

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

	<u>Targed/Target</u>	<u>Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn.</u> <u>What I have done in this assignment.</u>
Targed/Target 1	Think carefully about your overall question, seek guidance from mentors.	<i>I have aimed to ensure that I am answering the question and considering what it is asking. I have ensured this by having other students and mentors proof-read my work.</i>
Targed/Target 2	Back-up key judgements using a rationale or supporting evidence.	<i>Whenever I have provided a theory or evidence, I have tried giving a context and supporting argument to ensure the reasoning is clear and concise.</i>
Targed/Target 3	Ensure every opportunity to make critical comments in relation to literature.	<i>I have aimed to use literature in supporting a stance that I have promoted or suggested, ensuring the comments from the literature are accurate to what has been said.</i>

Introduction

“Organisational development in education can no longer be seen as an optional extra, but an embedded initiative” (Morrison, 1991, p.171). The Welsh government (WG) have created the School Development plan (SDP) process in encouraging continuous progression and reflection upon actions taken. This report will examine how a school approaches development planning and whether it is in line with the Welsh government’s guidance. In ensuring anonymity, the school will not be named, and referred to as ‘School 1’ in line with the BERA (2018) guidelines. School 1 is situated in a town in South West Wales and is in the green support category (My local school, 2019). The school has seen a dramatic increase in pupil numbers from 90 full-time pupils (Estyn report, 2010) to 177 pupils as of

2019 (My local school, 2019). The headteacher has been at the school for over ten years, utilising the SDP process in target planning and creating mission statements. The overall objective of this report is to critically investigate whether School 1 is a positive example of how to implement a SDP, with a focus on their ongoing target of health and well-being for the current school year.

Literature review

This section will aim to assess theory and literature regarding the development planning process and well-being as a growing initiative throughout schools. A SDP usually includes a range of short-term and long-term goals that continuously evaluate school progress and development, with the significant aim of improving learner outcomes (WG SDP document, 2014). The Estyn annual report (2013, p.26) stated how self-evaluation and development planning needed to be improved in over a quarter of schools in Wales. Professor Graham Donaldson states that a successfully established plan, with a thorough self-evaluation, should make a vital contribution to raising the quality of education and standards of achievement for all involved (2015, p.83). With this evidence, the WG made it clear that all schools should have a SDP, or an equivalent set of aims and targets, in place from September 2015.

In guidance of how to create a SDP, the WG (2014) produced steps, seen in *Appendix A*, that promote a continuous cycle of self-evaluation and target setting. A school will firstly reflect upon its performance of the previous year, recognising strengths and areas that need improvement or attention. They would then develop strategies to emphasise progress, before finally reviewing the impact and result. To fully understand why these steps were suggested, we must consider what benefits or challenges they could provide to schools.

Self-evaluation can provide an honest, collaborative process that identifies current performance levels. The results would provide strengths that can be celebrated and noticeable targets that have become apparent, resulting in action needing to be taken (WG, 2014). Aydin and Toptas (2017, cited in Kurum and Cinkir, 2019) support self-evaluation, declaring that done effectively, it can play a key role in educational success and the development of schools. Expanding on this point, the OECD (2009) state how school evaluation will impact performances of all pupils, with an emphasis on shortening the attainment gap between lower and higher pupils. If done coherently, the self-evaluation not only directs schools towards target setting, but it also provides a structure and elevates the

improvement process, producing a positive difference to the quality of teaching, learning and wellbeing of a school (Estyn, 2018, p.32).

The leadership of the school is another vital factor that can influence a SDP. Before the process begins, a vision for the school must be instilled. John J. Mauriel (1989 cited in Williams and Johnson, 2013) explains how a strategic leader would have a clear vision of where an organisation should be heading, showing belief and motivation to inspire others to follow. Earley and Weindling (2004) elaborate this point from their research, declaring that school staff emphasised the importance of leadership, with a headteacher promoting the shared values and ethos of the school. In contrary to these views, Dimmock and Walker (2004) explain how having a vision is not enough. They argue that some of the shortcomings of a school in creating its 'design', is how leaders fail to realise the priorities and do not consider the values that underlie the approach a school must take in improvement.

The involvement of all school staff and stakeholders is arguably the most influential aspect of the SDP process. Brighouse and Woods (1999) emphasise the need of 'critical friends' and finding the balance of evaluation with stakeholders and partners. If this is achieved, there is an increased likelihood of success for the school. The WG's National mission (2018) highlights the importance of continually constructing policies with all stakeholders to realise the vision of the Welsh learner. The Hanover report (2014) finds that all stakeholders need to be involved in the objectives, progress and results of the improvement process. Brighouse and Woods (2013) enhance the need for clarity for parents, building trust and establishing dialogue about a child's progression and information needed. Farrell (2014) states how governors need to be fully involved and invested in day-to-day running of a school. They need to accept further responsibility in ensuring clarity is made for all in benefitting learners' outcomes.

Appendix B displays the current, ongoing targets and aims of School 1 for this year. The particular target of scrutiny is point 6, 'restorative practice and well-being'. The health and well-being of pupils has witnessed an inflation of research and implementation, with schools having to adopt strategies and approaches to ensure learners' awareness of the ranges of feelings, behaviours and experiences. Donaldson (2015) explains that approaches to well-being in schools can aid in children and young people building positive relationships, dealing with difficult issues and coping to live life independently. Howard et al (2017) emphasise the need for a whole school approach to well-being by providing a range of strategies preventing any deterioration in learners' personal lives.

Restorative approaches (RA), provide strategies that can help de-escalate violent behaviours due to repetitive or sudden conflicts. Marian Liebmann (2007) suggests the benefits of using RA with children and young people is that it creates foundations for their actions and relationships, and offers resolutions to issues without resorting to conflict or violence. Hopkins (2002) gives an extra incentive for the use of restorative approaches as they are a valuable asset to the Healthy school's programmes. In summarising these arguments, Brooks (2012, cited in Howard et al, 2017) elaborates that schools play an important part in promoting strategies and approaches that children use for their entire lifetime. For children to attain the outcomes expected from the SDP process, they must have a positive well-being. RA aids in giving schools an initiative to endorse and promote for learners, with a whole-school approach being an underlying asset of the resource.

Development of the SDP

This section will be critically analysing how School 1 approaches the SDP process in line with the suggestions made by the WG in 2014, with an emphasis on the RA and well-being target. The school's most recent Estyn report (2017) details how the school has consistently been displaying positive, progressive outcomes for learners with leadership from the headteacher being highly effective in promoting an enthusiastic team. The school ensures clarity with all stakeholders with a thorough prospectus (School prospectus, 2019) stating the vision, aims and objectives that they aspire to achieve. In doing this, School 1 are clearly setting targets to improve learners' outcomes and also ensuring that all stakeholders are involved.

Estyn's annual report (2018, p.32) states that "self-evaluation outcomes of schools should inform improvement priorities directly". School 1 adheres to this guidance through a range of evaluative approaches. *Appendix C* is the school's self-evaluation from the beginning of this school year. The actions and approaches are listed, with an evaluation of each question using the 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rating system. In doing this the document is clear and can pinpoint the areas that would need improvement and attention during the year. Review of Estyn suggestions, questionnaires and common book scrutiny are all further evaluative measures the school continue to implement. The school also utilise challenge advisors to produce reports, as seen in *Appendix D*, based on observation and data. As seen in the report, paragraph three clarifies how the school use self-evaluation effectively and links to the SDP in setting improvement targets.

In their guidance, the WG provide minimum requirements that a SDP should include to establish an effective process. In setting improvement priorities, the school use the self-evaluation report alongside their review for the previous SDP. The headteacher is also fully aware of how the national priorities must be considered for this section of the process. The aim of increasing attainment in literature, numeracy and promotion of the Welsh language is clearly placed in the SDP.

The next content includes which targets and aims will be put in place for the forthcoming year. As shown in Appendix E, the school ensure they celebrate their successes through evaluating their self-reflection and well-being targets as an achieved 'green'. In building on previous success in well-being, the school adopted the local council (Council report 2017) initiative of implementing RA to encourage positive behaviour in and out of school. What must be considered here is whether the decision to use RA had the input of stakeholders, or whether the school adhered to the council's wishes. This is a particular area to approach with caution as the studies of Reeves, McCall and MacGilchrist (2001) display that schools witnessing low development of their plans would often be a result of complying with external demands.

Professional development of the staff was clear throughout the implementation of RA. In October, two teaching staff and one support assistant attended a three-day training course providing a deeper understanding of the initiative. The enhanced expertise would enable the staff to mentor and collaborate, not only with the school staff and children, but with all stakeholders, including governors and parents. As opposed to the positives that courses provide, consideration must be made that guidance from the WG (2014) suggests that every effort should be made to minimise teachers' absence from the classroom to avoid a negative impact on learner progress. The school have also aimed to avoid further staff absence, in developing a whole-school training of RA through inset days where all staff must attend, with an open invitation for governors.

The school are also promoting community ventures through this action point, hosting a training day of RA for all parents and governors to attend. This was rendered an appropriate action following feedback and the opinions of the school staff. The aim was to ensure a consistency in approaches for all children. In gaining further motivation to host this session, the school ensured they communicated thoroughly with support staff in gaining their opinion on whether the event would benefit. This abides by the opinion of Brighouse and Woods (1999) in that support staff provide knowledge of backgrounds and situations that aid in how a school can approach community links with the ambition of achieving a purpose.

Step three of the cycle is the implementation of the targets and any improvements that must be considered. School 1 were still in a development stage in regards to RA, however it was being implemented in classes through encouraging 'Check-in' sessions and lessons discussing what 'needs' the children felt were valuable to their learning. Playtimes would witness the most common behaviours that could be solved with RA, and supervising staff were encouraged to embolden children to solve disagreements themselves.

The final step of the cycle is well approached by School 1 with governors involved in evaluating the successes and targets that will be derived from the SDP. The school contemplate opinions of all stakeholders in these meetings with representatives of the teaching and support staff present to provide insight from their respective work groups.

Reflection

In reflection, School 1 is a positive example of the benefits in abiding by the WG cycle in creating a progressive and meaningful SDP. The planning process of the school aims to involve all stakeholders by inviting them to meetings and making approaches clear through the prospectus and newsletters. It is clear that outcomes for learners are developing and improving, however there are some considerations that could be implemented in progressing further.

The day-to-day skills of RA are apparent across the school, with all staff applying their commitment to the strategy. A suggestion that could potentially impact the learners is to produce visual reminders of the steps that RA include. Daniels (2018) explains how visual elements can accompany strategies already in place to benefit all learners. Embedding the approaches further would be the next step for the school. Increasing the knowledge and awareness for the pupils can promote the strategy further through pupil voice and student representatives.

The school must also consider alternative approaches if RA does not work with all children. As explained, the whole-school approach is paramount with well-being, however Kersey and Masterson (2011) explain that teachers and staff need to consider fresh approaches for children to find healthy solutions to any challenges or difficulties they may face. Every individual is different, therefore alternative methods may benefit some children who could be suffering with additional needs or difficulties at home. Weare (2015, cited in Howard et al, 2017) explains how a school needs to undertake a 'multi-component approach' using the full potential and experiences of all staff in ensuring consistency to health and well-being.

The inset day in January provided an example of why it is important for all stakeholders to be regularly involved and have an input. In this instance, the attendance target, shown in *Appendix B*, was highlighted as a concern following the number of absences during the Christmas term. Despite being concerned, the headteacher demonstrated very positive leadership, approaching the issue with delicacy and openness, asking staff for ideas or initiatives to encourage the learners into school. An idea, provided by a teacher, was collectively agreed upon and implemented immediately with the ambition that attendances would improve. In following this good practice, perhaps encouraging more frequent meetings could result in targets being acted on immediately and development of SDP targets can accelerate. Brighouse and Woods (2013) state how the more often that staff co-operate and work together, a shared understanding emerges, resulting in a significant impact on the progression of the pupils.

Conclusion

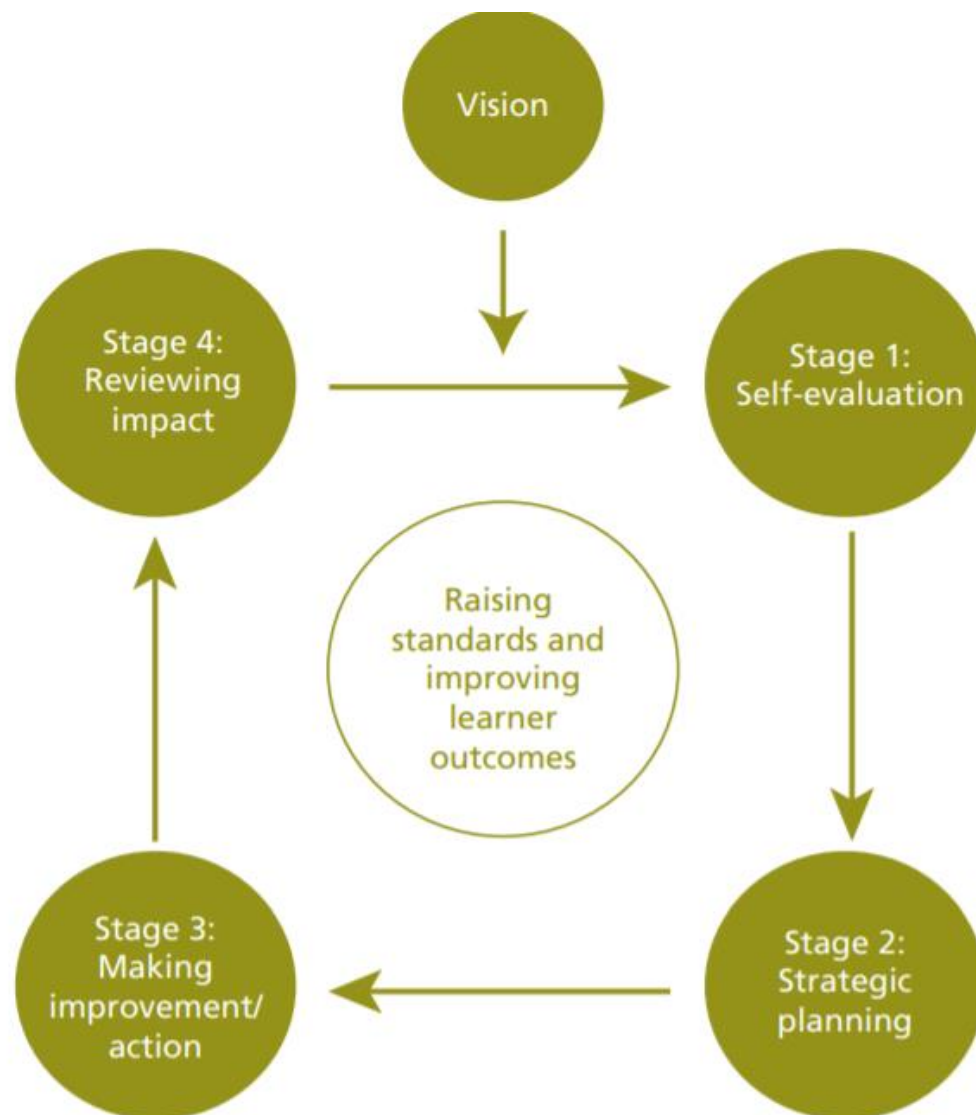
This assignment has brought attention to many factors that must be considered in the world of education. A whole-school approach is essential, ensuring consistency in approaches to improve the outcomes for learners. There is a large responsibility on school governors and, in particular the headteacher, in providing and achieving the aims of the SDP. The process needs to be administered with a degree of honesty in ensuring the learners can benefit fully from what is put in place.

The professional learning that is attributed to completing the SDP process is valuable for anybody associated with a school. Teachers need to fully commit to implemented approaches alongside offering expertise to progress schools in achieving their aims and targets at a consistent rate. Teachers, in particular those new to the profession, need to ensure they remain open-minded to the approaches undertaken by schools. Ensuring their commitment through following procedures and guidance of the school stakeholders. The ambition and commitment provided by this co-operation will inevitably impact on how the learners can achieve their outcomes, with an aspiration that they can achieve the characteristics included in the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales.

Word Count: 2,570

Appendices

Appendix A



Welsh government SDP document, 2014, p.7

Appendix B

[REDACTED] Priorities 2019-20

Graham Donaldson has set out four main purposes for education: • ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives • enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work • ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world • healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. In order to ensure our children are ready to accomplish all this these are our identified areas of current needs at [REDACTED]	
During the year 2019-20 these will be our main priorities, they will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness	
Priority	
1	<u>Journey towards Curriculum for Wales</u> Evaluate our current curriculum, Plan and prepare for next stage of development, Realise change and evaluate at key stages- in line with Estyn recommendations. Explore exciting opportunities to enrich the curriculum. (Arts council, STEM, Humanities projects etc)
2	<u>Language to Literacy</u> To consolidate and build upon good practice in relation to language acquisition and to improve standards in the key components of literacy eg letter formation, spelling, grammar etc A leaning in some classes towards boys literacy is also needed to engage all emerging readers.
3	<u>Developing confidence in numeracy</u> To consistently use and apply the four operations of number in order to ensure effective problem solving skills.
4	<u>Digital Competence Framework</u> To continue in the development of a whole school Digital Competence Framework curriculum map for [REDACTED]. Continue with CPD for staff in areas of identified need.
5	<u>Assessment</u> Update schools Teaching and Learning, Marking and Assessment policies to ensure continuity and progression throughout the school. Evaluate purpose and value of current practice and agree on structure moving forward ensuring focus is on learning. Relook at EEL and PEEL to monitor levels of independence, involvement and engagement.
6	<u>Restorative practice and well-being</u> Restorative Approaches (RA) includes the day to day skills involved in pre-empting conflicts and harm. It builds and maintains relationships and community, as well as reacting/ responding when things go wrong. RA engages and develops positive relationships and resilient communities, to reduce harm, and de- escalate conflict quickly by problem solving effectively.
7	<u>Welsh</u> Spoken welsh is used in and around the school, this will continue to be a school priority. Building on the Bronze award achieved last year we will work towards the Silver Safon Iaith accreditation.
8	<u>Attendance</u> To look for engaging and exciting ways to improve attendance. Tracking poor attendance, lateness and holidays to ensure EWO is supporting where needed.

Appendix C

Where we are start of year 2019-20		
Evaluating your current curriculum		
• To what extent do you promote the four purposes in your current curriculum arrangements?	The curriculum at [redacted] has always been broad and balanced, this coupled with the Cornerstones four pillars and we have a curriculum that is fit for purpose. Children have always given their views on what they would like to learn WWW., Science, DT, Welsh and Humanities weeks also ensure in depth coverage and using of skills learned.	
• How do you provide a wide range of enrichment experiences for pupils and recognise their achievements?	Trips, Engaging activities, broad and balanced curriculum, rich indoor and outdoor learning, afterschool clubs, internet apps, visitors,	
• How do you ensure that pupils build well on what they have learnt as they go through the school or between schools?	Tracking, target setting, teacher observations, monitoring of lessons and children's work, school learning walks, skills monitoring	
• Are assessment arrangements appropriate and how well do they help pupils improve their own work?	Starting school booklet, Baseline, FPP profile, RWI baseline, CHATT, verbal assessments, Catch me if you can, Spelling and times table tests, peer assessment, oral feedback, pink dots, All Wales reading , Single word , Traffic light system, National Tests, RM Easymaths, Emotional Intelligence, Boxall	
• How well do you evaluate the effectiveness of your strategic partnerships and community involvement in the curriculum?	Trips, Tabernacle, concerts, History Society, Fire, Police, Transition, [redacted] Forum, Specialist teachers, Students, parent volunteers, reading dogs, football, health, Bible explorer, Kerb craft, Barn sport, Eco school, School Council, Swimming, Sport ambassador, Urdd, Tournaments, Forest School, Cycling Proficiency, Sex Ed, Tooth brushing, inoculations,	
• To what extent are you ready to embrace change and engage with other schools and partners to develop your curriculum?	Work closely with other schools as common practice, work with colleges and have nurses, teachers and TA students regularly at the school. Actively encourage new and exciting learning opportunities that have merit. We are a self-evaluative school and are ever evolving to ensure that we meet the needs of our learners.	

Appendix D

Step 2 - Improvement Category

The categorisation based upon evidence and discussion at Step 2 is 'A' because;

Evaluation
The head teacher, senior leaders and staff have developed a shared vision, incorporating a very clear strategy to improve outcomes for all learners. The school motto of: 'Firm foundations, high standards', genuinely underpins the relentless quest for each child to receive excellent education and achieve their potential. This vision is understood by all stakeholders. The head teacher leads by example, facilitating excellent team work amongst the staff, thus creating very strong capacity to plan and implement change and sustain improvement successfully in nearly all respects. She engages all staff and other partners effectively in the change process. For example, planning has been imaginatively adapted to take account of the New Curriculum. Self-evaluation is accurate and detailed. It considers the progress of each pupil in detail and is highly effective in contributing to improving standards in learning and teaching. The school knows itself well and has a track record of bringing about improvements, ensuring nearly all pupils make good or better progress. Monitoring processes are highly organised and feed well into the self-evaluation report (SER). The SER effectively informs the areas of priority set out in the school development plan (SDP). Improvement planning at all levels is effective in addressing the areas in need of development. Actions linked to priority areas, including the use of resources, have led to sustained progress for nearly all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and other vulnerable groups. Pupils with additional learning needs are supported well and more able learners are challenged effectively to make strong progress over time. The school has a strong track record of successfully implementing national and local priorities to improve standards and the quality of learning and teaching. The head teacher and staff work very successfully with schools and other partners to enhance their own and others' capacity to bring about improvement. A number of schools from inside and outside the region visit regularly to observe good practice in relation to curriculum design and early years provision and pedagogy. The school's 'learning village' has inspired other local schools to develop similar models for outdoor provision and independent working. The head teacher has also supported less experienced leaders with tracking, monitoring and self evaluation processes. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are highly effective in supporting and challenging the school's performance. They represent the varied community in which they live and have an excellent knowledge of their school. The quality of teaching across the school and the impact on nearly all pupils' learning and progress is consistently good and often excellent. Nearly all staff have a shared understanding of the characteristics of good and excellent teaching and demonstrate this in classroom practice. Good practice is regularly shared across the school. New staff are mentored effectively and any under performance is addressed robustly, but in a supportive manner. The school's leaders and governors give a high priority to developing the workforce: performance management and professional development are successful in improving pupils' progress, classroom practice and in dealing with any inconsistencies in practice across each phase. The New Professional Standards for Teaching in Wales underpin all performance management procedures. The head teacher and staff track the progress of each pupil effectively and deliver bespoke intervention programmes, or adjust classroom provision, according to need. Targets set for pupils are challenging, but achievable. Teacher assessment is verified robustly through the school's own moderation procedures and is confirmed as consistent and accurate at cluster level.

- performance data at whole-school, cohort and pupil level;
- comparative performance data;
- value-added data and data about pupils' progress;
- the school's self-evaluation report and improvement plan;
- the school's targets;
- the previous categorisation report;
- previous notes of visits and/ or progress reports;
- documentation relating to the headteacher's performance management;
- reports relating to the school's inspection where relevant;
- first-hand knowledge of the life and work of the school.

The types of data evidence used by the Challenge advisor.

Appendix E

<u>Self- evaluation and monitoring</u> An audit of the school self-review cycle and performance management ensuring it is effective and in line with new professional standards for all staff involved with teaching and learning.	• Performance management meetings and targets set for all teaching staff • Effective and robust SER timetable set at start of year • Subject leaders identified and targets set • Training on new Professional standards received by all staff • Subject data analysed by co-ordinators and SLT	• Effective self-evaluation • School self- evaluation file • Performance management cycle • Effective teaching and learning • New areas for development in 2019-20 have been identified	
<u>Wellbeing, health and fitness</u> Monitor the wellbeing of children and staff using questionnaires and dialogue. Introduce 'A mile a day!' and various fun, physical activities to encourage physical movement. Personal, social and emotional communication is vital to wellbeing so general ASD training for staff and pupils will ensure everyone is familiar with signs of ASD and others needing support with their feelings	• Staff and pupils outside and exercising more • All staff and pupils familiar with the signs and needs of ASD • Raised levels of wellbeing • Good working relationship with ASD specialist school	• Talking with staff and pupils	

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