

# Raising standards, narrowing the gaps

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The **National Strategies**



**A teacher's guide to the support and resources  
being offered by the National Strategies**



department for  
children, schools and families

# SecEd

# In teachers we trust

The end of key stage 3 SATs was a landmark decision for education. However, *SecEd* editor **Pete Henshaw** warns that teachers must now lead the way on the assessment of pupils



**T**HE ANNOUNCEMENT of the end of key stage 3 SATs late last year was a triumph for our education system.

For too long the tests have hampered “proper” education during year 9, with teachers being forced to spend too much of their time drilling students to tick the boxes of the SATs.

Now with the exams firmly thrown out of the window, teachers can get on with giving their students an engaging and motivating education, and preparing them properly for key stage 4.

The ending of the tests will reduce pressure on their pupils and give the opportunity to develop a more creative curriculum, making sure that students are actively involved in what they are learning. It opens up all sorts of opportunities, to develop critical thinking skills, for example, or prepare students for new developments, such as Functional Skills and the Diplomas.

However, what is crucial and should not be lost sight of in this exciting development is that the tracking of pupils’ progress is still essential. It is good that the professionals – the teachers – are now to be the ones to take charge of ensuring pupils are on track. However, what is important is that teachers get a simple means by which they can assess pupil progress as they prepare them for key stage 4.

With the existing track record of government in trusting the judgement of teachers, some of you are concerned, quite legitimately, that you will be landed with a teacher assessment system that is bogged down with too many measures and checks.

However, there are good sounds coming from the pilot schools and case studies that we have reported on in this supplement, and hopefully these early pioneers are showing how the Assessing Pupils’ Progress (APP) plans and pupil assessment should be handled, with teachers working together in schools, and schools working together in local areas to ensure consistency and a manageable workload with proper support.

In recent months, *SecEd* has carried a series of articles from educationalists looking at what needs

to happen in this area, and one of the over-arching demands has been for proper support for the changes through, as one writer told us, “initial and continuing training, high quality moderation, the sharing and provision of excellent exemplification materials, and the time to do it all properly”.

Another crucial aspect is that teachers lead the ongoing development of these assessment systems; that they dictate how things should work, and that government listens.

This is the third annual supplement that *SecEd* has published in conjunction with the National Strategies in the run up to the Education Show.

Once again, this publication aims to update teachers everywhere on the ongoing work of the National Strategies in supporting and guiding good teaching practice. This publication looks at how the Secondary Frameworks might be able to offer you help when it comes to planning for progression, improving pedagogy, tracking pupil progress and using APP in the classroom, and in the personalisation of learning.

I hope that the case studies we have compiled offer you some interesting insights as to how teachers are using the National Strategies’ materials and guidance to influence their existing practice and implement proper procedures for assessing the progress of all pupils.

The end of key stage 3 SATs will not make teaching any easier, but all the signs are there that the new teacher-led systems of assessment at key stage 3 will allow you, as professionals, to focus on what teaching should be about – inspiring and developing young minds, and not ticking meaningless boxes.

**For information on anything in this supplement, visit the new National Strategies area of the Standards website at [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/secondary](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/secondary)**

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# Raising standards



**Clive Bush**, national director, secondary, with the National Strategies, discusses the work being done to support improvement

**O**VER THE last year, the UK has seen impressive improvements in young people's attainment across the board, with very positive outcomes at the end of key stage 4. The recent *Trends in International Mathematics and Science* study of mathematics and science in developed countries put our pupil performance in both subjects in the top 10 and the UK was the most improved nation. These outcomes are testament to the hard work of colleagues in schools and local authorities, who have risen to the challenges of curricular revision, personalisation, and syllabus revision at GCSE.

There are, however, greater challenges ahead to raise standards further and to narrow attainment gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers. This does not mean new approaches, but rather focusing strategies and resources that we know work well with these children to unlock their potential.

At the National Strategies, we offer succinct, focused support and guidance to schools to do this. The four cornerstones of planning for progression, strengthening subject pedagogy, tracking pupil progress, and providing personalised intervention are now seen by the majority of schools as fundamental to good practice and improvement.

Behind them lie the Frameworks; powerful online tools to provide all teachers with direct support to plan collaboratively for the progression of every child. We have continued to develop these over the year, adding a planning tool, resources for teaching, and links to other relevant materials and guidance.

Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) materials are directly linked to the Frameworks and are a central part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy to put effective pupil tracking in place and harness AfL for direct impact on learning and attainment.

These materials are now available in English,

mathematics, science and ICT and are already being used successfully by schools throughout the country. Indeed, they are the key to the rigorous, robust and regular teacher assessment, which is essential now that key stage 3 tests have been discontinued.

Most schools have established effective tracking systems and we have provided guidance to schools and commercial developers to ensure these do the job. Consequently, carefully planned intervention is now widely established and the National Strategies has a wide range of effective approaches to improve rates of progression and raise the proportion of children who make the expected levels of progress between key stages. This includes the Black and minority ethnic, and gifted and talented resources.

In addition, our Behaviour and Attendance, and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programmes underpin all this work by helping schools to achieve and maintain high levels of good behaviour and attendance.

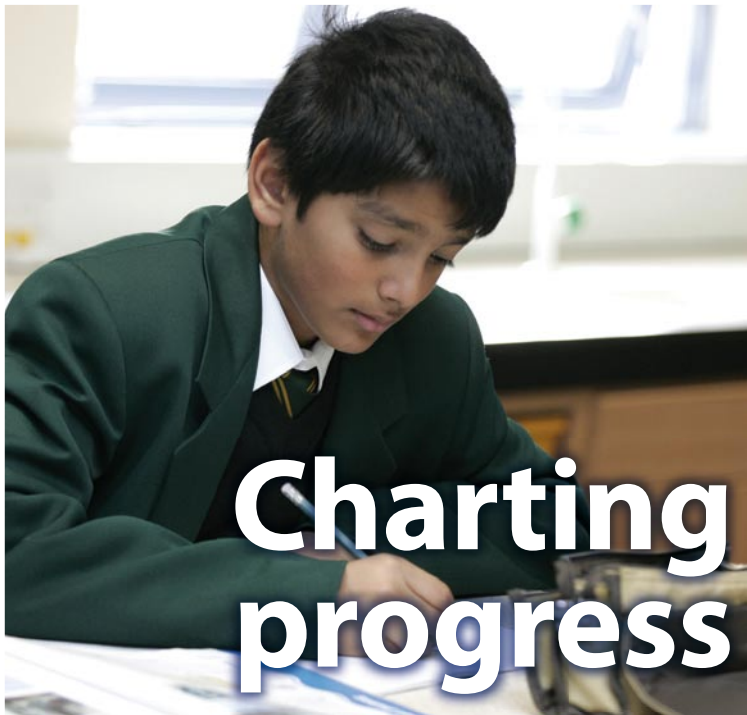
As the National Challenge became established, the National Strategies developed materials to aid schools in the writing and delivering of Raising Attainment Plans, as well as a suite of materials to support leadership and management and teaching and learning in the core subjects.

These are: Core Plus, focusing on classroom practice and departmental organisation in English, mathematics and science; Stronger Management Systems, concerned with establishing effective leadership and management; and Leading Core Subjects, providing support for senior leaders who are line managers.

These, and all our materials, are available on the new National Strategies area of the Standards website (weblink below), which brings together key resources for school improvement in an accessible form.

Further support and challenge for local authorities and schools is provided by our regional teams, which support the evaluation of progress and target-setting.

The focus of this year's work was the establishment of a coherent and cohesive framework for school improvement focused on the classroom. We will continue to refine and develop this approach in a way that is responsive both to government initiatives, the targets that underpin them, and the needs of teachers and pupils.



Planning for pupil progression in core subjects is vital. Over the next four pages, we look at what the renewed Secondary Frameworks can offer, and examine case studies of the Frameworks in action

**R**AISING STANDARDS and improving pupil progress in core subjects are at the heart of every school's work, and it is with this in mind that the National Strategies has renewed and updated the Secondary Frameworks for English, mathematics, science and ICT.

The renewed Frameworks are an online tool to support the collaborative planning of learning and improve rates of progression. They underpin planning, teaching and assessment.

Many schools are finding the Frameworks particularly useful at a time when they are thinking about strengthening teacher assessment following the abolition of key stage 3 SATs.

Alan Howe, senior director of the Secondary National Strategies, explained: "Schools are using them to review their schemes of work and to sharpen and focus their planning for pupil progress. The Frameworks are all about planning for progression in knowledge, understanding, and skills, rather than simply planning for coverage. They very powerfully link planning, teaching, and assessment and put at

teachers' fingertips everything they need in terms of planning their teaching around learning objectives that will really move pupils' learning on. It's not that teachers haven't been doing this anyway, but our job is to give them the tools to do it really well."

The clear learning objectives given for English, mathematics, science and ICT for year 7 to 11 pupils show how to plan for progression across key stages 3 and 4. As well as offering guidance on planning and teaching, the Frameworks also enable teachers to link learning objectives for planning with day-to-day and periodic assessment to help track pupil progress using the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) resources.

Access to all the APP guidelines is built into the Frameworks, so teachers can plan their schemes of work and use APP to check progress. APP is a central part of the Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy to put effective pupil tracking in place and harness AfL for direct impact on learning and attainment.

The Secondary Frameworks also help to strengthen teachers' subject pedagogy and professional development. Structured and designed in the same way, no matter what the subject, the Frameworks enable heads and teachers to ensure quality and consistency in planning, teaching, and assessment across departments and whole schools.

Mr Howe said the Frameworks offer teachers the flexibility to determine what is taught and how it is taught: "They are Frameworks, not plans," he said. "The onus is on teachers and schools having the autonomy to plan creatively and flexibly for their pupils. Teachers will download learning objectives from the Frameworks that they think are relevant to their class – but they are the ones who decide how they teach, how they structure lessons, and what strategies and resources they use. The Frameworks are a balance between offering valuable support and guidance while also recognising that teachers value the need to be creative and flexible in their planning.

"The Frameworks also support genuine personalisation in planning teaching and assessment. Good personalised learning requires teachers to know where pupils are in terms of their learning and in terms of standards, and to plan accordingly."

As well as bringing together key resources for improving progress in an interactive, clear and accessible way, the online resources also include examples of best practice by schools. Not only that, the National Strategies' regional teams are working with and through all local authorities to help schools evaluate their progress and challenge the targets they have set themselves.

# Case study: English

IT IS seven years since the English department at St Michael's CE High School in Chorley, Lancashire, took the decision to update its whole school assessment system – and the school has never looked back.

Following the introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), pupils at all levels now consistently make better than average progress in English at key stage 3, and GCSE results have improved significantly too.

"We were working on improving writing with a Lancashire literacy consultant at the time and she asked us if we would be interested in taking APP on board and trialling it," explained Cathy Clarke, the school's curriculum manager for English.

"Before that we didn't have any specific assessment criteria. It was very much impression marking and there was no consistency."

Ms Clarke and her nine colleagues opted to introduce APP across years 7, 8 and 9 – a total of 660 pupils – straight away. The teachers completed termly APP assessments and these were used to provide a level for whole-school progress checking. The APP assessments also offered useful information to feed back into curriculum planning and pupil target-setting processes.

"The impact was immediate," said Ms Clarke, who has been teaching for 25 years.

"Attaching the APP grid to the front of each assessment folder, with the bits pupils can do highlighted, means that straight away they know what they have to aspire to. You can say to a pupil 'this is why you haven't got your Level 6' and 'you need to work on X, Y and Z'.

"APP is really good. It also ensures that teachers are marking to a certain standard. It takes perhaps 30 seconds more to mark a piece of work, but you know that your marking is accurate. We keep all the work at key stage 3 in folders and when you look at them you have all the evidence in front of you and can see real progress. APP is ideal for personalised learning because I can see at a glance what strengths and weaknesses a child may have and then tune my teaching to deal with the class and with the individual."

To ensure that the standards being applied across the department are accurate and consistent, the



English teachers attend moderation meetings at least twice a year, once for reading and once for writing. The staff bring three pupils' work from their classes, all showing a range of attainment, and discuss them together.

"We needed to make a difference in our school and APP has made a real difference," said Ms Clarke. "The literacy is much better and our results at GCSE are very good too."

David White, senior advisor for English at the National Strategies, has talked to English teachers and subject leaders who are implementing APP up and down the country and found "a very positive picture".

A survey of 79 local authorities carried out in September 2008 found that 81 per cent of schools had made use of APP. Of these, 56 per cent were at an early stage of implementation, while 31 per cent had fully embedded APP across key stage 3.

Mr White said: "The feedback from teachers has been very good and we are very encouraged by it. APP allows teachers at regular intervals to accurately assign to each pupil a national curriculum level, but at the same time it gives a profile of the pupil and enables the teacher to see what the next steps for progression are for individual pupils.

"But we have still got three jobs to do. We have to make sure that the schools that have implemented APP are doing it well; we want the schools that have made a start with it to scale it up; and then there are the 19 per cent who haven't done anything yet, whom we obviously need to try and get going."

# Case study: mathematics



**S**CHOOLS ARE using the renewed Secondary Framework for mathematics to increase pupils' access to excellent teaching and engaging, purposeful learning that will enable them to make good progress through key stages 3 and 4.

Not only that, the growing number of teachers who are making use of the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) approach to assess youngsters' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics say that it is having a positive impact on teaching and learning in their schools.

Instead of relying almost exclusively on testing or what pupils have written in their exercise books, teachers are now drawing on a far broader range of evidence to track their progress.

They say APP is helping them to make rigorous, robust and reliable judgements linked to national standards and thereby improving teaching, learning and pupils' progression.

By means of day-to-day observations, interactions and ongoing assessment, teachers using APP can see clear evidence of what learners understand and are able to do. Assessment evidence used in mathematics is also now more likely to include oral work, information from different curriculum areas, and practical tasks.

Many of the secondary schools in England which are now using APP in mathematics have been involved in the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) Making Good Progress pilot, which was launched in 2007 to improve the rate of progress children make year by year, as well as between key stages.

Heathfield Community College in Heathfield, East Sussex, is one of the schools involved in the DCSF pilot. The eight teachers in the mathematics department have mainly focused their APP work on year 7 pupils, but are now using the approach for years 8 and 9 too.

"APP has really made us think about our mathematics teaching," said assistant headteacher Jackie Cooper, who teaches mathematics and also does consultancy work for the CfBT Education Trust.

"We are now at a stage where we are very excited about the way we are moving forward with APP in the classroom. It's not just about the activities that you are doing. It is looking at a topic, the progression through the topic, and the activities you can do to show that progression.

"Teachers are working together in groups of three to plan their lessons using APP. They're also doing some team teaching and then evaluating it together afterwards, which has been really useful."

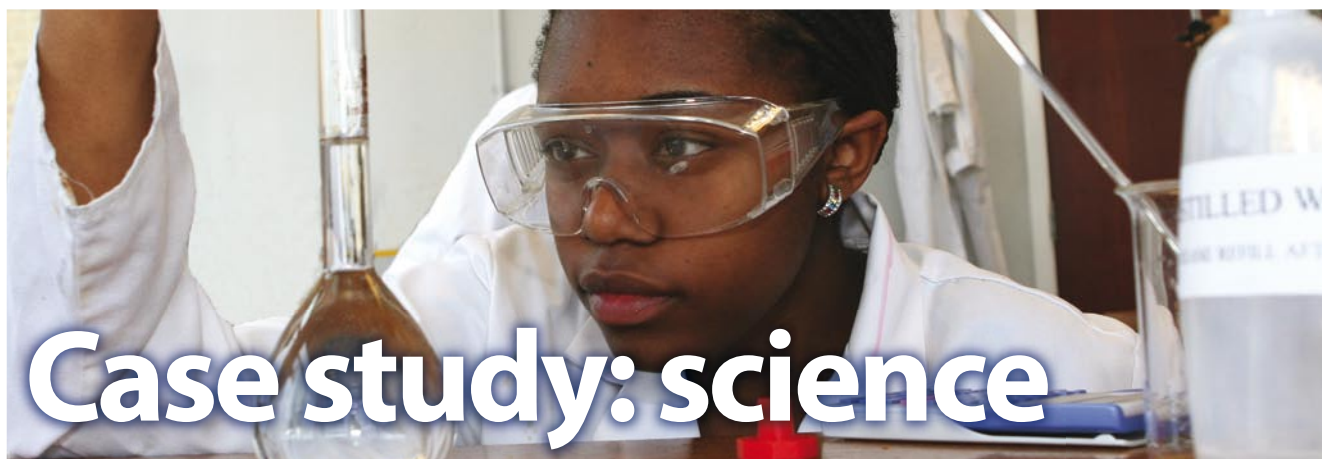
Ms Cooper added that APP has encouraged both her and her colleagues to come up with creative and meaningful ways to assess their students' progress, such as giving presentations to the rest of the class.

If teachers have taught a topic on fractions, for instance, to a year 7 class, they might also ask the group to show evidence of what they can do with fractions. "A lot if it involves self-assessment, alongside teacher support and probing questions," explained Ms Cooper.

"We might give pupils the learning outcomes and get them to use red, amber and green cards to show what they can and can't do. Another idea that has worked really well is to split a sheet of A3 paper into four and write addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in each.

"You then ask the students to show all the different types of fractions they can add together, take away, multiply and divide. Straight away you have got your evidence about what their strengths and weaknesses are.

"I have been teaching mathematics for 20 years and APP has made a real impact on my own teaching. It's also more engaging for the students because they are able to see exactly where they are at in terms of progression, and what they need to do to get themselves to the next level."



**I**VYBRIDGE COMMUNITY College in Devon is one school where pupils are inspired by science. A science specialist college, the 2,300-pupil school took part in the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) science pilot from 2007 to 2008.

Physics teacher and advanced skills teacher, Nick Kerswell, welcomed the publication of the renewed Secondary Framework for science – and particularly the way it enables teachers to plan creatively and flexibly for their pupils.

“It gives science departments more freedom,” he said. “It says ‘these are the sorts of things you have got to cover’, but at the same time you can build your curriculum and your scheme of work around the things that are available to you and are of interest.

“So there are still guidelines, but there’s also a lot more flexibility – which is fine by me.”

The Framework is based on the principle of planning for progression to support pupils making 3 to 4 levels of progress from the ages of 11 to 16. It shows how learning in science can be structured, using long and medium-term planning. Yearly learning objectives are given for years 7 to 11 – with teachers being encouraged to integrate these into their schemes of work.

The Framework makes a point of emphasising how science works and reinforces the fact that processes and skills in science are as crucial as the subject content.

Following on from the “how science works” strand come four other strands of progression – organisms, behaviour and health; chemical and material behaviour; energy, electricity and forces; and environment, earth and the universe.

A range of teaching strategies have also been added to the Framework, showing science teachers the

importance of blending explanations, argument and decisions with practical and enquiry skills.

“This,” says the National Strategies, “is an important step in supporting the planning for high quality first teaching.”

The 20-strong science department at Ivybridge is currently planning a series of two-week challenges for years 7 and 8, where students study a topic like alternative and renewable energy, then produce a presentation for the class and take part in a debate.

The science teachers will be able to select criteria from APP to assess the pupils’ progress. “Assessing these kinds of things can be very difficult, but being part of the pilot made us realise that APP can help us to work out how to do it,” said Mr Kerswell.

The renewed Secondary Framework for science underpins the APP approach and is a key tool in helping teachers plan for progression in a structured and effective way. The Framework encourages active learning and the engagement of pupils. It advises, for instance, that teachers “aim to spend a proportion of each science lesson in leading interactive tasks that involve all pupils”.

It adds, however, that “intervention, direct teaching, and interaction are as crucial during individual, paired and group work as they are in whole-class sessions, whether they be practical work or other activities”.

As well as the yearly learning objectives, additional materials within the Framework help teachers with their planning for progression.

This includes amplification of what the yearly learning objectives mean, strategies to enable them to move pupils on to the next level, rich questions to help learners link or apply their ideas, and links to the APP assessment focus for each aspect of “how science works”.

# Talking ICT

APP in ICT was only officially launched in February 2009. We speak to the National Strategies about the progress being made in this area

**G**OOD ICT skills are essential for young people today. As the National Strategies' area of the Standards website puts it: "Increased capability in the use of ICT supports initiative and independent learning, as pupils are able to make informed judgements about when and where to use ICT to enhance their learning and the quality of their work."

The most recent initiatives to support ICT subject leaders and teachers include the roll-out in 2008 of the renewed Secondary Framework for ICT and the launch of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) in ICT.

APP in ICT at key stage 3 was piloted in a number of schools prior to its official launch in February 2009. Although many schools are in the early stages of introducing APP, John Kirk, programme director of ICT for the National Strategies, told *SecEd* that "the feedback so far has been extremely positive".

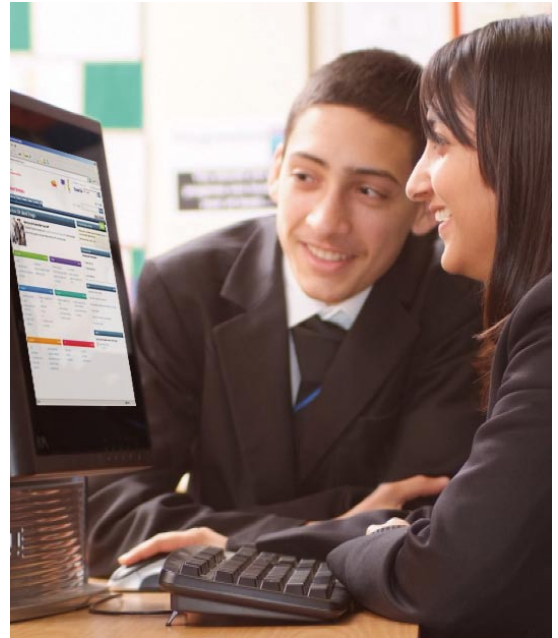
"Teachers have been saying that it is just what they have been waiting for," he added. "They particularly like the standards files, which demonstrate very clearly the standards at levels 4, 5 and 6, and the commentary that enables them to understand why a piece of work is the particular level that it is."

Throughout spring 2009, local authorities up and down the country are holding one-day ICT subject leader development meetings to outline the APP approach. Subject leaders have then been encouraged to disseminate what they have learned about APP within their own departments and set about introducing it.

"As with English, mathematics and science, the benefit that ICT teachers get from periodic assessment is the opportunity to stand back and reflect on where they are going," said Mr Kirk.

"APP enables teachers to analyse pupils' progress at a cohort and year level, and eventually at a school level, and to see the key areas they need to develop and strengthen across the board.

"It also gives a very good profile of where individual pupils are, so progress can be tracked and targeted much more closely and effectively. Another



benefit is that APP is equally applicable in schools where pupils do a discrete one lesson of ICT a week and also in schools which combine ICT with other subject areas. We need to keep reinforcing, though, that APP is about periodic assessment, and is not to be used on too small a timescale."

He explained: "We are clear that in ICT, periodic assessment should be used no more than once a term. For many schools, twice a year may be more appropriate.

"While day-to-day assessment enables teachers to look at where their pupils are in terms of a lesson, APP enables them to gather their judgements together in a sensible way and see how pupils are doing in terms of the big picture."

As well as helping teachers to plan for progression, track pupil progress, and facilitate personalised intervention, APP is playing a crucial role in strengthening subject pedagogy.

"APP works for an individual pupil because it gives them a spiky profile (different levels of skill in an overall area) and indicates the areas that they need to develop," Mr Kirk explained.

"But if as a subject leader or teacher, you notice the same pattern coming through, then rather than being something an individual pupil hasn't understood or picked up, that is more likely to indicate that you need to revise and review the teaching and learning that is going on. APP makes the whole assessment process more consistent, robust and transparent for everybody."

# Leaps in languages

The renewed Secondary Framework for languages will be launched in September 2009. We find out more about what is happening

**T**HE RENEWED Secondary Framework for modern foreign languages (MFL) is being updated following Lord Dearing's 2007 Languages Review, which recommended that languages become part of the statutory curriculum for key stage 2, the introduction of new programmes of study at key stage 3, and the fact that carrying on a language at key stage 4 should not be compulsory.

"It also aims to help key stage 3 engagement and motivation and keep youngsters on board so they want to carry on at key stage 4 and become lifelong language learners," explained Alison Edwards, the National Strategies' programme lead for MFL.

A number of schools have trialled a draft version of the renewed Framework and the feedback has been positive. Teachers welcome the fact that it is skills-based, learner-focused, and appropriate to "mixed-experience" classes. Some current year 7s, for instance, have done French at their primary schools, and some have learned Spanish or German too.

Another important aspect of the support for MFL is the development of the National Strategies' MFL Interactive Resource (see further information). This range of 16 short learning units to support teachers' CPD can be found online and includes modules like transfer and transition, coaching and motivation, and participation. In collaboration with CILT, the National Centre for Languages, the National Strategies has also set up more than 350 regional and local learning networks – focusing on issues like transfer and transition from key stage 2 to 3, assessment, and why more girls study languages after key stage 3 than boys.

The renewed Framework is based on the new programme of study for MFL, which also promotes the development of "Intercultural Understanding". The renewed Framework helps teachers to plan contexts for learning that give pupils opportunities to explore aspects of the life and culture of countries and communities where the language is spoken. An effective and motivating way to achieve this is by using a cross-curricular approach.

One school developing this approach is St Aidan's

RC School and Language College in Sunderland, a boys' specialist language college where all year 11s take either GCSE French, Spanish, or both, and some go on to study languages at A level. The school also offers enrichment courses to year 12s in Welsh, Punjabi, Japanese, and sign language.

MFL teacher Andrea Simpson has set up an innovative cross-curricular project inspired by a tiny volcanic island more than 6,000 miles away.

Reunion Island is in the Indian Ocean, 500 miles off the east coast of Madagascar. It is also one of France's 26 regions – the islanders speak French and use the Euro as their currency.

Ms Simpson spent six months living on the island and four years ago, keen to engage and motivate key stage 3 French pupils at St Aidan's, hit on the idea of creating a joint French and geography project for year 9s. She wrote the project with Matthew Morris, the

**It's an excellent way to teach. It keeps pupils motivated and engaged and gives them a real sense of purpose**

school's director of learning for geography. It consists of eight lessons – from the formation of the Earth to writing a newspaper article about a volcanic eruption.

Ms Simpson says that this cross-curricular approach, suitable for both mixed ability and more able groups, is paying dividends. She explained: "I would like to teach like this the whole time. It's an excellent way to teach. It keeps pupils motivated and engaged and gives them a real sense of purpose.

"The boys find learning like this much more interesting and ask if they can do it in other subjects. It is more mature because they are talking about real life, not about what animals they have got. It also reinforces the learning, in French and in geography."

## Further information

For the MFL Interactive Resource, visit the CPD area at [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/mfl](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/mfl)



## Much is being done to help schools evaluate and improve their gifted and talented provision

**T**HE NATIONAL Strategies has developed practical resources to help schools improve provision for gifted and talented (G&T) learners. This includes the launch of a range of self-evaluation tools to help schools assess and develop their G&T provision, and strengthen pedagogy and personalisation.

The Institutional Quality Standards (IQS), published in 2005, provide heads and teachers with a whole-school approach that highlights strengths and weaknesses in the support offered to G&T youngsters. These were followed by the Classroom Quality Standards (CQS) – tools for teachers (see the website below for further information) which focus in more detail on provision in the classroom. Published in 2007, they are built around seven key features of effective teaching and learning.

In 2008, the National Strategies took these generic CQS and developed subject-specific CQS in mathematics, English, science and ICT, supported by guidance and exemplification. The Strategies also launched the CQS web-based and DVD Guided Resource, which supports teachers in developing G&T self-evaluation and improvement in classroom provision.

Carol Singh, G&T programme leader for the National Strategies, explained: “It is important that schools see gifted and talented provision as part of their whole personalisation and progression focus. The current approach to provision is about high challenge and high support for gifted and talented pupils, but in the context of high challenge and high support for all pupils.

“The most significant way to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils is through quality first teaching. But having said that, as for all children, gifted and talented pupils also need activities beyond the classroom to enhance the day-to-day work.”

Local authorities are playing a key role in helping schools to take forward their G&T strategies. In the London Borough of Brent, for instance, Sharon Rhodes, co-ordinator of G&T education, organised a peer review session for three schools to discuss how they had used the IQS to develop their provision.

“Sharon also helped me to work out what we should be focusing on within my school,” said Wesley Richards, G&T lead teacher at Wembley’s Preston Manor High School.

“Gifted and talented provision has been at our school for nine years, but it is something that we have been trying to push higher up the school agenda. The main way we did this was by getting every department to use the IQS self-evaluation tool to comment on what they were doing and make a judgement on where we were in terms of our gifted and talented provision.”

The school then picked out two elements – *Effective provision in the classroom* and *Standards* – and worked out how these could be improved.

A working party was duly set up, enabling teachers from each department to work with Mr Richards on new ways of delivering G&T provision. Using Bloom’s Taxonomy as their starting point, the teachers looked at planning lessons, creating resources, and using higher order thinking skills in the classroom. The teachers then went back to their departments and shared their work with colleagues.

After seeing GCSE results yield more As and A\*s in 2008, Mr Richards now plans to use the CQS to work with individual departments more intensively. He believes, too, that the focus on G&T is improving the education of all pupils.

The National Strategies has also produced a revised version of its *Handbook for leading teachers for gifted and talented education*. This supports improvements in teaching and learning for G&T pupils and enables whole-school strategic planning.

# Supporting SEN

Two National Strategies initiatives are dedicated to helping schools to raise the attainment of children with SEN

**T**HE NATIONAL Strategies provides a range of initiatives aimed at ensuring effective leadership and teaching to raise the achievement of particular under-performing groups of pupils and to narrow gaps in attainment. These include two new initiatives focused on pupils with learning difficulties or SEN. The National Strategies has also funded regional local authority hubs of effective practice in SEN to support local authorities in helping schools to implement them.

The first is the Special Education Needs/Additional Educational Needs (SEN/AEN) *Value for Money* resource pack for schools, an interactive website to help schools ascertain if their spending on young people with SEN/AEN is “offering value for money and making real improvements to the quality of personalised provision and progression for their pupils”. This voluntary self-evaluation tool has been developed in association with the Audit Commission (see further information).

Meanwhile, the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) offers a training resource to help schools increase their skills and expertise in removing barriers to achievement for pupils with SEN. The IDP DVD or web-based tools include teaching and learning resources, training materials, effective classroom strategies, models of good practice for multi-disciplinary teams, and information about more specialist advice and training.

In 2008, the IDP focused on dyslexia, and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This year, the focus of the CPD resource is on supporting children on the autism spectrum. The IDP for the autism spectrum, produced in partnership with the Autism Centre for Education and Research at the University of Birmingham, is due out in March 2009 and is available on the National Strategies’ inclusion area of the Standards website.

The latest IDP specifically aims to improve outcomes for children and young people on the autism spectrum, increase knowledge and understanding among professionals, and share good practice. It is hoped that it will help schools to make adjustments that enable more young people on the autism spectrum to benefit from a mainstream education.

Somerset County Council is one of the local authorities that has helped to introduce the IDP into its

schools. It began this work in 2008 by holding a series of seminars about the IDP for SEN co-ordinators and SEN governors, followed by briefings for headteachers.

As a result, Holyrood Community Secondary School, an 11 to 18 split-site comprehensive in Chard serving a semi-rural area, took the decision to embed the IDP within its overall training and development strategy.

The school opted to focus on pupils with SLCN and set about introducing the IDP to teachers, pupils and parents. Staff created a cross-curricular working group and, using the IDP, assessed where they felt they were on the continuum of skills, knowledge and expertise. Based on this evaluation, a specialist SLCN advisory teacher was brought in to deliver training.

Teachers then began putting the ideas into practice, shared effective outcomes, and reported back to the working group.

**IDP has been highly effective in helping the school to assess its skills and expertise**

The IDP is still underway at Holyrood, but it has been highly effective in helping the school to assess its skills and expertise in supporting children with SLCN. A survey of teachers found, for example, that while most of them felt confident about recognising the indicators of SLCN, they were less certain about their ability to identify the severity of need in students with SLCN.

As a result of this evaluation, the school opted to work on two particular development areas. One was the identification of students with SLCN, particularly those with less severe SLCN or where their SLCN were secondary to another category of SEN, and the other was on making adjustments in mainstream class-setting. The school will evaluate its progress again during the summer term and, in the longer term, monitor the programme’s impact on student attainment.

## Further information

The SEN/AEN *Value for Money* Resource Pack:  
[www.sen-aen.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.sen-aen.audit-commission.gov.uk)



# Positive behaviour

The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme is still a relatively new challenge for schools. We look at what support is out there and the work of one school in particular

**T**HE SOCIAL and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme was launched in secondary schools in 2007.

This initiative, designed to develop the social and emotional skills of all pupils, helps young people to be more confident and resilient, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to empathise with others by developing skills across the curriculum.

The SEAL skills are grouped into five areas – self-awareness, managing feelings, empathy, motivation, and social skills – all of which support positive behaviour, regular attendance at school, learning, employability, and wellbeing.

Stepney Green Maths and Computing College, a boys' comprehensive in east London, began implementing the SEAL programme in September 2007. The school achieves above national average results – in 2008, for instance, 49 per cent of boys gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics – but they decided to use SEAL to improve attainment further.

“We wanted to use SEAL as a platform to underpin the learning process, together with other initiatives,

like Assessment for Learning and securing two levels of progress for each pupil,” explained assistant headteacher Grant Barclay. “SEAL promotes social and emotional skills, group work, and higher level thinking skills and we wanted to use these to enhance the learning process and increase our results.”

The school started by conducting a whole-school audit to find out where the SEAL programme matched what teachers were already doing within the curriculum.

“It was a very useful exercise because we realised that there were lots of things in the SEAL agenda that we were already doing to support learning,” said Mr Barclay, who teaches humanities and PE. “For example, year 7 boys do a humanities unit that involves collaborative work and students using their social skills. In the past, we have also done whole-school literacy and numeracy days and we recognised that there were a lot of SEAL aspects in there too.

“But more importantly, we realised that our pastoral approach – the way that we deal with student behaviour, our academic mentoring, and our pastoral leaders – uses SEAL too. So these were all things that we didn’t need to change much.”

Rather than roll out the SEAL approach across the whole school straight away, they decided to start with year 7s, many of whom were already familiar with SEAL from primary school, and work up. By 2010, SEAL will have been embedded across the whole of key stage 3. “I think SEAL needs to be targeted strategically for different year levels,” said Mr Barclay. “Pupils in years 10 and 11 who need to develop the social skills to go off to 6th form provision or a work experience placement are obviously going to have different needs to key stage 3 learners.”

Although Stepney Green does not have particular problems with behaviour and attendance, the school was keen to improve these aspects further. It maintains a SEAL focus throughout the academic year and holds a termly dedicated SEAL learning day.

“The feedback from the boys has been great,” said Mr Barclay. “Boys are practically minded and they really enjoy the social elements of SEAL. Before SEAL came in I don’t think they had the opportunity to express their emotions in terms of empathy and social skills, like saying what they liked and didn’t like about situations and how they could do things better.

“It is hard to quantify the impact of SEAL, but we are definitely seeing a change with our younger boys. There are decreased disruptions to learning and they have the skills to deal with things a lot better than before.”

# Narrowing the gaps

The National Strategies is working with schools and local authorities to meet the needs of vulnerable Black and minority ethnic pupils and raise achievement

**M**ANY SCHOOLS are making use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) guidance materials, which are available on the National Strategies' area of the Standards website and as hard copies. These provide tried and tested strategies to support the learning of pupils vulnerable to underachieving – such as those from specific heritage groups or those learning English as an additional language, including new arrivals.

Guidance materials for ensuring the attainment of Black pupils and raising the attainment of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Turkish heritage pupils have already been published, with similar publications for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and youngsters learning English as an additional language set to follow later in 2009.

Although the National Strategies has focused on narrowing the gap for disadvantaged children, some of whom may come from Black and minority ethnic groups, the EMA guidance materials can be adapted and used for a wide range of groups.

Frances Bestley, director of the National Strategies' Narrowing the Gaps programme, said: "It is a question of looking at leadership and management, looking at how you use data to identify the groups that are under-performing, and how you track their progress, and focusing on improving quality teaching to engage vulnerable pupils."

Schools that have been successful at raising Black and minority ethnic attainment have highlighted the importance of strong and determined leadership, high expectations of all pupils, and tackling attainment gaps between groups of pupils. They also focus on celebrating diversity, promoting a sense of belonging for all pupils, taking a strong stance against racism, and establishing strong partnerships with parents, carers and the wider community.

At Hampstead School in Camden, a home-school liaison programme with the Somali community has helped Somali pupils "significantly out-perform" their peers in key stage 3 English, mathematics and science. The school has engaged parents with annual Somali events to inform them about how pupils'



progress is assessed and the age-expected levels for key stage 3. It also runs training sessions for parents on the use of the internet to support children's learning.

Meanwhile, teachers at Bonus Pastor Catholic College in Lewisham, jumped at the chance to take part in the Black Pupils' Achievement Programme, a national initiative to raise attainment.

"We get very good results through sheer hard work and inclusion," said assistant principal Marianne De Jonge, who led the three-year programme at Bonus Pastor. "But this helped us to target underachieving groups and has had a very clear impact."

Ten pupils, whom the school felt would really benefit, were chosen to take part and Ms De Jonge met parents to explain what it involved. Opportunities to boost their motivation and aspirations included Saturday morning study sessions, revision classes, and additional academic monitoring. The use of data to track pupils' progress was also key.

All 10 students performed better in their GCSEs than peers who had started at the same level. There was also significant improvement in the attainment of Black African girls. Explaining the success of the programme, one pupil said: "My attitude towards work and teachers has improved significantly. My teachers now have high expectations of me and push me to excel, and I have high expectations of myself."

# Functional Skills

Another key area is Functional Skills. The National Strategies has been charged with providing support and training for those delivering the new qualifications

**T**HE NEW Functional Skills qualifications are designed to provide learners of all ages with the practical ability to use English, mathematics and ICT in everyday life, work and further study.

It is hoped the qualifications, which have been developed with input from employers, will encourage youngsters to become skilled and independent learners, to achieve better in all subjects, and to be more equipped to take on the challenges they face during their future education and careers.

Functional Skills in English, mathematics and ICT are already a component of Diplomas, with all three Functional Skills at Level 1 required for Foundation Diplomas and all three at Level 2 required for Higher and Advanced Diplomas. They have been embedded within the key stage 3 and 4 national curriculum and will also link to GCSEs.

Functional Skills were first introduced as a pilot in 2007 and will be rolled out in 2010. The government asked the National Strategies and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service to develop a programme to support the introduction and teaching of Functional Skills to learners “in all settings and at all levels”. While the National Strategies is focusing on pedagogy and how learners can build and apply their skills, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has been working with 11 awarding bodies to trial assessment models.

More than 2,000 centres, including schools, further education colleges, and workplace learning settings, are now involved in the pilot, which is in its second year. The National Strategies is working with local authorities to train and support the pilot schools across the country. A team of Functional Skills regional and senior advisors work with local authorities and schools to support the teaching and learning of Functional Skills, as well as helping to develop and transfer effective planning and practice.

Teachers involved in the pilot are exploring a range of approaches to teaching Functional Skills and sharing emerging practice. As a result, some exciting opportunities are being created for learners to apply their learning in real and relevant contexts.

To support this, in 2008/09, the National Strategies developed four training modules on the teaching of Functional Skills for subject leaders and teachers of English, mathematics and ICT, with a wider range for module four, including SENCOs and teaching assistants.

The modules, designed to be delivered as half-day sessions, build on the earlier CPD and complement the Secondary Frameworks training. They specifically address how to go from building Functional Skills to applying them, how to enable learners to solve problems within “real, purposeful and relevant contexts”, how to assess progress, and how to help learners progress from Entry Level to Level 1. These all correlate to the National Strategies’ four cornerstones for furthering good practice and improvement – planning for progression, strengthening subject pedagogy, tracking pupil progress, and providing personalised intervention.

During autumn 2008 and spring 2009, the modules have been rolled out to local authority consultants. Subject leaders and teachers are now being supported to disseminate the modules to colleagues. This collaboration is helping to create a coherent approach to skills development, and senior leadership teams are being encouraged to ensure that time and resources for joint working are built into school and departmental practice.

At St Paul’s Catholic College in Surrey, 27 year 10 pupils began studying for the Diploma in engineering in September 2008. With Functional Skills a requirement of the Diploma, head of English, Sarah Pearce, decided to incorporate it into English lessons.

She said: “A lot of the skills are embedded already, but it is helping to support the students’ learning and raising awareness about using the same skills and techniques across different subjects.”

### Further information

For e-learning versions of the core modules and overviews, visit the Teaching Functional Skills e-Learning course within the Functional Skills section of the National Strategies secondary area on the Standards website, or email [secondary@nationalstrategies.co.uk](mailto:secondary@nationalstrategies.co.uk)

# Supporting schools

National Strategies' support for schools has been consolidated onto a new web portal, with thousands of pages of secondary-specific content

**F**ROM DETAILS of the renewed Secondary Frameworks to the latest information about inclusion, leadership, and CPD, the new National Strategies' web area (see weblink below) gives teachers a vast array of tools and resources to help them teach.

Launched in November 2008 and featuring the latest technology, the web area forms part of the Standards Site and brings together leading content and advanced functionality for everyone involved in teaching and education.

For the first time, all the core National Strategies' materials have been consolidated in one place, making it easy to access, consistent, and user-friendly. There are almost 4,500 pages on secondary education alone.

Teachers are finding the pages on the renewed Secondary Frameworks particularly useful. These not only provide learning objectives for key stages 3 and 4 and direct links to programmes of study, but also offer increased emphasis on key concepts and processes, and guidance on planning and teaching to ensure effective progression.

The National Strategies has also created a new focus section within the web area for Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP).

Along with useful information, guidance and support materials relating to APP, this features an introduction to APP materials and how to use the approach to benefit pupils, as well as links to a Department for Children, Schools and Families' pamphlet, *Getting to Grips with Assessing Pupils' Progress*, and articles on APP.

The web area boasts a number of interactive resources, and enhanced search capabilities so users can target their searches across all the content more precisely than before.

There is also a range of video tutorials – subjects covered range from accessing and using the online

pages on the Secondary Frameworks, to in-depth guidance on using the Secondary Framework for ICT.

Heads, teachers, local authority advisors, and others involved in education are being encouraged to register on the site. This is a straightforward process, with users asked to give their first and last names and email address. Users can then tailor the site to their particular needs and interests.

They can, for instance, bookmark pages of particular interest and join groups. Currently, groups range from one for practitioners involved in the government's National Challenge programme, to a group for teachers working with the gifted and talented programme.

You can also sign up for daily, weekly and monthly email alerts.

The site is easy to navigate and there is also a series of help and glossary tools. The help section answers practical questions like how to bookmark pages or start discussions, while the glossary section

**There are almost 4,500 pages on secondary education alone**

gives definitions for everything from A levels and accelerated learning, through to year groups and young apprenticeships.

The National Strategies is in the process of integrating content from other educational providers in a structured and automated way, as well as looking at the possibilities of sharing content with a number of partner agencies.

So far the response to the new web area has been enthusiastic. Prior to the launch, around 180 people, including teachers from the early years, primary and secondary phases, trialled the site in intensive focus groups and testing sessions, while a further 1,300 users took part in online surveys.

"The new National Strategies' web area is a rich online resource," said Matt Hennessey, the National Strategies' senior marketing consultant.

"We have received some very positive feedback from users, particularly about the site's significantly advanced facilities, and we are continuing to adapt and refine it and add more content."

# The National Strategies

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)

If you are visiting the Education Show in Birmingham then why not visit one of these seminars and find out our latest information.

## Seminar Programme – Education Show 2009

Early Years	Secondary
<b>'I can do it': boosting young children's achievements as learners from birth to five</b> 11:45 – 12:30 Thursday 26 March 2009 A06	<b>Using 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' materials to strengthen teaching, learning and assessment at Key Stage 3</b> 14:15 – 15:00 Saturday 28 March 2009 C18
Primary	Cross Phase
<b>'Talk for Writing' in reception and Year 1</b> 15:30 – 16:15 Thursday 26 March 2009 A24	<b>The Inclusion Development Programme</b> 11:45 – 12:30 Thursday 26 March 2009 A09
<b>Improving mathematics teaching in primary schools: becoming a mathematics specialist teacher</b> 11:45 – 12:30 Friday 27 March 2009 B07	<b>Progression Guidance: What constitutes Good Progress for Pupils with SEN/LDD</b> 14:15 – 15:00 Friday 27 March 2009 B19
<b>Improving writing: an overview of the Every Child a Writer Pilot</b> 13:00 – 13:45 Friday 27 March 2009 B15	<b>Provision Mapping: Introducing the Value for Money Self Assessment tool for SEN/AEN</b> 11:45 – 12:30 Saturday 28 March 2009 C09

The National Strategies will be exhibiting on the Department for Children, Schools and Families stand, numbered S6 in Hall 6 at the NEC Birmingham



department for  
children, schools and families