

# Best practice

Porthcawl Comprehensive School

Number of pupils: 1494

Age range: 11 - 18 years

Date of Estyn inspection: October 2013



**Area of sector-leading practice which has been identified during inspection and relates to a particular quality indicator:**

**Key Question:** 3. Leadership

**Quality Indicator:** 3.3 Partnership working

**Aspect:** 3.3.1 - Strategic partnerships

**Context and background to sector-leading practice:**

Porthcawl Comprehensive School is a mixed comprehensive school serving the seaside town of Porthcawl. The 3 year rolling average for FSM is 9.9% but for the academic year 2013-14 it has risen to 12.2%. The school offers a fairly traditional curriculum and has good levels of attendance and achievement. Historically, the school has drawn pupils from four primary schools within the town, but in recent years an increasing number of parents have chosen to send their children to Porthcawl Comprehensive from outside the traditional catchment area. In September 2013, the Year 7 cohort of 235 pupils came from over 20 different primary schools, with 67 pupils classed as "out of catchment". This presents a significant challenge for the school in terms of its transition work with partner primary schools, and in

particular for the support for more vulnerable and anxious pupils.

The 'education other than at school' (EOTAS) service in Bridgend County Borough identified work around primary and secondary transition as an area that needed improving. Too many pupils were struggling with the move to secondary school and this was impacting negatively on their attendance and achievement. As part of the transition process, the school works closely with cluster primary schools to identify pupils in Year 6 for whom the move to secondary school may prove to be a difficult and anxious time. The school works with these pupils and their parents to ensure a smooth transition occurs. The school measures their emotional wellbeing and the impact upon attendance and behaviour.

**Nature of strategy or activity identified as sector-leading practice:**

The primary schools administer online questionnaires designed by the 'National Review of Behaviour and Attendance' (NBAR) to help identify pupils that may be vulnerable or anxious. Parents of these pupils are then contacted by the school and their children invited to form part of the school's "Helping Hands" group. Parents are invited to meet with the transition co-ordinator and family engagement officer initially to discuss the programme. "Moving on" booklets are issued to all Year 6 pupils but they become a primary focus for the anxious children to work through with their parents/ carers but also on their additional visits to the comprehensive. Tailored support programmes are put in place through the summer term of year 6 and autumn term of year 7 to assist these identified

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pupils with their particular issues. These are run by the family engagement officer, the education welfare officer and two pupil support officers from the school. Support staff from feeder primary schools also assist in running these sessions and are able to further support the pupils and discuss issues of concern each time they return to their primary.

Pupils are reassessed regularly through the process to judge the impact of the support. At the end of the summer term the parents/carers of these vulnerable children are again invited into school to see what their children have been doing and to give feedback to the staff in charge.

The school uses information from the NBAR questionnaires to plan the support needed by individual pupils. The school has programmes specifically geared towards building pupils' confidence, social skills or organisational skills. Often, the parents are anxious themselves about their children's move to secondary school and this is why working with the parents/cares is such a vital element of the programme.

The identified pupils from the primary schools visit the school on a number of occasions throughout the summer term in small groups. These visits are in addition to the standard visits undertaken by all pupils in year 6. During these small group visits a great deal of time and care is given to confidence building and allaying the fears that pupils and parents have. They meet all the secondary school staff who will play a key role in ensuring a smooth transition for them. This includes Heads of Year, P.E. staff, canteen staff, receptionists, first aid staff, attendance clerk, as well as all members of the senior leadership team. A variety of activities are used, such as circle time or craft development, which help pupils become more familiar with the school, the way it works and its staff. This is very effective at reducing the anxiety levels that these pupils have with the move to secondary school.

When the parents/carers attend to discuss the progress made by their children and we then start planning with them the support that will continue in secondary school. When the pupils transfer to secondary school, they continue to receive support as required from staff in the school's nurture base and from other

agencies. Through year 7, the pupils' wellbeing is monitored closely using the wellbeing questionnaire survey. Support programmes are refined, amended or withdrawn as required.

The NBAR questionnaires are also used by the school on an annual basis for all pupils. Vulnerable pupils are identified and interventions are put into place, such as:

- Student Assistance Programme
- Counselling
- Student Support Centre
- Peer Listening
- Buddying
- Seating arrangements
- Role of responsibility

Specific entry and exit data "My feelings" and "My class" are used to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions. Use is also made of attendance and exclusion data with pupils.

### **Impact on provision and learners' standards:**

Overall, the levels of pupils' wellbeing, from the "Helping Hands" group, in both primary and secondary schools have improved. The attendance rates for these pupils increases over the duration of the support. Evaluation of the entry and exit criteria for pupils indicates a significant improvement in pupils' emotional wellbeing.

Surveys of form tutors in secondary school note significant changes to pupils' attitude in terms of self-esteem, confidence, social skills and behaviour.