

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYP(4)–07–14 – Paper 2 – Eirias High School

Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households

Review of Fast Forward/Pyramid – a collaborative project run by Ysgol Eirias (secondary) and Ysgol Pendorlan (feeder primary) – funded by CaST Cymru.

Background to the project:

Angela Davies (CaST Cymru) worked with the head teacher of Ysgol Pendorlan (primary school) to identify a small group of parents and children who were deemed to be disadvantaged and would possibly struggle with the transition from primary to secondary. These parents and children were then invited to attend a weekly activity based group (Fast Forward) held at the primary school.

Dr Rachel Jones, Pupil Transition Coordinator at Ysgol Eirias (secondary school) was invited to attend one of the meetings and to run a Question and Answer session with the parents and pupils.

Rachel Jones does make regular visits to meet the Y6 pupils and their teachers but only normally has the opportunity to meet parents if they come along to the induction evening at the secondary school in July of Year 6. Past experience has shown that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds find it difficult to attend these large meetings due to a variety of reasons e.g anxiety, child care commitments, work commitments, it might have been the secondary school they attended and they didn't have a very positive experience.

The Q and A session went extremely well. It was well attended by parents and they were able to ask questions centred around their main concerns about the transition to secondary school. The main concerns were related to homework, discipline/detention, punctuality, uniform, PE kit and bullying. Rachel Jones was able to prepare resources beforehand and took along examples of uniform, PE kit, school bags and pupil planners.

The group were then invited to visit the secondary school on a subsequent session. The primary head teacher brought the pupils up in their mini bus and parents made their own way. Again the session was well attended. Pyramid trained 6th formers planned a series of activities for the pupils whilst the parents took part in a relatively informal discussion with staff from Ysgol Eirias. The session was overseen by Rachel Jones (Pupil Transition Coordinator) and was attended by Angela Davies (CaST), Phil McTague (Ysgol Eirias head teacher), Mike Mulvaney (Ysgol Pendorlan head teacher), Louise Kerfoot-Robson (Ysgol Eirias ALNCO) and David Bowen-Jones (Ysgol Eirias Head of Year 7). The parents were relaxed because they had met Dr Jones before and were willing to open up and discuss any concerns that they had. Again they required reassurance about the routine of the day, expectations that the secondary school has on attendance and punctuality, bullying and how it is dealt with. The secondary school had the opportunity to explain about the different support mechanisms that they offer. All parents and pupils were asked by CaST Cymru to evaluate the course and feedback was very positive.

The success of the first Fast Forward group meant that Angela Davies went onto select another group and Ysgol Eirias had the same input as before.

The challenges in taking the work forward:

- To maintain the positive relationship with the parents/carers
- To inspire the pupil to aspire to reach their full potential
- To maintain the atmosphere that pupils are seen as individuals even though they are now part of a much larger school community

Ysgol Eirias are taking many innovative steps to address these issues.

- A Pyramid group has been set up in Year 7 - funded initially by CaST Cymru. Some pupils who will attend have already had experience of Fast Forward. Others pupils will have attended other feeder schools and this will be their first experience of an intervention group.
- The Year 7 Pastoral team publishes Form Tutor Focus groups each term. The form tutor is asked to monitor pupils within their class on a variety of issues ranging from attendance, punctuality, homework completion through to friendship issues. The form tutors then report back to the team at Learning Team meetings and the groups of pupils are reviewed on a termly basis. Letters are sent home to inform the parent that their child is receiving extra support and they are invited to phone school or come in for a meeting if they feel the need to discuss the intervention further.
- Ysgol Eirias collects Midyis data on the pupils as they enter Year 7. This data, along with other data received from the primary school, allows the school to identify the MAT pupils. The Head of Learning then writes to inform the parents that their child has been highlighted as being MAT and that staff will be working with them to ensure that they reach their full potential.

The positive outcomes:

The pupils who participated in the scheme, have in the main, settled in well and are progressing well. They continue to build positive relationships with staff and pupils around them. In some cases, the pastoral team still monitors their individual progress closely and are in regular phone contact with some parents that they have met at the sessions.

Approximately 80% of the parents who attend fast Forward also attended the first parents evening at Ysgol Eirias that was held in the October of Year 7. This exceeded all expectations and it was felt that the parents had remained positively engaged with Ysgol Eirias even over the summer break.

The Year 7 pastoral team have found that this particular group of parents are also more willing to contact school with any concerns that they have. They have been found to be very accepting of any support or advice given.

Rachel Jones has liaised with Michelle Jayman, a PhD student working with a team at the School of Psychology, Social Work and Human Science, University of West London. As part of Ms Jayman's research, she is conducting an evaluation of the impact of Pyramid club interventions on the emotional well-being of pupils in early secondary education. In addition to assessing this primary outcome, the

research will examine the effect of socio-emotional health on other domains, specifically pupils' educational performance. Ysgol Eirias have agreed to supply data to Ms Jayman and she will in turn analyse the data and present back to the school.

Dr Rachel Jones
21st February 2014