle' with other members of their cluster, and develop the coaching skills of their TEEP Level 2 trained staff to facilitate further development of all staff in their schools
- develop their approach to evaluating the success of the TEEP project through the use of IRIS. The aim is to use technology to record and view teaching practice and evaluate the effectiveness of the training and research funded by the professional learning grant (PLG). This evaluation will be used to assess their effectiveness of aligning what happens in the classroom with the four purposes, how practice has been developed by PLG expenditure and to plan future development.