

	Targed/target	What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Pay close attention to the assignment brief. This work drifts away from the specifics of the assignment.	I have kept referring to the assignment brief and making a mind map to help put ideas down that link to the brief.
Targed/Target 2	Proofread your work to ensure clarity of expression and written accuracy.	I have re-read my work more often and asked family members to read over to check for readability. I have also practiced my academic writing by using the study skills handbooks.
Targed/Target 3	Identify more literature to support your work. Then make a stronger connection in your blog between your own reflections and the literature that you have used to develop your understanding.	I have used the university library online more to help me find appropriate literature to help support my points within my work. I have also used goggle scholar to help find relevant information.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com/>) on 16th February 2025 to proofread my conclusion using the prompt(s):

1. Please can you check this paragraph for grammatical mistakes.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

A Critical Evaluation of the Development of a Strategic Target in a School Development Plan: Actions, Impact, and Evidence-Based Reflections

Introduction

This critical evaluation will examine a strategic target from the School Development Plan (SDP) of School A. In accordance with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Guidelines (2024), the school will be referred to as School A to maintain its anonymity. The chosen strategic target for this evaluation is Target 2: “To continue to develop feedback to support pupils in making progress in learning” (██████████, 2024). The development of feedback is crucial in promoting students’ progress, as it provides learners with clear guidance on their strengths and areas for improvement. Effective feedback fosters self-awareness encourages active engagement and can be tailored to meet individual needs. Additionally, it has been shown to lead to improved learning outcomes and enhanced student confidence.

School A is situated in a rural community and currently has 127 learners enrolled (██████████, 2024). The school’s demographic includes 6.4% of learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM), 2.3% who speak Welsh at home, 17.9% who are on a learning plan, with 1.6% having Individual Development Plans (IDP), 0.8% with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and 3.9% who are children in care (██████████, 2024).

This evaluation will draw on relevant literature to support SDP process, examine a specific action point linked to School A’s development plan, and reflect on my own professional practice in relation to supporting the strategic target.

Literature Review

School Development Planning (SDP) is an essential strategic process in educational settings especially in Wales, where it has guided frameworks established by the Welsh Government (Welsh Government, 2023). The purpose of SDP is to focus on raising educational standards, ensuring accountability, promoting continuous improvement, and aligning school priorities with national objectives. A central part of a SDP is the commitment to enhancing learner outcomes, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has access to high-

quality learning experiences. This is particularly important in schools with diverse learner demographics, such as those with learners who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM), those with additional learning needs (ALN), English as an additional language (EAL) pupils, or looked after children. By collating data-driven self-evaluation and reflecting on teaching practices, schools can identify key areas for improvement and set realistic, measurable targets to guide their development (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991). Furthermore, SDP supports the alignment of local school initiatives with the broader educational context in Wales, particularly through the Curriculum of Wales (CfW), which emphasises holistic, learner-centred approaches, and is closely linked to the National Mission for Education (Welsh Government, 2023) mentioned that it seeks to enhance equity and excellence across the sector.

The process of SDP typically unfolds across several key stages. Initially, schools engage in a comprehensive self-evaluation process, which forms the foundation of effective planning (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991). This involves the rigorous analysis of a range of data sources, including learners' achievement, attendance, and well-being metrics, as well as feedback from staff, learners and parents. In this phase, schools are encouraged to assess their strengths and weaknesses, especially in the context of curriculum delivery, teaching methodologies, and learners support mechanisms, ensuring a focus on those learners who may be at risk of underachievement or marginalisation. This reflection is underpinned by the Estyn Inspection Framework (Estyn, 2024) which states that it serves as an external validation of school's self-assessment process. Following the evaluation, schools set clear SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievement, Relevant, Time-bound) targets that address identified areas of improvement. These targets should not only be academic but also consider broader factors such as learners well-being, equity, and inclusion, which are increasingly central Welsh educational policy.

The subsequent stage, action planning, involves outlining specific interventions and initiatives to achieve these targets. This phase requires careful planning regarding the allocation of resources, including staff-training, financial investment, and the introduction of pedagogical strategies (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991). Furthermore, a well-crafted action plan must designate clear roles and responsibilities to ensure effective implementation. Once the plan is executed, the focus shifts to monitoring and evaluation, which is a critical stage of the SDP process. Monitoring includes regular checks on the progress of specific actions, often through qualitative feedback and established targets, schools can adjust their strategies as needed, ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to emerging challenges.

Finally, the process of reporting and reviewing, where schools are expected to share their progress with key stakeholders, including governors, local authorities, and parents (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991). This stage of reflection ensures transparency and accountability, allowing for continuous conversations and collaboration between the school and its community. In the context of Welsh education, this process is designed to support sustainable development, focusing on long-term improvements that promote not only academic success but also the well-being of learners. Through this approach, schools contribute to the broader aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2025 (Welsh government, 2025), mentions reinforcing a commitment to creating an education system that is inclusive, sustainable and equitable. The SDP is not merely a management tool but a vital process that ensures schools remain responsive to the evolving needs of their learners and the wider educational landscape in Wales.

Effective feedback is a vital component of the learning process, facilitating pupil progress and deeper understanding (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). However, developing feedback that is meaningful supports learners but presents several challenges. One key issue is ensuring feedback is specific and actionable. General comments such as “well done” or “try again” lack the detail required for learners to make improvements. Instead, feedback should be the goal-oriented addressing specific learning objectives and providing clear guidance on next steps (Shute, 2008) Research suggests that feedback is the most effective when it includes information on task performance, process and self-regulation strategies, enabling pupils to actively engage in their learning journey (Brookhart, 2012).

Another challenge is balancing praise with constructive criticism. While positive feedback can boost motivation, excessive or unfocused praise may reduce its effectiveness (Dweck, 2006). Conversely, overly critical feedback can demoralise learners, particularly those with lower self-efficacy (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996). Effective feedback should acknowledge effort and progress while guiding learners towards further development. This aligns with formative assessment principles where feedback is used not just to evaluate but to inform future learning (Black and William, 1998).

Timelines are also vital. Hattie (2012) emphasises that immediate or well-timed feedback maximises its impact, as delayed feedback may be disconnected from the learning moment, reducing its effectiveness. However, in classrooms with high workloads, providing immediate, high-quality feedback can be challenging. Strategies such as whole-class feedback, peer assessment, and self-reflection activities can help mitigate this issue while still ensuring feedback is meaningful (William, 2011).

Furthermore, ensuring that learners engage with and act upon feedback remains a significant hurdle. Studies indicate that many learners do not read or respond to teacher feedback, limiting its effectiveness (Carless, 2006). Encouraging self-regulation through techniques such as feedback dialogues, metacognitive reflection, and scaffold learning can foster greater engagement (Nicol and Mackfarlane-Dick, 2006). However, some learners, particularly those with additional learning needs or English as an Additional Language (EAL), may require further differentiation. For instance, visual, verbal, or scaffolded feedback may be necessary to ensure accessibility and comprehension (Sadler, 2010).

Teacher workload is another concern, as providing detailed, individualised feedback is extremely time intensive. High workloads can lead to reliance on summative rather than formative feedback, limiting opportunities for improvement (Boud and Molloy, 2013). To address this, approaches such as coded marking, peer review, and technology-assisted feedback can enhance efficiency without compromising quality (Henderson et al., 2019).

Additionally, feedback must align with learning intentions and foster a growth mindset. Learners who perceive feedback to improve, rather than a judgement of ability, are more likely to benefit from it (Dweck, 2006). Teachers can support this by reinforcing effect-based progress and modelling reflective practices. Ultimately, while there are numerous challenges associated with providing effective feedback, evidence-based strategies can help ensure that feedback remains a powerful tool for enhancing learning outcomes (Hattie and Clarke, 2019).

Developing an Action Point

School A has established a range of strategic targets within its School Development Plan (SDP), encompassing areas such as reading and the integration of science into the curriculum. One of the key targets, as outlined in the SDP ([REDACTED], 2024), is: *“To continue to develop feedback to support pupils in making progress in learning.”* This target stood out due to its alignment with the school’s broader aims, which emphasises fostering emotional and social growth, cultivating curiosity and resilience, and enables learners to reach their full potential. Consequently, target 2 is closely linked to the school’s overarching vision and educational priorities ([REDACTED], 2024).

Discussions with several teachers at School A highlighted that this target was identified as a priority through the school’s self-evaluations process, which includes lesson observations, learner discussions, book looks and learning walks ([REDACTED], 2024).

Additionally, teacher A noted that this focus in feedback aligns with recommendations from a

recent Estyn inspection. Estyn (2017) observed that *“teachers’ feedback focuses too often on basic mistakes and does not result in pupils improving the quality and standard of their work.”* As a result, the school was advised to enhance feedback strategies to support learners progress, reinforcing the importance of Target 2. Furthermore, Estyn (2017) emphasises the role of effective feedback in fostering independent learning through clear learning objectives, learner involvement, progressive success criteria, peer and self-assessment, and high-quality questioning, all of which contribute to accelerated learning.

In response to this target, I identified several strategies to incorporate into my own teaching practice, working collaboratively with my class mentor to enhance feedback methods. This included implementing pit stops, WAGOLs (What A Good On Looks Like), self-assessments, and quizzes to encourage learners to reflect on and engage with their progress. Pit stops were integrated into each lesson to check for understanding, identifying misconceptions and link learning to the school’s four purpose characters. WAGOLs provided clear examples of expected outcomes, allowing learners to self-monitor their work throughout lessons. Self-assessments and exit tickets were used mainly in topic-based work, enabling students to evaluate their own progress beyond basic corrections and to determine their next learning steps. Each of these strategies directly supported the objectives outlines in the SDP (██████████, 2024).

To monitor progress in this area, School A employs a range of evaluative methods within its assessment of learning (AFL) framework. Senior leadership teams engage in pupil voice activities focusing on student confidence in discussing their peer and self-assessments. Additionally, national test results, conducted at the beginning and end of the academic year, provide quantitative measures of progress. Regular pupil progress meetings are held each term, complemented by book scrutinies that assess the effectiveness of feedback in both student books and class floor books (██████████, 2024). Teachers also participate in learning walks and lesson observations, allowing for professional dialogue and constructive feedback from colleagues to refine and enhance their teaching practices.

The School Development Plan (SDP) of School A highlights the importance of feedback in enhancing pupil progress, a focus supported by both internal evaluations and external recommendations from Estyn (2023). The school’s commitment to improving feedback aligns with broader educational research that emphasises its role in fostering self-regulated learning and academic achievement (Black and William, 1998). However, while the SDP outlines a clear objective, the effectiveness of its implementation requires critical examination.

One strength of School A's approach is its reliance on a range of assessment for learning (AFL) strategies, such as lesson observations, book looks and learner discussion. These methods ensure a holistic understanding of the impact of feedback on students learning. Additionally, the integration of evidence-based techniques, including pit stops, WAGOLs, and self-assessment tools, reflects an active effort to make feedback more meaningful. Research suggest that formative feedback is most effective when it is specific, timely and actionable (Hattie and Timperley, 2007), which aligns with the strategies employed. However, these are potential limitations. While the school prioritises feedback, there is little discussion on whether learners are equipped with the necessary skills to engage critically with it. Simply providing feedback does not guarantee improved outcomes; learners need explicit instructions on how to interpret and act upon it (Sadler, 1989). The heavy reliance on monitoring through book scrutines and observations raises concerns about whether the focus is on compliance rather than meaningful pedagogical change.

To further enhance the impact of feedback, School A could integrate professional development opportunities for teachers on effective feedback practices and learner metacognition. Additionally, exploring student's perceptions of feedback effectiveness could provide a deeper insight into its impact. A more learner-created approach may strengthen the SDP's long-term success.

Reflection and Evaluation

Supporting the school's effort to help feedback for learner progress has been valuable learning experience, allowing me to critically reflect on the effectiveness of my teaching strategies. Through introducing formative assessment techniques such as pit stops, WAGOLs, self-assessment, and quizzes, I have tried to provide meaningful and actionable feedback for my learners. These strategies align with Black and William's (1998) research, which mentions that formative assessment plays a critical role in improving learning outcomes. My experience suggests that when feedback is immediate, specific and student centred, learners become more engaged in their progress and develop greater ownership over their learning. However, challenges have emerged during this process. While strategies such as self-assessment and peer review help learners, some learners struggle to give effective feedback. Researcher by Sadler (1989) suggests that for feedback to be effective, students must process the ability to recognise the gap between their current performance and the expected standard. To overcome this, I have encouraged explicit instructions, helping learners to analyse their work and identify areas for improvement. Despite these

efforts, further professional development on scaffolding feedback would be beneficial for both the teacher and learner.

To improve the impact of feedback at School A, I propose several evidence-based recommendations. Firstly, implementing learner-led conferences could enhance learner ownership in the feedback process. Research suggests that when students actively participate in their progress with teachers, they develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Secondly, providing verbal feedback alongside written comments could improve comprehension and engagement. Studies show that verbal feedback, especially when given in real time, fosters stronger student-teacher interactions and encourages immediate reflection (Shute, 2008). Thirdly, introducing digital feedback tools could help to personalise learning experiences. Platforms such as Google Classroom or Seesaw enables teachers to provide detailed, multimedia feedback while tracking student responses over time. Research by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) notes that effective feedback must be ongoing, rather than a one-time intervention. Finally, a school-wide professional learning community (PLC) focused on effective feedback could provide staff with a continuous opportunity to share insights and refine their approach. Peer observations and collaborative reflection sessions would foster a culture of evidence-informed teaching, which would enhance the consistency and quality of feedback across the school. By introducing these recommendations, School A can further support learner progress and align its feedback strategies with best educational practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, School A's commitment to enhancing feedback as outlined in its School Development Plan (SDP) is well-grounded in research and aligns with educational practices. Effective feedback plays a crucial role in learners progress, fostering self-regulation, engagement and deeper learning. The school's integration of strategies such as pit stops, WAGOLs, and self-assessment demonstrate a proactive approach to improving feedback practices. However, while these initiatives are promising, challenges remain, especially when ensuring that learners fully understand and can act on feedback given. Addressing this requires targeted professional development for teacher and explicit instructions for learners on interpreting feedback effectively.

Furthermore, improvements could include learner-led conferences, real-time feedback and the digital tools to personalise learning experiences. Additionally, establishing a professional learning community (PLC) dedicated to refining feedback strategies could enhance

consistency and effectiveness across the school. By fostering a culture of continuous reflection and adaptation, School A can ensure its feedback practices are not just compliant with external recommendations but genuinely are impactful for students learning. The schools focus on developing meaningful feedback aligns with boarder educational goals in Wales, contributing a more inclusive, student-centred learning environment that promote long term academic success.

Reference List:

- Black, P., & William, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education*, 5(1), 7-74.
- Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2013). *Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding it and doing it well*. Routledge.
- British Educational Research Association (2024). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. 5th edn. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024/> (Accessed: 30th January 2025).
- Brookhart, S. M. (2012). *How to give effective feedback to your students*. ASCD.
- Carless, D. (2006). Differing perceptions in the feedback process. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 219-233.
- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.
- Estyn (2017). *Effective Feedback To Support Independent Learners*. Available at: <https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/effective-feedback-to-support-independent-learners/> (Accessed: 30th January 2025).
- Estyn (2023). *A Report On [REDACTED]*. Available at: <https://estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-07/Inspection%20report%20St%20Oswald's%20VA%20School%202023.pdf> (February 17th, 2025).
- Estyn (2024). *What we inspect (2024 – 2030): Maintained schools and pupil referral units*. Available at: <https://estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2024-07/What%20We%20Inspect%20-%202024%20Maintained%20Schools%20and%20PRUs.pdf> (Accessed: 30th January 2025).
- Hargreaves, D. H. and Hopkins, D. (1991). *The Empowered School: The Management and Practice of Development Planning*. London: Cassell.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Routledge.
- Hattie, J., & Clarke, S. (2019). *Visible learning: Feedback*. Routledge.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Henderson, M., Ryan, T., & Phillips, M. (2019). The challenges of feedback in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(8), 1237-1253.

Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.

Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218.

Salder, D. R. (1989) 'The Power of Feedback', *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), pp. 81-112.

Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535-550.

██████████ (2024) School Development Plan 2024 – 2025.

Shute, V. J. (2008). Focus on formative feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), 153-189.

Welsh Government (2015). *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*. Available at: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf> (Accessed: 3rd February 2025).

Welsh Government (2020). *Introduction to Curriculum for Wales guidance*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction-to-curriculum-for-wales-guidance/#the-curriculum-for-wales-framework> (Accessed: 3rd February 2025).

Welsh Government (2021). *The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021%20%282%29.pdf> (Accessed: 3rd February 2025).

Welsh Government (2022). *Cross-curricular skills framework*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/cross-curricular-skills-frameworks/> (Accessed: 3rd February 2025).

Welsh Government (2023). *Our National Mission: High Standards And Aspirations For All*. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2023/3/2/1679399634/our-national-mission-high-standards-and-aspirations-all.pdf> (Accessed: 3rd February 2025).

William, D. (2011). *Embedded formative assessment*. Solution Tree Press.