



## Family Learning Case Studies - Wales

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## Cathays High School

### Summary

Cathays High School is a mixed comprehensive school, located in central Cardiff, an area with a high population of migrants with ESOL needs. In response to local needs, Cathays have developed a range of provision aimed at upskilling parents, as well as enabling them to better support their children's learning. They have developed strong progression pathways, facilitating routes into employment and further education, and encouraging community participation. Cathays deliver a number of courses for parents. This provision grew from the identification of English language and literacy needs for parents, in order to empower them to help their children and to support their own progression. In the Spring Term 2019, they were running three courses funded by Adult Community Learning (ACL) in Cardiff: Childcare, Digital Skills and Confidence Building. Cathays also run an ongoing ESOL group throughout the year, were running a Healthy Eating course in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University and were piloting a Sewing course run by parents themselves. Although the courses were open to all parents, only women had accessed them. By the Autumn term 2019, the group has expanded further and has more courses based on a variety of creative, literacy, numeracy, fitness, digital skills and health and wellbeing in school, a leisure centre and the wider community.

### Building blocks to success

#### Delivering relevant learning:

Cathays High School provides an excellent example of how family learning can be used to target and address local needs. The family learning lead at Cathays High school describes how the need for parent courses was first identified to help parents with ESOL needs:

*“Initially I used to volunteer for the parent evening, then when the parents came in I used to translate for them, and then we realised, there are many parents who need help in translating. Then I realised that there's a need for educating the parents, and if the parents are getting educated they wouldn't need that help in translation, and they would be able to guide the children at home for doing their homework. So, I initially advertised by doing questionnaires, whether there's a need in the community for making them aware of different kinds of courses and things. Then we realised people are interested, then I started taking their names and numbers, call them individually, and then we started up with small groups.”*

The first small group - which ran in 2014 - aimed to improve English language skills, encourage reading among the community, and develop confidence in reading to help



children at home. From there, Cathays developed their current courses in partnership with ACL and Cardiff Metropolitan University, who provide funding for the courses. A new partnership is established with Flying Start to run parenting skills and family engagement programmes to build better relationships between parents and learners. The partnership with the Cardiff Library service and Old Story Museum to build stories with parents to record and archive their history of amalgamation of migration of their heritage and culture with the Welsh culture and sustaining it.

All of the ACL-funded courses are run in 10-week blocks, and on completion ACL award Agored Cymru accreditation. The Healthy Eating course and Complimentary therapies supported by Cardiff Metropolitan University are run for five weeks. Cathays have shown a continued commitment to delivering relevant learning, by adapting courses and creating new courses as and when needs are identified – for example, they have developed a parent-lead sewing courses in order to help parents gain confidence and provide a progression route into teaching. Larks Design, a local craft school supported Cathays to enhance the creative skills course, sewing cushion covers with embroidery skills around the world. Tesco Community Space is offering a venue to run numeracy skills which is linked to shopping and budgeting on a daily basis.

**Holistic approach to learning:** As the parents' courses are integrated within the school, Cathays can take a holistic approach to supporting learning. The courses aim to impact the whole family, by empowering parents to take a more active role in their child's learning. Additionally, the courses can be complemented with additional support for the children when there are literacy needs:

*“So, the children who have a SEN need in school, they're, kind of, also put into intervention for literacy. So, when they're having extra support for literacy intervention, along with parents' support of taking reading books from the library and doing the reading sessions with the children at home, it kind of has a dual effect and an extra push on their education, which will get a better result”*

### Impact and Progression routes

For many of the learners, the courses at Cathays are their first experience of learning provision as an adult. All of the courses can provide a progression route into further education, employment and community participation. This has been evidenced by ACL's small-scale evaluation of some of the most recently completed courses.

**Further education:** Initially, all of the courses were entry level; however, Cathays have recently begun to progress learners who have been with them for over a year onto level 1 courses. Some learners who have completed courses at Cathays have gone on to local further education provision at Cardiff and Vale College.

**Employment routes:** Cathays has also supported some learners to become peer teachers. Most recently, they have set up a sewing group run by parent volunteers. The school provide the venue and equipment, and parents bring their own materials, making the course extremely low cost. The family learning lead for Cathays High School explains that this could provide a path into employment:

*“The ladies who are going to lead it, if they’re confident with running by volunteering to teach a skill, then they would be encouraged to go and join as skilled teachers or tutors within the council, to start up their own initiatives of running such courses.”*

The post course evaluation questionnaire for the 2017/18 Confidence course found that all ten learners felt better prepared to look for work, four out of the 10 went on to look for a first job and four for a better job. From the 2017/18 digital responsibility course, two out of seven learners went on to look for a job, and an additional two for a better job. Dewis CIL, a Cardiff Council organisation has provided at least 4 learners who had additional language skills, work as personal assistants within the care sector in the last 6 months.

One learner described how participating in a course helped her gain the confidence to start working:

*“I have just started working and I feel very happy that I had this opportunity, because I took part in the learning for the parents’ group. It also helped me feel comfortable and welcome. My life has changed already. It’s like a dream come true to have a better life.”*

**Community participation:** Cathays works in partnership with the local library to develop reading challenges. This helps to foster community participation. Moreover, the courses in and of themselves provide a space for social interaction, for women who have tended to be based in the home doing housework.

Cathays also helps to progress women into voluntary roles, both within the courses as peer teachers, and with external organisations. All ten participants from the 2017/18 ‘Confidence Course’ said that the course had helped them to get a voluntary job.

## Conclusion

Cathays High School family learning provision grew out of identifying a specific local need for ESOL provision. Cathays have developed a strong model, using family learning as a progression route into further education, work and community participation as well as empowering parents to better support their children’s education.



## Contact

For more information, contact the Parent Learning Group in Cathays High School, Christina Roy [croy@cathays.cardiff.sch.uk](mailto:croy@cathays.cardiff.sch.uk).

## Swansea Council

### Summary

Swansea Council deliver a range of family learning courses in two centres, and across community settings in Swansea – including 30 schools. Courses are usually for 10 weeks, although two schools who self-fund the provision through their pupil development grants have opted for 30-week courses. The family learning courses form part of a wider 'lifelong learning' services, which also includes essential skills provision, and adult continuing learning. The family learning courses embed literacy, numeracy, oracy and digital skills – with the emphasis varying locally. The provision is funded by the local council, and all courses are Agored Cymru accredited. Provision tends to be aimed at parents with children between reception and year two.

### Building blocks for success

#### Engaging reluctant learners and building interest in learning and employment

The provision is advertised as 'open to all' – to avoid the potential stigma that could come with targeting parents. Informal, non-threatening approaches are used to engage learners who may be reluctant or have had negative experiences of learning in the past. For example, Swansea Council run coffee mornings and stalls at parents' evenings.

Staff have found that parents who may otherwise be reluctant learners, are more likely to be involved in family learning for the sake of supporting their children. However, once enrolled, the courses provide an opportunity to encourage and raise the value of wider learning. Parents may become more aware of the role they play in supporting their child's education, and have more involvement in the school, including being encouraged to become governors.

Moreover, participating in learning, and receiving a certificate for accreditation, can help to boost learner confidence and challenge ideas that learning is only for 'some'. A Lifelong Learning staff member explains:

*"I think...they realise that education is for everybody, whereas they might have seen themselves as outside that, sort of, little club in the past, you know,*

*nobody has ever gone to [University], nobody has ever gone to college,  
nobody has ever done A Levels.”*

Additionally, Swansea Council work with partner organisations to introduce further learning options through taster sessions. These have included arts, photography, and personal/social development courses as well as further accredited learning such as essential skills, English and maths.

**Increasing the value of employment:** The family learning courses can also act as a stepping stone to employment – careers advisors are usually brought in towards the end of the course to discuss next steps with learners. Swansea Council also have a strong relationship with Swansea Working, an employability organisation, who offer mentoring services to the family learning learners.

**Ensuring learning is relevant:** Although there are some ‘set’ curricula, learning is adapted to local need. For example, in some cases schools have been struggling with numeracy, and have requested to focus on this. In other instances, schools might be having an inspection and want to work on aspects that they have previously scored lowly in. In recent years, Swansea have responded to an increasing need for digital skills courses, as some schools are beginning to use tablets, and parents may need additional help to understand them and how they can support their children to use them.

## Impact

Staff at Swansea acknowledge that more in-depth research work is needed to fully assess the impact of family learning, including longitudinal outcomes. Currently, they use an end of course evaluation form for teachers and parents, which focuses on how the course went and identifying future improvements. In the post-course evaluation forms from three terms in 2016/17, 90% of parents indicated that they had a positive experience of the course and benefited from it. Additionally, output data shows that of the 266 learners across 2016/17, 186 achieved accreditation with Agored Cymru.

**For more information on Swansea’s family learning provision, contact Kay Piper (Operations Manager) on [Kay.Piper@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:Kay.Piper@swansea.gov.uk)**

# Springboard, Learning Pembrokeshire

## Introduction

Springboard, Learning Pembrokeshire, has been providing free learning opportunities to families in Pembrokeshire for over ten years. It currently delivers over 250 courses per year across nine schools and in 2018-19 engaged over 1,600 different adults and children in family learning opportunities within the county. Springboard's work in Gelliswick Church in Wales VC Primary School was recognised by Learning and Work Institute Wales with the 2019 Inspire! Closing the Gap Award

## Funding linked to priorities

Springboard's sustained growth has been made possible through securing significant amounts of grant funding from a variety of different sources each financial year. The project adapts its aims to fit the priorities of its various stakeholders and funding streams and is required to report back to its funders at the end of each financial and academic year based on the targets it commits to achieving in its grant applications and service level agreements.

The diverse range of family activities Springboard offers is dynamic and bespoke to each school's themes and priority areas of development to secure optimum levels of engagement.

As well as running creative courses linked to all 6 key areas of the new curriculum that help families explore the Arts and Sciences, the environment and the humanities, Springboard also runs courses which blend different subjects together such as Mindfulness and Art, and English and Technology to support people's health and well-being. In addition, Springboard is also committed to delivering as many large scale WOW projects as possible so that learners who engage on the project can feel a sense of pride in having created something that will have a legacy for the school and their local community be that a large scale mosaic, a series of stained glass windows or a school mural.

## Evaluation

Students evaluate their own learning and progression throughout their learning journey with Springboard and the project is able to collate data on attendance, attainment, accreditation and progression for each learner it engages. The project works with the Local Authority's data team to evaluate whether family engagement with Springboard can be seen to affect the children's attendance and attainment over the academic year. Key to the project achieving such high levels of engagement is the commitment of its team of Advisors to recruit and support learners from engagement to progression.

## Case studies

With over 800 adults engaged in the project each year Springboard's approach to tracking progression is to develop a portfolio of Case Studies from each of its schools. Each case study highlights in real terms the life changing impact Family Learning has on its students in terms of progression onto further learning, volunteering, employment and improved health and well-being.



The benefits of Springboard are shared with the wider community via regular social media posts, press releases and the coordination of large scale events. In an age where people are less inclined to read detailed reports Springboard feels that visually showcasing the range of its family learning activities to all existing and prospective stakeholders and beneficiaries is the most effective way of capturing its impact.

### Contact

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