

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	Work on text referencing.	Used the Harvard referencing guide provided by the university:
Targed/Target 2	To develop criticality interpreting ideas and theories, identifying links as well as criticisms.	Thinking of main arguments and criticism linked to the documentation sourced.
Targed/Target 3		

How a school develops relationship and sexuality education in its SDP: a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact and evidence base.

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Introduction

This report focuses on the School Development Plan (SDP) of a primary school which will be referred to as “School X” as according to BERA (2018). The SDP is based on targets identified from the evaluation of the 2022/2023 SDP, and was informed by the school’s vision, national and local priorities, self-evaluation findings, and ESTYN recommendations (Headteacher, 2024). The school is a mixed-gendered mainstream school with the socio-economic background of the learners varying through most social groups. There are 260 pupils at the school, 11 full-time teachers and 7 learning support officers. 34.6% of the school’s population are eligible for free school meals, higher than the Welsh national average of 28.7% (Welsh Government, 2023). 4.2% of learners at the school have alternative learning needs (ALN), and 4.2% speak English as an additional language (EAL). There are 11 classes, 5 of which contain mixed year groups. The school has a learning resource base for those in Years Three to Six with moderate learning difficulties including from a wider area within the local authority. The school’s SDP contains seven targets, each having an average of four priorities, and an average of six aims within each detailing how they will be achieved and measured. This report will focus on target one, “To continue to implement the Curriculum for Wales and develop learners’ knowledge of the culture and heritage of Wales”, and its third priority, “Ensure Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) meets the mandatory requirements and the needs of all learners”. This was chosen as one of the only priorities which is pupil focused, aligning it with my own personal pedagogy of student-centred learning, and because of the changes to RSE in the Curriculum for Wales 2022 (Welsh Government 2021).

Literature review

Introduction to the School Development Plan Process

When schools create a School Development Plan, they need to follow the guidance and regulations set out by the Welsh Government. A SDP should act as a singular strategic plan for improvement, looking at areas they want to actively improve, and how they will improve this, typically covering a three year time period. The school should set out priorities, and within these priorities, look at the resources they have available or need, including funding, to achieve this. It should also include how the school intends to develop their staff to reach the schools priorities and targets (Welsh Government, 2014). The Welsh Government

Schools Development Plan Guidance (2014) outlines that schools should follow a five-step school development planning cycle (Figure 1, Welsh Government School Development Plan Guidance, 2014). A school starts with their vision, which should reflect the school's ethos, values, and priorities. A clear vision gives the SDP context, which should be understood by all, and be motivational and achievable, underpinned by solid practical strategies. Next, the school begins the self-evaluation process (Figure 1, 2014), allowing schools to reflect on their performance and using it as the basis for creating the SDP, allowing the school to identify how they are performing; areas of strength, improvements, and actions required to make those improvements. Estyn (2019) have highlighted the use of the self-evaluation process to provide a report for schools to submit, however, due to the changes of inspection, this is longer required in Wales for various reasons such as, "supporting schools to focus on things that will make the biggest difference to learners". However, they emphasise that this does not take away from the importance of self-evaluation (Estyn, 2019). During the year, schools assess their progress against the set targets, and will use resources and support in relation to specific groups of learners such as ALN. Self-evaluation should be informed by both quantitative and qualitative data (Welsh Government, 2020). Qualitative data includes inspection reports from Estyn and information in regards to learners' well-being. It also includes stakeholders such as learners, parents and carers, staff, governors, and external organisations and agencies, often gathered through observations, surveys and interviews. Quantitative data refers to the data and statistics collected from various sources about the school, area and Wales, such as formative assessment, comparative data and contextual factors (Welsh Government, 2022). This evidence should be valid and represent the school's context and diversity. This data will be used to develop the schools strategic planning (Figure 1, 2014). The school will compare the evidence collected against the standards of quality and effectiveness in a specific area. It is important that all school partners and stakeholders are committed to the improvements planned. These create the targets and priorities within the SDP and how they will be measured, often achieved by 'good practice' in areas of teaching and learning (Welsh Government, 2014), but also from learning from other schools. It is the headteacher and governors responsibility to set aspirational targets, reflecting from the self-evaluation process whilst ensuring high levels of motivation and significant pupil attainment (Welsh Government, 2022). The School will implement the improvement using a range of proven classroom approaches, and upskilling and training teachers within their funding. After the school has taken action, they will have the opportunity to review the impact on the improvement made, allowing teachers to review, and provide feedback to governors and other stakeholders, feeding into a new cycle to be repeated (Welsh Government, 2014).

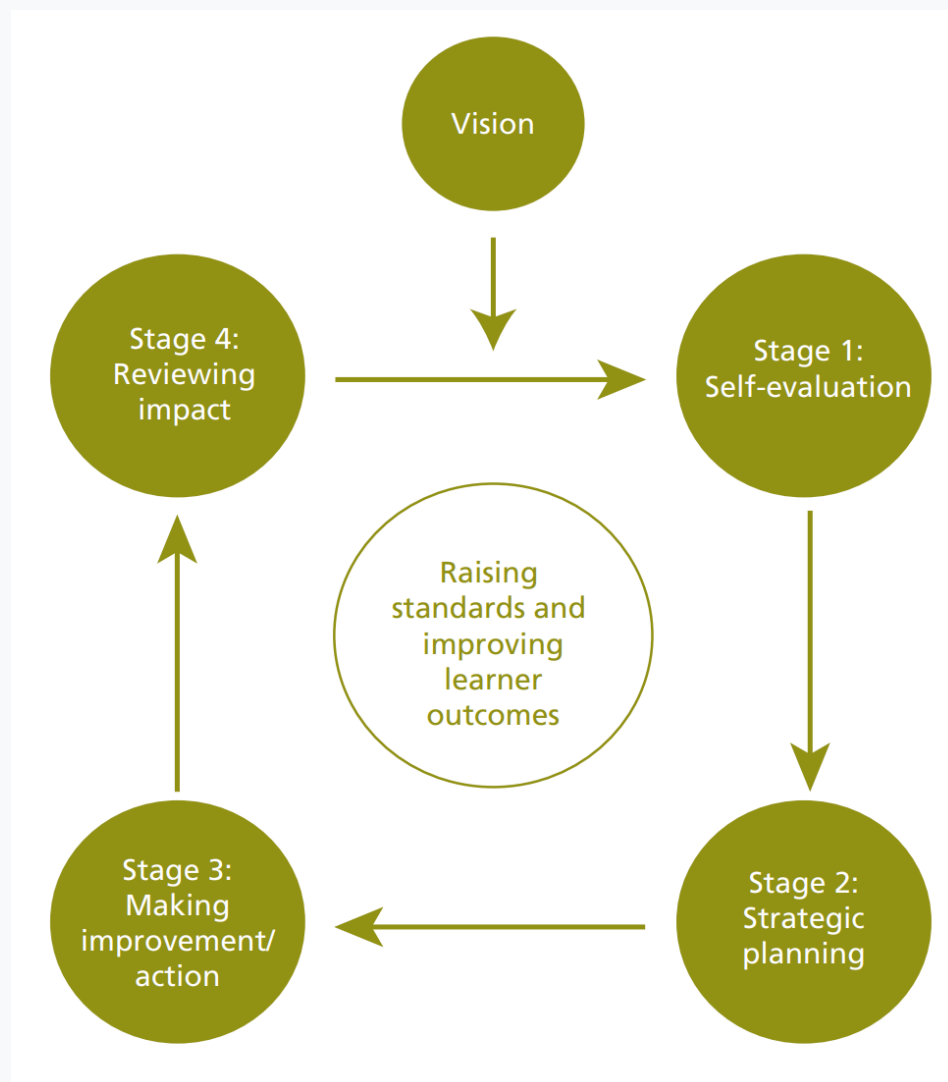


Figure 1

Welsh Government, 2014

Relationship and Sexuality Education in Wales

In September 2022, the Welsh Government changed how sex education would be taught across schools in Wales. The name in primary settings changed to Relationship and Sexuality Education which would be taught continuously throughout the school year, with

parents no longer having the option to opt-out of these lessons. These lessons focus on three main strands: relationships and identity, sexual health and well-being, and empowerment and respect. The learning criteria for these three strands are separated into three age-based phases; each appropriate for their age and development. (Welsh Government, 2021). Kirsty Williams, then Welsh education minister, decided not allowing parents the right to withdraw, “ensures that all pupils will learn about issues such as online safety and healthy relationships” (Adams, 2020). However, this was met with backlash, particularly from those in religious groups. The new RSE code allows the school to set out their own curriculum, however Ruth Wareham (2022), states that those who often oppose the parental right to withdraw from RSE agree that parents have “an intrinsic right to dictate the kind of instruction their children receive”. Eli Spitzer (2019) considered the new code specifically in relation to Charedi schools stating it is “a way of life” to insulate children from sexuality in Charedi culture. Spitzer (2019), argues that the new RSE curriculum asks Charedim to abandon their entire approach to child rearing. It may not just be individual religious rights at stake, but the rights of a community. However the RSE Code still allows Faith Schools to teach their own beliefs but they must also cover the compulsory requirements. “A Fertile Heart” is one program currently used by 58 catholic schools across Wales (A Fertile Heart, 2024), it is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Unicef, 2016) with Article 30, “You have the right to practise your own cultural, language and religion-or any you choose...”. However, this is taught through a catholic lens, which can be argued that this distorts the representation and educational practices against the RSE code, that suggests:

Curriculum content in RSE must be inclusive and reflect diversity...developing learners’ awareness and understanding of different identities, views and values and a diversity of relationships, gender and sexuality including LGBTQ+ lives. (Welsh Government p3, 2024)

This is also supported by Estyn’s Curriculum for Wales guidance and code for Relationship and Sexuality Education (Estyn, 2021). Many schools across Wales have opted to use schemes in teaching RSE, such as Jigsaw, Sbectrwm, All About Me, and Discovery (Thomas et al, 2023). A scheme allows schools to fulfil their statutory duty to provide RSE as part of the new Curriculum for Wales and to follow the RSE Code and Guidance issued by the Welsh Government (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2024 and Thomas et al, 2023). It can also support the delivery of other cross-curricular themes in the curriculum, as underpinned by the 12 Pedagogical Principles, to “Reinforce Cross Curricular Responsibilities...” (Donaldson, 2016). However, the Department for Education (2018) have

suggested that using a scheme may reduce the choice and diversity of the curriculum. A 'one size fits all' approach of schemes can lead to a failure to tailor to pupils' individual needs reflecting their own diversity and inclusion.

Developing an action point

On the 17th of January, a meeting was held with the student teachers and the Headteacher of School X to discuss the schools SDP and the self-evaluation process (Welsh Government, 2015). School X developed their SDP during the summer term and was led by the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), focussing on the curriculum and the expectations set out by the local authority. The SDP is independent of the school, focusing on the needs of the learners within the area. They worked closely with other schools within the cluster, looking at progression maps and common themes discussed within the local area. The school also used formative assessment to self-evaluate the needs in specific Areas of Learning (AOLEs). This was gathered from tests such as Salford, HAST, no more marking (comparative judgement), non-verbal reasoning, and national tests. The Headteacher emphasised the important role of reflection, and in order to develop the current SDP and curriculum, they evaluated the feedback and data obtained from the previous cycle. The curriculum within the school is delivered via a two-year cycle, making sure that learners in the mixed year groups are not repeating any topics as they progress throughout the year. The previous cycle was focused on developing Humanities whereas 2023-2024, School X is focusing on developing Science and Technology. They wanted to ensure that learners were also using knowledge obtained from the previous year and applying it to their new areas of learning as supported by 12 Pedagogical Principles 'Builds on previous knowledge and experience...' (Donaldson, 2016). Reflection was used in the development with assessing feedback from teachers, parents and caregivers, and pupils from the last cycle to form the new curricular cycle, as suggested by Estyn (2017). Pedagogy was also an important role in the development process with the school, working closely with the Central South Consortium.

On the 18th January, a governors meeting took place where SLT and AOLE leaders were delivering feedback on the SDP to stakeholders. This provided an opportunity to understand how the school involves governors into the process of an SDP, and also how this information is evaluated with further steps being identified as part of the process. This meeting determined that the focus will be on the development of RSE as outlined in target one, priority three.

Misconceptions around the topic of RSE were felt by many across Wales, with some activists taking it to the high court in December 2022 (Miles J, 2023). These misconceptions were particularly felt at School X, as measured from parental feedback questionnaires. As a result, a large proportion of the actions within this priority are addressing the misconceptions from parents and caregivers, and ways to engage with the stakeholders about what exactly learners will be taught during these lessons. The school held two parental focus groups, allowing parents to observe and participate in a lesson. On the 20th December 2023, the school held a parental focus allowing parents to participate in a lesson, with 10 parents attending, and also has an upcoming marketplace where each year group will have a stall, allowing wider stakeholders to view the progression within this subject across the school (Governors Meeting, 2024). This has allowed for an increase in parental engagement within the school and has allowed any misconceptions held about the subject to be clarified (Welsh Government, No Date). According to Sex Education Forum, RSE is an area where teachers often lack confidence (Sex Education Forum, 2023). Teachers receiving the appropriate training, as seen in Action two of the SDP, have upskilled, allowing appropriate resources to be selected, such as using the Jigsaw scheme, where lessons are pre-planned and are age appropriate (Jigsaw, 2024). With all staff being included within the RSE target, and the effectiveness of the teaching method reviewed in weekly staff meetings, there are greater opportunities for collaboration between less confident and experienced members of staff (Estyn, 2020). In line with the four purposes, in particular healthy confident individuals (Donaldson, 2015), Jigsaw lessons are taught at the same time on the same day across the school, allowing lessons to be uninterrupted and creating a safe place for learners to discuss their concerns, and allows the individual learners voice to be heard as supported by The 12 Pedagogical Principles, supporting social and emotional development and positive relationships. (Donaldson, 2015), (Welsh Government, 2019). The teaching of Jigsaw is made to uphold both the school's individual safeguarding policy and the Welsh Government's national safeguarding policy, particularly around concerns from parents and caregivers over who is delivering the RSE lessons. Student teachers and supplies are unable to teach RSE, again allowing the learner to feel safe with the practitioner (Welsh Government, 2022). However, despite most actions being highlighted green in the SDP to suggest accomplishment of an action, it is unclear if these actions have been followed through. For instance, Action 4, "RSE logo, RSE in newsletter and RSE visible on school website" (School X, 2024), Action 5 & 6, still have not been completed, with the school having no plans on actually following through in the upcoming year such as "meeting with religious leaders in the community". Rather than this being measured against the impact on learning as a SDP is suggested through both Estyn and the Welsh Government (Estyn 2021 and Welsh Government 2022), it is seen that this section of the SDP is instead a tick box

rather than being actively used to promote 'good practice' and 'effective teaching and learning' (Estyn 2021).

Reflection and evaluation

For School X, their priority was tackling preconceptions and misconceptions by parents and caregivers, focusing on parental engagement and working alongside parents and caregivers to deliver the curriculum, fitting the needs of both the RSE code, parental wishes, and the needs of individual pupils. However, the usefulness of this against the teaching and learning within the classroom is yet to be identified. With the feedback gathered from parental questionnaires and looking at the "...needs of all learners" as argued by BERA (2023), using a scheme of work can lack the diversity and individualistic needs of learners in a classroom. Pabla and Stothard (2023) suggest using a scheme of work has an impact on the teachers autonomy; they critique the pedagogical and curricular implications of relying heavily on schemes of work and the ongoing impact this can have on the profession of teaching, and the lack of creativity, innovation and professional development. However, teaching a sensitive subject such as RSE, has the danger of the teacher's own personal views colouring the lesson, so it is important that the RSE code is followed through to ensure the teaching is unbiased and fact based, and, where parental misjudgments are high, uses a scheme such as Jigsaw where parents and caregivers are able to access the resources. It already conforms to the RSE code in Wales, and the materials are appropriate for each phase.

Conclusion

It is clear the impact on schools of the changes to teaching of RSE has not been smooth, primarily because of the perceived cultural significance, and School X in particular faced negative backlash from parents and caregivers. However, the rationale is that all learners are entitled to the same quality and standard of education. The importance of including all stakeholders in the SDP process was really valued at School X, including having all staff able to offer feedback, giving them greater autonomy.

In future practice, it will be important to consider the importance and sensitivity around this topic, but, when teaching in a school using a scheme, to make sure it does not affect the quality of teaching and learning within the classroom. As an educator, I should be innovative

within these lessons, adapting the content so that it is individually tailored to the needs of all learners and religious backgrounds with guidance coming from parents and caregivers. The scheme should be used as a tool, without the teacher becoming too dependent on it.

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