

Gallwch ychwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf (Ond yn berthnasol os yr ydych wedi cwblhau aseiniad) / Please add your targets from the previous assignment (Only relevant if you have completed an assignment)

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Proof read to make sure that there are no simple spelling and/or grammatical errors.	I have proof read the document a number of times and have also had it read by other members of my family to check for basic errors.
Targed/Target 2	Take care to explain to the reader the relevance of the literature that you are referring to so that the purpose of it is clear.	I have attempted to link the literature explicitly to the purpose of the assignment.
Targed/Target 3		

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

The task for this assignment is to critically review one aspect of a placement schools' School Development Plan (SDP, also referred to as a School Improvement Plan).

The area of the SDP that will be analysed is '*to support pupils in developing confidence and resilience in their lives.*' This aspect of the SDP has been chosen as it provides clear links with the New Curriculum and the four key purposes. It is also an aspect of students' lives that has become more relevant over recent years with the increased use and influence of social media sites and online information and the pressures associated with it. Studies have shown that these things can have a negative impact on students' mental health and wellbeing (American Association for Suicidology, 2017; Royal Society for Public Health, 2017). Therefore, building confidence and resilience has become a key aspect of the education system.

The focus school is an 11-18 mixed, English medium comprehensive school in a large town in South Wales. There are currently 1212 students on roll. According to school records, 11.9% of students are entitled to free school meals (efsm), which is below the national average.

There is a particular emphasis on promoting positive attitudes towards mental health in this area of Wales due to a high rate of suicide in young people, so much so that it attracted national media coverage and became labelled as a 'suicide epidemic' by the press (Kurz, 2017, Telegraph 2008). The school aim is to eliminate any negative stigma that may have previously been associated with mental health and equip students with the tools to overcome or address any issues they may face during their lifetime, not just when they are students at the school through strategies that are aimed at increasing their confidence and resilience.

With schools being an integral part of society, it is essential that schools provide the most up to date and adequate education and information to the students and is continuously looking to improve its provision. Under the Education (School Development Plans)

(Wales) Regulations 2014, all schools in Wales must have a SDP. The purpose of the SDP is to set out the areas in which the school wishes to improve over a specific period. The idea is that all stakeholders are then fully aware of what the school priorities are; which are long-term, and which are short-term; how the school aims to make these improvements and who is responsible implementing them. The existence of the SDP ensures that the school as a whole has a consistent approach, whilst also allowing external agencies such as local authorities and Estyn being able to clearly see what improvements the school intends to work on and prioritise. The priorities often focus on things such as learning outcomes, staff and student wellbeing, staff development, infrastructure, school budgets and many other things that may be specific to individual schools.

SDP's are intended to be live, working documents that are informed by regular self-evaluation a school undertakes of its own performance and contextual data, primarily by the School Leadership Team (SLT) (Welsh Government, 2014).

Las Hayas et al (2015) highlight that adolescence is critical time to establish the basis of a healthy body and mind. They note that the ever-increasing prevalence of mental health issues and disorders amongst adolescents emphasises the significant need for schools to ensure that mental health and wellbeing from childhood is a primary focus. Patalay and Gage (2019) also concluded from their ten-year study that mental health issues, such as depression and self-harm, had increased considerably and suggest that the trend will keep going upwards if we do not adapt to changing society soon.

The increase in adolescent mental health issues has been recognised as national issue in this country and as a result, it has become a key aspect of the new Curriculum for Wales. The Curriculum places emphasis on healthy and confident individuals within the four key purposes (Donaldson, 2015). However, many schools have already implemented their own strategies for dealing with the mental health of their students, such as the UK Resilience Programme (UKRP)(2007) which was piloted in three schools in the North of England and showed a positive effect of well-being strategies on students metal health and resilience (Challen et al 2007).

Weare and Markham (2005) claim that there is increasing guidance on what needs to be done to improve positive mental health within schools, but they emphasise that any

strategies that are introduced must be done under a whole school approach, which would support mental health strategies being included within the SDP's of all schools.

A further promotion for the use of the whole school approach to mental health initiatives is the work of Humphrey, Lendrum and Wigglesworth (2010) who found that the introduction of the government SEAL programme (Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) had a minimal effect on mental health issues, mainly due to the lack of a consistent whole school approach. They also stressed in their conclusion that the 'null' results in their study should not devalue the importance of mental health within schools. This is a response which is also supported by Weare (2010) who states, "*uncertainties and tensions should not be an excuse for inaction*" (Weare, 2010, p.14). These studies clearly indicate the importance of these strategies being introduced and promoted as a whole, which they would be if included in the schools SDP, but also highlight how difficult it could be to measure improvements in mental health issues within adolescents (Weare, 2010; Wells, Barlow and Brown, 2003).

The priority of building confidence and resilience is something that is being promoted throughout schools in Wales at the moment and will continue to do so upon the implementation of the new curriculum, with the emphasis on confident and healthy individuals as a core purpose (Donaldson, 2015). However, due to the issues identified in the local area that are specific to this school, it appears logical that building confidence and resilience in young people of the area is already a key priority and identified as such in this specific schools SDP. As confidence and resilience come under the broad area of mental health, there can be no one quick fix solution to the issue and as a result, the school has suggested a number of actions to attempt to strengthen confidence and resilience in their students.

The school has recently become one of the first schools in Wales that offer a family counsellor as a result of action point 7.1 of the SDP (Appendix 1). The counsellor is attached to the school for three days a week and discusses issues within family groups. Families are often invited to use the service after issues are identified with a related student within the school, but the service is open to anyone with a relationship to the school. The service has proved to be incredibly popular with the local community and appointments are currently booked up for weeks in advance. As a result, the school are looking to increase the provision of the service to cope with the demand.

With regards to monitoring success, the school have not yet collected any form of data to assess success of the project, but by a simple self-evaluation method of looking at the uptake of the programme, this could clearly be seen as a successful strategy.

The aim of many of these initiatives and the purpose of including more than just the pupils is to attempt to help society flourish. The school believes that involving more people in the way in which the school is run and what issues are raised will result in a more connected society, which would allow individuals to feel confident enough to talk through any issues that they may be experiencing. With clear and obvious support systems in place, the school hopes to help remove the stigma that has previously surrounded mental health issues.

Action point 7.3 (as seen in Appendix 1) is a strategy aimed initially at the staff of the school via a 'mindfulness programme' that staff are able to attend if they wish. Discussions with long standing members of staff at the school highlighted that they had seen incidents of students suffering with depression, anxiety and stress increase dramatically over the last decade and they had taken part in the programme to attempt to understand it. The staff members that attended and who were questioned had found that as well as helping them personally, they felt that the programme had supplied them with a broader knowledge and understanding of the issues facing students, which put them in a better position to be able to assist should they be required to. This is the type of feedback which would allow this strategy to be viewed as a success as quantitative data for this would be difficult to collect. However, this programme is not compulsory and therefore had not been attended by all staff members, only those who had opted to attend. This appears to be against the advice of Weare and Markham (2005), Weare (2010) and Humphrey, Lendrum and Wiglesworth (2010), who all highlight the importance of a whole school approach.

The aim of the mindfulness programme is to promote a growth mindset attitude which studies have shown is proven to help build resilience within students (Dweck, 2007; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Seaton, 2018). The way in which the SDP suggested that this target (Appendix 1) was to be implemented was by teachers and staff to constantly promote and encourage persevere during difficult tasks. The success was evident throughout the school with many displays in classrooms and common areas promoting growth mindset (see Appendix 2). However, what cannot be measured is how much attention the students paid to these displays and whether they were affective in changing

the attitudes and behaviour of students. There are also studies that suggest that such displays can actually defer student's attention away from learning (Fisher et al, 2014; Barrett et al, 2015) and there was no evidence to suggest that the school had taken this into account.

This school places particular importance on the delivery of Health and Well Being lessons to promote positive mental attitudes and aims to co-ordinate its flexible approach to the curriculum with other stakeholders within the school. Parents and carers often invited to meetings with the leader of the programme to discuss concerns that parents may have with regards to their child's mental wellbeing and how they can be addressed and approached sensibly within the school environment. The students are also given options as to which topics they would like to discuss, with news stories and events often affecting students more than people may have previously been aware of. For example, students over the past year have asked to discuss issues surrounding cyber bullying and perceived consent. The ability to choose those topics that would not usually be discussed in a school surrounding has proven in studies to have had the effect of increasing students' confidence and resilience around these topics (McIntyre, Pedder & Rudduck, 2005).

Upon discussing the Health and Wellbeing lessons confidentially with students, it appeared that students had found some of the information incredibly useful and that they enjoyed learning new coping mechanisms in respect of dealing with cyber bullying and consent. The resilience tools that they had been shown in classes and techniques in how to deal with challenging situations had been implemented by some students spoken to, even though we were still quite early on in the school year when discussions had taken place.

These development plans are often reviewed annually using evidence that has been gathered throughout the year. Some changes or moderations that are needed will be easily identified through data, whereas others may be as a result of student voice or societal changes. However, even though there appears to be limitations with regards to the data collected in relation to some strategies, such as the one being looked at in this instance, studies have shown that the school and self-evaluation methods are more appropriate in assessing the success or failure of long term strategies as they are able to see the effects overtime (MacBeath,1999).

The aim to increase students' confidence and resilience is a difficult aim to measure, as discussed, but successful results could be seen as a change of attitude and behaviour of some students. A lot of school targets will allow quantitative data to be collected and analysed at regular intervals through the year, but an aim on improving confidence and resilience is not one that can be easily collated into workable data.

It is clearly evident that the schools have made a significant attempt to promote resilience and confidence whilst also removing the stigma around mental health issues, there appears to be very little evidence on how these strategies have positively impacted the students.

Whilst discussing the Health and Wellbeing lessons with students, one of the responses given raised a further issue; the students found the provisions useful but were still not confident enough to ask the questions themselves. With the primary focus of these lessons meant to be building confidence and resilience, were the strategies being used actually working? When the students were questioned as to why they hadn't asked the questions themselves, the responses included not wanting to be made fun of, not wanting to look stupid and simply embarrassment that they didn't already know the answers. When these findings were put to the assigned leaders in this area, they felt that the students were confident enough to ask questions. Therefore, there appeared to be a difference in student and teacher opinion in the success of some of these measures.

A possible way to address these inconsistent responses may be questionnaires at regular intervals throughout the year which would be aimed at identifying increased confidence and resilience. There are a vast number of psychometric tests that could be done easily as part of pastoral or lesson time that would allow the school to clearly track improvements or identify any areas which were a cause for concern.

Another issue raised through discussions was the positive impact of the 'Mindfulness Programme' which was run by the school counsellor. All staff that had been on the programme found it to be helpful to them personally and in how they approached issues with the students. However, this course was not compulsory, and staff were only invited to attend out of choice. With the feedback from the programme being so positive, it would be an idea to introduce this as a compulsory element and therefore part of the whole school approach that has been advocated for this type of strategy.

The aim of this assignment was to research one aspect of the school SDP and critically reflect on the implementation, impact and evidence of the chosen aspect. With the chosen aspect of this assignment being confidence and resilience, it is difficult for the school to collect quantitative data, but not impossible. The school has clearly given great consideration and importance to this issue by the programmes, lessons and resources they have made available (which was a major factor in it being chosen for this assignment), but they appear to be satisfied with simply implementing these plans as opposed to verifying if any of these actually make an impact on the confidence and resilience of the students that they are meant to be helping. The school appears to be focused on assisting teachers, students and parents as much as they possibly can with a large number of incentives and resources being made available to them, but could possibly look to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes and concentrating on the ones that are proving successful. However, as the SDP's are a live, working document, SLT may be looking to do this at a later date.

The research undertaken has proven how much work goes into creating a SDP and how many stakeholders are involved in maintaining and implementing changes. There is a great deal of research, thought and time put into creating such a plan and all aspects of the plan are aimed at improving the school in some way, whether it be structural improvements, wellbeing or teaching improvements and needs to be embraced as a whole school approach by all stakeholders for maximum impact. There also needs to be some form of measurement to enable to identify successes or failures within a school to allow the plan to adapt accordingly, which is the purpose of the plan being a working document.

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Appendix 1:Extract from the relevant section of the school SDP.

	- By ensuring the conditions as described in the STPCD are met in school - By consulting staff on the following: - All aspects of the SDP - The features of school life which contribute to positive working conditions in school - The school calendar - By providing professional advice and counselling to staff members on request			Staff survey conducted in May/June 2019 and influences development planning in subsequent year.	
6. To ensure the school's Strategic Equality Plan is effective in promoting the school ethos and reputation for positive inclusion	- By October 2019, agree objectives for the Strategic Equality Plan to all staff - By November 2019, prepare school context in relation to equality and share with staff and governors - By December 2019, agree priorities and formulate strategic plan	TP		- The establishment of a robust Strategic Equality Plan with a clear rationale based promoting equality of opportunity, elimination of harassment and celebration of diversity, - Staff value objectives and associated strategy	
7. To support pupils in developing confidence and resilience in their lives.	- By identifying and working with external partners to raise awareness of mental health issues - By using the Time to Change resources with identified pupils, and the school PSE programme, so that awareness raising and practical tips are part of the taught curriculum. - By promoting staff mental health by inviting all to participate in 'Mindfulness Programme' run by	KO TP KO TP KO TP		- All pupils in the school participate in preventative programmes to raise awareness of how to cope with mental illness and the stresses of school life. - Through Health and Wellbeing AoLE planning, a sustained approach to improving pupils' resilience is planned through the INSET and PSHE programmes, and Research and Development role - All teachers consciously support pupils in developing resilience by constantly encouraging pupils to	
	the school counsellor and others. - By enabling all staff to access specialist counselling services in if they need to do so. - By responding in full to pupil voice comments on PSE programmes, so that there is focus on topics identified. - By supporting all pupils in understanding methods of dealing with conflict and developing healthy relationships – avoiding passive and aggressive approaches, and choosing an assertive path.	KO TP KO TP KO TPHYs		persevere and remain purposeful when they face difficulties or seek other solutions when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful (growth mindsets) The school's pastoral programmes promote assertive (rather than aggressive or passive) behaviours in personal relationships, and that this is understood by all those responsible for pastoral care.	

Appendix 2:Examples of Wall displays supporting Growth Mindset

