

Targets

Targets	How you have worked on this	An example can be found on
Target 1 Continue to include more critical analysis when discussing theories.	To work on this, I have tried to find more than one point of view when discussing key points within my assignment.	Throughout the assignment.
Target 2 Endeavour to use a synthesis of research to support the key discussions.	For this, I have also as above found more than one point of view when discussing key points and have ensured to analyse both points.	Throughout the assignment.
Target 3 Continue to read a wide range of literature and ensure consistent referencing throughout your work.	Throughout the reading part of this assignment I used more journals and articles to achieve a wider breadth of sources.	Throughout the assignment.

How a school develops one aspect of its SDP: a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact and evidence base. (2,500 words)

Abstract

This report will explore one area of a schools' development plan (SDP). This will explore the actions taken by the school to achieve the targets that they set within the SDP, additionally, the impact that the SDP has on pupils' progress, and the whole school progress. In accordance with BERA Guidelines (2018), I have anonymised the school, and will refer as the school A.

Introduction

The SDP that is going to be explored throughout this report is based on a school that is situated on the outskirts of Swansea, in a rural area, which has almost 300 pupils on role including nursery, of which 47% are eligible for free school meals (FSM). There are twelve mainstream classrooms within school A, five of which are in foundation phase, reception, year 1 and year 2. Based upon school A's Estyn inspection in 2023, the school have decided to utilise the recommendations given to them, in their SDP. One of these recommendations was to provide opportunities for all pupils especially those from Reception to Year 2 to take responsibility for their own learning and become independent learners, especially in the outdoor area (ESTYN, 2023). Within school A's SDP they have set two objectives to work on this priority, the specific objective that will be explored during this report will be the second of the two objectives, to provide opportunities for pupils' to make decisions independently, with a particular focus on learning outdoors.

Why outdoor learning as a priority?

The point was taken from the schools Estyn report in 2023, this was then enhanced by learning walks that the school undertook, which discovered that outdoor learning needed to be a focus for the reception to year 2 team within the school. This learning walk found that the lessons and activities that were done in the outdoors were too structured, which took the independence away from learners. Additionally, this priority linked with a national priority, to embed a framework for a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing.

What is outdoor learning?

The use of locations other than the classroom for teaching and learning, such as the grounds of within the setting, is known as outdoor learning, or Learning Outside the Classroom (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, 2021). This suggests that any learning done in any place other than the classroom is considered to be outdoor learning. However, for the purpose of this report, Outdoor learning is learning done in the outdoors. Kiviranta et al. (2023) imply that a variety of contextual elements, such as local outdoor space availability, weather, culture, and safety, influence the practice of outdoor learning. This suggests that putting outdoor learning into practice has consequences, but it's also maintained that having access to the outdoors all

year round can give students a range of outdoor learning opportunities (Green Schoolyards America, n.d.). The English Outdoor Council (2015) supports the premise that students should be able to access outdoor learning year-round. According to the English Outdoor Council (2015), children and young people should have access to regular, ongoing, and progressive outdoor learning opportunities in order to maximise the positive effects that these experiences have on them. This would enable students to enjoy regular and ongoing outdoor learning lessons, but it would also need weekly planning of outdoor learning sessions. As suggested by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2009), there are many opportunities and benefits that pupils can have from learning in the outdoors that can be reflected in their in-class learning. They imply that, playing outside gives learners the opportunity to interact directly with the wonders of nature, which is in addition to the obvious benefits for their health and fitness, which are enhanced by exercises like running, leaping, and skipping. In a holistic school approach to attainment and physical activity and mental well-being, Williams (2022) claims that the supportive role that a link to nature and outdoor learning is recognised, understood, and put into practice. It is clear that spending time outside may improve one's wellbeing, and Education Scotland (2010) has further supported this by emphasising the positive effects outdoor learning has on students' health and wellbeing. Furthermore, the challenges encountered in outdoor environments provide priceless opportunities for real-world problem-solving, children who spend time in nature also have a deep comprehension of ideas like sustainability and conservation, which fosters a love of the natural world that lasts a lifetime (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2009).

What is a School Development Plan?

A School Development Plan (SDP) aims to give students the best learning opportunities and outcomes, regardless of their circumstances or background, so that everyone may reach the high standards and goals that the school has set for itself (Welsh Government, 2022). An SDP is a school's strategic plan for improvement, which sets out the actions a school will take to improve learner outcomes.

Who are the stakeholders?

The Welsh Government (2014) stated that the SDP is primarily the responsibility of the governing body of a school. Along with the head teacher at the school, who collaborates with the staff, and students, both parties will be in charge of developing and putting into practice the strategies and actions required to bring about the improvements outlined in the SDP (DENI, 2010). Additionally, the families of the pupils attending the school, and the local people of the school will be identified as people the Governing body will work with, to support in creating the SDP (Welsh Government, 2016).

Within school A, all stakeholders were involved in the creation of the SDP, with the governors at the heart of the process, alongside the headteacher, and senior leadership team leading the strategic planning of the SDP. There was then a staff meeting held, where the whole teaching staff discussed how they could achieve the objectives, and how they could be monitored, also discussed within this meeting was what term this was likely to be achieved in. After this staff meeting the senior

leadership team took these ideas and created the final SDP document with all information, which was taken back to the governors meeting for their approval. As for the implementation of the SDP priorities, the specific governors, pupils and staff are outlined within the SDP document. Therefore, indicating that there are specific stakeholders responsible for each priority.

What does the process of creating a School Development Plan entail?

It is evident from the Welsh Government's two given models of the SDP process (2014, 2022) that School A adhered to the recommended framework from the Welsh Government (2014). Even though there were some similarities between the two SDP cycles, School A would keep improving and assessing the results of the actions taken to meet the goals and priorities. According to the Welsh Government's (2014) model, the planning cycle begins with a vision and proceeds through self-evaluation, the second stage is strategic planning for the school development, thirdly improvement or implementation of this planning, and finally a review of the SDP.

As stated by Cambridge International Education (n.d.), the SDP process generally starts with an extensive self-evaluation of the school that covers all facets of school life, updates the school's mission, vision, and educational goals, and considers the strengths and limitations of the entire school community. Supporting advancements in professional learning, learner outcomes, and school development requires this process of self-evaluation and enhancement planning (Welsh Government, 2014). Through having a self-evaluation process it allows the SDP to be relevant to the specific school and enables learners to progress with the school, as they work on their SDP. It also makes it possible for stakeholder's to be informed about the school's progress towards the SDP and to contribute. As a result, it is an essential component of inclusive leadership and school culture (Goldstone, 2022).

Following an Estyn inspection in 2023, which included a recommendation to give students in Reception through Year 2 chances to take charge of their own education and develop into autonomous learners, particularly in the outside area, school A started the process of self-evaluation. The school then made the decision to go on a learning walk in order to identify particular areas that needed improvement. This study found that the requirements for independent learning were not met by the outdoor learning programmes since they were highly structured and provided little room for choice.

The second step, as implied by the Welsh Government (2014), schools need to create a strategic plan, which is captured within one document, this being the SDP, which captures the improvement priorities and strategies as a starting point of the further planning, consisting of external challenges, support systems and interventions. As implied by Jalal and Murray (2019) by adopting a strategic planning method, a school can improve its quality, solve problems, and overcome common challenges. From this the aim of strategic planning is to ensure that the visions of the school are met through a plan which is agreed on by all stakeholders.

School A decided to create their strategic planning for their SDP from the Estyn (2023) inspection. To create the SDP, the headteacher and school staff decided on suitable objectives for the priorities as suggested by Estyn. Additionally, within this stage of strategic planning, the senior leadership team were involved in creating a

road map of what the school can do to meet the objectives. This was further agreed by the wider school staff in staff meeting sessions, then this was presented to the Governing body to be approved.

Putting strategic planning into practice or working through the planning to make sure everything is finished to meet the SDP's goals, is the third step of the SDP cycle (2014). According to the Welsh Government (2014), in order to prevent confusion, duplication, and to ensure the most efficient use of resources, the SDP should include clear details about roles, accountability, actions, and deadlines. This way, all pertinent stakeholders will know exactly how to support and carry out improvements for the SDP, all stakeholders should know what actions they are taking, as they should all be involved in the strategic planning.

When School A agreed the strategic planning, all members of staff knew what areas they were responsible for across the whole SDP. Specifically, for the outdoor learning priority, there was a large participation for foundation phase teachers to be at the forefront of the actioning of this priority. School A utilised staff training that was provided from the local authority, in addition to work looks, and regular learning walks. These were also things that were fed back to all staff within the school to share examples of good practice. Additionally, staff had termly performance development meetings, whereby their performance was discussed to see where they required support, which would enable them to excel with outdoor learning as a priority.

Reviewing the impact the SDP has had on the school is the last phase in the SDP cycle, and it is something that should be done regularly. The Welsh Government (2014) suggests this when they state that SDPs are to be treated as live documents, subject to formal reviews and revisions at least once a year and frequent monitoring throughout the development cycle. This will guarantee that the methods and plans for school improvement are aligned with the current school context.

In order to review the impact that the SDP had on school A they timetabled an ADDS session to the end of every term, whereby the staff could reflect on what they have done, and how this has impacted the development of the school, through learners. Additionally, in this meeting areas that needed to be covered more in the next term were discussed, for example if they needed to focus more on priority 2, then as a school they would generally pay more attention to priority 2, while also focussing on the others.

Reflection and evaluation

The SDP for School A is easily accessible to all stakeholders because it is written in great depth and is simple to read. DENI (2010) states that an SDP should succinctly and precisely describe the school's priorities, the main actions it will take to raise standards, the resources it will devote to these actions, and the main objectives and results it hopes to accomplish.

When school A was implementing their targets for outdoor learning, especially independence in the outdoors it was found that the challenges set for learners were not so much child led, the change that the school had made was providing pupils with a choice of two different activities that they could do as a group, as a lesson.

Therefore, this was not enabling the learners to be independent in the outdoors. As suggested by the Reggio Emilia method, which placed a strong focus on developing lovely, resource-rich, adaptable settings where learners could explore their passions and think critically and independently, leading to amazing creative and independent thought (White, Cree and Solly, n.d.). With this method, students can freely and independently explore their surroundings and create things. Implementing this strategy would have allowed School A to provide tasks for students to work through on their own, with little to no adult supervision, and let students explore their outdoor space on their own, therefore this would be a recommendation for this objective.

Additionally, to improve on the implementation of the SDP, school A could have decided to focus on one objective at a time for each priority, rather than all objectives for each priority together. Especially for the outdoor learning priority, as the first objective of creating a suitable outdoor environment would have enabled the second objective to be achieved more easily. As stated by the University of Reading (2020), objectives are specific measurable outcomes a project which seeks to achieve in the short, medium or long term. Objectives are influenced by, and should contribute towards, goals. This implies that objectives must be measurable, therefore working on one at a time enables the objective to be measured without it being impacted by the other objectives.

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated the complex processes involved in developing an SDP, with a particular emphasis on giving students the chance to make decisions on their own, especially when learning takes place outside. Throughout the report it has been established that the school has focused on this objective within the SDP, learning walks have been carried out to see the benefits of the staff training, in addition to identifying how independence is promoted in the outdoors. The SDP's other objective within outdoor learning was to create an outdoor learning area that promotes engagement, curiosity and holistic development. It is evident that the school decided to focus on the independent learning outdoors as a priority, prior to creating an outdoor learning area to promote holistic development, which in turn would increase the pupils independence.

The impact on me as a Student Teacher

I was able to comprehend the rationale behind the SDP because of the bridging event I attended as part of this assignment. Additionally, the headteacher of my PTE3 school gave a talk that was very helpful in helping me comprehend the ideas behind the targets established within the SDP. As a result of this I was able to assist the staff members teaching years 1 and 2 in incorporating outdoor learning into their daily lessons. We also conducted weekly outdoor learning sessions, which were general lessons conducted outside to foster the growth and imagination of the students. Through implementing outdoor lessons within my PTE3 class timetable, I have seen the growth of confidence in the outdoors within my PTE3 pupils. As a result of this I will ensure that outdoor learning is embedded within my weekly timetable, as much as possible in my future practice.

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