

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

Gallwch yschwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf gan ddefnyddio'r tbal isod. /

Please add your targets from the previous assignment using the table below.

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Synthesise arguments when discussing your literature	Linked the literature together when discussing
Targed/Target 2	Improve structure of your work to define sections	Use clearer language to signal the different sections of my essay

An essential part of a school's work is to self-evaluate and set targets to guide their improvement. In order to do this, all schools in Wales are required to complete a school development plan (SDP) which sets out what needs to be done, how this will be achieved, and who is in charge of enacting it (Brighouse and Woods, 2013). This essay will examine how SDPs are developed and evaluated, with a focus on one target set out in the SDP from the school I attend for my first Professional Teaching Experience (PTE). The chosen aspect for this essay is the target to develop the provision for more able and talented (MAT) pupils and thus improve the performance of these pupils at Key Stage Four who achieve five or more A*-As at GCSE. This essay will therefore discuss the literature surrounding this provision, as well the literature on the process of creating a school development plan. In line with BERA (2018) guidelines, the identity of this school cannot be revealed. However, to provide some context, it was described by Estyn (2016) as an English-medium comprehensive under the Swansea education authority, with pupils aged eleven to sixteen.

Firstly, it is important to set out what a SDP is and why it is important. Continuous school improvement has been defined by Hanover Research (2014) as the process of systematically planning improvement and then tracking the progress over time. Schools put this into place by writing a SDP, which allows for regular self-evaluation and provides a record for all of the school's targets on how they aim to improve pupil outcomes (Welsh Government, 2014). These targets must set out how the school intends to ensure that all pupils are able to achieve their potential and therefore must always relate back to how this will improve the effectiveness of instruction and teaching pupils receive (Hanover Research, 2014; Welsh Government, 2014). Both Hanover Research (2014) and the Welsh Government (2014) agree that these targets should be rigorous and motivational, but also achievable for all staff and pupils.

Though a school gets a new SDP at the beginning of each year, the process is continuous and takes place through the year. It emphasises the needs of pupils, prioritises them, and uses data to make any decisions on strategies and targets (Hanover Research, 2014). The Welsh Government (2014) describes this as taking place in four stages: self-evaluation, where schools reflect on their progress; planning, where schools then involve all stakeholders in how to best be effective for their pupils; making improvement and acting by implementing the strategies set out and finally; reviewing the impact of their work. Staff and governors are constantly evaluating their SDP and look to determine how successful it has been created, developed and implemented (Teare, 1997). Arguably, the importance of this process cannot be understated. Only through honest reflection and self-evaluation can schools become aware of what they do well and what could be improved (Welsh Government, 2014). Similarly, Brighouse and Woods (2013) maintain how it is necessary for

schools to self-assess the extent they are meeting the needs for all their pupils and how this can be developed to benefit them.

For this essay, the development of provisions for MAT pupils at Key Stage Four has been selected as the aspect of the SDP from my school during PTE1 which will be explored. According to Hanover Research (2014), pupil achievement is one of the most frequent and prioritised aspect of SDPs, typically focusing on the grades that pupils achieve. This has particularly become a priority in Wales after the Welsh Assembly Government's aim to develop Wales as a 'learning country', so that all citizens would have the best opportunities and maximise their potential (Wallace and Donnelly, 2004). For this to happen, it is important for all pupils to be appropriately challenged in their education and thus requires teachers to differentiate the curriculum put in place (Teare, 1997; Donnelly and Scott, 2009).

This especially applies to pupils who are considered more able and talented. There are varying definitions of what makes a MAT pupil. In Wales, the term has been defined as pupils who often "require extended opportunities across the curriculum" compared to the general cohort of learners in their class and school (Department for Training and Education, 2003, p. 8; Donnelly and Scott, 2009). These pupils exist in every school, but the context of their classes and fellow peers informs that they are MAT pupils, as in their own school they may require greater depth to their learning and extension tasks, it may be different if they attended another school (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008). As a result of this, MAT pupils from different schools should not be compared to one another (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 2003). Therefore, there arguably cannot be a general 'level', 'grade' or national criteria beyond this definition that would classify pupils as more able and talented.

Consequently, the identification of these pupils must be fluid and reliant on identifying them in context (Donnelly and Scott, 2009). The processes put in place to identify these pupils should be broadly based to identify those who could achieve higher standards or may be underperforming (Department for Training and Education, 2003). These opportunities for identification must therefore be available for all pupils, from those in minority ethnic groups or different cultures, to those who are looked after or those who are young carers (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 2003). It has also been stressed by both the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (2003) and Wallace and Donnelly (2004) that the identification of MAT pupils should not be done at one point in their school careers. Instead, they should be frequent and continuous, as pupils develop at different rates and some may not display more able and talented abilities until they are older, more mature and have gained confidence.

The literature has also emphasised the dangers of leaving MAT pupils unfulfilled and unchallenged in their education. If MAT pupils are not sufficiently stimulated and challenged in their learning, then they may coast or become frustrated with their education (Donnelly and Scott, 2009; Wallace and Donnelly, 2004). This allows for MAT pupils to underachieve and not reach their full potential, which may be especially important when teaching a mixed ability group (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 2003; Wallace and Donnelly, 2004). As Wallace and Scott (2004) acknowledge, there is no one way to achieve this, and will differ from school to school, relying on the strengths of its staff and the opportunities available in their community.

To put this into practice, schools need to develop an action plan that ensures there is a whole school approach to meet the needs of MAT pupils (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008; Department for Training and Education, 2003). For the school I attended during PTE1, their action point in the SDP was to develop the provisions for MAT pupils at Key Stage Four, which would result in an increase in the number of pupils achieving more than five GCSEs at A*-A. As the Department for Training and Education (2003) suggests, all schools should provide the provisions for pupils to secure the best results for their own ability. In the school's SDP, this is fulfilled by the call for provision from the network Seren, who provide extra-curricular experiences and aim to expand pupils' horizons to more competitive institutions for higher education (CollegesWales, 2018). This provision would also aim to provide pupils with a supportive learning environment, that encourages and supports good self-confidence and self-esteem, which is required for all pupils to learn effectively and reach their potential (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 2003).

To ensure all of this is put into action, the school must meet the various required points for an effective SDP. The work done here must be strategically planned. This must be done from the planning done by the teacher to that done on a macro level by the school (Brighouse and Woods, 2013). They must also ensure there is a timescale to follow and a way to measure how effective the provision has been on pupil outcomes (Welsh Government). To do this for the MAT provision at this school, they have set the timescale for it to be developed from July 2019 to August 2020, when the final evaluation of this year's SDP will take place once the GCSE results have been released. However, it will also be monitored throughout the year, ensuring that the correct pupils have been identified, which is part of the action point's success criteria (Department for Training and Education, 2003).

This self-evaluation and measurement of impact is also guaranteed through the setting out of their own success criteria for this action point and the evidence that should be gathered to

evaluate whether the criteria have been met. Their success criteria specified that MAT pupils would be identified through Key Stage Four progress checks, an assertive mentoring programme would be introduced for these pupils and that links with Seren would be established so that these pupils would be provided with exciting opportunities. Arguably, by using the progress checks as evidence it does allow for all subjects to assess who are their MAT pupils based off their own context and does not forget pupils who may be more able in non-academic subjects. The cost of these provisions must also be considered and have been done in this SDP. As suggested by Whybra (2000), at times the resources available to MAT pupils may be limited due to the school budget and the fact that they may race through the materials given at a faster rate. This school has accounted for the resources needed for this by naming the cover cost it would take for staff to attend meetings and for days to be organised for the MAT pupils. To check that these provisions were put into place, the evidence that would be gathered and reflected upon would be the mentoring records, the documentation created for the progress checks, and finally the GCSE results themselves.

Another key aspect addressed is the involvement of the school's stakeholders. For one, they allocated the staff to oversee this, including one of the assistant headteachers. This ensures that leadership is distributed across the school, which Hanover Research (2014) suggests creates a culture of collaboration in the school and increase buy-in to the process.

Furthermore, having different members of staff, from different departments and areas in the school, in charge of different action point also has the potential to ensure that the aims and means of improvement are understood by all staff (Brighouse and Woods, 2013). These teachers must also be accepting of the needs for these MAT pupils and accept that they may at times have a greater ability at certain tasks than themselves (Whybra, 2000). Governors of the school are involved in the process by monitoring the policy, its implementation and also being a part of the evaluation process (Department for Training and Education, 2003). Furthermore, the Seren Network arguably becomes a stakeholder through this action point, as the school is using an outside organisation to develop its MAT provision.

From my own experience in this school, I can say that I have observed MAT provision being put in place. This occurs on a larger level with withdrawal programmes and the setting of core subjects, to the smaller level provisions such as having tiered and differentiated lesson objectives and one on one encouragement in class to push further. For example, whilst I was teaching GCSE History, my subject mentor and class teacher identified the pupils the school knew to be MAT and so instructed me to ensure these pupils were pushed further so to provide them with the best opportunity to gain a higher grade.

I was aware of a few occasions where pupils had been extracted from lessons to participate in extra-curricular activities as part of being a MAT pupil in the school. As suggested by Whybra (2000), this school is like many who have established withdrawal programmes to provide provisions for their MAT pupils. These provisions do take place across the school's age range, and it appears there are more in place for those in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. Arguably, this may be because it is less 'harmful' as such to take pupils out of lessons at Key Stage 3, than miss content required for exams at Key Stage 4. However, if the provisions are to be developed to increase the number of pupils gaining five A*-As in August 2020, then arguably there should be more structure to how often these extra-curricular sessions occur.

The mentor meetings that do take place I believe can provide many benefits to the pupils. Not only do they provide another way for the school to track the progress of their MAT pupils, they also present an opportunity for the pupils themselves. By assigning them a mentor who is most suited to their talents and interests, it could enable the pupils to seek more specific advice for their decisions at Key Stage Five, potential future careers or providing emotional support to their wellbeing. It should be acknowledged that GCSEs can be a very stressful part of a pupil's life and so having this support may be equally important as academic support to a MAT pupil.

Going forward, it may be beneficial to put in place more in-school provisions across all areas of learning and experience. My main experience in the school took place within my own AoLE, but I believe it would be helpful to ensure that there was a conformity in how MAT pupils are treated in lessons across all departments. The teachers in the school all seem to share the same purpose when concerned with MAT pupils, as suggested is required by Teare (1997). Nevertheless, it may remain a practical suggestion for all departments to agree on the specific provisions they will strive to put in place for all MAT pupils in their lessons. This may take the form of concentrating more on exam technique and practice questions, or potentially stretching their content knowledge. Alternatively, the school could decide to create more opportunities out of school hours for their MAT pupils, either as after school or lunchtime sessions, as suggested by Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (2003). However, these provisions must also ensure that they are appropriate for each subject and do not put any unneeded pressure on the MAT pupils.

In conclusion, this essay has examined what a SDP is, how it benefits a school, and specifically looked at the action point addressing the provision for MAT pupils at Key Stage Four in my first placement school. From this, I have learnt how vital it is to implement an effective SDP for schools to make considerable improvement, especially when it comes to

providing consistent advice and instructions for all staff and departments across the school. It has also provided me with the opportunity to examine the literature written on MAT pupils and the provision they require. For example, it has alerted me to the different types of provision available in Wales, such as the Seren network. Furthermore, it has reinforced the need to consider planning appropriate tasks with the appropriate level of challenge for all pupils and how these may need to be adapted to engage everyone (Winstanley, 2009). Therefore, in the future this assignment has provided me with the information to further my professional development concerning MAT provision, especially when concerning Key Stage Four and has altered me to the significance of the SDP.

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