

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	*Ensure that the content of the whole essay is focused on answering the question.	I have attempted to ensure that all contents of the whole essay is focused on answering the question through choosing a specific area of my placement school's SDP to analysis and evaluate.
Target 2	*Proof-read your work so that each sentence is complete and makes sense	This target is a particularly difficult one for me as I suffer from dyslexia. I have proof-read the assignment multiple time as well as asking others to do the same. I have additionally ran the assignment through the Grammarly software and engaged with Student services.

This essay will critically reflect on how a school develops one aspect of their school development plan (SDP). Through reflecting and evaluating to a high degree, the actions and methods of a school to pedagogical principles and theories of practice in education. A school development plan is a school's strategic plan for improvement, and it should set out the actions a school will take to improve learner outcomes (Welsh Government (WG), 2014). The school in which my professional placement was undertaken in shall be referred to as School A to adhere to BERA's (2018) guidelines and to protect the identities of those involved. School A is a town centre school situated in an area of high social deprivation, 372 pupils attend the school, and 26% of those pupils receive free school meals (Estyn, 2019; WG, 2020). School A decided on the target 'to ensure disadvantaged pupils achieve their full potential'. The need to decrease the attainment gap between pupils of deprived backgrounds and those of their better-off peers is one of the three national priorities of the WG, as deprivation has a tremendous and complex impact on many areas of a child's education and life (Estyn, 2012; WG, 2017). Schools, however, are situated in a unique position to remarkably mitigate the impact of poverty on pupils, mainly because of their work with families, parents/ carers, and the wider community (Egan, 2007). One of the ways School A decided to tackle poverty deprivation was through engaging with parents by conducting a literacy workshop. The immense impact parental engagement has on pupil's education, especially deprived pupils, has been supported by decades of research (Epstein, 1991; Simon, 2000).

The effect deprivation has on educational attainment is not a recent phenomenon (WG, 2014). However, recently, the impact has increased, and progress in tackling the issue has been considerably slower in Wales than in other countries (WG, 2014). Research has shown a clear link between income poverty and poorer educational attainment (Estyn, 2010). This impact can be seen before children have even entered schools and can see deprived learners being as much as nine months behind their peers (Sylva et al., 2004). Indeed, within Wales, deprived learners tend to perform significantly worse than their more affluent peers across all key stages (WG, 2014). Ainscow et al., (2010) advocates that schools can lessen the impact of poverty on pupil's attainment and progress because they are a universal institute available to all. Furthermore, the WG (2014), has argued that schools play an essential role in decreasing the effect of poverty because effective school practice can reduce underachievement in pupil's overtime when aimed at specific groups of learners. However, the connection between deprivation and educational attainment is complex and affected by a multitude of factors (Feinstein et al., 2004). Deprived learners are not a homogenous group; pupil's experiences and attainment vary by many elements such as gender, family history, additional learning needs, and first language (Reay, 2017). Thus, the performance and attainment of deprived pupils vary; some deprived pupils can achieve at the same level as

their affluent peers, or they can outperform them (Estyn, 2012; WG, 2014). Furthermore, the WG (2017) report demonstrates despite the challenges they face, schools in deprived communities can achieve successful outcomes indicating that poverty does not always have to lead to poor attainment if measures to combat the issue are in place.

Due to the complexity of the issue, research and evidence point to an urgency to tackle the effects of poverty from several angles, one intervention or strategy will not work, but working across several different topics can have an impact (WG, 2014). The WG (2008), has emphasised the use of a holistic approach to tackle poverty through schools working closely with parents to improve the learning outcomes of deprived pupils. Research advocates the immense impact that high-quality relationships with parents can have on deprived pupils by positively impacting their attitudes to education and achievement (Egan, 2007). Goodall & Vorhaus (2010) review concluded that many of the most effective parental engagement practices are family learning programs, of those approaches, literacy workshops were concluded to have the most positive impact. However, research demonstrates that deprived pupils' parents are less likely to be involved in their child's education and often have negative views and experiences of school (WG, 2014). Nevertheless, primary schools that do establish close links with parents have a large and significant positive impact on deprived learner's learning and wellbeing (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Schools operate within a diverse political and educational context, sometimes involving tensions between the various actors, goals, and strategies (Attinay & Yikici, 2017). Fernandez (2011) advocates that formal improvement planning can aid schools in making decisions in this diverse context. Planning for improvement should include an analysis and self-evaluation based on qualitative and quantitative data of a school's development needs, priorities, and plans to address these needs (McNamara et al., 2002). Planning for improvement assists schools in becoming more introspective and in developing procedures for continuous self-evaluations and feedback on student achievements and teaching practices (Fernandez, 2011). McNamara et al., (2002) advocate that a school's ability to self-evaluate, reflect, and problem solve is essential to meeting the needs of all pupils effectively. Therefore, an effective SDP should include plans for improvement and a self-reflective framework centred around the school's aims, mission, and visions, which are continuously reflected upon to monitor the progress and implementation of the SDP goals and targets (WG, 2014). Academics have argued that the development of an SDP is a vital part of every effective school's on-going improvement effort (Doud, 1995).

Kelly & Lazotte (2003) concluded that previously schools had been able to plan adequately without any extensive data collection and analysis, but in the current political climate, which

emphasises standards and accountability, schools need to be data-driven and results-oriented. SDP can aid schools in this data process, as it is regarded as a critical management tool in uniting the different stakeholders within a school to assess problems and achieve goals (Park et al., 2013). Penuel & Shepard (2016) indeed argues that an SDP should be the result of deliberation and negotiation between all stakeholders of the schools. School leaders will need to consolidate the different goals and ideas of stakeholders with the values, culture, mission, and vision of the school to ensure that goals are collectively developed (Kutash et al., 2010). However, Schmoker (2014) has criticised the lack of accessibility all stakeholders have to the SDP, as they are often lengthy jargon laced documents, which include a long list of tasks and action plans that not all stakeholders can understand. The WG (2014) have attempted to address this issue by advocating that SDP should not contain anything unnecessary and should be judged on its impact on improvement rather than its quantity. Although, schools in Wales have only been provided with a general planning framework for an SDP, which can cause variances in the quality of SDPs (Fernandez, 2011). However, due to the differences in schools, communities, and pupils, what works in one school may not work in another; therefore, schools need the freedom to create and plan their own SDP to ensure it suits the needs of their learners and community (Brighouse & Woods, 2013).

WG's (2014) framework for SDP recommends the use of a Planning cycle (Appendix one); the first step within the cycle is self-evaluation. The WG (2014) and Estyn (2012) have both highlighted the importance of conducting a self-evaluation in order to identify a school's strengths and weaknesses. There are two different approaches to conducting self-evaluations, top-down, and bottom-up (Skedsmo, & Huber, 2019); School A decided to take a top-down approach. The headteacher and governors of School A determined the targets and goals for the school using self-evaluations. The headteacher recognised the WG aim to tackle deprivation; therefore, they placed tackling deprivation as one of the school's main priorities. Skedsmo, & Huber (2019), however, have criticised a top-down approach for its lack of collaboration and inclusion of staff, which can potentially demotivate staff resulting in them not being committed to the implementation of the SDP. School A, however, wanted to ensure that staff was committed to the SDP. Therefore, the opinions and views of the staff were sought on how best to implement and tackle the targets, ensuring a collaborative culture and process (Hanover Research, 2014). Indeed, it was the staff who highlighted that an effective way to tackle deprivation was to increase and promote parental engagement. Staff used their professional judgement to decide on this solution as they had seen first-hand the benefits parental engagement has on deprived pupil's attainment. The headteacher noted that the inclusion of staff within the strategic planning increased their motivation, and as highlighted by the WG (2014), it ensured that the right members of staff with the right skills were in the right

place at the right time. Placing professional development opportunities for staff at the centre of School A's SDP by making sure the workforce had the necessary skills and experience to meet learner needs (WG, 2014). Schechter et al., (2004) has argued that for schools to survive in the current complex climate, it is vital for staff to continue to develop their practice and professionalism, as it provides schools with the ability to adapt to the new challenges.

Additionally, School A used data during the self-evaluation and strategic planning process to identify areas of weakness, strengths, and ways forward. The use of data-based decision making has recently become more prominent within schools, Van Geel's et al., (2016) research has demonstrated that this form of decision-making can increase student outcomes. For this target School A, analysed the summative assessments of all students. The results demonstrated that deprived pupils largely underperformed in literacy. However, Brown et al., (2017) issues caution to schools who over-rely on assessment data, because one source of data can often be unreliable and subject to biases. Brown et al., (2017) instead advocates the use of a triangulation method by using several forms of data sources, to reduce the reliance on one source of data and increase the reliability of the data and the self-evaluations.

The final step within the WG's Planning cycle is reviewing the impact; Penuel & Shepard (2016) advocate that for an SDP to be successful, schools must have systems in place to measure if they have achieved their targets. However, measuring the impact that a school has on their targets should not be done at one specific point, measurements should be conducted throughout the entire year, and the SDP should be viewed as a live document (WG, 2014). School A created clear success criteria for each of their targets in order to be able to review and self-evaluate themselves. The senior leadership team (SLT) also regularly met to discuss the targets deciding on whether they were close to meeting their success criteria and what was needed to do next. Once School A identified their targets and strategically planned for them, they carried on self-evaluating themselves and looking for further ways to improve their practice and student outcomes throughout the year to ensure they achieved their target and implemented the best practice for pupils. School A, therefore, clearly viewed their SDP as a continuous process.

School A's summative assessment showed that disadvantaged pupils underperform in literacy. Staff had additionally highlighted that they believed an effective way to tackle deprivation was through parental engagement. Thus, School A decided to combine these issues by creating a literacy workshop to increase deprived pupil's literacy level and promote parental engagement. Goodall & Vorhaus (2010) research concluded that literacy workshops have the greatest impact on deprived pupils, extensively and robustly impacting their academic and learning outcomes. Parental workshops had additionally been successful in

School A during previous years. The literacy workshops were carried out for five weeks and aimed to teach parents about the different literacy and phonics strategies School A used in order to promote the parents to be involved with their child's education. Recent studies had demonstrated that increasing parental involvement in primary education has a two to three-month positive impact on learners' performance and attainment (Higgins et al., 2013). The workshops were well received, with 20 parents attending all sessions. School A measured the impact of the workshop by collecting data to evaluate its effectiveness, Poortman & Schildkamp's (2018) research advocates that analysing data on pupils' performance is a highly effective method in helping to improve pupil attainment. Questionnaires before and after the workshops were given to parents and assessments were undertaken on the children whose parents attended the workshop. The data gathered showed a dramatic change in the opinions of parents, and in the work of pupils, most parents were now more willing to assist their child with homework and schoolwork. The pupil's results showed, on average, an increase in their knowledge and understanding of literacy. Indeed Estyn's (2019) report on School A highlighted that the school organised beneficial workshops for parents to help them support their child's learning.

However, once the workshops were over, School A did not have anything in place to continue to promote the parents from the workshop to be involved with their child's education. Goodall & Vorhaus's (2010) review concluded that effective parental engagement must be an on-going whole school process. School A must develop ways to continue to promote parental engagement throughout the entire year rather than for a limited period. The WG (2016) recommended the use of social events to promote parental engagement. School A could conduct regular coffee mornings for the parents of the workshops where the school can continue to promote parental involvement in pupil's education. Furthermore, the parents were not involved in the strategic planning of the workshops. Estyn's (2009) report concluded that good parental engagement practice was found in schools that were proactive, listened to parents, and included them in their SDP. Indeed, the WG (2014) highlights that an effective SDP involves all stakeholders and school partners because it promotes a sense of ownership over the SDP and ensures stakeholders work collaboratively. School A should look to include parents in their SDP by seeking their opinions, ideas, and advice on the targets they intend to set.

Throughout this essay, the actions of School A in achieving their target through the use of parental literacy workshops have been examined and critically reflected upon with reference to theories and effective pedagogical practices. Additionally, School A's SDP process and the actions they have taken to tackle this issue were evaluated and analysed. School A's workshops did have a positive impact on deprived pupil's attainment and parental

engagement. Thus, making strides to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils achieve their full potential and increasing their literacy scores. However, the workshops are only a short-term solution, and School A needs to develop ways of continuing parental involvement (WG, 2014). Furthermore, parents were not involved in the strategic planning for these activities. School A needs to address this issue and include parents in the planning and implementation of the SDP (Estyn, 2009).

Through conducting this assignment, I have learned about the process of SDP and the importance of conducting one. I understand that an effective SDP is not accomplished by one improvement plan but requires a long terms process of evaluating and analysing, including broad and consistent strategic thinking (Davies, 2003). Additionally, from this assignment, I have developed an understanding of the importance of tackling deprivation in order to mitigate the immense impact that poverty can have on pupil's attainment and performance (WG, 2014). I recognise that developing positive and professional relationships with parents can mitigate the impact of deprivation. Within my NQT year and beyond I will strive to establish and develop an on-going open relationship with parents. Furthermore, this assignment has developed my professionalism through increasing my knowledge and understanding of the nature of responsibilities schools have and the contributions the SLT team and individuals make towards achieving the school's visions, ethos, and targets. Enabling me to support and contribute to the design, implementation, and achievement of the SDP in my NQT year and beyond.

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Appendix One:

