

# Guidance for School Improvement Partners

Supporting and challenging improvement in AfL with APP



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# 1 Introduction

Most schools recognise the importance of Assessment for Learning (AfL) with Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) in personalising learning for all pupils across all phases, planning for progression and overcoming barriers to learning.

The AfL reinforces a strategic approach to assessment that has three linked aspects:

**Day-to-day assessment** – which is an integral part of learning and teaching, i.e. the interactions between learners and between learners and their teacher which shape immediate next steps;

**Periodic review** – which provides a profile of pupils' achievement across a subject (drawing on evidence from day-to-day assessment) to inform planning for progression and targets for improvement, and to help to track pupil progress;

**Transitional assessment** – which provides a formal recognition of pupils' achievement that can be shared between pupils, parents and teachers.

For many schools, development of AfL with APP now depends on the emergence and sharing of excellent school-based work to generate sustainable improvement. This publication is consequently of particular relevance to School Improvement Partners (SIPs) in brokering support that some schools may need in order to strengthen and consolidate AfL with APP.

As a SIP you will benefit in your work with schools from familiarity with a range of key guidance and support materials on AfL with APP which the National Strategies has provided for school senior leaders. These include a set of Quality Standards which enable schools to evaluate the progress they have made and plan further development.

This document will help SIPs by:

- summarising key information and guidance relating to developing AfL with APP in the context of implementing the AfL Strategy;
- referencing the further guidance and support materials available for developing AfL with APP;
- considering how school self-evaluation can support the development of AfL with APP and, in particular, how using the AfL Quality Standards can help with this;
- considering how SIPs can broker appropriate and effective support.

## 2 The Assessment for Learning (AfL) Strategy

### The aims of the AfL Strategy

- Every child knows how they are doing, and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there. They get the support they need to be motivated, independent learners on an ambitious trajectory of improvement.
- Every teacher is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils' attainment, understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan, particularly for pupils who are not fulfilling their potential.
- Every school has in place structured and systematic assessment systems for making regular, useful, manageable and accurate assessments of pupils, and for tracking their progress.
- Every parent and carer knows how their child is doing, what they need to do to improve, and how they can support the child and their teachers.

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### A strategic approach to assessment

SIPs can work with senior leaders in schools to ensure that their approach to AfL is part of a manageable and school-wide system of assessment. AfL is not an isolated activity. It feeds into the school's cumulative understanding of pupils' achievements and learning needs.

Central to the AfL Strategy is developing the use of APP as an entitlement for all pupils in all primary and secondary schools.

APP is a structured approach to periodic assessment enabling teachers to:

- **make reliable judgements of attainment** within National Curriculum levels and identify next steps in learning linked to national rates of progress;
- **use diagnostic information** about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to improve planning, teaching and learning;
- **track pupils' progress** over a key stage or longer.

Putting APP at the heart of learning for every pupil is now a key priority at school, local authority (LA) and national level. Indeed, many schools are already engaged in this as part of their AfL work. To support continued development, the National Strategies, in partnership with the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), has produced new APP materials in English, mathematics, science and ICT.

# 3 Evaluating progress in developing AfL with APP

## AfL Quality Standards

The AfL Quality Standards (page 5) provide schools with self-evaluation criteria to support the periodic review of progress with implementing the AfL Strategy. Senior and subject leaders, working with all teachers, periodically 'RAGG rate' \* where they are against these criteria.

The AfL Quality Standards relate to three areas:

- Leadership and Management
- Assessment for Learning (AfL) – day-to-day assessment
- Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) – periodic assessment

## The AfL Strategy Quality Standards exemplification

These additional support materials help schools use the AfL Quality Standards to periodically RAGG rate where they are with developing AfL with APP. The exemplification helps schools to profile their current strengths and weaknesses, identify action to be taken and possible areas for support.

They are available on the National Strategies area of the Standards Site:

Exemplification to support use of the AfL Quality Standards (Primary).

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00734-2009)

Exemplification to support use of the AfL Quality Standards (Secondary).

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00734-2009)

They are also available on the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) website in the form of an electronic self-evaluation tool:

[www.ciea.org.uk/continuing\\_professional\\_development/assessment\\_for\\_learning\\_strategy.aspx](http://www.ciea.org.uk/continuing_professional_development/assessment_for_learning_strategy.aspx)

The CIEA electronic version:

- enables each school to RAGG rate strengths and weaknesses against each Quality Standard;
- includes exemplification that sits behind the Quality Standards to help schools make their RAGG judgements;
- captures and records the date of entry to build up a RAGG rating picture of progress over time for each school against each AfL Quality Standard.

These materials will also help schools to complete sections of the Ofsted self-evaluation form related to the leadership and management of teaching and learning and the use of assessment to support learning.

\*RAGG - Make a judgement against the criteria. Red - requires significant improvement, Amber - requires some improvement Light Green effective practice needing embedding Dark Green - highly effective and embedded practice.

## Key questions SIPs may ask to support self-evaluation

General questions to secure school accountability can often generate general assurances and good practice but should also be used to identify aspects of practice for further discussion and follow-up action. The following key questions should not be used as a tick list but should open up lines of enquiry, dialogue and debate as SIPs support and challenge headteachers in their work to refine School Improvement processes that build the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

### Leadership and Management

1. What evidence is there that the leadership team have a shared understanding of AfL and give it priority in School Improvement planning?
2. Does the School Improvement Plan identify key actions in relation to the development of AfL with APP?
3. What action has the school taken to develop staff expertise in AfL with APP?
4. How is the school ensuring that key messages regarding AfL with APP are promoted across the school?
5. What has been the impact of the implementation of support and training on teaching, learning and progression?
6. What systems are in place for monitoring the impact of AfL on teaching and learning, motivation and pupils' progress?
7. How does leadership enable staff to systematically map provision and evaluate the impact of teaching approaches and interventions?
8. What systems are in place to ensure that subject leaders, teachers and TAs work together collaboratively, share their practice and learn from each other?
9. What evidence is there of opportunities for collaborative planning and assessment? (e.g. joint PPA time, staff meetings, moderation meetings)



## Assessment for Learning (AfL) – day-to-day assessment

1. Is the use of AfL strategies a focus for classroom observation?
2. Do records of classroom observation and lesson planning identify that teachers use skilful questioning and focused dialogue (whole-class, group and paired discussion) as a regular feature of lessons?
3. Is there evidence that AfL impacts on planning for progression?
4. How does the school track progression in key concepts and skills? Are judgements moderated within and across classes and key stages?
5. What evidence does the school have that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and what they need to do to make progress?
6. What evidence is there that pupils have the confidence, dispositions and skills to evaluate the quality of their work?
7. What systems are in place to ensure that new members of staff have a secure understanding of AfL and how it impacts on standards?

## Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) – periodic assessment

1. What systems and processes has the school established to introduce and embed APP?
2. How are teachers using assessment guidelines to carry out periodic assessment of progress and to identify next steps in learning and what they need to do to make progress?
3. How is the school ensuring that periodic assessment takes place for all pupils across all core subjects?
4. Are standardisation and moderation processes in place and secure?
5. How does the school ensure that APP is integral to the tracking system?
6. How is the tracking system and APP used to identify underachieving pupils and appropriate intervention to accelerate progress?
7. What systems does the school have in place to regularly discuss progress with pupils against APP criteria and to identify and agree targets for improvement?
8. What evidence is there of the impact of the target-setting process on pupils' progress?
9. How are teachers using APP assessment information to inform whole-class learning and teaching?
10. What strategies are in place for senior, phase, subject and department leaders to monitor the use of APP assessment to inform planning?
11. How is APP assessment being used to identify targets for pupils receiving one-to-one tuition and to evaluate their progress?
12. How is information from APP assessment being used to support transition and transfer?
13. How does the school ensure that every parent and carer knows how their children are progressing, what the children need to do to improve, and how they can support the children and their teachers?
14. What evidence is there of the success of the school's strategies for involving parents and carers in their children's learning?

## 4 Brokering support

All schools have received universal funding (through the Standards Fund) to develop AfL with APP. This might be used to facilitate staff release, enabling subject leads and the senior leadership team to take up offers of support and work alongside other schools. LAs have received further funding to be used to support a Lead Assessment School model.

Following discussion with senior leaders, areas for development may be identified. Support for the school may be available from a number of sources including:

- Leading Teachers
- LA Consultants
- Advanced Skills Teachers
- Lead Assessment Schools (using the further funding).

Further information about the Lead Assessment School model is available in 'AfL with APP: developing collaborative school-based approaches – Guidance for senior leaders' (Ref: 00824-2009PDF-EN-01).

## 5 References and resources

The Assessment for Learning Strategy:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search for 'Assessment for Learning Strategy')

Getting to Grips with APP:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00129-2009BKT-EN)

Leading and Managing Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) – Introduction (primary):

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search for 'Leading and Managing APP')

APP guidance for senior leaders (secondary):

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00643-2008LEF-EN)

Practical strategies to support the whole-school development of AfL with APP (Secondary):

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00734-2009)

Exemplification to support use of the AfL Quality Standards (Primary):

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00734-2009)

Exemplification to support use of the AfL Quality Standards (Secondary):

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00734-2009)

Quality Standards self-evaluation tool:

[www.ciea.org.uk/continuing\\_professional\\_development/assessment\\_for\\_learning\\_strategy.aspx](http://www.ciea.org.uk/continuing_professional_development/assessment_for_learning_strategy.aspx)

AfL with APP: developing collaborative school-based approaches – Guidance for senior leaders:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00824-2009PDF-EN-01)

Personalised Learning – A Practical Guide:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) (Search using ref: 00844-2008)

## 6 Appendix

AFL Strategy: Quality Standards	R/A/LG/G
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	
The leadership team has a secure and shared understanding of AfL and gives priority to its systematic development across the school.	
The school has a designated senior leader and expert core subject teachers who fully engage with LA support and training for implementing APP and actively lead in-school developments within and across subjects.	
The impact of developing AfL with APP on teaching and learning, motivation and pupil progress is systematically and systemically monitored and evaluated. This ongoing process directly informs continuing professional development for all staff.	
Subject leaders, teachers and TAs work collaboratively, share their practice and learn from each other both within and across subject areas.	
<b>Assessment for Learning (AfL) – day-to-day assessment</b>	
All teachers have a secure and shared understanding of AfL and how it impacts on learning and standards.	
All teachers have a good understanding of progression in the key concepts and skills in their subject.	
All teachers give pupils clear feedback which identifies next steps and provide opportunities in lessons for pupils to discuss and act upon the feedback.	
Skilful questioning and focused dialogue (whole-class, group and paired discussion) is a regular feature of lessons.	
In lessons, all pupils have a clear understanding of what they are trying to learn (learning objectives), how they can recognise achievement (learning outcomes), what 'good' looks like (success criteria) and why they are learning this (big picture).	
All pupils have the confidence, dispositions and skills to evaluate the quality of their work and level of understanding, and work with their teachers and peers to take the next steps in their learning.	
<b>Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) – periodic assessment</b>	
Planning for progression is informed by APP guidelines. Medium- and long-term plans identify intended learning outcomes and opportunities for periodic APP assessments and reviews of progress.	
Standardisation and moderation processes are in place to ensure accurate and consistent APP judgements.	
APP is integral to tracking and target setting that ensures that all underachieving groups and individuals are receiving appropriate additional support.	
APP criteria are shared and discussed regularly with every pupil to agree targets and review progress towards them.	
Teachers use APP assessment information to inform whole-class learning and teaching, group intervention and one-to-one support and tuition.	
Information from APP assessments is used to support transition and transfer.	
Individual pupils' progress and curricular targets (related to National Curriculum levels and informed by APP criteria) are regularly shared and discussed with parents and carers.	

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