

Targets

	target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	Ensure that you cite the work of authors accurately so that it is clear to the reader which author supports the specific point that you are making.	Checked all references against the Harvard reference guide and read over them thoroughly. Remembered to use page numbers when appropriate in order to demonstrate exactly where each piece of information has come from.
Target 2	Consider how best to use the word allocation so that you leave enough words for evaluation and criticality.	I have read through each sentence and ensured it adds purpose to my essay. Tried to limit the use of conjunctions and padding phrases in order to keep my word count on targets. Wrote each section separately and followed the word guide rigorously.
Target 3	Proof-read your work before submission in order to remove language errors.	I have read through my work twice and asked a member of my family to proof-read my work prior to submission.

ECAD7003

Learners, Schools & Communities: where am I teaching?

How a school develops one aspect of its SDP: a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact and evidence base.

This assignment critically reflects on how one welsh mainstream school based in Carmarthenshire develops one aspect of their School Development Plan (SDP). According to Estyn (2019) they emphasise the importance of schools reflecting on practice in order to improve standards of teaching. Welsh Government (2014) states that strategic planning is a continuous cycle that looks at short and long term plans in which schools will reflect upon its performance, identify priorities for improvement, develop strategies to address them, take action and review progress and impact. The School Development Plan (Wales) (Regulation, 2014) states this document should include a reflection of the current situation, matters requiring improvement, time scales and clearly state who is responsible for ensuring the priorities are met. This includes how funding will be allocated in order to develop teachers' professional practice and skills (Welsh Government, 2014). Therefore, the priority under analysis will be on how the school can develop 'Welsh oral strategies and extend pupils' writing skills across the school with links to handwriting'. This has been a target the school has been working on for some time, as they scored 'adequate' in their Estyn Inspection Report in 2013; which highlighted that pupils do not make enough progress in their reading and writing skills in either Welsh or English. Therefore, it is vital that the school meet this target if they are to work towards the national priority of increasing literacy standard along with Wales's mission of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2020.

Literature Review

The Minister for Education has set out a challenging and ambitious programme for educational reform in Wales which aims to raise standards and improve learning outcomes of children using their SDP (Williams, 2019). A school development plan is a live document that involves a three-year cycle and should be monitored regularly. The four key aspects within the process of achieving a priority of an SDP are Self-evaluation, Strategic planning, implementing amendments and reviewing effect which underpins a school aims and vision (Gwe, 2019). However, Welsh Government (2014) state that there is no best way of meeting a SDP as each

school and child is unique and therefore creativity is welcomed when coming up with innovative ideas (Destailly, 2015).

Despite SDP being statutory and continuous reflection being a key aspect, Bolton (2005) argues that some teachers can find this process challenging as it involves looking at their weaknesses. Self-evaluating and reflecting also involves teachers needing to change their ways of thinking by exploring new ideas, which many find challenging (Ford, 2018). Estyn (2019) states that reflecting and continuous professional development is key apart of a teacher's role in order to keep up to date with current legislation and provisions and deliver a high standard of teaching (Smith and Craft, 2011).

In order for a school to achieve sustained improvements it needs to have a clear purpose that is shared and understood by all; often with a lead person accountable along with stakeholders involvement in order to ensure that everyone has a commitments to the schools improvement agenda Halsal (1998) and Brighthouse (2013). This was achieved by the headteacher holding staff meetings and appointing members of staff responsible for each aspect, which is highlighted on the schools SDP. This information is also central to supporting advances in school improvements such as the use of 'School Effectiveness Grant and pupil deprivation Grant and feed Estyn inspection framework of self-evaluation and the management of staff and resources.

One of the biggest reforms of the new curriculum for Wales is the Cross Curricular Responsibilities (CCR) which places a greater emphasis on the development of Literacy, Numeracy and the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) (Donaldson, 2015; Barnes, 2018). As the school operates through the medium of welsh, the children are naturally immersed to the language daily, which Siencyn (2010) states is the best way for children to learn as they are in an environment that encourages and supports children to communicate through the medium of welsh and pick up on the welsh pronunciations and rules and learn new vocabulary regularly, which in hand raises children confidence through the use of positive reinforcement. However, this does come as a challenge to the school as 80% of the pupils come from English speaking homes. Whilst looking at the PISA scores they suggest that Wales have decreased the attainment gap and have improved significantly since the last scoring, however, they are still underachieving against the other UK Nations (Lewis, 2019). Could this be down to the fact that children in primary schools in Wales are learning two languages? Which would reflect the reasoning behind why this target has been a work in progress for the school for some time. Baker (2007) states learning two languages has a physiological effect on the brain; translating from one language to another is a valuable lifelong skill. Kamenetz (2016) believes that it is easier for a child to learn welsh at a young age than it is as an adult as the brain is wired to

absorb the language quicker, therefore placing a great emphasis on the provisions adopted by the school such as the 'Cynllun Clonc' and the 'Siarter Iaith' that support the Welsh development and the Welsh Assembly Government Agenda (Menter Iaith, 2020). The Welsh Assembly Government (2018) states that Welsh Language is a key part of our heritage and identity and provides children with enhanced career opportunities for the future (Issa and Hatt, 2013).

Developing an action point

The school aims to 'develop language skills to enable pupils to communicate effectively'. Research by Educate (2020) states that positive relationships between a school and its pupils along with strong values and aims are key in order to ensure a child feels supported to reach their full potential.

Therefore at the beginning of the cycle of developing an area of focus, During the self-evaluation element the headteacher and relevant stakeholders such as ERW, Consortia and Governors all observed the schools current position regarding literacy by using a range of methods such as: carrying out learning journeys, gathering feedback from staff and pupils, observed lessons, analysed reports from governors, shared good practice whilst working in collaborating with partnering schools, scrutinised children workbooks along with staff planning files and evaluated children's levels of achievement on Incerts. Brighthouse (2013) and Schon (1983) states, by self-evaluating on practice it will ensure that data is analysed against recent performance and highlights whether the provisions in place are working or need to be addressed further in order to raise standards and refine practice by setting relevant priorities through the use of SMART targets(Reed and Canning, 2010) . Clarke and Moss (2011) believe that the pupils voice plays is a vital part of the SDP as they know themselves better than anyone and will be able to provide good suggestions on how they can be best be supported with their literacy development (Walker-Geaves and Waugh, 2017; National Literacy Trust, 2014).

As a result of this, the school recognised their strengths and weaknesses regarding literacy, which highlighted that most children needed to develop their syntax of Welsh. Therefore, the school felt the first point of call would be to ask for assistance off leading schools and observe good practice (Skinner, 2010; Petrie, 2015). This included looking in depth at ERW language scheme and carrying out research and observing interventions such as 'Cynllun Clonc'. Cynllun Clonc was devised by teachers and promotes fluency in the Welsh language by focusing on grammar and rules through daily discussion sessions done in a circle time environment.

The school are also hoping to develop the 'Siarter Iaith' which focuses on developing ethical informed citizen of Wales by teaching children about the world we live in by celebrating Welsh culture events and promoting the Welsh language. The school have been fortunate enough to be apart of the 'Siarter' for some time however are aware that they need to promote this intervention further, as a result of this, the school have now allocated one member of staff responsible for developing the intervention across the whole school. Despite not having data to analyse the affects of the provision yet it is therefore difficult to gage its effect Education Authority (2020). However, the children have been fortunate enough to celebrate Welsh Music Day and take part in a range of sports through the medium of Welsh as part of the 'Siarter Iaith' which Rapporteur Group on Bilingualism (2010) is effective of developing Welsh tradition and heritage and identity.

The Education Authority (2020) states that data also plays an integral role of a SDP as it highlights if interventions are working. The data also shows that girls are outperforming boys within the school; however, I do believe that this could be as a result of the schools' themes and lack of reading resources tailored to boys' interests. The school have recognised this and now encourage children and the community to donate a range of reading materials to their library in order to develop boys love for reading. The school have also timetabled 15 minutes every morning to reading in order to ensure all children have an opportunity to read in both the medium of Welsh and English. Browne (2013) and Bower (2014) state that reading every day is essential for developing children vocabulary, increases their confidence and allows them to become independent as they read things for themselves. However, Epstein et al (2019) and Welsh in Education Plan (2017) highlight that parental support is key for developing the Welsh language. As English speaking parents feared concerns that they cannot support their children, the school ensure that all homework during the foundation phase will be bilingual and promote resources such as S4C, CYW, Radio Cymru and HWB that are all available to help. As part of the 'Siarter Iaith', parents also have access to Seren and Sbarc resources.

The headteacher and board of governors play an integral role in leading the school improvement. It was noted within Estyn (2013) recommendations that the school need to develop the role of the governors as a 'critical friend' as they have a legislative duty to revise the SDP on a regular basis. Therefore, it is essential that the headmistress, the staff and all stakeholders show commitments and involvements in the development planning process. Hattie (2012) states governors represent parents, staff and the community and therefore need to ask challenging questions when monitoring and evaluating educational standards. However, ultimately the governors within the school have the role of managing finances;

However, looking at the My Local School (2019) it is arguable that significant expenditure has been made recently as it shows the school were in a financial deficit during 2018-2019 for the first time in 5 years. Whilst meeting this priority, the cost for the training interventions such as 'Cynllun Clonc and the Siarter Iaith' have been low due, yet the impact has been extremely effective. Lindon (2012) and Davies and Ellison (2003) conclude that SPD will only be effective if staff are supported; therefore these training courses will enhance the teachers professional development and will allow them to plan rich literacy activities and increase standards of practice whilst addressing the SDP (Notman, 2011; Neaum, 2012). In order to ensure all staff and teaching assistants receive the same training, an inset day was arranged, which Burns and Sinfield (2012) believes is an effective way of ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of the provisions that will improve the children's Welsh oracy, he furthers by saying when staff collaborate together to share ideas, it instils a sense of confidence and empowerment which in hand uplifts schools moral as they are seen as equals and adopt a 'can do, in it together' approach. This was also supported by key members of the school observing the oracy programme 'Cynllun Clonc' in leading school in order to gain a better insight of how the provision looks in action and shared ideas on how it can immerge into the schools daily routine as Driscoll et al., (2015) states consistency is key.

The school are continuously re-evaluating their success criteria and measuring the impact the provisions they have put in place set by SMART targets, similarly to the self-evaluation element of the SDP the headteacher and relevant stakeholders use a range of evidence such as learning journeys, planning documents, observations and staff feedback in order to monitor affect of the provisions (Welsh Government, 2016). However, Day and Topsey (2009) state Zimmerman's criteria for appropriate goals, in contract to SMART targets offer a more rigorous and holistic approach as it considers a pupil's identity, emotions and social values. As the voice of the pupils is influenced by Donaldson (2015) and the new Curriculum, this does question the effectiveness of the targets as the child's perspective has not been considered whilst developing the school's priority.

Whilst reflecting on the school's progress of the SDP, I believe the 15 minutes allocated reading time every morning has been a success and boundaries are now in place in order to ensure that the children get the most of this time (Appleby, 2010). The school have also reflected on practice and adopted methods supported by the new curriculum and encourage the voice of the child, which in hand has ensured that all pupils are engaged 100% in their learning as all themes are now tailored towards both boys and girls interests (Hallet, 2012).

This was done by the school analysing what the data is telling them by evaluating and questioning if the progress of children language and literacy shows in the children's Incerts?

Which demonstrated that the majority of pupil have made progress in their welsh development over the last 3 terms as a result of introducing the Cynllun Clonc. Whilst analysing children work, it showed more children are now using syntax including compact verbs correctly; Effective question and answer, Use comprehensive vocabulary, follow the mutation rules and can identify common errors.

However, in order to improve fluency and ensure that the children are speaking Welsh at every opportunity given to them, in line with the schools policies; I would suggest the schools develops a 'Cryw Cymru' which is a selected group of pupils that show excellent welsh language, and have a responsible for praising and promoting the welsh development both in the classroom and out on the yard and have the powers to reward points to an individual child. In other leading schools, this has been very effective as there has been a chart in each classroom which acts as a visual representation of the pupils achievements and encourages pupils to use the welsh language out on the yard as a rewards is given at the end of each term for those who excel and make every effort to promote the Welsh language. Which acts as a very good incentive for all children, both boys and girls. This will also support the aims of the 'Siarter Iaith' which the school are in the middle of developing.

To conclude, as a result of extensive research and working in collaboration with the school to meet their priorities, I have gained imperative knowledge on the process of achieving and developing school development plans; which will be crucial within my role as a teacher in the future. The importance of a SDPs has not gone unnoticed and going forward I will ensure I research the priorities of the school I will be teaching in. Ensuring I contribute to the strategic planning and implementation of strategies; as Welsh Government (2014) and (Gwe, 2019) state that a SDP will only be effective when all staff, parents and stakeholders work together to achieve the target.

By focusing on literacy, with links to Welsh Development, this has also broadened my knowledge and understanding of the national mission that is central to teaching children fundamental skills of literacy along with positive attitudes and well-being in order to create ambitious capable individuals that are ready to learn throughout their lives. I have been extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to see the 'Cynllun Clonc' in action by the leading school that developed the provision that promotes welsh grammar and fluency, which is extremely beneficial whilst teaching in Wales. In addition to this, I will also ensure that I timetable reading and handwriting activities into my daily routines of teaching in the future, as Welsh Education (2017) and Baker (2007) states continuity is key to success.

(Word 2,730)

ECAD7003- Reference List

Appleby, K. (2010) Reflective Thinking; reflective practice, in M. Reed and N. Canning (eds) *Reflective Practice in the Early Years*. London: SAGE.

Baker, C. (2007) *A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism* (3rd ed). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Barnes, J. (2011) *Cross-curricular learning 3-14*. London: Sage.

Barnes, J. (2018) *Applying Cross-Curricular Approaches Creatively*. London: Routledge.

Bolton, G. (2010) *Reflective practice: Writing and Professional Development*, (3rd ed). London: SAGE.

Brighouse, T. (2013) *The A-Z of school improvement: principles and practice*. London: London: Bloomsbury.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *'The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design'*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Browne, A. (2013) *Teaching and Learning Communication, Language and Literacy*. London: Sage.

Bryan, J., Williams, J. M., & Griffin, D. (2020). Fostering academic resilience and opportunities in urban schools through equity-focused school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling*, 23, 1-14. DOI: 10.1177/2156759X19899179

Burns, T. a Sinfield, S. (2012) *Essential study skills. The complete guide to success at University*. (3rd ed) London: Sage.

Bower, V. (2014). *Developing Early Literacy 0-8*. SAGE.

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) (2nd Ed) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*, London: National Children Bureau.

Day, T. and Tosey, P. (Beyond SMART A new framework for goal setting *Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office, University of Bath, Bath, UK Centre for Management Learning & Development, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK*
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/9426096.pdf>

Davies, B. and Ellison, L. (2003) *The new strategic direction and development of the school.* (2nd ed) London: Routledge.

Destailly, J. (2015) *Creativity in the Primary Classroom.* London: Sage.

Driscoll, P. and Lambirth, A. et al., (2015) *The Primary Curriculum.* London: Sage.

Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures.* Crown Copyright. Cardiff. Available at:
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150317successful-futures-en.pdf>

Education Authority (2020) 'The School Development Plan (SDP) is a strategic plan for improvement.' <https://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/school-governors/school-improvement/school-development-planning>

Estyn (2013) 'xxxxx School Report'
[https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Inspection%20report%20Ysgol%20Gynradd%20\[REDACTED\].pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Inspection%20report%20Ysgol%20Gynradd%20[REDACTED].pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf.pdf)

Estyn (2019) *Effective Practice.* Available at <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effectivepractice>.

Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Sheldon, S.B., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R., Van-Voorhis, F.L., Martin, C.S., Thomas, B.G., Greenfield, M.D., Hutchins, J.D., Williams, K.
 (2019) *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Corwin: SAGE

Ford, K. (2018) 'The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning'. University of Sheffield.
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/> [Accessed 6th April 2020].

Hallet, E. (2012). *The Reflective Early Years Practitioner*. SAGE.

Halsal, R. (1998) *Teacher Research and School Improvement*. USA: Open University Press

Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible learning for teachers*. London: Routledge.

Issa, T. and Hatt, A. (2013) *Language, culture and identity in the Early Years*. London: Bloomsbury.

Kamenetz, A. (2016) '6 potential brain benefits of bilingual education.'

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/11/29/497943749/6-potential-brain-benefits-of-bilingual-education> [Accessed 3rd April 2020].

Lewis, B. (2019) Pisa education tests: Wales improves performance. *BBC Wales education and family correspondent*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-50629432>

Lindon, J. (2012). *Reflective practice and early years professionalism*. 2nd ed. London: Hodder Education

Marsh, J. and Hallet, E. (2008) *Desirable Literacies. Approaches to language and Literacy in the Early Years* (2nd Ed). London: SAGE.

Makin, L., & Whithead, M. (2004). *How to develop children's early literacy*. London: SAGE.

My Local School (2020) 'Ysgol Gynradd XXXXX'

<http://mylocalschool.gov.wales/School/6692006?lang=en>

National Literacy Trust (2014) <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/> [Accessed: March 5 2020].

Neaum, S. (2012) *Language and literacy in the early years*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Paige-Smith, A. and Craft, A. (2011). *Developing reflective practice in the early years*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Petrie, P. (2011) *Communication Skills for Working with Children and Young People: Introducing Social Pedagogy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Rapporteur Group on Bilingualism. (2010) 'Welsh second language.'
<http://www.assembly.wales> [Accessed 28th February,2020].

Reed, M. and Canning, N. (2010). *Reflective practice in the early years*. London: SAGE.

Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Siencyn, S. (2010) *The Foundation Phase 3-7 years*. Carmarthen: University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Skinner, D. (2010) *Effective Teaching and Learning in Practice*. London: Continuum.

Stuart, K., Rouncefield, C. and Maynard, L. (2015). *Evaluation practice for projects with young people*. London: SAGE.

Walker-Gleaves, C. and Waugh, D. (2017) *Looking after literacy*. London: Sage.

Webb, S. (2016). Gibb's Reflective model. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WfnHGq6ztg>
[Accessed 9 March 2020].

Welsh Education (2017). 'Education in Wales: Our National Mission'
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/education-in-wales-our-national-mission.pdf> [Accessed 3rd April 2020].

Welsh Government (2020) 'Siarter Iaith' <https://llyw.cymru/cymraeg-addysg/ysgolion/siarter-iaith> [Accessed 2nd April 2020].

Welsh Government (2014) 'School development plans'.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/school-development-plans.pdf>

[Accessed 22nd of March 2020].

Welsh Government (2016) Family and community engagement toolkit Theme 1: Leadership for a self-improving system Resources 1–7

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/theme-1-leadership-for-a-self-improving-system-resources-1-7.pdf> [Accessed 23rd March 2020].

Welsh Government (2020) 'Curriculum for Wales' <https://gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

[Accessed 05th March 2020].

Welsh Assembly Government. (2020) 'Four Purposes of the New Curriculum for Wales'

www.llyw.cymru [Accessed: 24th March, 2020].

Welsh Government (2018) 'School target-setting regulations: statutory requirements and changes'. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/school-target-setting-regulations-statutory-requirements-and-changes.pdf> [Accessed 28th March 2020].

Reading:

Bruce, T., Findlay, A., Read, J. and Scarborough, M. (1995) *Recurring themes in education*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. 'Wellbeing and Future Generation Act (2015)

<https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

Grigg, R. (2013) *Big ideas in education*. Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd.

Gibbs, G. (1988). Reflective model. Available at:

https://tccl.arcc.albany.edu/knilt/images/thumb/a/a9/Cycletest1_498x495.jpg/400pxCycletest1_498x495.jpg [Accessed 16 February 2020].

OECD, (2015) *Improving Schools in Scotland: an OECD Perspective*. Paris: OECD.

Woolley, G. (2014) *Developing Literacy in the Primary Classroom*. London: Sage.

Yelland, N. (2006) *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education*. Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd.