

ECAD7003

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	Continue to develop accurate referencing	Followed UWTSD Guidelines and advice from last assignment
Target 2	Try to write in a balanced way - Noting multiple viewpoints.	Looked to find more balanced research, from a variety of sources
Target 3	Express the limitations of your research.	Spoken with lecturers about limitations and how best to express them.

How the school develops one particular target of their SIP/SDP

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

Total - [2543 Words]

Introduction

In this assignment I will be looking at how a School Improvement Plan (SIP) is developed, how targets are implemented and how their impact is measured. Due to the use of sensitive data included in the SIP, it is important that the school is kept anonymous and the data is confidential throughout this research (BERA, 2018). This small school of 170 pupils is situated in an once mining village (School X, 2019). The school serves a generally disadvantaged area, with a current three-year rolling average of 25.1% pupils entitled to free school meals (ibid). The target I am focused on looks at the consolidation of previous curriculum developments in preparation for curriculum change and develop a shared vision for Curriculum for Wales (ibid). More specifically, School X is looking to further embed outdoor learning into their practice. For the purpose of this assignment I will be referring to the document as a SIP plan rather than a school development plan (SDP) in line with School X.

Literature Review

In 2014, the Welsh government created a 'School Improvement Plans' guidance document after an Estyn report saw that schools across Wales would benefit from improving the standards of their SIP (Welsh Government, 2014). The document sets out the school's priorities to improve the outcome of their learners as well as addressing the national priorities set out by the Welsh Government, which are to reduce the impact of poverty on education attainment and to raise the standards of education in relation to literacy and numeracy (ibid). A SIP and Strategic Planning contain many of the same characteristics (Fernandez, 2009). Their purpose is to design a plan to plot out where an organisation is heading, what is needed to achieve their goals and how they can assess the success of their actions (McNamara, 2003). Canole (1999) describes strategic planning as a "new type of planning process" that allows the involvement of the whole community. Lane et al. (2005) builds on the community link, likening the plan to a clear path, allowing all who are working collectively to follow and accomplish these goals. Romney (1996) believed that not only did an effective SIP refocus a staff's sense of purpose but allowed them to think creatively to best reach their collective goal. Levine and Leibert (1987) argue however that SIP can unintentionally overload staff's workload. Mintzberg (1994) furthers this by suggesting staff can become trapped by planning and incapable of actually teaching. The school's governing body are responsible for the agreement of the SIP, however in practice the headteacher will work along-side the members of staff and the governing body to produce the SIP (Welsh Government, 2014). This process has two phases: identifying the areas that require improvement and then prioritizing the issues (Hanover Research, 2014). School 'X' completed the identification process with a method known as 'Problem Solving'. Brighouse and Woods (1999), layout the four-step process as; identifying a problem; analysing the cause, collectively brainstorm the solutions; and decide on a plan of action. The importance of keeping all staff involved through the development process of a SIP, shows high quality leadership at all levels (Welsh Government, 2014). Brighouse and Woods (1999), believe that a top-down and directive leadership will only receive from staff what is contractually obliged. The Hanover Research (2014) argues that teachers are needed to be included as "agents of change" and that there should be sufficient top-down support to allow for bottom-up reform. Although many believe that the SIP is essential and a necessary first step to whole school development (Doud, 1995. Van Der Voort and Wood, 2014), Kelly and Lezotte (2003), judge SIPs to be the reason that schools are forced to be more data and results driven. Some argue that the "constant reinventing" of strategic plans can waste time and resources, when there is a lack of empirical research on the benefits of effective planning (Bobic & Davis, 2003. Phillips & Moutinho, 2000).

School 'X' invited PGCE students during their alternative placements to share in the school's good practice with the use of outdoor learning in their curriculum. The new curriculum for Wales looks to give outdoor learning environments equal status with classroom-based curriculum, stating that all learners of all ages should have opportunities to experience authentic learning indoors and outdoors (Welsh Government, 2020). Numerous researchers have found the main advantage for using the outdoor environment is the freedom it gives children to move, explore and experience the world for themselves (Rivkin, 1995; Bilton, 2002; Ouvry, 2003). Maynard (2007) supports this in saying that the use of "wild spaces" are vital to effective outdoor learning as it provides authentic contexts to broaden skills across the curriculum. Fjortoft (2004) reports children who are able to play freely in natural areas have better motor fitness and appear to be healthier and Behrman (1996) suggested that healthier children were more successful in school. Although this research supports the positive impact of outdoor learning, the age of the research limits its reliability.

Research shows that just being outdoors is not enough, how an adult uses and manages an outdoor space is as important for the pupils as the access itself (Malone & Tranter, 2003; Nicol, Higgins, Ross, Mannion, 2007). Aubrey (2004) suggests that some teachers face an internal tension when teaching in the outdoor environment as they are required to work towards specified outcomes whilst also incorporating a more authentic and informal method of learning. This could lead to an ineffective use of the outdoor learning environment. However, some argue that indoor based education alone is not sufficient to fully educate children as the benefits to pupils' learning and development from outdoor learning is too great to exclude (Waite, 2011). Therefore, to improve the outcomes for learning in outdoor education, Glazzard (2014) states training for teachers that helps them recognise their role as a facilitator, who bases pupils learning and assessments around their interests in the environment is necessary. Stevenson (2007) suggests teachers would be required to make adjustments to their usual teaching and learning to better facilitate outdoor learning experiences. MacQuarrie (2018) stressed the importance of integrating outdoor learning within the curriculum and everyday experiences offered to pupils. Outdoor learning should not occur in isolation but included in planning for teaching and learning as it provides opportunities to experience the cross-curricular nature of the real world (Dolan, 2015).

Developing an Action Point

School 'X' follows Welsh Government guidance by making their SIP readily available and is a common reference point by all staff (Welsh Government, 2014). Targets are displayed as posters on the wall throughout the school and upon arrival, we were given both a hard and

electronic copy of the SIP and other important school documents. School 'X' has five targets, I have chosen to focus on target three: the consolidation of previous curriculum developments for the preparation and development of a shared vision for Curriculum for Wales (School X, 2019). More specifically, I am looking at how they consolidate their development of their outdoor learning program over the last three years and integrate it into their curriculum going forward. School 'X' has seen outdoor learning to have a positive effect on pupils learning, Wayman (2005) simply states that teachers favour solutions that improve the education of the pupils they teach. It is clear that school 'X' has put a lot of time into improving opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors from all of the displays around the school.

Black and Wiliam (1998) argued that school policies should be classroom focused and include teachers' inputs as they are in constant contact with the pupils. School 'X' saw a direct correlation between providing pupils with high-quality learning experiences and achieving good outcomes (School 'X', 2019; Appendix 1). Teachers involved in data collection were seen to be more collaborative and able to see a holistic picture of the schools learning journey rather than just their experiences (Nichols & Singer, 2000; Symonds, 2003). Qualitative data was collected from self-assessments, staff observations and pupil interviews. It found that when teachers worked collaboratively to provide a broad range of high-quality learning experiences, promoted a positive effect of pupil engagement and mind-set (School 'X', 2019; Appendix 1). Research shows that a school's capacity to self-evaluate, reflect and feedback to be key elements of success when looking to improve how the needs of pupils are met (McLaughlin, 1993; Barber, 1996).

The Welsh Government (2014) sees consulting with all stakeholders, as the most effective way to develop a SIP as it is essential that everyone understands and collaborates to attain the school's goals. Research suggests that stakeholders are more alert to their school's needs, they are in a strong position to take action to improvement in their schools and therefore will be better equipped to direct resources and effort in order to meet targets (Nir & Ben Ami, 2005; Vitaska, 2008; Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013). Staff meet regularly to discuss the needs of the learners and how best they can improve the standards of teaching at school 'X', this collaborative effect is described as bottom-up planning but the distinction between bottom-up and top-down are rarely clean cut and more usually a combination of the two (Koontz & Newig, 2014). Staff members take charge of individual targets with the overall support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Research shows that teachers have a more positive experience with school improvement when leaders are engaged and supportive throughout the process (Antoniou & Griaznova, 2017). School 'X' were successful in attaining a 'Pupil Development Grant' for £750, which they used to buy waterproofs, warm layers and

resources to enhance their outdoor learning capabilities. The grant is available to help overcome additional barriers of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Welsh Government, 2015).

The school conducted observation and self-assessments to assess how embedding outdoor learning into the curriculum has affected the learning of the pupils, alongside interviews to gauge the pupil's opinions. This data is confidential as it includes personal and sensitive information to the school, following BERA guidelines (2018). However, from the data, the school have seen a positive correlation between the use of outdoor learning and improvement in learning outcomes. School 'X' found that pupils were more independent and improved on their communication skills by working together. Research shows that outdoor education requires more hands-on learning which aids the retention of knowledge (Palavan, Cicek & Atabay, 2016). Whilst working collaboratively pupils boosted their oracy skills, which translated to improved literacy skills in the classroom as pupils were able to write about the experience from memory. Teachers also saw pupils who were usually reluctant to take part in class, were more willing to participate outdoors.

Numerous studies have found that outdoor learning has a positive effect on children's academic performance (Khan et al., 2019; Lieberman et al., 2005). Furthermore, teachers report increased levels of engagement, both outdoors and back in the classroom and a reduction in disruptive behaviour (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998). Staff are passionate about the use of outdoor learning and this could cloud their judgement when self-assessing. Eva and Regehr (2005) reported that there is a presumption that professionals can effectively self-assess, where Ward et al. (2002) found the majority of researchers concluded that the standards of self-assessment in education to be quite poor. However, as previously stated, teachers are in a strong position to assess how this target is affecting the learners. Teachers at School 'X' are also seeking advice from their local community and businesses to improve their outdoor learning whilst taking into account the view point of the learner.

Reflection and Evaluation

During the last three years, the school has aimed and succeeded in increasing the resilience, engagement and pupil's autonomy across the school by introducing more opportunities for outdoor learning. Therefore, this year was about merging outdoor learning into the curriculum, instead of it being its own subject. Leggate and Thompson's (1997) research found an overwhelming support for the importance of long-term plans. During my time at the school, I spoke to several members of the SLT, who were pleased with the progress the school was

making towards outcomes but also the change they had seen in the pupils. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) assert that taking pupil voice into consideration is the key to improving teaching and learning. However, research shows that schools provide few opportunities for pupils to express their opinions (Alderson and Arnold, 1999; Wyse, 2001). School 'X' has spoken with pupils on occasions but have added into their SIP the importance of offering more opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions and feedback on the outdoor learning sessions. When I spoke to pupils, most spoke highly of the outdoor learning program and were able to recall the lesson aims and objectives. I believe that the way they collect information from the pupils could be an area for improvement. By creating anonymous questionnaires for pupils to fill in, you would be able to get the opinions of a much larger proportion of the school. With questionnaires, pupils have more time to think about their answers and by keeping them anonymous, pupils would hopefully answer more honestly, rather than trying to say what they think the teacher wants to hear.

Although outdoor learning has become a focused target on the SIP over the last few years, only one member of staff has had any training in outdoor learning provisions. One member of staff has qualified as a forest schools' leader, however in their own admission, has not used the skills enough to feel confident leading a forest school session. Teachers at School 'X' are pooling ideas for lessons they could use in the outdoor environment. To continue improving upon the school's success with the use of outdoor learning and blending it in to the curriculum, more staff could be offered the opportunities for continued professional development in outdoor learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this assignment looks at the importance of developing and implementing a SIP, how the success of the plan is monitored and its effect on the learners. School 'X' shows that a school without any onsite greenery or nature can still have a successful outdoor learning program by going out into their community and interacting with the local environment. I believe, for school 'X' to continue improving and finding success in learner's outcomes, they will need to look into training for members of staff and providing more opportunities for pupils to feedback their opinion on their learning. I have learnt the importance of speaking with pupils about what they value from their learning, what they learnt from the experiences and whether or not they found the teaching to be helpful. Fielding and Bragg (2003, Page 1) start their research paper by stating that "education is for the students and therefore students should have a say." Therefore, getting to know my class and what is important to them will be fundamental. Through this assignment I have been able to see how a SIP is developed and

understand how the different view points come together to create a clear path forward for the school. This experience has helped me to understand how this will affect me as a teacher and my class but also allows me to be more helpful and knowledgeable when assisting my future school's development of a SIP.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

SIP Target 3 Consolidate previous curriculum developments in preparation for curriculum change and develop shared vision for Curriculum for Wales

Rationale

- Temporary staffing changes in 2018/19 meant that previous good curriculum developments were less well developed in a few year groups.
- Long-term and short-term planning and approaches need to continue to be refined in light of curriculum reform. This will be an ongoing target.
- Improvements to curriculum provision and design during 2018/2019 now need to be further developed and a vision for the new curriculum formed with the cluster.
- The school provides pupils with many engaging and high-quality learning experiences which result in pupils achieving good outcomes. All teachers work collaboratively to provide a broad, balanced and rich topic-based curriculum which caters for the needs of individuals and the community. A recent focus on the planning of high-quality learning experiences that promote the application of skills and pupil led learning has had a positive impact on pupil engagement and mind-set. This needs to be further established and built upon.
- Independent application of Literacy, Numeracy and DCF skills will need to be further developed to ensure consistency and whole school approach to rich tasks.

What?	Intended outcome/success criteria	How?	Who?	Start Date	Milestones	End Date	Resources
Further develop curriculum in order to begin to reflect curricular reforms.	Pedagogy and Learning experiences are mostly described as “enabling” in the readiness tool to ensure provision is broad, balanced and is beginning to address the C4W	- Reassign roles to reflect AoLE and job descriptions in place. - Learning experiences to consider the 4 core purposes. - Review feedback/forward throughout the school. - Improve pupil voice to further support pupil understanding of the 4 core purposes. - Placemat and display evidence of all AOLEs. - Alter planning to align to 6 AOLEs.	SLT All staff SJ- Pupil voice work	Sept 2019	Oct 2019-job descriptions and PM reviews. Dec- feedback policy updated Jan 2020 long term planning reviewed -review undertaken and teachers trial new approaches to planning. July 20- most pupils have knowledge of the 4 core purposes and are able to talk about them in relation to learning July 2020 New planning formats considered	July 2020	Readiness toolkit Staff training
Whole school improved understanding of Health and Wellbeing AOL	With improved knowledge and understanding, teachers to develop a shared vision of the H and W AOL and how this will be developed within our school in	- Review to be carried out by lead. - Staff training for subject lead to raise awareness and understanding. - Review PSD provision across the school. - Review SRE policy and training for staff.	SM	Sept 19	Oct-training undertaken by lead April 2020-SRE training for all staff April 2020-review of provision and plan in place	July 20	Staff training- Collective learning- £160 Training Health

	line with the Curriculum for Wales All staff to recognise that Health and Wellbeing should not be seen as and add on but interwoven through all areas.	- Produce an effective but flexible action plan for development of the AOL. - In school training for all staff			July 20- SRE policy in place		schools (no cost)
Rich tasks to be developed further across the school ‘Missions’ to be further developed in Y3 and begin to be developed across KS2	Cross curricular learning is embedded in all classes Most pupils independently apply their skills at an age/ stage appropriate level across the curriculum. Pupil ideas are used to inform independent learning tasks	- Sharing good practice of effective approaches trialled last year. - Continue developing pupil voice to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to lead their learning. - Planning opportunities to develop cross curricular skills. - Staff to continue to use challenges at FP and trial independent missions at KS2.	SLT	Oct 2019	Dec 2019- all classes to have used rich task approach in 2nd half term topic January- planning for rich tasks over term/year February 20 - Missions developing in all KS2 classes July 20- review missions and plan for following year	July 20	PPA time Phase meeting SLT meeting

STEAM projects to begin to be developed in Y2,3 and 4	Teachers develop greater confidence to incorporate areas of learning into rich tasks Children are given purposeful opportunities to apply their skills.	• 2 teachers to work with cluster schools to develop STEAM rich tasks. • Teachers to work with a partner school and work together to share ideas and planning (pupil voice to be used in planning stage). • STEAM project to be carried out in Spring term. • Showcase case event end of spring term. • Teachers to share outcomes with all staff and agree a way forward for all classes. • All classes to plan a STEAM rich task for summer term.	SM/LD	Dec 19	Jan 20- planning day with cluster schools April 20- Show case event June 20- STEAM rich tasks across school	July 20	Cluster SOAP funding for supply- 2 supply days
Further embed cross curricular numeracy skill development	Numeracy skills are progressive and applied across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils are able to apply skills at age/ stage appropriate level.	• Numeracy skills yearly overview in place and implemented. • Staff implement Rich task approach to develop Numeracy and problem solving. • Increased numeracy application evident in Topic books. • Monitor through Book scrutiny/Learning walks/L2L. • Ensure that Numeracy across the curriculum is evident on display.	SJ	Dec 2019	Termly Monitoring shows improved evidence of application of numeracy skills	July 2020	Management time MER cycle 1-day monitoring per term.
Further embed cross curricular literacy skill development	Literacy skills are progressive and applied across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils are able to apply	• Literacy yearly overview in place and implemented. • Staff implement Rich task approach to develop Literacy. • Literacy evident in Topic books • Monitor through Book scrutiny/Learning walks/L2L.	LT	Dec 2019	Termly Monitoring shows improved evidence of application of literacy skills	July 2020	Management time MER cycle 1-day monitoring per term.

	skills at age/ stage appropriate level.	Ensure that Literacy across the curriculum is evident on display.					
Further embed cross curricular DCF skills	All staff continue to evidence cross curricular DCF Nearly all pupils are able to apply skills independently at age/ stage appropriate level.	- DCF yearly overview in place and implemented. - Staff implement Rich task approach to develop DCF. - DCF skills evident in Topic books or recorded on evidence document. - Monitor through Book scrutiny/Learning walks/L2L. - Ensure that DCF across the curriculum is evident on display.	LD	Dec 2019	Termly Monitoring shows improved evidence of application of DCF skills	July 2020	Management time MER cycle 1-day monitoring per term.
Further embed outdoor learning	All classes use the outdoors as part of learning (school grounds and wider community)	- Outdoor learning plan for KS2 to be further developed. Opportunities to use the outdoors in all areas explored. - Outdoor learning opportunities identified in planning. - Pupil voice to be used to identify opportunities for outdoor learning across school.	LD LT	Dec 19	Termly Monitoring shows improved evidence of good use of outdoors	July 20	PDG resource grant £750 for wet weather gear and outdoor equipment