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Education

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Guidance to Boards of Governors and Schools on School Development Planning

Introduction

1. The purpose of this guidance is to provide clarification to Boards of Governors and schools in relation to the requirements of school development planning for 2021/22 in the context of the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. It is being issued in accordance with Article 13(2)(b)(i) of the 1998 Order which requires a Board of Governors, in preparing or revising a School Development Plan (SDP), to consider any guidance given by the Department, the Education Authority and (in the case of a Catholic maintained school) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.
3. The SDP is an important vehicle for school improvement, communicating a coherent, shared vision for the development work of a school with all members of its community.
4. In light of the current circumstances where schools have returned to face-to-face learning during the summer term, the Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) recognise the need for a flexible approach to school development planning in the coming academic year.
5. Boards of Governors and schools should continue to take a pragmatic approach to school development planning, ensuring that the process is useful in supporting the work of the school and that it is manageable.

School development planning requirements

6. In normal circumstances, school development plans will set out the 'roadmap' for the 3 years ahead with a focus on the school's key priorities, identified following a process of self-evaluation.
7. It is acknowledged that in 2021/22 schools will need to develop a school development plan which addresses the specific challenges and whole-school priorities that will be faced in the next academic year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular both the impact of the recent extended period of remote learning and contingency plans for remote learning as required.
8. **In light of this, schools may wish to prepare a transitional plan for 2021/22. Alternatively, schools may find it more useful to amend or, for those in the final year of the three year cycle, extend the current school development plan for an additional year. Where schools extended their three year plan in 2020/21, it is acceptable to extend it for a further year in 2021/22.**
9. The SDP, whether a transitional, amended or extended plan for 2021/22, does not need to be an extensive document. It should bring together, in a clear and simple way, the school's priorities, the actions and resources that it will deploy to deliver these and the key outcomes it intends to achieve.
10. Based on the feedback received from the education sector regarding the current challenges, some priority areas which schools may wish to consider for inclusion are:
 - supporting the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of pupils and staff;
 - evaluating current provision and further developing effective approaches to remote learning (see <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/DE-EFFECTIVE-PRACTICE-IN-REMOTE-LEARNING.PDF>);
 - planning curricular delivery and in particular at post-primary level ensuring a resumption of practical activities across the curriculum (see <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202114-practical-work-post-primary-schools>)
 - developing effective approaches to delivering services to vulnerable learners and those learners who have statements of special educational need;

- identifying and addressing underachievement, particularly for those pupils who have experienced barriers to engaging in remote learning;
 - further enhancing parental engagement to support their child's learning; and
 - developing an effective programme of professional learning for teachers.
11. It is important for schools to have a SDP which is developed, implemented and reviewed with input and feedback from key stakeholders and formally approved by the Board of Governors.
 12. Consultation will form part of the school development planning process, with schools likely to consult digitally, perhaps through the use of online questionnaires or focus groups using digital platforms.
 13. Schools should have access to more comprehensive self-evaluation data than in 2020/21 to inform the review process, though we appreciate that data to inform wider system level comparison will not be available.
 14. As normal, once approved, a copy of the SDP should be issued to each member of the Board of Governors, the principal and each member of staff. It should also be accessible to parents. A copy of the SDP should be sent to the Education Authority and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, to CCMS

Further information and support

15. Guidance is available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-school-development-planning-guidance>
16. Schools can also seek advice and support in their school development planning from the Education Authority's School Development Service and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, CCMS. Support and assistance on managing data is also available from the Education Authority's C2K service.

Enquiries

17. Any enquiries about this guidance should be directed to School Improvement Team in the Department at DEsit@education-ni.gov.uk