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## Consultation Document

# School development plans – proposals to introduce regulations

Date of issue: **28 April 2014**

Action required: Responses by **21 July 2014**

# School development plans – proposals to introduce regulations

**Overview** This consultation sets out the proposals to introduce regulations governing the production and review of school development plans.

**How to respond** Responses to this consultation should be e mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by **21 July 2014** at the latest. (Insert 'SDP consultation' in the e-mail subject box.)

**Further information and related documents** Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.

The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations)

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## **Data protection**

### **How the views and information you give us will be used**

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

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# 1. Introduction

Raising standards of education and improving learner outcomes is at the heart of educational reform in Wales. International evidence indicates that school improvement is supported by effective short- and long-term planning, which is linked to challenging targets.

Developing a culture of strategic planning, effective self-evaluation and target-setting is vital to identifying and reducing variations in school performance. This is reflected in Estyn's common inspection framework (introduced in 2010) that places self-evaluation at the centre of school improvement. Self-evaluation is the means by which schools interrogate data, reflect, identify targets and plan how they will meet them. Evidence from Estyn inspection reports, performance in PISA tests and performance data used in school banding points to variations in the quality of self-evaluation, effective planning and target-setting and highlights the impact such variations have on school performance.

In October 2012 the then Minister for Education and Skills launched *Improving schools*, a national implementation plan for school education reform in Wales. The actions contained in the implementation plan built on the 20 point action plan for school improvement set out in February 2011 based on three national priorities for education.

- Improving levels of literacy.
- Improving levels of numeracy.
- Reducing the impact of poverty and deprivation on learner outcomes.

The 20 point plan included a commitment that schools would be expected to set out in a school development plan (SDP), endorsed by their governors, how they will reach improved standards of educational performance based on aspirational targets that the Welsh Government will set for the education system in Wales. In practice, schools may use alternative titles such as school improvement plan or school action plan. In this consultation 'school development plan' is the term used to refer to the school's primary strategic planning tool.

*Improving schools* promotes the use of performance data and other information to identify priorities and achieve sustained improvement. It sets out the requirement for schools to ensure that practitioners' performance objectives and their professional development are linked to school development priorities and learner outcomes, and cites the SDP as the tool for recording such priorities.

## **2. What is this consultation about?**

The Welsh Government proposes to introduce Regulations that require all schools to set out their strategic priorities for improving school performance and how they intend to address them in a single planning document; the SDP.

For many schools the introduction of Regulations will represent little or no change to their existing practice, and we do not wish schools to unnecessarily change arrangements where they are already proven to be effective. However, across Wales there is variability in the scope, quality and effectiveness of school planning. While many schools already have a plan to improve educational standards that is routinely updated, it is not currently a legal requirement and therefore leaves an essential tool for school improvement as an option that not all schools use effectively.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on the introduction of Regulations governing SDPs and, specifically, the following changes.

- To make it a statutory requirement for all schools to have a current SDP and to place a duty on the governing body of all maintained schools, including pupil referral units and maintained nurseries to periodically review the SDP.
- To set a minimum requirement for the content of the SDP and the production and review process.
- To streamline the planning process by requiring the SDP to incorporate all strategic improvement planning documents.
- To stipulate arrangements for publication of and access to the SDP.

These changes are described in more detail in section 5 (see page 9).

### **What is a school development plan?**

The SDP is a strategic plan for improvement. It will be informed by self-evaluation of school performance and contextual data and will contain the school's improvement priorities (which will include how the school is addressing the national priorities<sup>1</sup>), short and longer term targets, together with a plan for how the school will achieve them and how it will use the resources it has available, including funding. It will also set out how the school intends to develop its staff in relation to the school's priorities and targets.

A SDP sets out the overall plan for improvement for the short- and longer-term with sufficient detail to enable short-term actions to be identified and implemented. It is a live document that is used as a reference point by all staff and governors in reflecting upon and improving their work.

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<sup>1</sup> Raising the standards of education in relation to literacy and numeracy and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

### **3. What is the current position?**

#### **The planning process**

Evidence from Estyn indicates that self evaluation is vital to identifying and reducing variations in performance (Estyn self-evaluation manual 2010).

Estyn's annual report for 2012–13 concludes that self-evaluation and planning for improvement could be strengthened in just over a quarter of those schools in Wales inspected.

Schools may currently produce a number of plans as part of the planning process, for example a school development plan, a staff development plan, spending plans for grant funding, a post-inspection action plan (PIAP) and/or a plan for embedding the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). Currently there is no statutory requirement for schools to have a SDP in place.

#### **Professional development**

The quality of teaching is the single most important factor in helping learners achieve. Schools therefore need to ensure that those who either teach, support teaching or lead teaching have the necessary skills and experience to provide high-quality teaching.

Practitioners are expected to regularly reflect on and assess their practice, using the relevant professional standards as a backdrop, as part of the performance management process. The purpose of these professional standards is to improve learner outcomes by setting out what is expected of practitioners.

Through the performance management process, professional development needs are identified. Historically, professional development has often relied on traditional approaches such as off-site training courses for a limited number of individuals. However, international evidence shows that practitioners learn best when they are part of a collaborative and supportive network; when they can 'test' their learning in a learning setting (action research); when they can learn from the practice of others and when they reflect rigorously on the outcomes achieved.

The Welsh Government's approach to professional development reflects this evidence and is committed to ensuring that all practitioners have access to career-long professional development that is effective, sustainable and linked to national priorities. This approach is underpinned by the practice, review and development model (PRD) that integrates professional standards, performance management and continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure that professional development is focussed on school improvement priorities and is tailored to address individual needs.

## Existing legislation

There is currently no legislative requirement covering SDPs. However, existing statutory requirements do place obligations on governing bodies and headteachers in relation to three areas which are key to strategic planning.

- **School performance and target-setting** – there is a statutory obligation, set out in the *School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011*, for governing bodies to set key stage performance targets and submit them to the local authority by 31 December each year. Key stage performance targets form part of the content of the governors' annual report. The annual report also includes information on the school's performance in the Foundation Phase and key stages assessments as well as budgets and spending details.
- **Governors' annual report** – it is a statutory obligation for schools to produce an annual report setting out the school's progress since the last annual report (*School Governors' Annual Reports (Wales) Regulations 2011*). Schools are required to make a summary of the annual report available to all parents/carers and the full annual report available upon request. Currently, the required content of the summary report includes performance information but not targets or budget information.
- **Performance management** – in 2011 revised performance management Regulations came into force (*School Teacher Appraisal (Wales) Regulations 2011*). The revised arrangements strengthen the performance management of headteachers and teachers by linking review procedures and individuals' objectives to whole-school priorities, as set out in a school's improvement plan (i.e. the SDP). The *School Teacher Appraisal (Wales) Regulations 2011* require practitioners' performance objectives and professional development to be linked to school development priorities.



## 4. Why are we proposing change?

### Evidence for change

The process of self-evaluation and improvement planning is central to supporting advances in professional learning and learner outcomes.

We know that some schools already have robust plans for improvement in place and for those schools these Regulations will represent little or no change. However, this is not the case across all schools: evidence from Estyn indicates that the scope, quality and effectiveness of school development plans are variable. There is also variability in the extent to which schools' planning takes account of longer-term improvement targets.

There is international evidence to indicate that effective short- and long-term planning, linked to challenging targets, supports school improvement.

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*“In all providers that are excellent...that quality is maintained by means of an annual cycle of honest self-evaluation and planning for improvement”*

Estyn has highlighted the importance of schools carrying out self-evaluation to identify their strengths and areas for development and has identified a strong link between school self-

*The Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2012-13*

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evaluation and improvements in educational experiences and outcomes for learners (*Self-evaluation manual for secondary schools*, 2010). Self-evaluation is the means by which schools reflect upon their performance and use it as a basis for improvement planning.

### Streamlining the planning process

Effective improvement planning is based upon a process of honest self-evaluation. The SDP is a tool for capturing the necessary actions and targets for those areas where improvement is most needed. An effective SDP will clearly set out the school's improvement priorities and targets and will show how the school is addressing the national priorities, the main measures it will take to raise standards, the resources dedicated to these and the key outcomes. It should also set out how it intends to develop its staff in relation to its priorities and targets.

Schools only need one improvement plan. As such, at any point in time the SDP should be the single means of capturing the school's improvement priorities and strategies and form the focal point for any external challenge, support or interventions. It should therefore not be necessary to have other plans in place such as spending plans for grants or post inspection plans – these should form an integral part of the SDP which will reflect the circumstances the school is in at any time.

We are therefore proposing that in introducing Regulations for SDPs, we can also provide a means for streamlining schools' strategic planning processes and avoid unnecessary duplication and additional bureaucracy.

## **Strengthening professional development**

All practitioners, those who teach, those who support teachers and those who lead teachers, should have access to career-long professional development that is effective, sustainable and focused on improvement priorities.

Estyn has found that a common feature of excellent leadership that results in excellent teaching is professional development focused on the national priorities for improvement, and on developing teachers' individual skills and expertise in the context of school priorities. While this is reflected in the existing practice of many schools there remains evidence that professional development activities are not always linked to school priorities (*The annual report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of education and training in Wales 2012–13*).

The Welsh Government is developing a national model of professional learning that will provide all school-based practitioners with a clear structure and approach to their professional development. The model is based on approaches to learning that are known to be effective which include:

- coaching and mentoring
- engaging with evidence
- effective collaboration
- reflective practice.

An effective SDP sets out the school's priorities and targets for improvement and will set the context for practitioners' performance management and professional development. The national model of professional learning will be used in conjunction with the performance management process and the professional standards to ensure practitioners' professional development needs are firmly linked to priorities and are met in the most appropriate and effective way.

The proposed Regulations require the school development plan to be updated, as a minimum, annually so that the school's improvement planning and strategies reflect the up-to-date context of the school.

## **Sharing effective practice**

Alongside the introduction of Regulations we will provide guidance that draws attention to key principles of effective planning including sharing existing effective practice, robust and honest self-evaluation, setting short-term and longer-term improvement targets, planning how those targets will be achieved and reviewing progress.

However, we do not intend to be unduly prescriptive. As mentioned previously we do not wish schools to unnecessarily change their planning processes where these are already effective as long as they meet the requirements of the Regulations. We believe schools should be able to adopt formats and annual cycles that best meet their needs and the existing statutory requirements to report specified performance targets to the local authority by 31 December each year.

## 5. What specific changes are being proposed?

### Legislation

It is proposed that the Regulations will place a duty on governing bodies of all maintained schools (including pupil referral units and maintained nurseries) to establish a SDP. The Regulations would also place a duty on governing bodies to consult with the headteacher and other relevant persons or bodies, and monitor, review and revise the plan on an annual basis. The Regulations will also prescribe the following.

- Roles and responsibilities of governing bodies in the production and maintenance of the SDP.
- Use of school performance data to inform the SDP.
- Timescale of the implementation cycle.
- The minimum content of the SDP.
- Publication of and access to the SDP.
- A duty to review and assess, at least annually, the extent to which targets have been met.

Each point is described in more detail below.

It is important to note that the Regulations specify the **minimum** requirements for SDPs. Schools that already have effective SDPs which exceed the minimum requirements will not need to amend their approach but should satisfy themselves that their planning process is not unduly burdensome.

- **Roles and responsibilities of governing bodies**

The SDP is ultimately the responsibility of the governing body of the school which is accountable for school performance. The headteacher is central to ensuring that the school's plan for improvement and its implementation are successful. It is therefore proposed that the governing body consults with the headteacher on preparing or revising the SDP. The governing body will monitor, review and revise the SDP on an annual basis.

In preparing or revising the SDP it is proposed that the governing body takes into account the views of the headteacher, learners, parents/carers, staff and other relevant persons or bodies. It is important that the school's high level priorities for improvement are shared as all key stakeholders have a role to play in the improvement planning process.

- **Use of school performance data to inform the SDP**

As part of their self-evaluation and target setting, it is important for schools to identify priorities and set short- and longer-term improvement targets using robust performance data. The proposed

Regulations require the governing body to have regard to school performance information and the attainment results of learners at the school during the preparation and revision of their SDP. Regulations already exist that require the collection of performance information; therefore the proposed requirement places no additional burden upon schools. The relevant Regulations are *The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011* and *The National Curriculum (End of Foundation Phase Assessment Arrangements and Revocation of the First Key Stage Assessment Arrangements) (Wales) Order 2011*).

Self-evaluation would also take into account any recommendations made following a school inspection by Estyn and the SDP revised to incorporate the actions for improvement in the post-inspection action plan (PIAP). Other diagnostic approaches such as those used in the National Support Programme (NSP) and other improvement programmes may also contribute to self-evaluation.

- **Timescale of the implementation cycle**

It is expected that the SDP planning will be aligned with the statutory requirements for performance targets which are set out in *The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011*. These Regulations require schools to submit specified performance targets for Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 to the local authority by 31 December each year.

It is proposed that the SDP Regulations will come into force in the autumn term 2014 to coincide with the planning process. A SDP prepared or updated after the Regulations come into force will take the requirements of the Regulations into account. Schools would be expected to have fully adopted the new arrangements no later than 1 September 2015. SDPs should be live documents that are monitored, reviewed and revised at least annually.

Beyond the existing requirements to submit specified performance targets to the local authority by 31 December each year and the proposed annual review and sign off of SDPs, schools should determine their own planning cycles to best meet their own particular circumstances.

- **The minimum content of the SDP**

We want schools to use self-evaluation, informed by the data described above, to identify the areas for development and set improvement targets. As a minimum, it is proposed that Regulations will require that the SDP will include the following.

- I. School improvement priorities (including how national priorities are being addressed), actions, targets and expected outcomes for the current academic year and how the school will work with the local and wider community.

- II. Outline school improvement priorities (including national priorities), strategies, targets and expected outcomes for the following two years and how the school will work with the local and wider community.
- III. How the school intends to address the professional development needs of its staff, including those temporarily placed at the school, in order to address its priorities.
- IV. How the school intends to use available resources, including the deployment of its workforce and the use of available funding, to meet targets and address priorities.

- **Publication of and access to the SDP**

In order to balance the need to provide public access to key information contained within SDPs while taking account of the 'live status' of the plan, we are proposing that the publication of the SDP is aligned with the statutory requirements for the publication of performance targets as set out in the *School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011* and the *School Governors' Annual Report (Wales) Regulations 2011*. Existing Regulations require a summary annual report to be made widely available and the full report to be made available upon written request. It is proposed that high level targets and actions for the current academic year, as contained within the SDP, would be published as part of the summary of the Governors' Annual Report and be included within the full Governors' Annual Report.

School staff and governors will be responsible for developing and implementing the SDP and will therefore require ready access. It is proposed that a copy of the SDP must be made available at least annually to each member of the governing body of the school, the head-teacher and to each member of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the school.

The establishment of challenge advisors (formerly known as system leaders) in regional consortia as part of the National Model of Regional Working is a key element in delivering local authority and consortia responsibilities to raise standards of school performance and share effective practice. Establishing a minimum content for SDPs will provide a more consistent focus for schools' engagement with challenge advisors.

The SDP should be a rolling three-year plan. A SDP prepared or updated in accordance with the proposed Regulations will therefore always cover a three-year period from the date of preparation or last update.

- **A duty to review and assess, at least annually, the extent to which targets have been met**

The governing body is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the progress in meeting targets. As an annual process, self-evaluation is a key management tool for assessing a school's performance. It helps a school to focus on areas for development and informs planning for improvement.

It is proposed that the school development plan must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis or following an Estyn inspection, whichever is sooner. If the plan is to be revised following an inspection, it should be done so within the required timescale as set out by Welsh Government.

The proposed dates for implementation of statutory requirements are:

- autumn 2014 – regulations coming into force
- autumn 2014 – all schools to begin to adopt the new arrangements
- by 1 September 2015 – all schools to comply with the new arrangements.

## **Guidance**

Guidance will be made available to accompany the Regulations. The guidance will support schools in carrying out self-evaluation and embedding a robust and evidence-based approach to planning and action to bring about improvement in learner outcomes. The guidance will amplify the Regulations and provide additional information on:

- characteristics of effective school development planning
- how the development of the SDP fits with the requirements and timetable of other statutory requirements of schools/LAs to publish information
- examples of effective practice (e.g. drawn from Estyn inspection reports)
- case studies.

The purpose of the guidance will be to support schools in establishing effective practice but not to constrain schools where practice is already effective.

## 6. What outcomes do we anticipate?

By introducing the proposed changes we are seeking to achieve the following outcomes for all maintained schools (including pupil referral units and maintained nurseries).

- All schools will have an up-to-date SDP in place that sets out clearly how they intend to improve their performance
- The SDP will be the single strategic planning document that incorporates all other strategic plans and which forms the focus for any external challenge, support or intervention, including that from the local authority and/or consortium.
- The SDP is evidence-based and focussed on improving learner outcomes based on the national priorities.
- All schools carry out robust self-evaluation, using relevant performance data, to identify strengths and priorities for improvement that informs the SDP.
- The SDP contains targets for short- and longer-term improvement and sets out how the school intends to achieve them, including the planned use of resources (workforce and financial).
- The targets identified in the SDP are used to inform the headteacher's objectives identified in the performance management process.
- The SDP provides context for the performance management process for all staff and sets out how the school will address the professional development of its staff in order to meet identified priorities (national, school and individual).
- Progress in meeting targets and achieving outcomes is regularly reviewed by key stakeholders and the SDP is treated as a 'live document' and revised as appropriate.
- The SDP is a readily accessible working plan for staff and governors.
- All school staff and other key stakeholders are actively involved in the production, implementation and review of the SDP.
- High level targets and priorities are published as part of the Governors' Annual Report.