

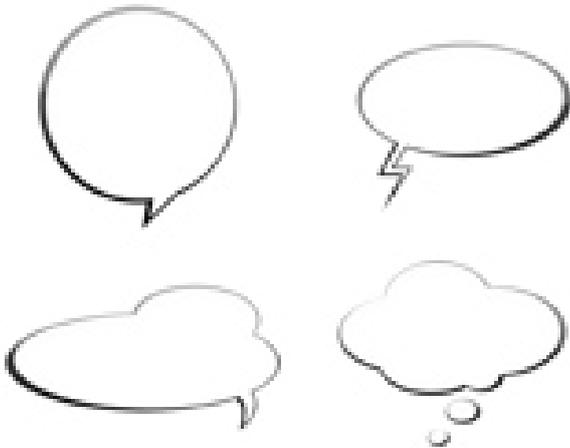
Best practice

Olchfa School, Swansea

Number of pupils: 1824

Age range: 11 – 18 years

Date of Estyn inspection: 23 – 27 May 2011



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

Key Question: 2

Quality indicator: Teaching

Aspect: Range and quality of teaching approaches.

Context and background to sector-leading practice:

Olchfa School is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school in Swansea. There are 1824 pupils on roll including 440 students in the sixth form. The school's intake is from a varied social background and represents the full range of ability.

Set up in 2006, LATOG is a peer-teaching observation scheme. It enables us to offer colleagues formative and constructive advice, while recognising, reinforcing and sharing good practice across departments. LATOG observations offer teachers a 'critical friend' service. They are not graded observations. They are regarded as supportive and non-threatening, providing the starting point for a dialogue about teaching and learning; one that

is rooted in a culture of openness, trust and collegiality.

We currently have a team of ten LATOG staff at Olchfa, each having proven themselves as leading practitioners. Our observers span a range of departments and hold a range of responsibilities within the school. The LATOG group is not exclusive. On a yearly basis, the team is reviewed and new members are encouraged to become involved. A thorough training programme is in place for new observers and time is given for staff to develop their observational skills. Being part of the observation team is in itself, a way of promoting the continuous professional development of the staff involved.

Description of nature of strategy or activity:

All teachers are observed over the course of the academic year and receive a robust and meaningful commentary on their lesson. Feedback is both verbal and written, disseminated to Learning Coordinators and the Senior Leadership Team. Verbal feedback takes place on the day of the observation and the written feedback follows within seven days. This ensures that the process remains fresh and relevant. Throughout the process, discussion is encouraged and constructive strategies to improve teaching are shared.

Recent LATOG developments include the inclusion of pupils in the observation process.

We are currently piloting a project where a group of

"The project aims to promote student voice and encourage students to become more involved with issues of teaching and learning."

trained students accompany LATOG staff into selected lessons to observe their peers learning. We currently have a team of seven student observers who work with their year group or below. Students are required to give written feedback and comment on specific aspects of students learning. This feedback is then disseminated with staff LATOG. The project aims to promote student voice and encourage students to become more involved with issues of teaching and learning. It aims to deepen discussions between teachers and students; an important extension of the concepts of pupil participation. This pilot is now well underway and will be continued over the next academic year.

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

LATOG observations do not take place in isolation; they are part of a much larger process. By sharing our strengths and areas for improvement, the findings contribute directly to the school's Self- Evaluation, School Improvement Plan and to the continuing professional development of classroom staff. School INSET is used to tackle whole-school needs and teachers are encouraged to work with the LATOG team to address and identify individual areas for improvement. In doing this, we ensure that the service impacts directly on the quality of pupils' learning experience in school. In school variation is reduced and students receive the same quality of experience across all lessons.