



EDUCATION

RAISING ASPIRATIONS INNOVATIVELY

REPORT OCTOBER 2021



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf Morgannwg
University Health Board



HEINI MERTHYR TYDFIL
Datblygu Chwaraeon ac Ymarfer Carff
ACTIVE MERTHYR TYDFIL
Developing Sport and Physical Activity



HEALTH, EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY IN MERTHYR TYDFIL

Working with Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council, an innovative opportunity was identified by the Research, Improvement, Innovation and Coordination (RIIC) Hub to link local schools, to drive awareness of science technology and the arts in partnership with organisations across South Wales.

ALEXANDRA SKWARNECKI-COKELEY
& LIZZIE THOMAS,
CTM RIIC HUB LOCAL ENGAGEMENT OFFICERS

OCTOBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

'Raising aspirations' was a pilot project undertaken with local primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council (MTBC). The aim was to challenge children of KS2 ages to think 'outside of the box' and provide access to technology and activities through local businesses. We wanted to give pupils the opportunity to use and create ideas of their own whilst providing them with opportunities to look into the future of their community, well-being and career path.

The initial project plan was envisaged between colleagues in Cwm Taf Morgannwg RIIC Hub team and the education team in MTBC. The RIIC Hub team co-ordinated and planned the project making connections with local businesses within the public sector, charities and third sector for volunteers to provide their expertise to local schools involved.

POLICY

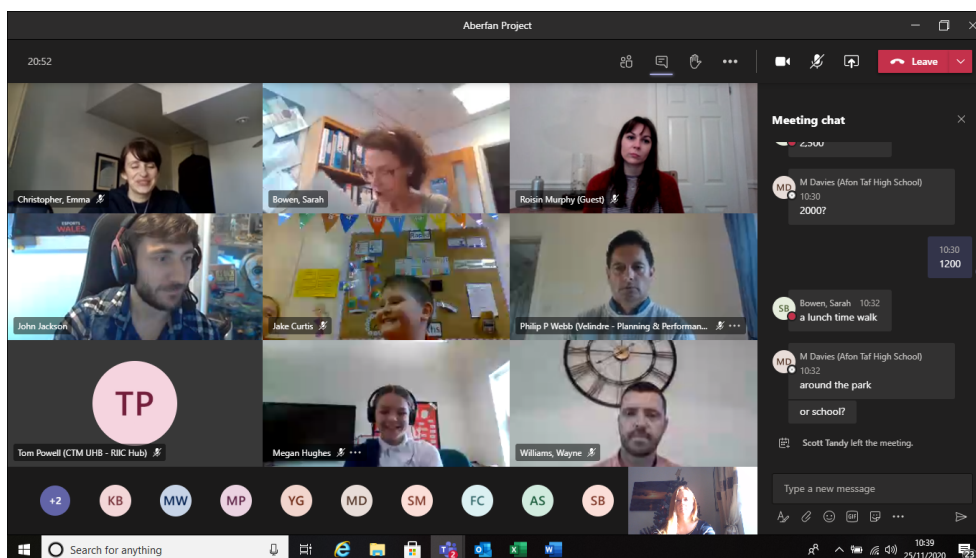
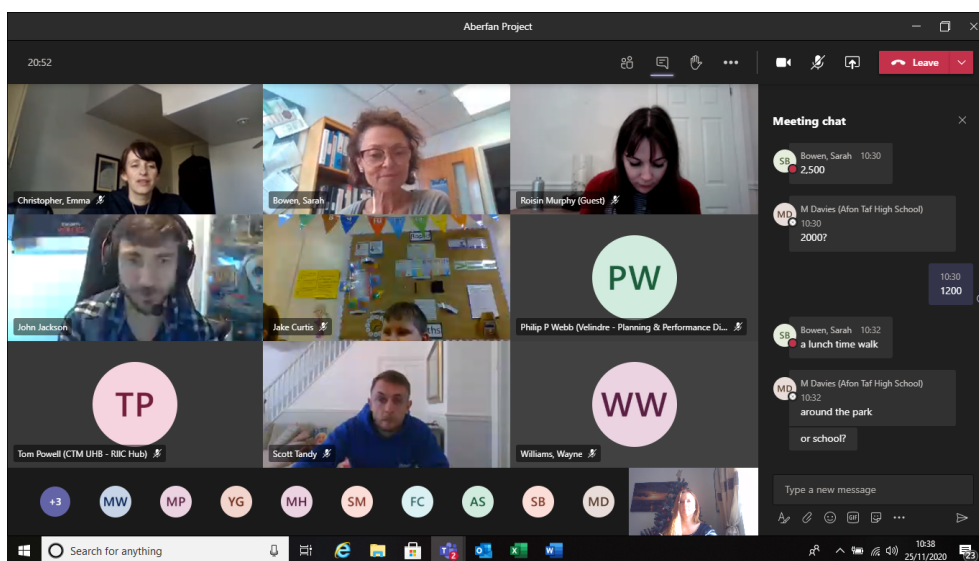
The project was to coincide with the Raising Aspirations and Standards strategy set out by Merthyr Tydfil Borough council. A five-year strategy to improve and sustain the highest possible educational outcomes for all children and young people across Merthyr Tydfil.

It will ensure they have the best possible start in life so that when leaving education, children and young people will have the skills, qualifications and aspiration to do the very best they can throughout their lives.



DRAGONS DEN APPROACH

The RIIC hub identified a number of opportunities from multiple providers. We worked with education colleagues and local businesses within the public sector and third sector for volunteers to provide their expertise to the children. Following an online event, school children were able to vote and select which projects they wanted to work with.



PROJECTS

GET FIT WALES



Project brief:

Getfit Wales is a free School programme that aims to explore and promote healthy development in participants (staff and/ or pupil) inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance by using step trackers and incentivising attainment of step goals at a personal, group, school, local authority and project level.

Through new and engaging activities, pupils can work individually, as well as in small and large groups to engage in experiences which are designed to give opportunity for pupils to develop attitudes, skills and knowledge to be healthy and confident individuals.

Project lead:

Scott Tandy, Newydd Housing Association
Project Leader

Emma Christopher, Active Merthyr
Project Leader

Rachel Jones, Troedyrhiw Primary School
School Liaison

Tara Nicholls, Ynysowen Primary School
School Liaison

Alun Williams, Ysgol Rhud Y Grug
School Liaison

PROJECTS

GET FIT WALES



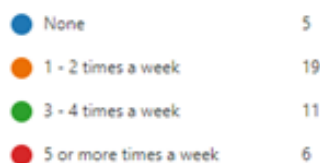
Challenges:

The online survey aimed to engage 100 pupils across the three pilot schools to gain an understanding of current physical activity levels. The survey received 41 responses from two schools engaged in the pilot.

Both the online survey and conversations with the head teachers throughout the duration of the pilot indicated the need to offer an innovative health-based intervention, as a way of complimenting the school physical activity programme. This is clearly evident in the online pre assessment survey results below:

3. How many times a week do you usually do 30 minutes or more walking? (e.g., walking from place to place for exercise)?

[More Details](#)



4. Please give examples of where you carry out such activity? (e.g., around your village, Walk in the local park, trails or paths, skate park)

[More Details](#)

36
Responses

Latest Responses

"Walking my dog with my mam "

"Taff Trail"

"Taft trail"

5. How many times a week do you usually do 20 minutes or more of vigorous-intensity physical activity that make you sweat or puff and pant? (e.g. games such as sports or tag, skipping, running, dance, riding bicycle, scooter)?

[More Details](#)



PROJECTS

GET FIT WALES



6. Please give examples of where you carry out such activity? (e.g., around your village, Walk in the local park, trails or paths, skate park)

[More Details](#)

30

Responses

Latest Responses

"Riding and exercising my pony "

"Local park/ field"

"Taft trail "

7. How many times a week do you usually do 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity that increases your heart rate or make you breathe harder than normal? (e.g., walking the dog, playground activities, riding bicycle, scooter)?

[More Details](#)

None	5
1 - 2 times a week	25
3 - 4 times a week	7
5 or more times a week	4



8. Please give examples of where you carry out such activity? (e.g., around your village, Walk in the local park, trails or paths, skate park)

[More Details](#)

34

Responses

Latest Responses

"Around my village "

"Taekwondo "

"Local paths"

9. In the last 7 days, what did you normally do outside of School hours (8:45am - 3:40pm)

[More Details](#)

Sat down (talking, reading, pla...	24
Stood around or walked around	4
Ran or played a little bit	5
Ran around and played quite ...	6
Ran and played hard most of t...	2



Due to lockdown restrictions at the time of pilot, the project relied solely on pupils and/ or parents of pupils inputting step data on behalf of the participant. As a result of this we are unable to quantify trends and accurately assess overall impact with mass amounts of step data missing and no post evaluation assessments completed.

PROJECTS

GET FIT WALES



Impact and outcomes:

Physical activity is an integral part of daily life in a healthy performing school, Getfit.Wales and Active Merthyr aims to build upon this ethos and strive towards ensuring physical activity is promoted throughout the school day and beyond.

Throughout the pilot period (Feb 2021 – April 2021) the project worked across three schools and engaged with 100 pupils, during this time the schools reported:

- Pupils were more engaged in PE lessons.
- Pupils shown to be more active in PE lessons.
- Pupils felt more fulfilled in being part of a team.

Future Plans:

Following the learnings of the Merthyr School Getfit.Wales pilot, Newydd worked with Vale of Glamorgan Sport and Play, Pencoedtre High School and St Richard Gwyn High School to expand on current physical activity provision offered to pupils at the schools. The Getfit.Wales programme run a series of lunch time and after School activities to encourage participants to be involved in a range of new and exciting activities which encouraged movement.

102 pupils participated in the project over the five-week programme (School term). The project monitoring sheets showed high engagement throughout the duration, as a result it has been discussed that this duration (School Term) maybe the optimum timeframe that the project runs with a particular set of participants with a set number of classes. We hope that by running the project this way, the project will offer excitement and 'buzz' around the project when the school classes are chosen.

The Getfit.Wales team are now working with RIIC Hub, WIDI, Public Health Wales and local schools to review how the project is run, how digital technology can be used to resolve problems highlighted and provide a better service to those involved.

"THE PROJECT HAS ALLOWED US TO EXPLORE NEW
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SUPPORT THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING.
WE HOPE TO BUILD UPON THE FINDINGS OF OUR
PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN THE WORK UNDERTAKEN
WITHIN THE MERTHYR TYDFIL BOROUGH"

SCOTT TANDY, NEWYDD HOUSING ASSOCIATION

PROJECTS

CREATIVE ARTS WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Troedyrhiw School

Project brief:

Funding was received via the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) in line with the Welsh Government's vision and mission for the future to support and nurture, the community and contribute to the improved health and well-being of a more vibrant Wales.

Objectives of the project were to create and engage school children of Troedyrhiw Year 5's in interactive, participatory creative arts workshops that brought in themes of the three R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and environmental awareness.

Project leads actions:

- Deliver online sessions to create character masks from recycled materials.
- To facilitate a process for the children to develop masked characters personalities and movements through drama and movement workshops

Pupil engagement actions:

- Create their own masks inspired by an animal or fictional character with items from their home or natural materials.
- Imagine and write their own story/storyboard about their character involving an environmental theme



"It was evident that the children enjoyed too, with lots of smiles and laughter and confidence to respond and ask question even in an on-line scenario. It was evident that when sharing space and doing activities that the children were thoughtful to and of others.

We were pleased by how much the children got into the project and the effort they made. They enjoyed the project and loved the movement and the characters they created were great."

School Teacher

PROJECTS

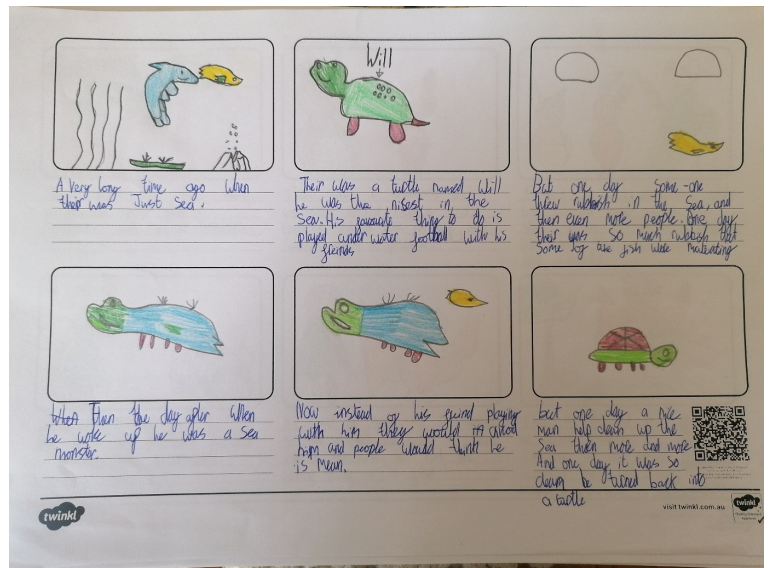
CREATIVE ARTS WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Troedyrhiw School

Lessons learned:

Self-expression and freedom through creativity, using imagination, independent thinking. Combining different art forms and what that can look like within a creative process.

The importance of considering the environment in creative projects and using materials we already have / environmentally friendly materials.



Pupil feedback:

"The sessions made me feel happy because we made masks and played fun games and made stories. The part I enjoyed the most is playing the games and giving my mask a name and story. To make sessions better next time come to class."

"The sessions made me feel happy. The part I enjoyed the most is the games and storyboard. To make the sessions better you could make the sessions longer."

"The sessions made me feel good. The part I liked the most was the dancing."

"The sessions made me feel positive. The part I enjoyed the most was when we created a character for the masks. It couldn't have been better. Thank you for the sessions."

PROJECTS

FreshstART

Afon Taf School

Project brief:

FreshstART is an Arts & Wellbeing organisation which helps people develop their creativity and self-confidence through art. The objectives of this project were to help pupils create artworks using recycled materials and help build their confidence in designing and making using these materials. Pupils were guided through demonstrations and powerpoint presentations to aid progress.



Project leads actions:

- Demonstrate the process
- Facilitate pupils making
- Discuss ideas and inspirations
- Follow the specifications

Pupil engagement actions:

- Collect recycled materials from their recycle bags
- Using their imagination to create artworks from recycled materials
- Learn new techniques

Outcomes:

- Wind Chimes made from recycled materials
- Improved knowledge and understanding of how to create artworks suitable to display outdoors.

Feedback:

Pupils were able to develop their creativity and confidence in their own ideas while following a design brief. They were able to process their ideas and given ideas on how to do this practically with objects from home that would normally be thrown away. They were able reuse these materials in fun, new ways thinking about many aspects of art, design. They were able to express their ideas through discussion, writing, making and get constructive feedback.



PROJECTS

Pharma Bees

The Pharmabees project is all about creating a bee friendly city, supporting the education of children of all ages and contributing to the fight against antibiotic resistant superbugs.



The human fascination with honeybees has provided Pharmabees with a vehicle with which to capture and hold the attention of students both young and old. To build on this sense of wonder and to create a buzz amongst the next generation of Welsh scientists, Pharmabees have developed in partnership with primary school teachers and children, bee based KS2 STEM enrichment resources which can be downloaded from their website.

pharmabees.co.uk/educational-resources

The children are able to develop an understanding of the importance of pollinators and the contribution they make to maintaining biodiversity and ultimately sustaining life on planet earth. Pupils can engage in local research projects that have a real world impact.

There are many activities that encourage the pupils to spend time in nature which will support their personal well being. The children are provided the opportunity to be involved in an ongoing citizen science project in which new data is collected in subsequent years.

***Anyone can be a scientist
School pupil***

FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS

AFON TAF SCHOOL

Afon Taf students took part in two activities, The Pharmabees project and the Creative Arts Recycling Project.

The Creative Arts Recycling Project was started during lockdown and most of the sessions were online with a group of students who opted for this course. I found it very informative and was certainly aimed at the right level for the range of students who took part. Although there were some restrictions to the materials that pupils had to hand at home, Siobhan came up with a huge range of alternatives and ideas that the pupils were able to use and follow. Siobhan presented the sessions to an excellent standard but it was such a shame these sessions weren't allowed to go ahead face to face.

All the pupils produced examples of work during the sessions but when we went back to school, it was more difficult for all of them to attend the online sessions. Well worth the experience and it will probably be even better if completed face to face.

The Pharmabees project was run in school on consecutive Wednesday afternoons with one class. There was a range of activities undertaken in both the classroom and the ICT suite. The 'Minecraft create a bee friendly environment' in the IT suite was particularly popular with collaborative online instruction from members of the team. Pupils were very engaged and enthusiastic about the topic.

RYG SCHOOL

After a strong start with the pedometer project , the momentum dropped and as other activities which were more embedded into school life slowly returned , we were unable to allocate nearly enough time to the project.

The mistakes were from our side as the providers were very accommodating.

FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS

TROEDYRHIW SCHOOL

We took part in an art project and the steps project.

The art project was very successful as we were able to continue with delivery of the sessions through teams and then have one final visit to complete when schools reopened . Pupils were engaged and the practitioners were in contact weekly to discuss progress.

Steps. Unfortunately we really struggled here due to school closures. Some children collected pedometers but getting recordings daily or even weekly proved very challenging. We did apply for a project with Merthyr collage too but unfortunately with travel and restrictions of school visits last year we didn't get to fulfil this project.

YNYSOWEN SCHOOL

Our Year pupils participated in the Comet Chasers project and Year 6 participated in the Farmers Union STEMterprise project.

The projects were a great success with all children fully on board and enjoying the project. As a school we thought The STEMterprise project would be something that we would like to roll out in the future across the school as it ticked so many boxes for the new Curriculum for Wales. We are in the process of purchasing poly tunnels in order for this to be carried out properly and we are looking to set up a cyber cafe to sell some of our produce.

The lesson plans and resources were fantastic and easily accessible. The children enjoyed finding out about seasonal products and setting up their own virtual restaurants and visiting the virtual farms. There was so much in the lessons that we didnt get through them all but now aim to carry it out as one of our main topics in school.

The skills the children demonstrated were excellent with the creating of their own advertising. They generated ideas for recipes and the teamwork promoted by the project was great. A good knowledge of sustainability was seen and the pupis could not wait to start designing their allotments thinkin about seasonability. Maths skills were also demonstrated with the children working with a budget and their research skills were developed.

This was a brilliant project and I cannot wait to do it as a whole school. All teachers were impressed and are all on board.

BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

- COVID 19
- Funding
- Access into school environments
- Time and resource
- Measuring long term impact
- Engagement with organisations

IMPACT

- Even with the pandemic we were able to promote virtual and face to face sessions
- Appreciated by children and teachers
- Facilitated access into schools that can otherwise be difficult to achieve
- Created a network of like-minded individuals and organisations

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To strengthen the ties between schools and project providers
- To roll out projects in other clusters
- To share this report with schools, Health and LA colleagues
- To confirm process for monitoring long term impact
- To undertake impact on learners and schoolteachers through questionnaires and surveys in order to report back to local authorities
- To consider how this type of activity can be replicated across whole schools, then rest of the cluster; then wider regionally
- To take this paper to the Regional Partnership Board and Local Authority corporate panels for information
- To consider further partnership activities with RIIC across other schools

PROJECT TEAM

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