

Learners, School and Communities: where am I teaching?

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	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	You need to be critical of the literature and your findings.	I have tried to be more critical in my writing on the SDP and my sources.
Target 2	You should have used a larger and wider study parameter this would have provided more information to make your judgements.	I have tried to use a wider range of sources however this has been more difficult.

This report will discuss and explore one priority from the placement school's School Development Plan (SDP) in depth. The placement school to be discussed is a primary school in the upper Swansea Valley which has two hundred and sixteen pupils enrolled (My Local School, 2020). Thirty percent of the children enrolled in the school are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) which is above the average for Wales. The school is in a deprived area where there is a lot of partnership work carried out with the community to attempt to lessen the effect of deprivation on the children. The school has five main priorities in its SDP. The priority which will be reported on is "To support the social/emotional wellbeing of pupils". The school made this a priority following the completion of a Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) check of the children within the school which flagged up over thirty percent of the children having had and/or were experiencing significant trauma. Some that the school was aware of, some that was new information to them.

NICE Pathways (2020) describe emotional wellbeing as being confident and happy whereas social wellbeing is explained as having good relationships with their peers and friends around them. The child would not have any behavioural or violence issues. According to NICE (2008), not only is the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils very important, but it has an impact on a child's physical development. They believe a child's social and emotional wellbeing impacts on how well they do in school. By having good social and emotional health, children are likely to be protected against violence and crimes, misuse of substances and behavioural issues (Adi et al., 2007). There are many factors which could mean that a child has a poor social and emotional wellbeing, these include witnessing or being a part of domestic violence in the home, parents who have a substance misuse problem, parents with mental health issues or often families who are involved in criminal activity (Bergin et al., 2018).

Good social and emotional wellbeing as a child usually leads to a state of good mental health as an adult. Many skills such as decision making, relationship making and social awareness are developed from a child into an adult and, if these skills are not well developed as a child, these will cause huge issues for children into their adult life. Schools have a bigger role in the more recent years in supporting and developing a child's social and emotional development. From interacting with different social and emotional interventions from a young age, a child's outcomes should have improvements (Waddell and Clarke, 2017).

Supporting a child's social and emotional wellbeing can get more difficult as they age (Hunter, 2015). For a young child intervention could be put in place within the school without the child, or any other child, realising that they are receiving intervention. When growing up it

is more apparent, or often a child is more aware, when someone is receiving extra support and they can make things more difficult by refusing any support. Some children may not realise that support is required and push away those around them that are trying to help. Programmes such as Trauma Informed Schools UK (2020) aim to give training to those working in school's so that they can provide support for a child's social and emotional wellbeing. This training was initiated from multiple studies that were carried out around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It was discovered that children who had ACEs, (such as abuse, neglect or household dysfunctionalities) were likely to suffer with mental health issues, premature death and physical health issues (Bellis et al., 2015). Therefore, TIS UK (2020) created training and interventions to apply within schools targeting these children.

There has been great improvement in the way that schools implement support for children due to research suggesting that social and emotional wellbeing has a huge influence on attainment in school, future employment and mental health in both child and adult life. Gutman and Vorhaus (2012) conducted research exploring the impact that behaviour and wellbeing has on educational outcomes. They discovered that children who have higher levels of emotional wellbeing in primary school make more progress and are more engaged when in secondary schools. They found that as children move through the school systems, there is more importance placed on emotional wellbeing as it plays a big part in explaining school engagement levels whereas demographic factors become less important. Gutman and Vorhaus (2012) explained that the relationships between emotional and social wellbeing, and the outcomes later in education, were comparable for children irrespective of their gender or home life background. Groves, Hobbs and West-Burnham (2017) argue that children coming from family homes with low incomes or homes which have difficult family relationships are likely to have lower levels of social and emotional wellbeing.

The Children's Society (2019) suggest that low social and emotional wellbeing can be linked to those with poor mental health. From a study they conducted they found that children with poor wellbeing had a low level of engagement in school compared to children with a high level of wellbeing. They discovered that this included a group of children who had some indicators of poor mental health at the same time as having a high level of wellbeing. They believe that it is important that both mental health and wellbeing are measured to ensure that children are not left vulnerable to being overlooked due to having low levels of wellbeing but no noticeable indicators of poor mental health.

Schools have been advised that to improve a child's social and emotional wellbeing they must adopt a whole school approach to support those children who are in need. This

would ensure that the school would work coherently in providing positive work on wellbeing to try and prevent the issue in place of curing it (Howard et al., 2017). By doing this a positive ethos is managed within the classroom which will support a child's emotions along with welcoming positive relationships, respect for each other and constructive communication between pupils and staff. A whole school approach should start from the earliest age in school and continue throughout the school up to year six in a primary school. Identification of emotions and the reasons that a child may be feeling a certain way could be used in a nursery class. Some children are unaware of certain feelings such as anger and could cause them to have outbursts without knowing the real reason for it. From identifying both the emotion and the underlying issue causing the emotion, guidance can be given to help de-escalate from it in a safe way that they could use again.

The school believes that it is important to have a minimum of one priority for maths, literacy and a Pupil Development Grant priority. A three-year overview is put in place to include predicted priorities for the coming years, although these priorities are not always the ones that are chosen to go forward (Yeigh et al., 2018). The school has only put in place a two-year overview. Creating a three-year overview can be difficult for the school as a lot can change in a short period of time which would lead to the school's priorities changing year on year. The priorities are under constant evaluation to ensure that they are either already being met or will be met by the end of the school year. The priorities are always created from outcomes of the school's own impact reports (a way of measuring the impact of an intervention), they do not use the outcomes from their previous SDP's.

A school's development plan must undergo a planning cycle which has four stages (Welsh Government, 2014). Beginning with the school's vision, followed by the following stages: self-evaluation, strategic planning, making improvement/action and reviewing impact. To create this school's SDP self-evaluation is carried out by asking the staff for their opinions on different areas within the school which could be improved, areas that have a positive impact on the children and how they feel overall about the school's ethos. The Welsh Government (2014) believe that self-evaluation supports schools in finding both 'weakness' and strengths within their teaching and learning. This school chose to build on a strength (wellbeing) and tried to improve it further. Two main areas which are explored are teaching and learning, and social and emotional wellbeing. The SDP is then further formed with input from different stakeholders such as pupil voice, monitoring, Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) surveys and the school governors. Input is gained from members of the teaching team in staff meetings. It is essential to involve many stakeholders to get different perspectives and more information from within the school. The more key stakeholders that

can be used to gain information from, the more relevant the school's SDP will be (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Often, the wider community are asked for their opinion on ways to improve within the school.

The Welsh Government (2014) suggests that data could be used from the school's last Estyn report. The school feels that they have met the targets that they were given as a result of their last Estyn inspection. To gain data for this specific priority, the school undertook a TIS check and discovered that there was a high number (over thirty percent) of pupils within the school who had/were experiencing trauma. From the last Estyn (2015) report carried out in the school, they received a "good" rating for wellbeing. As the Estyn (2015) report praises them for the wellbeing within the school it leads to the question, why was this chosen as one of the school's SDP priorities? From the data collected, it was a concern to the school that such a high number of pupils had/were experiencing trauma and felt they needed to minimise this percentage. The school could have opted to look at the PISA table to compare themselves with other schools in the area. This would have given further data and more self-evaluation.

Once all staff are content with the SDP, it is put in to simpler terms and a selection of pupils are asked to review it and give their feedback on any points that they feel are important or those that could be improved. This is essential in creating an SDP as it allows pupils to give their opinions on what they think is important in the school and what could be bettered (Estyn, 2017). This could be challenging in an Infant only school as it could be more difficult to explain it to the children.

For this specific priority the school created four action points (see Appendix 1) that they felt needed to be addressed in order to support the children in the school with their social and emotional wellbeing. As set by the Welsh Government (2014), each action point has a point which identifies who the action point refers to, a milestone which the school would like to hit for each term, a point which recognises professional development needs and a point which finds the source of finance (if any finance is needed to address the point) and an estimated cost. This ensures that it is clear who is responsible and accountable for each point and gives a timescale for each (Welsh Government, 2014).

On completion of the year, an impact report is carried out for each priority. Each impact report checks what level of impact each priority had on; the consistency of teaching and learning overall, the target group of learners, staff and the wider school community and, finally, what lessons were learnt from the priority. Each question is marked red, amber or green, depending on what level of impact it has had, and further detail is given by the school.

When creating the SDP, a success criteria is made for each priority (see Appendix 2), as suggested by the Welsh Government (2014). This makes it easier to evaluate the impact that the SDP has had on the priority. Although the success criteria is specific to each priority, it is not specific to each of the action points within the priority. As seen in action points one and two (Appendix 1), these are both different and it would be difficult to assess these against the same success criteria and therefore it may be beneficial to have a success criteria for each action point.

Since implementing this SDP, the school have been working towards each of the four action points. Staff within the school have received extra training around children's wellbeing. The use of TIS within the school has become more known and used more widely. Their goal was to create three interventions and activities for children to take part in to support their social and emotional wellbeing. One intervention was the website "Speakr". This allowed children to "speak" their minds by logging in to their own account and typing how they are feeling. This goes to the teacher. Children can send messages to other members of staff such as the Head Teacher. The website is used by KS2 children due to them needing to be able to type/spell to use it. This could be bettered by allowing the children to voice record messages, meaning that they would not need to be able to spell to access the website, allowing younger children to be able to use it. This application is used during term time. To further the support of the child's social and emotional wellbeing, they could be given their log in details to take home and update how they are feeling over the weekends and any holidays. This would be helpful over longer breaks. This could be linked to a child's social care team (if they were under the care of social services) and give them immediate updates without having to visit them first.

A second intervention implemented within the school is Nurture. This intervention relies heavily on one TA who received extra training around social and emotional wellbeing. Children are identified for support and are given one afternoon a week to go out of class and take part in Nurture. The children can access Nurture during breakfast club and lunch times. The children become very familiar with the TA and often confide in her about on-going situations at home. This allows the school to put measures in place to support these children. The children receiving intervention in the afternoons miss the same lesson each week in class which could mean that they miss out on vital teaching time. Yet, the school believe that Nurture is vital for these children and the benefits of it far outweigh lesson's which are being missed.

One of the actions put in place states that planning for regular outdoor learning, such as forest school, should be done. This is seen in the Foundation Phase part of the school.

The children regularly enjoy learning in the outdoors and can be more carefree. This is not seen as often within KS2, it is believed that it would be of great benefit to the older children to take part in outdoor learning to support their social and emotional wellbeing.

This report has shown how essential it is for a school to have an SDP. All members of staff should be involved in creating, and the continuous work involved with, an SDP. The more members of staff involved in creating the SDP, the more beneficial is it for the children and staff as they will be better informed. The SDP should be a working document which could be updated or amended at any time to suit the situation given to the schools.

Circumstances within schools are constantly changing and it is essential that the SDP is flexible and able to be amended alongside this. New members of staff within a school should be made aware of priorities within the school to ensure that everyone is working towards the same target. In future schools and placements it is vital that, before joining the team, the teacher asks to view the SDP and asks appropriate questions if they are unsure of anything within the document. It may be of benefit to read the SDP before going to future interviews to be aware of the school's priorities and show that the teacher is conscious of SDP's.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Actions		Who?	Milestone Term 1	Milestone Term 2	Milestone Term 3	Professional Development Needs	Source of Finance and Cost
1	Staff to undertake In School training on main principles of TIS including the 3 models, interventions and activities that can be used to support pupils.	All staff	Staff trained at points through the year			TIS training	Release time for staff £500
2.	In school action research groups established amongst TA's to investigate the impact of the chosen interventions and strategies	JH, DA	Pupils identified for support and allocated a key person in each class October 2019	Activities and interventions undertaken regularly to support the child Jan 20	Evaluation of the impact undertaken Feb 20	Training from JH/TH	£500 for staff release time
3.	Staff to plan for regular opportunities for outdoor learning. Forest Schools to be undertaken throughout the school during the course of the year. Monitor the benefits of biophilia on pupil wellbeing.	All staff AG/ SB	Planning scrutiny Oct 19	Listening to learners Jan 20	Impact assessment June 20.		

4	Key members of staff to be trained in specific interventions including big empathy drawings, sand therapy, emotional coaching etc. in order to support pupils with greater social/emotional needs	JH/TH	Training undertaken Oct 18	Supervision for staff arranged on a monthly basis	Impact assessment June 20	In school training with JH/TH	
How can the wider community of the school enrich the priority?							
Governor participation in lessons.							

Appendix 2

	Success criteria in terms of standards or quality:
	• ~~Speakr~~ demonstrating pupils' sense of wellbeing is over 2.3 on average. • Motional/Boxall <u>on line</u> scores for selected children showing improvements. • General behavior around the school is good. • Pupils engaged in learning and social interactions in a positive manner as evidenced in learning walks and general observations.