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**A Critical Evaluation of the Development of a Strategic
Target in a School Development Plan: Actions, Impact,
and Evidence-Based Reflections.**

Focus: Develop the quality of feedback so learners know how to improve their work.

	Target
Target One	Ensure your knowledge of learning will impact your own actions in your future practice and the strategies you will use.
Target Two	Continue to draw on the most recent research available to you to build on your emerging critical voice.

AI Acknowledgement

This written assignment focuses on a specific target identified in the School Development Plan (SDP) of School X. For ethical reasons, the school will be referred to as School X throughout the assignment (BERA, 2024). The school is located in a former mining town in South Wales and is an English-medium primary school with 429 pupils currently on roll (Estyn, 2023). The specific target explored in this assignment is to “develop the quality of feedback so learners know how to improve their work.” During my placement, I prioritised this target and embedded it consistently across my teaching practice. By doing so, I actively contributed to the school's wider development aims by supporting the implementation of this target in a practical, classroom-based context (Harris, 2002).

The SDP plays a vital role in driving change and improvement across schools (Welsh Government, 2022). Its primary purpose is to provide a clear strategic direction tailored to the school's unique context, with the aim of improving outcomes for all learners (Education Endowment Foundation, n.d.). The SDP sets out targeted priorities for development and supports staff in achieving these through their everyday practice. It also provides a structured framework for monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of actions taken (Welsh Government, 2024). An SDP is underpinned by national education policies in line with the National Mission in Wales. It is used as a tool to reflect the priorities set out within the guidance allowing schools to make improvements (Welsh Government, 2023).

To support schools in developing effective SDPs, the Welsh Government has introduced a ‘Planning Cycle’ designed to raise standards and enhance learner outcomes (Estyn, 2024). The process begins with establishing a clear vision, considering the school's values and operational goals to create a realistic and achievable plan. The first formal stage is ‘Self-Evaluation’, where the school reflects on its current performance, identifies strengths, highlights areas for improvement, and considers the necessary actions for change (Welsh Government, 2022). Following this, the school enters the ‘Strategic Planning’ stage, where all stakeholders, including staff, governors, and partners are involved to promote shared ownership of the improvement process (Estyn, 2024). The third stage, ‘Making Improvement/Action’, involves clearly defining roles and responsibilities to ensure effective implementation of the plan. The final stage is ‘Reviewing Impact’, which involves the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the SDP to ensure that strategies remain relevant and aligned with the school's evolving context (Welsh Government, 2014).

Improving the quality of feedback within schools is widely recognised as a key strategy for enhancing both the learning and progression of pupils (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Effective feedback can be seen to play a critical role in helping learners understand not only what they have done well, but also what steps to take to improve (Education Endowment Foundation, 2024) and it is seen as most effective when it is timely, ongoing, and specific (Wiggins, 2012). This aligns closely with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales, which places a strong emphasis on learner progression, reflection, and personalised learning (Welsh Government, 2022). The Assessment for Learning (AfL) approach supports this by promoting feedback as a vital tool for deepening understanding and fostering independent learning (Anon., 2021).

Dylan Wiliam (2011), a leading advocate of AfL, argues that formative assessment, especially when centred around timely specific feedback, can significantly improve learner achievement (Wiliam, 2011). He emphasises the importance of involving learners actively in their own assessment processes and providing feedback that moves learning forward (Wiliam, 2011). Similarly, John Hattie identifies feedback as one of the most impactful strategies for improving learning outcomes. Hattie highlights that effective feedback should help learners progress through clear reflections (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

While the benefits of effective feedback are widely acknowledged, some theorists raise important cautions (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Ruth Butler (1988) found that feedback in the form of grades or praise can undermine motivation and performance, particularly for lower-achieving learners. Her research suggests that task-specific feedback is more effective in promoting genuine learning than more general comments (Butler, 1988). In a similar way, Alfie Kohn argues that frequent external feedback, particularly when tied to rewards or praise, can reduce learners' motivation. He encourages schools to focus more on student-led reflections, rather than constant adult-led feedback. These perspectives could highlight the importance of reinforcing the need for schools to teach learners how to interpret and act on feedback meaningfully (Kohn, 1993).

Improving the quality of feedback in schools is a powerful way to raise standards and support learner progression (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Grounded in the work of theorists like Wiliam and Hattie, feedback should be timely, clear, and actionable (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). At the same time, Butler and Kohn serve important reminders that feedback must be thoughtfully designed and learner-centred (Butler, 1988). By addressing barriers such as time constraints, inconsistency, and pupil understanding, and by fostering a culture of reflective, self-regulated learning, schools can embed effective feedback practices that enrich teaching and learning for all (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021).

The Curriculum for Wales highlights the importance of feedback as a tool to support learners in understanding how to improve their work, while also recognising and building on their strengths (Welsh Government, 2024). It promotes formative assessment strategies that allow learners to actively engage with feedback (Welsh Government, 2025). The school's actions to improve feedback quality align with the four purposes, reinforcing reflective practice and learner-led improvement (Grigg, et al., 2024).

The school addressed the focus target in the SDP through monitoring learner outcomes and incorporating feedback from the most recent inspection. This approach enabled identification of development areas and the implementation of changes to improve learner performance (Welsh Government, 2024). To support continuous improvement, weekly whole-school staff meetings are held to review practices, ensure consistency, and introduce new initiatives (Hart, 2020). One of the meetings I attended during my PTE 3 placement focused specifically on feedback provided to learners. In that meeting, staff revisited the marking and feedback policy to ensure consistent and effective application. The discussion centred on identifying impactful elements and removing fewer effective practices (Research School, 2022). Staff collaboratively refined strategies to improve clarity and effectiveness, ensuring

the policy remained purposeful and consistently applied (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021).

Throughout my placement, I followed the school's marking and feedback policy, ensuring all written feedback met expectations. I used appropriate symbols, colour coding, and structured comments to provide clear, constructive feedback. I also used encouraging language when delivering verbal feedback, helping learners understand both their strengths and next steps. This included modelling examples and guiding improvements in content and presentation. I introduced live marking, which provided immediate feedback and encouraged reflection during lessons. This interactive approach kept learners engaged and fostered ownership of learning.

To enhance the feedback process, I introduced an assessment for learning strategy aligned with the school's policy. At the start of literacy sessions, the learners and I created a success criteria based on the learning intention. Co-constructing a success criteria gave learners a clearer understanding of expectations and empowered them to self-assess. I typed up the criteria and included a space for self-assessment. At the end of each session, we reviewed the criteria together, discussing areas of success and improvement. These discussions deepened learners' understanding and made them active participants in the feedback process. By embedding feedback strategies into daily practice, I helped create a learning environment where feedback was a valued tool for growth (Gan, et al., 2021). This encouraged independence, reflection, and ownership of learning. It also aligns with the professional standard to maintain high expectations and support learners to achieve their full potential (Cox, et al., 2013).

To measure the impact of the strategies used to improve the quality of feedback, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) regularly reviews learners' books to assess the policy's consistency and effectiveness (Worthington, 2020). They check for evidence of learners responding to feedback, making corrections, and improving their work. In addition, pupil voice activities, including surveys and informal interviews, are used to evaluate learners' understanding of feedback and its role in their progress (PERTS, 2025).

In conclusion, the focus of this assignment highlights a vital aspect of education that significantly contributes to the development and success of all learners. The initiatives undertaken by School X, in line with their SDP, demonstrate a clear commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. These efforts not only align with the aims of the curriculum but also empower learners to reach their full potential throughout their educational journey.

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