

# Pembroke Dock Community School

## Cooperative Learning

Equity dimension: tick the dimension related to the practice

- Fairness  Inclusion  Access  Opportunities  
 Personalised learning  Personal and social development

Subject: social justice, social development

Target groups: choose the educational level focus of the practice

- Early Years  Primary education  Lower secondary education  
 Upper secondary education  Vocational Training  Other

Source:

Pembroke Dock Community School is a purpose built school a short distance from the town centre. The facilities are of exceptionally high quality and have been very well planned and designed. Provision also includes Pembrokeshire's designated Learning Resource Centre for pupils with ASC which is modern and well resourced. The school, opened in 2001 and was the first school in Wales to be constructed under a private finance initiative.

Currently, the school has a total roll of 650 pupils aged three to eleven, including 80 nursery children. The school provides full-time education for all nursery age pupils. There is also Flying Start provision for 64 two year olds.

Pembroke Dock's catchment area can be described as economically disadvantaged and is in a Communities First Area. Approximately 31% of pupils are currently entitled to free school meals (which is higher than the all Wales average figure of 20%). The annual intake covers the full ability range, although many pupils are from disadvantaged families. Pembroke Dock Llanion and Central ward are ranked as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> most deprived area in Pembrokeshire, (Llanion being in the top 10% most deprived in Wales). According to the Townsend Deprivation Index, Pembroke Dock Central and Llanion fall into the 'Most Deprived' electoral divisions in Wales. The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion report that 69.2% of children in Pembroke Dock are deemed to be from low income families and 45.5% are from workless families. The school has provision for specialist speech and language provision for pupils with communication difficulties and nurture groups to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school takes pride in its family and community engagement and provision. We have adopted the UNCRC (United Nations Convention Right of the Child) and are a Gold Level Rights Respecting School. We are a Professional Learning Pioneer School, working with the Welsh Curriculum on the New Curriculum for Wales, as well as a designated Professional Learning School.

### Mission Statement

Proud to be a community school, striving for success for all!

Contact details: Headteacher – Mrs Michele Thomas, Pembroke Dock Community School, Bush Street, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire SA72 6LQ, Wales, UK

#### Description:

Staff at PDCS offer a variety of strategies to engage pupils in meaningful learning, including group work.

The Cooperative Learning approach offers far more structure than merely sitting pupils in groups and expecting them to gain the skills needed to work productively and successfully together, by pure exposure to this situation. To ensure effective collaboration and engagement from all pupils, CL activities must contain all five elements;

- Face to face interaction: Pupils work closely together and engage in dialogue that promotes continued progress
- Positive interdependence: Where all group members feel connected enough to succeed – “They sink or swim together!”
- Group processing: Where children use a variety of ways to assess their ability to achieve their social skills and then identify ways forward
- Social skills: Explicitly taught to develop pupils’ ability to function effectively as a group
- Individual accountability: Where each member of the group is responsible for the success of the task

These elects, effectively combined/structured into learning activities, ensure effective small group work and enhance children’s ability to communicate, interact and develop relationships.

It is clear that pupils are highly engaged with this pedagogical approach, and constantly challenged to develop their social skills. Teachers report that students are now working well with this approach and are happy to work with peers that they might not previously have been able to. Small group work is now more focused and effective, ensuring all pupils are contributing and engaging throughout. Teachers are highly motivated to use this approach as they clearly see the impact of its effectiveness amongst their pupils and how they are working together more effectively now.

Some of our most experienced staff note the CL training to have been the most valuable professional development opportunity that they have ever engaged in. Their enthusiasm to immediately implement this approach into their classrooms, to share their experiences with colleagues and to disseminate the impact they noted with others is testament to the value of this approach, felt across the staff body at PDCS. Staff openly discuss how their previous ideas of group work have now been reconfigured to align with the principles of CL and how significantly more impactful CL groups have been, particularly for those learners with ALN or those who have previously been reluctant to contribute amongst their peer group.

Prior to the implementation of Cooperative Learning, teachers at PDCS regularly engaged pupils in their learning through group work. Previous monitoring cycles demonstrated that many pupils were meaningfully engaged in group work across the school. However, since the introduction of the Cooperative Learning approach, learning walks across the school have identified that nearly all pupils are working together and supporting one another when engaged in tasks delivered through this pedagogical approach.

#### Methodology:

Teaching staff from across the school attended a four day training course in Cooperative learning. The aim was to engage staff in training that transforms their practice in the classroom; resulting in greater pupil engagement, collaboration, development of social skills and a general enhancement of learning across the school.

Staff returned to school and disseminated their training, first, at a staff meeting, which resulted in the desired effect; a staff excited and engaged in a simple pedagogical approach that immediately appeared to reflect the teaching style and approach that could further enhance the learning taking place within their classrooms. In our 3 form entry context, at least one member of staff in each year group had attended the training, enabling each year group to plan specific opportunities to embed Cooperative Learning into their practice.

#### Resources:

[https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/research\\_and\\_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cooperative-Learning-1-Spencer-Kagan/dp/1879097109>

Outcomes: It is clear to note that all strategies and approaches gained in the training were relevant to our classroom and have been immediately impactful. The training offered an opportunity to reflect on our current practice – where we previously engaged in ‘group work’ with our pupils, we could now see far more effective and meaningful strategies were available to us, which served the dual purpose of developing relationships and well as improving outcomes for learners

Pedagogical strategies for AFL opportunities were a particular strength.

With regular engagement in the Cooperative Learning approaches, we expect pupils to form better relationships with one another and engage to support and problem solve together. We hope that our ALN learners will gain confidence and that those pupils who are reluctant to engage with peers, will also develop confidence to do so.

The AFL opportunities should ensure that teaching staff have a better knowledge of pupil understanding in their learning, thus improving outcomes.

#### Supporting documents:

Video link: <https://pembrokedockcp.primarysite.media/media/co-operative-learning-at-pembroke-dock-community-s>