

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Consider sampling further and how this could have impacted on the findings.	This target is specific in relation to a research project.
Targed/Target 2	Make use of curriculum documentation relating to current practice	Current curriculum documentation has been used where possible.
Targed/Target 3		

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

This report sets out to analyse, evaluate and critically reflect on a school development plan for the period 2019 - 2020 provided by a village based Welsh Primary School. The school in question has around 450 pupils with an average of 33% of those pupils coming from a home where at least one parent speaks Welsh. 8% of pupils receive free school meals and 18% of pupils are recognised as having additional learning needs (SDP). Whilst we will discuss the current priorities contained in the development plan there will be a focus on one element. The report will evaluate the process pertaining to their objective to raise the verbal language skills of the Foundation Phase pupils. Welsh Government identified in its guidance on school development plans published in 2014, that school's planned objectives will include how the school addresses the national priorities. These include raising standards of education in relation to literacy, as well as raising standards of education in relation to numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. In line with Government recommendation this school focuses on raising the standards or literacy skills. However, is this the sole reason for this objective to be a priority?

Welsh Government launched a guidance document (school development plans) in October 2014 on school development plans. It acknowledges the need for all schools to produce and maintain an effective development plan (p 2). Estyn's annual report of 2012-2013 (p 26) recognised a need for some schools to improve their self-evaluation as well as planning for improvement. It is also an Estyn requirement that schools provide their SDP's to Estyn prior to an inspection. The 2014 guidelines issued by Welsh Government discusses the role that legislation plays in school development plans, such as The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011 which places a duty on governing bodies to include performance targets including absentee numbers in their annual reports. The guidance also states that The Education (School Development Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2014 specifically identifies that the school development plan period will be three years. The Government guidance describes what should be included but acknowledges the need for each schools' plan to be unique to the setting and therefore the guidelines are not there to be adhered to but rather to point in the right direction. The guidance clearly defines the role of the governing body however as one with overall responsibility of the SDP. The guidance states that the governing body has a duty to "prepare, monitor, review and revise" SDP's (p 4). It does recognise however the key role the headteacher has in delivering and implementing the strategies as well as monitoring staff. White and Poster (1997 p.129) states that in some schools the governing bodies are seen to merely facilitate headteachers

by endorsing their ideas and simply agreeing to their proposals. They also discuss the power struggle that can occur due to the teachers feeling that quality assurance is often put upon them and not something they are actively controlling or contributing to. Chapter 7 (p122) discusses the role of the Local Education Authority in assisting schools with SDP monitoring as well as ensuring the implementation of Local Management of Schools by the governing body. This role can be seen as both positive or negative and relies on relationship building to ensure honesty, transparency and a view to working together to achieve the same goal.

This brings us to the subject of creating and monitoring the SDP itself as well as monitoring the implementation of the SDP objectives in the school. Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) discuss how we prioritise our objectives based on needs as well as resources, however resource will often trump the need as it were. They suggest greater long-term success can be obtained if schools are clear in their “resolve to define the needs” of pupils and educational objectives. They recognise that choosing an objective with reduced resource available may see the school moving at a slower pace towards the goal, however, the importance of using that resource in the most effective and productive way is what achieves the end results. They mention the use of technology, with some schools purchasing equipment based on price not on suitability of use (p 209). This can often be the case in schools where ineffective or incompatible equipment will remain dusty in a store room. With several schools now employing digital experts within the school teams, perhaps purchasing based on price will no longer occur. Also mentioned is the involvement of stakeholders in the effective development of an SDP (p182 – 183). It states that “education is not alone in having to adapt to the pressures of economic, technical, social and political changes”. They go on to suggest that planning structures from corporate organisations such as in industry could be adapted successfully for use in education. This is a statement England, Crystal (2003) would disagree with. As an experienced headteacher she suggests that business models from “cold and imposing structures” such as corporations cannot be effective in schools as “a school is an extended family” (p 13). England suggests that whereas teachers will produce the necessary graphs and documentation to satisfy the demand they will then “return to their classrooms, shut their doors, and do what works most effectively for kids” (p 35). Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) are attempting to bridge the gap between educational and non-educational management. They recognise that industry sharing its effective practice with education is more of a one-way street and that the practice may need altering before entering the educational setting. However, they believe that those, such as England, who do not believe that schools can indeed “learn from industry base their case on false premises and lack of first-hand knowledge of industrial management” (preface p x). England describes later how false a class observation carried out by management can be (p

35), which brings in to question if monitoring the implementation of the SDP objectives through class observations is genuine or effective? This is supported by White and Poster (1997) who observed that despite the senior management team promoting a positive ethos towards monitoring they found that providing feedback proved difficult as the teachers were not wanting to receive it and the management team were uncomfortable providing it (p 31).

What therefore constitutes a successful SDP? Giles (1997) states that an effective SDP is an intelligible working document, with clear priorities. He recommends avoiding broad generalisations, focussing instead on time specific, measurable objectives with an allowance for mid-term adaptations which could result from time constraints or budget insufficiencies (p 93). Giles discusses the SDP sitting within a series of whole school plans and how objectives can be fulfilled if the normative, strategic, tactical and operation planning are coherent and collaborative (p 24-25).

As stated, there are heavy regulatory elements to an SDP, viewpoints of stakeholders need to be included, a process of monitoring to be adhered to, as well as financial and human resource to be considered for all objectives. Data analysis also plays a vital role as it enables the senior management team to critically evaluate the previous and current result period to ensure accurate monitoring and benchmarking.

Whilst analysing the SDP provided for this report, it was found that the data mentioned above covered a variety of subjects. The report from the previous year includes subject specific results such as Welsh, Mathematics, Science, as well as personal and social development scores and language skill levels. The document includes free school meal statistics, attendance percentages and the statistics for the number of pupils with special educational needs. Where possible the data includes the statistics for the local authority across the same categories, this allows the school to benchmark against other schools in the area. Some schools see benchmarking as a guideline while others are more skeptical of its use. Despite so much emphasis being put on the individuality of schools and their pupils there is a substantial amount of comparison made across several aspects of school life. The popular school comparison website, My Local School, use the number of pupils receiving free school meals and attendance figures as the main indicator of social deprivation in schools. The percentages are placed in bands with similar schools grouped together and their results compared. The argument here is not one of true comparison which is a useful tool for development but rather what are the parameters to which these bandings are set? How can we truly compare schools within a band if one school is at the top of that percentage bracket and another at the bottom? There are benefits to a school being at the

top of the percentage bracket when their results are strong, they are seen as high performing. What then if the percentage brackets shift, moving the high performing school into the bottom of the next category? Some schools see this banding and benchmarking as a numbers game in an unfair system where the statistics reflect what Local Authorities would like them to. Some schools see it as an opportunity for genuine sharing of resource, knowledge and expertise between schools with similar cohorts. The school analysed in this report is classed as 'green', meaning that it needs the lowest level of support from Government and Local Authorities and the improvement capacity has been rated as low. The categorisation is assessed by challenge advisers from regional consortia, using evidence of standards achieved as well as the quality of leadership, teaching as well as learning. They will also use information from the Welsh Government to inform this evaluation as well as discussions with schools. What is interesting here is that Welsh Government were issuing standards for comprehensive schools based on GCSE results and attendance figures alone which were then grouped into four standards. They have since moved to using a wider evidence base whilst also considering local context and include discussions with the schools on their development areas. Perhaps this indicates a move towards a fairer system of scoring schools.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) (2012) outlines the purpose of the framework as a curriculum planning tool for schools to embed literacy and numeracy in their teaching. It states that progress will be recorded in the form of annual reports for an intended audience of parents and carers which will be based on assessments carried out by the teachers. The data from this framework is not collected on a National level which supports its intention of being a planning tool. The literacy strand of the LNF is split into three strands: oracy, reading and writing across the curriculum. The SDP under analysis has a specific objective for this academic year which is to increase the standards of verbal language skills in the Foundation Phase. This supports the Welsh Government position on including the national standards but also answers a need for this development area to be addressed. It is also supported by the Estyn Annual Report 2018 – 2019 which states that “standards of literacy overall are broadly similar to those three years ago” (p14). Estyn also recognises the benefit of using effective strategies to improve speaking and listening skills “provides a sound foundation for developing their reading and writing later on” (p 14). The report goes on to say that literacy “should remain priorities for many schools” (p 14). The school has identified this area partly through analysing the performance results. The results show that the Welsh literacy communication skills in the Foundation Phase deteriorated from the period 2016 – 2017 to 2017 – 2018. It is worth noting that the school transitioned from being a bilingual school to a Welsh medium school in 2017 and this may have had an impact on

the results. As part of the research into the schools SDP a meeting was held with the Headteacher to discuss the process of selecting objectives for the SDP as well as how he ensures the objectives are carried out. Firstly, the senior management team and the governors look at the previous year to reflect and develop best practice. There is clearly a level of influence from the new curriculum in this year's SDP which is to be expected given the stage of transition that Wales is in currently. The first objective is to raise the awareness of the four purposes from Donaldson's Successful Futures report (2015) with a focus on developing ethical, informed citizens. The third objective sees the development of the Science and Technology area of learning and experience through planning in a thematic way to ensure purposeful opportunities and to raise standards. The fourth is to raise attendance standards, which is also influenced by regulation and is substantiated by the statistics which show a decline in attendance figures.

The SDP reviews last year's targets which have been collectively graded as showing strong progress. Literacy targets formed two of the four objectives, one being to improve sentence patterns for the whole school, the other, to continue to improve reading fluency throughout the school. The third was to recognise pupil's welfare levels or state of mind thoroughly in order to assign appropriate support. This was done successfully through introducing Speakr in Key Stage 2 which is software that allows pupils to record how they feel through selecting an emoji. The monitoring process involved a pupil questionnaire to establish the effectiveness of the new software which highlights pupil feedback. The monitoring process for the 2019-2020 verbal skills target is thorough, the SDP demonstrates a robust monthly monitoring process which includes teachers visiting other schools to see reading programmes in place which have developed pupil's verbal skills substantially. This is supported by Estyn in their Annual Report 2018-2019 "Increasingly, successful leaders work with other schools to share and develop good practice" (p 31). The programme was implemented and results monitored by the teachers who have provided feedback on its development. There have also been lesson observations carried out by the senior management team, which has shown considerable progress in the pupil's verbal language skills. Having been present during a classroom observation for the purposes of monitoring it is clear that the process could be improved. As the monitoring team were late to the lesson the teacher had to repeat the literacy lesson which resulted in a lack of engagement and interaction from the pupils. When questioned regarding the monitoring process the headteacher advised that the more the SDP is monitored and worked on the better the result against objective. This is supported by White and Poster (1997) who recognise the value in classroom observation done correctly to monitor the implementation of the curriculum. They also acknowledge the vital role the pupils have in providing feedback on classroom teaching, suggesting that "children are the best source of information about their learning" (p 80-83).

The SDP states that the school utilises Incerts, a skills-based school recording system, to identify the progress pupils are making.

There appears to be a lack of the pupil voice through-out the implementation and monitoring of this literacy objective. Through analysing all objectives included in the SDP, it is evident that more input is given to the pupils for the three other objectives than the verbal skills objective. This could be as a result of the literacy programme being new to the teachers and them wanting time to develop their own skills or it could be that it was not considered as important as they had the Incerts system to provide data. Either way there is a distinct lack of involvement from the pupils which could have led to obtaining valuable information relating to the pupil's enjoyment of the new programme.

The process of analysing this school's SDP was supported by both the headteacher and classroom teacher as they recognised the benefit of being able to participate and contribute effectively to an SDP. The SDP sits alongside multiple plans and feeds into several aspects of school life, an appreciation of which can only strengthen an individual's skillset. The knowledge generated from researching and understanding the plethora of factors that contribute to an SDP contribute to a web of knowledge which is carried from school to school.

With further emphasis on "self-improvement and collaboration" (Estyn Annual Report 2018 – 2019 p10) is now the time for school's SDP's to shed the weight of enforced 'guidelines' and work closer with other schools in a shared attainment of development and progression based on a mutual vision of happy, healthy and skilled pupils? Is this not the successful future that Donaldson aspires to?

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