



Academi Genedlaethol ar gyfer
Arweinyddiaeth Addysgol Cymru
National Academy for
Educational Leadership Wales

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LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE: MIDDLE LEADERS IN WALES

Thursday 30 March

9am-2:45pm



TIMETABLE

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- 9:00am **Welcome** - Tegwen Ellis (Chief Executive)
- 9:10am **Welsh Government** - Kevin Palmer (Deputy Director for Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning)
- 9:20am **The Role of Being an Effective Middle Leader**
Roy Leighton
(Founding Director of Positive Peace Cambridge and Senior Associate of Independent Thinking Ltd)
- 10:40am **Break**
- 11am **Voices from the Field**
Rachel Simmonds (Conwy Youth Service)
Matthew O'Brien (Birchgrove Primary School)
Bryony Evett-Hackett (Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg Ceredigion)
Jenny Davies (Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon Y Cymoedd)
Owain Jones (Aberaeron Comprehensive School)
- 11:50am **Middle Leaders Discussion**
- 12:30pm **Lunch**
- 1:15pm **The Importance of Middle Leadership**
Professor Alma Harris, FAcSS, FLSW, FRSA
(Cardiff Metropolitan University)
- 2:30pm **Closing Remarks** - Tegwen Ellis (Chief Executive)

SPEAKERS



Kevin Palmer

Deputy Director in Welsh Government for Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning

Kevin Palmer is currently a Deputy Director in Welsh Government for Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning. His policy areas include Initial Teacher Education, NQT Induction and Professional Learning for all teachers and leaders, but also education research policy, pedagogy and innovation, and the Education Directorate's ongoing commitment to responding to COVID-19 through innovation in planning and practice.

His education career started in Academia as a lecturer in Literature and Philosophy while studying for his doctorate. From there he entered FE and taught English and Media studies alongside PGCE for FE Lecturers, including taking responsibility for college-wide Professional Learning in pedagogy and innovation. After a stint as an Assistant Principal in North Wales, he worked in technology-based pedagogy and innovation in Greater Manchester, and as part of the BSF team in Salford, where he led on learning transformation. He joined the Welsh Government team in 2018 to develop the National Approach to Professional Learning, conclude the new accreditation of ITE and build the foundations of our National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry.

His focus now is still on these aspects of the work, but also on our national conversation about teaching, Talk Pedagogy, Think Learning and on teaching and learning in the context of a new curriculum and the legacy of COVID-19. Kevin is intensely proud of what the Welsh education system has achieved since we began our reform journey some ten years ago, and on the way Welsh educators have responded to some of the most challenging conditions in our recent history. He hopes to continue working to support the realisation of our new curriculum and the achievement of the ambitious objectives our system has set itself.

SPEAKERS



www.independentthinking.co.uk



Roy Leighton

Founding Director of Positive Peace
Cambridge and Senior Associate of
Independent Thinking Ltd

Growing up in a working-class Black Country community with six brothers and sisters, Roy knows first-hand the challenges faced by children in such circumstances and the importance not only of high expectations and aspirations for all, but also the need for creative and compassionate approaches in the classroom. Indeed his current work, including his impressive MPhil from Cambridge and a 1991 Japanese award for his contribution to peace, culture and education, is very much focussed on peace and peace building in a world that is increasingly at odds with itself.

And as someone with an open mind to new ways of thinking when it comes to changing and growing as professionals and organisations - and who has co-authored eight books on education, creativity, spirituality and change management - Roy embodies the enlightened thinking that can help us all be better at what we do and who we are.

His book 101 Days to Make a Change was shortlisted for the People's Book Prize for Non-Fiction and he has also contributed to several of Independent Thinking's best-selling collaborative books including our most recent, The Working Class.

As anyone who has witnessed one of Roy's presentations knows, he very much sets the standard when it comes to 'taking people's brains for a walk', something he does with great humour, compassion, energy, authenticity and a genuine commitment to share ideas, insights and strategies to help schools bring the best out of everyone in their community.

SPEAKERS



Rachel Simmonds

Strategic Manager, Conwy Youth Service

Rachel Simmonds joined Conwy County Borough Council in 2007, following a range of previous roles within community settings. In 2007, Rachel joined Conwy as a Professional Youth Worker and since this time her roles within the organisation has developed continuously, and she is currently Strategic Manager of Conwy Youth Service and Outdoor Education.

Rachel feels Youth Work is at the heart of the community, providing positive caring and welcoming spaces for young people to connect, share and learn. Rachel has always had a passion and interest in improving Young people's mental health, including providing outdoor experiences and opportunities to push boundaries, overcome challenges and have fun.

Rachel feels the above outlook has supported her within her personal and professional career, never being scared to try something new!

Outside of work, Rachel is a keen walker and enjoys discovering new places. Rachel is married with two children and enjoys spending time with them exploring, learning and having fun. She is also a governor at a local primary school.

SPEAKERS



Matthew O'Brien

Headteacher Birchgrove Primary School

Matthew O'Brien started teaching in 1999 and has gained a thorough knowledge of the Primary Curriculum and has experience teaching across the age ranges from Reception to Year 6 and in a Special Teaching Facility.

During his career, he progressed from class teacher with curriculum responsibilities to two deputy headships, and in 2008 was seconded by the Local Authority as acting headteacher. In 2009, he was appointed headteacher of a Junior school and soon after successfully amalgamated the Infant and the Junior schools.

He has been headteacher of Birchgrove Primary School since November 2013; a school that nurtures children's natural curiosity, and develops happy, confident learners.

Facilitating the Professional Learning of staff is central to Matthew's philosophy. All staff at Birchgrove Primary School successfully understand the school's vision and as a result, they work together as a community. Over time, the school has successfully brought about significant improvements and sustains these in a meaningful way. Much of this has been achieved by supporting the professional learning of the staff and strengthening collaboration with parents and the wider community.

SPEAKERS



Bryony Evett Hackfort

Director of Learning, Teaching,
Technology and Skills for Coleg Sir Gar
and Coleg Ceredigion

Bryony Evett Hackfort is the Director of Learning, Teaching, Technology and Skills for Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg Ceredigion in South West Wales. Bryony is extremely proud of the Further Education (FE) sector in Wales and feels passionately about the need to amplify its voice. Bryony started her FE journey in 2006 within the Performing Arts department and made the move into the leadership of teaching and learning in 2018. Since that time, Bryony has made the most of every opportunity to learn about the FE community and establish links, networks and projects driven to support the FE sector. Bryony aspires to be a future leader for FE and be part of helping to shape its direction.

As a leader, Bryony wants to enable and support those around her to recognise their own strength, value, potential and voice within their organisation and externally. Bryony has demonstrated a commitment to this approach through the creation and implementation of the Action Research programme and the development of Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg Ceredigion's 'Culture of Curiosity'. Action Research and the wider FE speaks movement, is about showing staff that they are able to shape and influence not only their organisation but the sector as whole in order to give our learners the best possible experience and opportunity to reach their potential. This programme has achieved national recognition through the Princess Royal Training Award 2022 and has already had a significant impact on the confidence and value that many of our academic staff are now starting to place on their own work and capabilities.

SPEAKERS



Jenny Davies

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon Y
Cymoedd

Jenny Davies is a primary phase teacher and middle leader in the Welsh medium sector of Bridgend. She has worked at her substantive post at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon y Cymoedd since 2008 under three headteachers and has supported the school as part of the senior leadership team since 2015. Following a yearlong secondment teaching at a Primary school in Melbourne, Australia, Jenny, has worked as a seconded Deputy Headteacher at Tynyrheol Primary where she earned valuable experience in curriculum design and has developed a passion for learning about and sharing successful pedagogy and an understanding of the science of learning. Her curriculum design work at Tynyrheol has supported other schools in their mission to provide the best opportunities for their learners and support for their practitioners. She has recently been appointed Deputy Headteacher at Llanfair Primary in the Vale of Glamorgan where she looks forward to continuing her work in a permanent senior leader's role.

SPEAKERS



Owain Jones

Headteacher Aberaeron
Comprehensive School

Owain Jones has been the headteacher at Aberaeron Comprehensive School since 2015 and was previously the Deputy Headteacher at the school. Owain started his career at Ysgol Y Strade in Llanelli and was given the opportunity to develop various leadership skills whilst in this post. Owain is currently a mentor to leaders on senior leadership development programmes and the NPQH qualification and is a peer inspector for Estyn.

"Holding a leadership role in a school is an exciting challenge and I am very aware of the responsibility that all leaders have to engage in professional development so that we can ensure the best possible experience for the learners in our schools. As a result, I have undertaken various leadership programmes throughout my career and am keen to support others and contribute to the education system in Wales."

SPEAKERS



Professor Alma Harris

Professor of Leadership in Education,
Cardiff Metropolitan University

Professor Alma Harris, FAcSS, FLSW, FRSA, is an Emeritus Professor at Swansea University and Professor of Leadership in Education at Cardiff Metropolitan University. She is internationally known for her research and writing on school leadership and system improvement. Professor Harris has written extensively on middle leadership and distributed leadership in schools. Professor Harris is a consultant to the World Bank and is Past President of the International Congress for School Effectiveness. She is committed to equity and excellence in education. Her latest book *System Recall-Leading for Equity and Excellence in Education* was published by Corwin in 2020. Professor Harris is an International Education Adviser to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Scotland. Professor Harris serves on the Council of the Learned Society Wales. She is currently co-facilitating the National Discussion on Education in Scotland, for Scottish Government.



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