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Leading in Learning: developing thinking skills in secondary schools

Supplement to Key Stage 3 Guide for school leaders
(Feb 06 version)

School leaders

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Secondary
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**Leading in Learning: developing
thinking skills in secondary schools**

Supplement to Key Stage 3 Guide for
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This supplement is addressed to leaders in schools who are launching Leading in Learning first at Key Stage 3 and then extending to Key Stage 4.

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Introduction

This supplement is provided for leaders in schools that are already implementing Leading in Learning at Key Stage 3 and should be read in conjunction with the original *Guide for school leaders* (DfES 0036-2005 G) published in February 2005. It provides additional guidance, based on experience of implementation in schools, and in particular, the completion of a pilot project at Key Stage 4 during 2004–5. This supplement has three sections. As experience of implementing this initiative grows, further supplements may be produced in the future.

Teacher roles

A key principle of the work of a trio at both key stages is collaboration in the lessons and at the planning and review stages. In order to strengthen and support this aspect additional guidance was provided as part of the Key Stage 4 pilot. Each teacher took on a specific role as either subject teacher, observing teacher or plenary teacher. The impact of this model was so great that it is now recommended as an enhancement at Key Stage 3.

Scaling up and teacher development

Models of scaling up were described in the original *Guide for school leaders*. One important and practical dimension of scaling up is that not all teachers operate as a trio and observe each other's lessons. This section suggests how schools can keep to the heart of the approach at this critical stage. It also outlines how coaching can be incorporated into the model, so that other teachers benefit from professional development within the Leading in Learning programme.

Extending Leading in Learning to Key Stage 4

The model offered in the pilot at Key Stage 4 was a progression from that piloted at Key Stage 3. It successfully trialled approaches in the development of thinking, learning and study skills, linking particularly with coursework. This section outlines a rationale for extending Leading in Learning to Key Stage 4 and sets out the resources that are available, including a *Key Stage 4 Handbook for teachers* and a *Key Stage 4 training manual*. It also raises issues for schools to consider as they seek to adapt approaches in line with developments in the 14–19 age range.

Teacher roles

Handbook additions

Three pages have been added to the electronic version of the Key Stage 3 *Handbook for teachers*, in order set out the roles of 'subject teacher', 'observing teacher' and 'plenary teacher'. Each has a supplementary page number, so that the new material can be identified without affecting the original numbering. The pages are as follows:

- In 'The 3-subject cycle' an additional section 'Teacher roles in a 3-lesson cycle', on page 15.
- In 'Improving thinking skills lessons' additional paragraphs 'Roles of visiting teachers in the lesson', on pages 22a and 22b.

Further training in teacher roles

The *Key Stage 4 School training manual* includes Trio training session 2 'Working together in a 3-lesson cycle', which addresses the roles of observing teacher and plenary teacher. Two 15-minute sections are based around discussion of two video sequences from the Key Stage 4 DVD:

- Video sequence 4 'Teacher roles: observing teacher' (6 minutes). In this collaborative review, Mat is the observing teacher. He demonstrates key features of the role, as set out in Handbook page 22a.
- Video sequence 5 'Teacher roles: plenary teacher' (4 minutes). Kath, a history teacher, comments on her role and leads the plenary of an RE lesson. She summarises a number of points in the Handbook page 22b.

Developing metacognitive plenaries sessions 2 and 3 also draw on sequences from the Key stage 4 DVD:

- Session 2 'Focusing on specific aspects' is based on video sequence 7 'Kevin's plenary' (6 minutes)
- Session 3 'Taking small steps forward' is based on video sequence 8 'Features of Mark's practice' (7½ minutes).

Scaling up and teacher development

In the initial phase of implementing Leading in Learning, three 'leading thinkers' collaborate in 'plan-observe-review', working with one class (or three classes with some pupils in common). This secures a strong focus on thinking skills and metacognition, with clear transfer and progression. The key step in embedding Leading in Learning is involving the whole of a year group. This presents opportunities, but also raises issues of transfer and consistency when a greater number of teachers are involved and they cannot all operate as trios. The challenge is to maximise opportunities and minimise difficulties, whilst keeping to the heart of the approach.

Maximising opportunities

Scaling up creates a number of opportunities.

A whole year group is involved, not just a small group. There are now no problems in ensuring a common teaching group.

- A greater scale of awareness raising will be possible with a whole year group of pupils and their parents/carers, for example with references to bridging scenarios in year group assemblies, letters to parents, briefing meetings for parents and pupils.
- Transfer can now happen for all pupils in this year group and could be enhanced by teachers outside of the cycle expecting, using and developing increased skills (e.g. common use of summarising and related thinking skills).
- Entire departments are involved and this increased collaboration within the subject means that the lessons become embedded in schemes of work.

Raising awareness, developing transfer and embedding practice are points for action by the school leadership team.

Minimising difficulties

The main issues to resolve are twofold.

- Not all teachers operate as a trio. What is lost here is the physical presence of other teachers in lessons outside their own subject. Consequently, transfer may not be immediately obvious.
- As more teachers become involved so consistency of the lessons and their outcomes becomes difficult to achieve. This means that feed-through from one lesson to the next may need to be at a more general level rather than 'I saw you doing this in your D&T lesson...'

Keeping the focus

Schools that come to a satisfactory resolution of the issues referred to above will keep to the heart of the approach by ensuring that:

- they maintain 3-subject cycles with clear transfer between subjects;
- the original 3 teachers continue operating as a trio collaborating in 'plan – observe – review';
- with leadership and support from the subject leader and the trio teacher, every

teacher collaborates within their department in 'plan – review';

- the trio work together across departments to support transfer through the cycle.

The trio of 'leading thinkers' have key roles, both individually and collectively.

- With subject colleagues they each take the lead on:
 - preparing and discussing a shared lesson plan, taking into account collective feedback from subjects earlier in the cycle;
 - reviewing lessons in the subject and collating relevant feedback to give to the colleague who will take the lead in the next subject, particularly on points that will aid transfer and progression.
- As a trio they:
 - prepare outline plans and review lessons, based on reports from subject colleagues as well as their own observations;
 - propose modifications and developments for the next lesson or cycle, particularly to aid progression and transfer.

Teacher development through coaching and collaboration

There are two modules on coaching in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy folder *Sustaining improvement* (DfES 0565-2003 G). A coach is not the 'best teacher' but rather is someone with expertise in a particular, often generic, aspect of teaching. They also have the interpersonal skills to help another teacher analyse and develop their own thinking and teaching in that area. Coaching requires some training, and it helps if the identified coach belongs to a coaching network so that they can reflect on and improve their practice.

For a trio of 'leading thinkers', a very strong element of peer coaching is implicit in the 'plan – observe – review' process. Taking on specific roles in each other's lessons helps them to develop expertise in coaching each other in order to improve 3-subject cycles. This is well illustrated by Key Stage 4 video sequence 9 *Reviewing after 6 lessons in a long cycle*.

If one teacher is particularly skilled in teaching thinking skills, then it might be appropriate for them to coach one or both of the other teachers. The coach might teach at the early stages of implementation so that the other two teachers can benefit from some modelling of important teaching skills for Leading in Learning. In the later stages they might switch to supporting the planning and teaching of the other team members. This is illustrated in Key Stage 3 video sequence 11 *Coaching in teaching thinking skills*.

It is also important to consider the development needs of teachers who are not part of the trio. They might benefit from modelling of teaching skills (especially the metacognitive plenary) by one of the leading thinkers or an opportunity to observe and review a thinking skills lesson. Alternatively, they might be coached by a leading thinker who has the necessary skills. Phased realistically over time, a schedule of support could be drawn up that would greatly enhance the implementation of Leading in Learning. This could be a part of the school's planned programme for CPD.

Extending Leading in Learning to Key Stage 4

Plans for Leading in Learning at Key Stage 4 will depend on the progress in thinking and learning skills of pupils who have experienced Leading in Learning as a systematic teaching programme through Key Stage 3. For schools who are ready to capitalise on pupils' improved skills the Key Stage 4 model offers a suitable progression. Different approaches are possible.

- An **entitlement** approach might emerge in a school where it was felt that revisiting particular aspects of thinking skills and developing them further would help to raise standards for all pupils. This would involve scaling up to all Year 10 pupils, perhaps in the three core subjects.
- An **intervention** approach might target a particular group of pupils who it was felt would benefit from further 3-subject cycles, or perhaps three departments where there were identified weaknesses in terms of coursework or other aspects of learning.

The Key Stage 4 model

The Key Stage 4 model has some similarity with that at Key Stage 3.

- It focuses on developing the five National Curriculum thinking skills.
- In order to maximise transfer of learning, it takes a cross-curricular approach that involves three teachers from each of three subjects working collaboratively on thinking skills lessons.
- It is based on a set of ten teaching strategies, eight retained from Key Stage 3 and two new ones particularly suited to thinking skills at Key Stage 4.

It also has some distinctive features.

- As a first stage, it involves analysis of strengths and weaknesses in coursework in the three subjects, with a view to identifying common aspects of thinking skills for development.
- It proposes a flexible model for lesson cycles that involve up to three lessons in each subject, allowing for a particular teaching strategy to be used more than once in a subject:
 - the short cycle, where one lesson is devoted to each subject so a cycle of three subjects is complete over three lessons, taking about two weeks;
 - the long cycle, where a sequence of three lessons is devoted to one subject so the cycle of three subjects is completed over nine lessons and may take more than a term to complete.
- Teachers plan together, observe and review each other's lessons, with the added feature that the visiting teachers have very specific roles, one of which is to lead the plenary of the lesson (now included at Key Stage 3).

Initiating 3-subject cycles in Year 10

The *Key Stage 4 Handbook for teachers* and *Key Stage 4 School training manual* have material in common with the Key Stage 3 versions, adapted to suit the Key Stage 4 model, with new video sequences from Year 10. As well as those referenced in the table there are additional training sessions on improving progression in pupils' thinking skills and on developing metacognitive plenaries. To support future developments, further sessions will be added as the initiative develops. These will aim to facilitate whole-school, within- and across-department collaboration.

Task	Points for consideration	References
Select three subjects	<p>If envisaging an entitlement model, with eventual scaling up to all pupils, English, mathematics and science may be the most likely combination of subjects.</p> <p>If envisaging an intervention model, the choice might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ three subjects where there are known weaknesses in coursework; ■ three subjects that will enable you to target an identified group of pupils. 	
Select Year 10 classes	<p>If starting with three leading thinkers, each teaching one class, it may be possible to have only a small group of pupils in common. It will be important to track the progress of these pupils.</p> <p>Depending on the experience of staff and the approach to be adopted, some schools may find ways of involving more teachers and classes from the outset. However, it would be important to retain the roles of leading thinkers.</p>	
Prepare to extend the programme to Year 10	<p>Arrange for the three teachers to analyse strengths and weaknesses in coursework in their subjects, prior to their first meeting.</p> <p>Arrange one or more meetings with the three teachers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ share outcomes of coursework analysis and agree a thinking skills focus to develop; ■ discuss planning of thinking skills lessons (using new video); ■ choose between one long and three short cycles, decide the order of subjects and select the teaching strategy to use for the first three lessons; ■ clarify roles of observing teacher and plenary teacher and set up collaborative planning, observation and review. 	<p><i>Key Stage 4 Handbook for teachers</i></p> <p>Material new to teachers in 'Thinking skills and coursework' and 'The 3-subject cycle'.</p> <p><i>Key Stage 4 School training manual</i></p> <p>Use trio training sessions 0, 1 and 2, omitting small sections that are familiar to experienced teachers</p>

Monitor impact on pupils' learning	After one long or three short cycles pupils complete a piece of coursework in at least one of the subjects. The three teachers evaluate the coursework against the thinking skills focus and points for development.	
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Looking ahead

Whatever approach emerges at Key Stage 4, it will be important that pupils' developing skills as independent learners are built on in all subjects, including non-Key Stage 3 subjects. Possibilities to consider include:

- ensuring that all departments are aware of the progress that pupils have made in the five national curriculum thinking skills by the end of Year 9. Consider introducing projects bridging from Year 9 to Year 10 that bring together the five thinking skills within an extended enquiry or investigation. Such projects might be organised within subjects or faculties or collaboratively across two or three subjects;
- scaling up the Key Stage 4 model of one long or three short cycles in Year 10, as appropriate. Ensure that all departments/faculties are aware of the outcomes of the coursework analysis and thinking skills focus for the 3-subject cycles, so that they can relate it to pupils' study in their subjects;
- ensuring that all teachers are aware of and make effective use of the ten teaching strategies included in the *Handbook for teachers*, many of which are suited to tackling challenging concepts, helping with revision and developing independent study.

Above all, encourage all teachers to continue a dialogue with pupils about learning and about how developing thinking skills is important in improving achievement in coursework and examinations and in transferring learning to different contexts. Schools that develop systematic, explicit approaches to teaching and learning thinking and study skills at Key Stage 4 will be extremely well positioned to successfully take on the developing agenda for the 14–19 curriculum.