

# AfL with APP: developing collaborative school-based approaches

Guidance for senior leaders





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# 1 Introduction

Schools are now taking forward APP as a continuing priority to personalise learning for all pupils across all phases, plan for progression and overcome barriers. This document brings together a range of key published materials for the first time. It provides quality standards to enable schools to evaluate the progress they have made together and plan further development, offers information on arrangements for school to school support and a summary of collaborative approaches such as lesson study.

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 headteachers, senior management teams and subject leaders/curriculum coordinators as they plan and develop effective partnerships for APP.

This document is intended to help senior leaders by:

- drawing together the information and guidance relating to developing Assessment for Learning (AfL) with Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) in the context of implementing The AfL Strategy;
- considering how a lead school/department model of support can be developed as part of, and integral to, existing support networks and support for AfL;
- 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;
- describing the nature of support that lead schools/departments might offer and how, as part of a blended approach, this can contribute to other support available;
- looking at how schools might gain most benefit from collaborative working and accessing external support to sustain progress;
- providing examples of successful partnerships, networking and use of external support for senior leaders to consider.

## 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.

### A strategic approach to assessment

Senior leaders in schools will wish 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
- **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 Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), has produced new APP materials in English, mathematics, science and ICT with APP materials for Foundation subjects in secondary to be made available in due course.

#### **APP 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 (AfL).

**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 (APP).

**Transitional assessment** – which provides a formal recognition of pupils' achievement that can be shared between pupils, parents and teachers (to include end-of-key-stage assessments and examinations, external tests and tasks).

# 3 Working with Lead Assessment Schools

All schools receive 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 support a Lead Assessment School model and the DCSF has suggested some school profiles to help set up support networks. The proposed approach is that Profile 1 and Profile 3 schools are paired in a Lead Assessment School system of support with the leading school receiving additional funding to facilitate this.

**Profile 1 schools** are those identified as potential Lead Assessment Schools or lead English/mathematics departments (secondary).

**Profile 2 schools** have the capacity to develop their own APP practice although they may benefit from networking with other schools and making use of other existing support.

**Profile 3 schools** are those that would benefit from the additional Lead Assessment School support.

**Profile 4 schools** are those that will already be receiving other external support, e.g. from the LA, and would not benefit from the additional Lead Assessment School support.

A set of AfL Quality Standards (page 8) have been produced to support self-evaluation and help identify which schools fall within which profile through 'RAGG rating' (red/amber/light green/green) against each AfL Quality Standard.

**Profile 1** – mostly green and light green ratings.

**Profile 2** – mostly light green and amber ratings.

**Profile 3** – mostly amber ratings, with some light green in 'Leadership and Management'. Red ratings in 'APP – periodic assessment' may help to identify areas for Lead Assessment School support.

**Profile 4** – mostly amber and red ratings.

In practice, the Lead Assessment School model provides a set of principles, and a framework to work to, which enables LAs and schools to work together to develop support models appropriate to their context and needs. Examples of these are provided in section 6 'Models of support' (pages 10–15).

The profiles are broad categories designed to help support networking and direct support. Schools in any profile will have different strengths and areas for development identified through their self-evaluation using the AfL Quality Standards.

School networking and LA support will focus on helping schools to build on strengths and address areas for development as appropriate. In secondary, there will be lead schools and lead departments as practice in one department may have particular strengths. This may also be true of particular subject strengths in lead primary schools.

## Support available from LA National Strategies consultants

The Lead Assessment School model is designed to build capacity and to enable schools to support each other. This will be part of the overall support available from other school networking, LAs and published materials.

LA National Strategies consultants' support might include some of the following:

- Delivering APP training to all schools, focusing on the APP process.
- Continuing to work directly with schools receiving targeted support.
- Partnering together Profile 2 schools with similar or complementary practice, to share and build upon developing practice.
- Identifying and supporting Lead Assessment Schools through training, briefings and self-evaluation.
- Monitoring and quality assuring the work of Lead Assessment Schools with Profile 3 schools (e.g. using the AfL Quality Standards).
- Developing and facilitating networks of Lead Assessment Schools as an opportunity for school-to-school support and to further develop their own practice. These may be within or across LAs and will include mathematics and English. Cross-phase networks may be appropriate. The networked schools would meet at least termly and meetings may be themed, e.g. 'transition', where appropriate.

## 4 The AfL Quality Standards

The AfL Quality Standards (page 8) provide schools with self-evaluation criteria to support the periodic review of progress with implementing The AfL Strategy. The idea is that schools periodically 'RAGG rate' where they are against these criteria.

They also support the Lead Assessment School support model by helping identify which profile schools fall into and by matching the identified strengths of one school with areas that would benefit from support in another.

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

These materials will also help LAs to focus and coordinate the support that schools need, for example through the lead school/department model, and review the impact of this support.

They are available on the National Strategies area of the Standards Site and also on the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) website in the form of an electronic self-evaluation tool.

The CIEA electronic version:

- enables each school to RAGG rate strengths and areas for development against each Quality Standard;
- provides the Quality Standards exemplification 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;
- provides schools with the option of sharing this information with the LA to support a joint review of progress and coordination of networking and support (this shared information will be confidential to the LA and school, i.e. the National Strategies and DCSF will not have access to this at school or LA level but it will provide an overall and anonymous sample statistic of progress nationally).

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 provides 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 ( <i>learning objectives</i> ), how they can recognise achievement ( <i>learning outcomes</i> ), what 'good' looks like ( <i>success criteria</i> ) and why they are learning this ( <i>big picture</i> ).	
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.	

## 5 Making the most of support

Schools supported by Lead Assessment Schools might focus on one or more of the following aspects.

- **Whole-school CPD to get started with APP:**
  - understanding the processes
  - using the materials (guidelines/standards files)
  - making a level judgement using APP.
- **Leading and managing whole-school APP:**
  - how APP fits within a whole-school AfL strategy
  - scaling up to involve all teachers and all pupils
  - using APP information in tracking systems
  - in-school standardisation activities – using the standards files
  - in-school moderation.
- **Leading and managing APP with a subject department:**
  - scaling up to involve all teachers and all pupils
  - standardisation activities – using the standards files to secure a common understanding of standards
  - moderation of assessment judgements
  - using APP information to review a scheme of work.
- **Making good use of APP assessments to impact on the quality of teaching and learning:**
  - identifying assessment opportunities in day-to-day teaching and medium-term plans
  - capturing 'evidence': range and manageability
  - using information from APP assessments in medium-term planning
  - using information from APP assessments to set appropriate class and individual curricular targets
  - using APP assessment information to tailor teaching for groups or whole classes.

Suggested activities that schools might undertake when supported by Lead Assessment Schools:

- Collaborative review of current AfL practice and identification of priorities for development.
- Peer coaching – including training for coaching so that a subject leader can then coach others in the school.
- Joint CPD – for example, Lead Assessment School contribution to whole-school or subject department CPD.
- Focused visit to the Lead Assessment School to observe APP in action and discuss with teachers who are confident in its use.
- Lead Assessment School contribution to staff or department meeting to advise on, for example, implementation and standardisation.
- Review of impact of developments following joint activity, and support for future action by the supported school.

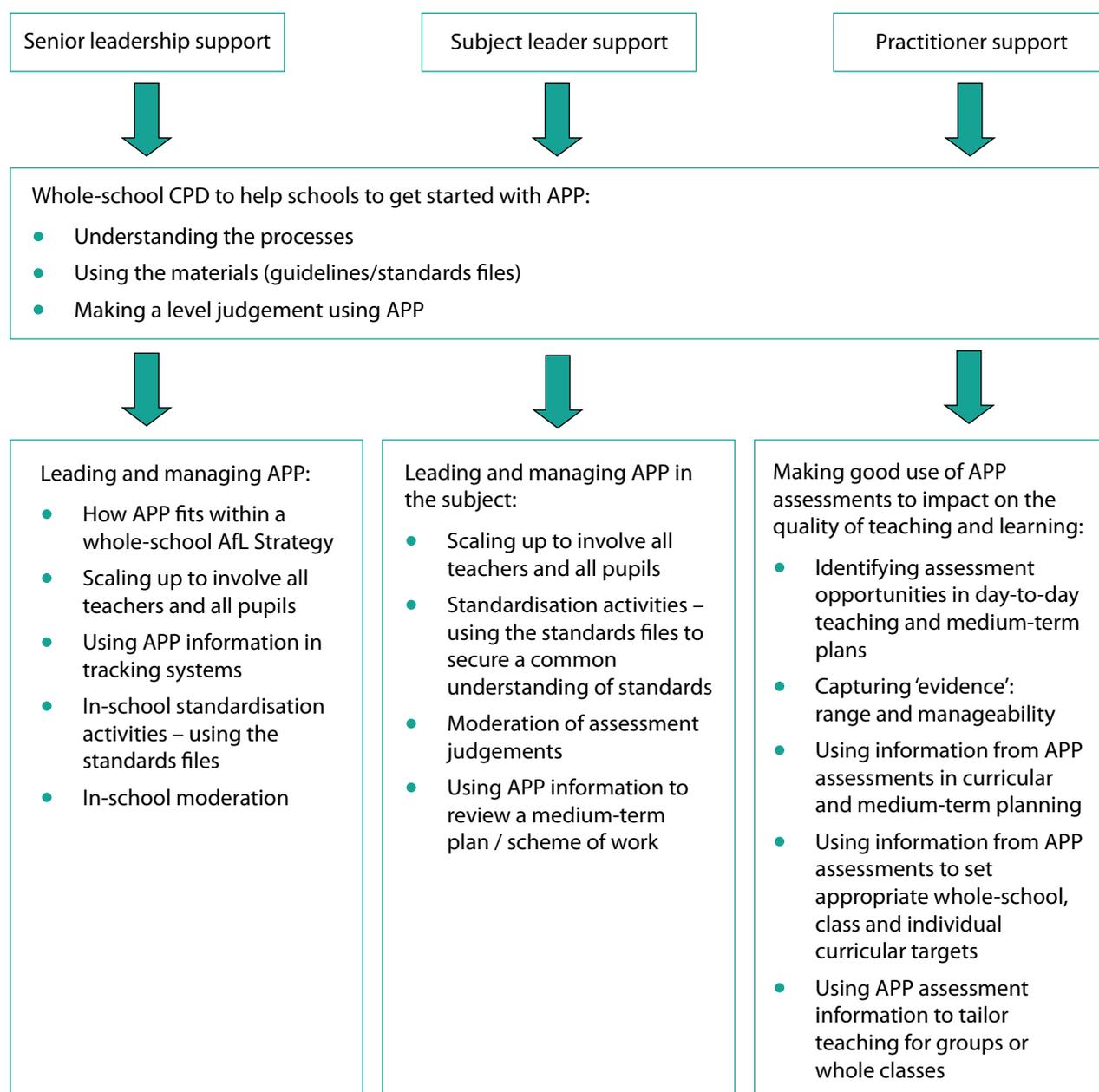
# 6 Models of support

## Lead Assessment Schools: Models of support

The Lead Assessment School model is designed to go beyond the familiar approach of one practitioner supporting another, although 'Leading Teachers' are likely to be a key component of the support offered. Lead Assessment Schools (or Departments) will be most effective when multi-layered support, including senior leadership, middle leadership and practitioner support, is provided.

### A possible model of Leading Assessment School support

(Schools would select from various elements at each level based on identified need.)



## Senior leadership support

Support at leadership level should focus on the whole-school management of APP. This may include:

- how APP fits within a whole-school AfL Strategy
- scaling up to involve all teachers and all pupils
- using APP information in tracking systems
- in-school standardisation activities – using the standards files
- in-school moderation.

As support at leadership level focuses on whole-school issues, where the need for this type of support is identified, it will normally be provided by a Lead Assessment School rather than a Lead Assessment Department.

Senior leadership support may typically include the following types of activities:

- Hosting visits to demonstrate whole-school systems, policies or practice, for example demonstrating a pupil tracking system on the school's network.
- Hosting focused visits to observe APP in action and discuss with teachers who are confident in its use and leaders who can share the benefits.
- Review of current practice, for example collaborative review of current whole-school AfL practice and identification of priorities for development.
- Leading, co-delivering or supporting whole-school training.
- Joint development work such as the joint creation of in-school moderation systems in each of the schools, with cross-school moderation between the two schools to support the process in the supported school.
- Review of impact of developments following joint activity at senior leadership, subject leadership and practitioner level, and support for future action by the supported school.

## Subject leader support

Support at subject leadership level will focus on leading and managing APP in the subject and may include:

- scaling up to involve all teachers and all pupils;
- standardisation activities – using the standards files to secure a common understanding of standards;
- moderation of assessment judgements;
- using APP information to review a medium-term plan / scheme of work.

In primary schools, this support may typically be offered to subject leaders by the assessment lead, the subject leader or the person responsible for the implementation of APP in the Lead Assessment School.

In secondary schools this support may be provided at departmental level, for example by the subject leader, the person responsible for Key Stage 3 or the person responsible for the implementation of APP in the subject. This support may be offered as one of the layers of the Lead Assessment School support, or it may be offered by Lead Assessment Departments which will normally operate at subject leadership and practitioner level.

Subject leadership support may typically include the following types of activities:

- Hosting visits to demonstrate subject or department systems or elements of practice, for example, or the subject leader visiting to observe the use of amended guided reading plans / records (based on assessment focuses) which support effective questioning in order to improve the teaching of reading and gather valuable evidence of learning.
- Hosting focused visits to observe APP in action in the subject and discuss with teachers who are confident in its use.
- Review of current practice, for example collaborative review of current AfL practice in the subject (using the 'Leadership and Management' and 'Teaching and Learning' review tables) and identification of priorities for development.
- Support for co-delivery or delivery of subject / departmental training such as introducing the APP process in the subject or analysing collections of evidence.
- Joint development work, for example developing practical approaches to reduce any workload issues related to scaling up APP to involve all pupils or jointly developing a new medium-term plan / scheme of work.
- Review of impact of developments following joint activity at subject leadership and practitioner level, and support for future action by the supported school.

### Practitioner support: Learning and teaching

Support at practitioner level will focus on the impact of APP on learning and teaching and may include:

- identifying assessment opportunities in day-to-day teaching and medium-term plans;
- capturing 'evidence': range and manageability;
- using information from APP assessments in curricular and medium-term planning;
- using information from APP assessments to set appropriate whole-school, class and individual curricular targets;
- using APP assessment information to tailor teaching for groups or whole classes.

Support for learning and teaching will typically be offered by effective teachers from the Lead Assessment School (referred to here as 'Leading Teachers').

Practitioner support may typically include the following types of activities:

- Hosting visits to demonstrate elements of effective classroom practice, such as effective questioning, use of peer and self-assessment or developing dialogue in the classroom. It is very important that visits should be followed up back in the practitioner's classroom in order to ensure that they impact on the visitor's practice.
- Hosting focused visits to observe APP in action and discuss with teachers who are confident in its use.
- Support for using the frameworks to aid planning and select effective pedagogical approaches.
- Joint planning, teaching and review of learning, including developing new teaching approaches to address areas identified as weaknesses for a group of children through APP assessments.
- Lesson Study (see below for a fuller explanation).

## The Lesson Study cycle

Research into lesson study has demonstrated its effectiveness and, when all elements are in place, it can have a powerful, positive impact on pedagogy and teacher development – the heart of school improvement.

Where schools make effective use of lesson study they:

- have a culture built on professional dialogue, support and risk-taking;
- are clear about how this fits into their approaches to development;
- plan, resource and quality assure the process;
- ensure that learning is captured for wider application across the school.

Many schools use parts of lesson study. The full process is summarised below.

Where APP processes are embedded and Leading Teachers are supporting teachers in using the diagnostic information gained from APP to tailor teaching for groups or whole classes in order to address the identified needs of pupils, the Lesson Study cycle is a very effective model of support.

Lesson Study is a professional learning process. It works because it focuses on the **learning** and **progress** made by children as their teachers develop specific pedagogic techniques designed to improve a particular aspect of teaching and learning that they have identified within their school.

Lesson Study is a model for collaborative classroom professional learning which embodies all the features of effective CPD; namely, high quality input followed by activity where:

- two or more teachers work together, developing practice in the classroom, focusing on the needs and learning of pupils and trying to solve a teaching- or learning-based problem which is affecting pupils' progress;
- teachers are engaged in developing a teaching technique which is designed to improve a specific aspect of learning for identified pupils;
- teachers keep a record of what they learn and pass on the knowledge of practice which they gain to others – for example, by coaching, leading a professional development meeting or providing a demonstration lesson.

Lesson Study has been used successfully in the UK to improve teaching techniques and pupil progress in core subjects in primary and secondary schools and to develop broader pedagogic approaches such as AfL. During a Lesson Study cycle a small group of teachers (or even a pair) will:

- use the data they have gathered from day-to-day and periodic assessment (using the APP materials) to agree a focus for pupils' learning and progress;
- jointly identify a teaching technique to develop or improve the agreed area of focus;
- identify three case pupils – each should typify a group of learners in the class, for example high, middle or lower attaining in the strand being taught and developed;
- jointly plan a 'study lesson' which uses, develops and closely studies the effects of this new technique – while keeping in mind the three case pupils (these are also known as research lessons; there can be a danger that people think study lessons are for conducting experiments rather than developing practice, but they are definitely for developing practice);
- teach and jointly observe the study lesson focusing on the case pupils' learning and progress; they may repeat and refine this over several lessons or teaching sequences, but not all of these need to be observed study lessons;
- interview the case pupils to gain their insights into the study lesson;

- hold a post-lesson discussion analysing how the case pupils responded to the technique, what progress they made and what can be learned about the application of the technique – next time;
- formally share the outcomes with a wider audience of other teachers – in a presentation, by demonstration or by coaching.

## Examples of different support models

### Example 1

The headteacher of a primary Lead Assessment School supports the headteacher of another primary school in developing an effective tracking system to highlight pupils not making sufficient progress, using APP to ensure the quality of the teacher assessments which inform the tracking. A Leading Teacher supports the headteacher and subject leader in developing pupil progress meetings in English in order to engage teachers and senior leaders in a professional dialogue about the progress of the highlighted pupils and, at the same time, uses the Lesson Study cycle to support the Year 4 teacher in tailoring teaching to meet the needs of the pupils identified, focusing on areas identified through APP.

### Example 2

A network of secondary schools has established Leading Teachers for a wide range of aspects of effective AfL and APP practice, for example in one school there is a 'Leading Teacher for effective questioning', while in another there is a 'Leading Teacher for developing effective dialogue' and in a third there is a 'Leading Teacher for moderation in English'. Senior leaders within the network profile their school's own strengths and areas for development using the Quality Standards and then draw on these Leading Teachers to support whole-school, departmental or individual development.

### Example 3

In a secondary school which has effectively implemented APP in English but where APP in mathematics is only just starting to be implemented, the headteacher identifies the need for in-school support from the English Department focusing on processes. This is combined with support from a Lead Assessment (mathematics) Department focusing on strengthening the approach to teaching and learning in order to provide rich evidence of pupils' learning and attainment. This support is followed up in lessons by a Leading Teacher working with two members of the department.

### Example 4

The senior leader from a primary Lead Assessment School supports the member of the senior leadership team of another primary school responsible for implementing APP, to establish a system of analysis of APP assessments across the school to identify gaps in provision. They then work with the subject leader for mathematics in reviewing the long- and medium-term plans in order to address these areas. They also work with the staff to develop whole-school curricular targets to support a focus on these areas. A Leading Teacher then works with two members of staff using the Lesson Study cycle to develop effective practice which can then be shared with other teachers.

### Example 5

The LA has identified an existing network of primary schools which was established to support the development of effective AfL. Network meetings already take place at two levels, between senior leaders and between practitioners, to share effective practice and discuss issues at whole-school and classroom

level respectively. Although there will be a named Lead Assessment School within the network which will hold funding, all of the schools will work together to support identified need in developing and embedding APP across the network.

### Example 6

Two secondary schools in similar contexts have been paired in order to share expertise. One of the schools has a particularly strong English Department which provides support for their English colleagues in the other school. This includes some departmental training in APP, some joint development work and coaching of individuals. The other school has a very strong inter-departmental learning and teaching group which has very effectively developed AfL across the school. They use the 'Leadership and Management' and 'Teaching and Learning' review tables to identify areas where they can support their colleagues in moving from 'developing' to 'establishing' in AfL.

### Example 7

The LA has worked with its schools and two neighbouring LAs to develop an intranet site as part of a 'blended approach' to providing support. In addition to existing networking, LA support visits and school-to-school support visits, the group of LAs has established a supervised e-forum to support the development of AfL with APP. The group of LAs has also set up a 'support agency' where schools have identified individuals with particular expertise (along with their capacity to provide support for others); the LAs are thus able to direct enquiries to the 'experts on its books' for direct or remote support.

## 7 References and resources

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)

What is leading teaching?:

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/node/41807](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/node/41807)

Leading and Managing Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) - Introduction (primary).

[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/node/180821](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/node/180821)

Search the Standards Site ([www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)) using the reference to locate the following:

- Practical strategies to support the whole-school development of AfL with APP (Secondary). Ref: 00734-2009
- Exemplification to support use of the AfL quality standards (Primary). Ref: 00734-2009
- Exemplification to support use of the AfL quality standards (Secondary). Ref: 00734-2009
- Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study. Ref: 00508-2008
- Improving practice and progression through lesson study: A handbook. Ref: 00887-2007
- APP guidance for senior leaders (secondary). Ref: 00643-2008



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