

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	Proof read work	I have read over the work ensuring it relates to the task description.
Target 2	Critical of findings	I have been more critical of my findings and have shown how it could be done differently.

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

Introduction

This report looks at how a school develops one aspect of its School Development Plan (SDP). This has been based from my time at my first placement (PTE1) and looks specifically at 'creating a culture of excellence based on core values of Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration' (SIP, School X 2019-2020). The report will look into relevant literature about SDPs in general but also the schools core values. The report will critically reflect on the actions, impact and evidence of this chosen aspect and will then evaluate what the school has done and how it has benefitted from the changes. The school referred to (School X) is a 11 to 18 year mixed, community school maintained by a local council in the South Wales region. It is an English medium school with significant Welsh provision. There are 1,700 pupils on roll with 330 in sixth form in the current academic year. Pupils come from the local town and surrounding areas. Around 24.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, well above the average of 17.4% for Wales and the percentage has been roughly the same for the last three years. Around 41% pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales.

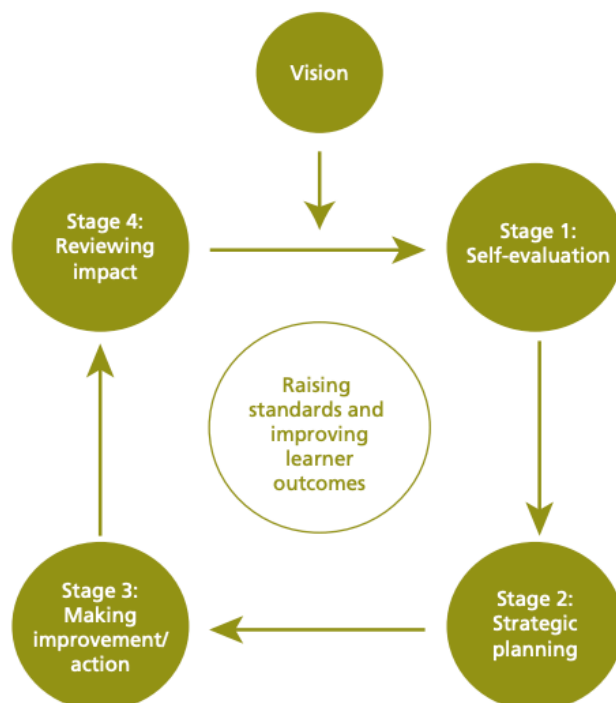
Literature Review

Recent literature from the Welsh Government (2014) mentions that an SDP is the strategic plan of improvement for the school, which sets out the actions a school will take in order to improve learner outcomes. It is a self-evaluation tool a school undertakes to measure its own performance and will focus on short- and longer-term targets. Hanover Research (2014) supplements this by saying the SDP should be both quantitative and qualitative data which analyses both internal and external variables which link directly to student learning. Additionally, it suggests using a third-party to ensure objectivity in the assessment. This is

potentially something that may be overlooked by most schools due to cost and time implications, which in turn can skew the SDPs expected impact and milestones. Nonetheless, all schools must comply with the Education Regulations 2014, where all schools are required to have a rolling three-year plan about the schools proposals to set out how it will achieve its targets and priorities, and importantly that the whole school and wider community are aware of the plans details (Education and Public Services Group, 2016). Hargreaves and Hopkins (1994) comment that development planning is a more inclusive and sophisticated school-based strategy for managing change, which effectively is what the purpose of the plan is – to manage change to create a better school experience for the learner. However, they also note that governments around the world have enhanced the autonomy of schools by focusing on results and also influenced school governance by giving power to parents, local community and business interests. As well as this, ever more so, teachers are expected to be more accountable in the quality of educational outcomes. The SDP is simply a description and more formal explication of the actions which are required to manage the change to improve the school.

For a school to achieve each target of its SDP, Welsh Government (2014) have created a 4-stage process planning cycle (figure 1).

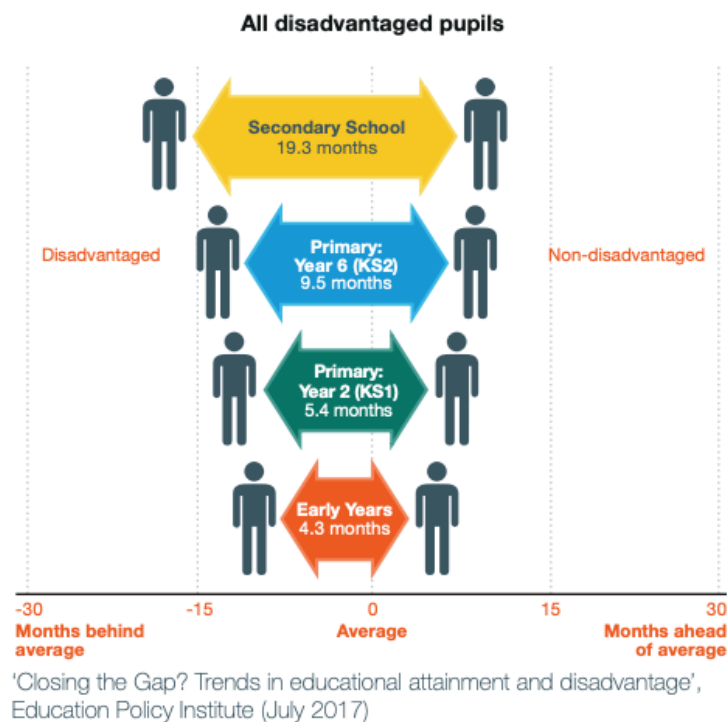
Figure 1: School development planning cycle



Stage 1 is to evaluate the target to be improved. Stage 2 is to create an action plan or activities to combat or improve the target. Stage 3 puts the plan into action. Finally, stage 4 looks at reviewing the impact, to see what needs to be amended and refined for the following

year. This is done for all targets which creates a comprehensive document for stakeholders of the school. Ehren, M.C.M., Janssens, F.J.G., Brown, M. *et al.* (2017) expand on this by expressing that a focus on the process of evaluation and a continuous cycle of evaluation with the purpose of 'transformation and learning' is vital.

The target focused on in this report, is creating a culture of excellence based on the school's core values of Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration. Previous Minister of Education, Huw Lewis (Welsh Government, 2014) says children's educational outcomes are more likely determined by home background rather than their personal characteristic. He continues by saying a child from a poorer background will start school with a poorer vocabulary and is much less likely to obtain 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths. The below figure shows the attainment of all disadvantaged pupils from Early Years through to Secondary:



It can be seen that disadvantaged students will over the course of their school life fall further behind and as such, will generally have lower aspirations and self-responsibility to succeed in education.

To challenge this, Welsh Government (2014) are using 'Hwb', to create an online network of professional practice and collaboration, from seeing what works well in other schools. Previous Prime Minister John Major said, "education is the high road out of poverty" (Smith, 2018) and this all starts with the school's core values. Estyn (2012) supplements this by saying effective schools in challenging circumstances take a whole school and strategic

approach to tackling any disadvantage and this is done through a structured, coherent and focused approach to raising aspiration to disadvantaged learners. Furthermore, this is done by the use of data and tracking progress of said learners. Importantly noted by Estyn (2012) is the development of social and emotional skills to be able to build on wellbeing, which it says in turn can create respect between the student and the school and give them a sense of responsibility, to achieve to the best of their ability.

In regard to the Respect element to the school's core values, Kyriacou (2009) emphasises that the importance of mutual respect between teacher and pupil cannot be over-estimated. On the other hand, Kounin and Sherman (1979) note it is important to realise respect is earned over time and cannot be demanded immediately from the teacher. Also realising the important phase of a student's education is the transition from primary to secondary and it is here where the respect has to be built.

Developing an action point

Using figure 1 above, the PTE1 school have developed their SDP in accordance with the Welsh Government rules and guidelines. The chosen aspect I have decided to focus on is at the top of the list on my PTE1's SDP – in the 'Priority' section of the document (see appendix). The vision of the SDP is to have a clear manageable and forward-thinking method of what the school is aspiring to achieve. The school has looked at itself and has noted that it's not where it wants to be and importantly, it's not where it once was. The reputation of the school was highly regarded in the local town and area. However, this image has been tarnished over the years, not just due to school performance and results, but also due to external factors such as a decline in local businesses and as such, the local economy has suffered. To create the culture of the school's values, every assembly regardless of year group, uses pupil achievements to illustrate values and non-negotiable behaviours. This is achieved through weekly themes such as Black History week, International Women's Day and Auschwitz remembrance to name a few. The premise is students will learn from history and apply values to their own lives. It is a good theory and the students do expect this from their assemblies, however I feel the assemblies can be a bit too extreme, which can lead to students deflecting or not paying attention.

Another action is to develop 'basic' values in the classroom through consultation with the school council and staff. Teachers embed this whole school approach individually in their respective classrooms and therefore teach students norms such as the 'hands-up' approach where students stop everything they're doing and stop talking when the teacher puts their hand up patiently. An additional value is the 'Restorative Approach'. This is an approach used by the school to understand a student's misbehaviour. Instead of punishing the

individual student for misconduct, the teacher takes the student to one side and talks to them in a calm peaceful manner in regard to why they're behaving inappropriately. The idea behind this value is to get the student to acknowledge his or her behaviour and to calm down, before being let back into the classroom. Respect is shown to the student in hope that the student will replicate. This approach is performed in acknowledgement that the student has some sort of vulnerability, potentially at home and other external factors, due to the school being based in a low income area. The school understands the student may be acting out and is may not be intentional.

Strategic planning is utilised to contain high levels of challenge to reflect the core values and the Four Purposes of Curriculum for Wales. Crucially, the school has a special class 3 times a week called 'Prep'. These lessons happen lesson 1 on a Monday, lesson 4 on Wednesday and last lesson on a Friday. The idea is to develop the core values of the school and lessons are based around Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration. Each year group has strategically planned resources created by Heads of Years and the Senior Management Team to develop these core values. Development of these lessons are completed by collaborating with Welsh Government, teachers, parents and the community. Data is then collated and used in a manner to create resources for the Prep lessons.

Transitioning from primary to secondary is a huge challenge of change, for the students. What's important here is the school has an excellent transition programme. Being a school of 1700 means there are many feeder schools around the area. Transitioning takes place over many specific days and weeks, but importantly the school uses these days not only to help the students know where they are going but to also instil the core values of the school. This is key as the student understands the core values before entering on the first day of Year 7. During Bridging 4, I looked into transitioning and specifically focused on pupil voice. I asked my Year 7 registration class about their experience of transition and on the changes of values from primary and secondary. Noted in a few of the responses was the significance of learning the school values and how it would affect the students' time at the school. It could be seen that the school really wanted to emphasise the importance of school values early on, as so to ensure the values stay throughout school life and optimistically throughout the student's entire lifetime.

Measuring the impact from all of the above points has also been constructive to the school. This SDP has been years in the making and is constantly reviewed and updated.

Fortunately, the aspect I have chosen has been a constant for a long time since the new Headteacher joined the school, as he wanted to introduce the 'restorative approach' as well as changing the school week from 5 lessons a day, to 6 lessons Monday to Thursday and 4 lessons on a Friday. Without constant measuring on the impact and reflection of the aspects

of the SDP, I feel the school would be in a much inferior standing. It is clear to see that the constant development is reflected in the SDP, when comparing to previous iterations.

Reflection and evaluation

Changing a culture is not an easy job. It takes time, dedication and commitment from all parties involved, most importantly the students. As such, creating a culture of excellence based on core values of Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration takes years. Since the new headteacher had joined the school and aspired to create this culture, from what I know it has been executed quite well. Estyn has given it a 'Good' rating in its last Inspection, and I can feel positive impacts of instilling the values straight away in the transitioning phase between KS2 and KS3. The Restorative Approach seems to also be working albeit adequately; however, I do feel there needs to be improvements to the system. An example is where there is no repercussion to the student if the Restorative Approach fails. If the student continues to be difficult and gets handed a detention, he or she simply does not attend the detention, and there seems to be no consequence thereafter. It seems the system is *too* restorative, if even there were such a thing. One school report showed the school actively trying not to exclude students to fall in line with council averages. Not excluding for bad behaviour then transitions to other students thinking they will 'get away with it', which defies the core values the school is trying to implement.

The 'hands-up' approach is a school wide approach which all staff members must adhere to. However, when observing in different subjects and phases, it is clear that not all members of staff use the system, as they use their own method of calming the class down after an activity or discussion. As such there is inconsistency in the system where the student becomes confused to the values of the school. As the system was implemented it should be used by all, regardless.

A step the headteacher took too far in my opinion was changing the school day. Having Monday to Thursday as a 6-lesson day is far too long. Personally, while teaching and observing in other lessons, I have seen students that are exhausted, and some have even commented that they have switched off for the day by the time it got to lesson 6. This has also been replicated by teachers' moods and preparation to classes. As they know the students switch off, they tend not to challenge the students to reach maximum engagement. To save 2 lessons on a Friday doesn't justify the other 4 longer days. Initially it was a well-being exercise for teachers meaning staff could leave early. But Week A there is a departmental meeting on the Friday after lesson 4, so the real benefit to teachers is only the 2 hours for the Week B timetable. Conducting a 'teacher voice' in different departments has shown that at least 85% would prefer it going back to a 5-lesson day, just like all other

schools around the area.

Lastly, Prep! In theory it's a good idea. The student comes into the week on a Respect-based lesson. Reiterated mid-week in regard to Responsibility and then leaves the school week with some sort of Aspiration based learning. However, this is far from the truth. From the prep lessons I have taught and observed, not all prep resources are used. There is an inconsistency as to who should be doing what. The general student feeling is that it's a 'free' lesson. There is silent reading for 10 minutes, thereafter a 10-15-minute lesson on the core values and then homework time. Students have it too easy, as the homework is not done at home – where intended, to engage the students' mind outside of school. Each week three 55-minute lessons are unproductive which could be used more effectively each week.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the School Development Plan is a wonderful document that sets out the aims of the school to make it a better learning environment for the student. Overall it looks at the school as a whole and segregates the aims into different priorities. After looking over the whole document and thinking about the ways the school does things, I chose to look at the school's core values as I saw it as an important aspect to focus on, due to the students coming from a low-income background. What I have taken away from the document and this report is that the SDP is important to know which direction the school is heading. However, I do strongly feel that there needs to be more communication with key stakeholders such as teachers, as they are the ones who teach the students. More emphasis needs to be on feedback allowing more tweaking to the SDP. A circa 85% vote by teachers for the school to go back to a 5-lesson day is too much to be ignored.

Influentially I will now look at the SDP for my next placement to see its priorities and which direction it is aiming for. Importantly I feel I can measure a lot in regard to how the school is performing. An SDP coupled with an Estyn report can really open my eyes about any school and can potentially help me decide on which school I want to work for given the opportunity.

Word Count: 2747

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Appendix:

Extracts from School X's SDP:

Target / Success Criteria	Action/ Activities	Expected Impact & Milestones	Staff responsible	Target date for Action	Resources/ Cost/ Funding Stream	Monitoring impact/ Evaluation arrangements & evidence sources
1a) Create a culture of excellence based on core values of Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration	1a-1) Main hall and block assemblies to use pupil achievements to illustrate values and non-negotiable behaviours	Discussion on themes to refer to core values during each assembly.	HT AHT HoLS	Sep 2019		Assembly materials
	1a-2) Values based classroom 'Basics' to be developed through consultation with school council and staff.	Staff to develop a consistent set of classroom normal operating procedures Utilise coaching to embed the Basics and uphold the school's core values in all lessons including Prep Teachers and LCs are observed utilising coaching techniques in all that they do	SMT/HsoD	Dec 2019		Meeting minutes
	1a-3) All lessons including Prep must be planned to contain high levels of challenge to reflect the core values and the Four Purposes of the CFW	Class teachers refer to the core values within their lesson objectives Pupils undertake challenging tasks linked to the Four Purposes in lessons which can be further developed in Prep sessions All LCs must adhere to the new Framework for delivery of Prep	All Staff	Jul 2019		Lesson plans

Target / Success Criteria	Action/ Activities	Expected Impact & Milestones	Staff responsible	Target date for Action	Resources/ Cost/ Funding Stream	Monitoring impact/ Evaluation arrangements & evidence sources
1a) Create a culture of excellence based on core values of Respect, Responsibility and Aspiration	1a-4) Departments to ensure that extra-curricular activities and various team activities provide a forum to extend pupils understanding of core values	Pupil behaviour, commitment and effort will be values driven.	All staff	Sep 2019	Transport and entry costs for competitions etc £???? EIG	Learning environment Dept minutes
	1a-5) Improve the Learning Environment, making it engaging and stimulating for all learners	Displays will reflect the three core values of Respect, Responsibility, Aspiration	ALNCo BFM	Nov 2019	Production of Values Posters £????	Evidence of displays
	1a-6) Teach Year 6 pupils the importance of the 'values' and the non-negotiable behaviours	Year 6 pupils to do 'Successful Lives' and Prep skills programme during transition visits Presentation to Year 6 pupils on Parents evening and Transition visits	AHT LC ALNCo	Sep 2019- Jul 2020	Transport Costs for Transition £???	Transition Events
1b) Culture of excellence and high expectations leads to all pupils achieving excellent attendance (95%+)	1b -1) All staff to take responsibility for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance	Train teaching and pastoral staff to take registers on Class Charts and make use of the inbuilt tracking system Pastoral team monitor attendance in a more timely manner allowing them to make more effective interventions and AWS referrals Undertake an awareness raising initiative linking Attendance to School Values to create focused interventions in LC sessions Seek timely interventions after advice from EP for all pupils with attendance and wellbeing needs	AHT GLSOs HoLS LC All staff EP	Sep 2019- Dec 2019 Sep 2019 Dec 2019 Sep 2019 Dec 2019	Class Charts Training Costs £???	Training plan Monitoring plan attendance reports Minutes and register of training Completion of SIMS Tracker
	1b-2) LCs and Subject Teachers to provide line managers with fortnightly update of attendance of pupils eFSM	Pro-forma to be used and updated to identify patterns of absence and suggest strategies for improvement	LC HoLS GLSOs	Sep 2019 July 2019		Learning Walks LC and TG attendance reports Attendance Pro-formas