

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

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Ensure you use Harvard referencing guide.	I have used the Harvard referencing guide, supplied by my university lecturers, to accurately reference in text and as a list at the end of my assignment.
Targed/Target 2	N/A	N/A
Targed/Target 3	N/A	N/A

Introduction

This report demonstrates how a target from School X's school improvement plan (SIP) has been identified and addressed, with the impact of change measured through an evidence-based framework. School X is situated at the centre of a housing estate, consisting of both affluent and deprived areas. School X's SIP states they want to promote and improve the quality of provision for health and well-being for staff and pupils, due to the new curriculum possessing the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) (School X, 2019). The Welsh Government has placed greater importance on health and well-being to develop the pupils' ability to navigate life's opportunities and challenges, whilst becoming aware of how their physical and mental health alongside their emotional and social well-being interconnect to enable good health and well-being, which promotes successful learning (Welsh Government, 2020).

Literature review

A school's development planning process creates a partnership between teachers, governors, local education authorities and parents for which there is a collective commitment for school improvement (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 2004). The SIP is defined as a blueprint for the processes needed to produce school improvement and higher pupil outcomes (Valli, 2000). This strategic plan is informed by regular self-evaluation of the school's performance and contains short and long-term targets in relation to the school's identified priorities (Welsh Government, 2014). The SIP includes how the staff are going to achieve the targets and which available resources will be used, such as funding, in order to accomplish the priorities (Welsh Government, 2014). The detailed SIP process provides actions to be implemented across each of the three years to reflect the schools' current performance in meeting its priorities (Welsh Government, 2014).

There are two strategies that are predominantly used throughout primary schools to create their SIP, the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down approach is when the senior leadership team (SLT) within primary schools make decisions that feed down for classroom teachers to follow. This ultimately allows the SLT to lead their employees in the desired direction (Anson, 1994). Furthermore, a top-down approach does not necessarily mean that solutions are dictated, however, this is often the case (Kezar, 2012). This strategy could potentially lead to a lack of teacher engagement to new schemes due to their current knowledge not being considered (Anson, 1994). Research has shown that members of staff, not in positions of authority, can contribute to changes of an institution by furthering goals, meeting targets and creating change (Astin & Leland, 1991; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-

McGavin, 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003). This links to the bottom-up approach, which allows participation by all employees of the school to address the areas that need improvement. This allows the teachers to provide solutions from their classroom perspective, leading to a democratic decision-making process (Cummings et al., 2005), however, this could become time consuming and SLT may struggle to incorporate their perspective into new solutions (Anson, 1994). In addition, the bottom-up approach may raise concerns over the teachers' motivation to develop ambitious solutions, inevitably forcing them to change aspects of their pedagogy (Anson, 1994). Lastly, the bottom-up approach can become derailed by resistant SLT and stakeholders when they do not agree with ideas being shared by staff (Anson, 1994). On the other hand, some schools combine the top-down and bottom-up approaches together to create a strategy that suits SLT and the staff at the institution (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996).

School X have identified five targets to allow school improvement to occur (see Appendix 1), with this report focusing on health and well-being (Target 1). School X have been judged excellent for health and well-being, with Estyn providing alternative suggestions in other areas on how to improve the school (Estyn, 2018). School X have included Target 1 based on the new initiatives of the 2022 Welsh curriculum, where the 'What Matters' statements of the Health and Well-being AoLE may impact teaching approaches and provisions (School X, 2019). Target 1 is split into aims, with this report focusing on improving outdoor learning provisions (Aim 2) and strengthening provisions to improve pupil well-being (Aim 3) (see Appendix 2).

High quality outdoor environments are associated with increased socialisation between pupils (Herrington and Studtmann 1998). This imperative time spent outdoors has shown to reduce stress and mental fatigue (Taylor et al., 2001). Similarly, a study showed that children from a public housing area when exposed to greener, outdoor environments became less aggressive and had reduced mental stress (Kuo & Sullivan 2001). Some pupils within School X show symptoms of ADHD, where walking outdoors could be crucial in reducing the severity of the symptoms whilst increasing concentration (Kuo & Taylor 2004, Taylor et al 2001). Playground activities and strategies are currently being reviewed by School X, with peer mediation and playground pals currently being trialled (School X, 2019).

The outdoors can develop self-confidence, self-esteem, concentration, inhibit initial impulses and self-discipline, linking to Aim 3 (Marsh, 1999; Taylor et al., 2001). Mental health problems in early life can have adverse effects in the long-term, with common problems in children being depression, anxiety, ADHD and autistic spectrum conditions (Murphy and

Fonagy, 2012). 10 percent of 5-15-year olds have a diagnosable mental health disorder, which equates to three children in every classroom in all schools in Britain (National Service Framework, 2004). A report by the Department of Health (DoH) (2015) stated that one in ten children need support for mental health problems. In addition, mental health problems in young people can result in lower educational attainment, for example, children with conduct disorder are twice as likely to leave school with no GCSEs compared to other children and are associated to behaviours that can lead to severe health complications such as smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse (DoH, 2015). Moreover, children with mental health problems have an increased risk to physical health complications (DoH, 2015). In line with the DoH figures, School X will have some pupils who have mental health problems. The staff at School X spend the most time with these pupils so are best placed to identify behavioural changes that potentially indicate problems (Weare, 2015). The CentreForum Commission (2014) recognises that teachers are not mental health professionals, however, should possess the skills to recognise pupils with emotional and mental issues and understand how to access help. The report stated that the National Curriculum should include teaching regarding mental health and resilience in young people, an aspect included within the Health and Well-being AoLE of the Welsh Government's 2022 curriculum (CentreForum Commission, 2014; Welsh Government, 2020).

Developing an action point

School X has decided not to use any published schemes to maintain the excellent levels of health and well-being they currently possess (Estyn, 2018). Staff have received three input sessions where they had an opportunity to share experiences they have had in their class, give feedback and received ideas for well-being and mindfulness lessons (Kenifick, 2020). A whole-school convergent approach has been introduced by School X to maintain and improve health and well-being ahead of the 2022 Welsh Curriculum. Numerous studies have found that combining the two approaches is important as their limitations and strengths complement each other. Top-down leadership gives a common direction for all staff to follow, however, lacks creativity in upcoming solutions, has risks of becoming a leader dependent organisation and lacks acceptance for teaching staff (Pearce & Conger, 2003). The bottom-up approach complements this by leading to more complex ideas, increased expertise when creating solutions and more enthusiasm for change (Pearce & Conger, 2003). A study by Webb and Vulliamy (1996) examined the changing role of the contemporary primary-school headteacher and the types of management strategies used. To summarise this study, headteachers considered that through combining bottom-up and top-down approaches they were able to complete the SIP holistically, whilst agreeing

incentives for specific initiatives linked to the SIP by setting targets through appraisals (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996). School X were asked how they are going to measure the impact that these health and well-being sessions are having on the pupils and if they are using specific measures rather than just pupil feedback. School X's response was that they have looked at different packages that could potentially be bought in, however, a final decision by SLT was not made.

One sub-target from School X's SIP is to strengthen provisions to improve pupil well-being (School X, 2019). The actions stated in the SIP was for the Health and Well-being AoLE team to be advocates of new strategies, to support colleagues when they adopt different approaches and to evaluate this impact with pupils (School X, 2019). Numerous strategies have been implemented throughout the school and will be reviewed by listening to pupil and staff feedback (School X, 2019). These strategies implemented thoroughly throughout School X include weekly Massage in Schools Programme sessions and mindfulness lessons (Kenifick, 2020). Research regarding massage has strongly indicated benefits such as positive changes in pupils' emotional well-being and social behaviour (Massage in Schools, 2020). Furthermore, studies have stated that through massage, self-esteem and concentration levels can increase (Woolfson et al., 2005), anti-social aggression can lower (Woolfson et al., 2005), confidence and teaching skills are enhanced (Massage in Schools Association, 2006), whilst brain development accelerates (Guzzetta et al., 2009). A study looking at mindfulness in adolescents found that short, focused, mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) can reliably impact a range of indicators of positive social, physical and psychological well-being (Weare, 2013). The study reliably found small to medium impacts measured in relation to mental and psycho-social health, however, due to the lack of research on mindfulness in schools, there is no concrete evidence suggesting that mindfulness lessons improve academic grades, problematic behaviour and physical health (Weare, 2013). In addition, a systemic review of MBIs with early adolescents highlighted many practical examples for educational professionals who aim to improve the quality of life of their pupils through MBIs (McKeering and Hwang, 2018). Despite this, methodological limitations of existing MBIs require further research to provide essential information to decide whether MBIs are beneficial in educational institutions for early adolescents (McKeering and Hwang, 2018).

School X actioned the planning for improvements to the school grounds to encourage outdoor learning to take place more frequently (School X, 2019). There is vast research concluding that there are significant benefits linking outdoor learning with improving health and well-being of pupils in primary schools, as aforementioned in this report. School X's

headteacher was actioned to evaluate the cost of improving outdoor equipment, which totalled to approximately £10,000, and looked towards grants, community and PFA funds (School X, 2019). The school will review the impact of change for this target by listening to pupils, staff feedback and quotes from observers (School X, 2019). School X is currently having external consultations to consider future developments, whilst evaluating these proposals together with the benefits that the outdoors holds, in relation to the 2022 curriculum to establish clear purposes for improving the school grounds and practice (School X, 2019). The planning of the outdoor grounds in School X is being reviewed and evaluated through school council sessions, staff feedback and SLT meetings with the board of governors (School X, 2019).

Reflection and evaluation

Since the SIP was published, whole-school strategies have been implemented. The Health and Well-being AoLE lead conducted pupil voice sessions to receive their feedback on the impact of these strategies, with feedback being positive (Kenifick, 2020). Follow up feedback sessions were planned for the summer term to gain additional information on the strategies used (Kenifick, 2020). In addition to the two aforementioned strategies, the Health and Well-being AoLE leader is trialling many other strategies within her classroom, before they become part of the whole-school practice. Her approaches include check-in charts, drop-in sessions for pupils identified as having well-being needs and positive post-it notes (Kenifick, 2020). In my opinion, School X have been extremely proactive regarding the new initiatives included within the 2022 Welsh curriculum, introducing many new approaches, however, the school could improve the methods used to evaluate the impact such strategies are having on the pupils, rather than relying on verbal feedback. A National educational study was conducted to examine factors affecting the implementation of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) group interventions in English primary schools (Humphrey et al., 2008). Interviews were conducted with lead SEAL staff, with data transcribed and subjected to qualitative data analysis, providing additional information to the researchers (Humphrey et al., 2008). On the other hand, quantitative research could have been conducted to explain phenomena through obtaining numerical data, analysed using mathematical methods (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2000). Research instruments can be designed to allow phenomena that does not naturally exist to be collected as quantitative data, to be statistically analysed (Muijs, 2010). Questionnaires could be created in School X asking pupils to grade several statements related to the strategies implemented, giving their answers as a number. This provides the SLT with quantitative and qualitative data in relation to pupil opinions on the new health and well-being strategies being completed. Quantitative and qualitative research

is usually proposed against each other; however, many researchers use mixed method approaches to obtain the appropriate breadth and depth within their results (Muijs, 2010).

An aspect that I believe School X could look to develop is the teaching staff's ability to identify pupils with additional health and well-being needs. Educational staff should receive training in child development, mental health and psychological resilience to enable them to become more equipped to identify vulnerable children (CentreForum Commission, 2014; House of Commons Health Committee, 2014). Furthermore, School X could look for strategies to enhance the well-being of its workforce, as their SIP stated they want to be proactive in promoting and managing the health and well-being of staff (School X, 2019). One study collected data from 24,100 staff in 428 schools throughout the UK, 246 schools being primary's (Briner and Dewberry, 2007). The conclusion of the study stated that if we want a school's performance to improve, then we must pay attention to teacher well-being as how teachers feel on a daily basis will likely impact their professional practice which, in turn, affects the performance of pupils in their class (Briner and Dewberry, 2007). One potential reason why School X have not investigated staff well-being yet could be not to overload the amount of aims included in Target 1, so that the current aims can be met first. In addition, cost could become an issue when looking into this suggested target. To improve the staff's ability to distinguish pupils with additional health and well-being requirements would cost School X a substantial amount of money, through course costs and supply cover. Currently, School X have decided to prioritise their funding on improving the quality of the school's outdoor facilities for the pupils, rather than staff well-being and external courses (School X, 2019).

Conclusion

To summarise, this assignment was conducted to understand how targets in a school are identified, who addresses them and how they are going to evaluate the impact made once the target has been acted upon. From this assignment, I have improved my understanding on how a school enhances its learning environment through a SIP. The research conducted regarding the school development process has identified the key steps needed to construct a SIP and the best approach to take to create one. From my literature findings, I believe that a convergence of the bottom-up and top-down approaches is the best strategy when improving the school development process. This convergent approach can lead to important outcomes such as deeper and more transformational change in a shorter timeframe whilst also building the leadership of the school (Seymour, 1996; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003). Studies have shown that school development strategies will fail over time if broader

support from all members of staff does not occur, which supports the theory of combining the top-down and bottom-up approaches (Bettencourt, 1996; Meyerson, 2003).

I believe that there is a two-way relationship between teacher well-being and pupil performance (Briner and Dewberry, 2007). This places a strong emphasis on improving well-being for both pupils and teachers within a school environment to promote successful learning. If I am ever in a position of authority within the school context I would use a convergent approach to make all staff feel included in plans relating to their practice, enhancing their motivation to adapt to allow targets to be achieved, whilst improving their professional development by supporting their health and well-being to create a positive classroom environment.

Word Count= 2727

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Appendices

Appendix 1

School Improvement Plan 2019-2020 – Summary

Main Priorities				
Target	Focus Area	SER / NIA	Key Objectives	Funding Allowance
Target 1	Health & Wellbeing To promote and improve the profile / quality of provision for Health & Wellbeing for staff and pupils throughout the school.	2.1, 2.2 4.1, 4.2	1.1 Review final version of H&WB 'What Matters' and assess any implications for teaching approaches and/or provision 1.2 Improve quality of provision for outdoor learning. 1.3 Strengthen provision to improve pupil wellbeing (e.g. mindfulness, growth mindset) 1.4 To improve the range of pupils' physical skills, cooperation and thinking skills. 1.5 Improve whole-school provision within the Healthy Schools programme.	PLP School Budget Grant / Community / PFA Funding
Target 2	Welsh Language To raise standards of pupil's Welsh oracy and profile throughout the school	1.3, 3.3	2.1 To raise standards of Welsh Oracy throughout the school so that all L2L assessments are at least good. 2.2 To raise the profile of Welsh language throughout the school.	Cluster Working PLP
Target 3	Expressive Arts Continue to improve quality of teaching and provision to develop the Expressive Arts AoLE (2 nd Year)	1.3, 3.2 5.1, 5.3	3.1 Review final version of EA 'What Matters' and assess any implications for teaching approaches and/or provision. 3.2 Continue to improve range and quality of pupils' creative individual responses to a range of stimuli across the EA disciplines of MMADD (PIAP) 3.3 Review strategic approach to strengthening EA provision through in-house professional learning and the use of external expertise.	PLP School Budget
Ongoing areas for improvement				
Aspect	Aim	SER / NIA	Key Objectives	Funding Allowance
C4W22	Continue to raise standards in core subjects and cross-curricular skills. Raise awareness of finalised C4W22 AoLEs and consider implications for future provision and pedagogy.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Literacy/ Numeracy – continue to raise standards of above expected outcomes. (See separate action plans). Improve parental engagement and impact of intervention strategies. Humanities / SciTech AoLEs – evaluate final curriculum documents and plan for further training / provision reviews in 20-21. Continue to improve staff confidence to improve provision across all DCF strands. (See also Eco-schools & DCF action plans)	PLP School Budget PDG
Premises	Continue to maintain security, safety and cleanliness throughout school.	4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4	Ensure H&S policy and risk assessments are up-to-date and any identified issues are addressed. Work towards planned improvements for building & grounds.	School Budget.

Appendix 2

Target 1: To promote and improve the profile / quality of provision for Health & Wellbeing for staff and pupils throughout the school.								
C4W22 References: 4 Purposes, PP1, 8, 10, 11, AoLE – Health & Wellbeing				SER / NIA References: 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2				
Context: The emerging new curriculum clearly affords a higher level of importance and priority to health and wellbeing across all age ranges. The 'Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015' and subsequent WG and BCBC goals have given rise to an increased awareness of the need to be proactive in promoting and managing health and wellbeing for staff. Whilst the AoLE detail is not yet completed, this is an appropriate time to conduct a system-wide review, evaluating the impact of existing provision and procedures and beginning to explore new and/or alternative programmes. One challenge in particular will be consideration as to how to appropriately measure and report a baseline and the impact of any new strategies, beyond the anecdotal. Therefore, the emphasis of this target will be to raise the profile and quality of provision but it is not anticipated that a robust evaluation of impact will be possible within the short timescale of an academic year.								
Aims:	Actions:	Responsible:	Timescales:	Resources & Cost:	Review, Evaluation & Support:	Update / Progress Report:	RAG Status:	
1. H&WB 'What Matters' Review final version of H&WB 'What Matters' and assess any implications for teaching approaches and/or provision.	a. Teachers to review final document carefully and identify any elements which require significant changes to provision or approach. a. Teachers understand how H&WB support the Four purposes and link to other AoLEs.	DHT	Spring 20	Staff Meeting WG New Curriculum documents	Planning Review Staff feedback Update to GB			
2. Improve quality of provision for outdoor learning.	a. Review playground activities & strategies (e.g. peer mediation, playground pals). b. Cost and plan for improvements to the school grounds to facilitate and encourage improvements in outdoor learning. (See Premises target 2)	HT	Ongoing	c£10,000 Grant / Community / PFA Funds.	Listening to Learners Staff Feedback Quotations			
3. Strengthen provision to improve pupil wellbeing (e.g. mindfulness, growth mindset)	a. H&WB team to be advocate for different strategies, support colleagues to try out different approaches and evaluate impact with pupils. (e.g. MISP / iValueU) b. Trial and evaluate methods to measure wellbeing and gauge impact (e.g. Happens-Wales, Estyn pupil survey, PERMA) to help assess possible impact other other strategies.	DHT H&WB Team	Throughout Year	n/a	Listening to Learners Staff Feedback Survey data			
4. To improve the range of pupils' physical skills, cooperation and thinking skills.	a. Evaluate implementation and impact of 'Real PE' approach to date and consider ways forward and possible introduction of 'Real Gym'. (collaborate with AYP and Brynmelyn Primary) b. PE Leaders to receive further training in Real PE & Real Gym to support colleagues and build capacity. c. PE Leaders to provide in-house support and guidance to colleagues to improve teacher confidence.	PE Leaders	Aut 19 Throughout Year	REAL PE SoW Real Gym resources Jasmine online platform (paid AYP 19-20)	Staff feedback Listening to Learners Learning Reviews Subject leader support AYP evaluation			
5. Improve whole-school provision within the Healthy Schools programme.	a. Complete the necessary components to receive Healthy Schools Stage 5 b. Draw up agreed long-term plan to ensure actions sustained beyond Stage 5 award.	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Aut 19 Throughout Year	Healthy Schools Scheme.	Support from HT/DHT/GB link and Healthy Schools programme staff.			