

As the number of action and improvement plans seems to spiral, **Chris Rhodes** examines the links between self-evaluation and development planning, and suggests a simple format that will increase the quality of a school's strategic management.

TWO SIDES OF A SINGLE COIN:

the indivisible
links between
school self-
evaluation and
strategic action
planning

Schools evaluate their own provision, strengths and weaknesses because they want to know how good they are. Ofsted's Self Evaluation Form (SEF) has provided a structure in which the outcomes of self-evaluation can be recorded systematically. If Ofsted closed tomorrow, the need for robust school self-evaluation would remain. The need for a SEF would also remain because a school cannot be effective if it does not have a structured approach for regular self-review.

Each section within the SEF asks the school to weigh its strengths and weakness and to identify key areas for further improvement. These should then be linked directly to the school's development plan. For example:

Rosemary Lane Primary School: *Standards on entry are well below expected levels, especially speaking and listening... This impacts on the quality of pupils' writing in Key Stage 1 where standards remain below average despite pupils' good progress [Assessment data file 2]... We are giving a much greater emphasis to oracy, especially in Year 1 [SDP priority 4a].*

The Single Integrated Development Plan (SIDP)

School development plans are nothing new. Many are substantial and map out the school's proposed development in detail for a number of years. Most schools have other plans as well: post-Ofsted plans, recovery plans, local authority plans, subject leader plans, 'maintenance' plans and many more. The results

can be very confusing and unmanageable, and often deny headteachers, senior staff and governors the opportunity for a simple, practical and unified strategic plan for improvement.

Schools are now encouraged to rethink their whole approach to development planning and to write a Single Integrated Development Plan (SIDP).

The Senior Management Team (SMT) and I have used the 'areas for development' section of the SEF to write a single list of the most important things we need to improve. These will form the basis for our new development plan... [Headteacher's report to governors].

Traditionally schools have revised their development plans on an annual basis, usually around the time of the budget allocations. This is no longer appropriate as plans will need to be more responsive to the changing needs of the school, which could come at any time.

The analysis of our writing results at Key Stage 1 (KS1) has identified a need to rethink the Year 1 curriculum to link it more closely to the Foundation Stage Curriculum, especially the development of a good spoken vocabulary. SIDP priority 1 has been revised to reflect this, and ... [Headteacher's report to governors: Rosemary Lane Primary School].

There should no conflict with the school's declared vision of excellence, as set out in its Aim Statement. If there is, then either the priorities or the aim statement need to be revised.

The school's science results are well below average for the second year running. The headteacher says that science is not on the SDP cycle for another two years and therefore little can be done. I urgently ask him to reconsider this. [Link inspector note of visit: Plum Tree Junior School].

Writing the SIDP

Step 1: Complete the SEF analysis. Initially this has proved an enormous task, reportedly taking 50–60 hours. Thereafter, it should be a lot simpler. Some sections, teaching for example, might need to be revised termly, and the 'characteristics' annually. Achievement and standards will be updated during the autumn term as the school's own data and the Performance and Assessment reports (PANDA) become available.

Further ideas to help with preparation for Ofsted are included in the Manager's Briefcase

Step 2: List all the areas for development from the various sections of the SEF. Group them together, aiming to have no more than four clusters. Do not include non-priorities, just the major improvements that have to be tackled.

Step 3: Give each cluster a name and express it as a priority 'title'.

The SEF 'areas for development list' included raising standards in writing in KS1 and in English generally in KS2, increasing the percentage of good teaching from 60% to 70%, inducting the new science subject leader and...

We realised that we could leave out maths as a major priority because standards are already above average and are rising, and maintenance of this improvement can be safely left within the subject leader's action plan.

We finished up with three main priorities for the new SIDP: Raise standards in English, Improve the quality of Teaching and learning and... [SMT member]

Step 4: Match the priorities against the school aim statement. There should no conflict with the school's declared vision of excellence, as set out in its Aim Statement. If there is, then either the priorities or the aim statement need to be revised.

The current Aim Statement was written two years ago and does not fully reflect key aspects of Every Child Matters and the Children Act. This became very obvious as staff completed section 4 of the SEF. References to each child achieving its academic potential also need to be re-worded. I ask governors therefore to consider the following amendments..... [Headteacher at governors' meeting].

Step 5: Pages one and two of the SIDP. These will capture the name of the school, its aims and its current strategic priorities for improvement.

Rosemary Lane Primary School

Single integrated development plan

Revised December 2005

In order to achieve our aim that

We will enable every child to become a successful and independent learner,

Our current priorities are

1. Raising standards in English
2. Raising the overall quality of teaching
3.

If the school has a separate special plan because it is part of an external support programme or is in an Ofsted category, this should be shown as Priority 1. It thus becomes integrated and integral to the overall improvement plan rather than running alongside separately. In these cases, so much energy will be going into Priority 1 that there will be little point in having many additional priorities. Some schools may prefer to have none.

In order to achieve our aim that
 We will enable every child to become a successful and independent learner,
 Our current priorities are
 1. Addressing the key issues from the inspection report
 2.

Example of a school that has a post-Ofsted action plan

In a nutshell...

Chris Rhodes makes practical suggestions for ways of combining the SEF, school development plan and other action plans into one – the Single Integrated Development Plan. He suggests that there are seven steps to producing the plan, which include:

- completing the SEF
- clustering together areas for development as priorities
- matching priorities with the school's aim statement
- providing further detail for each priority including:
 - breaking it into tasks
 - setting success criteria expressed in terms of benefits for pupils
 - giving a time scale.
- Setting action plans against each priority, although not necessarily including them with the plan itself

The new SIDP may be added to or amended at various times throughout the year.

Priority 1: Raising standards in English

Target 1: to increase the % of boys who attained level 2C in writing at the end of KS1 to 80% achieving L4 by 2007

Target 2: to improve the quality of the fiction library so that it is used by 75% of pupils on a weekly basis by Easter 2006

Target 3:

Step 6: Pages 3, 4 and 5 of the SIDP. Page 3 will take Priority 1, break it into tasks, set success criteria expressed in terms of benefits for pupils and give a time scale. Page 4 will do the same for Priority 2. This is the organisational stage of development planning.

Step 7: Pages 6, 7 and 8 of the SIDP take each of the tasks and turns them into action plans. This is the operational level of management and is really the business of individual subject coordinators. Many schools prefer not to include this level of planning in their overall development document. This is because it is at a very detailed level, is internal to the school and is best discussed between the head or SMT member and the individual member of staff, rather than part of a document scrutinised by governors.

It fits like this with priority 2 and 3 alongside it:

Action plans come in many forms, and each school must devise the one that suits them best. All action plans *must*:

Rosemary Lane Primary School

In order to achieve our aim that
 We will enable every child to become a successful and independent learner,
 Our current priorities are
 1. Raising standards in English
 2. Raising the overall quality of teaching
 3.

- relate back to the SIDP, aim statement and SEF evaluation;
- contain realistic costs and timescales;
- contain success criteria that explain how the actions will impact on pupils;
- explain how and when plans will be monitored and reviewed.

Priority 1: Raising standards in English

Target 1: to increase the % of boys who attained level 2C in writing at the end of KS1 to 80% achieving L4 by 2007

Target 2: to improve the quality of the fiction library so that it is used by 75% of pupils on a weekly basis by Easter 2006

Target 3:

Priority 2: Raising the overall quality of teaching.

Target 1: 60% of teaching good or better by June 2006

Target 2: short term planning contains learning outcomes for each

Priority 3

In conclusion

The introduction of a structured tool for self-evaluation, the SEF, should be welcomed by schools as an opportunity to review their practice for internal review and for planning actions to bring about improvement. Both documents should be short, focused and useful. The one should not exist without the other – they are the two sides of a single coin. They are designed to make things better for children, and that's what schools are about too. ●

PROFILE

Chris Rhodes is a former primary headteacher and local authority inspector. He is the author of several books on primary school management.