# Penryn Partnership Plus NLC

**Non Worrall and Victoria Crowe**
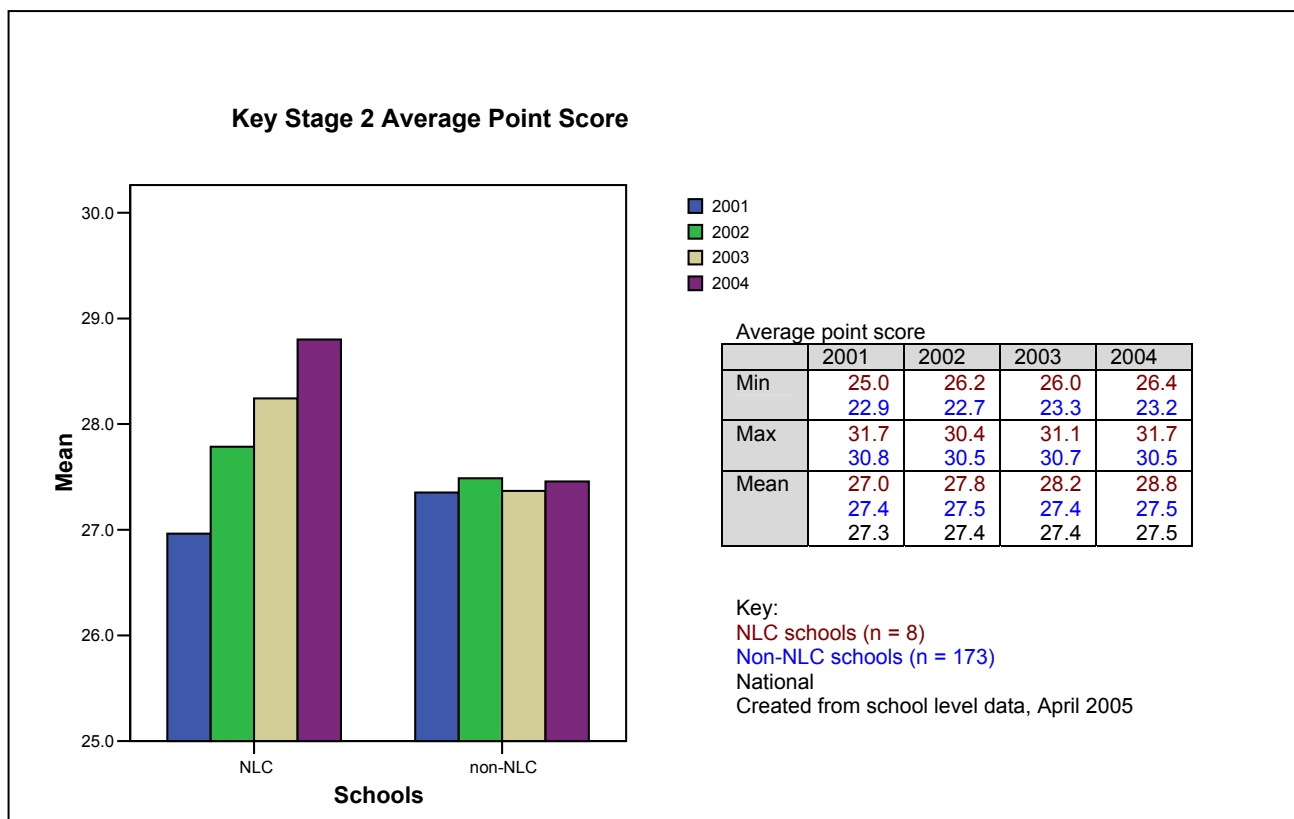
Networked Learning Communities

Penryn 'contains extensive areas of social and economic deprivation'.
Ofsted Inspection Report for Penryn Junior School, 2004

## Impact on children: attainment

Over the period of 2001 to 2004, the eight primary schools in the Penryn Partnership Plus (PPP) Network Learning Community (NLC) have shown a greater increase in average point scores at Key Stage 2 than the other schools in Cornwall. Over the four years, PPP schools have shown an increase of 1.8 points, compared with non-networked schools which showed only a small increase of 0.1 points (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Key Stage 2 average point score for NLC and non-NLC schools in Cornwall, 2001-2004

**Key Stage 2 Average Point Score**

Average point score

|       | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|
| Min   | 25.0 | 26.2 | 26.0 | 26.4 |
|       | 22.9 | 22.7 | 23.3 | 23.2 |
| Max   | 31.7 | 30.4 | 31.1 | 31.7 |
|       | 30.8 | 30.5 | 30.7 | 30.5 |
| Mean  | 27.0 | 27.8 | 28.2 | 28.8 |
|       | 27.4 | 27.5 | 27.4 | 27.5 |
|       | 27.3 | 27.4 | 27.4 | 27.5 |

Key:
NLC schools (n = 8)
Non-NLC schools (n = 173)
National
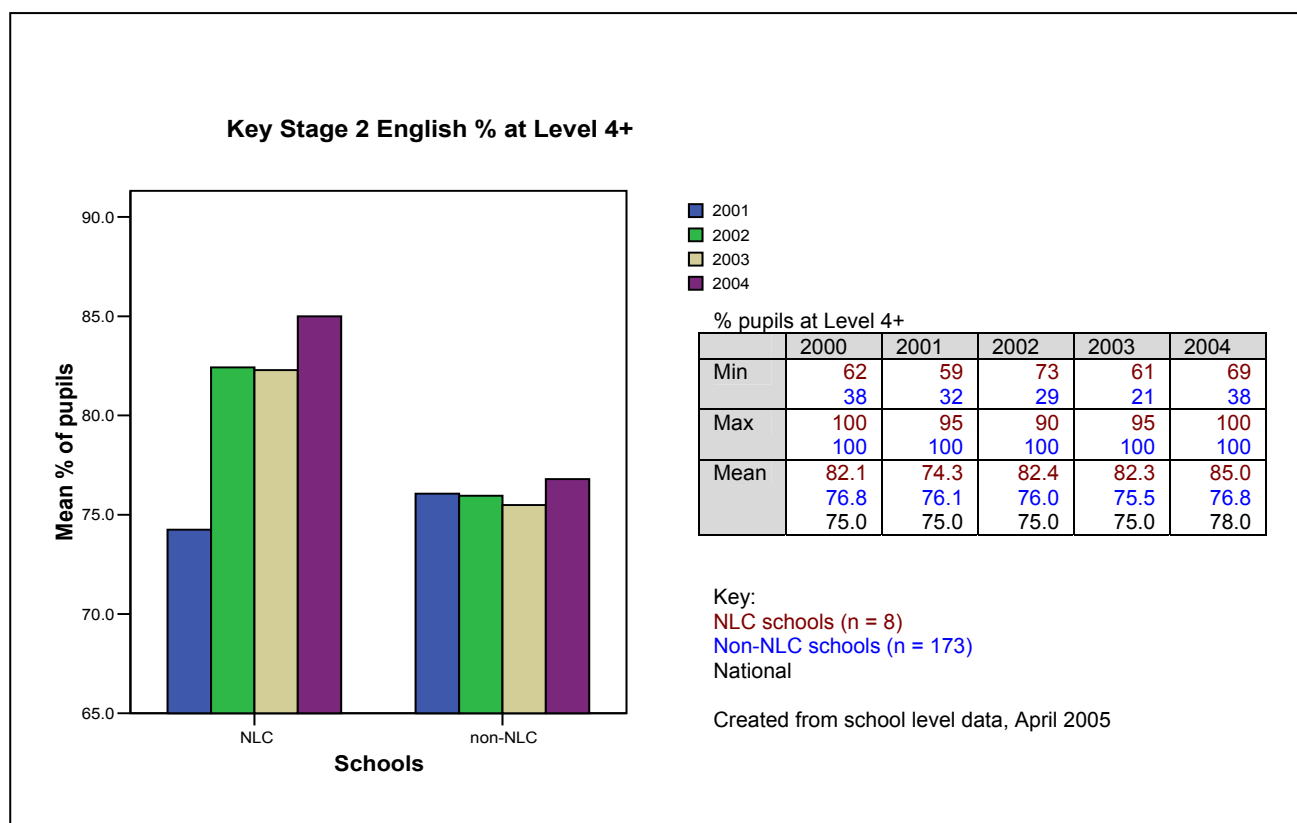Created from school level data, April 2005

In contrast to outsiders' view of Cornwall as an idyllic context in which to live and work, the schools in PPP are working to counter high levels of socio-economic deprivation. As the Ofsted report for Penryn Junior School (2004) observes, Penryn 'contains extensive areas of social and economic deprivation'.

Throughout its life, PPP has focused on developing children's aspirations and sense of self-esteem by offering a broader range of opportunities, within and beyond the school day, than would be possible for any single small school. In tracing the impact of the partnership on pupils' learning, this report, following discussion with members of the network, attempts to begin to answer the question: 'How have the adults worked to ensure that their vision of each school as a professional learning community is realised in the engagement, achievement and attainment of their 2,184 pupils?'

The analysis of data in PPP has been used to track individual pupils, classes, year groups and schools. In regard to the whole network, analysis (Figure 2) shows attainment data for Key Stage 2 English since improving pupils' narrative writing has been a focus of the network. Again, the gains that can be seen are over and above the gains made by the remaining schools in Cornwall. This statistical information presents strong evidence of improvement in attainment.

**Figure 2:** Key Stage 2 English at Level 4+ in NLC and non-NLC schools in Cornwall, 2000 and 2001-2004



**Key Stage 2 English % at Level 4+**

% pupils at Level 4+

|  | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Min | 62 | 59 | 73 | 61 | 69 |
|  | 38 | 32 | 29 | 21 | 38 |
| Max | 100 | 95 | 90 | 95 | 100 |
|  | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Mean | 82.1 | 74.3 | 82.4 | 82.3 | 85.0 |
|  | 76.8 | 76.1 | 76.0 | 75.5 | 76.8 |
|  | 75.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 78.0 |

Key:
NLC schools (n = 8)
Non-NLC schools (n = 173)
National

Created from school level data, April 2005

## Impact on children: achievement and standards

Between 2002 and 2004, an analysis of available school and individual pupil attainment data within the network developed into a research project, led by the headteacher of Penryn Junior School. Working from the headteachers' observation that standards in narrative writing were a shared weakness across PPP, they set out to explore the benefits of ICT-based formative assessment strategies whilst expanding teacher knowledge and understanding of progress in writing. Building on an ICT-based approach that had been successfully trialled in Penryn Junior School, the network chose to develop pupils' self-assessment skills and the ways in which teaching assistants could support pupil learning as key classroom focuses of the enquiry.

During the academic year 2002-03, the project involved 200 Year 6 pupils. This was expanded to 800 pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 during 2003-04. By devising pupil-friendly versions of the assessment statements used by teachers, a method of pupil self-assessment was established which enabled them to understand what they could do and to make decisions themselves about their next steps in learning (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Pupil assessment statement form for PPP

APPENDIX 1

PENRYN PARTNERSHIP
IMPROVING MY WRITING

NAME:                                                                              CLASS:

STORY TITLES

**WHAT TO DO**

1) Write your story title in the space provided.
2) Write your story. The points below might help you.
3) Read your story, or someone else's story, and tick if you think you/they can do any of the points below.
4) Think about what you need to do to **improve** your next story. Set yourself a **target**.
5) Write your next story and see if it is better!

**TO WRITE A GOOD STORY, I NEED TO BE ABLE TO:**

| 1 | Describe what happens in the story — at the start, in the middle, and how the story ends. |
| 2 | Write a story so that events are related to one another. **Does everything in your story make sense?** |
| 3 | Show imagination in the way that I describe the setting and the action. |
| 4 | Show imagination in the way that I describe characters. Do you show that the characters are different? |
| 5 | Use a mixture of short and longer sentences, joining longer sentences with words other than and or then. |
| 6 | Use lots of different and interesting words. Instead of 'He went…' you might write 'Max hurried…' |
| 7 | Use punctuation (capital letters, full stops, commas, apostrophes, question & exclamation marks, speech). |

In January 2002, before the writing record was introduced, 32 per cent of the 200 Year 6 pupils across the network achieved Level 4 in writing. In the standard assessment tests (SATs) results that year, following the intervention, this figure rose to 61 per cent. For the pupils, it was found that as well as increased attainment, there was an increased understanding and motivation in being able to plot their own progress and set their own targets. It was also felt that there were new opportunities for dialogue between pupils and adults which enabled pupils to have informed discussions about their writing skills with each other, and with the teacher or teaching assistant.

As well as this particular curricular example of using data to generate a tool for effective formative assessment, PPP has focused on the development of whole-school and cross-phase use of data to track the progress of pupils' attainment. A cautionary note in relation to claiming a direct causal relationship between the use of data tracking and the improvements in pupil attainment was sounded by the primary headteacher who is also a co-leader of the network.

> "In terms of the impact the tracking has had, it's very hard to demonstrate that link. What you can demonstrate and what you'll hear when you talk to the pupils is that they've got a greater awareness of their role as learners, what their targets are, where they're making progress, where they're not making progress. There's a greater awareness across the partnership."

> Headteacher, Penryn Junior School

Registering the caveat, and taking up the cue of improved pupil understanding of their own learning, the question was whether this claim could be evidenced by talking with a range of pupils from the three schools.

## Impact on children: knowledge, skills and understanding

From the pupils' perspective, this approach, no matter what the particular features were in any one school, has led to a variety of outcomes demonstrated both in their understanding of their own learning and motivation to learn. This was powerfully evidenced in discussions with Years 3 and 4 pupils at Mabe Primary School. The pupils' confidence and clarity in explaining the use of marking ladders were pronounced. An example of a completed Year 4 pupil's marking ladder in Figure 4 demonstrates how it works.

**Figure 4:** Example of a Year 4 pupil's marking ladder



Once the pupil has assessed his or her own work, the teacher contributes comments. The combining of their feedback provides the basis for an informed dialogue, accords responsibility to the pupil and at the same time gives the teacher insights into the child's understanding of his or her own learning and progress.

> *"I've been using more adjectives and personification and similes …. We're learning more things than we used to."*
>
> Year 4 pupil, Mabe Primary School

Each piece of writing completed contributes to an overview of the child's progress that is explicitly recorded and understood easily by teacher and pupil, and a termly progress record is annotated in the front of the pupil's exercise book (Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** Termly progress report



In Penryn Junior School, the data-tracking system provides information to identify pupils who need additional support by working in smaller support groups with a teaching assistant. Additional time has been provided for the additional literacy and numeracy groups by creating an extra, timetabled 30-minute slot within each day where all children follow an additional activity. The Year 4 class teacher explained that for many lower-attaining children, this provided an opportunity to shine. He was very aware of these children who "thrive on praise. If they get something wrong, their heads go down literally on the tables." In his view, the small groups enabled these pupils to experience some success with reading and writing, an experience denied them for far too long.

In the eyes of the Year 6 teaching assistant who works with both 'middle' and 'bottom' groups of children to boost their attainment, the challenge is to bring a sense of enjoyment to the class. To do this, she sees changing their self-image through productive talk as key.

> *"You're trying to bring out the best in themselves. You try to make them enjoy it. You've got to see them all as individuals, as children before anything, little children who have had really negative experiences. They're at the bottom, they know they're at the bottom, they're not silly enough not to know – and you've got to try and bring out what there is because they've all got something … They just want that chance. You've got to encourage them to talk."*
>
> Year 6 teaching assistant

By creating attractive, self-contained workspaces between the classrooms, the school has invested resources in making the children feel special. The results of the highly-structured support programme are beginning to be felt, not just in the improved attainment scores but also in the extra spark that these children now demonstrate in their mainstream classes.

## Impact on children: challenging targets and learning goals

Improving transition and avoiding the Year 7 dip in performance, an established priority of PPP, have been greatly assisted by passing on more refined data to the secondary school. This has enabled the English department of Penryn College to create a detailed picture of the literacy learning needs of each Year 7 student (25 per cent of whom are on the special needs register), ensuring a more efficient and effective matching of intervention and direction. The school also activates the skills of its own students to create effective intervention strategies. Pupil teachers and pupil mentors regularly meet with younger, lower-attaining pupils with the aim of improving both their school work and their behaviour.

*"I find out what's wrong in that lesson, if someone's just loud or they don't like that teacher so they just misbehave. We find out and we set a little target on Post-it notes. And we get them to write down what they think they do wrong and how they can improve it. And then I help them improve and we meet every Thursday for this."*

Year 10 pupil, Penryn College

The pupils regard this work as both valuable and empowering and the students themselves are seen as an important support system within the classroom.

*"I think being taught by a friend or someone your age makes it a lot easier … You learn a lot from other people, 'cos other people get different points to you and then you can talk to each other. Because I think it's horrible when it's just a silent classroom and the teacher is the one, and they are the ultimate power. But if you've got talking in the classroom and you've got friends and everyone helping you, it makes it a lot easier - a lot more fun as well."*

Year 9 pupil, Penryn College

In all three schools, interviews with students ranging from Year 3 to Year 10 presented a clear and detailed picture of the impact that the partnership's developments have had in engaging them in the process of understanding and taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a discussion about the effects on their learning of the self-assessment processes used at Penryn College, a Year 10 pupil commented that she felt the motivation to learn had improved because the pupils were "learning because [they] want to, not because [they] have to".

The essence of the conversation with students exploring the ways in which their teachers and support assistants had worked with them to ensure their developing ownership of their progress in learning, was captured by a Year 8 student (Figure 6).

**Figure 6:** Year 8 student's perception of ownership of learning
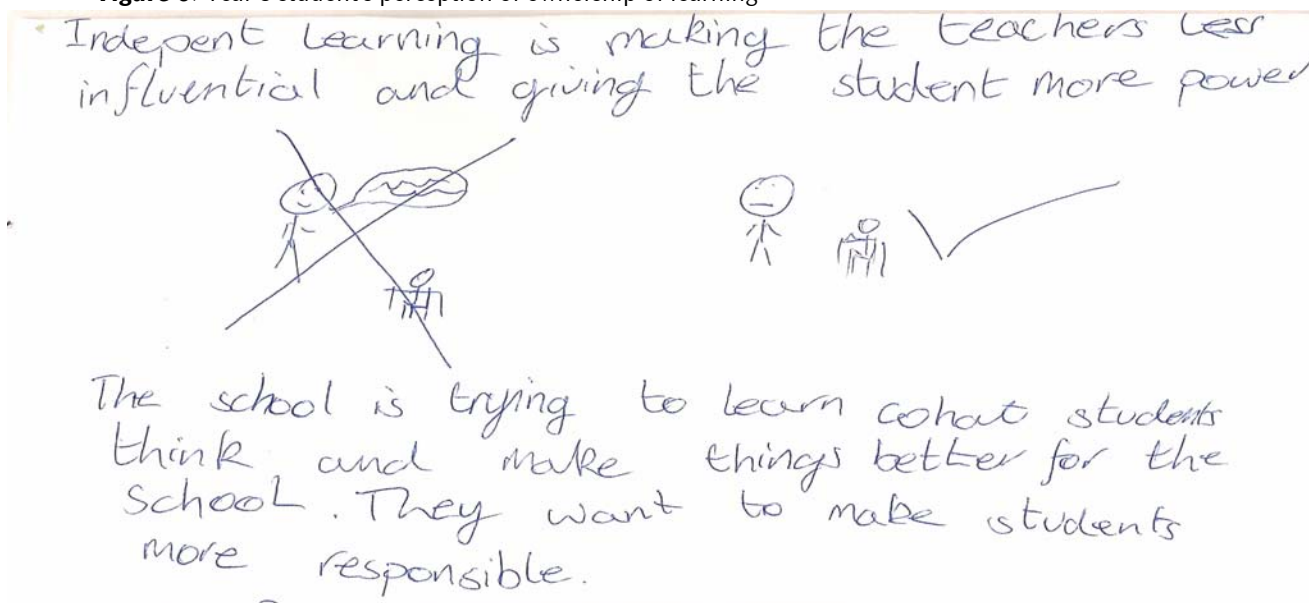


A small-steps target-setting approach, informed by the same approach that informed the primary narrative writing project, is being developed in the secondary school. Building on the foundation of positive attitudes towards self-assessment carefully cultivated in feeder primary schools, the secondary teachers have developed a more sophisticated system that reflects the subject teaching focus that characterises the secondary phase. At the beginning of each term, each student completes a table in which their actual performance, taken from a report written by a teacher, is set against the performance of a perfect pupil. Each student then examines the gap that is revealed and sets his or her own targets for improvement in the three cross-curricular categories of:

- use of class time

- effort

- homework

These targets are recorded by the student on a 1-5 point scale, giving a running total for each term. This method seems to have provided the students with a highly motivating way of engaging with their own learning, forcing them to identify where they are and therefore developing a higher degree of responsibility for their own learning: "The targets challenge you to learn and make you more responsible for what you learn", as one Year 9 pupil at Penryn College put it.

The focus on developing independent, autonomous learners was pronounced in all three of the schools visited. Much work has been done to build the key skills of communication and leadership through the development of co-operation, trust, self-motivation and confidence. The pupils interviewed were full of enthusiasm for the range of networked activities in which they had been involved, particularly the recent production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which involved 450 Years 5 and 6 pupils trained and co-ordinated by teachers and Year 10 students from Penryn College. It was greeted with great acclaim by audiences of over 1,000 people and the delighted enthusiasm and pride in their achievements lit up the children's faces as they spoke animatedly, but modestly, about their participation: "We worked very well together I think and it was quite a good experience," said a Year 5 pupil from Penryn Junior School.

The pupils' appreciation of the sustained effort and long-term commitment needed to mount such an enterprise spoke forcefully of the place the experience would have in their memories of the future. Such large-scale events are building a sense of the network's community whose members show a clear sense of shared responsibility for the social, moral and cultural

development of all their children. The co-operation and celebration of the diversity of these events embody the key philosophical concepts that motivate the network.

A further collaborative venture designed to ease the transition experience of primary school pupils is the 'discovery day'. As described by a group of Year 5 children, this provides a day-long visit to Penryn College, giving the children access to PE, science, geography and drama lessons and opportunities to explore the secondary environment well in advance of transfer. Being able to meet teachers and older students as well as find their way around the extensive buildings and grounds is making the children feel more confident of their future ability to be safe and know where to find the answers to questions and issues that will inevitably arise.

> *"We had an experience of what it would be like when we go into the seniors … It made me feel a bit more safe because I know what it's going to be like."*
>
> Year 5 pupil, Penryn Junior School

## School processes: what contribution has the network made?

### Adult learning: writing project

The clear focus on using data to track and develop each child's progress throughout his or her experience of compulsory education has necessitated training that has helped every adult involved in the PPP schools to both understand and apply with confidence the information provided. This was carefully built into the provision for adult learning that underpinned the writing project. The headteacher of Penryn Junior School led two half-day sessions for all Year 6 teachers and teaching assistants focusing on:

- instruction on how to use the ICT-based formative assessment tool
- detailed discussion about what progress in narrative writing looks like
- analysis of a wide range of samples of pupil writing in order to make judgements about (a) what they can already do and (b) what the next steps in learning should be
- guidance on how to introduce and use a pupil self-assessment format
- guidance on how to tutor a child so that they can make their own judgements about (a) what they can already do and (b) what they should work on next
- role-play sessions (with staff taking on the role of a pupil) and actual tutoring sessions with volunteer pupils

*NTRP Summary of Narrative Writing Project*

Building upon Penryn Junior School's set of 20 statements which captured the specific features of narrative writing necessary to meet the descriptors for literacy at Levels 3-5 in the national curriculum, teachers across the partnership schools used the agreed writing record to make judgements about each pupil against certain success criteria. These judgements provided information about what each child could do but at the same time gave a detailed overview of strengths and weaknesses in the class as a whole (Figure 7).

**Figure 7:** Sample formative writing record

| School | Hogwarts | | | KEY | | Data to Enter*: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher | Prof. Dumbledore | | | 0 = No evidence of skill | | 1) School, teacher & pupil names against register numbers |
| | Year 6 | | | 1 = Some evidence of skill in some writing | | 2) Pupil performance data using the key provided |
| Updated | Apr-02 | | | 2 = Confident use of skill in most writing | | 3) A class target (as a rough guide, 50% is a 'just level 4') |

28 Sample Size (Calculated automatically) — Now analyse to inform your teaching and learning priorities

**FORMATIVE WRITING RECORD**

| | | | Class Percentage | Andrew | Amy | Ben | Belle | Carl | Christina | Daniel | Danika | Edward | Ella | Fred | Francis | Graham | Gill | Harry | Harriet | Ian | Isabelle | Jack | Janice | Ken | Katie | Len | Lucy | Matthew | Matilda | Nigel | Natalie | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Part A class/individual percentage scores | | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | 64 | ## | 50 | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | 64 | 50 | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | ## | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Part B | | To achieve Level 3 the pupil can: | % | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 |
| 1 | PO | Write a story with a beginning, middle and simple ending | 52 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | PO | Write a story so that events are related to one another | 68 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | PO | Show imagination by describing the setting and action | 61 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | PO | Show imagination by describing the characters | 55 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | SC | Use a variety of sentences, some with connectives. | 43 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | V | Use a variety of interesting and precise words | 41 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | P | 50% of sentences correctly demarcated (including some speech) | 55 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

However, the improvement in SATs results for the Year 6 children at the end of the second year of the project, although still appreciable, was not as pronounced as it had been for the previous cohort. After much debate, including discussion in a learning conversation at the NLC Annual Conference 2005, the project leader has come to the conclusion that the key factor was the less rigorous programme of training provided for the adults. Whereas the first cohort of teachers and teaching assistants had been given detailed instruction in understanding and applying the bank of formative statements, as well as role-play opportunities to appreciate pupils' possible reactions, it was assumed that the second cohort needed far less time and input to reach the same level of understanding and expertise. Therefore, the network had invested less time and funding in their preparation, resulting perhaps in the second cohort being less knowledgeable and consequently less effective in practice.

Nevertheless, the experience of the impact on teachers (and consequently on pupils' standards) of being able to access a less bureaucratic approach to data handling through ICT has facilitated the partnership's development of more sophisticated whole-school tracking approaches which all teachers are more willing and confident to use. Mabe Primary School's Years 3 and 4 teacher talked freely of the ways in which data tracking enabled her to "be more clever" in the way that she targeted the specific weaknesses and strengths of her mixed-age class. One headteacher is deeply aware of the additional objectivity that data analysis affords him as he constantly seeks to anticipate the unexpected.

> *"The interest is in making sure that you don't have blind spots. It's extremely easy to think that you've got things to a certain level – it's working fine – but unless you shine the torch in different areas, you don't know that in fact there's some issues there that you haven't been aware of."*
>
> Headteacher, Penryn Junior School

## Adult learning: maths

Moving on from a focus on literacy, the numeracy co-ordinators for Penryn Junior School and Mabe Primary School have applied a similar small-steps approach to the teaching of maths. Their detailed analysis of each pupil's scores on each question of SATs and progress test papers provides them with frequently updated and accurate information that enables them to target which specific learning objectives of particular national curriculum levels need to be followed up with each child or small group of children. Such an approach means that each child has a clear, short-term target. Additionally, there have been concerted attempts to involve parents more directly in their children's learning. An example is the mental maths initiative devised at Mabe Primary School in which worksheets focusing on the regular practice of particular maths skills (identified as weak from the data) are sent home to be completed with parental

Networked Learning Communities

supervision and support. Child and parent maintain a record of 'What did you practise?' and 'How did you get on?' which feeds into a class star chart. This scheme, supported by input from the head and numeracy co-ordinator in terms of adult information about current maths methods, has been welcomed by children and parents alike, extending involvement in learning further into the community.

### 'Exciting writing' research

Further work by individual staff at Mabe Primary School, from an externally funded piece of research, has fed into the wider school system and will ultimately be communicated with the wider network. The 'exciting writing' research project, supported by Cornwall local education authority (LEA) and conducted by 37 teachers across the county, aims to target a particular set of disengaged children. These children have been identified as underachieving in writing, not because of any special needs impeding their progress, but because they are not motivated. The research aims to work with these children using visual texts, such as DVDs and videos, drama and ICT in order to improve engagement. For example, *The Incredibles* was used as a focus whilst looking at a unit of work on news reports. When the class teacher asked at the beginning of the project for advice to give to a younger child about being a good writer, the children involved focused on presentation, telling others to "join their writing nicely". Towards the end of the project, their advice now informs writers to use "some powerful words". Initially, five children from Years 3 and 4 were chosen as participants, but the work has now been extended to other pupils with dramatic results.

> *"[She is] an able Year 4 pupil, but [she] did have some engagement and motivation problems though. Not that she doesn't want to work, but just under her own terms. She would prefer to read her little horse book. She has been <u>very</u> motivated by this, absolutely on fire really with it."*
>
> Years 3 and 4 teacher, Mabe Primary School

Making careful use of resources provided by both the DfES strategy teams and Cornwall LEA, the network schools are building their collaborative work on data and tracking pupils' progress into their school improvement plans. By using the response data from the Global Institute for Student Aspirations (GISA) dimensions questionnaire, Penryn College identified that 'Year 8 [pupils] are a little disaffected' while its detailed SATs analysis yielded the information that 'lower-attaining girls do not achieve as much as they could at Key Stage 3 English.' Similarly, Penryn Junior School's headteacher has isolated a small number of girls whose performance is lower than it should be. The early warning system provided using a detailed breakdown of the results of frequent before and after testing is enabling individual schools to operate a more effective early intervention system, which should mean that fewer students become disaffected because of persistent underachievement.

## Network characteristics

### Context

The Penryn Partnership Plus (PPP) formed during the 1990s as a cross-phase cluster of schools focusing on transition and sharing opportunities and resources in PE. This cluster consisted of 10 schools – 3 schools who share the same campus (an infant, a junior and a secondary school) and 7 feeder primary schools – in a largely rural area of mid-Cornwall. After two to three years of working together, the cluster began to focus more on the curriculum and on dovetailing school improvement plans. Funding support was provided at this time by Cornwall LEA.

In January 2003, the cluster became a networked learning community and focused on developing a professional learning community in each partnership school. To this end, the steering group of headteachers and school leaders meets every half term and decides, for each network priority, who will be involved in each school and how much funding each project will attract. Other staff can be invited to attend these meetings, where they have the opportunity to

present their ideas for future network activities (see Appendix 1 for an overview
of the network's structure).

It is interesting to note that membership of the PPP has remained constant throughout its 10-year history and that changes in staff have not affected the impetus of the partnership:
"Changes in headship haven't affected the sense of team work and what we want to achieve.
New people can come in, but the body politic still moves on," remarked one network co-leader.

### Developing skills

A particular and continuing focus of PPP, as stated by the headteacher of Penryn College, is the development of skills that are required in order to enable pupils to achieve future economic well-being.

> "We know that we've got a lot of kids that aren't going to go anywhere, they're going to stay in the locality but they're going to end up unemployed … So what we're trying to do is to make sure we identify what their key skills are and then practise it in a whole variety of ways."
>
> Headteacher, Penryn College

Committed to enhancing students' aspirations through building their sense of achievement and self-confidence whilst developing fun and excitement in learning, Penryn College has invested considerably in the approaches advocated by GISA, which provides a framework to raise standards by improving teaching and learning environments in partnership with teachers and parents. A questionnaire completed by all students every two years based on the eight GISA dimensions[1] highlighted that for the students 'belonging' and 'fun and excitement' were areas requiring attention. The partnership, by offering opportunities such as the *Joseph* production and the partnership residential venture planned for 220 Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 pupils for the autumn term 2005, has taken up this challenge. In addition, the secondary school has taken actions such as setting up a bullying focus group, developing a student charter and reforming the student council. The GISA approach is now to be extended to the rest of the network, with one of the secondary school teachers leading through a series of visits to each of the primary schools. Her task is to find specific ways of further developing and refining student voice activities that are appropriate to each school within the overarching GISA framework and within the network.

### Diversity

Similarly, PPP has retained its model of diversity within a common purpose in other areas. The student progress-tracking systems vary between schools but each is underpinned by the same principles. In 2003-04, network funding was used to facilitate the sharing of a key developer's knowledge and understanding of ways in which such an approach could be operationalised in each school. Each school has refined its own way of devising a system that meets its particular ethos and needs.

> "I've watched partnerships fall apart when you insist on inclusivity. So if you say we've all got to do this and if you're not doing it, you're not playing the game then you're not going to be our friend anymore … Because some schools opt in, some schools opt out … People aren't set up against a wall in an 'either or'. It means that the partnership exists in little pockets … we don't feel a necessity to say we've got to do everything, we pick into the things that are right."
>
> Headteacher, Penryn College

This flexibility on the part of the network is indicative of the vision that each school should be a professional learning community and the network should therefore allow each partner the

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[1] The eight dimensions are: leadership and responsibility, confidence to take action, curiosity and creativity, spirit of adventure, sense of accomplishment, fun and excitement, belonging and heroes.

opportunity to respond to the needs of its immediate community. For example, the range of expertise in PE that exists in the secondary partner (a specialist sports college) is available to all the other schools, opening up a whole range of opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6. This energy to work with each other and the wider community in Penryn has been received very positively. As the Ofsted report for Mabe Primary School (2004) states:

> "All these schools, known as the Penryn Network Learning Community, provide many opportunities for staff development at both local and national level. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to take part in a variety of sporting occasions, all of which raise academic and sporting standards. Because there is so much pupil involvement with the college, parents believe the school goes above and beyond the basic minimum requirements by this effective partnership and provides their children with many valuable opportunities for learning."

## Leadership opportunities

The secondary school students also benefit, in that they are afforded a variety of leadership roles in providing access to particular sports activities for the younger children through the Junior Sports Leaders Award scheme, and it is only to students that the network offers leadership opportunities. This can be seen very clearly in the ways in which they have used the ever-growing skills and expertise of staff within the partnership to lead training and coaching across the network. The headteacher of Penryn Junior School, who values his own personal gains from the partnership because "that whole sense of working together gives you greater strength to do the job well", drew specific attention to the opportunities and benefits of using home-grown experts to run training that was carefully tailored to meet the self-identified needs of the members of the network. For example, all of the ICT New Opportunities Fund training in the PPP schools was run by four network teachers, three from Penryn Junior School and one from Mabe Primary School. According to the co-leaders, there is now a mindset among all of the headteachers on the steering group that leads them to look first at their own resources when facing a problem: "That's the difference a partnership makes. When you have a problem, you think, before you think of the LEA, you think: 'Is there a partnership solution?'". They perceive much of the LEA training to be inevitably of the 'blanket variety' since it is intended to be accessed by large numbers of practitioners in one fell swoop. This attitude, which prioritises home grown, tailor-made solutions, allows the network to match training to specific adult levels of need, at the same time as offering a wealth of leadership opportunities to individual practitioners. It also means, however, that the network has only occasionally bought in outside expertise.

Although the partnership has not chosen to work closely with a higher education institution, it has a mature relationship with the LEA, which, in the days before the NCSL Networked Learning Communities initiative, gave some funding to the partnership out of interest in its collaborative way of working. There is now, in fact, a move to extend the networked dimension as a way of meeting the demands of the extended schools initiative and the Every Child Matters agenda by linking PPP with the Falmouth cluster of schools.

## Inclusivity

Inclusivity through diversity of involvement and opportunity can be seen as the informing ambition of Penryn Partnership Plus where enhancing all pupils' learning to build their aspirations is very much the centre of the network. The barriers between the primary and secondary phases are being systematically removed.

> "It's not unusual to see primary school kids in this environment any longer. It's almost like one big school now."

> Acting head of English, Penryn College

In this way, the networkers are extending their activities beyond the committed core, spinning ever more collaborative threads that will provide a structure which can be robust enough to

hold responsibility for the children in all of their individual professional learning communities. The partnership is already demonstrating the desire to reach beyond its immediate partners, as seen in the invitation taken up by children from Isles of Scilly schools to join the production of *Joseph*. Such confidence and energy augur well for the continued successful development of the network.

When one of primary schools was categorised as having serious weaknesses, the network provided as much support and advice as possible, viewing the situation as one they all needed to address. As the school moved quite quickly out of the category, the headteacher valued the support she received, as related by the secondary liaison teacher.

> *"She said that the partnership and the networked learning aspect of it have enabled her school to make massive improvements … She said that if it hadn't been for the fact that she was part of the partnership and the NLC, and the way we were able to support her, and she was able to use us as well, they wouldn't have come out so quickly."*
>
> Year 7 head, Penryn College

This is not a surprising outcome of a network that is in part dedicated to providing that additional support for headteachers that can, in their view, arise most effectively from their peers. The high proportion of Cornish headteachers over the last decade who have been on long-term sick leave gives the current leaders pause for thought, making them determined to share out responsibilities whenever possible to avoid unacceptable levels of personal stress.

It is not just the headteachers who share their objectives and burdens. The partnership also demonstrates a systematic approach to all adults, building their understanding of each other's professional practice. For example, the partnership has developed its own version of networked learning walks. Starting with the focus of easing transition, the secondary school's seven Year 7 tutors have each established a link with a Year 6 teacher of one of the seven feeder primary schools. They have spent a day in the primary schools, observing learning and teaching, processing how different practices can be extended and adapted to the secondary context. In the coming school year, the exchange will be reversed with the Year 6 teachers spending a day at the college.

> *"We're going to put it in October so that they can then see if their Year 7 [pupils] are working as they should be … They'll be attached to a Year 7 tutor, following somebody from their school around … It's an ongoing evaluating, monitoring and developing process."*
>
> Year 7 head, Penryn College

All of the work of Penryn Partnership Plus is shaped by the desire to enable all of the children in all of the schools to aspire to, and achieve, as much as possible. As one co-leaders said: "Never underestimate what kids can do if they're asked the right questions and given the right tasks".

## Acknowledgements

Networked Learning Communities

## Methods and sources

### Interviews

- Penryn Junior School headteacher (network co-leader)
- Penryn Junior School Year 4 teacher
- Penryn Junior School Year 6 teaching assistant
- Mabe Primary School headteacher
- Mabe Primary School Years 3 and 4 teacher
- Penryn College headteacher (network co-leader)
- Penryn College Year 7 head
- Penryn College advanced skills teacher
- Penryn College acting head of English
- Penryn College literacy learning support assistant
- Penryn College head of house
- Penryn College staff development officer (learning network co-ordinator)
- Penryn College deputy headteacher

### Focus groups

- 6 Penryn Junior School Year 4 pupils
- 4 Penryn Junior School Year 5 pupils
- 2 Mabe Primary School Year 4 pupils
- 1 Mabe Primary School Year 3 pupil
- 5 Penryn College Year 8 pupils
- 2 Penryn College Year 9 pupils
- 1 Penryn College Year 10 pupil

### Documents

- NLG Submission document
- Activity record submitted as evidence for NCSL Year 2 review
- Development and finance plan submitted as evidence for NCSL Year 2 review
- NCSL Spring enquiry 2004 narrative
- Traffic lights document submitted as evidence for NCSL Year 1 review
- Network-o-gram, 2005
- Network report on narrative writing project, Teacher Research Conference (NTRP) 2004
- Network report on Penryn Partnership Writing Skills Project
- Summary of Penryn Junior School SATs results
- LEA analysis of Penryn Junior School SATs results
- LEA analysis of PPP SATs results
- Examples of pupil-tracking data from Penryn Junior School and Mabe Primary School
- Vision Action Plan from Penryn Junior School
- Maths SATs analysis (2004) from Mabe Primary School
- School development plan from Mabe Primary School
- Ofsted Inspection Report, Mabe Primary School, 2004
- Ofsted Inspection Report, Penryn Junior School, 2004
- Examples of pupil work from Mabe Primary School and Penryn College
- Transfer and induction literature from Penryn College
- GISA survey results for Penryn College
- Literacy plan evaluation from Penryn College
- Examples of target-setting work in Penryn College
- Analysis of Year 7 progress tests from Penryn College, 2005

# Appendix 1: Penryn Partnership Plus structure

Links with other Networks
Sports College Network
Sports Partnership
GISA
Exeter University
College of St Mark & St John
NCSL
Primary Leadership Programme
SWIFT
Cornwall Learning Forum
Leading Edge

**Penryn Partnership Plus**
Steering Group
Co-leaders + Primary Headteachers
+ Activity Leaders (as required)

History
1997: partnership work extended from transition to the wider view
2003: new structure with Learning Network Team & Primary Learning Co-ordinator introduced

Penryn College
Learning Network Team

Primary Learning
Co-ordinator

CPD:    3 Joint Training days & Governor Training.

**Leadership**

Huff & Puff
JSLA
MFL Leaders
YALA music & dance leaders
NPQH
LPSH
PLP
Activity leaders
ICT

**Attendance**

Audit

**Curriculum Partnerships**

Performing Arts Project
Sports Co-ordinator Scheme
Music support
ICT
MFL

**Teaching & learning**

Learning Walks
Year 7 Tutors observe Year 6
Lesson observations in Penryn College
Narrative Writing Project
SCIPs
Action Research Projects

**Pupil attitudes**

SEBS
&
GISA

**Assessment**

Formative & Summative in KS2 + KS2/3 transfer
+
target setting in KS3 & KS4

**ITT**

Cross phase trainee

**Focus Groups**

SENCO
Dyslexia
ICT
Science
Music staff
PE staff