

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

POLICY OBSERVATORY CASE STUDY 11

Name of School/Setting: **Ely Caerau Federation Schools Community Partnership**
Local Authority: **Cardiff**
Type of School/Setting: **Community**
Language Medium: **English**
Focus of Case Study:
Strengthening links with communities, family and parental engagement

Ely Caerau Federation Schools Community Partnership

The Ely and Caerau Local Partnership set up ACE¹ (Action in Caerau and Ely) to create a lasting legacy for the successful Communities First² programme in the area. ACE aims to:

- Bring the community together
- Support community groups
- Manage and develop local projects
- Employ staff and create local employment opportunities
- Manage community buildings
- Promote the needs of Ely and Caerau with the Council and other service providers
- Find ways of bringing money in to regenerate Ely and Caerau

ACE works alongside community groups based in Ely/Caerau and Fairwater/Pentrebanne (Cardiff West) who ensure that Communities First work is shaped and influenced by the local community. Each partnership group nominates 1-to-2 members to sit on the ACE board to represent Communities First issues. ACE provides overarching support for the Communities First team, ensuring that the programme is effectively delivered through monitoring and programme evaluation.

¹ <http://www.aceplace.org/#!communities-first/c8hd>

² Communities First aims to contribute, alongside other programmes, to narrowing the education/skills, economic and health gaps between our most deprived and more affluent areas.
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/people-and-communities/regeneration/communitiesfirst/?lang=en>

The Case Study - Ely Caerau Federation Cluster

Ely Caerau Federation Schools are situated on the West side of Cardiff. A large proportion of the community falls into the top 10% most deprived areas in Wales. Ely and Caerau are Welsh Government Communities First designated areas. A survey undertaken by Estyn in 2013 showed that 20% of Federation Pupils enter secondary school with a reading age below nine years and six months; this is generally considered the level of functional literacy.

Ely Caerau Federation Schools Community Partnership is led by the Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator for Ely Caerau, who is also Chair of the Learning Centre Partnership Board which pulls together all the headteachers from the primary and secondary schools in Ely Caerau, and all the Partner Agencies which supports learning, helping to raise education attainment in the area and support families' well-being. There is also a team of professional interlinked practitioners, Family Learning and Liaison Officer, Youth Progression Mentor, and Adult Learning Co-ordinator. Staff have co-designed an innovative programme that supports the Communities First Learning Communities theme to engage with parents, carers, pupils and families to try and overcome some of the barriers to learning in an area that has high levels of social and economic disadvantage and uses Results Based Accountability (RBA) to plan, monitor and evaluate performance.

In the Federation there are two secondary and six primary schools:

Secondary

- Glyn Derw - 546 pupils – 38.8% Free School Meals (FSM)
- Michaelston - 703 pupils – 45.1% FSM

Primary

- Herbert Thompson – 457 pupils – 55.4% FSM
- Windsor Clive – 418 pupils – 53.2% FSM
- Hywel Dda – 389 pupils – 57.4% FSM
- Trelai – 433 pupils – 48.1% FSM
- Pencaerau – 341 pupils – 49.0% FSM
- Millbank – 134 pupils – 30.4% FSM

December 2013 figures

The Federation has found that although parents are significantly more engaged in their child's learning during primary school years they become disengaged during the secondary school years when young people need even more engagement from home to support learning.

“Parental involvement and family learning seems to happen much easier at primary level so we wanted to showcase what happens in primary school with interactive displays so that we could maintain some of that momentum and link parents to secondary learning because that is when we have noticed parental engagement drops off.”

Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator

“The Federation is investing in a new learning ICT platform which will include a parent portal. This will enable parents to more frequently monitor the progress of their own child. We have invested in a social learning environment (Yahki³) to encourage parents to work with their children outside of the school day.”

“The ‘Achievement for All’⁴ initiative is currently in place and we are seeking to use this to complement and consolidate all current programmes.”

Federation Assistant Head (Teaching & Learning and Training)

Ely Caerau Federation Schools Learning Showcase Event

The first ever Ely and Caerau Federation Schools Learning Showcase event was held at Western Leisure Centre on Wednesday 17th July 2013 from 3.30-6pm. This event was co-designed by the Federation cluster of schools and Cardiff West Communities First/ACE as a means of promoting family and community engagement in schools and learning opportunities for all ages and was also a forum to raise the profile of each school in the cluster, presenting a cohesive, joined up approach to learning across all the Key Stages.

The event showcased how working together with other partners and agencies enables the provision of a holistic range of school and community based interventions to engage families and promote family learning. The Federation aimed

³ <http://www.yahki.com/>

⁴ <http://www.afa3as.org.uk/>

to inspire and encourage parents to work with the schools to help improve educational outcomes for their children; to help raise the aspirations and educational outcomes for children who are affected by poverty and disadvantage; and to break the link between poverty and low attainment.

“In affluent areas parents are much more engaged with schools, parent’s evenings are well attended, whereas our parents don’t understand how important that is, so we are trying to change the whole ethos of understanding that children will do better in school if parents are involved.”

Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator

In order to plan the event learner voice groups from both Glyn Derw and Michaelston Community College secondary schools got together with the Community Team led by the Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator and Dynamix⁵ for a consultation evening.

Initial invitation to participate in the consultation was presented to the learner voice groups by posing two initial questions:

- **Would you like your parents to be more engaged with your school?**
- **Would you like your parents to be more interested in what you do so that they could support you better in your learning?**

Subsequent discussions led the groups to conclude that the answer to both questions was yes and that they would like to be involved in the event.

The learner voice groups consisted of approximately 40 pupils, 20 from each school and the consultation evening was held at a local restaurant. The planning was followed by the sharing of a meal.

The Learning Board organised the activities, which were based very strongly on the ideas of the pupils. Approximately 500 people attended the Learning Showcase Event which included:

- Interactive exhibitions and taster sessions by schools and partners
- Performances from school choirs and performing arts groups
- Free family time play sessions on the Play Bus⁶
- Free buffet

⁵ Dynamix is a social enterprise and workers co-operative whose aim is to create a fairer society by developing people's skills for participation, co-operation, inclusion, play and enterprise.

⁶ Play bus access had to be earned by visiting 6 exhibitions at the event. Children were not allowed to enter the bus alone they had to be accompanied by a parent or carer so that they could enjoy the play experience together.

- Consultation session led by pupils

Part of the event included a pupil run consultation. Prior to the event Dynamix trained the volunteer pupils how to run a consultation and equipped them with the necessary skills and methods to get data and information. The pupils then consulted with parents at the event with the support of Dynamix in order to research the following questions:

- **Why schools put on parents evenings but not all parents attend?**
- **What kind of things could be done to give parents the opportunity to see what schools are doing?**
- **How can parents become more involved in their child's learning?**

Interestingly prior to the event pupils shared the assumption that their parents and carers were most interested in grades and results, reports, behaviour, anti-bullying policies, trips, uniform, and then parents' evenings. They also thought that the things stopping their parents and carers from engaging with school included attitudes; that they thought their parents felt uncomfortable; and thought it unnecessary and not important.

Contrary to these beliefs the pupil researchers found out that 49% of parents would like to know more about how their child is doing in school and that text, phone and email are the best way to communicate with parents. They also discovered that in order to feel more supported by the school parents want: information, quickly and regularly including lots of good news; to be told as soon as possible if there is a problem; and to feel valued and that their children are valued.

With regard to parental involvement it was found that: work, confidence, timing, not knowing what is going on, and lack of childcare were the most preventative barriers. Most of the parents felt that parents' evening was either OK or good. However they thought that the organisation, queuing and appointment systems could be a lot better.⁷ Dynamix concluded that lots of relaxed opportunities for parents to come to school should be created; this could include coffee mornings / evenings, intergenerational events and community events and that these should be particularly focussed on Year 7 families to prevent barriers from forming. The more opportunity there is to come in to school then the less likely parents are to feel uncomfortable about being there. The majority of people consulted had not heard of Family Learning, but those who had described it as very positive.

“We want our families to know that at school this is what we are trying to do, we don't see our schools as being just

⁷ Dynamix Report

for the children, we want the whole family to be engaged in school and we want the school and the community to have a direct link as it is a hub that can improve the lives of anyone connected to it.”

Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator

Dragonfly Year 7 Parent/Pupil Workshops – ‘Super Start’

These workshops were offered to all pupils and their parents at the start of Year 7 in 2013. They involved a one and a half hour workshop that enabled pupils and parents to openly and honestly explore how well they were settling into Year 7 and to deal with any issues arising in their attainment, friendships, homework and family life etc. For the first half of the workshop parents and pupils attended separate workshops so they could engage with their peers and then in the second half they came together to share what they had learnt. At the end of the workshop every pupil had an action or set of actions and goals that they had chosen to work on and parents then committed to supporting their child with these goals.

The ‘Super Start’ programme is designed to empower parents to support their children to raise aspirations and attainment at the commencement of their secondary school education. The programme was also designed to assist in a pupil’s transition from primary to secondary school. Every parent/guardian attending a ‘Super Start’ session was entered for a prize draw to win an electronic tablet to support learning at home.

Objectives for the pupils:

- to reduce anxiety about the transition from primary to secondary
- to start exploring their aspirations for the future
- to introduce them to the support network available in school and encourage dialogue between parents, pupils and teachers

Objectives for the parents:

- to improve their relationship and attitude to the school
- to offer guidance and support in how they can help to support their child’s learning, most particularly their literacy and numeracy skills to empower parents in supporting their children
- to explore and challenge limiting beliefs and barriers to learning, affecting both parents and their children
- to encourage them to develop aspirations for their children and themselves

Evidence of Impact

Evaluations reflected a very positive response to the workshop. Pupils reported that they found the session useful, giving it an average rating of 7.9 out of 10 and clearly felt an increase in their confidence in regards to being in Year 7, with the average rating increasing from 6.8 before the session to 7.7 afterwards. There was also an increase in how comfortable they felt about asking teachers for help, with their rating rising from 5.3 before the session to 6.9 after the session. The most marked increase in the ratings was in regard to how comfortable they felt about asking their parents for help before and after the session, as this increased from 6.2 to 8.2. Many pupils fed back that what they found most helpful about the session was having the chance to talk about their problems and feelings.

“It gave me ideas of what I can do to build my confidence.”

“I found it was easy to figure out my worry in the session.”

“We can communicate better.”

Pupil Voice

Parents' evaluations also demonstrated that the workshop had a positive impact reporting a considerable increase in how confident they felt about their child settling into Year 7, with the average rating increasing from 6.7 before the session to 7.9 afterwards. There was also an increase in how comfortable parents felt about coming into school to speak to teachers about their child, with ratings rising from 7.2 to 8.2. Parents gave the workshop a 7.8 rating for the overall usefulness. The main reasons given as to why the session was useful included: meeting other parents, being able to voice their concerns about their child and making contact with the Year Head at the school. Many also valued finding out things about their child that they didn't know.

“Really helped me to have 1-to-1 time with my daughter.”

“Good to learn things about my child that I didn't know.”

“Useful to talk to other parents who are going through the same experiences.”

Parent Voice

50% of participants expressed an interest in a follow-up session, which would clearly indicate that there is a need for continued support for some of the families of Year 7 pupils in the form of workshops and coaching.

Transition Family Activity Afternoons

The 'Transition Family Engagement Programme' runs in both Glyn Derw High School and Michaelston Community College after school from 3-to-5pm one day each week. Families with children in Year 7 and the feeder primaries are also invited to attend. The core aims of this programme are to ease the transition from primary to secondary education; to strengthen the relationship between parent and child; encourage family and community engagement in secondary school; signpost parents and adults into progressive school and community based courses programmes; and improve the confidence and social skills of vulnerable children to support engagement in school and improve learning outcomes for children from a disadvantaged area. Family activities include:

- Arts and crafts
- Healthy cooking
- Storytelling and reading cafes
- Planning community/school and fund raising events
- Family trips

The project has become embedded in the School's Wellbeing Plan and is used by pastoral staff to refer families who have been identified as vulnerable, who require extra support, and have children who are not engaging in school and are at risk of possible exclusion. The project is run in partnership with Cardiff West Communities First/ACE.

Evidence of Impact

Parents and pupils are asked to complete a questionnaire at various points throughout the programme. They are also involved in the decision-making surrounding activity choices and trips etc. 100% of those attending rate the provision as very good or excellent. 12 parents during the 2013-to-14 period have signed up to other adult learning courses.

Developing Post 16 and Adult Learning Opportunities

Cardiff West Communities First/ACE, in three distinct and interconnected parts, is facilitating this project.

1. The first part is the development of the Western School Federation Post-16 and adult learning curriculum through partnerships with key education providers.
2. The second part of the project is the development of Post-16 and adult learning opportunities within the community that will lead to engagement and

progression to further study and employment. This is being delivered in partnership with a range of local education providers and Universities.

3. The third part is the development of Pathways to Higher Education and Employment. This partnership aims to bring together learning providers who together can assemble a range of progression routes to Higher Education for community members regardless of their prior level of educational achievement. The project aims to make a range of progression routes to high quality employment transparent and accessible and give clear sign-posts to employment opportunities that meet with Welsh Government priorities.

Development of the Western School Federation Post-16 and Adult Learning Curriculum

The proportion of pupils leaving Year 11 with 5 GCSE passes has increased significantly and has placed new demand on the Federation 6th Form (see tables below). This project brought together the Federation with ACE, Cardiff and Vale College and St David's College to broaden the 6th Form curriculum to offer a much improved range of AS and A level choices together with a broad range of Level 3 BTEC vocational courses.

Glyn Derw High School and

Michaelston Community College Results

Key Stage 3: Core Subject Indicator

	Glyn Derw	Michaelston
2010/11 (Actual)	58%	45%
2011/12 (Actual)	60%	60%
2012/13 (Actual)	69%	62%
2013/14 (Predicted)	79%	74%

Key Stage 4: Level 2

	Glyn Derw	Michaelston
2010/11 (Actual)	33%	37%

2011/12 (Actual)	62%	56%
2012/13 (Actual)	80%	62%
2013/14 (Predicted)	68%	72%

Key Stage 4: Level 2 including English & Maths

	Glyn Derw	Michaelston
2010/11 (Actual)	22%	19%
2011/12 (Actual)	34%	25%
2012/13 (Actual)	27%	25%
2013/14 (Predicted)	42%	34%

Attendance Figures are also showing improvements:

Michaelston Community College

November 2011	88.8%
January 2013	89%
March 2014	91.5%

Glyn Derw High School

November 2011	87.5%
January 2013	91.5%
March 2014	92.5%

Development of Post-16 and Adult Learning Opportunities within the Community

Cardiff West Communities First/ACE is working with a range of education providers to expand the breadth of adult learning courses that are delivered locally. This is seen as particularly important as many community members experience significant barriers to accessing good quality provision outside the area due to financial and mobility difficulties. The project has brought together Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff and Vale College, Neighbourhood Learning and a range of other smaller providers to assemble a local curriculum. The range of opportunities includes engagement courses, Basic English and Maths, GCSE's and a suite of Level 4 vocational short courses that are accredited by HE institutions. The curriculum is being expanded in both a reactive and proactive way.

Development of Pathways to HE and Employment

Cardiff West Communities First/ACE is facilitating a project that will develop a clear curriculum that is fully supported by a range of HE providers that each contributes qualifications which are mapped to career goals. Some of this local provision is already in place however other elements are being developed in order to provide a series of educational pathways that are mapped to priority areas for employment and skilled employment. A key priority is the development of pathways that are designed to be accessible to all, whatever their prior educational achievement. The curriculum will to allow local people to acquire the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to sustain educational progression that are mapped to professional qualifications which are supported by appropriate advice and guidance.

Evidence of Impact

The Federation increased the number of learners enrolling from 25 in 2012, to 130 in 2013. This is contributing to raising aspirations and Level 3 educational attainment within the community. By September 2014 the Federation will expand provision and the total learners benefitting is expected to reach 250.

In the period June 2013-to-January 2014 Partners have introduced 40 new courses that are delivered locally within Ely, Caerau, Fairwater and Pentreban. With an average cohort of 12 learners per programme, these courses have engaged around 500 residents. The work with providers is planned to continue this trend and bring-on many new courses for the local community.

“Thanks to ACE and Communities First for the Youth and Community Work course and the support with child care. I'm sure all this learning will be useful and I hope it will

help with the voluntary work placement that I'm going to do now and in the future. Thanks to all E."

E is an asylum seeker living in a hostel in Ely

The school and community based adult learning programme across Ely Caerau is a key element to improving the 'home learning environment' to equip parents to support their child's learning and to help close the gap between social disadvantage and achievement.

"We want parents to see learning as part of their lives which has an impact on them wanting their children to achieve; they then have the ammunition to support their own children's learning."

Schools and Community Learning Co-ordinator

Future Developments

Time Bank - *Give time, get credit!*

The Federation also aims to broaden experiences. A group of disengaged youngsters facing exclusion recently went on a coach trip to London, however this was not a free trip the youngsters and accompanying parents and carers paid with 'time credits'.

Time credits are a community currency; they can be earned by volunteering time to the local community. In return for giving up time to help others, 1 hour of giving, helping, and serving someone else will equal 1 time credit. Time credits have no monetary value, but allow volunteers to buy time with Community Partners offering activities- e.g. 1 time credit will buy you an hour in the leisure centre.

Time credits can be used at selected:

- Play, climbing, bowling, and leisure centres
- College beauty and hair salons
- Gardens, country parks, and galleries
- Camping and caravanning holidays
- Theatre, music and drama shows
- Community parties, events, and trips

Time credits can be earned in a variety of ways, for example:

- Helping children learn
- Mentoring
- Assisting at a homework club
- Planting and maintaining gardens

- Litter picking
- Running community events

There are two 'time banks'- a school time bank, and a community time bank. The ethos behind the project is to encourage helping others through volunteering, community spirit, and active citizenship. It helps people living in poverty by earning time to pay for activities and events and encourages young people 'to earn' and not to expect to get things for free, thus increasing greater autonomy and self-esteem.

Between 2010 and 2012 a 2 year pilot of 'Time Bank' was run, this has now ended and the good work continues, however the scheme is now being re-developed for brand new launch. Following consultation and re-evaluation it is hoped that the new scheme will include time credits being paid for time spent in GCSE revision thus creating a new way to raise aspirations and raise attainment levels.

Funding

Learning Showcase Event

- Families First Grant for Community Focused Schools – Engaging parents
- Cardiff West Communities First/ACE

Dragonfly Year 7 Parent/Pupil Workshops – 'Super Start'

- Families First Grant – Community Focused Schools – Engaging parents
- Pupil Deprivation Grant
- Cardiff West Communities First/ACE

Transition Family Activity Afternoons

- Pupil Deprivation Grant
- Neighbourhood Learning
- Community Foundation of Wales
- Cardiff West Communities First/ACE

Developing Post 16 and Adult Learning Opportunities

- Welsh Government Communities First Initiative

Time Bank

- Communities Currencies in Action Project
- Interreg IVB NWE Programme
- Big Lottery Fund

Summary

The key message from this case study is that parental engagement is critical to reducing the impact of poverty on pupils' achievement.

Theme	Particular factor	EC
Leadership	Rigorous use of data and self evaluation	✓
Engagement with parents and wider community	Strong dialogue with parents	✓✓
	Adult learning	✓
	Establishing and sustaining strategic partnerships	✓✓

Key Contact

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