

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	pay extra attention to possessional apostrophes.	I have proofread extensively, paying particular attention to plural nouns. I have also checked these on multiple electronic grammar checks.
Target 2	pay extra attention to the use of semi-colons.	I have proofread extensively, paying particular attention to plural nouns. I have also checked these on multiple electronic grammar checks. I have ensured that when I do not use them in a list that I am consistent (instead of accidentally combining normal commas and semi-colons).
Target 3	Remove unnecessary page numbers from references when I have not directly quoted to be accurate with referencing and aid conciseness.	I have paid particular attention to my use of referencing and have removed unnecessary page numbers unless I am directly quoting. I have left this detail to the final reference list per Harvard guidelines.

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

Purpose

This report will examine how the placement school (PTE1) has developed one aspect of its School Improvement Plan (SIP) following Estyn's inspection (2017) and the school's data-based (Schildkamp, 2019) self-evaluation report (2018-19).

Context

PTE1 is an English-medium and mixed secondary school for 11- 18-year olds, governed by a South Wales local authority. The school incorporates an urban demographic that is socially and economically disadvantaged, with 32.7% of pupils entitled to Free-School Meals (FSMs) which is >15% higher than the national average (Estyn, 2017). Over 70% of pupils originate from ethnic minorities and speak English as an additional language. For 2016-17, the budget per pupil was £4,742 which was > £500 their 2010 budget (Estyn, 2010,17). Whilst the school experienced three headteachers between 2004-2010, the current headteacher has been in post for over 10 years, following successful leadership in the UAE.

Despite receiving 'excellent' judgements for 'current performance' and 'prospects for improvement' (Estyn, 2017, p. 2), the school was advised to *improve* performance standards in certain subjects and 'strengthen' components of improvement planning such as self-evaluation. Subsequently, in congruence with *Hanover Research* (2014) that advises schools to decide between two to five 'key priorities', the school identified three overarching aims:

1. 'to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning';
2. 'improve wellbeing';
3. 'develop leadership across the school'

(SIP, 2019, p. 1).

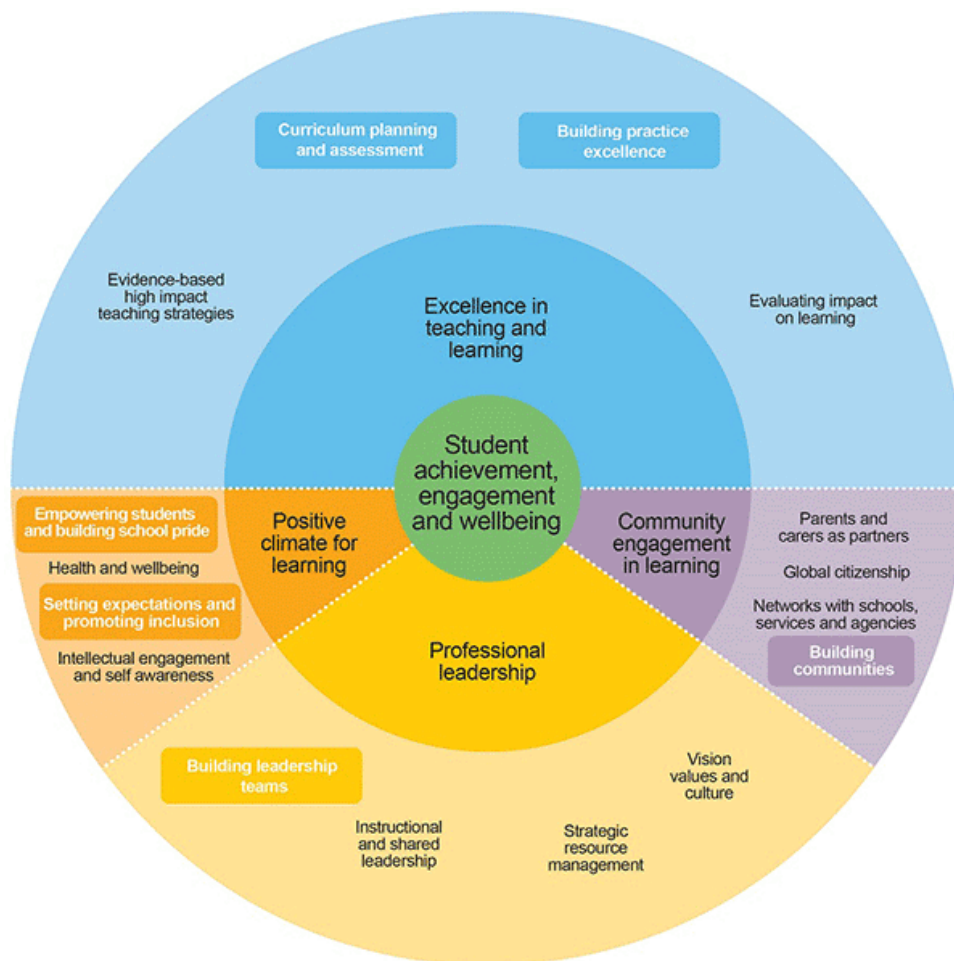
For each aim, numerous 'action' plans were delineated with references to impact indicators, staff, budget, time and resources (HR, 2014; Welsh Government, 2014; Schildkamp, 2019). As illustrated on page five, for the first aim, eight action plans are stipulated, compared to five for wellbeing and leadership.

Given the significance of pedagogical/ subject knowledge and continual learning for effective teaching (Hargreaves, 2011; Brighthouse, 2013; WG, 2017; Timperley, 2007) **this report will focus on how the school has enhanced its teaching by advocating ‘continuous learning for all staff across the school and beyond’ and developing ‘lead practitioners’ (SIP, 2019, pp. 2-5). In their examination of the world’s highest-performing schools, McKinsey and Company (2007) conclude that: ‘teacher quality is the most important lever for improving student outcomes’ (p. 12).** Based on data from Tennessee, they reveal that a ‘high-performing teacher’, can elevate a student’s percentile from 50 to 90 compared to a ‘low- performing teacher’ where performance would decrease to 37 (Ibid). In addition to refined **instruction methods** where teachers:

- ★ activate prior knowledge
- ★ review previous learning;
- ★ model;
- ★ scaffold;
- ★ plan appropriate tasks;

effective teachers should also anticipate misconceptions and comprehend the rationale behind students’ errors (Coe et al, 2014; Rosenshine, 2012; Kyriakides, 2013; Lemov, 2010; Hattie, 2009).

The **role of pedagogy** in school improvement is illustrated below:



(Australia's Department of Education/ Training, 2018: *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes*).

SIP: Process, Purpose & Effectiveness

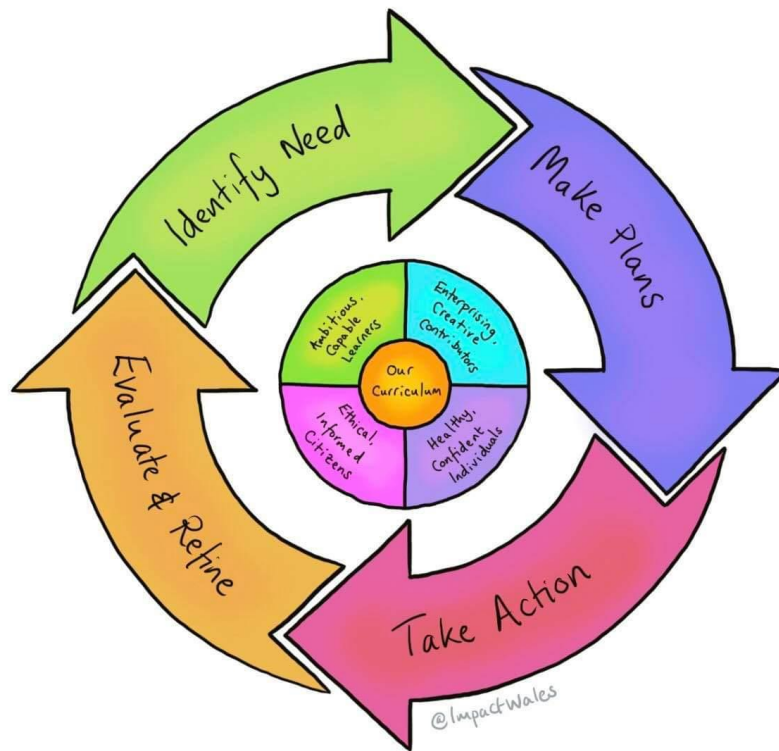
According to Brighouse (2013), there are two 'broad approaches' to school improvement (p. xi). The first is 'rational and pragmatic' where targets are set and monitored stringently to reduce 'achievement-gaps' (Ibid; EEF, 2018; Jones, 2017). The second is 'creative', where individuals support the school's vision and priorities through collaboration, conferring their skills, knowledge, ideas and experience (Ibid). **Yet, to generate concrete improvements, schools need to marry these approaches based on their particular circumstances (Ibid).** Following the investigation of 80 schools in Scotland (1995-1997), Macbeath and Mortimore (2001) postulate that 'culture and history' are essential to school effectiveness (pp.viii- x).

Whilst Fernandez (2011) agrees that context affects SIP's, from analysing data from the fifth-largest school district in America, he stresses the political dimension, explaining that schools have to navigate complex and 'competing' pressures (p. 339). **In Wales, in addition to formulating suitably challenging goals (HR, 2014; Fernandez, 2011), SIPs should also address national agendas namely: enhancing literacy and numeracy standards and minimising the 'achievement gap' (WG, 2014).**

Following Jackson's (2000) description of school improvement as a 'journey', when examining a secondary school in Bedfordshire, Hallinger and Heck (2011) refine the conceptualisation of 'context', contending that the current status and trajectory of the school is vital when identifying trends that positively influence school improvement. Since schools can be categorised as stable, declining and improving, they argue that schools should not be considered unique, as patterns in leadership and improvement planning from longitudinal and broad contexts can be utilised to guide schools on their journeys (Ibid; Victoria Education, 2018).

Context is integral when targets are being decided and in the evaluation stage when evidence is collated and scrutinised to assess the extent of improvement (HR, 2014; Schildkamp, 2019). Crucially, as demonstrated by Brighouse (2013), WG (2014, 17A), Estyn (2013) and Reeves (2006) these insights inform best practice recommendations and scoring frameworks. These sources will be consulted when evaluating PTE1's SIP and offering tentative recommendations following BERA (2018).

Whilst scholarship and professional literature debates principles within developmental stages such as trust, reciprocity and capacity (Hargreaves, 2011) and discipline (WG, 2014; Dempster&Macbeath, 2008); **the core function of the SIP is to: ' help determine where an organisation wants to go, what is needed to get there, and how to know' if it arrived (McNamara, 2003).** The image below summarises the essential stages of SIP:



(Impact WalesA, 2016)

PTE1's SIP: Analysis/ Evaluation

Adhering to regulations (WG, 2014), PTE1 has communicated *how* they will advocate ongoing learning for all staff within/ outside the school:

Key Priority: To continue to improve the quality of provision and teaching and learning

Plans to bring about improvement	Key actions required	Success criteria (Impact and Outcomes)	Lead & others responsible	Timescale		Resources Costings & budget source
				Start	End	
Promote continuous learning for all staff across the school and beyond.	- Develop professional development provision - Align staff needs with INSET opportunities - CPD opportunities made available to all staff - Links to action research & class studies available - Develop the role and impact of the pedagogy team - Develop Bilingual Skills of Pupils & Staff - Behaviour for Learning strategies embedded into routines - Develop 'Closing the Gap' and 'Change Management' training opportunities where appropriate. - Reorganisation of core training programme for trainees, NQTs and new staff	- Staff take responsibility for developing their own professional learning - Successful strategies implemented and embedded into teaching - Lesson observation data for provision increases from 91% to 94% good or better. - Increased staff confidence in the use of the Welsh language. - Attitudes to learning in lessons increases from 93% to 95% good or better. - Staff are supported to seek input and advice from colleagues when needed. - Effective use of STT to meet training needs of staff before the new academic year.	[REDACTED] Pedagogy Team	June 2019	July 2020	Staffing (ATH) £20,000 TLR3 £2,683 EIG 5,500 EIG 19,500

(SIP, 2019).

The SIP states **nine** key actions, including:

- Make CPD available to all staff;
- Develop CPD provision;
- 'develop the role/ impact of the **pedagogy** team';
- Form links to action research and case studies

(Ibid).

Before evaluating these intentions according to theory, from undertaking a teaching placement at the school, multiple professional meetings and an elective week, it can be corroborated that the school has developed an organised and *comprehensive* approach to CPD. From October- January, weekly after school CPD workshops were attended where each session focused on a specific topic such as '*responsive teaching*'; effective marking; performance targets; diabetes and ICT. These sessions were delivered in the 'professional learning suite' that contained a CPD library and extensive displays on effective pedagogy; the new curriculum; leadership and behaviour management. These resources were available throughout the placement, indicating a commitment to their goals (Brighouse, 2013) and their utilisation of evidence-informed strategies to enhance teaching (VE, 2018). Yet, to aid this, perhaps data training can be incorporated (Schildkamp, 2019).

Additionally, a 'market-share' event was attended, where members of each Department shared their conclusions/ recommendations following a **case-study** on a chosen aspect of teaching/ learning (WG, 2014, 2017, 19A).

Turning to 'success criteria: impact and outcomes', the SIP (2019) explicates that:

- Staff take responsibility for developing their own professional learning
- Successful strategies implemented and embedded into teaching
- Lesson observation data for provision increases from 91% to 94% good or better.
- Increased staff confidence in the use of the Welsh language.
- Attitudes to learning in lessons increases from 93% to 95% good or better.
- Staff are supported to seek input and advice from colleagues when needed.
- Effective use of STT to meet training needs of staff before the new academic year.

Although these indicators link to the identified actions (Schildkamp, 2019) and demonstrate a degree of specificity and detail, the organisation and language of the success indicators are somewhat unclear and inaccessible to outside readers (HR, 2014). For instance, the meaning of 'STT' (Student Talk Time) is not defined, and the decision to group 'impact and

outcomes' together means that some indicators are more evidence-driven and measurable than others (Fernandez, 2011; WG, 2014).

This contrast is illuminated by the aforementioned percentage targets for attitudes to learning and lesson observations, and the comparatively vague description: 'staff are supported to seek input and advice'. Whilst the percentages are measurable and specific (Reeves, 2006) and can motivate staff (Leighwood et al, 2006; Harris&Young, 2000), **this report considers that the latter aligns more with required actions than 'impact/ outcomes', as it does not delineate how this will be measured, such as through teacher satisfaction/feedback data.**

Consequently, this report recommends that the SIP specifies:

- ◆ what *targets* have been set for Welsh Language development?
- ◆ what constitutes 'effective' STT and *how/ when* will this be organised?
- ◆ *what evidence* will be used to support judgements that staff *are* assuming responsibility for CPD?
- ◆ *who* will verify whether strategies have been successfully 'embedded'?
- ◆ *Whether collaboration with **external sources** will occur to enhance pedagogy?

Alternatively, perhaps PTE1 can re-organise their 'impact/ outcomes' so that they read more like descriptions of their 'intended improvements' rather than a combination of measurable targets and ideal outcomes (WG, 2014, p. 12). Such consistency could enhance the structure and accessibility of the SIP, as well as addressing the WGs advice that the quality of planning is based upon its effect on improvement 'rather than the volume of detail' it includes (WG, 2014, p. 3).

*Whilst the term 'embedded' is integral to Welsh educational discourse (WG, 2014, 2017A; Donaldson, 2015), in Australia, there are '**four proficiency levels**': emerging, evolving, embedding and **excelling** (VE, 2018). **To be excelling in pedagogical development, schools must have 'internal capacity' to update their understanding/ implementation of 'high-**

impact strategies’ and consult external expertise when necessary (Ibid: ‘Continuum’).

Since there is no explicit mention of external organisations (SIP, 2019) perhaps this can be developed.

Nonetheless, the SIP includes a separate evaluative section:

Strategies to monitor and evaluate:

- LNF assessments
- WMT outcomes
- Data tracking- Digital literacy, English and maths
- Thematic Review of Cross Curricular Competencies Examination results
- Link and line management meetings to monitor progress
- Analysis of pupil progress data and outcomes
- Learning walks
- Pupil voice surveys
- Staff feedback and evaluations
- Close monitoring of lesson observation outcomes and department review outcomes

This relates to the ‘reviewing stage’ (WG, 2014) where relevant staff and leaders evaluate the implementation of the initiatives and make suggestions and alterations for improvement. These strategies demonstrate the school’s awareness of relevant data sources and their intended utilisation of a combination of data (qualitative, quantitative, ‘formal’ and ‘informal’) to assess the impact and progress of the plans (Ibid; Schildkamp, 2019; Leithwood et al, 2006; VE, 2018).

Methodology

HR (2014) advises that schools incorporate **classroom observations** based on the *Responsive Classroom Model* which emphasises learners’ emotional/ social wellbeing and the techniques adopted by teachers to foster a supportive, inclusive, engaging and diverse learning environment (Responsive Classroom, 2016). Whilst in the UK ‘responsivity’ relates to Williams’ (2011) conceptualisation of AfL, which emphasises ‘live’ marking/ feedback during the lesson, PTE1 adopts a similar approach to pupil wellbeing and behaviour which they term ‘restorative’ (Thorsborne&Blood, 2005, 13; Hopkins, 2011). This is reflected in the ‘professional development through peer observation’ template below, that asks teacher-

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observers to comment on pupils' attitude/ behaviour and **reflect** on examples of 'engaged' and 'challenged' pupils (PTE1, 2020).

Professional Development through Peer Observation					
Department / Subject		Teacher		Observer	
Number of pupils present		Date		Lesson	1 2 3 4 5 6
Year / Class		TA support	Yes / No	Seating Arrangements	
Lesson Title / Details:					
What teaching strategies and ideas could be adapted to support your own teaching?					
TEACHING & PROVISION Are a variety of strategies used by the teacher during the lesson? Does the lesson have appropriate pace? Does the teacher use appropriate strategies to ensure positive relationships? Objectives and success criteria are clearly presented and understood How effective is the use of teaching methods, resources and support staff? Is the lesson very well planned, structured and delivered? How effective is subject knowledge? How effective is provision for skills development? Are expectations of all pupils high enough? How is the provision for Welsh language/dimension developed?					
DIFFERENTIATION Does the lesson provide suitable challenge for all pupils? Are the needs of all pupils considered? How effective is tailoring of the work to meet the needs of pupils? Are pupils highly challenged? Are pupils given the support to succeed and do so?					
ASSESSMENT Is there formative assessment throughout the lesson? Do pupils understand what they need to do to improve? Does feedback to pupils in books/files identify their current level of work, their strengths, areas to improve and show evidence of them acting on feedback to progress in their learning? How is progress of pupils assessed regularly and formatively? How do staff & pupils know the level of progress from the lesson? Do pupils know how to improve their learning? How effective is feedback in pupil books/files? What are the opportunities for self/peer assessment?					

PROGRESS IN LEARNING & STANDARDS ACHIEVED What are the standards of achievement within the lesson? Do the pupils make appropriate progress in line with ability? Are objectives achieved? How do the pupils know they have made progress? Do pupils recall prior learning, acquire and apply new knowledge understanding and skills effectively?	
SKILLS Do pupils communicate effectively in relation to age/ability i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening, thinking, DCF, numeracy? What specific skills are shown in lessons and what are the standards of these skills? How well do pupils develop skills and habits of learning? <i>N.B. Not all skills need to be exemplified in every lesson</i>	
BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING Are pupils on task and keen to learn? Are pupils enjoying learning? Are Restorative Approaches being used effectively? Does behaviour contribute to learning? Is environment secure and friendly?	
What have you learned from this lesson?	
Questions you would like to ask the teacher?	
What was the most effective aspect you saw that...	
D Deepened Thinking	
R Role Modelled Expectations	
I Impacted on Progress	
C Challenged Pupils	
E Engaged Pupils	

Pupils' voices are also integral to effective school improvement. Estyn (2012,13) lists ten strategies that 'good schools in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage' use.

As well as peer- observation, they advise that schools:

'gather learners' views about teaching and learning, give learners a key role in school development and involve learners directly to improve standards' (p.4).

Yet, as surveyed by Macbeath and Mortimore (2001), this advice was voiced in 1993 when education Professor SooHoo described pupils as 'authentic sources', proclaiming that their opinions should be sought out (p. 389). Although the SIP demonstrates *attempts* to do this, perhaps the school could outline:

- ♦ *What survey they will utilise to elicit pupils' views?*
- ♦ *When and how these will be issued?*
- ♦ *What pupils will be involved: are these the same as the subgroups from the performance targets?*
- ♦ *How many lessons will be peer- observed? **

*In Shanghai, eight lessons are required to be observed per- term (McKinsey&Company, 2007). 'Demonstration lessons' are also recommended, where excellent practitioners are observed by broad audiences for feedback; discussion and to share best practice (Ibid, p. 21). Lesson Studies could also be utilised to develop teachers' practice and promote collaboration across/ beyond the school (Dudley, 2014; WG, 2017; Hargreaves, 2011).

Resources

The SIP successfully outlines **who** is responsible (Fernandez, 2011); the **time frame** (HR, 2014) and the **sources of funding** that will be utilised (WG, 2014). Regarding staff, in congruence with workforce planning/ delegation (WG, 2014), one of the four Assistant Heads is specified and the 'pedagogy team' (SIP, 2019). Hargreaves (2011) discusses how schools can maximise their 'organisational capacity' through 'the qualifications and deployment of staff' (p. 685). Similarly, following longitudinal case studies of ten American schools, Lightwood et al (2006) contend that effective monitoring/ evaluation of improvement data should be undertaken by the senior leadership team. Correspondingly, the nominated initiative leader is a long-term senior member of staff who has whole-school responsibilities regarding pedagogy following substantial experience.

Timing:

The SIP states that the plans to enhance professional learning will occur between June 2019- June 2020. This indicates that the school is following regulations (WG, 2014) and best practice advice (Reeves, 2006). Informed by the *Results -Oriented Cycle of Inquiry* that advances a five-step process to SIP, HR (2014) explains that schools should divide their priorities across the entire school-year into 'quarterly, weekly and even daily objectives' (p. 26). Whilst the school fulfils the first aspect, it does not fulfil the latter. Yet, perhaps this omission can be explained by the WGs requirement that SIPs should cover three- years, thus, the focus is *not* specifically on one school year - which would be more conducive for weekly/ daily planning- but an **ongoing cycle of improvement** (WG, 2014).

Similar detail is echoed by (Reeves, 2006) in a scoring rubric for evaluating SIPs. **Regarding time/ opportunities, perhaps professional learning could be targeted to specific subjects/ Departments following Estyn's (2017) recommendation to improve the quality of teaching in certain subjects.** Additionally, since I am not an employee at the school nor a stakeholder, it is unclear whom the pedagogical team incorporates. Brighouse (2013) recommends that these include lead practitioners. **Obtaining information regarding the expertise and size of this group, and documentation produced by them (such as schedules/ teacher feedback to learning sessions) would further support an evaluation of the school's use of resources**

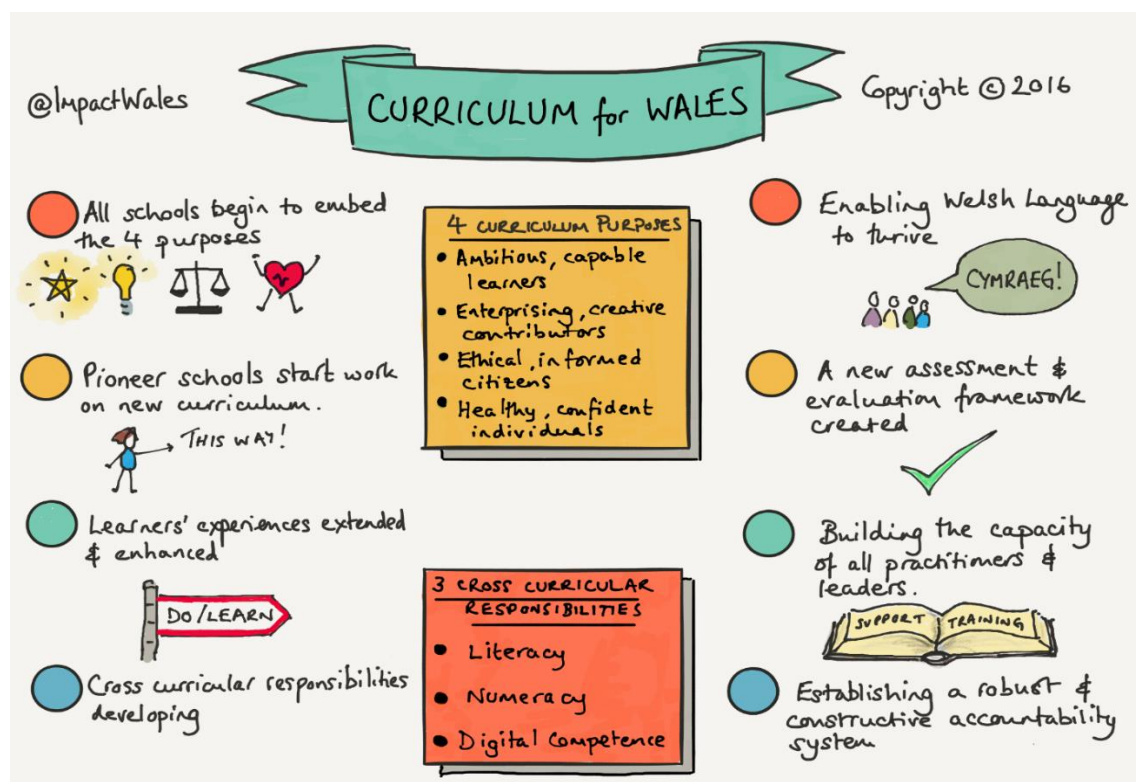
and 'sense-making process' of the data collected (Schildkamp, 2019). Similarly, attendance at a pedagogy team meeting by a stakeholder or 'critical friend' (Brighouse&Woods, 1999; Macbeath&Mortimore, 2001; Swaffield, 2007), may further support the school's comprehension of data (Schildkamp, 2019) and internal evaluation processes (Harris& Young, 2000; Frost, 2008).

Funding:

The plan states that:

- £20, 000 will be derived from the Education Improvement Grant (EIG);
- £2683 from Tier Three for Teaching/ Learning Responsibilities (TLR3)
- salary costs of £20,000.

As explained in GwE (2019-20), schools are required to detail how the EIG will be utilised in their SDPs. This involves supporting the 'transformational curriculum' (WG, 2017):



(Impact WalesB, 2016)

As exemplified above, professional learning encompasses pedagogical, subject, leadership and Welsh training/ opportunities: all of which *are* being implemented (SIP, 2019).

Moreover, these purposes should be honoured following *The Wellbeing of Future Generation Act* (2015) that strives to create: a prosperous; global; cohesive; equal; resilient and vibrant Wales (Senedd Research, 2018; WG, 2015). **Whilst it is difficult to assess a precise aspect of the SDP against this broader vision, in its entirety, the SIP demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of its multiple responsibilities and how these contribute to national objectives.**

Regarding TLR payments, the WG (2019) stipulates five conditions. Crucially, teachers should have significant and additional leadership responsibilities which are necessary for staff development and educational improvement (ibid). Since these conditions apply, the school's financial resources appear suitably aligned. Indeed, Leightwood et al (2006) consider that recognising staff's efforts and the organisation of financial resources are integral to effective leadership since teams are being supported and equipped to undertake their duties.

Implications

This report has analysed and evaluated how PTE1 has sought to improve the quality of teaching, following Estyn's recommendations and their self-evaluation report which recommended that aspects of pedagogy such as AfL should be enhanced (SE, 18, p. 31). The corresponding SDP delineated eight action areas to enhance standards of teaching across the school. Two of the target areas were: to improve the L1 (D-G) and L2 threshold (A*-C) to 100% and 80% respectively (SIP, 19). **Whilst staff have explained that the school is on track and that they are pleased with the implementation and reception of their professional learning strategies, this report cannot verify whether precise performance targets have been achieved until after July 2020.**

In consonance with Frost (2008) who advocates international dialogue, international perspectives from Australia, America and Shanghai were incorporated. Whilst SIP can benefit from global collaboration, as cautioned by Pollard and James (2011) educational strategies must be applied honouring national contexts. Furthermore, schools should experiment with a *combination* of pedagogical strategies and ensure that all improvement

strategies are **evidence-based** (VE, 2018; WG, 2014; Schildkamp, 2019). Nonetheless, to fully capitalise on data, sound data literacy skills are required and perhaps, researchers (Schildkamp, 2019).

Professional Development

By examining PTE1's documentation, conversing with leadership staff and researching development planning, I have been able to contextualise my classroom teaching and pedagogical research. Although statistical data and acronyms were initially incomprehensible, now, I feel more prepared to engage with senior staff members and motivated to contribute to a national vision. Indeed, this research has crystallised my ambitions to assume a leadership role in education and undertake a Master's in educational leadership.

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