

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Your writing style could be developed in places to increase sophistication to your arguments.	I tried to add sophistication to my writing style in order to support my text.
Targed/Target 2		
Targed/Target 3		

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.

The following report will highlight the importance of a School Development Plan (SDP) in regards to improving teaching and learning within education. The report will address the progression of one of the four action points within an SDP and display the impact it has made on a particular school. The SDP that will be analysed has been developed by a Roman Catholic Primary State School in the Vale of Glamorgan, which will be referred to as School X for the purpose of anonymity. The primary school is a one form entry setting, including Nursery to Year 6 and unlike other schools in this area, it accepts children from the date a child's 3rd birthday occurs. It is situated in a semi-rural location which is in catchment for children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) is 14.8% which is higher than the local average of 12.9% but lower than the national average of 18.9%. In addition to this, there are 3.6% of pupils who are looked after by Local Authority (LAC) which is more than three times higher than the local and regional average. The mission of the school is **"Jesus: in our hearts, in our minds, in our living and in our learning."** School X desires to achieve this by providing a welcoming, loving community and emphasising the importance of placing the Gospel values at the heart of learning experiences. By promoting the Jesuit values, the school aspires to create well rounded, happy and successful life-long learners.

The SDP was created in 2017 and remains a working document until September 2020 where it will be evaluated. It contains five priorities that were informed by national and local goals, for example, reducing the impact of poverty on achievement outcomes. The priorities correlate with the recommendations of the Estyn report, therefore, School X were able to triangulate this information, with the use of self-evaluation and the SDP, in order to accomplish greater student achievement and improve the school's overall performance. Thus, the SDP priority that will be addressed in this report will focus on the **development and implementation of a knowledge-rich curriculum.**

In order to fully understand the progression of this particular School Development Plan, it is important to acquire deeper background knowledge relating to the document and the surrounding topics. The purpose of SDP enables schools to identify their strengths and weaknesses to further develop their practice. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2013) metaphorically describes an SDP as a road map designed to identify the

changes that need to be made in order to improve pupil outcomes and displays the journey of the actions to achieve this. Additionally, it should be common practice that SDP's should not be developed then abandoned, thus, should be consistently implemented in order to display 'quality improvement'. 'Quality improvement' is defined as partaking in action research, collating qualitative and quantitative data and utilised in order to successfully provide sufficient changes (Hannover Research, 2014). In correspondence to this, Woods & Brighouse (2013) state that **“school improvement is a journey whose path is always under construction.”**

The process of a SDP has been recognised as an on-going progression that should be continuously reviewed and should fundamentally begin with self-evaluation strategic planning that is developed with teaching staff, the headteacher as well as the Governing Body. This is beneficial as it provides an insight into the local and national recommendations that can inform the SDP (Welsh Government, 2014). Essentially, ensuring the development of the action plan is appropriately designed with the ability to implement throughout the academic year (Hannover Research, 2014). Failing this, the purpose of the SDP would be unnecessary as changes may not be made according to the document. The purpose of the Governing Body is also to review and support the process of updating the SDP annually or following an Estyn inspection (The Education (School Inspections) (Wales) Regulations, 2006).

Escobar (2009) states that in order to distinguish whether or not the use of an SDP is effective, the outcomes of achievement need to be monitored as they will provide the impact the SDP has had on pupil progression in learning. Subsequently, when conducting research to inform an SDP, staff can feel empowered and build on their own personal growth by updating their knowledge to inform their practice (Edmonds, 1982). In contrast, Mintrop & MacLellan (2002) discovered that unless an SDP is consistent with its implementation, it can be an insignificant task in regards to any clear improvements within a school, particularly if there isn't a clear purpose to the document and has been created just as a requirement for administration.

As School X is in catchment for children from various areas of the Vale of Glamorgan, a diverse range of children attend the school, including many from low socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a significant link between socioeconomic status (SES) and the impact it has on level of pupil achievement (Raffo et al, 2007). Social mobility has been an issue for

generations, with no exception for the current generation. SES has informed the degree of social mobility and how children progress throughout their education (Smith, 2018). Low socioeconomic neighbourhoods tend to have low levels of employment which subsequently results in low levels of aspiration and goals (Gale and Parker, 2015). Thus, the lack of aspiration can also contribute to low levels of educational attainment. Additionally, this can prevent equal life chances being accessible to all children. In agreement with Durkheim (1893), Parsons (1975) states that education has a significant impact on a child's role in society in adult life depending on the quality or accessibility of teaching and learning. Their belief is that children from disadvantaged backgrounds with poor or lack of education are more likely to grow up and remain in low SES neighbourhoods, whereas, children from privileged backgrounds with high quality education tend to prosper throughout their life with more opportunities to achieve.

In addition to this, E. D. Hirsch (1983) identified a link between knowledge and low SES and emphasises the importance of knowledge acquisition in order to provide equal educational opportunities that will support children in their adult life. When delivering lectures to students in both University of Virginia (UVA) and public colleges, Hirsch utilised what he viewed as 'common knowledge' as a background to teaching and to provide a concept for deeper understanding. However, he discovered that the students in the public colleges had greater difficulty understanding as they lacked the rich knowledge that provided a background. The students in UVA were able to comprehend the teaching and engage in the discussions with understanding, resulting in greater outcomes and grades. Therefore, this initiated his development of a knowledge-rich curriculum that provided equal life chances for children, no matter of their socioeconomic upbringing, due to the coherent knowledge provided through teaching. Didau (2019) states that all children have individual needs and progress at their own pace, therefore, a gap in ability is inevitable. However, SES should not be held accountable for the opportunities for academic achievement for all children. Therefore, reducing the attainment gap for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds is one of the main priorities in Wales that informs the SDP developed by School X (Jones, 2017).

School X initially self-evaluated their current Estyn inspection report, alongside the Governing Body in order to identify what was in place and what needed changing. It was evident that it was essential for the school to raise overall standards for children reading, writing and the level of attainment for children eligible for free school meals (eFSM). After extensive research, they identified that in order to reduce the attainment gap and promote

social justice, the key was to develop a knowledge-rich curriculum (reference omitted for anonymity). School X was previously a Pioneer school, however, has now been provided with the title of an Innovation School. The purpose of an innovation school is to incorporate innovative, cross cutting ideas and frameworks and evaluate the process (Innovation Schools, 2019). Thus, School X had the opportunity to develop new themes using a combination of schemes and research. In previous years, the school adopted The Leonardo Effect as a form of teaching in order to immerse children in their learning. This consisted of a whole school approach which provided children with immediate engagement and maintained interest throughout the topic (Hickey & Robson, 2012). However, they discovered that they were lacking essential components in order to provide children with quality learning experiences, for example, learning was not progressive or coherent. Therefore, the topics were not providing children with the opportunities to build on prior knowledge and develop their schema (Piaget, 1954) as the cross-curricular themes lacked relevance to each other.

School X initiated change by creating an action plan to develop a new curriculum in 2017. They began by self-evaluating the structure of their current curriculum and compared it with Donaldson's (2015) four key purposes suggested for the New Curriculum for Wales (2022) in order to identify how they could cater for their pupil's holistic development. They identified that their use of the Singapore Maths (2007) scheme was producing substantial results in outcomes and therefore they would continue to implement this alongside their new knowledge-rich curriculum. Their next step was to carry out key reading that would inform the direction in which they desired to take the development of the curriculum in order to meet the four purposes suggested by Donaldson (2015). Self-evaluation and research highlighted that knowledge acquisition and progression was lacking from the current curriculum yet fundamental to teaching and learning. Correlating with the research carried out by Hirsch (1983), School X also believes that the lack of key and consistent knowledge can put children at a disadvantage within their education and career. Therefore, they prioritised the importance of providing children with knowledge and skills when developing the new curriculum in order to reduce the attainment gap and provide equal life chances for all.

School X incorporated the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Curriculum (2016) created by Hirsch (1986) in order to increase the provision of knowledge. They favoured this particular scheme of work as it prioritised the implementation of teaching and learning by building on prior knowledge and the use of memory retrieval. Vocabulary is at the heart of the curriculum and was designed to build pupil's knowledge of phonics and decoding prior to

the application of building words and fluency in reading. Although Kolb (1984) would suggest experiential learning provides the most success, Christodoulou (2014) states that in order to apply and utilise skills, children need to gain knowledge to understand the task that they are participating in. Therefore, the curriculum incorporated the aspects of Gough and Tunmer (1986) which includes the importance of primarily teaching synthetic phonics and ensuring complete mastery of this before practicing the skill of reading. The combination of decoding and comprehension is known as Scarborough's Reading Rope Model (2001) which allows children to understand the language as well as recognise the words as a whole. In relation to the impact of prior knowledge, ensuring good levels of comprehension before reading information provides background knowledge and improves the overall understanding (Willingham, 2009).

All stakeholders were informed of the development, including all staff, governors and parents. This ensured input from various sources which can be beneficial as diverse recommendations may inform decisions that cater for the best interest of all children (Estyn, 2017). The action plan included the opportunity for parent focus groups to further understand the change in curriculum and the benefits that may be provided for their children's development. The next step of the SDP was the whole school trial of the implementation of the CKLA curriculum. Staff used the units from the CKLA curriculum and worked together to adapt them to ensure children would receive quality knowledge, develop reading, writing and oracy skills as well as fundamental historical, geographical and scientific learning, that would be progressive and would build on prior knowledge. The final step was to evaluate the implementation in January 2018 and continuously monitor and develop the curriculum until the final review in September 2020.

The SDP displays that in order to successfully monitor the development and implementation of the curriculum, a success criterion should be utilised (Escobar, 2009). The success criteria created for this priority states that in order to identify the progress, most pupils should achieve the pass rate in unit assessments, nearly all meet their individual targets and recall key information. The final aim should then be met as these actions should improve outcomes and attainment levels. The school's adoption of this curriculum has displayed many aspects of success according to the improvement of whole school data. The school has consistently implemented their intended approach throughout the 3 year period by mastering phonetic recognition and comprehension by the end of Reception and ensuring the Scarborough Reading Rope model (2001) is being utilised within older year groups when reading.

Alongside this, the school has introduced 'Domain' lessons that consist of a cross-curricular blend of learning, that progress over the years. For example, within Year 2, the children learn about the human body and animal habitats, however, the topics are revisited in Year 4 in greater depth but are able to access the prior knowledge they have gained in order to show greater understanding and progress in their development. As Piaget (1954) would suggest, this knowledge develop's each child's schema which their memory will automatically refer back to in unfamiliar situations in order to make sense of it. The use of a 'read-aloud' within these lessons, allows children to be familiarised with new concepts and vocabulary through a dual coding approach (Paivio, 1971). This consists of providing both auditory and visual stimuli as the teacher reads the information and the children listen to the information while images are displayed to deepen the understanding.

Subsequently, there are recommendations that could be made in order to improve the implementation. Although the 'read-aloud' has shown benefits due to the increase of vocabulary and comprehension, Mayer (2002) states that children may become less engaged as they are being taught by rote rather than participating in the learning, resulting in a lack of understanding and progression. As all children learn at their own pace, it may be beneficial to adopt different approaches within lessons, such as short bursts of information, combined with focus tasks, to ensure the engagement and progression of all children.

In regards to data, it would appear that the implementation has been successful and greatly beneficial to the pupil's development. According to the evaluation in whole school results, the mean score of national reading tests has increased from 101 in 2014 to 108 in 2019. The review of the data also follows the progress each year group from their attendance of Year 2 to Year 6 and shows a vast increase in all results. However, the progression from one year group in particular shows the results from the beginning of the curriculum implementation in 2017 to 2019. This displayed an increase of 11 points in reading test results as a whole year group, which is abundantly clear that the knowledge-rich curriculum has been beneficial to reading levels. In addition to this, the increase in reading levels has also shown that 27% score greater than 115 which could indicate that those pupils are More Able and Talented (Gov.Wales, 2019).

In conclusion, the exploration of the School Development Plan has displayed the impact and importance of working documents in order to continuously improve teaching and learning. The report shows that School X consistently considered the SDP in regards to developing

their priority by creating a plan and steps to evaluate to ensure the appropriate actions were carried out. The development of a knowledge-rich curriculum has displayed that regardless of a child's socioeconomic status, high quality education should equal life chances and reduce the attainment gap by supporting children to achieve their highest potential.

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