



Changing ethos and raising expectations

Ysgol O M Edwards and Ysgol Glanadda

Context

Ysgol Glanadda is a junior school in Bangor, North Wales serving a mixed catchment area close to the centre of the town. English is the first language of most learners. Ysgol O M Edwards is a small primary school in a more rural part of Gwynedd, where most learners speak Welsh as their first language. In 2012, Estyn judged Ysgol O M Edwards as 'Excellent', describing the relevant, stimulating learning experiences that motivate and inspire learners to learn.

Ysgol Glanadda was inspected by Estyn in 2012 and raised concerns about the standards of work in Welsh alongside broader issues relating to learning and teaching and school leadership. In June 2014, Ysgol Glanadda was judged by Estyn to have made sufficient progress and was removed from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Impact

More learners were targeted to achieve a Level 5 in Welsh at Ysgol Glanadda than before.

The two schools were evolving a professional learning community and raising learners' standards and staff expectations through their work.

Ysgol Glanadda was more open to working with and learning from others as a result of participating in the partnership.

Expectations of learners' work and capabilities had changed, and the work had developed to nurture and reflect improved practice in targeting learners for extension work in English and Welsh.

Governors were more involved in monitoring targets and outcomes and in working with the headteacher to raise standards.

Focus

Ysgol Glanadda worked with Ysgol O M Edwards to address issues around learning and teaching and areas of school leadership along with the development of Welsh language skills.

What they did

Building relationships

At the outset, the two headteachers allocated time to set the context for the partnership and to identify short-term and medium-term reforms that were needed to help the school to improve in light of the Estyn report and its recommendations. As part of this work, they spent time getting to know the context in which Ysgol Glanadda works, the key challenges faced, and its development needs for staff and learners.

The headteachers discussed the leadership approaches used by the headteacher at Ysgol O M Edwards and how they might be translated to Ysgol Glanadda's context. They then identified the immediate steps that were required to enable

Changing ethos and raising expectations

Ysgol O M Edwards and Ysgol Glanadda

Ysgol Glanadda to assess and address the issues highlighted by Estyn. This was seen as a matter of urgency, by both schools and by the County Council officials.

The two headteachers built a positive relationship with teachers and explained how the partnership could benefit the school. In doing so, they emphasised its potential as a means of improving learning and teaching and raising attainment.

Outcome

Ysgol Glanadda became more open to working with others and to the notion of learning from another school after they had participated in work at Ysgol O M Edwards, reviewing learners' work and observing lessons.

Strengthening systems to support learning and teaching

The two headteachers developed more rigorous and focused monitoring processes which were introduced at Ysgol Glanadda. They also undertook structured lesson observations together and ensured that emerging issues were followed up thoroughly after these activities had been completed. They then collaborated to refine the use of targets in the school.

At the same time, Ysgol O M Edwards shared learning and teaching resources with Ysgol Glanadda as part of the work to model good practice.

Outcomes

In keeping with the targets for improvement, performance was monitored more closely by the headteacher in Ysgol Glanadda, e.g. through more rigorous scrutiny of marking and learners' work.

The headteacher at Ysgol Glanadda created a system to check that agreed recommendations were acted upon and progress was reviewed more systematically than in the past.

Ysgol Glanadda has strengthened its moderation arrangements.

Raising expectations

Both headteachers reviewed the targets and outcomes data for learners at Ysgol Glanadda in the light of evidence about how they should be progressing. This was followed by a process which enabled teachers from the two schools to discuss

Changing ethos and raising expectations

Ysgol O M Edwards and Ysgol Glanadda

learners' work, and their expectations. As part of this, they drew on examples of their work at Ysgol O M Edwards to consider what could be expected in terms of learner progress, evaluated the level of work they required from learners based on what other children were doing, and discussed how to enrich the quality of learning and teaching.

Outcomes

The headteacher at Ysgol Glanadda helped to set higher expectations of learners. He increased the amount of extended writing that was done in both English and Welsh to provide more robust evidence of what learners could achieve.

Teachers were expected to be more rigorous about insisting that learners were reminded of the basics of presentation, ensuring all work was completed to a high quality. They were also encouraged to ensure that learners used more varied forms of expression in written work.

Changing classroom practice

The work to raise teachers' expectations was accompanied by changed classroom practices at Ysgol Glanadda. This included increasing the amount of differentiation, introducing more varied reading activities, and undertaking group reading sessions more systematically.

Other aspects of approaches used at Ysgol O M Edwards were also developed at Ysgol Glanadda, including the 'daily challenge' in mathematics and the use of tablets for developing learners' verbal presentation skills.

Outcomes

Ysgol Glanadda introduced more varied reading tasks.

The school has developed more appropriate differentiated work.

Tablets are being used to complement the school ICT curriculum and are used in specific, appropriate contexts such as supporting learners in delivering verbal presentations.

Why it worked

- The two headteachers took the time to explain the partnership's value to teachers at Ysgol Glanadda and having done so, effective professional conversations developed.
- Ysgol Glanadda recognised the need for change in terms of improving leadership practice and raising its expectations of learners.
- This recognition of need was accompanied by a programme of change to the way the school approached learning and teaching, with a clear focus on specific changes that could help learners to achieve which drew on the model used at Ysgol O M Edwards. For example, the partnership provided a practical model of good practice in areas such as curriculum and assessment arrangements, marking and giving feedback.
- Despite the differences in socio-economic and cultural contexts, the two headteachers recognised that the schools could work together effectively and that elements of practice used in Ysgol O M Edwards could be translated to the context at Ysgol Glanadda.
- Support and guidance provided by Ysgol O M Edwards was greatly appreciated by the headteacher and staff at Ysgol Glanadda.

Contact details

Dilys Ellis-Jones
Headteacher – Ysgol O M Edwards
Tel: 01678 540242