

Professional standards for teachers:

Guidance on the craft of teaching



Background

The framework of professional standards for teachers defines the characteristics of teachers at each career stage. The standards are statements of a teacher's professional attributes, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills.

The standards describe how teachers should discharge their professional responsibilities, as contained in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. They provide the framework for a teacher's career and clarify what progression looks like.

The standards, and accompanying guidance, will support teachers to identify ways of broadening and deepening their expertise within their current career stages, or as they plan to move towards the next career stage.

The craft of teaching

The framework of professional standards for teachers includes standards for the skills relating to the 'craft of teaching' (Ref C29; C30; P8; E8; E9). The purpose of this guidance is to:

- illustrate what progression may look like
- encourage teachers to reflect on their practice, and
- stimulate a professional dialogue with their line manager/reviewer.

It also tells teachers where they can access further resources to support them in developing their teaching practice.

In exemplifying the craft of teaching at core, post-threshold and excellent teacher levels, it is important to emphasise that the example provided is one that is appropriate for a year 6 literacy lesson. As such it is not intended to be definitive or universal, but it has been developed to illustrate the principles that underpin what progression might look like at different career stages. These principles can be adapted to other contexts, settings and pedagogic practices.

More detailed guidance on how the standards apply during the statutory induction period can be found at:

www.tda.gov.uk/induction



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Professional standards for teachers:

Guidance on the craft of teaching continued



The principles of progression

The standards C29, C30, P8, E8 and E9 describe a set of skills that relate to the craft of teaching – ie. what teachers do when they are teaching. As teachers become more experienced they will display broader and deeper levels of knowledge, skills and understanding of their craft.

Progression in practice might include:

- enhancing/extending their repertoire of strategies and techniques
- developing their judgement in matching such strategies and techniques to different groups of learners and individuals
- developing their capacity for innovation.

On attaining qualified teacher status (QTS), teachers are equipped to teach lessons at the standard Q25. At first they may rely on pedagogies learnt within their training, or those endorsed by the National Strategies. As they progress through the main scale, they will continue to meet standard C29, responding to the learning needs of the variety of pupils they encounter, and adapting their techniques accordingly.

Teachers will need to reflect on their own practice and that of others as part of the process of acquiring a comprehensive range of strategies and techniques that will fully engage the range of pupils they teach. As teachers move through standards P8 to E8 and E9, they will become progressively more confident at using their experience to find effective ways to help learners achieve learning objectives.

It is important to emphasise that teachers at any stage of their career will be able to teach an effective lesson. But, as teachers progress from one career stage to another, their capacity to teach with great skill, creativity and imagination becomes more sustained.

The National Strategies

The National Strategies provide guidance on how pupils are taught the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in the National Curriculum. They also provide materials for use in schools. However, personalised approaches will require teachers to adapt curriculum content and pedagogic practice to ensure the learning needs of their pupils are met, in the context of the subject being taught.

'Supporting Pedagogy' is a collection of cross-phase resources to help support teaching at early years, primary and secondary stages, providing guidance and links to publications that will enable teachers and practitioners to draw on a range of working practice.

The website is divided into the four interrelated areas of:

- subject and curriculum knowledge
- teaching and learning models
- repertoire of skills and techniques, and
- conditions for learning.

'Supporting Pedagogy' can be found at:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/issues/wholeschool/strandpubws/_ws_sup_ped/

Teaching a Year 6 literacy lesson



The example below provides an illustration of what progression within the Craft of Teaching standards (C29, C30, P8, E8 and E9) might look like in the classroom at each level (core, post-threshold and excellent teacher) within the given scenario. It has been developed to encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice and to engage in a professional dialogue with their reviewer/line manager.

The example is based on the lesson material from the Primary National Strategy unit on Formal and Explanation Writing Week 1, Day 5. In this scenario the pupils compare two letters of complaint about a delayed train journey, and look at the use of language in each letter. The pupils then write their own letter of complaint about a different incident. In each stage of the example the pupils are the same; it is the teaching approaches that are different.

It is important to emphasise that this example is not attempting to define what good teaching is, or suggesting that one type of lesson is necessarily better than another. Teaching is a subtle and complex activity. A lesson that works well with one group of pupils on a particular occasion may not work so well with a different group on a different occasion. So, when the example below describes the lesson with a video as more stimulating than the lesson with role-play, it is not suggesting that video is better than role-play. It is simply picking out some features of this particular lesson which made it more successful than another particular lesson. The key here is that within the example one can see successively greater degrees of skill in the craft of teaching.

Similarly, the principles illustrated by the example are not just relevant to English teaching or to the primary setting. Rather, it uses an instance of teaching a particular subject in a particular school year to illustrate the point that teaching can take place at different levels of skill and expertise, and that this is true for all subjects, stages and phases of education.

The example, it is hoped, will also encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching and to engage in a professional dialogue with their reviewer/line manager.

Lesson stages

1. Looking at the two contrasting examples for a letter of complaint

One letter is clumsily written, uses only the simplest sentence structures and omits key information. It would irritate and bewilder the recipient.

The other letter shows much more skill in the use of language. It is courteous and nuanced, uses complex sentence structures and descriptive terms, and contains all the relevant details of the disrupted train journey. It would be much more likely to produce a positive response.

The teacher's task in this first stage of the lesson is to introduce the two letters to the pupils and get them to see the different effect of each letter.

Teaching at the Core standards

The teacher begins the lesson by distributing the two letters and asking the pupils to read them. She then asks them questions about the contents of the letters and how the recipient is likely to react to each letter.

This is a good, thoroughly competent introduction to the lesson. The pupils are given appropriate stimulus material and are encouraged to reflect on it.

Teaching at the Post-Threshold standards

The teacher begins the lesson by distributing the two letters and giving the pupils a few moments to read through them. He asks two pupils to role-play a railway official receiving one of the letters, and reacting appropriately to the tone and content.

The role-play is a more interesting activity than a question-and-answer session, and it focuses the pupils' attention on the likely effect of each letter. The teacher asks several other pupils to try the role-play and suggests how they might react to each, expostulating and despairing over the clumsy letter, sarcastically pointing out what information it omits, and reluctantly acknowledging a problem in the case of the skilful letter.

This is a more vivid way of helping the children to see the effect of each letter.

Teaching at the Excellent Teacher standards

The teacher begins the lesson by snapping off the lights and plunging the classroom into darkness. The pupils are startled. Before they have time to react, a video comes to life on the interactive whiteboard. A railway official, recognisable as such from the signs and posters around him, is sitting in an office reading the two letters of complaint and reacting theatrically and entertainingly. The pupils laugh and ask to see it again.

(The teacher has asked a teaching assistant to act out the role, with a few props, while she filmed the performance.) She gives copies of the letters to the class and asks them questions about why the tone and content of each letter caused the official to react so differently to each one.

The video is a much more vivid way to introduce the contrasting letters to the pupils.

Lesson stages

2. Examining the features of language in each letter

The teacher displays the letters on an interactive whiteboard and questions the pupils about sentence structure, punctuation, the use of adjectives and the choice of vocabulary.

Teaching at the Core standards

The teacher points to sections of the text displayed on the interactive whiteboard so that all the class can see exactly which sentence is being discussed.

She asks clear questions of different pupils. When some answer quickly and confidently, she congratulates them. When a pupil is not able to answer a question, she rephrases the question or asks a different pupil for the answer. She lavishes encouragement and praise on the pupils who struggle to answer the questions.

This represents good, competent use of questioning technique and interactive whiteboard technology.

Teaching at the Post-Threshold standards

The teacher uses the highlighting feature of the interactive whiteboard to pick out the sections of the text. He also manipulates the displayed text ("If we move this, and put an adjective in here, like this ...") and he does so directly on the board itself, not by using the computer attached to it.

He asks different questions of different pupils, showing considerable skill in matching the question to the ability and understanding of each pupil. Each pupil needs to think for a moment before answering, so the questions are rarely too easy for them, but the pupils nearly always manage to answer the question, and usually correctly or appropriately. This is because of the teacher's skill in questioning, not because the pupils are more able than those taught at the Core standard.

It is a more advanced use of the interactive whiteboard. This is also a more skilful use of questioning because the pupils find the questions challenging but within their ability. The teacher's ability to ask questions which the pupils are able to answer well gives each pupil a sense of achievement and confidence.

Teaching at the Excellent Teacher standards

The teacher has sufficient confidence and skill in using the interactive whiteboard that she invites the pupils themselves to come up to it to manipulate the text and highlighting.

When questioned, the pupils find the questions challenging and intriguing, but it is very rare for them not to be able to answer them. The questions themselves, and the sequence in which they are asked, are such that the pupils see a significance in the answers. They see connections and implications which lead to sudden flashes of comprehension and understanding. Pupils say, "Oh, I see ...", "Ah, so that means that ...".

The way the pupils react to the questioning is not a reflection on the pupils. They are no different from the pupils being taught at the Core and Post-Threshold standards. The difference is in the skill of the teacher.

This is an exemplary display of both questioning technique and the use of the interactive whiteboard. Indeed, the excellent teacher's lesson may well be observed by a colleague because it is part of her role to exemplify effective teaching techniques.

Lesson stages

3. Independent work

The children have 20 minutes to write their own letter of complaint about a restaurant meal. A written scenario to be given to the pupils sets out the basic facts about the disappointing meal and the unsatisfactory service.

Teaching at the Core standards

The teacher moves about the classroom, helping and encouraging pupils.

She 'differentiates' the task for pupils of different abilities by suggesting to the less able pupils how they might omit some features of the scenario to produce a simpler letter. She encourages the more able children to add extra information and arguments to make the letter more effective.

She is careful to ensure that all members of the class carry out the task. She knows there are some less engaged pupils who try to avoid written work. She makes repeated, tactful checks on their progress so they know they cannot avoid writing the letter.

This is competent and assured handling of independent work because the task is adapted to each pupil's ability and all the pupils concentrate on their work.

Teaching at the Post-Threshold standards

The teacher differentiates the task by making various changes to the restaurant meal scenario so he can give easier and harder versions of it to different pupils.

For the less engaged pupils who do not like writing he devises a completely different scenario. For example, one of these pupils is obsessed with football, so the teacher gives him a newspaper photograph of the highly contentious incident the previous evening where the referee disallowed a goal and sent off a player from the team that the pupil supports. The teacher asks the pupil to write the letter of complaint to the Football Association about the referee's behaviour.

This is a more skilful handling of independent work because the differentiation of the task is better planned and more thorough. Devising different, more motivating tasks is a more effective way to engage the reluctant writers than just repeatedly checking that they are completing a task.

Teaching at the Excellent Teacher standards

The teacher does not use the ready-made scenario at all. Instead, she reminds the class of the very recent incident when the pet dog of a pupil at the school was run over, on a zebra crossing, by a heavy goods vehicle passing through the small village in which the school is situated. The pupils are familiar with the incident – it has had a lot of press coverage – and with the local campaign for a bypass road to reduce the heavy traffic flow through the village.

She suggests to the class that, now they are aware of how to write effective letters of complaint, they should each write a letter to the county council in support of the local campaign and complaining about the lack of a bypass in the light of the injured pet incident.

The children have strong feelings about the incident, and the teacher encourages them to summon up all their skill and powers of persuasion with language to write a letter which really makes a difference to the campaign. She hands out envelopes and stamps so the pupils can actually post their letters after they have written them.

This is an extremely skilful handling of independent work for two reasons. Firstly, because it is an emotive issue close to the pupils' hearts they are highly motivated to write the best letter they can, especially since the letters are real ones which will actually be posted.

Secondly, because the issues and the incident are very well known in the school, there is no need to differentiate the task for the students by providing different scenarios to them. Each pupil is able to draw on their own knowledge and understanding of the issues and events to decide what to put into their letter: the pupils create their own differentiation of the task.

Conclusion



The example shows how teachers operating at three different levels – core, post-threshold and excellent teacher – might approach the same lesson.

At the Core standards the teacher teaches a good, thoroughly competent lesson. She uses the National Strategy materials to good effect, provides a stimulating start to the lesson, displays accomplished questioning skills, and ensures that all the pupils tackle work appropriate to their abilities and complete the set task.

At the Post-Threshold standards the teacher teaches with still more skill. He manages to devise a more stimulating start to the lesson, and displays more flexibility in using the National Strategy materials because he adapts them more extensively, which results in more effective classroom management and more pupils working independently. Using interactive whiteboard technology effectively is another way in which teaching can make a bigger impact on pupils, and this teacher uses it to good effect.

At the Excellent Teacher standards the teacher teaches an excellent lesson. She brings a remarkable degree of imagination, creativity and skill to bear on every stage of the lesson. The opening of her lesson is so entertaining the pupils actually ask for it to be repeated; there is no doubt that she has managed to get the full attention of every pupil in the class. She exploits the potential of interactive whiteboard technology to the full, and her questioning technique is such that the pupils themselves are aware of learning through her questions. When it comes to getting the pupils to write their own letters, she dispenses completely with the existing material in order to devise a task which is particularly ingenious in the way it ensures that every pupil works with a passion to complete the set task.

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