

Part B:
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
Targed/Target 1	Within your Practical Skills section there is an opportunity to be more specific with the actions for your own future practice.	I have reviewed my evaluation section to make sure I used the opportunity to be specific when discussing my future practice and personal actions.

Introduction

The aim of this assignment is to understand how a School Development Plan (SDP) supports the ongoing development of a school and the impact on educational experiences. It will also critically examine the process of how a school develops one aspect of their SDP, along with the evidence that supports the change and its impact on practice. The chosen aspect is taken from the placement school's SDP. It focuses on improving pupil's Welsh reading skills by engaging in shared/guided reading on a regular basis (please refer to Appendix A). When undertaking academic research, the British Educational Research Association guidelines stress the need to maintain anonymity and confidentiality (BERA, 2018). This means, to ensure the school's privacy, information about the initiative will be handled with the care the BERA guidelines advocate.

The school is an English-medium primary located in the Swansea Local Authority and has a total of 435 pupils. The pupil population are diverse with 29% being eligible for free school meals, while a further 12.4% have additional learning needs and 10.7% have English as a second language (Estyn, 2023). Carter and White (2021) highlight that schools face constant challenges so they must evolve and adapt to ensure they improve and maintain their quality of education. Schools continuously aim to improve their practice and at the centre of this process is the SDP. The Welsh Government (2014: 3) states the SDP is 'the school's strategic plan for improvement' that 'sets out the actions a school will take to improve learner outcomes'. Korkko et al. (2020) recognised that each school has their own unique educational ecosystem with its own strengths, challenges and goals. Macbeath (1999: 13) also recognised this as they believe there is no 'perfect way' to implement school development. Each SDP outlines distinct plans, goals and actionable steps relevant to previous targets/priorities, self evaluation and Estyn recommendations, helping to raise the schools standards (Welsh Government, 2014).

Developing an action point

School development is a process that strengthens the school's ability to manage change (Harris, 2013). It focuses on the whole school and aims to modify educational practice and procedures; enabling them to achieve their goals, strengthen collaboration and quality of education, improving academic outcomes for pupils and staff professional development (Sahin, 2013; Ainscow et al., 2016).

The Welsh Government (2014) recognises the effort schools put into developing these plans and the continuous work needed to ensure progression and success. Donaldson (2015: 28) states that the process involves the 'senior leadership team plan[ning] for the development for their school'. However Hopkins (1994) argues that school development is not limited to the senior leadership team, as involving stakeholders in the self-evaluation and data analysis process can support sustained school improvement. Lindgreen et al. (2019) agree with this statement as they believe stakeholders have an understanding of the needs of the community and pupils. Harris (2013) also suggests that collaboration is vital for school improvement as stakeholder participation can bring different perspectives on educational practices to the school's attention, encouraging change, supporting growth and helping them to reach their goals. Stakeholders in the education system include school leaders, governors, head teachers, teachers/school staff, local and religious organisations, parents and pupils (Duke et al., 2013). Shams et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of stakeholder participation, they believe the level of engagement is important for the achievement of positive results. This is because they can support schools with the identification and decision-making process, aiding the development of broad targets, areas of improvement and creating smaller targets/actions to help reach their goals (Leal Filho and Brandi, 2016). They can also recognise resources or initiatives that could be used to support the school's target progression; enabling schools to provide the best quality of educational opportunities while also supporting target progression and achievement (Harrin, 2020). However, Holloway et al. (2016) recognises there could be challenges when dealing with stakeholders, each individual has different needs, priorities and objectives which could lead to conflict or little co-operation within the project; this could negatively affect the school's improvement process and progression. Henisz (2017) also recognised the potential challenges, but states the importance of communication and opportunity for relationship building, this can help to build a foundation of trust and understanding which can help to build positive working relationships and focus for school improvement.

The SDP is based on self-evaluation, data and context of the schools performance, this enables schools to reflect on their school context, practice and impact, helping to discover areas of improvement to boost professional and pupil learning (Chapman and Sammons, 2013) This enables schools to develop their own priorities and create short and long-term goals and inform any actions (e.g with resources and staff) to address the challenges/weaknesses that could impact pupil education (Welsh Government, 2014). The Welsh

Government (2022) released new guidance which provides a new perspective on school improvement, evaluation and accountability. The updated guidance expected for schools in 2024 provides schools with a new outlook to educational planning, introducing new strategies that align with the curriculum for Wales, encouraging a co-operative approach to future planning for schools in Wales. The guidance for school improvement highlights three areas of focus: Vision and leadership, Curriculum, Learning and Teaching and Equity, Well-being and Inclusion (Welsh Government, 2022). Although this guidance provides educational staff with updated information related to school improvement, Tadesse (2023) states schools can face many challenges such as collaboration difficulties with stakeholders, lack of funding, inadequate leadership and resistance to change.

SDPs outline the school's targets and direction for improvement for the next three to five years, the school's vision is broken down within the plan to show how those targets will be achieved (Welsh Government, 2014). Bryson (2018) recognises breaking targets into smaller pieces is beneficial for effective, strategic planning, this is vital for self-reflection, continuous evaluation, organisation and measuring of data and impact. Simerson (2011) recommends effective strategic planning should be integrated into everyday management and practice. Steiner (2010) highlights the benefits of this within schools, this can help to prioritise/set goals, develop strategies tailored to the schools weakness/improvements and promote staff and stakeholder commitment. Alongside strategic planning, data analysis and measuring impact enables schools to review progress and find patterns to inform future decisions and identify goals for school improvement (Selfridge and Pembroke, 2022). Approaches used to gather data and measure impact include interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and self-assessment tools; the aim of these is to gather information, results and perspective from individuals to inform the progression or areas for change/improvement (Bernhardt, 2017). Pawar (2004) highlights this process requires people's responses, this can be challenging because people may choose not to participate for various reasons (e.g time consuming or complicated process), low responses could affect the reliability of the results, affecting the school's monitoring and progression. However Kelly and Downey (2011) and Bernhardt (2017) stress that schools must find their purpose for the study (e.g monitor school's community initiative) before engaging with this process; this enables them find the appropriate method suitable for the participants which provides them with the opportunity to participate and gain data that is valuable to their school progression and development.

Literature Review

The specific aspect from Placement School's (2024) SDP focus on the priority area 2: 'Learning and Teaching and Equity'. The SDP breaks down the priority into subheadings: Strategic priority 2.2 includes targets for each Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). Each AoLE includes 3 sub-priorities/actions, the following priority is from the AoLE Language, Literacy and Communication: 2.2.1 Welsh reading. From their recent inspection, Estyn (2023) felt there was not enough focus on the school's teaching in the whole school improvement targets. To confront this challenge, they recognised their need for a more focused approach, leading to the school's decision of each AoLE curriculum lead identifying priorities to take forward which can support the focus of whole school teaching and learning. Conzemius and O'Neill (2013) recognised that creating SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound) targets allows you to set clear and focused goals, making it easier to plan and implement which can help the school to achieve their future teaching and learning goals. Strunk et al. (2016) research suggests that SDPs created in educational settings are often overly optimistic, not realistic and lack specific information on actions/strategies. However, when studying the Placement Schools (2024) SDP, it was organised into small, achievable steps that included potential considerations such as resources available, potential time limitations and funding. The Estyn (2023) report also recognised pupils make a good start in developing basic Welsh, however lack confidence in using more complex language patterns. It also recognised their provision for developing pupil's reading skills. This comment could influence their priority of improving Welsh language through engaging in shared/guided reading.

Within Wales, there is a national mission committed to providing high standards and aspirations, there are six objectives which focus on success and high standards of education for all pupils (Welsh Government, 2023). Objective 6 focuses on the Welsh Language belonging to everyone with the aim of everyone having access to the language and the opportunity to learn it (Welsh Government, 2023). The Welsh Government (2017: 2) states 'the Welsh language is one of the treasures of Wales', it is a valuable part of Wales which represents our personal and national identity. The Welsh Government (2023) aims to promote the Welsh language by encouraging the use of Welsh within education which is an essential part of the Curriculum for Wales and in their vision of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Welsh Government (2017) realises to achieve their vision, the first phase involving educating individuals must be implemented, helping to increase the number of Welsh speakers.

Cremin et al. (2014) highlights that reading can support language acquisition and development. Reading with peers and adults, enables pupils to work together to discover new language and literacy skills, this supports them to speak and see the words while discovering meaning from scaffolding on others, helping to develop their knowledge and fluency of language (Founts and Pinnell, 2017). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1962), children's learning can be shaped by social interactions, aiding them in reaching the Zone of Proximal Development (Johnston and Nahmind-Williams, 2014). However Muthukumar et al. (2022) highlighted Vygotsky's theory may not be relevant to all social and cultural groups. Vygotsky suggested that all children gain the same understanding through social interactions, however the individual needs of children can be diverse and lead to different outcomes from the same experience. Gelman (2009) views this as a benefit, children may not get the same meaning from an experience, but they will develop their own unique perspective/knowledge that is valuable for future learning. Lemov et al. (2016) recognises the challenges of shared/guided reading, there are diverse academic abilities within a classroom which requires careful planning to ensure pupils receive the appropriate support to promote their language and reading skills. The school will assess the quality of the initiative through learning reviews (Placement School 2024). These are reflective documents which monitor and track pupil's progression and learning (Sancisi and Eddington, 2015). Best (2008) suggests that learning reviews provide up-to-date and precise data which includes any strength and gaps in pupil learning which can aid with the self evaluation and school improvement process. Townsend (2007) questions the use of learning reviews for school improvement as these are completed from the perspective of the teacher/school staff. They suggest additional methods that could support the data in the learning review such as gathering feedback from individuals involved, aiding with the process of self evaluation and school improvement.

Reflection and evaluation

By evaluating and reflecting on the Placement School's (2024) SDP, It provides clear information on the 3 school improvement areas, with information under sub-headings to help them achieve their goals (refer to Appendix B), aligning with the Welsh Governments (2024) guidance. The priority for LLC: Welsh reading, shows the schools dedication to supporting pupil's Welsh language skills which are in line with and contributing to the Wales national mission/vision for the Welsh language and Curriculum for Wales through guided/sharing reading sessions. The purpose of this priority is to deliver a whole school approach to support the teaching and learning of Welsh, providing a consistent and

systematic approach with guidance from other peers and practitioners (Welsh Government, 2023). The strategic decision/action aims to tackle the challenges highlighted in their Estyn (2023) report, showing the schools willingness to address feedback and dedication to ongoing improvement.

In addition, shared/guided reading supports pupils to develop their skills and understand the meaning of a language through reading and social interactions with peers and teachers/school staff linking to Vygotsky's sociological theory. The school assesses the quality of the target/strategy through learning reviews (Placement School 2024). These are reflective documents which monitor pupil progression and learning (Sancisi and Eddington, 2015). This enables the school to gather information which contributes to the whole schools targets and improvement for teaching and learning. Best (2008) suggests that learning reviews provide up-to-date and precise data which includes any strength and gaps in pupil learning which can aid self-evaluation and the school improvement process. Townsend (2007) questions the use of learning reviews for school improvement as these are completed from the perspective of the teacher/school staff and mentions there could be other methods to gather data to aid with the process of self evaluation and school improvement. A recommendation for this would be to include other stakeholders such as pupils to support the written data from teachers. This enables them to gather feedback about the strategy from the pupils perspective and own learning experience. OECD (2013) states pupils are primary stakeholders within education. Their participation in school development allows them to be involved in the decision-making and provide feedback, helping to make meaningful change and improve learning outcomes (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). However Schildkamp et al. (2013) states there are challenges to pupils participation/feedback, pupils age and stage of development can affect their ability to participate or share. Schildkamp et al. (2013) also mentions they may not have the maturity or lack skills and experience to share feedback effectively, impacting on the quality of data given to the school. Although this is a potential challenge, Hattie (2012) states schools have the knowledge/skills and experience to create opportunities for feedback that are age/stage appropriate for the pupils. Opportunities such as questioning, surveys/forms, quizzes, discussions or self-assessment can be adapted to ensure they are appropriate for the pupils; enabling them to share their thoughts/feelings effectively (Chapman and Sammons, 2013). This enables the school to develop a wider view of the impact of actions and gather additional evidence to support their learning journey record;

supporting their self-evaluation and school improvement process and their ability to provide high quality teaching and learning opportunities (Chapman and Sammons, 2013).

Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of this assignment was to understand the process of SDP and involved critically examining how a school approaches development in one aspect of their SDP. This was highlighted through the LLC AoLE: Welsh Reading; in response to Estyn (2023) response of the schools need to develop a more focused approach to whole school teaching and learning, and supporting pupil confidence with Welsh patterns through shared/guided reading. This sub-priority highlighted within the plan aligns with the Welsh current national mission, visions of the Curriculum for Wales and educational goals within the Welsh Government (2024) guidance. Also, by evaluating the placement school's SDP, this has taught me how schools address their own unique challenges, recommendations and strengths within their educational and local community. This task has supported my future practice. I feel this has supported my professional knowledge and understanding, I now know the role and importance of a SDP in relation to achieving the school's goals and overall improvement. This has deepened my knowledge of the process involved such as stakeholders engagement, use of data, measuring impact and self evaluation. I feel this will aid me in supporting school improvement within my future teaching experiences. I now feel better equipped to contribute effectively in supporting schools to achieve their goals and support school improvement.

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Appendices

Appendix A - School Improvement Area 2: Curriculum, Learning and Teaching.

LLC Priority: To improve use of welsh shared/guided reading throughout the school.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.2 – Literacy, Language and Communication						
Rationale for inclusion	As Estyn felt there was not enough of a focus on teaching in our whole school improvement targets, each Curriculum Lead has been asked to identify priorities to take forward, in their Area of Learning and Experience.					
Sub Priorities / Actions	Intended Impact / Success Criteria	Time Scale	Responsible Individual & related personnel	Resources / PL	Cost	QA Activities
2.2.1 Welsh reading	Welsh reading resources are regularly used across the school; shared reading resources for Progression Steps 1 and 2 and a guided reading scheme for Progression Step 3.	Sept '23 – Jul '24	EJ All teachers	Guided Reading Books for Progression Step 3 Support from ~~Athrawes Eiro~~	None	Learning Reviews

(Source: Placement School, 2024: 18).

Appendix B - Placement School Contents.

Showing 3 School Improvement Areas, aligning with Welsh Government (2024) Guidance.

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(Source: Placement School, 2024: 1).