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Part 2

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Introduction

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, schools need to continuously adapt and improve their practices to meet the ever-evolving needs of their students. School

Development Planning (SDP) is a systematic approach that helps schools identify areas for improvement and set strategic targets to achieve their goals (Welsh Government, 2014).

The purpose of this assignment is to critically reflect on how a school develops and addresses one aspect of its SDP. The report will reflect on the actions, impact, and evidence base used by the school to support post-covid recovery of the Welsh language across all abilities.

The report will be divided into four sections: literature review, action point development, reflection and evaluation, and conclusion. The literature review will use relevant sources to analyse the school development process and the provision for Welsh language learners. In the action point development section, the school's SDP will be discussed, including the processes of self-evaluation, data analysis, stakeholder involvement, strategic planning, and impact measurement. The report will go on to reflect and evaluate the school's efforts to support the Welsh language across all abilities, and suggestions will be made based on theory and practice. Finally, the conclusion section will summarise the assignment and its implications for professional development.

The school in this report, referred to as School X, will be anonymous in accordance with BERA guidelines (2018). The local council where the school is located will be referred to as Council Y. School X is a mixed, bilingual secondary school for pupils aged between 11-18 years located in south-west Wales. According to Estyn's report, there are 1346 pupils on roll (2022a). Most students come from white British backgrounds, with approximately 2.6% of students having English as an additional language. Additionally, 8.8% of students speak Welsh at home which is approximately 2% lower than the national average (Estyn, 2022a). Most pupils study the curriculum in English, but the school has one full bilingual class in each Key Stage 3 and 4 year-group where some of the curriculum is taught in Welsh, and students pursue a First Language Welsh qualification at GCSE.

Literature review

Wales' poor performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2002 and 2009 prompted significant concern and led to the realisation that a comprehensive reform of the education system was needed. In response, the Welsh Government implemented a large-scale school improvement program in 2011 aimed at improving the quality and equity of its education system. This initiative was reviewed in 2014 and 2016 and recommendations were provided on co-constructing policies with key stakeholders and implementing a national approach to identifying and celebrating good practices driven by school self-evaluations (OECD, 2014; 2017).

The SDP is a crucial component of the education reform in Wales. The SDP is designed to help schools identify their improvement priorities and to develop strategies to address these priorities. The plan must be informed by the school's self-evaluation, contextual data, and stakeholder input. The plan should set out how the school will achieve its targets in relation to its priorities and how it will use available resources, including funding. These priorities include national goals such as improving literacy and numeracy skills and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. In this way, the SDP aims to ensure that schools are accountable for their performance and that they are focused on achieving high standards and aspirations for all learners, regardless of their background or circumstance (Welsh Government, 2022a). In accordance with the Curriculum for Wales, a key aspect of this objective will be guaranteeing that schools facilitate the progress of each student, thereby contributing to the four purposes of the curriculum (Donaldson, 2015).

While the plan covers a three-year period, it contains sufficient detail to address current year priorities and broad targets for years two and three. The SDP is an active document that is continuously updated to reflect the school's progress and latest performance data. Welsh Ministers established legislation to govern the creation of school development plans which came into force in 2014 (*The Education (School Development Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2014*). These regulations set out the topics to be covered in an SDP, the period it should cover, the necessary steps for reviewing and updating the plan, and the guidelines for making the plan publicly available.

The decline in the number of Welsh speakers has been a significant concern for the Welsh Government, particularly given the target set out in Cymraeg 2050, which aims to reach a

million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2017). In 2021, an estimated 538,000 usual residents in Wales aged three years and over (17.8%) reported being able to speak Welsh, which is a decrease since 2011 when 562,000 people (19.0%) reported the same ability (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This decline has highlighted the need for further efforts to promote and improve the Welsh language in education, as well as across all areas of society. Cymraeg 2050 aims to increase the use and prominence of the Welsh language in all aspects of public life, including education, business, and culture.

The Welsh Government has also introduced the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs), which are designed to ensure that all learners have access to high-quality Welsh-medium education, regardless of their linguistic background (Welsh government, 2022b). The plans are developed by local authorities and outline how they will ensure that learners have access to Welsh-medium education from the early years through to further education. The plans also set out how local authorities will support the development of Welsh language skills among all learners, including those who do not speak Welsh as a first language.

In recent years, Wales has taken several measures to advance its equity agenda, including the adoption of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2015). The act includes seven 'Well-being Goals' aligned with the four purposes of the curriculum for Wales. Cymraeg 2050 aligns with the well-being goal that includes the promotion of a vibrant Welsh culture and thriving Welsh language, and the education sector will play an important role in achieving these wider national goals.

Overall, the Welsh Government's policies and initiatives demonstrate a commitment to promoting and improving the Welsh language, both in education and across all areas of society. School X's SDP aims to support the post-Covid recovery of the Welsh language

across all abilities aligning with these wider policy goals and highlighting the importance of promoting the Welsh language as a key part of Wales' cultural identity.

Action Point Development

School X uses a planning cycle recommended by the Welsh Government to develop effective SDPs [Figure 1]. Self-evaluation in School X is carried out using a variety of methods, including analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to allow evidence-based decisions and ensure strategies are effective. This includes pupil panels, classroom observations, inspection reports, student assessments and progression data, learning walks, demographic data, and local and national educational standards.

Chapman and Sammons define school self-evaluation as a “process by which members of staff in a school reflect on their practice and identify areas for action to stimulate improvement in the areas of pupil and professional learning” (2013, p.2). A crucial aspect of this approach is the constant review and evaluation that constitutes a fundamental component of the planning cycle. School leaders play an integral role in the self-evaluation process however it is argued that an effective self-evaluation and strategic planning goes beyond the senior leadership team and involves all stakeholders including governors, pupils, teachers, parents, and other members of the local community in order to empower all actors and encourage engagement and ownership of the school’s vision (Estyn, 2020; Goldstone, 2022; Welsh Government, 2015). This collaborative approach corresponds to the ethos of the curriculum as well as reinforcing the Five Professional Standards for Teaching

and Leadership (Welsh Government, 2019a). The leadership team must acknowledge their professional obligation to promote and facilitate the growth of all staff as leaders. It is crucial for the school development process to become a school-wide responsibility and for all staff members to take greater ownership of their professional development.

The SDP is required to function as a rolling three-year plan (*The Education (School Development Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2014*). School X reviews their three-year plan annually, resulting in a one-year plan with detailed priorities, targets, and strategies for the academic year. Each department then creates their own development plan. A copy of the Technology development plan can be found in Figure 3 which shows how they are working towards the school's Welsh language targets.

In 2014, Estyn recommended School X to increase Welsh first language qualifications, but a 2022 follow-up inspection revealed limited opportunities in developing Welsh reading and writing skills, resulting in Welsh first language pupils lacking confidence in using their language skills (Estyn, 2022a). School X set targets in their SDP to address these issues, increase the use of incidental and conversational Welsh and develop Welsh first language in line with local authority expectations (School X, 2022, p.6). The Welsh Government's national target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 has also influenced School X's SDP. Local authorities in Wales are mandated to create a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and School X's local authority developed a 2022-2023 WESP to increase the number of Welsh speakers of all ages (Local Authority Y, 2022). The 2011 Census revealed a 6.4% decrease in Welsh speakers in County Y over the decade, dropping below half, (specifically to 43.9%) for the first time in history (Welsh Language Census Group, 2014). One of the possible contributing factors is

that only 50% of children in the county get to develop their language skills through the education system. The report stresses the crucial principle that every student must have the chance to become completely bilingual by the time they finish school, enabling them to apply and refine their language skills in the community and at work. School X plays a vital role in achieving the local authority's targets and expectations to increase the use of Welsh language.

Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to face-to-face teaching for two years, Welsh first language in KS3 in School X saw the largest decrease in results in 2022, with a decrease of 47% compared to 2019 data (School X, 2022). This highlighted a specific need for the school to include strategies and provision to support post-COVID recovery of Welsh language skills across all abilities in their 2022-2023 SDP.

Once priorities and targets have been identified within the strategic planning stage of the planning cycle [see Figure 1], the school develops strategies, alongside timescales, costs, and success criteria to ensure its targets are met. Targets are assigned to individuals (for example school staff) who will lead the implementation of the strategies. Figure 2 shows how the chosen priority has been developed in the school's SDP. The next step is to execute the strategies and actions specified in the SDP. The school considers the SDP as a living document that is continuously monitored and formally reviewed and updated throughout the year.

Reflection and evaluation

School X uses a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system to assess the progress and achievement of the sub-targets and strategies set under the main priority. As shown in Figure 2, the progress check in September 2022 shows that the school did not complete the sub-targets of the priority. The data for the progress check that took place in January 2023 is not provided in this report, however, interviews with the first language Welsh teacher and Assistant Head Teacher of the school provided useful insight into the current status of strategies of the Welsh language SDP priority. Strategy 1 [see Figure 2] of supporting new leaders in Welsh has not been fulfilled due to the unsuccessful allocation of a permanent Head of Welsh in the school for the past four years. This may have had a significant impact on the Welsh language provision of the school, however, the Assistant Head Teacher (2023) shared her optimism that the role will be filled and ready for the new academic year in September 2023. Hopefully, the fulfilment of this role will offer stability for the Welsh department, ensuring quality teaching and learning, and the effective delivery of the Welsh language curriculum in the school.

The school also set out to train its staff in bilingualism and Siarter Iaith (Welsh Government, 2019b) to equip them to deliver basic bilingual support during lessons. An INSET day for all staff in September 2022 was dedicated to this strategy, showing steps have been taken to achieve the sub-target, however, it may be beneficial to incorporate a more continual staff training provision to optimise learning. The Welsh Government provides an opportunity for teachers and classroom assistants to take an intensive Welsh language sabbatical (short and long courses), which aims to improve their proficiency in the language and enhance their

confidence in using it in their teaching practices (OECD, 2017). This could be a strategy that the school could adopt.

The school already has some intervention support from a Teaching Assistant for first-language Welsh groups which is aimed at developing and refining their Welsh language skills. This could also be applied to second-language Welsh groups to develop skills across all abilities.

The Welsh Government (2014) emphasise the importance of sharing good practice as part of the school development process. School X could look at strategies that other schools have implemented, and trial or adapt to their school needs. An example can be taken from a different Welsh Medium school in the same local authority, which has published its experience of effective practice with the aim to promote a strong Welsh culture after noticing the decreasing effects of the Covid pandemic (Estyn, 2022b). To emphasise the significance of the Welsh language and customs, all departments at the school included culture and Welshness in their respective schemes of work. This is also a crucial aspect of the Curriculum for Wales. An additional suggestion for School X would be to organise various events in the school for the pupils and even the local community which promote the Welsh culture and language. This may include concerts, assemblies, jamborees, presentations, competitions or talks from external organisations. This would offer pupils and the local community opportunities to practice their Welsh language skills as well as provide an opportunity to celebrate the culture with pride.

Conclusion

The purpose of this assignment was to critically reflect on how a school develops and addresses one aspect of its SDP. The chosen priority taken from School X's SDP was to support post-covid recovery of the Welsh language across all abilities. In conclusion, this assignment has increased my awareness of various strategies and initiatives that School X, the local authority and the Welsh Government have implemented to support the Welsh language, culture, and history.

The Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership includes a specific mention of Welsh language and culture as part of the values and dispositions, therefore this highlights the importance of my role as a teacher to promote and respect the Welsh language and culture within the classroom and in the wider school community. As part of my own professional development, I will continue to improve my own Welsh language skills and my knowledge of the Welsh history and culture to pass on to future school communities and play my part in realising the Welsh Governments ambitious educational goals.

Throughout this assignment, I have gained a valuable insight into the process of school development planning and the impact it can have on learning outcomes for pupils. The importance of self-evaluation and regular review of the SDP has been highlighted, and I am now equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to this process in my future career in education. I am excited to be a part of a team that values the Welsh language and culture and recognises its importance in the curriculum for Wales. This assignment has reinforced my commitment to promoting bilingualism and cultural diversity in the classroom

and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to develop their language skills to their full potential.

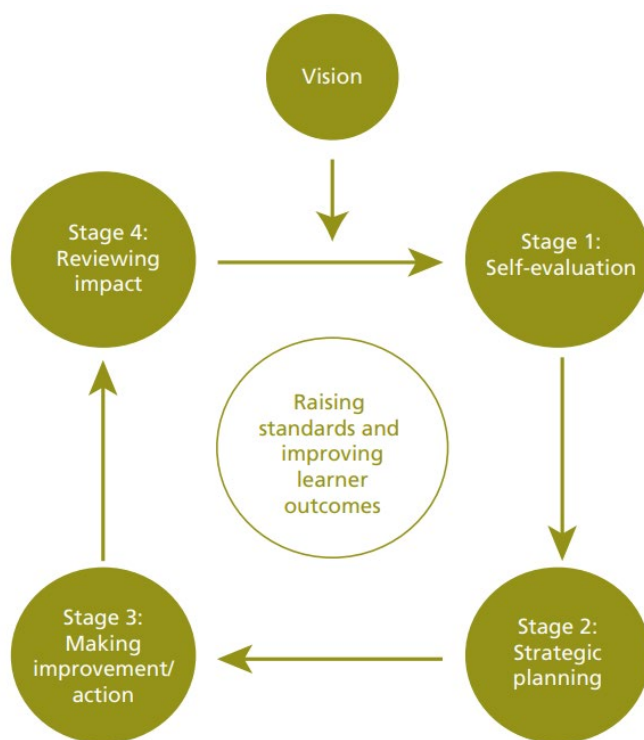


Figure 1. School development planning cycle (Welsh Government, 2014, p.7).

Whole School Priority		Success criteria			
Provide the strategies and provision to support post Covid recovery of Welsh Language across all abilities.		- Pupils Welsh 1st Language outcome 6+ improve in line with previous data. - Pupils Welsh 1st Language scores based on National test data falls within the average score of 1000. - GCSE Welsh 1st and 2nd Language results improve.			
Strategies. How?	Monitoring	Timescale	Success Criteria	Cost	RAG / Sept 2022 Progress Check
Provide support and collaboration for new leaders in Welsh with support from challenge advisor	RTL/ ATL	Sept 2022	Middle leader in Welsh feels supported and develops strategies of improvement that are effective and measurable.	Training Cost	
Train staff on bilingualism and Siarter Iaith to promote the language across the school.	SM/ATL	Sept 2022	Staff are equipped to deliver basic bilingual support during lessons.	INSET	
Further develop the intervention support in Welsh with a specific focus on pupils in the Welsh 1st Language classes.	SM	Nov 2022	Pupils are supported in small groups to develop and refine their Welsh 1st Language skills.	Lesson time	
Develop a range of strategies to improve reading and communication skills in Welsh with targeted classroom intervention which will be based on individual learning pathways.	SM	Oct 2022	Pupils outcome improve at all levels and key stages	PPA time	

Figure 2. School X School Development Plan (SDP) 2022-2023 Priority: Provide the strategies and provision to support post Covid recovery of Welsh Language across all abilities.

Technology Department Priority						
IA3 TARGET			Success Criteria			
Develop bilingualism across the faculty			- Staff feel confident using incidental Welsh. - Pupils use more incidental Welsh and become confident using key words in Welsh in the subject. - Bilingualism improves across the school.			
Strategies	Monitoring	Timescale	Success Criteria	Cost	RAG / Sept 2022 Progress Check	RAG / Jan 2023 Progress Check
Attend whole school training to support departmental bilingualism.	SLT	Sept 2022	Staff feel confident using incidental Welsh because they have received support.	INSET		
Work with the Welsh department to translate resources correctly.	SLM/SM	Throughout the year	Resources in Welsh support staff with their development of the language.	PPA Time		
Use incidental Welsh in every lesson, ensuring that Gwaith Dosbarth and date are always noted in Welsh.	All Staff	Throughout the year	Resources in Welsh support pupils with their development of the language.	Lesson Time		

Figure 3. School X Technology Department 2022-2023 Priority: Develop bilingualism across the faculty.

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