

	Targed/target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn What I have done in this assignment...
Targed/Target 1	Ensure the sources you use are as up-to-date as possible and make greater use of underlying learning theory and a range of perspectives	My oldest reference is from 12 years ago
Targed/Target 2	Ensure all judgements and assertions are justified	
Targed/Target 3	Consider the suggestions made from a range of perspectives	

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

Word count: 2,749

“Every school is capable of improvement” (Ruane, 2009, p.5). This statement is from a Northern Irish policy however, there is a commonality of approach across all governing bodies. Every school in the United Kingdom follows its government’s guidelines on a school development plan (SDP). This report will look at one aspect of a SDP, by looking at why the school decided to improve this area, how they are developing it and how it has improved the school as a whole. The school will be anonymised according to the BERA (2019) guideline which highlights institutions and individuals right to privacy and anonymity. Therefore, this report will refer to the school as School X. School X is situated in the City and County of Swansea and had 471 pupils on roll at the start of the academic year, with 20.6% entitled to free school meals which is slightly higher than the Welsh national average by around 2%. One of School X’s areas of development in their SDP is to develop expressive arts skills in pupils via their community links, which will be the focus of this essay.

A SDP should be set out in a clear and organised way to bring the school’s priorities together with the goal of improving learners’ outcomes. The Welsh First Minister made the School Development Plan part of the Education Regulation in 2014 as an Estyn annual inspection found that a quarter of schools in Wales needed to work on their self-evaluation and planning

for improvement (Welsh Government, 2014). This regulation set out a guide on how schools can make an effective development plan and set out requirements that every school must reach in their plan. Hattie (2012, p.2) articulates that “Setting the bar at zero means that we do not need any changes... But this approach, I would suggest, is the wrong answer”. The SDP document drafted by the Government means that all schools across Wales have a baseline guidance for a SDP with equal expectations that are monitored, which is setting the bar at a high standard for improvement in Welsh schools.

The Welsh Government (2014) document created a school development planning cycle with four stages. The plan requires schools to start out with a vision of what they are looking to achieve and then follow the stages of the process. The first stage is self-evaluation and calls for schools to take an in-depth look at what they have done well and what needs improving to allow them to achieve their vision. MacBeth (cited in Gerry and O'Hara, 2008) emphasises the importance of internal rather than external evaluation as this motivates teachers to improve and gives them a sense of ownership. However, for a SDP to be most efficient the planning should involve all stakeholders and partners of the school which is stage 2 of the plan. The second stage is strategic planning which involves consultation with the governing body to finalise the development plans, prioritise the areas from the self-evaluation and include financial considerations. Brighouse and Woods (2013, p.2) refer to this as “communities of practice” where colleagues work together to maximise the learning. Before moving onto the next stage, the governing body makes sure that the targets are assessable but also provide some form of challenge to help improvement and an action plan will be made with finances allocated to each target where necessary. Making improvement/action is the third stage where the schools put their plan into action. All staff will be aware of the SDP and will be given a responsibility for a specific target. There will be an estimated time of completion per target and the school will use guidance from the action plan to complete each target. Throughout the year the schools review the impact of the work being done to achieve the targets, which is the final stage in the planning cycle. The SDP is a continuous working document where progress is reviewed throughout the academic year and the document is evaluated and reviewed yearly to understand the impact of actions taken on pupils' learning and attainment outcomes. When the school has achieved their targets, those actions will still be developed through teaching in the school but will not be a focus for development as new priorities will take their place as the school reviews and reflects on their SDP each year.

School X has chosen to focus on developing expressive arts skills with their pupils. Expressive arts, also known as creative arts, does not have as much of a heavy emphasis in the current national curriculum as the core subjects such as Mathematics, English and Science. However, Donaldson's (2015) new Welsh curriculum

document '*Successful Futures*' creates six areas of learning all with equal levels of importance, with Expressive Arts having its own area of learning. Donaldson as well as other educationalists have recognised the benefits that expressive arts have on economic and educational outcomes, therefore they are becoming more valued in the curriculum not only for Wales but other areas across the UK. Research across the UK, USA, Canada and Australia suggests that taking part in art activities can increase attainment levels in reading and maths (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017). The research was undertaken by different countries from the years 2006-2012 with the USA looking at 25,000 young people and adults and the UK looking at the effect on SAT results. Although the research is looking at different age groups and some being more recent than other, all the research correlates with the same findings.

Art is also known to have a positive impact on health and well-being and can have dramatic effects on people dealing with major health conditions. The Welsh NHS Confederation (2018) have discovered research that taking part in art activities can help children with cancer deal with pain, reduces stress and anxiety in asthmatic children and reduces stress in trauma patients. "Over 20% of children experience a mental health problem at some point between ages 3 and 11" (Centre for Mental Health, 2015). So, if this could affect over 20% of the school population and art is known to relieve stress and anxiety, surely it should hold the same level of importance as other subjects in the curriculum. Robinson (cited in Didau, 2016) argues that as a nation we should value the arts and as teachers we should use it in a cross-curricular way and find ways to embed it where it may not naturally appear such as in maths lessons. This method also links in well to Donaldson's (2015) areas of learning and experiences in the new Welsh curriculum, as the new curriculum encourages all the areas to link together to provide one cohesive learning experience.

Part of the focus for School X's development plan was to continue to plan for a new curriculum, encompassing the four purposes and all of the areas of learning and experience. They began their self-evaluation by having a full staff meeting to audit the work they have been doing over the past two years to develop the four purposes. The school involve all staff in the self-evaluation as this is where they discover what they need to do to improve. Bandura (cited in Dunn, Airola and Lo, 2013) says that if a teacher is going to have a positive response to a task, they must believe that they can be successful at achieving it. The staff looked at all areas of each of the four purposes and graded themselves from one to five per area, with one being low and five being fully embedded. They recorded the evidence that they had for each area of the four purposes and reflected on the work they had already done whilst also planning for the next steps to continue to develop the four purposes. From their audit the school

discovered that their work on developing Enterprising, creative contributors was the lowest out of all the four purposes, therefore it needed to become a focus of development for this year's SDP.

As part of the strategic planning the Head teacher and Deputy head presented the forms with the evidence to the governing body, to show the work they had already achieved and what needed improvements. Before making this a target in their SDP the school and governing body needed to look at how they were going to achieve their next steps. Fortunately for schools in Wales there is an independent charity named Arts Council for Wales who provide funding to develop art in Wales. This funding is not easily accessible and has many requirements to get the grant. School X applied for this funding three times and only received it when they had devised a plan that reached the demands of the grant criteria. Arts Council for Wales provide grants to school but are a charity that focuses on the art rather than the work of schools, so it is not accessible for all schools in Wales as it is not an education-based charity. However, School X managed to get the funding which meant there was a lot of planning to develop expressive arts in their school. The grant asked for the school to work with local artists and provide art that could be displayed in their community. One of the local artists had worked with another school in Swansea who were a lead creative school and that school had links with local artists. The Welsh Government (2014) SDP document says that schools should be aware of opportunities to collaborate with other schools and share practice. To share practice and get the best opportunities for the children, School X collaborated with the other local school (which will be referred to as School Y) to form a creative arts project. Both the schools had links with their industrial heritage so to develop the expressive arts in school, the two schools devised a project that would "develop their understanding of their history and community and support collaboration" (School X, 2019). This project is a cross-curricular project with art ingrained throughout. When this was approved as a target by all stakeholders in School X, it was placed under Community within the main priority of their SDP which was to "Improve provision, engagement and independence in learning" (School X, 2019).

The schools have gathered a creative team with five artists. The artists have expertise in sculpture, weaving and dance as well as many other art forms. The plan entailed the year 5 pupils of both schools to work on this project throughout the year, with it being reviewed every half term. The project started with a Jamboree day where both schools came together in School X alongside the five artists and did a carousel of different art activities set out by the artists. This is where the children were able to express themselves creatively and discover which area of the arts interested them most. Throughout the year the artists have come into the school to work with the children in year 5 on different areas of art. The children have been on trips to learn about their industrial heritage and have incorporated art into their trips and

their experiences into their art. They have been to Hafod Copperworks and Big Pit where they have taken their sketch books with them to draw what they have seen. The children have been using the sketchbooks over the year to practise their drawing skills and it is a place where they can make mistakes and learn that art doesn't have to be perfect. Scott Adams (cited in Didau, 2016, p.355) exclaims "Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep". The Hafod copperworks walk inspired the sculpture work the children have been doing with a local sculptor using copper to build their own sculpture model. The children have also created a dance based on their experiences at Big Pit by using actions of miners and have worked on art pieces based on these trips with the artists. Once a week one of the artists comes into School X to work with the pupils on free school meals. The CLA (2018) declares that if a child from a low-income family participates in art activities through education then they are three times more likely to go university and get a degree. This group finishes off any artwork that needs completing as well as working on the sketchbooks and creating their own art pieces.

The work on this project is reviewed every half term and the school use qualitative data from self-reviews the children have completed and from pupil voice. Jones and Hall (2009) indicate that pupil voice can improve teaching and learning and make the pupils feel part of the school community by valuing their opinions. School X pupils have created feelings charts where they can express how they felt before an activity and then again after the activity and have a web where the more of the web is coloured, the more confident they feel about this area. The review was continuous throughout the year so that the school will end up with quantitative data to show the progression throughout the year and on every half termly assessment they update their SDP by colour co-ordinating it, depending on the progress.

The work the school has done to develop the expressive arts has gone exceptionally well and they have been recognised for their outstanding practice by the Local Authority. Bringing the local artists in not only helped with the community links but provided the children with a huge range of artistic skills that they will carry with them through their education and further. The school linked up with the community effectively and have planned to display the pupil's artwork in the Swansea College of Arts soon. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (2015) expresses the importance of community links suggesting that schools may benefit through being able to access different resources, enhance relationships and improve well-being of pupils.

Although this project has been successful in promoting expressive arts, it has not been a whole school approach and the audit covered the whole school. School X decided to work with one year group as it was a trial project to help with creating their own curriculum, but the skills learnt could benefit all pupils and staff. There may be a funding issue in making this a

whole school approach as there are five paid artists working on this project and the grant had specific requirements attached to it, but the school could use the opportunity of having the artist to support teacher's professional development. A 2015 Estyn report (quoted in Nasuwt, 2017, p.34) declared that "The creative arts curriculum relied too much on chance" and its progress depended on teacher's expertise and confidence. If the artists share their expertise with all the teaching staff, it will improve their subject knowledge development and confident in the arts. Another way to share expertise is for the year five pupils to set up workshops for the rest of the school, where they can demonstrate the skills that they have learnt to their fellow pupils and undertake art projects with them. In these workshops the pupils could make pieces of art that they could sell which would help the whole school not only be creative contributors but also entrepreneurs. Gray and McBlain (2012) discuss Vygotsky's theory and note that mixed ages groups allow younger children to learn from their more knowledgeable peers and can create strong school community bonds.

To conclude, an organised and achievable SDP is essential to all schools. It is vital for schools to self-evaluate, find an area that they need to improve on and develop a plan for that improvement. This works best with teacher involvement to create a whole school strategy. School X discovered that they needed to develop their work on expressive art and this essay has shown that the arts can have a positive effect on pupil achievement and well-being. The Matthew Effect discusses people with socio-economic advantage improving whilst the disadvantaged do not, making the gap larger (Rigney, 2010). However, research has shown that children from low-income families benefit from art activities within schools. Welsh Government have created Closing the Gap in Education Act (2017) with the aim of reducing the impact that poverty has on attainment levels in the future. Therefore, art is an important part of the curriculum and should be incorporated in all teachers' future professional practice. In my teaching I shall involve art and help with the SDP.

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