

Gallwch ychwanegu'ch targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf (Ond yn berthnasol os yr ydych wedi cwblhau aseiniad) / Please add your targets from the previous assignment (Only relevant if you have completed an assignment)

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Consider the context and background of literature you discuss, using this consideration to demonstrate critical awareness.	I have considered the context of the literature when making a critical point.
Targed/Target 2	Make greater use of evidence collected to support/consider points.	As written above, I have made greater use of evidence that has been found when making my points.
Targed/Target 3	Take every opportunity to support points with literature.	I have made sure that I have supported all points made with literature.

ECAD7003: How a school develops one aspect of its SDP: a report that critically reflects on the actions, impact and evidence base.

Introduction

This report on a School Development Plan (SDP) discusses how a school develops one aspect of its SDP, critically reflecting on the actions, impact and evidence base. The experience in question is related to one school but must be mirrored by many others across the local authority as part of the rational approach to this school's improvement. The school, an 11-16 co-educational community school has currently 438 pupils on role which serves a suburban area between two local authorities (My local school, 2019). The school has additional complications with 28.5% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) compared to the Welsh National average of 18.3%. However, according to the most recent Estyn report of 2019, 40% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales (Estyn, 2019). School X also has two specialist teaching facilities for pupils with both specific and moderate learning difficulties with nearly 33% having an Additional Learning Need (ALN) in which 13% of those pupils have a statement for that need. With the school vision aiming to create an inclusive community allowing for each individual pupil to maximise their personal potential; making sure pupils are ready to learn and are respectful in the school community it is important that all pupils are engaged. Therefore, the aspect of the SDP that will be reflected upon is how School X provides opportunities for disengaged learners across the local authority in relation to their wellbeing, care, support and guidance.

Literature Review

A school development plan (SDP) is the most important document for a school and indeed the whole school community. It shows what they know and see as their priorities for action and so it is achievable and can be measured, it is put into a timescale (Welsh government, 2014). This is a working document for the use by all stakeholders meaning all members of the school community must feed into the plan. In order for school improvement to be sustainable it should be supported by effective short and long term planning, which is linked to challenging targets. Using qualitative and quantitative data, honest self-evaluation is needed to carry out the disciplined process of planning for school improvement. This cycle should be continuous as a school will reflect upon their performance, identify their priorities for improvement and develop strategies in which they will address them.

The SDP cycle starts with the schools' clear vision and what the school is aspiring to achieve. In order for the school to

make progress, the school needs to consider the context and agree on a vision that is achievable. The next stage is for the school to self-evaluate. It is important that the school reflects upon their performance and use this for a basis for school development planning. Self-evaluation is a key tool in helping schools to identify how well they are performing, where their areas of strength are and what needs to be improved (Welsh government, 2014). However, in Estyn's annual report in 2012-13 it concluded that self-evaluation needed to improve in over 25% of schools in Wales that they had inspected in order to be able to embed a robust, evidence-based approach to planning for improvement (Estyn, 2013). This self-evaluation is followed by strategic planning where all school partners and stakeholders are involved in improving the school's agenda, followed by making the improvement and carrying out the action and then reviewing the impact of the action, completing the cycle.

Figure 1: School development planning cycle

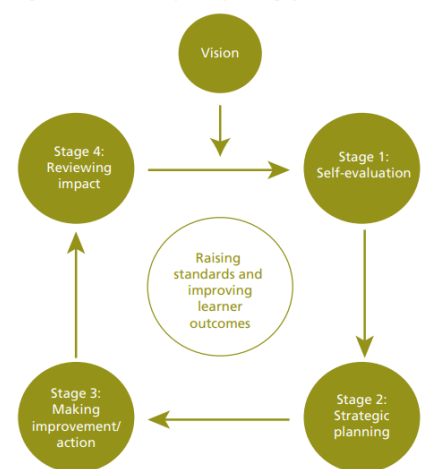


Figure 1 - School Development Planning Cycle

When we sift through the literature for common strategies on how we reengage the disengaged in learning, clear patterns have emerged and have been repeated. In 2007 and 2008, Ofsted conducted a study on 29 secondary schools as they had shown a decrease in unauthorised absences. Of the 32,987 students, 4,347 of whom at become disengaged from education during some point of their lives. Of the disengaged pupils, the school had managed to re-engage 3,404 of these students successfully using factors such as using effective monitoring systems to identify students at risk, close collaboration between primary and secondary schools during transition, the involvement and communication of a wide variety of adults within the school and community and modifying the curriculum by drawing upon educational providers beyond the school environment (Ofsted, 2008). This mirrored Windham's (2005) recommendations that to engage learners the educational curriculum must include – "Interaction, Exploration, Relevancy, Multimedia and Instruction" (pp 5.7-5.9). Respectful relationships and interaction are seen to improve pupil engagement, with pupils today being intensely social and interactive learners. In a survey by Willms, Freisen and Milton (2009) – *Imagine a school, Design for Learning and What did you do in school today?* – pupils want stronger relationships with teachers, each other and communities. Ofsted (2008) found that offering a personalised curriculum with courses that take place within the community and taught by individuals outside of school, were a better match for the pupils needs who were unable to engage with the traditional curriculum. In particular the link with the 'real world' helped change the pupils' attitudes, engagement and the decrease in the numbers of pupil exclusions. This is echoed through the literature as a common prerequisite for engaging learners, with learners asking that their learning applies to real-life contexts wherever possible as opposed to being text-based; working with community issues builds a sense of purpose (Claxton, 2007).

Improving the overall wellbeing of disengaged learners involves an approach which involves a component of care. Effective learning experiences are shaped by student-teacher relationships which support the development of social and emotional competencies. Approaching pupils' challenges with a spirit of caring, empathy, respect and genuine desire

to know pupils can make a unique contribution to their confidence as learners (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009, p.15). Although one might conclude that this 'interaction' falls under social engagement, literature connects that to be engaged in learning, pupils need social interaction.

Research by Willms, Freisen and Milton (2009) also found that pupils want their teachers to create learning environments that build interdependent relationships and promote a strong culture of learning. Restorative practice (RP) is an increasingly acknowledged and employed approach to school discipline in relation to behaviour issues by focusing on repair and reconciliation (Marsh, 2017). There is clear evidence that has a positive impact on the entire school culture with exclusion rates improved and pupils get a voice in their communities and pupils prefer the use of RP compared to the alternative punitive approach. However, moving to a RP approach is a long-term process and to adopt this schools need a plan and commitment to make sure classrooms are central creating this holistic approach (Cavanaugh, Vigil & Garcia 2014).

Overall the literature confirms that there is a common trend in what opportunities schools can provide in order to avoid disengaged pupils in education in particular providing the right environment and making sure that positive relationships are formed. There are barriers which schools need to understand including the pupils' individual needs and have necessary strategies to overcome these, but as the most important school improvement lever, pupil wellbeing should be a priority in schools.

Developing an action point

Disengaged learners can be marginalised in a number of ways and often live in communities where the effects of poverty are embedded in the social fabric having an impact on their educational experiences (Millar and Kilpatrick, 2005). Thus, due to the locality of this school it was important to look at how we can reengage the disengaged.

Self-evaluation

The schools vision as stated above is create an inclusive community allowing each pupils to maximise their potential. During the self-evaluation process various qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed from parental engagement systems and Estyn surveys. An important piece of data was the pupil roll, in-year transfers and exclusion rates. In 2007, 760 pupils were on roll at school X which since then has drastically lowered to just 438 in 2019 as a result of a poor Estyn report in 2013. Davies and Ellison (1992) recognise that a falling role in pupils require a response from management. However, with the idea of inclusion at the fore front of the headteachers vision, School X accept a number of managed move, in year transfers and exclusions in a bid to provide education for all.

Over the past four years a significant number of pupils joining were disengaged from education and presented barriers to learning with a relatively high number having negative attitudes to learning. In 2018-2019 School X received the highest number of managed moves across the local authority accepting 9/45 (Estyn, 2019). Therefore, the school recognised that there was a need of provision to be matched to the ability of the vulnerable, young learners with the correct level of support and guidance needed. Whilst pupils responded well to the strong pastoral care team provided in School X, many struggled to maintain this progress in their classroom studies. Cavanaugh, Vigil and Garcia (2014) echo this and say that classrooms need to be central in creating the holistic approach in the classroom, considering the needs and wellbeing of the whole child. Hence, leadership at the school recognised that the needs of a significant number of pupils could be met better and this data identified a number of key areas of provision that could be modified to address the needs of vulnerable learners.

Strategic Planning

Upon self-evaluation, the senior leadership team recognised that a number of developments needed to be made in order to provide more opportunities for disengaged learners and support their wellbeing. A full review of the curriculum identified the need for additional courses to suit the needs of all pupils, the reconstruction of a behavioural

management system needed to be put in place to support pupil wellbeing and avoid exclusions and creating an inclusive ethos in order to move away from focusing on narrow measurements of success and instead favouring individual achievement.

The school has invested significant and a vigorous amount of time and training to ensure that there is consistency amongst staff in the way that they deliver these approaches and strategies that have been developed to support pupils. However, these new implementations would be a costly enhancement for the school through training and acquiring the resources. Using a bottom up approach, targets have been created by using all stakeholders through the community, by looking at pupil data, questionnaires, results and socio-economic data. However, neither top-down or bottom up strategies for school developments work, what is required is a blend of the two (Fullan, 1994).

Implementation

Delivery and plans for courses were adapted to make sure that changes could be made to give pupils the correct opportunities and to give the pupils who were joining later in the year the chance to catch up with peers and successfully gain the qualification.

Alternative and enhanced provision was developed with innovative courses in order to enhance engagement and outcomes from pupils of all abilities. Willms, Freisen and Milton (2009) support the idea that involving the outside community in the curriculum helps to improve relationships and attitudes, however, there is a risk that pupils will still disengage in this type of activity.

Established behavioural management schemes were replaced with a system focusing on building restorative dialogue, placing teacher-pupil relationships at the heart of the process. The system of mutual respect and strong communication reinforced a collaborative network amongst the pupils and community. An inclusive ethos is reflected throughout the school, with staff holding celebratory and supportive discussions with pupils who transfer in to help build trust and their enthusiasm. All staff have this common mind-set and provide a consistent message to pupils 'Ready, Respect, Safe'.

Measuring Impact

The impact has been measured by looking quantitative data and comparing previous figures. The schools focus on creating an inclusive environment, working closely with parents and learners has resulted in a significant reduction in exclusion rates which are now very low to just 27 across the local authority in 2019. The interventions have allowed an additional three learners who were at risk of permanent exclusion to alternatively engage in provision in their schools. School attendance figures appear to be higher and punctuality is strong. As well as the disengaged pupils, high achieving has benefited from the wider curriculum and alternative provisions. Significant numbers of pupils that have been previously out of education have been reintegrated into mainstream education and have successfully gained GCSE qualifications, headlining that these developments show a positive thread.

Reflection

The implementation of these reengagement strategies for the disengaged pupils has been seen to provide more opportunities and improved attainment through having a personalised curriculum, using non-punitive approaches to bad behaviour and supporting teacher-pupil relationships. However, the effectiveness of these development strategies is not only dependent on whether the pupil engages with it but how much the teacher engages with the change too. When considering the socio-economic context of the school, it may be difficult to fund training for teachers in terms of supporting pupil wellbeing through restorative practice and to fund community courses for a personalised curriculum. Additionally, some staff use these practices more than others, so evidence of pupil engagement with certain staff may be limited or inconsistent when compared others. Whilst there is evidence of improvement in terms of exclusion rates and successful managed moves numbers, there is still a number of pupils who remain disengaged from education with the vast majority being classed a vulnerable learner.

Furthermore, in order for the holistic approach to be used it needs to be reflected in all schools across the local authority, supporting transition from primary to secondary and to ease the transition process for in-year transfers. Therefore, members of the school senior

leadership team (SLT) have shared School X's inclusion strategies with other schools in the local authority. The SLT have provided training to colleagues from other schools as part of their professional learning and senior leaders' meetings have been used to share the practice with other school, thus this may be a factor in the improvement of engagement with learning and the decrease in the number of exclusions.

Following this report there are some recommendations to overcome some barriers that still may occur given the developments. In terms of creating a personalised curriculum, make sure that there are other rewards available as well as gaining a qualification. Rewards such as opportunity to go on trips were found to be a powerful incentive for pupils who struggle to engage in school or who's families cannot afford to send them on these trips (Ofsted, 2008). With these available, it can lead to improved attendance. Also with the aim of creating an inclusive, holistic environment it would benefit the disengaged pupils to have close contact with parents. Although having a whole school system 'Class charts' where parents are communicated via an app, it would be useful to have an alternative mode of communication for parents who cannot access the mobile app, although as the literature suggests this needs to be mirrored by all teachers to be effective.

Conclusion

This report has examined how School X has developed one of its aspects of its SDP. This report has looked at how the school provides opportunities for disengaged learners in terms of their wellbeing. The summarise, the themes and ideas that surface most often in the literature are; providing a personalised curriculum, using restorative practice, making learning relevant to real life and improving teacher-pupil relationships, making sure there is a strong support network. The strategies that have been developed in the SDP have clearly been researched based and have been seen to have a positive impact throughout. As Ramley and Sia (2005, p.8.15) add "Significant changes in teaching and learning are possible, particularly when interactive technologies are involved". In my future practice I will ensure that I establish positive relationships with pupils and ensure that their wellbeing is at

the fore front of every decision. I understand the importance providing all the opportunities possible for the disengaged learners, especially in a school that has a low socio-economic context.

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