

Local Authority Impact Reports

Name of the Local Authority: Wrexham

Date of Report: Summer Term 2010

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Introduction

The aim of this report is to begin to establish the impact of the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative in Wrexham County Borough Council. This report is based on evidence obtained, in April 2010, during visits, by the consultant, to a total of seven schools- five primary school and two infant schools. The schools were selected by the authority in order to provide a variety of settings e.g. a mix of urban and rural schools, range of linguistic and social backgrounds, different age groups, varied sized schools, variation in length of involvement in the PESS project. For logistical reasons, it was not possible to visit a secondary school as part of this study.

A total of seven lessons were observed, one in each school. Four of the lessons observed were in gymnastics, two were dance lessons and one was an athletics lesson. As part of the visit, discussions were held, in each school, with the subject leader and headteacher, as well as with selected groups of pupils.

In addition, the consultant had meetings with those involved in the management of the project within the authority. He was also provided with a range of documentation to support and exemplify the issues discussed in these meetings.

Main findings

LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT

Within the local Authority (LA), the PESS project enjoys an increasingly prominent position. During the present academic year, PESS has become more of an integral part of the School Improvement concept.

PESS has very close links with numerous other teams such as Adventurous Activities Centres, Leisure and specific Sports Development officers. It is closely aligned to other projects such as Dragon Sport, Healthy Schools and Activemarc Cymru.

The leadership and management provided by the authority demonstrate a significant number of positive aspects.

- PESS now enjoys an increasingly high profile within the authority.
- The PESS initiative is now well managed by the authority. The current line manager is Head of Service for the 8-14 age group. In an attempt to maximise the potential of PESS, the LA PESS management team have implemented a number of initiatives, some of which were introduced by the previous line manager.
- As a consequence, the PESS officer has presented information to, and become an integral part of, a significant range of groups within the LA e.g. the Department Management Team, Joint Education Team, Strategic Coordinator Group, Wrexham Association of Secondary Head teachers and the Primary Headteachers Federation Group.
- The impact of the initiative is regularly monitored and reported upon
 - in termly Development Centre (DC) meetings
 - in termly meetings with the consultant and Sport Wales Active Young People (AYP) Regional Officer
 - by utilising the PESS planning and reporting system
 - by sharing information with LA school improvement officers;
 - by feedback from the various mentors, mentees and partnership leaders
 - course action plans
 - school impact report – termly
 - school self evaluation/PE review

- course evaluations
 - LA officer discussions with Headteachers (QDD visits)
 - School cluster meetings
 - PE Quality circle – secondary meetings.
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- On two occasions, PESS courses have been scheduled on school closure days— thus maximising the uptake and minimising the cost on those particular days. The intention in the future is to organise more courses on closure days.
 - Approximately 800 CPD opportunities have been taken up during the lifespan of the project in Wrexham.
 - Recently implemented PESS initiatives are often made a priority e.g. approximately 66% of the LA’s primary schools’ PE subject leaders, by the end of this academic year, will have attended the recently created Subject Leaders course.
 - The number of mentors being utilised within the LA is increasing-at present, there are six being utilised. To a large extent, the process has proved beneficial for those involved.
 - Some Development centre Partnership Leaders play an active and important part in the success of the project within the county e.g. assisting the coordinator in monitoring and reporting on progress within the DCs.

THE REMAINDER OF THE REPORT RELATES SPECIFICALLY TO INFORMATION GAINED DURING THE VISITS MADE TO THE SEVEN SELECTED SCHOOLS

- In nearly all the schools, PESS targets are included in the SIP or in subject reviews and are monitored on a regular basis. In many instances, these targets have been agreed as a consequence of the completion of the subject self-evaluation.
- All subject leaders are committed to the PESS project and are keen to maximise its potential contribution within their school.
- All schools believed that PESS had raised the profile and perceived importance of PE within the school and the local community.

- Direct involvement in the PESS project has resulted in the school environment being adapted or designed to encourage participation in physical activity, by a greater number of pupils than was previously the situation e.g. traversing/bouldering walls, mapping out the grounds of every school in the authority for orienteering and other activities.
- Primary school teachers believed the number of courses offered to be appropriate.
- Every school was particularly complimentary of the support afforded by the LA's PESS coordinator

CURRICULUM

- All schools offer a broad curriculum.
- In nearly all schools, a definite attempt has been made to respond to the demands of the 2008 Orders.
- At KS2, pupils received the target of at least two hours of curriculum PE.
- As a consequence of the nature of the processes involved in the Foundation Phase, calculating the time allocated for Physical and Creative Development was proving more problematic. However, all schools believed that at least two hours was allocated, in various forms, to these areas of learning.
- In many schools, the time allocated to PE had increased due to their involvement in PESS and the corresponding increase in teachers' confidence.
- The programme of study, within the PE curriculum, which has been amended to the greatest extent, was in the gymnastics element of the Creative Activities strand. Many schools believed that enough training/courses had been allocated to this particular aspect and that similar attention should be given to dance.
- Where teachers have attended both Gymnastics module 1 and 2, progression and continuity exists across much of the work. In schools where teachers have attended the gymnastics module 1 course only, or where cascading has been ineffective, limited continuity and progression was in evidence.
- In the small schools which followed the units and lesson plans included on, for example, the Gymnastics Module 1 course CD, progression and continuity was difficult to attain as a consequence of the logistical arrangements in which classes invariably comprised of mixed age groups.

- Schools, which include the Foundation Phase age group, were most keen to receive training in the PESS courses on Physical and Creative Development.
- In health Fitness and Wellbeing (HFW), schools have integrated some of the learning outcomes and practical activities in other programmes of study e.g. in competitive or creative activities, on a cross curricular/topic basis.
- The PESS project has had an undoubted and significant impact on the transition process—from a social and academic perspective—and particularly from KS2 to KS3. Effective co-working in DC meetings has been an integral component in this development. A few teachers believed that providing primary school teachers the opportunity to observe standards in the secondary school would be a beneficial development.
- Involvement in the PESS project has also had a positive impact on pupils' involvement in extra curricular activities. In one school, the headteacher noted that 'the confidence gained by pupils in the PE curriculum, motivates them to take part in extra curricular activities-both within and outside school'.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

A. TEACHING

- Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the greatest impact of the PESS project has been to increase the teachers' confidence, and negate their inhibitions, when teaching PE.
- Most teachers believed that the PESS project had an impact on their teaching style in PE lessons—and moved them away from a command style to a more child based approach.
- One teacher believed that, as a consequence of the school's involvement with PESS that 'PE was now a far more integral part of cross curricular teaching and initiatives'.
- The four components of the Skills framework are becoming an integral focus of teachers planning and delivery—particularly communication and thinking skills.
- All teachers expressed their admiration of the PESS project and its impact within their respective schools. They are, particularly, impressed with the quality of the

resources and courses-and their positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching.

- All teachers expressed their gratitude to the local authority for their support and organisation regarding the PESS project-and its impact on the quality of learning and teaching within their schools. In one school, a 'teacher who was disaffected with PE' had, following attendance at the PESS Dance Course, delivered demonstration dance lessons to the other members of staff.
- Most schools felt that the PESS mentoring programme had a positive impact on teachers' competence and confidence in delivering PE lessons. Some schools believed that it would be more beneficial if the mentor was a primary school teacher.
- In nearly all/all lessons observed, teachers:
 1. delivered lessons which followed a structured sequence;
 2. provided good role models;
 3. made links to previous learning;
 4. managed the class effectively;
 5. set high expectations of behaviour;
 6. created a positive atmosphere;
 7. undertook effective positioning in order to observe pupils' work;
 8. established safe working routines;
 9. demonstrated effective class management;
 10. made appropriate use of voice;
 11. set tasks which were appropriate for many of the pupils;
 12. involved learners in assessing their own and others achievement
 13. shared the learning outcomes with the pupils.
- In many of the lessons observed, teachers:
 1. used appropriate terminology;

2. organised the equipment/apparatus effectively;
 3. intervened to encourage improvement;
 4. encouraged full participation;
 5. created situations which encouraged maximum participation when undertaking physical tasks.
- In around half of the lessons, teachers:
 1. made effective use of ICT, including the PESS resources;
 2. used a range of teaching styles;
 3. demonstrated good subject knowledge;
 4. provided quality demonstrations;
 5. provided feedback which promoted learning.
 - In a few of the lessons, teachers:
 1. delivered lessons in which pupils were physically active for an appropriate proportion of the lesson;
 2. provided tasks which extended the more able pupils;
 3. provided a focus for pupils observations;
 4. following peer evaluations, provided the learners with opportunities to amend their routines;
 5. provided warm ups which were suitable for the age group;
 6. provided cool downs at the conclusion of the lessons

B. LEARNING

- From discussions with teachers, anecdotal evidence would suggest that pupils, during lunch and break times, are now far more engaged, and consequently, better behaved during these times.
- In all/nearly all lessons, the learners:

1. worked effectively alone, with a partner and in small groups;
 2. were interested and motivated;
 3. were able to solve physical problems;
 4. used appropriate terminology;
 5. worked safely and responsibly;
 6. respected one another and the teacher.
- In many of the lessons, the learners:
 1. accurately described what they and others are doing-and made simple suggestions on ways to improve;
 2. performed confidently in front of a variety of audiences.

C. STANDARDS of ACHIEVEMENT

- Anecdotal evidence from the teachers would suggest a definite improvement in the standard of most pupils work. In addition, teachers believed that pupils were now far more engaged in their learning during PE.
- As a consequence of the changes in the process involved, analysing Estyn's inspection reports, in order to measure progress, has proved problematic. However, in the one school in which it was possible to make a realistic comparison between their last two inspections (2004 and 2009), there had been a marked improvement—from a satisfactory (KS1) and grade 3 (KS2) in 2004 to Grade 1 (reception) and grade 2 at both KS1 and 2 in 2009.

(Grades obtained for other schools in the LA, demonstrate an improvement in standards since their involvement in PESS)

- In all/nearly all lessons, most learners:
 1. acquired new knowledge and skills;
 2. performed with a reasonable level of tension and a clarity of shape;
 3. created simple sequences/routines;
 4. carried the apparatus safely;

5. enjoyed their PE lessons
- In many of the lessons, the learners:
 1. moved with control;
 2. following feedback from the teacher, were able to appropriately amend their sequence/routine;
 3. understood the impact of exercise on their bodies
 - In nearly half of the lessons, the learners;
 1. repeated actions accurately;
 2. used changes of levels, speed and directions in their routines/sequences;
 3. undertook increasingly analytical evaluations;
 4. displayed good posture whilst standing and sitting;
 5. worked hard physically.
 - In a few of the lessons, the learners performed sequences which flowed from one action to another;
 - In very few of the lessons,
 1. the learners, who were more able, performed to their potential;
 2. undertook responsibility for certain sections of the lesson e.g. delivering the warm up.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Sport Wales should:

1. when creating courses and resources, pay due cognisance to the requirements of mixed age classes;
2. in their courses, amend the RECIPE structure e.g. add another letter to the acronym, in order to ensure that providing opportunities for pupils to amend

and/or improve their sequences, following peer evaluation, is given suitable attention;

3. in their courses, ensure that undue emphasis and time allocation is not allocated to pupil evaluations;
4. in their courses, ensure that sufficient emphasis is given to encouraging the more able pupils to work to their potential;
5. undertake research to ascertain valid and reliable evidence as to the impact of the PESS project on such aspects as standards, attitudes and learning behaviour;
6. in their courses, ensure that sufficient emphasis is given to developing teachers observational and analytical skills.

The Local Authority should:

1. continue to embed the PESS project in the LA's planning processes;
2. encourage the PESS coordinator to increase the number of strategies for monitoring the impact of the project e.g. cascading strategies utilised, response to action plans completed during various courses..
3. in order to encourage greater consistency and progression, attempt to ensure that a higher percentage of teachers in the primary and junior schools have attended the Gymnastics Module 2 course and/or that more effective cascading of information from courses takes place.
4. further extend the roll-out of a structured mentoring programme within all active DCs.
5. consider the impact of teachers who have received PESS training but have changed schools or left the authority;
6. consider increasing the number of courses organised on school closure days;
7. investigate the implications of primary schools who are located in Wrexham but feed a secondary school in another authority
- 8 consider strategies of sharing proposed future developments within the project so as to enable schools to respond and plan accordingly
9. make the development of the PESS Foundation Phase initiatives one of it's priorities;

10. consider strategies, within the PESS initiatives, for encouraging greater continuity and progression within the Foundation Phase and onto Key Stage 2.
11. increase the number of primary school teachers who become active mentors within the project.
12. consider increasing the CPD opportunities within Dance
13. consider allocating funding to enable effective cascading of information from various courses to other members of staff
14. consider providing opportunities for primary teachers to observe standards in PE in the secondary school.
15. consider strategies for integrating, to a greater extent, the less committed schools and DCs within the PESS project in Wrexham

Schools, in their planning and teaching, should, where appropriate:

1. in Health, Fitness and Wellbeing (HFW), ensure the learning outcomes for HFW are suitably mapped-out; these outcomes should provide a balance between the four components of the HFW strand i.e. safety, exercise effects, health benefits and activity promotion.
2. provide more opportunities for the more able to work to their potential;
3. develop strategies to encourage greater fluency in the learners routines/sequences;
4. provide a focus for pupils observations;
5. make greater use of ICT and PESS resources during the lessons;
6. ensure that undue emphasis and time allocation is not allocated to pupil evaluations;
7. include suitable warm ups and cool downs in the lessons.
8. following attendance at courses, undertake more effective cascading strategies for disseminating information to other members of staff;
9. become more receptive to the mentoring concept and process;

The consultant would like to express his gratitude to all who assisted him— the LA officers, headteachers, teachers, support staff and pupils--all of whom, without exception, were courteous and professional in the manner in which they contributed to this process.

In brief, PESS is making good progress, and is having a significant impact on standards in PE in primary schools, within Wrexham County Borough Council.

APPENDIX

SUGGESTED CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Brynteg—‘PESS and how it saved money and time for the school’.
2. Brynteg- ‘Involvement of the designated PE Governor’.
3. Victoria Juniors-‘Utilising the information gained in the PESS Subject Leader’s Course in order to evaluate teachers and pupils opinions about PE’.
4. Victoria Juniors-‘Dance course and resources-how the Subject Leader provided staff training in the school’;
5. Eyton-Adventurous Activities Storybook for KS 1 and 2.