

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Make sure you show your understanding of learning theory by discussing those ideas in relation to reading.	I have discussed the evidence of ideas and my understanding of this within the assignment, after completing a substantial amount of reading for this assignment.
Targed/Target 2	Revise the way you reference within the written assignment - including use of commas, multiple authors and punctuation around the reference.	I have reviewed the use of referencing in my assignment and make changes where possible.
Targed/Target 3	Be consistent and accurate when using capital letters and punctuation and ensure that sentence construction is accurate and clear.	I have checked for grammar issues more thoroughly. Re-reading the assignment over more in order to try and reduce the mistakes

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

This report aims to critically reflect on the process and impact of the school's role in implementing one aspect on their School development plan (SDP). In Wales since 2015 it has been compulsory for schools to have an active SDP(2014).

The school which this report reflects on is in a small rural town with feeder schools coming from mostly rural villages. There are just over 1500 students who attend this 11-18 provision. 4% of the pupils are eligible free school meals (eFSM), in comparison to the national

average of 16.4%. These 4% of pupils live in the highest 20% of deprived areas in Wales. The School have 8% of students with an Additional learning need (ALN) which is also lower than the national average of 19.2% and 2% of Students Speak English as an additional language (Estyn 2019) The most recent Estyn report gave the school an outstanding in all areas with no recommended improvements (2019). With this in Mind the area of the SDP which will be looked at more closely in this report is a key priority in Wales' education plans. This is set out by the school to Sustain exceptional standards which raises aspirations, progress, engagement and attendance of Disadvantaged pupils (eFSM/LAC) to secure high outcomes and reduce the current gap in performance compared to non-free school meals students (nFSM)(SDP,2019).

Majority of studies and education reports use the gauge of eFSM as an indication of poverty and deprivation. This data is one of the easiest and most consistent forms which schools have access too (Estyn 2012, WAG 2014, Sharples 2011).

The School development plan is a form of strategic planning which encourages the school to reflect on its own practice and highlight key priorities which it can improve on. In Wales this became a compulsory element to the school improvement process. This was part of the national strategy for improving education and become part of the wider plan to reduce deprivation and poverty. Where education isn't seen as a standalone strategy for reducing poverty it is seen as one element which is well placed within communities to analysis the strategies needed and can be used as the foundations for implementing change and reducing the impact (September 2014). Many schools were already using SDP as part of their practice and this strategy has grown since the introduction of maintained school in the 1980's as part of the ways schools managed themselves.

Schools realised that with no plan in place improvements came from individual teachers who would enthusiastically implement good practice within their own classroom and sometimes school wide, but as soon as that teacher left then the school would no longer continue with that way of working and the improvements would then become less effective. For this reason, it became understood that if all teachers bought into the idea of planning as a whole school and the plan was then implemented school wide this would be much more effective for the school (Hargeaves and Hopkins, 1994).

David Hopkins states that "recent research evidence however suggests that schools that exhibit 'best practice' in development planning have transcended its use as a change management strategy and now see it as a means of enhancing pupil achievement."(2010)This is emphasising that those schools that embrace a good practice at

using a school development strategy see a bigger potential in making improvements to student attainment.

The Welsh government have also seen the potential in this practice and therefore this has become the preferred practice of planning. They emphasise that this form of planning should be used as the overall strategy in the school and should include other planning systems which the school may have previously used such as planning for professional development as well as financial planning so that only one form of plan is used and reduces unnecessary work. (October 2014)

The process for planning starts with the governing body of the school. Legislation set out by the Welsh government in 2014 states that it is the Governing bodies duty to instruct the school to undertake this planning process, it is their responsibility to monitor and review the process. The first step is for the school to have a clear vision of what they are aspiring to achieve. Then the school enters the process which is seen as a continuous cycle of:

- self-evaluation, which includes all members of the school community giving feedback and the collection of relevant data.
- strategic planning which should be a 3-year plan where year one should include priority targets and years 2 and 3 are used to capture higher level and longer-term priorities.
- making improvements or actions and reflect and monitor the plan. The SDP has been described as a 'live document' because it is a continuous process of reviewing and planning. (Welsh Government, 2014)

As mentioned already the Welsh government has set out that reducing poverty nationwide is high on their agenda and this has also become a priority within the education sector too.

These Priorities set out by the welsh government include raising the standards in education on Literacy and Numeracy and reducing the impact which poverty has on education. (Welsh government, June 2014: October 2014)

Both the Guardian and the BBC cover the headlines that poverty is having a huge impact on pupils learning, (Burnes 2019; Weale 2019) the articles cover concerns being raised by teachers in the classroom and the impact that these issues are having on pupil and their attainment levels. These articles highlight that Poverty is seen as a huge problem effecting the education of our young people. There have been several factors which can influence a student's attainment level. These factors have a direct link to the socio-economic background of the pupil. These include:

- Poor diets which result in an increase in non-attendance in school

- Students entering the classroom hungry which can cause lack of concentration and engagement.
- Lack of funding for textbooks and equipment related to educational needs
- Pupils attitudes and aspirations.
- Parental disenfranchisement with education. (Burnes, 2019: Sharples et al, 2011)

The strategies which are being suggested in improving attainment of disadvantaged students are:

- Parental engagement and raising aspirations with this socio-economic group by providing better communication and targeting this group of parents, using parental forums for feedback and encouraging parents to take part in booster/educational engagement workshops.
- Students/Pupil engagement and raising aspirations using learning to learn strategies and encouraging a growth mindset
- Using effectively data collection and monitoring.
- Having a highly effective and visionary leadership team who encourages and implements good teaching evidence-based practice within the school and provides opportunity for professional development in good pedagogy
- Good Quality teaching as teachers are on the frontline and can encourage students in an appropriate and enthusiastic way. This can be done with good classroom management, school teaching strategies and policies. (Welsh Government, June 2014: October 2014)

As mentioned above, one of the national strategies and an element which is compulsory to consider on an SDP is that of improving poverty on educational achievement and reducing the gap. This has been taken by the school and put into their SDP as a key priority of sustaining exceptional standards; 'raise aspirations, progress, engagement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils to secure high out comes and reduce the current gap in performance compared to non-eFSM' (SDP, 2019)

The School have a rigorous data collection system. They use the SIMMS program for collecting information of attendance, grades, behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school also collect key transition data on all pupils entering the school and complete their own level testing for literacy with all students on entry to the school. This acts as a key indicator which can be used for measuring student progress and highlighting any students who need extra support in literacy. The school also complete data capture half termly which allows for constant checks and reviews of all students at both a school, pupil and parental level. The

school also collect data on other vulnerable students such as those with an ALN and those who are CLA (LAC- looked after children).

The school also use data from the national category systems and FFT and Welsh bench marking data. Which allows the school to analysis how it is performing in comparison for similar schools and its local area.

The school is not categorised as having a high demographic of disadvantaged students and only 4% who are eFSM in comparison to the average of 16.4% in other schools. This does not however mean that the school can become complacent and believe that they don't have a need to continue to close the gap. The Data captured with from the government site my local school indicates that the gap between the eFSM and non eFSM students in the school is slightly wider than the national average. Although the data also shows that eFSM students have a higher achievement than the average in Wales. (Welsh Government, 2019) Therefore this shows that the school achievements are above average however there is a greater need on the school closing the gap between the students in order to avoid a negative impact which could occur with the two socio-economic groups being more polarised.

The above methods are all quantitative data collection however the school also undertake qualitative methods of evaluation. They have a strong culture of self-evaluation which includes teacher development through personal reflection, lesson observations and teacher appraisal systems. The students also take part in questionnaires throughout the year and they also have a good pupil voice and school council.

These methods of data and reflective practices work towards involving all the stakeholders in the evaluation process and means that the school has a strong buy in policy from pupils and parents which is essential in implementing the SDP Priorities. The school have a clear focus that they are committed to providing excellent 'education, inspiration and opportunities for life' which has become the school moto.

The school generally promote good teaching and learning strategies to the whole school as this is seen as good practice and many of the other priorities on the SDP help to promote the reduction in the performance gap too. The Whole school approach has been adopted as a successful evidence-based method for 'closing the gap' (Successful Live, 2015). These approaches include delivering the Pivotal wellbeing and Behaviour management programme in school as good classroom management has been discussed to have positive outcomes

for attainment (Sharples, 2011). Encouraging a classroom environment which allows for challenge, uses meta-cognition and a growth mind set methods as well as focusing on the literacy and numeracy frameworks. These methods have been discussed at length in government documents and have been found to have a massive impact of 'reducing the gap' and improving attainment with lower ability students and should continue to be the focus moving into the new Curriculum.(Welsh government, June 2014:October 2014: 2015: 2020) There are also a cross over elements in the SDP which aims at a promoting of Inspirational teaching and leadership and shows that the school are using a wide range of methods to build achievement across the school as well as at reducing the impact of poverty. Reflecting on what many researchers have seen as strategies which can be used in schools to close the gap. Parental engagement and raising aspirations with this socio-economic group by providing better communication such as parental forums for feedback and encouraging parents to take part in booster/educational engagement workshops have been discussed in various documents which discuss the effects of deprivation in education(Welsh Government, April 2014: Sharples, 2011)

The school has an open-door policy where parents can contact the school in relation to their child at any time. The school have implemented engagement officers for the different key stages and these people work closely with the key stage leaders. This as been implemented to improve the pastoral side within the school. However, targeting these engaging parents more effectively could help to reduce the impact of the socio-economic influences which affect the students.

The school also report that parental engagement can be difficult for parents of eFSM pupils. This can be down to things like transport to the school as the school is situated in a rural town and the eFSM students who attend the school are predominantly from an area several miles away which makes getting to attend things like parent evenings and focus groups difficult. Therefore, the school could aim at taking onboard these requirements and use the ideas of providing community learning within these socio-economic areas or supporting the initiatives that already take place within these areas and have more of a presence.

Parents of students who are e-FSM are encouraged to take up the financial supports which the school put into place for these students. This includes help students with uniform provisions where needed, The school will provide students who are eFSM with one paid for residential trip over the students school life and have even gone as far as helping students from disadvantaged background to aspire and support with financial costs of going to

Oxbridge. This is done through the school having access to a community fund which is managed by an independent committee to the school. The school can access this for students learning experiences. This is something unique to the school and many other schools don't have access to this funding opportunity.

However, the school also report that not all students who are eFSM take up this. This is down to stigma. Overall, the school is made up of parents who are more affluent and there is often a larger financial gap between students. The School have implemented cashless transitions for all students which means that students who are eFSM are less visually seen. The food in the canteen has had a major overall where there has been a larger uptake from of pupils using the school catering system, this has been hoped to also help the more vulnerable students gain access to health meals. Stigma, the quality of food and eating with friends have been noted in work done By Storey and Chamberlin to be reason why students do not take up free school meals (2001) they also noted that parents do not always understand how to apply and that they are entitled to such provisions therefore they concluded that school may need to 'sell' the uptake of free school meals. The school have many of the aspects in place to reduce the stigma, however maybe the school need to look at ways of selling the uptake more.

Both the uptake of free school meals and the engagement of parents aim at improving the social and economic aspects around improving the attainment levels as these areas do have an impact on the student's everyday life's with significant effect. (Welsh Government, June 2014: Successful lives, 2015)

Other areas which have been discussed are area such as pupil's engagement and good teaching strategies. The school have a strong ethos of building a growth mindset and learning to learn techniques. The school have policies in place for Assessment for learning which encourage all students to embrace their own learning and know how to make improvements. There is also an effective MAT policy which allows all students to be pushed to their full potential. The whole school ethos is to aspire and work towards higher goals. This has an overall impact on how students perform including those from eFSM families. This has been good working practice in many of the Government documents (April, 2014: Estyn, 2012:2013) There these areas should continue to be the focus within the school

In conclusion the school have a substantial system which monitors and evaluates the processes within the SDP. They use rigours data collection and continue to use this information to monitor and make further improvements within the school. The school also

have a strong use of good teaching practice which is evident in the schools over all achievements and the results which they received from the last inspection. The school could continue to aim at the eFSM students more by engaging parents and look at the uptake of those eligible for free school meals.

In my working practice I will take from this that creating links with parents of all pupils including those who are eFSM are extremely important at building and bridging the gap in attainment levels. Also, that the use of engaging with the priority on the SDP as a whole school approach has is effective in building achievement bridging the gap and making improvements to the school. It is important to engage with good teaching practice and monitor the data closely in order to target areas for improvement more effectively.

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