



## Developing and sharing practice

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and  
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes

### Context

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes are Welsh-medium primary schools in Cardiff. Ysgol Mynydd Bychan has more than 200 learners on roll, much more than Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes which is still a growing school and is not yet catering for as many learners as Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, although it is expected that it will do so in future. In November 2012, Estyn inspected Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes and highlighted positive evidence about learner progress, behaviour and attitude towards learning and well-being. However, Estyn also noted the need to improve progress in learners' extended writing skills in English and Welsh and highlighted areas for improvement in terms of teaching and assessment, including the use of assessment as a means of supporting learning. In March 2014, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes was judged by Estyn to have made sufficient progress and was removed from the list of schools requiring monitoring.

### Impact

The regional consortium and Estyn have noted improvements to planning and monitoring as well as the standard of teaching at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes.

Internal monitoring also indicates that there has been an improvement in the standard of teaching at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes.

The use of programmes such as Geiriau Gwych has supported Year 2 learners' progress in writing and extended writing. Mathemateg Mawr has underpinned success in numeracy.

Middle leadership in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes has been strengthened. Data is now being used effectively to inform practice.

### Focus

When the partnership began, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes was a relatively new school. Over a six-year period, it had grown from 39 to 89 learners, developing from one year group. At the time of writing, it had expanded to Year 5. The partnership work was facilitated by the existing positive relationship between both schools' headteachers. One of them described how the strength of this relationship had accelerated the pace of the work: 'One school had learned from the other'.

## What they did

### A partnership approach

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan had identified areas where they needed to change. Some of those changes reflected issues which needed to be developed in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes. The headteachers therefore focused on what needed to improve in both schools alongside specific matters that needed to be addressed in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes. The schools worked together to strengthen whole-school policies, provide greater structure at Key Stage 2, and develop the use of self-evaluation. They also addressed issues relating to learning and teaching such as the quality of extended writing in both English and Welsh and the need to strengthen differentiation.

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Both headteachers created processes to enable staff and governors at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes to learn from practice in Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, and developed leadership capacity by appointing middle leaders from both schools as project leaders. These aspects of the partnership work were facilitated by the mutual confidence that both headteachers had in each other's professional capability.

### Outcomes

The partnership accelerated the pace of change and added impetus to the development work at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes.

The workload was shared between the two headteachers because of the partnership.

### Analysis and use of data

The two headteachers worked together to refine their processes to support learning and teaching, including the use of data. They jointly analysed data across both schools, examining specific groups such as boys/girls, learners eligible for free school meals, and summer-born children. Ysgol Mynydd Bychan shared its learner tracking data with Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes to support planning provision.

Both headteachers met with staff to discuss data on a termly basis and coached them to set targets for individual learners which were informed by the data analysis. The headteachers created a portrait of expectations of learner outcomes from the Foundation Phase to Year 6, with an accompanying portfolio of exemplar work in English and Welsh.

### Outcome

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan refined its processes for using data and some of the systems used in Ysgol Mynydd Bychan were adopted in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes. This led to more robust methods of using data to monitor learners' progress, and setting of targets and expectations.

### Refining quality assurance and performance management

The two headteachers observed practice in both schools and then worked together to strengthen quality assurance systems. They reviewed lesson plans jointly to look at issues such as differentiation and also moderation of learners' work.

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They introduced a set termly timetable of monitoring activities in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes that was modelled on the practice used at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan.

Both headteachers monitored how teachers assessed learners and then developed whole-school approaches which were designed to achieve greater consistency of practice. In addition, they created a structure to provide feedback to teachers and aligned performance management objectives more closely to school priorities.

### Outcomes

There was a more systematic approach to quality assurance.

Self-evaluation work was more focused.

There was greater clarity about expectations when conducting lesson observations.

Staff were more accountable and they received feedback on their performance more quickly.

The school secured greater standardisation through a process of monitoring assessment and testing, especially in literacy and numeracy.

### Sharing professional practice and resources

Work was also undertaken to increase professional capacity at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes, informed by the arrangements at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, but tailored to meet the school's own needs. This focused on developing more consistent practice across Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes.

A programme of teacher exchanges enabled staff at both schools to observe one another's practice and Estyn inspectors provided training on what constituted an excellent lesson and modelled practice accordingly.

All teachers attended training provided by collective learning which introduced them to new pedagogical approaches. Staff from both schools subsequently collaborated to develop this aspect of their practice.

The headteachers of both schools developed the role of middle leaders, in particular that of subject leaders in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes, by giving them responsibility across the school.

### Outcomes

Teaching and learning at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes were strengthened by giving staff opportunities to see high-quality practice at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and elsewhere.

New learning and teaching approaches were influencing the way teachers at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes worked.

### Fostering whole-school approaches

The whole-school systems that underpinned learning and teaching were refined, drawing on the experience of Ysgol Mynydd Bychan.

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan shared its learning and teaching resources with Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes which provided them with examples they could use as the school developed. For example, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes introduced cornerstones based on work undertaken at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. Both schools jointly developed and introduced programmes in literacy (Geiriau Gwych), extended writing (Ysgrifennu Cyfoethog) and Numeracy (Mathemateg Mawr). Ysgol Mynydd Bychan also developed learner profiling, and staff from both schools worked together to refine it.

At the same time, the two schools created identical methods of communicating with parents/carers which helped to nurture their understanding of their children's progress.

### Outcomes

Internal monitoring indicated that the quality of the work in science had improved.

Geiriau Gwych had a positive impact on learners' work.

There was a clearer view of what learners should be achieving with more consistent expectations across the school.

Links between school and home were strengthened and parents/carers were better informed about what their children should be achieving.

### Developing middle leadership

Headteachers from both schools developed the role of middle leaders, in particular that of subject leaders in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes, by giving them responsibility across the school.

#### Outcome

Leadership at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes was stronger, with a team of middle leaders in place to support the school's senior leadership team (SLT).

#### Why it worked

- The existing positive relationship and open and honest dialogue between the two headteachers facilitated the partnership work.
- Robust analysis of data and an understanding of the individual child behind the data underpinned the partnership's success.
- Staff at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes were given an opportunity to work with experienced practitioners at Ysgol Mynydd Bychan. Also, both schools recognised the need to build on the strengths which existed in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes as well as Ysgol Mynydd Bychan.
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pen-y-Groes recognised that there were issues which it needed to address and that Ysgol Mynydd Bychan had the capacity to help it on its journey of improvement.
- The schools maximised the opportunity presented by the partnership to enable staff to work with experienced practitioners and to nurture their confidence.
- The partnership provided a way of raising awareness of what was being achieved in another school.

#### Contact details

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