

2100597 – Amy Rachel Thomas

(2500 words – Essay – Part B)

A Critical evaluation of the development of a strategic target in a school development plan: Actions, Impact, and evidence-based reflections

This essay will critically evaluate the school's development plan, focusing on its specific target. The school that will be discussed is an English medium school, located within a friendly and welcoming area, with only a few areas of deprivation. There is a range of diversity throughout the school, as 9.1% of the pupils are of either Black or Asian ethnicities, with the rest of the school recording White-British as their ethnic background. Around 26.5% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, and 6.1% of the pupils have an additional learning need. The school celebrates all cultures and their traditions, to teach the learners about race, religion and other cultural factors.

The chosen target is, to support pupils who are struggling to regulate behaviour. The school intends to, 'Ensure clear communication to all stakeholders on the behaviour policy so that it is understood and adhered to'. This target applies to all staff, to ensure learners are made aware of how they can self-regulate, to aid behaviour management, as well as to support children with additional learning needs. This schools' development plan is reviewed from a January-to-January basis, whilst allowing the Autumn term to make changes and developments when the children start school.

According to the Welsh Government, stakeholders are key when it comes to creating a school development plan. The stakeholders include, Governing bodies, Headteachers, Staff, Challenge advisors and local authorities. This shows that each of these different groups will play a vital part within the schools' development, as well as the way in which the plan is stated and structured, to ensure it reaching its most effective and efficient outcome. Each of these groups are responsible for overseeing decisions, to ensure the plans' implementation, overall. These plans are put in place, to work alongside the new Welsh curriculum, to ensure that the work of the school aligns with the national policies and expectations across Wales.

According to the Welsh Government, 2025, 'It provides a framework that encourages continuous improvement, collaborative practices and robust evaluation'. From this, it shows that these plans are set to see what challenges and targets a school will face, to ensure their

learners are reaching their best potentials, whilst considering their health, wellbeing and education.

The target that will be discussed focuses on the mental health and well-being of all learners throughout this school. The idea is that children feel comfortable enough and are provided with the support that they need to ensure they can self-regulate. There are many types of regulation, these include: Emotional, Cognitive and Behavioural regulation.

An abstract taking from Sage Journals states, 'Students' self-regulation is crucial for primary education, enabling students to take initiative, persevere, and adaptively regulate their learning processes'. By this, it indicates how primary schools wouldn't be able to support their learners fully, if they didn't research techniques and ways in which self-regulation could be included within classroom settings. Self-regulation is extremely important for those with learning difficulties, as well as additional learning needs.

One form to aid students who need to self-regulate is a zone of regulation. Zones of regulation is a framework that has been created to help all pupils understand how they are feeling and to regulate their emotions. Children who suffer from behaviour issues, would need an area like this, to identify how they are feeling, whilst being included in the rest of the class activities. A source to support this is, 'The Zones of Regulation – A simple approach to Developing Self-regulation'. This programme has been developing ideas for teachers and staff members for over 15 years. Their goal is to build, self – awareness within classroom settings, for more time to be spent on learning and educating about behaviour management and for a more inclusive and healthy school environment for each school across the World. An abstract taken from this programme states, 'The Zones of Regulation provides an easy way to think and talk about how we feel on the inside and sorts of emotions into four coloured zones, all of which are expected in life'. By this, this programme has introduced four sections, that describe different emotions. The zones are used for children to communicate how they are feeling, if they struggle with explaining their emotions. It could be seen that these zones are a key strategy to use within the classroom and should be considered and implemented in a quiet, calm and safe area away from the chaos and loudness in a usual classroom setting.

Another strategy is to include well-being and mental health sessions. This was a strategy that was implemented and observed during a session within the school and proved to be effective amongst children of all abilities. They were used to implement 10–15-minute sessions after busier periods within the classroom, to induce calm and quietness amongst the learners. Some of these sessions included, health and wellbeing, mental health and mindfulness.

The Department for Education states, 'Good mental health and wellbeing helps children and young people: develop, attend school, engage in learning and achieve and thrive'. By this, the Department of Education is suggesting that if schools can provide a safe, calm and inclusive learning environment, staff and support staff will start to see changes within individuals and within their overall attitude towards attending school. The source states, 'Embedding an evidence-based, holistic, whole school approach to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing, helps to achieve this'. It could be stated that, if a school's main target is to support self-regulation and well-being, carrying out further research within these topics, can prove to benefit the learners, as well as the staff of the school.

However, despite there being continuous research carried out to support the idea of self-regulation, some are against the concept. There are some potential barriers towards self-regulation within schools. An abstract taken from the 'Journal of Business Research – Self-

regulation and goal directed behaviour: A systematic literature review, public policy recommendations, and research agenda' states, 'Lack of self-regulation has manifested as a loss of self-control and has induced harmful behaviours. From this, it shows how significant self-regulation is within schools and how schools should make it a priority for each of their pupils and staff members. There is the concept that due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, many young people have been affected by their lack of early education, which has formerly resulted in an increase in anxiety and behavioural issues. The source depicts the idea that despite regulation set in place within classroom settings, more research should be carried out to support the students, for them to achieve and set personal goals to work towards, to aid their self-regulation, overall.

One evidence-based approach to tackling a health and well-being goal, could be by implementing physical activity and movement breaks.

It could be seen that by incorporating physical activity on a regular basis, it helps to reduce stress, tension and allows students to have that short release of built-up energy after a break or a lunch period. An abstract taken from the 'National Library of Medicine – Physical activity and performance at school: a systematic review of the literature including a methodological quality assessment', author, Amika Singh suggests the data that was found after carrying out a study.

The case study depicts, children aged 6-18 years were objectively measured within their physical activity, to display whether it was found beneficial towards their academic achievement. The findings were very mixed, with 'ten of the sixteen studies on self-reported

physical activity showed positive associations with academic achievement'. From this, it depicts the idea that more than half of the studies that were carried out, showed that physical activity had an extremely beneficial outcome. There was also a significant link between cardiorespiratory fitness, to display the idea that this played a role in improving the academic outcomes overall, also. It has been scientifically proven that physical activity plays a significant role within a development of a child's brain and attitude towards their education, as this would be a vital strategy for teachers and key staff members to implement within their classroom settings.

This strategy could be carried out by, using online sources and videos for children to dance, sing and move around to.

Another evidence-based approach to this goal could be, 'Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS)'. An abstract taken from the charity website of 'Understood', suggests, 'Positive behavioural interventions and supports is an approach schools use to promote school safety and good behaviour'. This could show, that by school staff implementing this concept, they could see an improved version of their students, as well as an overall behavioural outcome as a whole school. The idea of this strategy is to prevent the behaviour issues and not to enforce punishment. This source suggests that 'positive behaviour strategies' are reinforced, especially for pupils with IDPs and other learning plans. After reading, it is seen that this strategy promotes the idea of good behaviour, as pupils know how to meet the expectations of the teachers, as well as promote their own academic achievement.

A key theorist, 'Albert Bandura', studied the concepts of self-regulation during his time of being a psychologist. His studies find that 'individuals' have the capacity to control their own thoughts, emotions and actions to achieve personal goals and to adhere to societal standards'. Bandura's ideas stem the concept that people and children 'actively interpret and evaluate their experiences, which influences their self-regulatory behaviours'. His theories seem to interpret many different aspects of self-regulation, including both emotional and cognitive, which allows others to adapt these concepts within their own environment. His theory links with the strategies that the school has implemented, such as Zones of Regulation and well-being sessions. For example, his theory suggests the idea of 'promoting self-efficiency' throughout students of all ages, 'observational learning' encourages pupils to analyse other students to overcome barriers and challenges and, to 'allow pupils to set their own goals to aid in their thought processes (cognitive) and reflection of their own education'. By this, as the school inherits these concepts, the learners are then able to be in control of their own emotions.

The wider vision of this school is to embed emotional and wellbeing provisions and strategies. It seems that some of their ideas included, Strengthening intervention groups, through DCD, Lego Therapy and ELSA training for all staff members. Another factor is, to reassess and evaluate the national accreditation award for Healthy Schools Staff well-being website. The idea is to reevaluate where the school is in terms of their well-being, to achieve this specific goal for a consecutive year. This target aligns with the overall school approach, due to their rationale of their School Development Plan. It states, '130 pupils within the school currently have below 90% attendance'. This shows how the school want to incorporate self-regulation tools, to achieve higher attendance records for their students. 'There continues to be an increase with the number of pupils who are emotionally dysregulated and need support to access the curriculum'. This depicts the idea that the school feel it is urgent, for evidence-based strategies are implemented, to ensure less students feel dysregulated and know how to regulate with the tools and techniques.

It is clear to understand that the school is clearly working steadily towards achieving this goal, by what they have put in place by this point. Whether the school has focused on learners who need IDPs or have created a self-regulation corner within their classrooms, their efforts are apparent after reading their school development plans. The data shows that despite their being a spike amongst the number of children who need to self-regulate, the school has focused on these individuals, to implement new strategies within their curriculum, to ensure these learners are reaching their full potential. They started off by setting clear and attainable goals, to figure out what self-regulation would appear as throughout the whole school. It became clear that student voice had a huge impact on how the targets were conducted, due to pupils feeling overwhelmed and felt themselves, that certain factors needed to be changed and implemented.

It became extremely clear through how pupils performed after some of these strategies were implemented. Their attendance improved on average, as well as pupils now had more time to focus on their schoolwork.

One of the school's main approaches to this target was, to focus on everyone, providing them with resources, if they needed further attention or an individual plan set in place. It could be seen that, there may be some barriers with this approach. One of these factors include the amount of support staff available within schools. According to the ALN Code of Practice (2021), 'local authorities and schools are required to assess, provide and review ALP for students with additional learning needs. This includes involving parents and students in the process'. There is the idea that this programme outlines a whole school approach that they should take to support individuals with ALN. The code states that they believe children

should be heavily involved with the shaping of their education and shouldn't rely on staff as much through the process of their own learning and development.

After the cuts of budgets and finance, it has proven difficult to provide each school in Wales with extra support staff. According to NASUWT, they state 'NASUWT seeks to support members to provide high-quality teaching and learning that meet the needs of all learners including those who have special educational needs and disabilities. However, many challenges have occurred with this concept across the UK. These include, 'an increase of pressure on mainstream schools to meet the needs of learners', 'significant delays in accessing support' and 'more than a decade of cuts to school and public service budgets resulting in cuts to services and staffing and the loss of expertise'. It is proven far difficult for mainstream teachers to support each child individually, especially with the costs of staffing being halved. These barriers could be tackled by, including the local community within activities in school. The 'Supporting education group' suggests to strategically partner with local authorities, to aid with funding to provide these efficient sources. The idea is to link with a supportive business, to reduce the emotional stress and well-being of students and staff when it comes to funding issues. The source states, 'a collective voice is essential in advocating for increased government funding'. By including parents and local communities, pupils can collaboratively construct activities and extra-curricular clubs, to raise awareness for these issues and to provide schools with further funding, to aid their education successfully.

Considering each of these factors, this school has chosen an attainable target to achieve, with certain concepts already in place to work towards. Wards. It could be seen that this school should focus on implementing the use of well-being sessions, zones of regulation and mindfulness awareness sessions, to ensure students are supported, in doubt staffing becomes an issue in the future, meaning less pupils will be supported with additional learning needs. By implementing these key strategies, it will help students gain the confidence to self-regulate with the tools that are available, as well as achieve their goals and work towards achieving better performance within the classroom setting.

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AI Declaration:

I can confirm that I have acknowledged my use of ChatGPT (ChatGPT) on 25th February 2025, to support my research and findings for this essay. I used the following prompts:

- 1. 'Can you summarise what the Welsh Government has stated about stakeholders?'**
- 2. 'What are the key purposes of a School Development Plan?'**
- 3. 'Can you summarise what this article states about budget cuts across schools in the UK?'**