

	Targed/Target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn. What I have done in this assignment.
Targed/Target 1	Consider developing counter arguments further	I have acknowledged that this is one of my previous targets, so I have remembered to develop by counter arguments further.
Targed/Target 2	Don't use I in an academic assignment.	Though I was told by a lecturer that we were able to use 'I' in a previous assignment, I have not used it throughout this report.
Targed/Target 3	Proofread your work	I have checked through and thoroughly proofread the assignment for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.

The following report will critically evaluate and reflect on how a school develops one aspect of their school improvement plan (SIP), also known as a school development plan (SDP). It will analyse and discuss the actions planned, looking at the impact and the evidence of how it will lead to an improvement. This report will focus on how a school plans in a strategic manner to develop information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school environment. The school at the centre of this reflection is an English medium primary school in the Rhondda Cynon Taff county borough of local authority. According to the Welsh Assembly Government (2019a) the school currently has 147 children between the ages of 3-11years old, of the 147 pupils, 26.3% of them are eligible for free school meals. This figure is currently significantly higher than the national average of 18.4% in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2019a).

According to Webb and Vulliamy (1996) a SIP is a document that has been put together in a strategic manner with the aim of improving education and thus bettering learners' outcomes. The introduction of this type of planning began following the Education Reform Act in 1988 where the idea of introduction of the use of the market strategy in public policy led to an increase of autonomy of management in schools (Gorard, 2002). Webb and Vulliamy (1996) further explain that the use of this market approach also led to an increase in parental choice as well as a new per capita funding system. These aspects developed into what is known as new public management. Gorard (2002) highlights that the use of the market strategy in schools increased the onus placed upon Local Education Authorities (LEA) to record and develop their schools' effectiveness as well as improving their learner outcomes. Thus, leading to the Department for Education and Science to fund the school development plan project in 1989 (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996). This project ensured that local authorities were able to work in collaboration with schools as well as their governing bodies to identify good practice and provided advice on how to plan strategically for the current socio-economic status of their catchment areas throughout England and Wales (Gorard, 2002).

In 2014, the Welsh Assembly Government released a guidance document to aid in the writing and implementation of school development plans. This was following the Education Regulations 2014 review where legislation was passed to ensure that schools adhere to implementing a SIP in order to raise educational attainment (Welsh Assembly Government 2014b). The Act states that they had a national priority to increase literacy and numeracy standards as well as reduce the impact of that poverty has upon education (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014a). With the new regulations released on 27th October 2014, maintained schools had a limited amount of time in which to produce a SIP by law by 1st September 2015 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014b).

According to Blanchard (2002) SIP's are an accumulation of budgetary decisions, looking at how funding will be distributed to priority areas of improvement. The plan takes into consideration how it will use resources available as well as highlighting any staff training needed in order to maintain or enhance the improvements (Duke et al. 2013). The plans are often written with a target set for three years in advance, each target would then be organised into strategical sections depending on their priority, usually a traffic light system is put into place to help identify the level of improvement needed (Blanchard, 2002). The Welsh Assembly Government (2014a) highlights that these plans need to continually be updated and refreshed to ensure that listed targets are on track and are still relevant to the school. The guidance document also discusses the use of challenge advisors in schools to help foster challenge and support in areas needing improvement (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014a). At this moment, the school is identified as being in category A with regards to the efficiency of improvements being made as recorded by the challenge advisors (Welsh Assembly Government, 2019a).

Blanchard (2002) argues that the use of self-evaluation is a key element in the process of developing a SIP as it allows for the school to identify any possible areas for improvement. Duke et al. (2013) writes that as SIP's are written in a cyclical manner, there must be an element of self-evaluation in order to create a starting point. Schools will therefore begin to scrutinise data including their inspection reports, attendance records, risk registers and educational attainment levels (Blanchard, 2002). When schools have collated the data needed to inform the plans, the head teacher will then work alongside the teachers in discussing action plans on how to improve the identified targets (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014a). When an action plan has been briefly developed, the plan is then further discussed with other stakeholders in the school including the Governors, parents, learners, local authorities and the senior leadership team in the school. The proposed action plans will be put forwards to each of the stakeholders and they will discuss the targets and ultimately create a strategic plan for each target identified.

Yancovic et al. (2020) notes the importance of having a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure that there is a broader perspective as to why each target should be an area of improvement in order to benefit the school. As Blanchard (2002) writes, this avoids the polarisation of discussions, enabling each stakeholder to justify why the improvements are necessary. Planning in a strategic manner enables both the local authority and the consortia to see that a clear purpose is being developed for how each school plan to achieve the targets set, as this method of planning also serves as a quality assurance mechanism (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996). Welsh Assembly Government (2014a) notes that the SIP's are to be reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure that they are robust and are still fit for purpose. However, Meyers and

VanGronigen (2019) note that over reliance on bureaucratic procedures such as following the guidance document, could lead to the possibility of creating an inauthentic plan. By following the cyclical pattern of self-evaluation, strategic planning, implementing action plan and then reviewing the impact, schools can develop a method that works best for their school to complete this motion. Webb and Vulliamy (1996) discusses the fact that SIP's can vary enormously in purpose, detail and targets. However, Riley and Nuttall (2017) view that the need for educational indicators that influence the SIP and the method in which they are evaluated should be integrated into a wider evaluative system, thus allowing management to effectively plan across local authorities and consortia.

The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in schools has been steadily increasing in a reflection of modern society. However, due to its ever-evolving tendency to upgrade at an ever-growing rate many schools have difficulty in keeping up with the latest versions (Judge, 2002). There are numerous factors contributing to this difficulty including accessibility, funding and lack of training available for staff. Rudd (2001) discusses that ICT is rarely identified as an area that could improve school and student performance. However, digital competency is highlighted as one of the main elements of the Curriculum for Wales as it enables children to become digitally literate for further initiatives (Donaldson, 2015).

ICT is not only used in the learning environment, it is an integral part of the administration team, often storing large amounts of sensitive data. Beauchamp (2017) suggests that teachers depend on technology to undertake research, record planning and produce differentiated resources to facilitate their teachings. Rudd (2001) notes that the role of the teacher is crucial to implementing school improvement initiatives as they can benefit from the introduction of new technologies. The school at the centre of this report has included the element of ICT in their SIP. Incidentally, the school has produced five different school improvement plans, four of which explains how they school aims to meet the criteria of the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015). The fifth plan is a stand-alone plan looking deeper into wellbeing. The plan that will be discussed during this report is in relation to the enterprising, creative contributors section of the four purposes of the curriculum (Donaldson, 2015).

As a part of the action plan already put into place to increase the integration of ICT throughout the school, the stakeholders had already begun to implement the first few steps as they had discussed research from schools within the cluster. The research included the impact that the use of ICT has on improving pupil attainment as well as how teacher attitudes towards technology influence its effectiveness (Beauchamp, 2017). From this, a strategic plan was set up to help integrate the use of ICT. Firstly, the school appointed a teacher to become the ICT

lead, this person was then responsible for working alongside the ICT technician who visited the school to monitor the school's central servers on a frequent basis. Secondly, they were to liaise with other teachers during staff meetings to keep them updated on the current software available for use in their classrooms. Incidentally, another section of the strategic planning had just taken place as every classroom had just received new interactive touch screen alongside a laptop for each teacher. This part of the strategy was to increase the efficiency of using technology in the classroom as before had each class has a desktop, where teachers were limited as to where they moved the technology. By providing each teacher with a laptop, this increased the accessibility for teachers, as if the class teacher were on PPA, the teacher covering would be able to bring their own laptop into the classroom and use it accordingly. This method of using laptops instead of desktops would ultimately lead to an increase of efficiency with regards to cost as laptops can be refreshed as and when needed, whereas this would be more costly to do so on desktops (Beauchamp, 2017).

Another aspect of the strategic plan already in motion was that the school has just used some of their funding to buy thirty new Chrome books. At the time, the school already had thirty iPads, but they were an older generation of software and were often slow to perform tasks. There was a timetable in place allotting times for each classroom to have equal access to the iPads, however there was no timetable in place for the Chrome books. The Chrome books were introduced to the school to help in the development of children's digital literacy. This developed the action plan into the 'make an improvement' section of the cycle. Teachers would begin to incorporate ICT lessons in their lessons with the aim of developing their digital competency skills. This would then feed into the review of impact on the aim as the school plans to move into a learning environment where technology is integrated throughout. For example, the school had used some of their budget to invest in the license fee for Oxford Reading Buddies online. Each child was given a username and password free of charge and the software was used as a record of each child's reading stage. At the end of each half-term, the data provided by the software would be analysed to see whether there had been any impact upon children's attainment in reading. This would then inform the stakeholders as to whether the action plan is effective in improving learner's attainment through accessing more ICT resources.

Upon analysis of aspects of the SIP the school are beginning to integrate ICT throughout the learning environment. As the Chromebooks are now available for the children to access, this will enable the teachers and children to both develop their digital literacy skills further. The introduction of an after-school coding club is a good starting point to engage children in an element of computing that they may not be familiar with yet as the children are able to develop their computational thinking skills. A limitation of this action plan could be that the school only

has thirty Chromebooks, this could pose an issue as most classes have over 30 children. However, as a timetable will be created to enable equal access, teachers could consider using the Chromebooks during a carousel of activities therefore, only a small number of children would need to have access during the session. Another limitation could be finding the time for staff training on how to use the new technology as teachers as the training would have to be undertaken during non-teaching time. To overcome this limitation, they could utilise the technology lead by asking them to provide in house training to other staff. Not only would this be cost effective but could be flexible to coincide with teachers schedules throughout the week.

To further enhance this action point, the school could utilise the software available for free for every child in Wales provided by the Welsh Assembly Government through their Hwb accounts (Welsh Assembly Government, 2019b). Incorporating this accessibility to other platforms may increase the impact on developing children's digital competency as they are able to access this account at any time (Beauchamp, 2017). A possible suggestion would be to introduce the use of Microsoft teams, as it is included with the Hwb account (Welsh Assembly Government, 2019b). Using this software, teachers can set assignments and quizzes virtually allowing children to be able to access this work from home. Though a limitation of this this could be that not every child has access to a device or internet at home. The other drawback to this point would be related to the previously mentioned issue involving finding time and funding for staff training, as they would have to be comfortable in accessing and navigating through Microsoft Teams software. The school should continue to implement ICT throughout the timetable in order to further enhance the development of digital literacy in the school. Therefore, when the stakeholders review the current plan in place, they are able to measure the suitability of the its' actions and make adjustments where necessary.

In conclusion, the way in which the school has decided to group the plans reflective of the four purposes has really helped the stakeholders understand the vision behind the target. The school are planning in the cyclical manner as suggested by the guidance document regardless of the research suggesting that if schools follow the guidance rigidly then it could lose its' authenticity (Meyers and VanGronigen, 2019). Moreover, using the four purposes as reference points for SIPs has proven to be an innovate way to plan strategically to reach the current aim. The aspect of ICT was beneficial to focus on for this report since the school has already begun to implement their three-year action plan, therefore it was clear to see how the plan was being developed throughout the school. Moving forward, creating and implementing SIP's in this manner have proven to be beneficial as the use of self-evaluation allows for further development where necessary. Although self-evaluation could also inform the stakeholders if the SIP were not successful. It will be interesting to see how other schools develop and

implement their SIP's in future practice to see if there is a more beneficial way to approach the need to improve standards across schools.

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