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

Final word count: 2572

	Target	What I have done in this assignment...
Target 1	Greater critical engagement with research, including identifying the limitations and challenges and considering how this impact upon your study.	I have looked at how the SDP will impact my own practice and included limitations.
Target 2	Proofread your work to ensure fluency in your writing and avoid errors in punctuation, particularly when using the apostrophe.	I proofread numerous times.
Target 3	Revise Harvard referencing protocols.	I have referred to the Harvard referencing handbook when completing this assignment.

This assignment will be focusing on the school development plan (SDP) from my Professional Teaching Experience (PTE) school. It will address why a target was made, how it is addressing the action point and measuring the impact it has had on the school. The aspect of the SDP will be to 'Improve quality of cross-curricular teaching and learning' and is the third focus out of five. A review of literature will be undertaken to understand the role the SDP has on both the school and cross-curricular, with the action point focusing on Digital Competency. After reflecting on the action point in the SDP, recommendations will be made on how it could have been addressed differently and how it will inform my own practice in the future.

For the purpose of this report, to ensure that my PTE school is kept confidential in line with BERA (2018) the school will be referred to as School Y. School Y is a pioneer school (Estyn, 2017) therefore, the whole SDP has a focus on the new curriculum for Wales. School Y is in South Wales and is an English-medium school (Estyn, 2017). The school is based in a city and has a diverse ethnic background with a broad range of languages and English is a second language to many learners (Estyn, 2017). The school recognises that there is an average of 26% of learners who are eligible for free school meals and has identified 28% of learners with an addition learning need (Estyn, 2017).

"The school development plan (SDP) is the school's strategic plan for improvement. It sets out the actions a school will take to improve learner outcomes" (Welsh Government, 2014a, p.3). The Welsh Government (2014a) has identified the SDP to be a live document required to report the current performance data of the school based on short and long-term targets. As this is a live document, it is essential that the school should be updating the document on at regular intervals. This is to ensure progress is being made and the school is meeting their key focuses and action points. Overall, the SDP should reinforce and support the school to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the improvements that need to be made, the current progress. With this information stakeholders are then able to contribute towards meeting the focuses.

"Evidence-based education is an approach where the methods used are based on significant and reliable evidence. It aims to apply the best available evidence, gained from scientific methods, to educational decision making" (Victoria State Government, 2018). Thus, suggesting the improvements that have been outlined in the SDP have been developed based on approaches that were used previously and proved to be affective in achieving higher standards. As well as data influencing the improvement of the school, the Welsh Government (2014a) have implemented challenge advisers to identify and support the actions needed to accomplish the improvements and to share good practice. Welsh Government (2014a) established that challenge advisers are part of a regional group and are fundamental into meeting and raising the national standards. Yet, Brighouse and Woods

(2013) have implied that schools will plan their SDP on their own and the challenge schools will encounter is if the planning is effective to achieve the outcomes. Hanover's research (2014) have suggested the SDP is put into place to reduce the attainment gap and raise the standards across the curriculum for all learners.

Welsh Government (2014b) have developed a planning cycle which consists of four stages to support the development and implementation of the SDP. This has been identified as "self-evaluation, strategic planning, making improvement/action and reviewing impact" (Welsh Government, 2014b, p.7). This cycle of the four stages can help direct the stakeholders involved to have clear aims on what is required to be improved and to set reasonable approaches to achieve the aims. Despite this, schools may have difficulty when completing the first stage as it relies on being reflective, identifying different aspects that need improvements and analysing the performance of the school. A key factor of the SDP is those who are involved, Brighouse and Woods (1999) have suggested the governors are imperative if the SDP is to make progress and have a key role into planning, monitoring, and evaluating each year. However, Wallace (2009) points out that as well as governors, parents and teachers will contribute and on occasions the learners may have an input on the SDP.

For School Y to meet their focus of improving the quality of cross-curricular teaching and learning, an action point was put together in order to develop teachers understanding, competence and confidence in DCF in order to encourage and engage learners to write. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003) recommended that when approaching cross-curricular, the links between subjects should be strong enough that children can transfer the knowledge and skills through the whole curriculum. Welsh Government (2020a) has identified 3 responsibilities that need to be considered throughout the curriculum; these include literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. The Welsh Assembly Government (2019a) had defined that when using cross-curricular, the skills taught should be to a high capability and children can continually develop and apply throughout the curriculum. This is supported by Jarvis (2009) highlighting that cross-curricular responsibilities (CCRs) should be used when possible to ensure that all learners are acquiring a high standard of knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

In order to support the use of digital competence, the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was put into place and "It focuses on developing digital skills which can be applied to a wide range of subjects and scenarios that are transferrable to the world of work" (Welsh Government, 2018, p.2). Welsh Government (2013) has also developed the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) that is implemented by teachers to develop the skills across the curriculum and is fundamental in the use of planning lessons. One may suppose that the use

of the different frameworks will help to support practitioners and should be referred to in order to improve the quality of cross-curricular teaching and learning.

Estyn (2018) have recommended that schools will need to plan the DCF across the curriculum, in a range of subjects to ensure that enough progress is being made. If schools take the recommendations forward it will ensure all elements of the DCF are being met for each learner and can be transferred throughout the curriculum. Krumsvik (2011) has challenged some of Estyn's conclusions, arguing that teachers can lack digital competence and will attempt to meet the criteria of using DCF across the curriculum without having adequate skills. However, one question that needs to be asked is whether DCF or technology can impact on the learner. "When technology is integrated into lessons, students are expected to be more interested in the subjects they are studying" (Savvidis, 2020) supports this and confirms the importance of meeting the needs of the learner and adapting to how they learn best whether that is visual, audio or kinaesthetic.

As previously stated, the first stage of creating an SDP is self-evaluation, where "schools reflect upon their performance and use it as a basis for sustainable improvement planning" (Welsh government, 2014, p.8). In order to get a full understanding of why the focus and action points were developed by School Y, a discussion had taken place with the deputy head. The focus is to improve the quality of cross-curricular teaching and learning to raise standards with the action to develop competence and confidence in using the DCF and using ICT to engage learners to write.

From the discussion, I was made aware of the two reasons for this development. First, School Y wanted to get ahead as a pioneer school and start the process of meeting the expectations of the new curriculum, "The Curriculum for Wales guidance promotes collaboration and cross-disciplinary planning, learning and teaching, both within and across Areas" (Welsh Government, 2020b). Donaldson (2015) has created 4 core purposes which have been developed into the curriculum to prepare learners for the world in which we live in. These 4 core purposes will influence the teaching and the experiences that learners will receive in school. Within the SDP a self-evaluation rationale was produced and identified that although teachers were aware of the CCRs and would teach across the curriculum, it was found not to be consistent. The self-evaluation therefore supports School Y's focus for the year to improve the quality of cross-curricular, however this was broken down further into action points for each CCR.

The second reason mentioned in the discussion, was that there was a need to improve literacy and numeracy standards within the school. This is reflected in School Y's Estyn (2017) report with the recommendation of improving numeracy skills across the curriculum. Welsh Government (2019b) have set the recommendation for Year 2 children to be an outcome 5 in all areas of learning and Year 6 children to be at level 4 for each subject.

School Y has compared their school data against the expectations of the government's recommendations to follow the approach of evidence-based education. Therefore, School Y has used available evidence to support their reasoning to include certain aspects in the SDP rather than just an opinion.

Bell (2002) expressed that when planning for school development, schools can thrive when they use good management practice in the planning process. When strategic planning took place, the head teacher was involved as well as four cross-curricular leads (leadership roles) and one governor. Eby (2018) discussed the use of “Top down Approach”. This approach appears to be taken place in School Y as individuals with high authority developed the SDP and were given specific tasks to complete before delegating to staff members. However, Eby (2018) also discussed the use of the “Bottom Up Approach” where employees can have input and set tasks for individual's with higher authority. This approach could have been effective for School Y in the planning process, to gain more ideas from a range of professionals that could be considered before developing their action point. Considering both approaches, it seems that when strategical planning takes place there should be consideration on who is planning and key members should be utilised to gather a range of inputs to ensure the plan is being developed to its full potential and the action(s) taken forward are implemented effectively.

Welsh Government (2014) has outlined a suitable timeframe of an SDP is 3 years, nonetheless, it is good practice to review annually and revise when required. At the end of summer term, School Y will gather information to self-evaluate the evidence that has been collected to ensure progress has been made towards the focus and its impact on learning. School Y will be reviewing data from Year 2 and 6 literacy and numeracy tests to measure the impact of the strategies used to develop cross-curricular teaching and learning. A key problem with this is that each cohort will differ with each year which can impact on data. Therefore, “The schools self-evaluation statement should also bring out the unique and distinctive features of the school and the richness of its provision based upon quality assurance system” (Brighouse and Woods, 2013, p.145). When reviewing the impact, considerations need to be made on how effective the strategies were and whether they were appropriate to the school and learners.

On reflection School Y has carried out different actions in response to the focus. School Y has placed a board within the staffroom, clearly displaying the SDP to ensure that all stakeholders within the school are aware and can track the progress throughout the academic year. This aspect is reinforced by Bell (2002) that when new information is produced, that planning can be updated accordingly. However, during PTE, action points would be completed to meet certain aspects of the SDP but would not be updated to reflect the implementation. Therefore, a recommendation would be to ensure that the SDP is

always being updated to be aligned with the Welsh Government guide of a live document. The SDP could be included on the agenda of staff meetings to ensure it is discussed and updated regularly. In addition to this, the SDP cycle portrays 4 stages, School Y follows this, where the impact is reviewed at the end. However, a recommendation would be to review the impact and reflect at different points through the year, this enables the school to be reactive and add, remove, or amend action points based upon the current situation.
School Y has completed an inset to gain an understanding of the requirements of the DCF and the use of ICT in the classroom. As part of a follow up, the DCF lead within School Y completed a learning walk to observe the teachers' competency and how DCF was incorporated to inspire writing. Following this, feedback was given to individual teachers detailing strengths and suggestions to improve teaching and learning. Although the approach of a learning walk and feedback may not always be effective as it can only provide the DCF leads with a snapshot of a lesson. An approach that may be considered would be to allow the DCF lead to go into a lesson to offer support or demonstrate an approach to ensure that it is being carried out effectively. Another recommendation could be to provide the DCF lead with feedback at regular intervals to keep the DCF lead up to date with how the DCF is being used and allow the DCF lead to offer their views and/or provide recommendations. Depending on time, this could either be done in person or electronically. Welsh Government (2017) reminds schools that digital leaders can demonstrate the skills by delivering high quality lessons that practitioners can use to transform their lessons. Estyn (2018) have recommended utilising learners and training their digital skills in order to support members of staff and their peers. Another suggestion would be to train a number of children to be digital leaders within the school. The DCF lead could train the digital leaders with a skill or a resource that could be used throughout the curriculum. This could help promote the use of technology and encourage or influence their peers to improve the quality of learning within the learning environment and across the curriculum.
Looking into SDP has made me aware of the process and how many stakeholders are involved in planning and implementing the action points to improve the school and learners' outcomes. The whole process has been constructive to my own professional development to understand the impact that national and school data can have on the SDP. A key example that could affect my own teaching is if an SDP has a focus in raising standards such as literacy and numeracy, though any action point on an SDP could potentially affect my own teaching approach within the classroom. Therefore, to adjust I may need to adapt to ensure that I am fulfilling the needs of the school. In future practices, I will be proactive in making myself aware of the areas the school are focusing on, contribute to the action points and put forward recommendations where possible. To conclude, from completing this experience, it has made me aware of the different processes undertaken in order to produce an SDP to

ensure standards within teaching and learning are to a high standard, to give pupils the best opportunity to learn and succeed both inside and outside of school.