

**Sport Wales  
PESS and PLPS Case Study**

**Learning through  
Leadership:**

***Enhancing learning in  
primary schools through  
the Primary PE Leadership  
Network***

**February 2015**

© SPEAR, Canterbury Christ Church University

**Learning through Leadership**

***Enhancing learning in  
primary schools through  
the Primary PE Leadership  
Network***

**Key Points**

- *Learning through Leadership highlights the importance of developing confident PE leaders with strong skill sets to ensure children fulfil their potential across the whole curriculum.*
- *The Primary PE Leadership Network has supported the development of a clear and consistent PE vision and policy across primary schools.*
- *This case study highlights how bespoke needs-led training and mentorship has created a community of practice that improves the standard, provision and management of PE across the school.*

# Learning through Leadership

## Context

Physical literacy is a holistic concept which can be described as the 'motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.' (Whitehead, 2014). A growing body of evidence strongly suggests that physical literacy not only allows children and young people to fulfil their physical potential, but also improves attention, concentration, engagement and on-task behaviour. This ensures children and young people are 'available to learn' and have the potential to achieve better outcomes through physical, cognitive and affective development. Physical literacy is unique to each individual and considered fundamental for a child and young person's health and wellbeing as well as playing a key role in facilitating academic achievement.

In 2000 a Welsh task force outlined a number of key actions required to improve standards of PE across Wales. As a result the PE and School Sport (PESS) Programme was set up and managed by Sport Wales (funded by the Welsh Government in 2001) and continued until 2014. The primary aim for the programme was to ensure that 'every young person is challenged and supported in PE and school sport'. PESS focused on up skilling the practitioners. High quality provision across curricular, extracurricular and community activity helps to engage children and young people, providing them with positive activity experiences and the skills, confidence and motivation to be 'hooked on sport' for life. The PESS project has developed a suite of professional development courses and resources to support practitioners working with 3 to 19-year-olds (Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4 and above).

Delivery was managed and supported by expert regional consortia teams with an understanding of physical literacy and the ways in which it can be achieved and improved through the curriculum and the wider community. PESS interventions investigated the potential value of using the physical to create and enhance meaningful learning and improve academic achievement through movement. This approach allowed for the creation and development of bespoke, holistic and child-centred interventions driven by need (as opposed to a 'one-size fits all' approach). Dragon Multi-Skills and Play to Learn developed wide reaching and extensive activities which were used as facilitative vehicles, accepting that the stage of development was more important than age.

The bespoke evolutionary nature of PESS has provided an excellent foundation for the new Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS). The primary focus of PLPS is to create engaging opportunities that meet the needs of every child, helping them to fulfil their full potential.

# Learning through Leadership

## Context (Cont.....)

In conjunction with the PLPS a newly developed Physical Literacy Framework (PLF) will provide practitioners with clear expectations that will help track the progress of every child along their physical literacy journey. The implementation of the PLF across Wales will raise the importance of developing a physically literate nation. However, the need to independently collate, review, analyse and evaluate the PESS evidence base and the introductory phase of the PLPS in raising standards across physical literacy, academic achievement and whole school outcomes is paramount.

## SPEAR

In October 2014, the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University was commissioned by Sport Wales to independently review the evidence base for the Physical Education and School Sport Programme (PESS), the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS) and the Physical Literacy Framework (PLF). Part of this independent review involves the collation, review, selection, secondary analysis and innovative presentation of case studies evidencing and sharing a range of best practice across PESS and PLPS initiatives. As such, the narrative and analysis of this case study has been conducted by SPEAR with the resources provided by Sport Wales. Consent to identify children, adults and organisations within this case study has been granted.

SPEAR is a cross school and cross faculty research centre at Canterbury Christ Church University established to bring together expertise across and outside the university and to facilitate collaborative working. In particular, SPEAR brings together expertise in Sport and Exercise Science, Physical Education, Education, Health and Tourism and Leisure. SPEAR's research has helped guide and inform public policy to increase physical activity and sport participation among young people by identifying the processes most successful in increasing participation. It has provided a rationale for government investment, contributed to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, and steered programme improvements that enhance physical activity opportunities and experiences.

More details on SPEAR and its work can be found at:

[www.canterbury.ac.uk/SPEAR](http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/SPEAR)

# Learning through Leadership

## *Enhancing learning in primary schools through the Primary PE Leadership Network*

### Profile

The positive impact of educational leadership on learning is well documented (Baker, 2007; Supovitz et al. 2014). Effective leadership is fundamental to the success and development of learners and a successful school will have leaders that set a clear vision for the development and care of its learners. Affecting change in the school system requires innovative leadership and a cohesive team prepared to challenge traditional learning environments. Staff must be given freedom, trust and support in order to create engaging, challenging and fun learning environments in which the learner can fulfil their full potential (Wahlstrom et al. 2010).

The PESS programme embraced the need for collective and shared leadership with a view to improving the health, wellbeing and academic attainment of children across Wales. The PESS regional teams offered a series of training and mentoring sessions to PE curriculum leaders within primary education. The overarching aim of training and mentorship was to improve the standards, provision and management of PE and school sport. This case study follows the journey of PE curriculum leaders in five primary schools across South Wales.

# Learning through Leadership

## The Challenge: What was the problem?

A group of nine primary schools and their subject leaders for PE within the Central South area of Wales created the 'Primary Leaders PE Network'. The schools involved were:

1. Mynydd Cynffig Junior School
2. Garth Primary School
3. Allensbank Primary School
4. Maes Y Haul Primary School
5. Fairfield Primary School
6. Aberdare Park Primary School
7. Pengam Primary School
8. St Marys PC Primary School
9. Evenlode Primary School

The network received direction and support from the PESS regional mentors, Jane and Beverley. This support was particularly valuable as the network members were, at that time, unfamiliar with the new Leadership Standards and how they might support their role as PE leaders within schools. Whilst each school had a different approach to the delivery of PE and school sport, there was consensus on the desire to:

- Improve standards of PE and school sport across the school.
- Improve provision of PE and school sport (including extracurricular activities) across the school.
- Improve management and leadership of PE and school sport across the school.

The Primary Leaders PE Network recognised the need to create strong strategic direction with a clear and consistent vision for PE and school sport. The network acknowledged that each school would need to consider and update their PE and school sport policies and plans. The benefits of providing an expansive, varied and quality extracurricular programme which engaged the wider community were also recognised as areas that each PE subject lead wished to explore and develop within their respective schools.



# Learning through Leadership

## The Challenge: What was the problem?

The network required training, support and mentorship in relation to their leadership roles. In particular, training associated with understanding and implementing developmental areas identified from the School Sport Survey was required. There was also interest expressed in further support with identifying professional development for staff and preparing for a quality kite mark (Active Mark Cymru) related to PE and school sport. Primarily the network wanted to understand the impact of training and mentorship on the standards, provision and leadership of PE and school sport within their schools. The collective aims for the project were:

- To investigate the impact of the programme on provision and leadership in schools.
- To prepare schools for Active Mark Cymru self-review and application.
- To support individuals in their own professional development.
- To support schools to use their School Sport Survey data.

This case study follows the progress of five schools involved in the Primary Leaders PE Network that subsequently disseminated their work at the PESS 2014 conference.

## The Intervention: What did they do?

Following an initial audit the Primary Leaders PE Network established that:

- None of the schools involved had reviewed PE provision in their schools.
- None of the schools had Active Mark Cymru.
- None of the practitioners were aware of the revised Leadership Standards.
- All schools needed to revise curriculum maps.
- All schools needed to revise school PE policy.
- None of the schools had School Sport Councils.

Based on the initial audit and feedback from the network, Jane and Beverley (PESS managers and mentors, now PLPS Managers) created a 6-day training programme designed to address the common aims and objectives of the group. The training programme was mapped to both Estyn's Common Inspection Framework and the Welsh Government Leadership Standards.

# Learning through Leadership

## The Intervention: What did they do?

Through feedback from the primary leaders, it became apparent that a flexible approach to the training and mentorship offered would be necessary. Following on from the second training session the PESS mentors were able to work with the Primary Leaders PE Network collectively and individually to adapt the original training plans and produce more bespoke school and leader-centred training and support packages. This allowed each school to attend to their specific needs and desired outcomes in a way that was both appropriate to their stage of development and linked to Estyn's Common Inspection Framework and the Welsh Government Leadership Standards.

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

The leadership training addressed a number of core themes and overarching aspirations articulated by each of the schools as a priority. Three schools achieved Active Mark Cymru on completion of the training programme. Seven schools established School Sports Councils/Sports Leaders to facilitate stronger pupil voice. Staff reported a better understanding of their roles as a subject lead in PE. In all schools PE was robustly reviewed and action plans created and delivered. Staff were also able to reflect personally on their role in view of the Leadership Standards and identify developmental needs. It was deemed essential for training to be facilitated in a flexible and 'needs-led' format, allowing each school to implement and drive change in a bespoke way. Consequently each school measured the success of their journey differently. The impact and outcomes for the five schools based on the 'needs-led' approach of each is summarised in the profiles on the following pages.

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

### Profile 1: Evenlode Primary School:

The PESS training provided an opportunity for staff to review existing PE provision using School Sport Survey data to identify and focus on three distinct objectives:

1. Provide a collective and unified school vision with regards to PE and ensure all staff are confident to deliver the vision.
2. Review and update the schools PE curriculum and policy.
3. Review and plan an effective learning environment which fosters the school vision and commitment towards PE.

A staff questionnaire was distributed to gain a consistent school vision for PE. The questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore staff awareness and understanding of teaching and learning in PE. The survey highlighted a number of opportunities for staff development and as a result an INSET training programme focusing on Dragon Multi Skills and Play to Learn was undertaken to improve confidence in teaching PE. In addition, staff were assisted in 'reading' the School Sport Survey data to identify issues related to their delivery of PE and School Sport. As a result school staff reported that **"children are much more confident and able to use skills learnt and apply them to Dragon Sports Games at a variety of individual levels, and have a sound knowledge of the importance of multi-skills"**. The training, support from Jane and Beverley and knowledge gained from understanding the School Sport Survey data enabled the development of a clear and consistent vision.



Examples of the training resources used and delivered during the staff INSET days

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

With the support of the PESS team the school produced an updated PE policy and curriculum which was followed by ALL staff. In particular each Key Stage 2 year group had one session of Multi Skills or 'Outdoor and Adventurous' and one session of 'Creative' a week taught by the PPA teacher who had been trained in PESS. The new PE policy had been approved by the board of governors. In addition, the school is in the process of building a new **"bigger and better"** hall (the school, originally built for 250 pupils, now has 450 on roll, so provision was no longer fit for purpose). The school also has fantastic grounds and a real opportunity to develop and strengthen the 'Outdoor and Adventurous' activities further, allowing the children full access to the PE curriculum.

### Profile 2: Aberdare Park Primary School:

Following the leadership training and analysis of the School Sport Survey, Aberdare Park Primary School identified five key actions to focus on in order to enhance the standards, provision and management of PE and school sport. These were:

1. To develop extracurricular sports activities.
2. To develop a whole school PE policy and curriculum plan.
3. To develop pupil tracking and target setting (identify more able and talented [MAT] children and create MAT portfolio).
4. To set up sports ambassadors to work with School/Eco Council members.
5. To begin the process of achieving the Active Mark Cymru accreditation.

The school developed a number of extracurricular sports clubs and activities from Foundation Phase through to Key Stage 2. In particular a 'Mini-Movers' club with a focus on developing ball skills, balance and co-ordination was developed for the Foundation Phase children.



# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

At Key Stage 2 the school aimed to offer a wide range of after school clubs, some of which involved the use of outside agencies, such as Breeze Gym. Breeze Gym provided a valuable community link with a local gym that adapted sessions for the children. The sessions provided an opportunity for children to try boxercise, circuit training and funky pump. The children noted that the sessions were:

*“Awesome, lots of fun. We loved using the pads and boxing gloves.”*

*“We learnt different skills and it taught us how to use different equipment properly.”*

*“Awesome, lots of variety to keep us fit.”*



Boxing activities provided by Breeze Gym



Meet the Sports Ambassadors

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

A cross curricular, creative and interactive PE policy and curriculum was developed and disseminated to the board of governors. The PE curriculum plan was then shared with staff. Feedback was very positive and confidence was developed in learning and teaching PE. In addition a policy and action plan was developed for the identification (through INCERTS and observations) of MAT children across the curriculum. These children were then encouraged to embrace their talents by joining local clubs or teams with the support of their parents. Two sports ambassadors were chosen from year 6 and two deputy sports ambassadors from year 5 to raise awareness of sport in the school through presentations in whole school assemblies, sharing ideas for the development of sport and outdoor activities at School Council meetings, and assisting staff with the organisation of PE events and resources. Finally, staff members attended the Active Mark training day and, with the agreement of the senior leadership team, the school collated evidence and built a portfolio ready to apply for Active Mark in the 2014/15 academic year. This target was embedded in the School Improvement Plan for 2014/15.

### Profile 3: Allensbank Primary School

Allensbank Primary School had appointed a new PE subject leader. Hannah was new to the role and found the training and support provided by the PESS team and the PE network invaluable. There was a particular need identified to raise the profile of PE across the whole school. With the support of the PESS team and PE network Hannah and the school used the School Sport Survey results, coupled with the self-review school template and staff questionnaires, to highlight six key areas for developing PE. These were:

1. Creating a strategic direction for PE.
2. Leading learning and teaching in PE.
3. Developing and working with others.
4. Managing the subject.
5. Securing accountability and consistency.
6. Strengthening the community focus.

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?



Sample of the Key Stage 2 activities added to the curriculum

In order to create a strategic direction for PE within the school, a clear vision for the subject had to be established and shared with staff and governors. Hannah also recognised the need to link the school's progress and her personal progress with the Leadership Standards. Once a clear vision had been agreed it was necessary to update the PE policy and support guidance. This included providing a clear direction on driving change and continually improving PE across the school. Work undertaken included the development of an innovative and interactive curriculum, updating resources linked to Play to Learn and Dragon Multi Skills, and the integration of pupil voice through the Sports Council to effect change based on need. Hannah also felt much more confident in identifying CPD needs and informing staff of effective teaching approaches. She was able to deliver staff INSET training days covering the 10 High Quality Outcomes of PE and worked with staff to develop the curriculum.

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

The school now use INCERTS to track pupil attainment in PE. In addition, Hannah has ensured that staff are more aware of and able to use the hierarchy of gross motor skills and has developed the use of the Dragon Tracker App. Being able to monitor pupil attainment in PE through INCERTS and the Dragon Tracker App has facilitated the continuous development of PE in the school. Other monitoring includes the use of video and photographic evidence to assess ongoing development. Attendance registers are used to identify children who forget PE kit or miss lessons and support is targeted at less active children. The school also now has a non-participant policy for PE ensuring that those who are unable to take part physically are engaged in other ways. The identification of concerns, training and knowledge gaps has enabled the school to develop to ensure PE is more effective, and an open environment in which teachers feel able to share ideas and good practice has been created. The school has also expanded extracurricular sport provision and engaged parents to support the delivery of activities. A strong understanding of how to effectively manage and develop PE in a sustainable manner has been gained.

### Profile 4: Maes Yr Haul Primary School

The Primary Leaders PE Network supported Sarah, the PE Co-ordinator for Maes Yr Haul Primary School in:

1. Developing a clear PE vision (updating the PE policy and producing a creative and innovative curriculum plan).
2. Undertaking a self-review.
3. Sharing and disseminating good practice.
4. Personal reflection as a subject lead.

After the initial network meeting a whole staff meeting was arranged to outline the details of the leadership network and associated outcomes. The meeting created "lots of discussion", and this was used to develop a staff questionnaire which in turn informed the schools vision for PE based on 'Every Child Matters'. In particular, the school wished to raise participation levels by offering 'fun' PE with lots of choices and encouraging new ideas and teamwork. The use of resources to improve learner outcomes and create good links with parents and outside agencies was fundamental to the vision. As a result of engaging all staff Sarah was able to complete a staff audit and identify whole school and individual CPD requirements to improve the standard, provision and management of PE.



# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

Updating the PE policy and creating curriculum maps has enabled the school to:

- Use results from the School Sport Survey to inform development.
- Track pupil progress.
- Address non-participation in PE.
- Provide a range of extracurricular opportunities and involve parents in delivery.
- Give pupils a voice through the newly established School Sports Council.
- Achieve successful Active Mark Cymru application.

The self-review enabled the identification of cross curricular opportunities and links to overarching initiatives such as 'Healthy Schools'. The development of playground leaders has ensured that the children are engaged in a variety of roles within PE across the school. The school now offers a plethora of curricular and extracurricular physical activities to all children broadening the experiences and likelihood of success for all learners. The newly organised Sports Council offers the learners 'a voice' to provide feedback on PE and school sport. Regular staff meetings are scheduled to enable the continuous identification of training needs and development of the PE curriculum and extracurriculum offer.



Staff feedback and views on the subject changes and training provided.

# Learning through Leadership

## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?



Sarah's personal reflections on her role as PE leader and the Primary PE Leadership Network

The whole school has benefitted from the Primary Leaders Network creating a variety of opportunities for the children through the continuous development of PE and school sport.

### Profile 5: Garth Primary School

Caroline represented Garth Primary School at the Primary Leaders Network. She and the school aimed to improve the standards, provision and management of PE and school sport across the school. For Caroline the network offered the opportunity to:

1. Understand her role as a subject leader in a PE context.
2. Be able to effectively lead and manage PE across the whole school.
3. Ensure PE drives/links with whole school issues.
4. Use the inspection framework to inform subject self-review.
5. Personally reflect on the Leadership Standards.



# Learning through Leadership

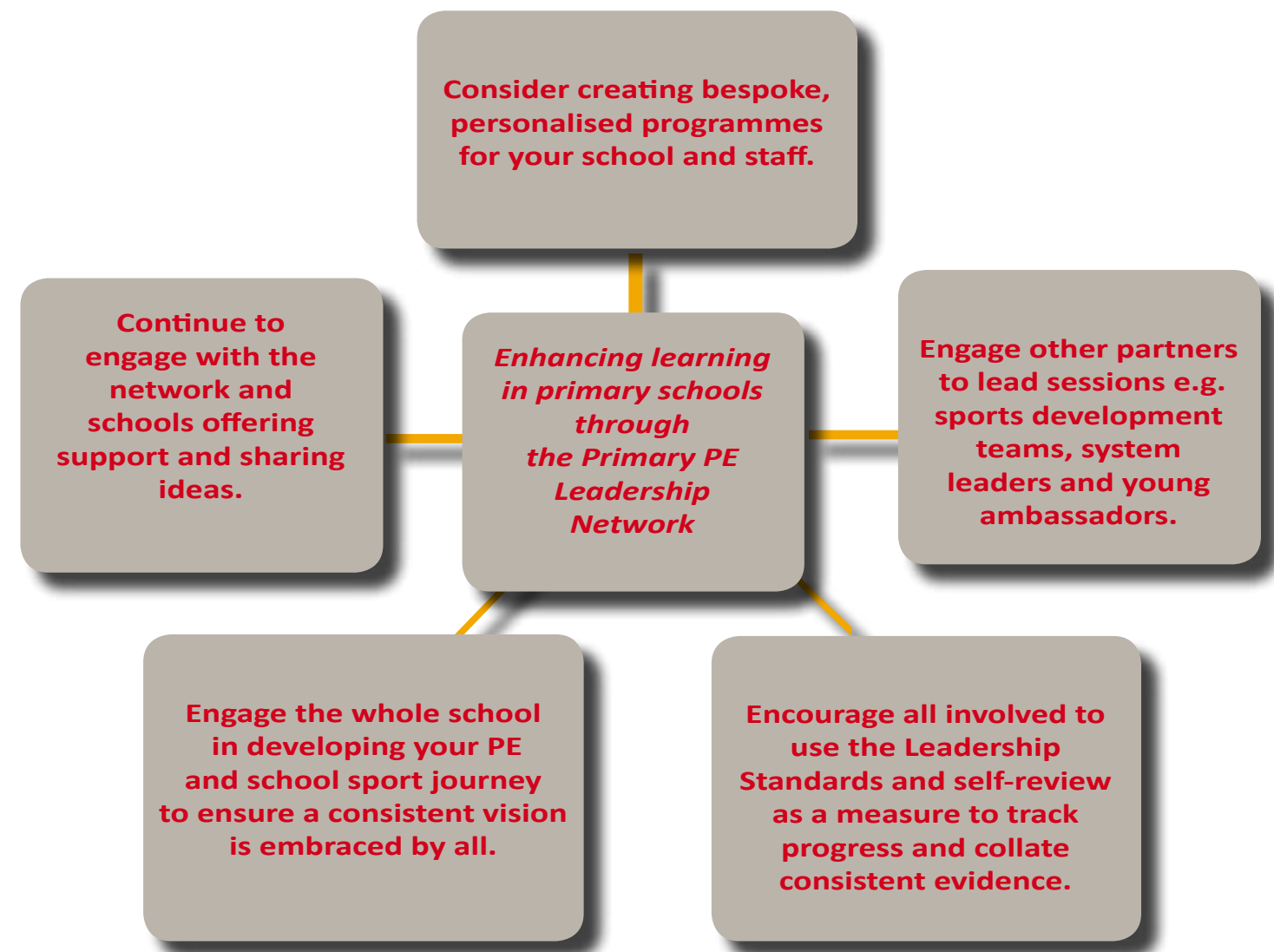
## Impact: What changed for the children, young people and school?

Prior to participation in the network Caroline and the school had “nothing to compare with”. Being part of the network has enabled the school to use statistics from the School Sport Survey to establish the level and standard of PE delivery across the school. Garth Primary School is “now ahead of schools on a country-wide basis in the vast majority of areas questioned”. The school has implemented a new tracking system to further monitor standards through the use of Classroom Monitor, and plans to roll out the use of Dragon Tracker App across the school. A staff audit has shown an improvement in knowledge, confidence and enjoyment of teaching and learning within PE. The network has supported Caroline and the school in increasing the number of timetabled minutes of PE to a full two hours per week. Garth Primary School now has an elected Sports Council consisting of 13 pupils from years 3 to 6 and uses ‘pupil voice’ to engage the children in the development of PE and school sport. Staff have been given ‘idea sheets’ providing ideas on how to engage ALL children in PE and school sport. 12 Key Stage 2 children have been fully trained and work with Key Stage 1 children through the ‘Active Buddies’ scheme. The playground area has been improved to encourage all children to be physically active. The school also participated in ‘National School Sport Week’ and organised ‘pupil-led fun days’ such as Wimbledon activities with year 4 pupils and health and fitness sessions with year 6 pupils. Caroline, with the support of the network and school, updated and improved the PE policy.

Action plans and schemes of work for PE and school sport have been updated and are easily accessible to all staff; they are time specific and linked to the Healthy Schools application. Staff now feel confident and comfortable enough to ask Caroline for support and clarification. The school has developed links with the Wellbeing Leader and numerous community agencies. Ultimately staff and pupils at Garth Primary School are motivated and committed to continuous improvement enhancing the PE and school sport offer for all. Caroline recommends the Primary Leaders Network and believes that “the Primary Network has been successful” for both her and Garth Primary School.

# Learning through Leadership

## Recommendations: Advice for schools and practitioners



# Sport Wales PESS and PLPS Case Study

---

---



Follow Sport Wales on [Twitter](#)  
Connect with Sport Wales on [Facebook](#)  
Subscribe to the Sport Wales [YouTube Channel](#)  
Sport Wales and Physical Literacy [Website](#)  
Sport Wales [Website](#)

© SPEAR, Canterbury Christ Church University

[SPEAR Website](#)

