

Best practice

Glan Usk Primary School, Newport

Number of pupils: 660

Age range: 3-11 years

Date of Estyn inspection: May 2011



Area of sector-leading practice which has been identified during inspection and relates to a particular quality indicator:

Key Question: 1

Quality indicator: 2

Aspect: Wellbeing

Context and background to sector-leading practice:

Glan Usk is a very large primary school situated in the city of Newport. The school has evolved from the amalgamation of three separate schools in September 2008. Staff and children moved into purpose built PFI accommodation in January 2010. The on entry data has demonstrated a downward trend in pupils' baseline during the last three years, particularly in the areas of 'Writing' and 'Personal Social'.

19% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. 15% of children have English as an Additional Language. 21% are identified as having Additional Learning Needs.

Pupils' ability to make decisions in school were judged as excellent. The VOICE team (Valuing Opportunities for Investigation and Child-led

Enquiry) was established enabling greater pupil participation in decision making. The action research the VOICE Team carries out ensures that pupils are able to participate fully in shaping important aspects of the work of the school and significantly raises standards in wellbeing.

Description of nature of strategy or activity:

The VOICE Team was established as a completely separate group of pupils from the School Council. Pupils from Years 4 to 6 volunteered to be part of the team and were of mixed ability.

VOICE Team followed a series of introductory sessions which enabled them to become expert researchers in school. These sessions highlighted various aspects of research:

- What is research?
- What do researchers do?
- What can we find out from research?
- How do we collect data?
- How do we analyse data?

VOICE Team discussed areas that they would like to research within the school. These have included over the last two academic years, reward systems, behaviour charter, teaching and learning and pupils' wellbeing in school. The pupils choose the area they would like to research. All the discussions are child-led and the member of staff acts as a facilitator.

Over the course of the academic year 2010-2011, the VOICE Team's research question was 'How do children in our school learn?'

"The work of the VOICE Team has impacted on pupils' wellbeing and further improved standards in learning across the whole school."

Pupils constructed a baseline of the information they had. This was established from learning walks and discussions with other pupils. This work was pulled together and shared with all members of the team.

How did the VOICE Team carry out the research project?

These were the activities undertaken:

- Learning Walk – VOICE Team evaluated the whole school environment and commented on the way it supported children’s learning;
- VOICE Team discussed ways in which they could find out what children and staff thought about learning in the school;
- they wrote a script to follow in interviews and designed questionnaires; they organised themselves to carry out the research and collect the data, and conducted this over a two week period;
- VOICE Team analysed the data independently and arrived at conclusions; and
- these conclusions and targets for development were shared with the school leadership team, school governors, staff and pupils

What impact has this work had on provision and learners’ standards?

The involvement and decision making of the VOICE Team ensures pupil participation has a major impact on the strategic development of the school.

2009-2010

- VOICE Team contributed significantly to the development of a new ‘Behaviour Policy’ which incorporated their research findings on the fairness of the use of rewards and consequences throughout the whole school; and
- targets for development drawn up by the team were used as part of the school’s Improvement Plan for the following year.

2010-2011

- VOICE Team found that pupils’ learning in the school has been enhanced through the whole school focus on the development of the International Primary Curriculum, Foundation Phase and key skills;
- the team found that recent school improvement plan (SIP) targets focusing on pupils’ skill development and independence were having a positive effect on learning;
- targets for development focused on consistency in the use of displays and independent learning areas across the school; and
- these targets led to the development of a ‘Display Team’ – a team of pupils with whole school responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of displays and ensuring consistency in the way that displays support pupils’ learning.

The work of the VOICE Team has impacted on pupils’ wellbeing and further improved standards in learning across the whole school.