

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Ensure that you investigate the topic under investigation in its widest sense in order to be able to cite relevant literature to support your own findings.	I have considered various aspects of an SDP, using relevant literature to critically appraise the actions and impact of a school's target.
Targed/Target 2	Try to cite sources that have been written in the last ten years wherever possible.	I believe the majority of my sources have been written within the last ten years. Where older sources have been used, I have ensured the information is up to date and still relevant.
Targed/Target 3	Proof-read your work to remove language and punctuation errors.	I have proofread the essay several times, paying particular attention to language and punctuation.

How a School Develops One Aspect of its SDP: **A Report that Critically Reflects on the Actions,** **Impact and Evidence Base**

Introduction

School development plans (SDP) are an integral aspect of improving school performance in the context of the school improvement cycle. This report will contextualise SDPs, why they are necessary and what they should include. It will consider how a Welsh town centre primary school developed their SDP and will critically appraise the target of 'Welsh as a second language'. Welsh is considered a treasure, what defines us as people and a nation (Welsh Government, 2018). Unfortunately, due to various barriers, levels of attainment in Welsh as a second language are low (Donaldson, 2015). This report carefully considers the evidence base and aims to reflect on the actions taken by the school to address the target and their impact.

When examining the strategies for supporting students in their learning, the context of a school is fundamental. School X has a population of approximately 380 pupils, with an age range of three to eleven years old (Estyn, 2019a). As the average for free school meals over the past three years in School X is 26%, compared to the national average in Wales of 18% (My Local School, 2020), it is likely that the demographic is of a lower socio-economic background.

Literature Review

There is a growing interest into how schools are performing (Hopkins, 2003). The education reform in Wales places improving standards within schools at the centre of focus (Welsh Government, 2014). This is seen in school league tables and the introduction of regular external inspections utilising the Estyn common inspection framework (Estyn, 2020). These processes allow both the identification of successful strategies and potential areas of improvement. As a consequence, the expectation of schools to be continually achieving more is high (Hopkins, 2003 and Harris, 2004). However, Hopkins (2003) warns that despite internal or external inspections, unless a school has capacity for change, there may be little to no impact on a pupil's learning. The Welsh Government (2014) suggests schools can achieve

this improvement through strategic planning linked to specific targets. Therefore, a school's ability to effectively produce an internal improvement process is crucial in order to succeed.

The Welsh Government (2014) places emphasis on the importance of using self-reflection, guided by data, to create specific and challenging targets. They advise that schools should use a cycle of reflecting on their performance in relation to their targets: identifying steps for improvement, implementing these changes and finally, reviewing their progress. This also lends itself to the mandatory annual self-evaluation report produced by all schools (Estyn, 2019b). Waring and Evans (2014) further argues that critical reflection is the 'cornerstone' of school practice. A key step in this school improvement cycle is meaningful and successful school development planning (Welsh Government 2014). This is streamlined by the requirement of schools to prepare a School Development Plan (SDP): a document that details the school's improvement cycle with the opportunity for regular self-evaluation (Welsh Government 2014).

An SDP firstly outlines the school's main priorities as well as factoring in national considerations. It formulates a strategic plan for improving standards across the school and the dedication of resources necessary (Welsh Government 2014; Department of Education NI 2020). It must directly impact teaching and learning, in order to facilitate a pupil's progress (Hopkins 2003). It should be context specific, with different schools requiring varying strategies (Hopkins 2003, Harris 2013). Furthermore, it should be prepared in accordance with the regulations set out in the School Development Plans Guidance Document (Welsh Government, 2014b) and contain: target times, monitoring opportunities and details on reviews and revisions. Moreover, all of these factors should be decided after consultation with key stakeholders, which may include governors, parents and pupils (Estyn 2019b; Welsh Government 2014).

School X included the promotion of more consistent standards in Welsh second language within their SDP. This target directly links in with the Welsh Government's 'A Million Welsh Speakers' initiative: a drive to increase promotion and use of Welsh in everyday Wales, with a target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2018). The proposal places emphasis on education and the necessity that young people develop a strong base with high standards in the language. Theme 1 of the government plan utilises 'early years education' and 'statutory education' to increase the number of confident Welsh speakers. In order to achieve this, a transformation in how Welsh is taught is needed and the Welsh Government (2018) argue that this can be done by increasing the number of primary school teachers that can confidently teach Welsh. Furthermore, the proposal highlights the

importance of digital competency, with the need for high-quality language technology, to ensure success.

The Education through Regional Working Group (ERW) aims to assist teachers in working together to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences, to ensure the best outcomes for learners (ERW, 2020). In an attempt to support the increased use of Welsh within English medium schools, ERW has created the Cymraeg Campus Language Charter, known as 'Siarter Iaith' in Welsh. Within 'Siarter Iaith', there are three awards schools can achieve through following a clear framework (ERW, 2016). 'Siarter Iaith' is particularly useful as it encourages all stakeholders to take ownership of improving pupils' Welsh language competency.

A Welsh curriculum review, 'Successful Futures' (2015), examines the Welsh Government policy of firmly placing Welsh within schools. Donaldson (2015) suggests that both provision and standards of language are incongruous across schools within Wales. This may be down to weakness in the Welsh language skills of staff and teaching methodology. Foundation phase pupils, in general, are seen to have a positive response towards learning Welsh (Donaldson 2015). However, this does not seem to translate through to Key Stage 2, with Estyn reporting Welsh as a second language to rank the lowest in terms of teaching practice and GCSE results (Donaldson, 2015).

Developing an Action Point

As previously explained, improvements to teaching Welsh within primary schools is necessary to achieve Welsh Government targets. Therefore, in the previous year, School X assigned one teacher as the Welsh language lead and subject advisor. As this teacher was confident in speaking Welsh, it was hoped they would be able to aid other teachers and provide guidance on how 'Siarter Iaith' award could be achieved. However, due to absence during the year, little progress had been made.

The process of self-evaluation within any SDP is crucial to facilitate improvement. School X carried out monitoring during the school day to assess the level of Welsh being used by pupils. Evidence showed that there was little to no Welsh being used around the school despite a Criw Cymraeg being set up the previous year. Furthermore, the deputy headteacher and subject advisor carried out interviews with staff to determine their knowledge and confidence in teaching Welsh as a second language. There had been progress on last year's findings, with staff willing to attend courses in order to continue to improve their language skills. However, Robson (2002 in Cohen et al. 2010) argues that 'what people say' and 'what they

actually do', differ. These interviews with a senior member of staff may lead to interviewees saying what they believe the interviewer wants to hear, and not giving an accurate representation of their opinions, confidence levels or day-to-day running of their classrooms (Cohen et al. 2002). A 'learning walk' was also completed during the self-evaluation stage. This was conducted by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject advisor to determine the amount of Welsh on signage around the school. It was found that this was an area that required improvement.

School X has access to a range of data to analyse, in order to support the creation of context specific targets (Welsh Government, 2014). One form of qualitative data, a school may evaluate, is their inspection report. Following an Estyn inspection at School X last year, the first recommendation was to 'improve pupil's Welsh language skills' (Estyn, 2019a). Estyn (2019a) determined there was a 'sound' understanding and use of contextual Welsh in the foundation phase. However, outside of Welsh lessons, Key Stage 2 pupils were not using Welsh enough. School X also had access to benchmarking data to compare their performance amongst their family of schools (Welsh Government 2014). However, their overall score was low and it may have been more useful for School X to have compared itself with higher achieving schools.

In addition to this, School X also collected and analysed their own qualitative data through the form of interviews with major stakeholders in the school. The process started with senior team members conducting interviews with teachers to gain an insight into their level of Welsh, and their confidence in using Welsh within the classroom. In an attempt to gain the commitment of all stakeholders in the improvement of Welsh across the school, time was allocated during a governors meeting. This allowed governors to consult with various members of the school, in order to consider their opinions and recommendations on the action plan. Brighouse and Woods (2013) emphasise that the thoughts of all community stakeholders should be reflected upon regularly. This was not addressed within School X's SDP, and could therefore be a potential area for improvement in the future.

The Welsh Government states that an SDP must detail specific information about the progression of staff development in line with given targets (Welsh Government, 2014). In School X, following an assessment of each teacher's language skills, an action point was created to address any shortcomings. The subject leader then worked with members who required support and training during Planning Preparation and Assessment sessions (PPA). This helped inform teachers of appropriate teaching methods to implement, in order to improve Welsh standards in targeted classes. The hope, with such a technique, is that as the practice becomes embedded, the school's capacity for improvement will increase (Hopkins, 2003).

However, Fullan (2000) and Harris (2013) warn that progress will only be achieved if relationships are properly developed, and team members work collaboratively to change the internal conditions of the school.

Included within School X's SDP were the expected outcomes and success criteria for the key actions taking place. These included improved writing outcomes across Key Stage 2 with at least 70% of pupils achieving the expected outcomes. An additional success criteria was for all staff to use incidental Welsh confidently. Detailed within School X's SDP were the initials of the individuals responsible for the intended outcome. Brighouse and Woods (2013) discuss how accountability within a SDP increases effectiveness. They further describe how for an SDP to be effective, it should include the opportunity for 'regular observation and evaluation of teaching'. Although this may have been done by School X, a method of strategic reflection was not detailed.

Reflection and Evaluation

Brighouse and Woods (2013) state that an SDP should provide a powerful statement concerning the whole school (Leithwood et al. 1999, in Harris, 2010). Furthermore, Harris (2013) discusses how unsuccessful plans can often be formulated due to a lack of understanding of implementation. School X could look to resolve such issues through the introduction of Welsh language target training and awareness sessions. These would be run by the subject advisor and attended by all teachers, in order to provide an opportunity for both issues and achievements to be discussed (Cohen et al. 2010 & Hopkins, 2003). Members of the school community, including learning support officers, administrative staff, dinner ladies and lunchtime supervisors, could also be trained. A Welsh language team, instead of a single lead, would also prevent absence or sickness from impeding progress. This would begin to create a culture of increased collaboration within the school, as staff work together to share best practices (Harris, 2013; Muijs, 2006; Mitchell and Sackney, 2000). Dunaway, Kim and Szad (2012) emphasise that an SDP should allow increased involvement from all stakeholders. The introduction of collaborative opportunities within schools, helps to build a capacity to change (Muijs 2006), which in turn can lead to sustained improvement (Stoll et al., 2006; Harris, 2004; Hopkins 2003; Fullan 2002).

Dunaway, Kim and Szad (2012) also discuss how a 'shallow understanding' of a target amongst staff, can lead to 'shallow involvement'. They suggest a solution to include staff in the analysis of the problem and identification of future action plans. School X currently produce their analysis using a 'bottom up' approach. This means that although the views of staff are taken into account, the formulation of action plans are controlled by senior members of the

team. As a result, staff may feel their opinions are a token gesture and have little impact on future plans. Fullan (1994) and Harris (2010) warn that this can lead to poor commitment to the implementation of these actions. Harris and Muijs (2004) explain how teacher leadership can be an effective means of increasing teacher's engagement with SDP targets. By including teachers in more formal roles and decisions, they may begin to feel included in the meaningful future development of the school (Estyn, 2019c).

As previously explained, School X could improve its SDP by considering the opinions of all of its stakeholders, including parents and pupils, prior to the creation of an action plan for a particular target (Estyn, 2019c). Interestingly, School X included no key actions involving parents during evaluation or implementation, with little reference to pupils. Dunaway, Kim and Szad (2012) also argue that parents should be included in both the analysis and implementation process. This is important as Stoll et al. (2006) also agrees that to be successful in implementing change, whole school communities need to work together to find the best way to enhance learning. As School X's community has some of the lowest numbers of Welsh speakers in the country (Welsh Government, 2019b), it would be crucial for School X to assist parents with Welsh learning where possible. Means of achieving this include help sheets for parents when assisting with homework and family learning sessions. Within these sessions, Welsh could be introduced to parents, eventually enabling them with the advanced skill to support their child's learning. This would also have the added benefit of strengthening the schools relationship with parents and therefore building upon School X's culture and values of 'community'.

Brighouse and Woods (2014) examine the importance of pupil involvement with improvement planning within a professional learning community. School X could increase their use of pupil voice by including pupils directly in their self assessment process. This could be done through the use of pupil interviews or surveys about the use of Welsh language within the school. This has the potential to provide further insight than the book review of Key Stage 2 pupils undertaken by School X (Estyn, 2017). Furthermore, Hopkins (2003) explains 'good or effective' schools should continue to improve their development through further empowering students and involving them in decision making. This could be achieved by School X utilising a Criw Cymraeg and asking pupils' opinions at school council meetings. Methods such as these would also allow pupils' Welsh language achievements to be celebrated as Criw Cymraeg and school council members can be responsible for weekly awards, certificates and letters to parents. Hopkins (2003) emphasises the importance of recognising such achievements when looking to raise pupils' achievement expectations.

Conclusion

This report evaluated School X's target of improving Welsh as a second language in the context of their SDP. School X falls under Hopkins' category of 'good or effective school', where unfortunately, little research has been focused (Hopkins et al. 2014). An effective SDP is updated annually or following inspection, either internal or external, to ensure it remains accurate and current. Self-evaluation is a shared responsibility of all members of a school community, who must work collaboratively as a professional learning organisation (Brighouse and Woods, 2014; Estyn, 2019c).

School X had a notable lack of Welsh speakers in the community. Training of members of staff at all levels, could assist with this. Furthermore, staff absence, particularly in the roles of Welsh language lead and subject advisor, impeded Welsh language progress. A whole school initiative with a team of people to fill these roles would better the professional learning community and prevent absence from hindering learning.

Critical reflection is important so as not to become 'trapped in unexamined judgements, interpretations, assumptions and expectations' (Larrivee 2000, in Waring and Evans, 2014). Additionally, the efficacy of listening to all stakeholders is vital for school progress. Regular, structured self-reflection and encouraging participation of all stakeholders will influence my future professional experiences.

Reference List

Brighouse, T. & Woods, D., 2013. *The A-Z of school improvement principles and practice*, London ; New York: Bloomsbury Education.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K., 2002. *Research methods in education*. Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K. and Wyse, D., 2010. *A guide to teaching practice*. Routledge.

Department of Education (NI), 2020. *School Development Planning*, Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-development-planning>, [Accessed 27.03.20]

Donaldson, G.,(2019). *Successful Futures*. [PDF] Available at: <http://file:///C:/Users/emmad/Downloads/Donaldson%20Report%20%20Successful%20Futures%20%20Independent%20Review%20of%20Curriculum%20and%20Assessment%20Arrangements%20in%20Wales.pdf> [Accessed 19 Oct. 2019].

Dunaway, D.M., Kim, D. And Szad, E.R., 2012. Perceptions of the Purpose and Value of the School Improvement Plan Process. *The Educational Forum*, 76(2).

ERW, 2016. *Handbook Cymraeg Campus*, Available at: http://d6vsczyu1rky0.cloudfront.net/30631_b/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Handbook-Cymraeg-Campus.pdf [Accessed 10.03.20]

ERW, 2020. *Cymraeg Campus Language Charter*, Available at: <https://www.erw.wales/schools/teaching-and-learning/language-charter/> [Accessed 04.03.20]

Estyn, 2017. *Supplementary guidance: Welsh*, Available at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Supplementary%20guidance%20-%20%20Welsh%20en.pdf> [Accessed: 12.04.20]

Estyn, 2019. *Online Inspection Report*, Available at: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/0School_0.pdf [Accessed 20.02.20]

Estyn, 2019b. *School Self-Evaluation Improvement Project*, Available at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/school-self-evaluation-improvement-project/inspecting-self-evaluation-new-approach> [Accessed 28.02.20]

Estyn, 2019c. *Including all staff in the self-evaluation process*. Available at:
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/including-all-staff-self-evaluation-process>
[Accessed 20.03.20]

Estyn, 2020. *Common inspection framework*, Available at:
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/inspection-explained/common-inspection-framework>
[Accessed: 22.03.20]

Fullan, M., 1994. *Coordinating top-down and bottom-up strategies for educational reform*. Systemic reform: Perspectives on personalizing education, pp.7-24.

Fullan, M., 2000. The return of large-scale reform. *Journal of educational Change*, 1(1).

Fullan, M., 2000. The three stories of education reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(8), pp.581-584.

Harris, A. and Muijs, D., 2004. *Improving schools through teacher leadership*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Harris, A., 2004. *Distributed leadership and school improvement: leading or misleading?*. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 32(1).

Harris, A., 2010. Leading system transformation. *School leadership and management*, 30(3).

Harris, A., 2013. *School Improvement: What's in it for Schools?*. Routledge.

Hopkins, D., 2003. *School improvement for real*. Routledge.

Hopkins, D., 2003. *School improvement for real*. Routledge.

Hopkins, D., Stringfield, S., Harris, A., Stoll, L. and Mackay, T., 2014. School and system improvement: A narrative state-of-the-art review. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 25(2), pp.257-281.

Mitchell, C. and Sackney, L., 2011. *Profound improvement: Building capacity for a learning community*. Taylor & Francis.

Muijs, D., 2006. *Teacher led school improvement: Teacher leadership in the UK*. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 22(8).

My Local School, (2020). [redacted]. [online] Available at:
[http://mylocalschool.gov.wales/School/\[redacted\]?lang=en](http://mylocalschool.gov.wales/School/[redacted]?lang=en) [Accessed 02.04.20].

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M. and Thomas, S., 2006. *Professional learning communities: A review of the literature*. *Journal of educational change*, 7(4).

Waring, M. and Evans, C., 2014. *Understanding pedagogy: Developing a critical approach to teaching and learning*. Routledge.

Waring, M. and Evans, C., 2014. *Understanding pedagogy: Developing a critical approach to teaching and learning*. Routledge.

Welsh Government, (2014). *School development plans*, Available at:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/school-development-plans.pdf>
[Accessed 23.02.20]

Welsh Government, 2014b. *No. 2677 (W. 265) Education, The Education (School Development Plans, Wales Regulations 2014*

Welsh Government, 2018. *Cymraeg 2050, A Million Welsh Speakers*, Available at:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf> [Accessed 03.03.20]

Welsh Government, 2019b. *Welsh Language Results*, Available at:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-05/welsh-language-results-annual-population-survey-2001-to-2018.pdf> [Accessed 04.03.