

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Where appropriate (and if requested to do so) use your knowledge and understanding to indicate how these will impact on your future practice, by making links to Professional Standards.	I will make stronger links to the professional standards when talking about my future practice.
Targed/Target 2	Continue to develop your critical awareness to investigate contradictory or incomplete information and make strong, persuasive, arguments.	I will develop my critical awareness by investigating more contradictory resources.

Part A

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

Introduction

This report will explore how a school develops one aspect of its School Development Plan (SDP). The actions, impact and evidence base will be critically reflected on in this report, by examining how an action point has been developed. The purpose of this, is to understand the professional responsibilities and complex nature of interacting with stakeholders when developing a SDP.

According to the Welsh Government (2014), a SDP is a strategic plan for improvement that focusses on actions to improve learner outcomes. Self-evaluation is key to monitoring the progression of the identified action points. Following BERA (2018) guidelines, the school has been anonymised to protect the identities of learners. The school is based in a disadvantaged area in South Wales. According to an Estyn (2020) report there are 427 pupils on roll, approximately 21% learners are entitled to free school meals and 30% of learners have been identified as having additional learning needs.

The report will be focussing on the Humanities Area of Learning Experience action plan and the key priority of implementing the new Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) syllabus.

This new syllabus has been introduced with the reform of the Welsh Curriculum, and many schools are still at the beginning of the journey of implementation.

Literature review

According to the Welsh Government (2014), a SDP is an overall plan for improvement that lasts for three years. It should outline how the school should prioritise achieving identified targets and how it will use resources available such as funding. The SDP should focus on maintaining goals as well as achieving new targets by examining strengths, celebrating, and sharing best practice.

Estyn (2016) outlines that one of the main priorities of a SDP is establishing and maintaining an ethos of improving the standards and wellbeing of all pupils. According to Brighouse and Woods (1999), SDPs are informed by the national and local context that the school exists within. Factors such as the climate set by media, institutional partners, local and centralised governments, teachers' unions, and the attitudes of stakeholders, all impact the SDP.

Stakeholders can be described as individuals who have a stake in the school's success Brighouse and Woods (1999). A SDP should be accessible to pupils, staff, parents, and governors. In some cases, learners have played a key role in developing SDP, however it is essential that this is conducted in a supportive and safe environment where pupils feel confident to express their opinions honestly, Welsh Government (2021). According to *Leadership for a self-improving system*, schools may wish to consider using co-production in involving families and communities for meaningful development of a SDP (Welsh Government, 2016, p.6).

Schools may approach developing action points differently. Estyn (2020) highlights good practice in '*Including all staff in the self-evaluation process*' by organising school staff into teams and focus on the development of priorities in detail. Moreover, leaders that know their staff well will understand individual teacher's strengths in practice and areas where they can provide expertise (Estyn, 2018, p.4).

It is essential to highlight that the purpose of a SDP is not only to set targets but also to carry out effective self-evaluation to develop practice and whole school improvement (Welsh Government, 2014, p.6). According to Estyn (2020), self-evaluation can be undertaken by all members of staff in a collaborative way to explore areas of improvement and next steps.

Furthermore, from September 2022, the new RVE syllabus became mandatory for all schools in Wales. This was highlighted as key priority in the SDP by School X, as there are many challenges with implementing the new guidance.

Firstly, the Welsh Government (2021, p.5) stated that the RVE guidance is statutory and published under section 71 of the Curriculum and Assessment Act. According to an Ofsted (2021) report, it was found that 44% of schools in England reported no timetabled RE. Additionally, Pett (2022, p.5) highlights that there is evidence of too many schools not meeting this statutory requirement or delivering high quality RVE lessons.

Moreover, The RVE syllabus is not about convincing learners to become religious or non-religious. Therefore, its teaching must be explored critically and pluralistically and approached with openness, impartiality, and respect (Welsh Government, 2021, p.6). The new syllabus puts an emphasis on learning about religion through a localised and worldwide lens. According to Pett (2022, p.5), traditionally, RE is seen as the coverage of six major religions and many minor ones, that can be 'neatly packaged' up and presented in lessons. The new guidance means that there is a larger scope of content to cover, and Pett suggests that decisions must be made on content selection, however making such decisions based on numerical or cultural dominance can be problematic. In addition to the RVE guidelines, each county will have a locally agreed syllabus which responds directly to the learners in their environment. In September 2022, Swansea council released a document that informed the schools in the county on the agreed RVE. A census was included in the agreed syllabus which highlights the diversity in Swansea, demonstrates the number of different religions practiced in the area, and the rising amount of the population who are not religious. Swansea council (2022) state that schools should appreciate this diversity and this information should be a key factor in selecting content when designing the RVE curriculum.

This is supported by Pett (2022) who discusses the importance of local context, understanding the history and character of an area, to develop meaningful learning experiences in RVE. By implementing a diverse coverage of different religions, learners can feel represented as well as develop an understanding and respect for different cultures and religions.

Furthermore, the inclusion of ethics and values into the guidance support the shift that religion is being explored with more openness and flexibility. Religion focusses on a belief, where values focus on the why and ethics focuses on the impact on actions (Vaisey, 2021, p.4). It is highlighted in the Swansea agreed syllabus the importance of recognising values and ethics as there is an increased amount of the population who are not religious, which means a focus on values and ethics as well as philosophical convictions can be meaningful for the learners in the local community.

Developing an action point

As outlined by the Welsh Government (2016, p.6) it is up to the school decided the cycle of self-evaluation and development planning in a way that works best for them. Headteacher A (2023) shared that the journey of the School Development plan begins each September, with focus time for staff to engage with stakeholders and reflect on the previous year's achievement of targets. The school was inspected by Estyn in 2020 and received an excellent judgement in all areas, this can be attributed to the time given for staff to reflect and research the areas they think need improving. It is noted by the Welsh Government (2022) that during self-evaluation and improvement process, staff should have suitable support and confidence to develop and improve their practice continually. This should also develop a self-evaluation process that is collaborative.

Headteacher A outlined that the school is structured with a senior leadership team, which includes the headteacher, deputy leader and senior leader. There is then a 'middle-leadership' team which consists of leads of each area of experience. Each 'middle-lead' will work in a small group, collaborating on one action plan for each area of learning experience.

The SDP highlights 6 different key priorities that derive from an area of learning experience as well as addressing the national priorities of: raising standards of education in relation to literacy and numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment (Welsh Government, 2016, p.3).

As inspected by Estyn, the primary school has been very successful in achieving national and the priorities determined by the school, and Headteacher A shared that most of their focus with the SDP is maintaining standards and targets achieved in the past. This is evident across the school as there are many posters of historic SDP priorities which serves to remind staff of their past achievements and importance of maintaining these standards. Despite research that suggests that data-based decision making can contribute to learners achieving higher standards (Schildkamp, 2019), Headteacher X shared that the school has moved away from intense data-based decision making as the process would rely to heavily on evidencing achieved targets, where this should be apparent in the day-to-day life in the school.

After reviewing the previous school development plan, and setting key priorities across the whole school, action plans are created for each Area of Learning Experience. The Humanities group, led by the Humanities lead first met in September to review the achievements and areas of improvement highlighted by the previous SDP. Through collaboration, the Humanities team then selected 4 targets to achieve for the academic year, one of which is implementing the new RVE syllabus across the whole school.

They began by involving stakeholders, inviting parents and governors to the school to be involved in a presentation and Q&A session, outlining the new syllabus. According to the Welsh Government, governors and school staff must be sensitive and non-judgemental

when interacting with parents to achieve a true home to school partnership (2016, p.9). By involving stakeholders in September, all of the school community were made aware of the priorities in delivering the RVE curriculum and given clear expectations of learners, staff and parents.

The action document is structured as followed; the success criteria to achieve target, what impact the school wants to achieve, how the school knows if they have been successful, which staff are managing the target, the timescale to achieve the targets and the training, resources and costs required. As mentioned by Lamb (2021) it is essential that priorities are turned into clear written objectives that can give the whole school an overview of what you want to do. This is evident in the Humanities action plan, with ADD's sessions dedicated to whole school understanding of the new syllabus and ensuring that learning experiences are pluralistic, includes religious, non-religious beliefs and philosophical convictions.

The Welsh Government (2016, p.40) states that evaluation helps school to continually adjust their interventions by monitoring what is effective practice. This results in helping practitioners develop and improve. The action plans are monitored termly, with the lead of each area of learning experiences examining lesson plans, 'SeeSaw', learner's books to see if there has been progress made towards the target. The Humanities lead X (2023) shared with me that the monitoring of the RVE implementation target was especially important so that she could understand the whole school coverage of the syllabus and the journey of learners. The Headteacher will evaluate the action plans and SDP at the end of each academic year, examine successes and areas of improvement and the process of developing a SDP repeats.

Reflection and evaluation

When reflecting the school's approach in developing SDP, it is clear to see that the whole-school approach and use of 'middle-leaders' has a positive effect in all staff having good knowledge and understanding of the identified targets and strategies in achieving them. However, it was surprising to hear from the Headteacher that he only reviewed the SDP documents once, at the end of the academic year. This places a considerable responsibility on the area of learning experiences leads and team members of each action plan.

According to Estyn (2016), leaders should be overseeing the professional development of staff continuously to ensure quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Arguably, this is being implemented at the school through ADD's sessions and professional learning time. However, I suggest that there should be more monitoring done by the senior leadership team, to ensure all staff are being supported throughout the year and areas of improvement

can be identified with enough time to make amendments. It is outlined by Estyn (2018) that good practice when developing SDP occurs when SDP teams are given targets for development linked to their priorities. This can further support the staff team to continuously develop their practice.

Furthermore, Goldstone (2022) state that enabling all stakeholders to participate throughout the year towards school improvement is paramount and is a vital part of inclusive leadership. A possible area of improving the self-evaluation process of the SDP is including more stakeholders as well as the senior leadership team more regularly in monitoring the process, to ensure targets are being developed at a high standard.

Moreover, when examining the specific target of the implementation of the RVE syllabus under the Humanities action plan, it is clear to see the importance in allowing time for staff to undertake critical research to gain a rich understanding of the reform of the Welsh curriculum. The monitoring that took place in March highlighted that the school had made good progress in selecting content which was meaningful to learners as well as included a range of non-religious and religious focuses through a pluralistic lens.

According to Swansea Council (2022, p.10) activities such as experiences inside and outside the classroom such as visiting local places of worship and other special places of significance should be included under the RVE coverage, to expose learners to an authentic understanding of different cultures and religions. Swansea council go on to state that activities should be inclusive for learners to experience awe and wonder in a variety of environments. Despite the good progress made in reaching the target of successfully implementing the RVE syllabus, there are areas in which it could develop further. More experiences where the learners can engage with the local community and individuals who have a rich understanding of a certain religion or philosophical conviction could enhance the learning experience by placing RVE in a real-life authentic context. Additionally, it could be beneficial to continue to monitor resources such as the census and other data to inform decision making around the content taught in RVE, such as including a more open dialogue with stakeholders such as parents, who may provide insight to religious or non-religious viewpoints that are important to them.

Conclusion

This report set out to examine how a school develops one aspect of a School Development Plan. The Humanities action plan with the target in implementing the RVE syllabus was explored by examining how action plans are created, developed, and evaluated and the responsibilities that the structure of leadership teams and middle leadership teams place on staff, through a whole school approach to the SDP.

The school highlights the benefits of including professional learning time for staff, as the wider research and understanding undertaken by teachers significantly inform how they approached the action plans. When thinking about my own professional learning and leadership skills, I would be interested to take an active role in developing a SDP in the future. I think the experience would enhance my practice by developing my skills further in evaluation and collaboration across the school and wider community.

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