

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	Use appropriate format and headings.	I have followed the guidance regarding suggested structure.
Target 2	Use a wide range of literature and predominantly use literature that is grounded in wider research.	I have engaged with a wide range of literature, much of which is grounded in wider research.
Target 3	Secondary points need to be followed up.	I have followed up secondary points.

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

This assignment will consider how my placement school develops one aspect of its School Development Plan (SDP), namely improving attendance and will include a critical reflection of its actions, impact and evidence base. For the purpose of this assignment, the placement school will be referred to as School X, in adherence to BERA guidelines (Bera, 2018) for anonymity. School X is a primary school located in a deprived area in South West Wales (Estyn.gov.wales, 2020). There are approximately 240 pupils aged 3-11 years at the school. Approximately 13% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the average for Wales of 18%. School X has eight single age classes. The pupil teacher ratio is approximately 25:1. The school has identified approximately 23% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Almost all pupils come from English-speaking homes. Very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Very few are from a minority ethnic background or learn English as an additional language. The last Estyn inspection conducted in 2014 scored School X 'good' for their performance and 'good' for their prospects for improvement.

School improvement is defined as a systematic and continuous effort targeted at employing changes that accomplish educational goals and better student outcomes (Brighouse and Woods, 2013). These changes also serve to support the school's ability to create and sustain further improvements, which according to Schildkamp (2019), can be conceptualised

as an iterative process where data plays a significant role. With this in mind, schools develop SDPs, which Brighouse and Woods (1999) believe offer a concise statement defining the priorities that have been identified and the actions required to address them, along with the support and resources to be used to implement and achieve them. They further state that the purpose of school development planning is to allow the school to reach the highest level of effectiveness in meeting the needs of its pupils in a culture characterised by change (Brighouse and Woods, 2013). A view supported by the Welsh Government (2014), who advise that the SDP defines a strategy for improvement and sets out the steps the school will take to improve outcomes for pupils. The importance of the SDP, and the need for a clear purpose and end target, is clear therefore if the school is to move forward and make sustained improvements. Experts also advise that the improvement targets set need to be rigorous whilst remaining attainable (Hanover Research, 2014).

The SDP operates as a cycle: evaluation, planning, implementation and reviewing impact (Welsh Government, 2014; Hanover Research, 2014). A systematic approach is therefore employed which promotes a collaborative effort by the whole school community to shape the future of the school. There needs to be a continuous process based on a school culture where plans and policies are continually being developed, implemented, evaluated and revised against the aims of the school. In addition, it offers a platform for collaborative creativity which can be tailored to each school's needs. SDPs are monitored regularly during the development cycle, and are reviewed at least annually (Welsh Government, 2014; Hanover Research, 2014; Brighouse and Woods, 1999; Brighouse and Woods, 2013).

A key element of school development planning is that of attendance improvement (All Wales Attendance Framework, 2012). Many experts believe that there is a statistically significant link between attendance and attainment (Lieutenant et al. 2018; Estyn, 2015; Daraganova, Mullan and Edwards, 2014). According to Cook et al. (2017) and Sawyer (2018) a connection exists between chronic absenteeism and pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, Estyn (2015) also identify a relationship between absenteeism and pupils eligible for free school meals. The problem of absenteeism is therefore one schools need to act pro-actively to address, as according to Heyne et al. (2019) and McCoy et al. (2012), it has the potential to cause both long, and short-term problems for children, those immediately around them and also the wider community. This view is supported by Havik, Bru and Ertesvåg (2015), who state the importance of establishing the reasons, whether legitimate or illegitimate, for absenteeism - as this knowledge could be key for both school and pupil development. The importance of preventing recurring absenteeism and school

refusal (non-attendance with parental knowledge), is therefore significant as highlighted by Heyne, Sauter, and Maynard (2015) and Rasasingham (2015).

Akbaşı, Şahin, and Yılmaz (2017) advocate the use of computer technology to identify absenteeism, which allows trends of any type to be identified early. A view endorsed by Chu et al. (2019), who describe developing and piloting an online attendance tracker. Their system utilises a centralised school management system where teachers record attendance, as is typical in schools. To compliment this system, Ingul, Havik and Heyne (2019) suggest developing the role of School Attendance Teams within a school's community whose primary focus is the development and management of school systems that facilitate early identification of attendance problems.

It is also worth noting that a number of both behavioural and cognitive-behavioural interventions have been devised to combat truancy or school refusal; and some of these interventions have been found to have a positive effect on attendance (Maynard et al. 2013; Maynard et al. 2018). An approach supported by Maeda and Heyne (2019) who do however highlight that continuing development is still required for this approach. Both Kearney (2008) and Carroll (2015) emphasise the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to promote understanding and intervention in order for the field of School Attendance Problems to advance. Many recognise the need for a varied approach to tackle the problem of absenteeism with Claes, Hooghe and Reeskens (2009) and Ekstrand (2015) stating that a shift in perspective is required to prevent absence and encourage attendance. It has been suggested that many pupils who absent themselves consider school work meaningless, involving no challenges, a fact recognised by Balkis, Arslan and Duru (2016) who comment that in order to challenge students, schools must hold some meaning for the individual.

Lieutenant et al. (2018), Welsh Government (2011) and Estyn (2015) all argue the importance of attendance policies (APs) being clear and consistent. Claes, Hooghe and Reeskens (2009) also support this view adding that absenteeism may be promoted if APs are substandard. A belief emphasised by Marburger (2006) who argues that enforced APs increase pupil attendance and attainment. Birioukov and Brant- Birioukov (2019) however question the effectiveness of APs that do not pay credence to issues such as poverty, abuse and mental health. The importance of positive school and parent relationships in addressing absenteeism is also highlighted as being vital by many experts (Sahin, Arseven, and Kiliç, 2016; Cook et al. 2017; Akbaşı, Şahin, and Yılmaz, 2017). In Wales, schools collaborate with the Education Welfare Service in order to address and resolve issues related to attendance as advised by Welsh Government (2011). It is also recommended that they recognise the importance, when supporting families experiencing difficulties, that multi-

agency working is employed alongside pupil centred practice to identify the support needs of pupils (Welsh Government, 2016; Childs and Grooms, 2018).

In line with Welsh Government (2014) guidance, School X conducted a robust process of self-evaluation. There are five main points to be considered in this year's SDP; raising standards across the school, improvement in wellbeing and attitudes to learning, Welsh standards and bilingualism, improving school attendance and leadership and management. The latter three points are all Estyn recommendations following their last inspection. The school have evaluated where they currently stand and have set targets for improvement. They have also provided examples of the evidence they will use to highlight progress made. Each point also highlights opportunities for data analysis – both qualitative data (for example Person Centred Plans (PCPs) (Welsh Government, 2015) and Additional Learning Needs provision) and quantitative data, for instance attendance data (Appendix 1). Stakeholders are clearly detailed with staff responsibilities, outside agencies, parental support and community links reflected upon. Strategic planning has been used to develop an action plan highlighting responsibility, actions required and evidence to support outcomes. There is also detailed analysis of data gathered to inform and influence future plans and allow for the impact of each point to be measured.

Having considered the SDP, I have decided to focus upon the issue of raising attendance as my point of consideration. The SDP highlights that attendance for 2018/2019 was 93.14% compared to 93.25% for 2017/2018. Attendance, as at February 2020, was 94.47%, a slight improvement on the previous year however not reaching the targeted 95%. The SDP clearly shows that the school recognises that the responsibility of improving attendance does not fall on one particular service or organisation, and efforts have clearly been made to ensure that multiple partnerships are considered a significant area of focus. Welsh Government (2011), Estyn (2015) and Lieutenant et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of schools having a clear AP, however one does not exist at School X and this should be a priority for the Leadership Team to address.

As suggested by Chu et al. (2019) the school use an attendance tracker to analyse attendance data on a daily basis, this allows for early identification of absenteeism irrespective of its nature. Parents of absent pupils are telephoned shortly after registration or are sent a text message as suggested by Akbaşlı, Şahin, and Yılmaz, (2017) to investigate the reasons for absenteeism. If no reason is provided families are then contacted by letter. These actions clearly provide immediate data which can be acted upon however, they are dependent upon parental response and pupils regularly absent would need to be noted and targeted for further investigation to take place in the school environment. It is recognised that

constructively educating parents regarding the relationship between attendance and attainment, before highlighting the potential sanctions that could be imposed for absence is therefore essential (Estyn, 2015; Cook et al. 2017; Akbaşı, Şahin, and Yılmaz, 2017).

The school seeks support from the Education Workforce Service to deal with attendance issues, and has also worked with Education Welfare Officers to aid families at risk and identify reasons for absenteeism (Havik, Bru and Ertesvåg, 2015) and Social Services are also involved where appropriate. The school along with the Local Authority, also hold meetings with families of persistent truants to address absenteeism. Each of these are positive ways forward. However, more focused time could be spent in the school setting working with specific children to offer support and guidance which may throw some light upon the reasons for their absenteeism. Consideration could then be given to triggers which may be emotional, motivational or family based. This could then lead to tailored education plans being created for pupils with poor attendance (Havik, Bru and Ertesvåg, 2015).

With more pupil involvement in mind the school have introduced EPIC learning (Everyone planning in class) in an attempt to incorporate pupil voice, giving pupils opportunities to contribute to planning through teacher led activities with a view to improving pupil engagement as advised by Estyn (2017) and Hannikainen and Rasku-Puttonen (2010). The school recognise that, as advised by Reid et al. (2010) further development is required to include pupil voice opportunities as gathering information from pupils regarding any barriers they face in terms of school attendance could prove beneficial. Consideration should be paid however, to those less confident and articulate pupils who may refrain from taking part, therefore feedback box and mentor class strategies could be employed (Mayes, Finneran and Black, 2019).

The school regularly encourages group work through clubs, class lessons and 'circle time' (Glazzard, 2016). This allows pupils to be prompted to engage in discussions regarding attendance where they are given the opportunity to have their own voice heard (Quinn and Owen, 2016). Each class then has the opportunity to discuss its attendance statistics so creating a competitive view of attendance and developing an element of peer pressure regarding good attendance (Carroll, 2011), which in some instances encourages pupils not to let their class down by not attending. Many pupils have displayed an increase in confidence and emotional wellbeing during these lessons, which is a key factor in Donaldson's Successful Futures (2015).

The school uses extrinsic rewards, as suggested by Fryer (2011) and Estyn (2015), to motivate good attendance. These are currently in the form of weekly certificates, trophies, and gift vouchers for the best attender. The use of this reward scheme has encouraged

some pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning as they understand how a day's attendance affects their monthly attendance. However, analysis of the attendance data shows that rewards for good attendance in the form of trophies/certificates, has not proved to be sufficiently effective as many recipients do not see the value of the reward. The school are currently offering gift vouchers to try to promote interest though it might be possible to extend this to termly awards, with a school trip for those over a certain percentage, which has proved to have an impact in some schools.

An emphasis has been placed on the use of differentiated learning (Prast et al. 2015) to present learning activities to pupils that are better matched to their ability. Activities provided are aimed at making the process of learning interesting, such as educational visits that engage pupils interest and, in turn encourage them to attend school. The school has recognised that by using a variety of teaching approaches combined with the weekly focus on attendance during assembly, that pupils are more familiar with the concept that their success at school is directly linked to their attendance.

Other methods used have included regular feedback to parents during termly consultation evenings, letters showing attendance and individual Headteacher meetings. All of which are positive approaches, though they do of course rely upon parental engagement which in itself is an area to develop. It is important also for the school to be aware of the views of Visaria et al. (2016) who argue that successful strategies to promote attendance can lose their effect over time and need to be monitored, evaluated, reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis. This can be of significant importance when several strategies are being tried that are not linked strategically or coherently.

Breakfast club is available, however there are a variety of further engagement opportunities that could be introduced. These include additional after school clubs and homework clubs which could also serve to promote social inclusion (Garn et al. 2014), however funding may be an issue, and school personnel would also be required (Davies et al. 2014). It has also been suggested that placing senior staff at school entrances to welcome and dismiss pupils each day (Maxwell, 2012) could have a positive effect.

Having considered the ways in which absenteeism is dealt at School X, it is clear that some approaches are more successful than others and that only a multi-faceted approach, which is flexible to change, will ensure maximum impact. The emphasis on data analysis is of great importance and daily reflections upon absent pupils, when considered with historical data, will highlight pupils requiring further investigation. Working collaboratively with all stakeholders is imperative, especially parents, as collaboration with parents gives way to

developing relationships based on quality and respect (Epstein, 2001; Epstein and Sheldon, 2016; Gestwicki, 2016; Ward, 2013). A point reinforced by Cox-Peterson (2011) who believes this will therefore ensure that a responsibility for achieving common goals is established which will ultimately result in improvements in children's wellbeing (Reed and Walker, 2015; Gonzalez-Mena, 2017; Hornby, 2011) and can increase the number of positive outcomes for children in terms of academia and socio-emotional development (Kurtulmus, 2016). Estyn (2015) suggest that schools who are able to improve attendance and raise standards, make use of a holistic approach. Their evidence suggests that promoting attendance needs to be an ongoing focus which can break the deprivation cycle and improve standards. Points with which I agree wholeheartedly, as it is through understanding the whole child and recognising their many facets; their learning styles, their abilities, their fears and the constraints placed upon them by both nature and nurture, that I as a teacher will be able to help them to realise their true potential. Ensuring I plan lessons to motivate them, differentiate work set to help them to achieve their potential, provide them with a classroom that is a safe haven where they feel valued and establish good home links based on a mutual respect – will all combine to encourage them to attend school. I feel as a teacher that this will be the best contribution I can make to improve school attendance.

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Appendix 1

Priority	4. To have robust care, support & guidance within the school that includes improved attendance figures (ESTYN RECOMMENDATION)
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Where are we now? based on our self-evaluation	Targets & Success Criteria We will know we have succeeded when:	Key Sources of Evidence
1. Attendance for 2018/2019 was 93.14% (93.25% last year) (see attendance data) 2. Of those 46 pupils targeted for having attendance lower than 90 %, 33 pupils (71.7%) improved attendance by 1.5 % or more, 3 pupils (6.5%) improved by less than 1.5% and 10 pupils (21.7%) had lower attendance 3. The School has PCPs in place for all pupils 4. ALN provision is in place for those pupils who are not working at the expected Outcome/Level and for those pupils who are not making the expected progress from their baseline	• The school has achieved 95% attendance for the academic year 2019/2020 • Individual pupils targeted have improved attendance by 1.5% or more • PCPs are in place for all pupils • ALN provision in place and effectively monitored • Use of multi-agency working • New EWS support and documentation in place • Safeguarding training and revision for whole staff	Whole school attendance data Individual pupil attendance data Groups of pupils' attendance data PCPs Outcomes/Levels Data Provision evaluation IEPs/IBPs/IDPs/Group IEPs Reviews Multi-agency reports Use of new EWS documentation Safeguarding training records

Who is leading on this project?	Staff	JT & PG (ALNCO)	Governing Body	Link Governor for Well-being		
Step 1: Preparing (Seeking advice, viewing good practice, professional development)		By whom?	Start	End	Est. Cost	Source
- Seek advice from EWO on individual pupils targeted for low attendance - Analyse Attendance data - support meeting		JT	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
Update staff on Codes for register and use of notes		JT	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
Keep enquiring/learning about new initiatives the school can use to improve attendance and also keep informed about County guidelines		PG	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	£123.85	EIG
ALNCO to attend various courses in order to develop PCPs, new Code of Practice (Feb. 2019) and share Good Practice with other ALNCOs		County	Autumn Term 2019	Autumn Term 2019	*****	EIG
All staff to have updated Safeguarding training						
Step 2: Action Plan (Activities & strategies to make improvement happen)		By whom?	Start	End	Est. Cost	Source
Analyse and Target those pupils with below 90% attendance for the academic year 2018/2019 – speak with EWO		JT	Autumn Term 2019	Termly	-	-
Parents of absent pupils telephoned each morning after 9:30 (if they haven't informed the school already) to be asked why the pupil is not in school – letter home if no reason given – new documentation to be used for leave of absence etc.		HM	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
Continue with attendance cup and teacher reward awarded to the class with the highest attendance each week but also include most improved		JT	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
Continue with termly and yearly certificates and rewards for pupils and class with 100%, high and best class attendance		JT	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
Continue with regular feedback to parents during termly consultation evening, letters showing attendance, individual Head teacher meetings and formal communication involving EWO and/or Social Services		JT	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	-	-
- ALNCO to feedback information from various courses - Pupils and staff to complete any new and review PCPs yearly - ALN paperwork in place, provision monitored and standards/progress evaluated		All staff	Autumn Term 2019	On-going	£247.70	EIG

Step 3: Reviewing Impact (Milestones)				
Date	Monitoring Activity	By whom?	Tangible signs of progress against milestones and / or further work required <i>(not merely completion of activities or tasks)</i>	RAG Progress
Daily	Registers Late Book	JT/HM	M1: Registers analysed by JT/HM by 9:30 – telephone call/text home Late book completed after gates/doors locked to classrooms at 9:00 Use of new EWS documentation and communication procedures	
Weekly	Attendance Data	JT	M2: September 2019 - Attendance data from 2017/2018 is analysed, pupils below 90% targeted Identify trends for attendance/latecomers Attendance cup is presented weekly in the Friday morning whole school assembly Attendance Data to be posted on school web site and School Twitter account	
Termly	Attendance Data	JT	M3: Analyse attendance figures and reasons Work with EWO on cases of consistent poor attendance Attendance Assemblies - certificates for pupils with attendance between 97-99.9% Special certificates for 100% attenders for the Term and reward - improved attendance certificates Rag Rated letters to parents reporting on their child's attendance Parent Evenings - Child's attendance from September is discussed with parents Attendance reported termly to Governing Body	
Summer Term 2020	Attendance Data	JT	M4: Special certificate and reward presented to 100% attendance for the year Class with the best average attendance will have a reward Reports to parents – individual pupil's attendance is reported to parents Analyse Attendance data for year – are we 95%?	

Autumn Term 2019	PCPs	ALNCO All staff	M5: All pupils to have PCPs updated and any new pupils created Share Good Practice of creating PCPs with pupils PCPs in use	
Autumn Term 2019	Groups - Targeted pupils (Forecasted data)	ALNCO JT	M6: Analysis of groups of learners – are they on target? If not, why? What are we doing about it? What provision/intervention is in place? How can we challenge mainstream?	
Autumn Term 2019	Safeguarding Training	County	M7: Do all staff who come in to contact with pupils have the relevant safeguarding training?	