

SUBJECT: Report on the quality of school improvement processes

DIRECTORATE: Children and Young People

MEETING: Children and Young People Select Committee

DATE:

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Young People Select Committee with an evaluation of the quality of school improvement processes in Monmouthshire schools in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Effective planning for improvement is a key element in raising and securing excellent standards of education and improving learner outcomes for all pupils.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Select Members scrutinise the report and take the opportunity to comment on the contents.

2.2 That Children and Young People Select Committee review progress annually.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 All schools are required to have a School Development Plan (SDP) in place that, as a minimum, is fully compliant with the requirements outlined in 'School Development Plans' (Wales) Regulations 2014 (the regulations). The SDP is required to function as a rolling three-year plan and this means that it will always cover a three-year period. Year one of the SDP will include detailed priorities, targets and strategies; years two and three will capture high-level priorities and targets.

3.2 The regulations specify the minimum contents of a SDP. Schools are free to use their own format and style to suit their particular context. However, all schools are encouraged to share effective approaches. All SDPs must include the following:

- School improvement priorities
- School improvement targets
- Professional development strategy
- Working with the community
- School staff and school resources
- Progress towards previous targets

3.3 The school development planning cycle is set against a clear vision, which sets the context for the SDP. It is up to individual schools to determine the cycle of self-evaluation and development planning that works best for them within the set timescales.

3.4 All schools are required to set and submit targets to the local authority by 31 December each year. This may influence the content and timetable for school development planning.

3.5 This report reflects key findings in an interim review of progress in January 2020. A full year evaluation will be completed in the summer term 2020.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 The Education Achievement Service (EAS) is our commissioned School Improvement Service, providing support to all Monmouthshire schools, including for school improvement processes.

5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 The focus on securing excellent standards goes hand in hand with equality and both are dependent on each other. This focus will enable more pupils to achieve their potential regardless of background or personal experiences.

6. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTEES:

Children and Young People Departmental Management Team

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- School Development Plans - Guidance Document no: 155/2014
- School target-setting regulations: statutory requirements and changes - Guidance document no 254/2019
- EAS Regional Approach 2019-2020 Review of School Development Plans
- EAS School Improvement Programme Evaluation 2019/20

9. AUTHOR:

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10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Interim Review of the Quality of School Improvement Process in Monmouthshire Schools 2018/ to 2019/20

1. Background and Context

The school development plan (SDP) is the school's strategic plan for improvement. It sets out the actions a school will take to improve learner outcomes. A SDP will be informed by the self-evaluation a school undertakes of its own performance and contextual data, and will contain the school's improvement priorities together with short-term and longer-term targets.

In 2014, Welsh Government provided guidance to schools and governing bodies of maintained schools (including pupil referral units and nurseries) in Wales. School Development Plans Guidance Document no 155/2014. This provides guidance on the Education (School Development Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2014 that came into force on 24th October 2014. This guidance sets out an approach to school development planning, but is not intended to be unduly prescriptive. Each school will be at a different point on its improvement journey and what works well in one school may not be appropriate for another. Key to school improvement is effective school development planning, which will be set in the context of the school's long-term vision

School Development Plans
Guidance Document no: 155/2014

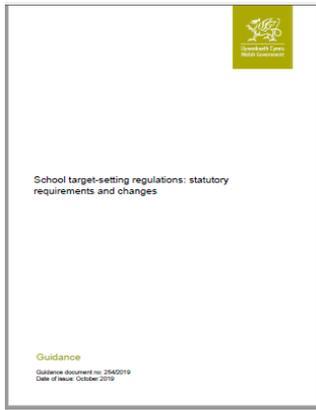


All schools are required to comply with the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Senior Management teams in schools and governing bodies need to ensure that there are robust and rigorous processes in place for self-evaluation and a commitment to the development and implementation of improvement planning. All schools have a responsibility for their own improvement through school self-evaluation, performance management and targets setting, and for making the best use of the challenge and support available to them.

2. Target Setting Arrangements for 2019-2022 and the link to SDP priorities

School target setting is an important tool in school improvement by focussing on how schools are currently doing, what more they should aim to achieve and what they must do to make it happen. Any improvement strategy benefits from the focus and direction which suitable targets provide. Following consultation, the Welsh Government has amended Target Setting Regulations with changes coming into effect from October 2019. This means that:



- School level target setting arrangements will remain the same (end of key stage numerical targets for Foundation Phase, KS2,KS3 plus three local targets), as will the need for local authorities to approve.
- For KS4, there will be more flexibility for secondary schools to reflect individual school context with six local targets and no requirement for measure specific targets.
- There is an expectation that all local targets (Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4) are reflected within school development priorities.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing bodies are responsible for promoting high standards of educational achievement in maintained schools¹. The headteacher is responsible for the management and control of the school² and, alongside the governing body, is key to leading the work of the school and its capacity for improvement.

The Regulations in School development plans October 2014 Guidance document no:155/2014, place a duty on the governing body to prepare, monitor, review and revise a SDP. By being responsible for its preparation and revision, the governing body will be responsible for agreeing and 'signing off' the SDP. The matters that must be dealt with in a SDP are set out in the Schedule to the Regulations

Although the governing body holds overall responsibility for the SDP, in practice the headteacher will work with the staff and governing body in producing the SDP and will be responsible for implementing the necessary actions and strategies to bring about improvement.

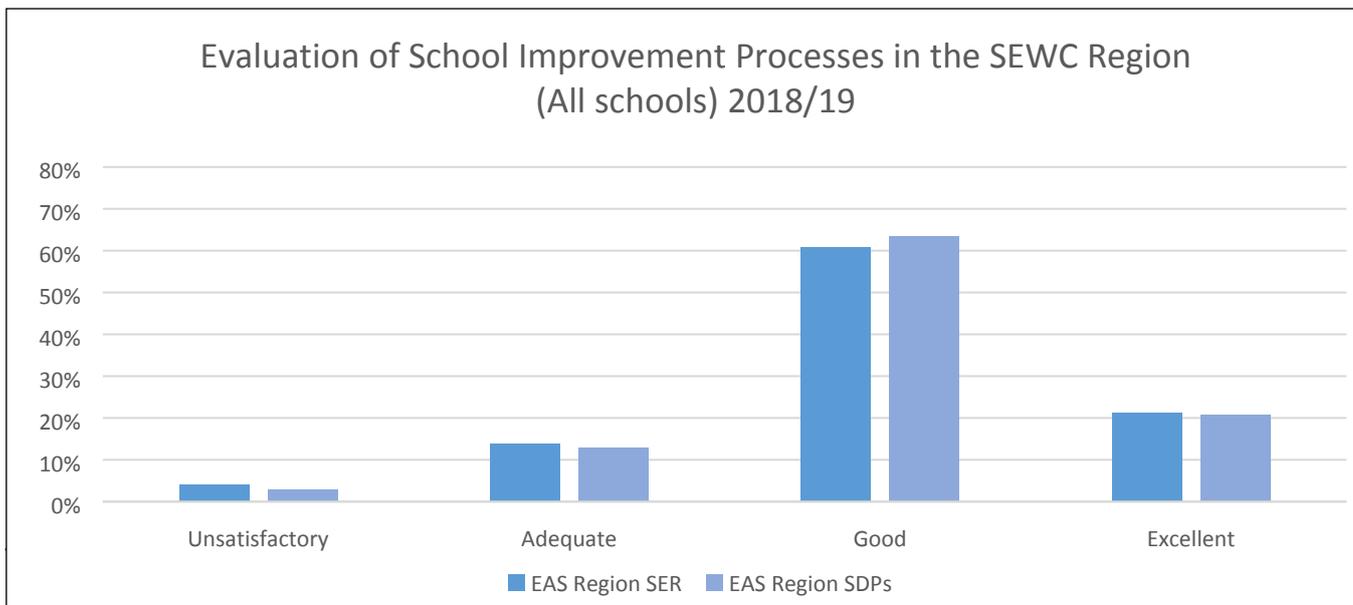
The local authority and regional consortia have responsibilities to raise standards of school performance and share effective practice. The SDP will provide a focus for engagement with schools; challenge advisers will challenge and support schools in identifying and implementing the actions necessary to bring about improvements. Challenge advisers play a critical role in linking schools to the support available from, and through, regional consortia.

The local authority has a role to agree targets for schools which supports them in meeting their obligations to provide differentiated support. It helps ensure that targets are stretching, yet realistic, focused on the real priorities for improvement in individual schools, and based on robust use of evidence of performance, strengths and weaknesses.

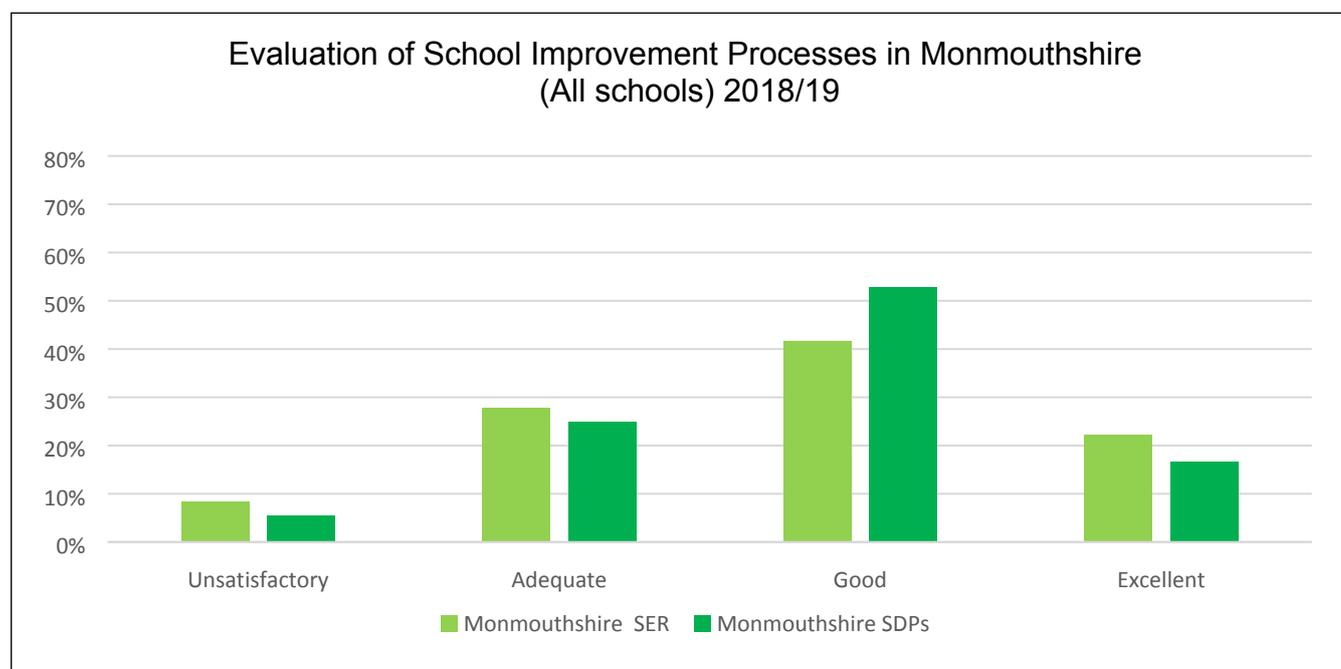
4. Regional and Local Context

Following the completion of the National Categorisation process in 2018/19, the EAS carried out an in-depth evaluation of the quality of SDPs and self-evaluation (SE) processes using information gathered and submitted by Challenge Advisers.

Based on this information, the graph below shows the profile across the region In 2018/19



This graph shows the profile across the region in Monmouthshire in 2018/19.



Analysis of 2018/19 SDPs and SE processes SEWC Region and Monmouthshire.

- The quality of self-evaluation processes and school development planning across both the region and in Monmouthshire is variable in 2018/19.
- Compared to the region, the proportion of unsatisfactory and adequate SDPs and SE process is twice as high in Monmouthshire.
- Too many SDPs and SE process are unsatisfactory and adequate.
- The proportion of SDPs and SE processes judged to be good or better in Monmouthshire is lower than the proportion across the region.

- Not enough SDPs and SE processes are good or excellent in Monmouthshire.
- Overall SDPs are stronger than SE processes in Monmouthshire.
- In 2018/19 the proportion of excellent SE processes are 1.0pp higher in Monmouthshire than across the region.

In response to the outcomes above, the EAS developed a regional process to improve school development planning and SE processes.

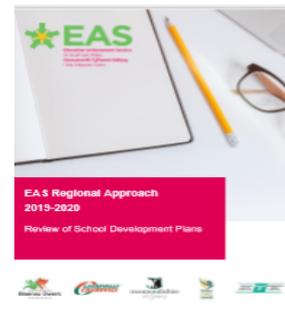
5. Regional Review and Evaluation Process for School Development Planning and SE Processes 2019/20

During the summer and autumn terms 2019, the EAS provided schools with a range of support to ensure that processes for school development planning and SE processes are effective in schools across the region and support national reform.

The package of support included the delivery of a series of workshops for school leaders and EAS/LA SDP surgeries to review draft SDP priorities and identify additional support for individual schools.

Joint EAS and local authority held Professional Panel meetings to review the quality of improvement planning and ensure statutory compliance for all secondary school plans and a selection of other schools. For secondary schools, this meeting also provided the local authority with the opportunity to discuss KS4 local targets in depth and formally agree where appropriate.

EAS Regional Approach 2019/2020
Review of School Development Plans



6. Response to Regional Review and Evaluation Process for School Development Planning and SE Processes 2019/20

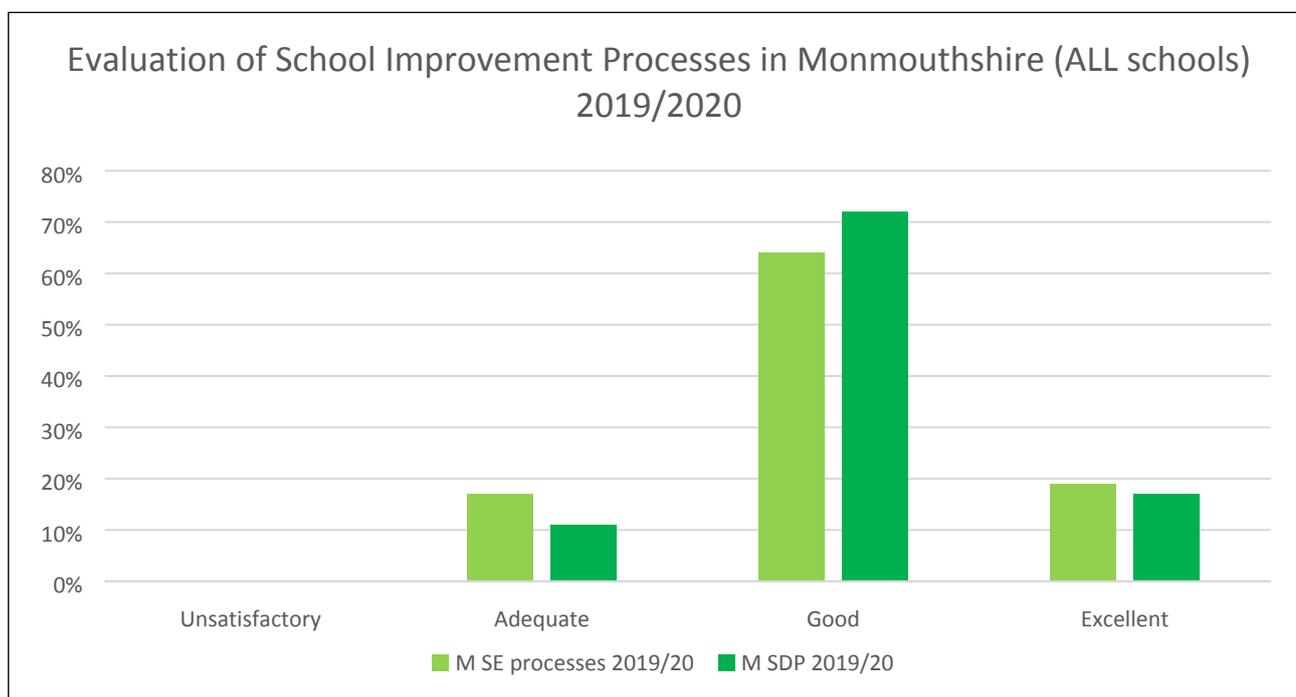
The EAS completed an interim programme evaluation of the impact of the strategies used to improve school improvement planning during the summer and autumn terms 2019 at the end of January 2020.

The interim findings below indicate that there has been a positive response to improving school improvement processes in secondary and targeted primary schools because of engagement in regional training support and challenge.

- The level of engagement from all secondary schools and targeted primary schools has been good throughout the process.
- All four Headteachers of secondary schools in Monmouthshire attended the SDP workshops and surgeries held in the summer term 2019. All four secondary school Headteachers and all primary Headteachers on the Schools Causing Concern Register presented drafts of their SDPs at the surgeries in the summer term.

- At the initial SDP panels held in October 2019, SDPs in half of Monmouthshire secondary school were at least good and signed off by the EAS/LA panel. However, half of the secondary SDPs were unsatisfactory at the initial professional panel.
- The EAs provided feedback and additional support to the two schools in need of improvement. As a result, the local authority signed off improved versions of SDPs at School Causing Concern Meetings held later in the autumn term 2019.
- The Chair of Governors or Vice of Governors in all secondary schools attended SDP professional panel meetings with Headteachers.
- LA and EAS officers held Professional Panel pre-meetings, which enabled an honest, informed discussion to take place to discuss the views of LA and EAS in relation to the quality of the SDPs. This helped to formulate an overall view and provided an opportunity for parties to prepare and agree on well-targeted questions to ask the Headteachers and governors.
- All SDPs for the six Monmouthshire primary schools were reviewed at Schools Causing Concern (SCC) meetings in the autumn term 2019, All six SDPs were of at least an adequate standard with three where SDPs and school development processes being judged to be good by the schools' challenge advisers
- The regional review and evaluation process for school development planning has allowed the LA and EAS to work more closely together to develop a shared understanding of expectations in relation to self-evaluation and school improvement processes.
- Most Monmouthshire secondary schools and targeted primary schools used elements well from the SE/SDP workshops to support their school development planning processes.
- All Monmouthshire secondary schools and targeted primary schools have made appropriate improvements following feedback from SDP surgeries and professional panels.

The table below shows the 2019/2020 evaluation of SDPs and SE process for Monmouthshire schools.



Analysis of 2019/20 SDPs and SE processes Monmouthshire.

- There are no unsatisfactory SDPs or SE processes in Monmouthshire in 2019/20. This is a significant improvement compared to 2018/19.
- Many SDPs and SE processes are good or excellent in 2019/20.
- There is a significant increase in the proportion of good SDPs and SE process compared to 2018/19.
- The proportion of adequate SDPs has halved compared to 2018/19.

Conclusion

The level of engagement with the regional programme of training, support and challenge has been good in all four secondary schools and the six SCC primary schools and nearly all Monmouthshire schools participated in the training provided by the EAS.

As a result, the quality of SDPs and SE process in many Monmouthshire schools is good or excellent in 2019/20. This reflects a significant improvement compared to the profile in 2018/19, however, we will continue to support, challenge and monitor schools to ensure that all SDPs and SE processes in Monmouthshire schools are good or excellent.

It is too early to judge the impact on raising and securing excellent standards of education and improving learner outcomes for all pupils.