	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Read a wider range of perspectives of your key focus	I have read a variety of different sources on the theme of parental engagement.
Targed/Target 2	Reflect more deeply on the quality of your actions in relation to the focus and consider complex issues	I have reflected on the literature I have included and tried to offer complex recommendations.
Targed/Target 3	Follow academic writing conventions: synthesise literature, introduce shortened versions, do not name people	I have not named the school or staff and corrected my common in-text referencing mistakes.

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

Introduction

In 2014, the Minister for Education in Wales set up an ambitious programme aimed at educational improvement. It was designed to support all schools through an evidence-based approach to planning, which ultimately leads to positive changes in learner outcomes (Welsh Government, 2014). Primary School C is a pioneer school that works closely with the Welsh Government to discuss educational developments. After merging with a local Nursery School in 2016, Primary School C now has 471 pupils registered aged 3-11. 36% of these pupils are eligible for free school meals and poverty is a significant factor in the local community. 31% of children have been identified as having Additional Learning Needs (ALN), all who are on school action or school action plus schemes (Estyn, 2017). In their programme, Welsh Ministers also provide guidance on School Development Plans (SDP), which is a plan specific to a school and identifies priorities and targets in order to improve outcomes for learners (Welsh Government, 2014). This assignment will specifically focus on one aspect that Primary School C identified within their SDP. It will explain the actions taken to address this focus, and the recorded impact based on evidence. The SDP has become a resource to assist Primary School C in helping nearly all pupils make good, or exceptional progress (Estyn, 2017).

Literature Review

SDP's were only initially designed by schools in need of immediate improvement, and mandated by the federal government (Fernandez, 2011). Even in the U.S.A in 2011, some states simply suggested schools should adopt a SDP, but it wasn't a legal requirement (Dunaway, Kim, and Szad, 2012). In Wales, school headteachers now work alongside governing bodies to lead improvements in their schools. Regulations now demand that all schools in Wales have an SDP in place, where all staff are involved in its production and implementation before it is agreed and approved by the governing body (Welsh Government, 2014). The process and steps of production in a SDP can vary significantly (Dunaway et al., 2012), and Knoff (2007) says it should be a natural process. The Welsh Government state that the SDP is firstly informed by a long-term vision, regarding what the school intends to achieve at the end of a 3-year period. This should be understood by all involved, and Dunaway et al., (2012) supports this as essential practice to identify desired student achievement

outcomes. However, schools can often look too far into the future, and Brighouse (2013) highlights that complacency can become a factor, especially if previous achievements have been great for learners.

Self-Evaluation should then measure current performance through a number of assessments (Fernandez, 2011). Previous qualitative and quantitative data relating to students and achievement should be examined as Reddekopp (2007) points out this helps to build the SDP further. Importantly, this data should be gathered by all stakeholders, otherwise the SDP will not be meaningful (Reddekopp, 2007). The Welsh Government (2014) also support this claim of involving stakeholders in the strategic planning phase. This ranges from teachers and students, to parents and the community. They explain that there may be a number of sub-plans as part of the overall development process, and thus everyone should take responsibility and show collaborative commitment to the schools overall aim. Kelly and Lezotte (2003) support the use of strategic planning to bring together all stakeholders within an organisation to decide on the schools aims, how they're going to achieve them, and how they will assess progress. Interestingly, Yaakob et al., (2019) argue that strategic planning requires special training for teachers, and if they don't understand the process it can cause a significantly higher workload. Selecting and implementing actions to improve comes next and everyone should recognise their responsibilities (Barnes, 2004). The Welsh Government (2014) highlight high-quality leadership is vital here to ensure persistence towards a goal. Leaders must set an example of character to other adults because if staff don't support an improvement strategy, it is unlikely the students will either (Smith, 2009). Despite the SDP forming a 3-year vision, Barnes (2004) explains that the evaluation of impact and outcomes should take place at regular stages throughout. Martinez et al., (2016) support this statement and say it should be a continuous improvement process that best fits the needs of the school. The SDP should then be updated to meet the situation of the school, or following an inspection (Welsh Government, 2014). Alternatively, some argue that constantly revisiting the SDP can waste valuable time and resources, such as teachers time for planning (Bobic and Davis, 2003).

Primary School C gathered at their annual stakeholders celebration in April 2018 to discuss developments and the production of their SDP. The key areas the school desired to improve upon were professional learning, ownership and responsibility, and a curriculum design that was unique to the school (Appendix 1). However, a vital contributor to all three of these themes was positive relationships, and so they placed this at the heart of their SDP. Forming positive relationships was underpinned by many practical strategies, and so this assignment will pay particular attention to their actions of improving 'family and community engagement'. Teachers developing positive relationships with their students is clearly essential for students' well-being

and learning outcomes (McGrath and Van Bergen, 2015). However, research has highlighted that positive relationships between teachers and parents are also significant for the child, and can cause increased attendance, performance, homework completion and acceptable behaviour (Alameda-Lawson, 2014). Support for this can be provided by Santiago et al., (2016) who make a connection between relationships, improved outcomes for students, and smoother adjustments for children at school. Therefore, it is clear to see why Primary School C has highlighted family and community engagement as a priority to improve relationships.

Other schools and authorities have made clear strides towards promoting family and community engagement, such as the Pen Green Centre for children and families (Whalley, 2007). A flexible early childhood service was set up to meet the needs of families in the community and was managed by teachers and support staff. Reasons for this movement were that they once worked with a hostile group of parents who formed an action group against them, and there was also a lack of consultation with parents who were identified as children's key first educators. The next section will discuss how Primary School C's practical strategy of developing 'family and community engagement' was developed through the SDP cycle.

Developing an Action Point

To gather rich and meaningful information about Primary School C's SDP cycle, individual qualitative interviews (Appendix 2) were conducted with key stakeholders (Roulston, 2010). These included a Year 6 pupil, a learning support assistant (LSA) who was also the community centre lead, a community governor, and a parent governor who was also an LSA. Interestingly, all stakeholders supported their annual celebration in April 2018 as the main contributor to their formation of their SDP. This suggests that Primary School C is succeeding the recommendations of Dunaway et al., (2012) and the Welsh Government (2014) in terms of involving everyone in the production of the SDP for it to be most effective. However, it would be interesting to see how many parents attended as Dunaway et al., (2012) states parents continue to be much less involved than full partners in improving schools. At this celebration, Primary School C conducted a self-evaluation as a school, to highlight areas that are succeeding, and other areas which were perhaps problematic or required improvement. This potentially contradicts the guidelines of the Welsh Government (2014) because the school used a self-evaluation tool even before forming its vision. A common theme to emerge was that they were experiencing problems with parents, both in person and on social media, and teachers emphasised a lack of collaboration. Mirroring the difficulties that teachers faced in the study of Whalley (2007), the school wasn't recognising parents as children's first educators, and overlooked the potential for improved outcomes when parents are involved

(Santiago et al., 2016). Therefore, this formed the vision to promote healthy and positive relationships through family and community engagement.

Primary School C then conducted a self-evaluation of current performance regarding its relationship with families and the community. Kimball et al., (2010) highlight that this helps to frame the specific issues in a school, while Estyn (2018) support the identification of areas for development as they lead to improvements in educational experiences for learners. The interview data revealed that the staff were experiencing the following problems. Firstly, parents were describing the integration into the school at nursery level as an anxious experience, in which they weren't receiving sufficient support for their children. This led to a detrimental effect on the early development of relationships between parents and staff. Secondly, key stage 2 staff explained their interactions with parents were often negative. They were sometimes faced with challenging behaviour, and they felt there was a professional barrier between the parents and the school. Staff may be guilty of assuming parents are ineffective to the school setting (Whalley, 2007). However, Gruber and Gruber (2008) explain parents can be challenging when their children experience troubles. Staff at Primary School C should be given guidance on how to rejuvenate these relationships, and work with parents effectively.

In the strategic planning phase to take action, Primary School C firstly prioritised home-visits which were aimed at families of nursery children. Through the collaboration of Foundation Phase staff, this would positively engage families as early as possible. Peralta-Nash (2003) supports home-visits for teachers to understand their pupils better, however, Whalley, (2007) explains that sometimes it's not recommended to visit households as circumstances can be complicated. Secondly, playing and learning groups were implemented to target all parents and carers to provide emotional support, educational ideas for home, and to build up a rapport. These classes would be conducted by the Community Centre lead, and the appropriate teachers for the age group. Parents are more likely to remain involved when they feel cared for and can assist in their child's education (Henderson et al., 2007). However, a difficulty which was consistent at Primary School C, was the ability to work cohesively with parents from diverse backgrounds (Lin and Bates, 2010), and so these families were potentially disadvantaged (Hess et al., 2006). Finally, the headteacher promoted an open-door policy right through the school. This was designed for parents to speak freely to teachers as they become open to regular communication. Ideally, building up an element of trust, respect, and discuss valuable information about the learner. Meyer et al., (2011) explain this can assist parents who have time constraints or barriers which would normally prevent them from speaking to teachers. Nevertheless, you may still encounter contrasting views between teachers and parents regarding a pupil's needs (Hess et al., 2006).

The Welsh Government (2014) emphasise the importance of leadership in sustaining the schools commitment to the actions of the SDP. The headteacher's senior leadership team at Primary School C were crucial in monitoring each action and ensuring staff had clear responsibilities throughout the process. This justifies why they included 'ownership and responsibility' as a further component of their SDP. They set a clear timescale of 12 months in order to evaluate the implementation, in which stakeholders could voice opinions on strengths and areas in need of further improvement (Macbeath and Mortimore, 2001). A limitation is perhaps that the school didn't evaluate at regular intervals during this 12-month implementation phase (Macbeath and Mortimore, 2001), however, Estyn (2017) have still described the schools leadership as dynamic and highly creative, which has led to pupils making exceptional progress.

Qualitative data was gathered by staff to review the impact of their actions. In relation to their strategy of home-visits, the deputy head explained that the school had built strong partnerships with some families, yet a sufficient relationship with almost all families (Meyer et al., 2011). The key benefit was the greater understanding teachers gained of children (Pelralta-Nash, 2003), especially those with ALN for whom they could readily prepare provisions. A key adjustment made from reviewing the implementation was that they now provide welcome packs to families, ensuring they make effective use of resources (Welsh Government, 2014). The playing and learning groups caused a knock-on effect of a growth in confidence and development for parents. Alike the findings of Whalley (2007), parents were beginning to open-up as they felt at ease, accept support from the community centre staff, and also become involved in other programmes. One example is a parent who took part in an ICT learning group and then later secured paid employment. Finally, the parent governor and LSA highlighted that this professional barrier between parents and staff was fading. She had benefited herself from effective two-way communication about her own child's needs (Meyer et al., 2011) who had once displayed challenging behaviour. Teachers were taking time from their busy schedules to express that they care (Meyer et al., 2011), and so parents were willing to become partners in their child's education (Henderson et al., 2007).

Reflection and Evaluation

Primary School C clearly follow steps to the SDP guidelines provided by the Welsh Government (2014). Notably, they also support the views of both Knoff (2007) and Dunaway et al., (2012), in terms of their SDP cycle varying somewhat to the guidelines to represent the circumstances at the school. They provide a notion that schools will not always have a clear

direction, or sense of what they aim to achieve, and so may require a thorough self-evaluation before they can form any sort of vision. A clear strength Primary School C displays throughout the SDP cycle, which is recommended by many researchers, is their willingness to involve all stakeholders. Teachers, governors, pupils and support staff all contributed to the cause, and so the SDP can evidently be deemed meaningful (Reddekopp, 2007). A recommendation here would be for the school to ensure all stakeholders fully understand the process of strategically planning, as Yaakob et al., (2019) describe it as a time-consuming experience if misinterpreted. The majority of the data Primary School C gathered and shared with us from their self-evaluation and impact review was qualitative. Although this may have been the most suitable approach to investigate and explain the theme of family and community engagement (Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai, 2015), utilizing quantitative data can form the basis of the goals a school wants to achieve (Reddekopp, 2007). By applying quantitative data, Primary School C could then numerically assess its outcomes against a target, such as parental attendance at a learning group, and then ensure a generalisation of the findings (Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai, 2015). Finally, Primary School C clearly value the relationships between teachers and families. It supports many researchers who stress the importance of positive relationships for improved learner outcomes, well-being, attendance and behaviour (Alameda-Lawson, 2014; McGrath and Van Bergen, 2015). Nonetheless, how can the school ensure and evidence that parent engagement has assisted in improved outcomes for learners. For example, in the high school study of Adams and Christenson (2000), the benefits of positive parent-teacher relationships were articulated through higher grades and credits earned by students. Therefore, Primary School C should clearly express its own evidence that family and community engagement has improved learner outcomes.

Conclusion

The focus of this assignment has been School Development Plans which form a large aspect of the Welsh Government's (2014) programme for educational reform in Wales. It has discussed the steps to a SDP cycle, ranging from a vision, to an impact review. Based on qualitative data and information collected, the assignment has also critically examined the production of Primary School C's SDP, and how it developed family and community engagement as an action point to improve relationships. This was importantly linked to literature, and recommendations were then offered as to how things could have been done differently. This has importantly influenced my future teaching practice, because I have not only studied literature relating to the SDP cycle, I have also explored an example in professional practice. The key learning point I have taken is the many barriers or difficulties a school may encounter in the process of striving for its targets, and the importance of regular

evaluation to make corrections. This is where collaboration is key, in which all stakeholders must come together to ensure the SDP is effective. Primary School C exemplify how high-quality leadership, working together, and developing a strong vision can lead to pupils making exceptional progress (Estyn, 2017).

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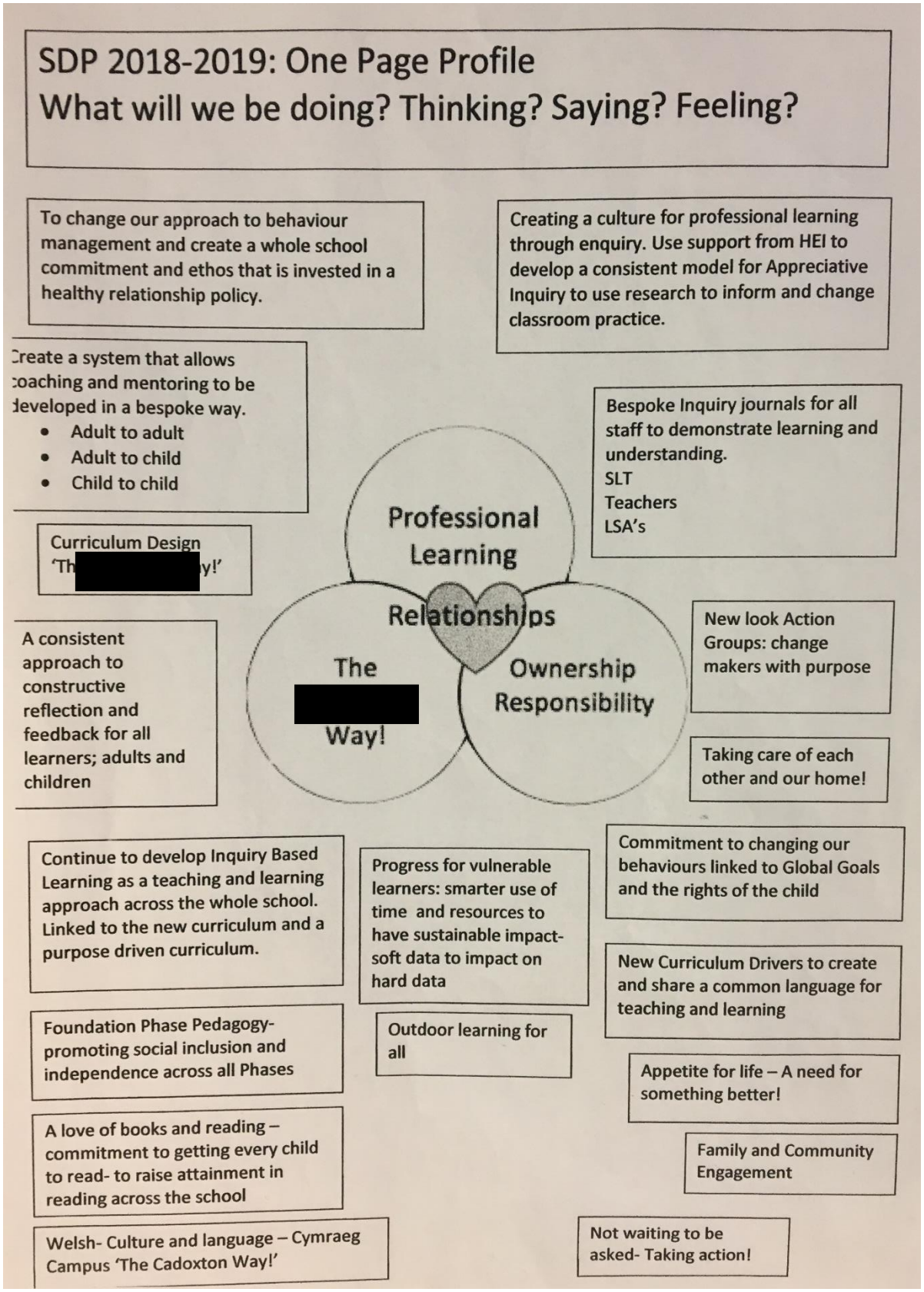
Appendices

Appendix 1- Primary School C SDP



Appendix 2- Interview Questions

Parent Governor / LSA:

- How has the school helped you and your children?
- What made you want to become a governor?
- What significant changes have you noticed that the school have made?
- Have you encouraged any other parents to be involved in the Primary School C community?

LSA / Community Centre Lead

- What provisions do you run?
- What impact do your provisions have on the community?
- How do you get people involved?
- How have your provisions been evaluated?

Year 6 pupil

- What was your role in the SDP celebration day?
- What types of feedback did you give to the school?
- Have you and your parents attended anything that the school puts on for the community?
- Has any of your feedback had an impact?

Community Governor:

- How would you describe the Primary School C community?
- How long have you been supporting the Primary School C community?
- Has your role changed in any way?
- Do you cater for other faiths in the school community in any way?