

# Secondary

## National Strategy

# Handbook for assessing pupils' progress in English

A practical guide

Guidance

Curriculum and  
Standards

## English subject leaders and teachers of English

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The material in shaded boxes illustrates aspects of the approach as they have been used in schools. Where quotations are used they are from teachers who took part in the pilot project.

These materials have been developed by QCA in partnership with the Secondary National Strategy.

The help provided by the teachers and pupils who have trialled these materials as part of the Monitoring Pupils' Progress in English project has been invaluable.

# 1 Assessing pupils' progress (APP): an overview

## What is Assessing pupils' progress?

Assessing pupils' progress (APP) is a structured approach to assessing English so teachers can:

- track pupils' progress in reading and writing through Key Stage 3;
- use diagnostic information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

Based on the assessment focuses (AFs) that underpin National Curriculum assessment, the approach improves the quality and reliability of teacher assessment. It has proved to be robust, manageable and effective in practice.

APP was developed in a two-year project between September 2003 and August 2005 involving 100 schools in 20 local authorities. The project was able to explore in some depth an approach to teacher assessment in English as well as the related issues of standardisation and moderation. This handbook describes the materials that have been developed and how they support the assessment process, as well as identifying some of the successful approaches adopted by pilot schools working collaboratively to secure standards. All the materials have been extensively trialled and revised in the light of feedback from schools and the findings from an independent evaluator. The materials are made up of two basic elements:

- a set of guidelines for assessing pupils' work related to National Curriculum levels;
- a bank of short teaching sequences leading to pupil tasks for reading and writing.

## APP: the basic approach

The APP approach is straightforward. At regular intervals, which are planned to fit in with school assessment policy, teachers review pupils' work using APP guidelines to build a profile of their attainment. If they wish, teachers can choose from a bank of APP assessment tasks to provide additional evidence of pupil attainment. The information gained from the process allows teachers to:

- analyse by AF the relative strengths and weaknesses of each pupil (pupils at levels 3–6);
- assign each pupil an overall National Curriculum level for reading and for writing;
- use this information to set curricular targets to strengthen pupils' learning and inform their own future teaching by making links to the relevant objectives from the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9* (DfEE 0019/2001).

*'Each teacher has now identified the pupils in their classes that need some extra attention by using the APP marking guidelines. An advanced skills teacher is working with these pupils now, using the AFs to focus the work to each pupil's needs.'*

While APP recognises the importance of speaking and listening, for example in responding to reading, it has not yet been possible to develop a framework for assessing this English attainment target.

# The advantages of adopting APP

APP is powerful because it:

- embraces both formative and summative assessment;
- supports teachers in aligning their judgements systematically with national standards;
- increases the consistency and reliability of teacher assessment;
- is systematic and also adaptable to local contexts.

Other advantages for an English department of adopting APP are that it:

- contributes to the professional development of all teachers, particularly of less experienced colleagues;
- provides high-quality evidence to inform reporting on pupil progress;
- contributes to improved learning and more responsive teaching.

*'I've had to interrogate my own judgements more closely, and by using the marking guidelines I've begun to see the different patterns of strengths and weaknesses and I'm learning more about my pupils. You have to be open minded. A very difficult class of mine did better on the Year 9 task than I'd dared to hope. This set me thinking about my expectations of them which are perhaps more related to their behaviour than their actual capabilities.'*

## The APP materials

The suite of APP materials includes:

- this handbook
- assessment guidelines for use with pupils' ongoing work in reading and writing;
- the standards files containing collections of ongoing work from 16 pupils, assessed and annotated at AF level to exemplify the APP approach and national standards;
- a bank of 24 assessment tasks covering a wide range of reading and writing, each with a set of marking guidelines and annotated examples of pupils' responses.

### Assessment guidelines

These are A4 sheets which give the criteria for each AF at levels 3–6 and are used for the assessment of pupils' ongoing work in reading and writing. Ongoing work is:

- pupils' day-to-day written and oral work completed in lessons or as homework;
- evidence of what pupils can do independently;
- work that exists in exercise books, on paper or, in the case of oral work, in the form of teacher records. It is not a special portfolio.

When completed, the assessment guidelines provide a record of a pupil's attainment profiled against the AFs. The assessment guidelines are in the CD-ROM.

Guidelines for assessing reading - ongoing work in year 7					
Pupil Name	Form	Date			
AF1 - understand, describe, explain or evaluate the content, events or ideas in texts	AF2 - describe, refer to or interpret the content, events or ideas in texts	AF3 - identify and comment on the structure and organization of texts, including features of text type	AF4 - explain and comment on the content, events or ideas in texts, using evidence from the text	AF5 - identify and comment on the content, events or ideas in texts, using evidence from the text	AF6 - identify and comment on the content, events or ideas in texts, using evidence from the text
Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3	Level 3
Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4	Level 4
Level 5	Level 5	Level 5	Level 5	Level 5	Level 5
Level 6	Level 6	Level 6	Level 6	Level 6	Level 6
Overall assessment (tick one box only): Secure 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Secure 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Below 3 <input type="checkbox"/>					

*'It is an excellent (very specific) diagnostic tool for reading and writing...'*  
*'When you've used the guidelines you feel you've applied a more "scientific" approach and that you can say more precisely why you think the pupil is at a level.'*

## **The standards files**

This publication contains examples of pupils' ongoing work that have been assessed and annotated to exemplify national standards. It should be used as a basis for standardising activities in a department and provides teachers with a reference point when making their own assessments. The standards files are on the CD-ROM.

*'We felt that we reached a common standard for marking through moderating the work and looking at the examples.'*

## **Assessment tasks**

These are teaching sequences for two consecutive lessons which lead to pupils working independently on a reading or writing task. Each task includes:

- a teacher booklet with lesson notes;
- resource materials;
- marking guidelines;
- a selection of pupil responses to the task annotated to show how the marking guidelines are to be applied;
- pupil booklets that contain everything that pupils need to complete their independent work.

The 12 reading tasks, four for each of Years 7, 8 and 9, are designed to cover a range of fiction/non-fiction and literary/non-literary writing. The 12 writing tasks cover the four 'triplets' of writing purposes for each year group.

Teachers can choose to use one or more of the assessment tasks in order to strengthen the evidence base for their assessment and can select from the bank tasks that fit best with their programme of work for that term. The assessment tasks should not be regarded or used as 'mini tests' since:

- they are lessons in which the teacher plays an active role;
- pupils work independently as part of the task but not under strict test conditions (e.g. the teacher may clarify questions, prompt further writing and support any individual pupils who are struggling);
- they are not marked in the same way as tests.

All the assessment tasks are included on the CD-ROM.

*'Our pupils liked the preparation, focus and build up to the independent work in the tasks. They are well motivated but not very academic. They really tried their best and we had some pleasant surprises. The tasks tended to improve the quality of evidence for our pupils.'*

The marking guidelines for the tasks are based on the assessment guidelines for ongoing work. They have a similar format but are customised for each task. Using the marking guidelines to assess a pupils' performance in a task yields a profile of attainment by AF and a National Curriculum level. The marking guidelines are included on the CD-ROM. Also included are examples of pupils' work on the tasks, annotated to show how to mark.

*'It was good to find that sometimes when we applied marking guidelines to the task answers we saw that pupils were actually doing better than we expected, especially for the writing.'*

## At a glance guide to the APP materials

What is it?	Where do I find it?	How do I use it?
<p><b>APP Handbook</b> Guide to the APP approach</p>	<p>This booklet</p>	<p>Use the handbook initially to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform yourself about the APP approach</li> </ul> <p>Refer to it subsequently for detailed guidance on how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement APP in a department</li> <li>• use the assessment guidelines for ongoing work</li> <li>• use the assessment tasks</li> <li>• use the APP approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment guidelines for ongoing reading and writing</b></p>	<p>On the CD-ROM in the assessment guidelines folder</p>	<p>These guidelines should be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initial training in the APP approach</li> <li>• assessing pupils' ongoing work</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standards files</b> Collections of assessed pupils' work exemplifying attainment at all the levels</p>	<p>On the CD-ROM in the standards files folder</p>	<p>Use the standards files initially to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct standardising when first adopting APP</li> </ul> <p>Refer to it subsequently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as a check on standards when making assessments and during moderation activity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment tasks</b> 12 reading tasks 12 writing tasks</p> <p>each task has a set of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• marking guidelines, similar to the assessment guidelines but customised for each task</li> <li>• exemplar responses assessed and annotated pupil responses to each task</li> </ul>	<p>On the CD-ROM in the assessment tasks</p> <p>On the CD-ROM together with the relevant task</p>	<p>Using the overview of tasks, select the task(s) that is/are most likely folder to meet the needs of pupils. Check the material for suitability before making a final selection.</p> <p>The task files contain all the material required for both teachers and pupils</p> <p>Use a copy of the marking guidelines to mark each pupil's task and record their attainment profile</p> <p>Use the exemplar response to help you apply the marking guidelines to the correct standard</p>

## 2 Starting APP

Establishing the APP approach requires five steps:

1. Seek approval and support from senior leaders.
2. Plan a process of implementation that is manageable for the teachers and will yield assessment information at the most useful times.
3. Provide initial briefing for the teachers involved.
4. Provide training and support for teachers during the first assessments.
5. Use the assessments to improve teaching and learning.

### Step 1: Seeking approval and support

Approval and support from the senior leadership team (SLT) are essential because APP must be planned in a way that is consistent with whole-school policy on assessment and reporting. School leaders need to be convinced of the benefits of the approach in improving teaching and learning and raising standards because of staff training and resource implications.

*'I met with our curriculum deputy and the assessment manager. They were both happy that the English department wanted to strengthen assessment practice. We agreed to schedule the APP assessments through the year so that teachers would have all the information before they were required to write reports and submit grades for the school tracking system. It was agreed that the department could have time during one of the school INSET days to set the scheme up and that, subject to staffing constraints, some teachers could be freed up from time to time for training and moderation. Two hundred pounds will be made available for additional copying requirements.'*

### Step 2: Planning for implementation

The first decision is about the scope of the implementation. Will APP operate for all pupils in all years of Key Stage 3 or will the scheme be phased in more gradually? Phasing in, for instance by starting with one year group only, has the advantage of reducing pressure on teachers in the early stages of implementation when they are becoming familiar with new materials and different ways of working. Even with a gradual introduction, it is important that all English staff should be involved from the outset so that training is relevant to all and the creation of a 'two-speed' department is avoided.

*'Teachers in my department were very keen to start using the APP approach. It really made sense to them. In particular, they wanted everyone to be involved so that we could all share our experiences and contribute ideas. We all started with just one class each, which ended up as a mix of Year 7 and Year 8. We were glad we made that decision as the new system took a bit of getting used to. We're getting a lot quicker now, though, and want to scale up the use of the approach next year.'*

The second decision is about the regularity and timing of the assessments. Is the progress of pupils to be monitored once a term or twice a year? When in the school year would be most appropriate? The criteria for making these decisions are:

- manageability – frequency and timing must fit with other work to avoid clashes;
- when the school asks for level judgements and reports to parents.

*'What we did was to look at the calendar for the year and see where the pressure points were. Actually there were pressure points everywhere! But it was still clear that there were times when it was possible to do our APP assessments when they wouldn't coincide with major tasks like GCSE coursework and would fit in with school reporting deadlines.'*

## Examples of planning for school implementation

### School A

School A has an experienced English department with considerable capacity for making improvements. Following an Ofsted judgement, the improvement of its assessment practice is the department's main priority. Consequently it has decided to implement APP fully after some trials in the summer term. School A's assessment and reporting policy requires that a National Curriculum level is reported to parents once a year at the time of the main school report. Years 7 and 8 receive their main reports at the end of the school year whereas Year 9 pupils receive theirs in March. The department has decided to monitor pupils' progress twice a year.

#### School A's plan for the first year of APP in English

July	Plan for APP approved by school SLT
September	Initial briefing for English teachers on INSET day Multiple copies of materials needed for classroom use are ordered
October	Department standardisation meeting using the APP standards files Y9 first assessments – task only It was decided just to use a task because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not enough ongoing work would be available</li> <li>• it would give the teachers a chance to try out a task</li> <li>• it would phase in APP</li> </ul>
November	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y9 tasks Y8 first assessments of ongoing work – use of tasks optional
December	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y8 assessments
January	Departmental moderation exercise on INSET day based on Y8 work assessed last term Y7 first assessments of ongoing work – use of tasks optional Y9 second assessments – use of tasks optional
February	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y7 and Y9 assessments Additional tuition (using booster materials) for some Y9 pupils to prepare for end of key stage test is planned on the basis of the assessment
March	Y9 reports
April	Tasks used with Y7 and Y8 if appropriate
May	Y7 and Y8 second assessments – use of tasks optional
June	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y7 and Y8 assessments HoD reflects on implications of assessments for review of scheme of work
July	Reporting statutory end of key stage teacher assessment for Y9 Y7 and Y8 reports

## School B

In School B the English department has a majority of teachers who are either inexperienced or new to the school. The head of department (HoD) wants to improve assessment practice but there are other important improvements that also need to be made. Consequently the decision is to implement APP gradually. All teachers are to be involved but APP will only operate initially in Year 8. This year group has been chosen because of evidence that this is something of a 'gap year' where pupils tend to coast and make limited progress. School B's assessment and reporting policy requires that a National Curriculum level is reported to parents once a term with a full report once a year. The department has decided to monitor pupils' progress once a term so that the outcomes mesh with the school's requirements. Some time previously given to Y8 optional tests will now be used for APP assessments.

### School B's plan for the first year of APP in English

July	Plan for APP approved by school SLT
September	Initial briefing for teachers on INSET day Multiple copies of materials needed for classroom use are ordered
October	Department standardisation meeting using the APP standards files Use of tasks where appropriate
November	First assessments of ongoing work for Y8
December	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y8 assessments
January	Departmental moderation exercise on INSET day based on Y8 work assessed last term
February	Use of tasks where appropriate
March	Second assessments of Y8 ongoing work
April	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y8 assessments
May	Use of tasks where appropriate
June	Third assessment of Y8 ongoing work
July	Y8 assessments are finalised and reported HoD reflects on implications for review of Y8 scheme of work HoD seeks approval from SLT for extension of APP to Y9 in following year

## School C

School C has an English department with a mixture of experienced, long-serving teachers and some new members of staff. The department's performance is average when compared to national benchmarks but is good compared to other core subjects in the school. The HoD is finding it hard to convince all the English staff that changes are needed in assessment policy, and workload has been raised as an issue in the school. Consequently the decision is to use APP just to track the progress of a selected group of pupils. The target pupils will be pupils in Year 7 who are borderline level 3/4 and pupils in Year 9 who are borderline level 4/5. All teachers who take the targeted pupils will be involved and assessments will be made twice a year. If tasks are used, it will be with the whole teaching group not just the targeted pupils. It is agreed that the APP approach will be extended if it is evaluated positively.

### School C's plan for the first year of APP in English

July	Plan for APP approved by school SLT
September	Initial briefing for teachers on INSET day Multiple copies of materials needed for classroom use are ordered
October	Department standardisation meeting using the APP standards files Use of assessment tasks if chosen
November	Y9 target pupils first assessments
December	Teachers reflect on implications for future teaching of the Y9 target pupils based on first assessments
January	Departmental moderation exercise on INSET day based on Y9 work assessed last term Y7 target pupils first assessments of ongoing work – use of tasks optional
February	Teachers reflect on implications for future teaching of the Y7 target pupils based on first assessments Y9 target pupils second assessments
March	Reflection on the implications for future teaching based on results of completed Y9 assessments Additional tuition using booster materials for Y9 to prepare for end of key stage test is planned on the basis of the assessment Y9 reports
April	Tasks used with Y7 if appropriate
May	Y7 target pupils second assessments
June	Teachers reflect on implications for future teaching of the Y7 target pupils based on second assessments HoD reflects on implications for review of scheme of work
July	Report statutory end of key stage teacher assessment for Y9 Y7, Y8 and Y9 reports

## Step 3: Initial briefing

From the outset teachers need to gain an understanding of:

- the purpose of APP and the scope and timing of its planned implementation in the school;
- the assessment focuses (AFs) for reading and writing;
- how to use assessment guidelines for assessing ongoing work;
- the use of optional assessment tasks and the associated marking guidelines;
- how to come to an overall judgement by weighing up evidence from ongoing work and any tasks.

This briefing can be provided in school using materials made available by the Secondary National Strategy via local authority English consultants.

*'As a second in department charged with introducing APP, I found the idea of providing training for my colleagues in the department quite daunting. I was in touch with the LEA English consultant and she had training materials. We sat down together and adapted these so that they would fit the time available and would meet the needs of my department in particular. The consultant offered to come and do the training but I didn't want to hand it over completely so we arranged to do it together.'*

## Step 4: Training and support

As teachers approach the first round of assessments, they will need:

- the relevant assessment guideline sheets, tasks and marking guidelines, the standards files;
- information from the HoD or other teacher with lead responsibility about how to report the assessments and by when;
- activity designed to standardise their assessment judgements prior to beginning their assessments.

Standardisation is absolutely essential if teachers are to be confident about how to make the assessment judgements and also to ensure that judgements are in line with national standards. This work should be based on the APP Standards Files, which contain examples of assessed pupils' work that is annotated to show exactly how evidence of attainment has been used to reach the final assessment judgement. The Standards Files are a guide to the way in which standards should be applied, and it is best for departments to work together with them to establish joint understandings at the start.

*'We set up our standardisation as an ongoing process. It was no good thinking we could get our heads around it in one meeting. Anyway, some of it is better done with people looking at material on their own when it suits them. What we did was in four stages. We all individually assessed three samples of pupil work at different levels that we got from our own pupils. It was useful to add some annotation to highlight the evidence. Next we met to discuss these assessments. We all had copies of the Standards Book so we could compare our assessments to the official exemplification. Then we all went away to look at other material from the Standards Book. Finally, at a second meeting, we discussed some other examples from the Standards Book. This was important because some people weren't happy that they understood the way the standards had been applied in the exemplification. We did manage to resolve these issues and now we do have a shared view in the department.'*

A process like the one exemplified above will ensure that teachers can use the Standards Files confidently as a reference point while making their first assessments.

## Step 5: Using the assessments to improve teaching and learning

To gain the full benefits of the APP approach, the assessment information gathered has to be used effectively. One obvious use is in reporting the progress of individual pupils. APP allows teachers to give clear and detailed feedback to pupils about where they have made progress and about what they need to do to improve further. Likewise, reporting to parents can include information about their child's overall level of attainment together with a breakdown of particular strengths and weaknesses within that level. Subject leaders will want to look at the overall picture that emerges from the assessments and consider the following points:

- Are there general patterns of strengths and weaknesses that suggest some revision of the scheme of work is required?
- Are there patterns that suggest that changes are needed to the teaching of a particular class?

Teachers will need to consider any action required for groups of pupils or individual pupils within their classes to remedy areas of relative weakness that have been identified.

*'What shocked us when we looked at our first round of APP assessments were the gaps in our assessment of reading. The scheme of work included plenty of opportunities for pupils to respond to texts, but when we looked for evidence of attainment in some of the assessment focuses, it just wasn't there. The work we set the pupils didn't ask for it. My heart fell. I thought that we couldn't change the scheme of work again. Then I realised that the scheme of work as such was fine; it was just the work we were setting that needed tweaking in order to focus pupils on the missing areas as well. I sat down and looked at the scheme for the following term and it didn't take long to put together a page of ideas that would improve the tasks set and give pupils the opportunity to show what they could do on a wider range of reading skills.'*

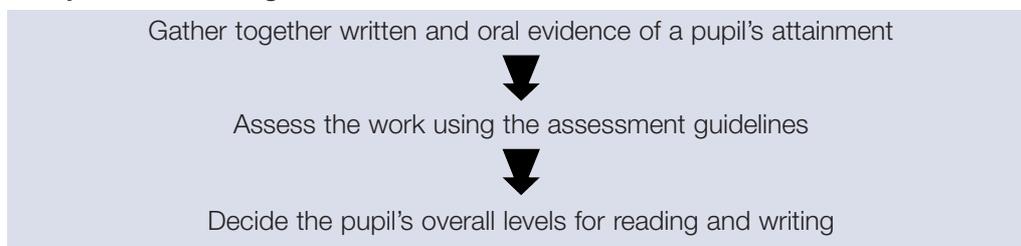
### Priorities when starting APP

Schools will find it preferable to implement APP with the support of their local authority English consultant and in collaboration with other schools. It will be very difficult for schools to implement APP effectively when working in isolation and this approach is not recommended. When planning the initial implementation of APP, there are some key priorities. The checklist below shows the features that must be in place from the start.

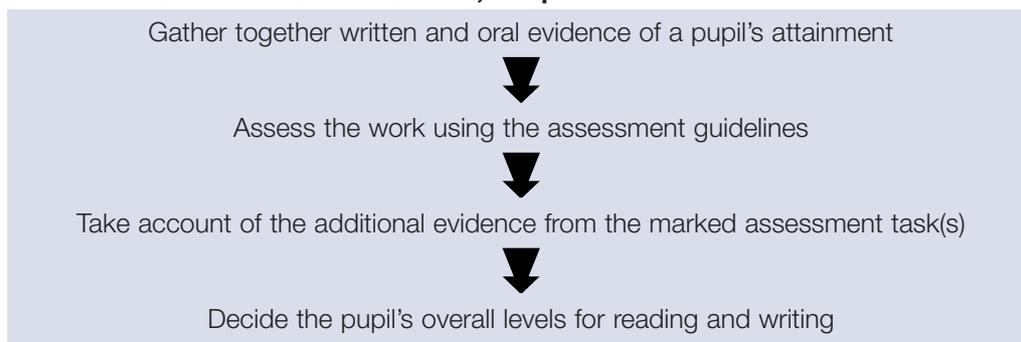
<b>APP checklist: Priority actions for initial implementation</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	✓
<p><b>Ensure the support of senior leaders re:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compatibility with school assessment policy</li> <li>• resources for training and copying materials</li> <li>• time for planning, standardisation and moderation</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Integrate APP with whole-school assessment policy so that, without duplication of teacher effort, it can deliver:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required outcomes in terms of National Curriculum levels</li> <li>• input into tracking systems</li> <li>• input into target setting</li> <li>• compatibility with school calendar</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Secure teachers' understanding of the purpose of APP and its processes including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment focuses</li> <li>• ongoing work</li> <li>• assessment guidelines</li> <li>• use of tasks and marking guidelines</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Engage teachers with the standards files by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making copies available</li> <li>• undertaking standardisation activity using them</li> <li>• supporting their initial use as a reference point for teachers assessing their own pupils' work</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Agree the scope of the first batch of assessments by deciding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who will be assessed?</li> <li>• at what intervals will assessment take place?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Manage the practicalities of the first batch of assessments by ensuring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• availability of assessment guidelines sheets</li> <li>• advance notice of deadlines for assessments, moderation and recording</li> <li>• a clearly understood and agreed process for recording outcomes</li> <li>• administrative support is available for data entry</li> </ul>	

### 3 Assessing pupils' work

#### The process is straightforward:



#### If assessment tasks have been used, the process is:



The flow charts on pages 13 and 14 give detailed guidance on how to make the assessments.

#### The use of sub-levels

The basis of the APP approach is to track pupils' progress by identifying where specific strengths and weaknesses lie and assigning them an overall level. Many schools also want to identify progress within levels, for example through the use of sub-levels (i.e. level 4a/b/c). APP suggests that it is helpful to note whether a level is 'low' or 'secure'.

The flow charts overleaf make clear in detail how to assign both categories within a level. A 'low' level is awarded when pupils have attained only some of the criteria for performance at the level, still remaining below the level in some assessment focuses (AFs). Pupils whose attainment within a level is 'low' may fall back to the level below in their next assessment, i.e. the attainment is not secure. Pupils whose attainment in a level is 'secure' will match the level criteria in all or nearly all of the AFs. They may even match criteria at the level above on some aspects of their work.

The use of sub-levels will be decided in schools to fit in with the overall policy for assessment, recording and reporting. A focus on sub-levels should not, however, distract from attention to the diagnostic profile that APP generates for each pupil in order to inform future teaching and learning.

#### Reconciling evidence from ongoing work and assessment tasks

Ongoing work includes a range of evidence collected over time. A task provides a single piece of additional evidence. Thus, if the level indicated by the task is different from the ongoing assessment, the latter will usually give the level. There are some circumstances, however, where the task level is a better indicator. This may apply where:

- the pupil has completed little ongoing work;
- most of the pupil's ongoing work has not been done independently;
- the ongoing work provides evidence for very few of the AFs.

The level given by the task can also be a deciding factor when the assessment of the ongoing work is borderline.

## Assessing ongoing work: Writing

Use this process to make judgements based on the assessment guidelines for writing.

Collect together:

- pupils' written work
- any other evidence
- an assessment guidelines sheet

- include teacher records and the main pieces of writing since the last APP assessment
- consider which pieces show what pupils can do independently, and give more weight to that evidence

Consider which borderline (3/4, 4/5, 5/6) is your starting point

- some work may spread across three levels, but try to narrow it down

Start with AFs 5 and 6 (*sentence variety and punctuation*). Look through the work until you are confident which criteria are the best fit, then highlight them

- you might want to give more weight to independent work done towards the end of the assessment period
- look until you are confident of your judgement, then move on

Tick the level-related boxes for AFs 5 and 6 on the assessment guidelines sheet

Now look at AFs 3 and 4 (*text structure and organisation*). Highlight criteria which are met. Tick the boxes on the assessment guidelines sheet

- highlighting helps feedback to pupils
- if you find you cannot make a judgement because there is no real evidence of a particular AF, tick the Insufficient Evidence (IE) box

Repeat the process for AFs 1 and 2, then AFs 7 and 8

- try to be clear about the evidence – don't give 'the benefit of the doubt' too many times

Now make the overall judgement

- If there are four ticks at the higher level for **AFs 1–6**, award that level
- Otherwise give the lower level

- this way avoids AFs 7 and 8 being given too much weight, as they can help to confirm the level rather than decide it

Consider how confident you are that the level has been achieved, and look across the AFs and decide whether the level is 'secure' or 'low'

Tick the relevant box at the bottom of the page

- if across the AFs the criteria are mostly highlighted then that level is likely to be 'secure'. If there is highlighting above and below the boundary, or the evidence is thin, then a 'low' final level is appropriate

Keep the assessment guidelines sheet with the pupil's work

- use the sheet for moderation and as a record of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses in writing

## Assessing ongoing work: Reading

Use this process to make judgements based on the assessment guidelines for reading.

Collect together:

- pupils' work
- any other evidence
- an assessment guidelines sheet

- include teacher records of discussions and activities which give evidence of reading since the last assessment
- consider which pieces show what pupils can do independently, because you need to emphasise that evidence

Consider which borderline (3/4, 4/5, 5/6) is your starting point

- some may spread across three levels, but try to narrow it down

Start with AF2 (*retrieval and selection*). Look through the work until you are confident which criteria are the best fit, then highlight them

- you might give more weight to independent work done towards the end of the assessment period
- look until you are confident of your judgement, then move on

Tick the level-related box for AF2 on the assessment guidelines sheet

Repeat the process for AFs 3–6

- try to be clear about the evidence – don't give 'the benefit of the doubt' too many times
- if you find you cannot make a judgement because there is no real evidence of a particular AF, tick the Insufficient Evidence (IE) box

Now make an overall level judgement, balancing the evidence across the AFs

- at levels 3/4, award level 4 overall if level 4 is ticked in AFs 2, 3 and one other. Otherwise award level 3
- at the other boundaries, award levels 5 or 6 if there are four ticks at the higher levels

Consider how confident you are that the level has been achieved. Look across the AFs and decide whether the level is 'secure' or 'low'

- if across the AFs the criteria are mostly highlighted then that level is likely to be 'secure'. If there is highlighting above and below the boundary, or the evidence is thin, then a 'low' final level is appropriate

Tick the relevant box at the bottom of the page

Keep the assessment guidelines sheet with the pupil's work

- use the sheet for moderation and as a record of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses in reading

## 4 Key considerations when assessing pupils' ongoing work

Every teacher needs a shared understanding of how to:

- identify pupils' work that can provide good evidence of attainment;
- take into account any teacher support given.

Throughout the key stage, pupils undertake a variety of activities, including reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is ongoing work, but not all of these activities provide the teacher with clear evidence of pupil attainment and progress. To be useful in judging progress, pupils' work needs to have been carried out with a degree of independence.

### Independence in reading

Pupils are often asked to respond to a text following a joint reading, such as writing about a character in a novel following a shared reading of the first chapter, or writing about an aspect of a poem following shared reading and discussion. If what is written consists mainly of repeating what has been said in class by the teacher, then there is little evidence of pupils' attainment in reading. If pupils are explaining interpretations and responses they have developed themselves following the joint classwork, then the evidence can be assessed.

Another important aspect of independence in reading is pupils' ability to engage directly with texts. This implies that, in some work, pupils read all or part of the text for themselves. This is not a matter of whether they can decode the text; it is a question of whether, when faced with a text that they have to read for themselves, they have the application and stamina to read it in full and can read it for meaning. Teachers should, therefore, ensure that they plan for some assessment opportunities where pupils have to respond to a text that they have read for themselves and which has not been mediated by, for instance, reading aloud.

Another issue in the assessment of reading is whether it is appropriate to base assessment entirely on written responses. Where pupils have difficulty with writing, it is possible to underestimate their reading ability because their responses are limited by their writing skills. Conversely, some pupils may be rated too highly as readers because the adept phrasing of their written responses conceals gaps in understanding. For these reasons, it is important to seek other evidence of reading attainment. Possibilities include:

- oral responses to questions either in whole-class situations or guided reading groups;
- oral presentations;
- responses involving drama techniques such as hot-seating;
- activities such as sequencing, annotating and cloze that demonstrate understanding of text without requiring sustained writing.

The outcomes of activities such as these may be ephemeral and so the teacher needs to make a brief record of the evidence of attainment.

### Independence in writing

Teaching is an integral part of ongoing work and teachers provide support for pupils' learning through their teaching. This teaching includes help with aspects such as topic, form, purpose and features of the writing. Sometimes the degree of help means that pupils' work is strongly scaffolded and so it is difficult to decide how far the writing is the result of pupils' own decisions. Independence does not mean that pupils have been left entirely to their own devices without the guidance of their teacher. It does mean that

pupils have an opportunity for independent thinking, making their own decisions about important aspects of the work, and they have not been given too much support while completing it. Where extensive help has been given, this needs to be taken into account in assessing the standard of the work.

*The following examples clarify this:*

Where a teacher prepares pupils for a piece of discursive writing by giving them a fixed paragraph plan to work to, it will be possible to judge pupil progress on a number of assessment focuses (AFs), but not AF3 (i.e. organise and present whole texts effectively) because pupils do not have to make any of their own decisions about how best to organise the writing. Similarly, when the teaching prior to writing means that all pupils have a very similar beginning or ending, it is possible to assess the rest of the writing as independent work although evidence for AF3 will be limited.

When working with a guided writing group, a teacher may focus on detailed redrafting of their writing to improve and vary sentence structure. In this case the finished pieces of writing will not yield evidence of independent attainment in AF5 (i.e. vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect).

If a teacher sets a descriptive writing task and supplies pupils with a bank of words designed to improve their vocabulary, it will be necessary to take this support into account when assessing AF7 (i.e. select appropriate and effective vocabulary). It may well still be possible to assess the way pupils have selected vocabulary, as there is a difference between those pupils who have chosen and deployed the words to good effect, and those who have been less discriminating and have matched the words less well to the context.

If a teacher focuses on persuasive writing, reads and discusses examples of persuasive texts, explains and lists the various features of this type of writing and then sets the class a persuasive writing task, the outcomes can be seen as independent work. If the teacher needs to give one or two pupils extra support, such as helping them to write the first few sentences of their piece, then the work of these pupils will be less independent and this should be taken into account when it is assessed.

Learning is the main aim of classroom activity, and ongoing assessment is valuable to support and promote learning. Effective teaching supports the work of pupils – for example the teaching sequence for writing as promoted by the Secondary National Strategy – but for assessment purposes it is necessary to take account of any support given. It is useful to consider three possibilities when judging pupil attainment in an AF:

Standard not attained	Standard attained with focused support	Standard attained independently
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Level-related judgements should be based on what pupils can attain independently.

## Where to find good evidence of attainment

In assessing pupil progress the aim is, periodically and systematically, to review pupils' work to make a judgement about progress that is linked to national standards. Although pupils take part in a wide range of activities, their collections of work consist most obviously of what they have written. These outcomes are easy to review, as the written pieces that can yield assessment evidence for **writing** may include:

- planning for writing;
- extended writing – narrative and non-narrative – in a variety of forms for a range of purposes;
- shorter, focused pieces of a similar range;
- writing from other curriculum areas.

Other work, such as sentence completion exercises or very brief notes, will not give much evidence of pupils' independent writing.

The ongoing work that can yield assessment evidence for reading includes:

- reasonably extended written work such as alternative endings, additional chapters, literary essays or answers to comprehension type questions;
- shorter, more focused pieces investigating texts in the form of text annotation, DARTs activities or visual organisers such as thought mapping, character collages, story boards, time lines etc;
- oral work – set at least partly to meet a reading objective – such as pupil presentation of a text to the class, contribution to class discussion, related drama activities such as role-play, hot-seating, thought tracking, forum theatre, or any record of pair/group discussion;
- pupils' responses to personal reading, such as a reading journal or record of discussion with a teacher;
- detailed work on shorter non-fiction texts, such as poetry or adverts, which focuses on use of language;
- research work – sifting information, framing questions, editing, selecting information from different sources, work on bias/fact/opinion;
- evidence from literacy progress units, Reading Challenge or other intervention programmes.

Teachers' marking comments and records are also sources of evidence. Occasionally, teachers may remember a particularly significant oral contribution made by a pupil and, even though no record has been made, this may be taken into account when considering the pupil's progress. But relying heavily on such memories could lead to unsystematic and impressionistic assessment.

## 5 Using the assessment tasks

The use of assessment tasks drawn from the bank of 12 reading tasks and 12 writing tasks is optional in the APP approach, but is strongly recommended where additional evidence of attainment is needed. They can be used at any time, but are most likely to be used towards the end of the assessment period. Tasks are particularly useful when:

- pupil work does not cover all the assessment focuses (AFs);
- some pupils have little completed work because of, for instance, poor attendance;
- pupils are on the borderline between two levels.

*'The tasks were very useful for the pupils who often don't finish work or do it in a slapdash way. The tasks showed they were sometimes more capable than they let on.'*

To use tasks effectively:

- select from the available bank a task that fits in with the programme of work that pupils are following and matches the levels of attainment in the teaching group;
- dedicate two consecutive lessons to the task;
- prepare carefully using the material in the teacher booklet;
- choose writing tasks where pupils are familiar with the type of writing required and are not meeting it for the first time;
- follow the flow chart guidance on pages 19 and 20.

Once pupils have completed a task, it is marked using the appropriate marking guidelines. Guidance on how to apply these guidelines is provided in the teacher booklet for the task. When the marking is complete, teachers will have a level for each pupil as well as a profile of attainment against the AFs.

## Assessing writing tasks

Use this process to make judgements based on the task marking guidelines and examples of pupils' answers.

Collect together:

- pupils' responses
- any general notes from teaching the task
- marking guidelines sheets

- consider any circumstances relating to the class overall or to any individual pupil that may require you to modify particular judgements, e.g. the degree of independence/support in completing the task

For each pupil, consider which level borderline (3/4; 4/5; 5/6) represents the most likely starting point

- some responses may spread over three levels, but try to narrow it down

Start with AFs 5 and 6 (*sentence variety and punctuation*). Look through the work until you are confident which criteria are the best fit, then highlight them

- to keep track of judgements, it can be helpful to annotate the response as significant features strike you, for example just a tick with the AF number
- look until you are confident of your judgement, then move on

Tick the level-related boxes for AFs 5 and 6 on the marking guidelines sheet

Now look at AFs 3 and 4 (*text structure and organisation*). Highlight criteria which are met

Tick the boxes on the marking guidelines sheets

- highlighting helps feedback to pupils
- if you find you cannot make a judgement because there is no real evidence of a particular AF, tick the Insufficient Evidence (IE) box

Repeat the process for AFs 1 and 2, and then AFs 7 and 8

- try to be clear about the evidence – don't give 'the benefit of the doubt' too many times

Now make the overall judgement

- If there are four ticks at the 'higher' level for **AFs 1–6**, award that level
- Otherwise, award the lower level

- this way avoids AFs 7 and 8 being given too much weight, as they can help to confirm the level rather than decide it

Consider how confident you are that the level has been achieved. Look across the AFs and decide whether the level is 'secure' or 'low'

Tick the relevant box at the bottom of the page

- if across the AFs the criteria are mostly highlighted, then that level is likely to be 'secure'
- if there is highlighting above and below the boundary, or the evidence is thin, then a 'low' level is appropriate

Keep the marking guidelines sheet with the pupil's work

- the guidelines help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses

## Assessing reading tasks

Use this process to make judgements based on the task marking guidelines and examples of pupils' answers.

Collect together:

- pupils' responses
- any general notes from teaching the task
- marking guidelines sheets

- consider any circumstances relating to the class overall or to any individual pupil that may require you to modify particular judgements, e.g. the degree of independence/support in completing the task

Remind yourself of the text and questions

- note carefully those pieces of text that will provide the 'territory' on which pupils will base their answers so that when dealing with more generalised answers/comments, you may recognise when these are 'rooted in the text' rather than 'personal speculation'

For each pupil, consider which level borderline (3/4; 4/5; 5/6) represents the most likely starting point

- some responses may spread over three levels, but try to narrow it down

Read through the answers in order, highlighting the relevant criteria for each question/AF where these are fulfilled

- the same AF may be addressed through more than one question and so it may be helpful to add a tick to any highlighted criterion that is fulfilled more than once

When all answers have been considered:

- review the highlighting of the criteria for each AF
- tick the level-related boxes for each AF on the marking guidelines sheet

- try to be clear about the evidence – don't give 'the benefit of the doubt' too many times
- if you find you cannot make a judgement because there is no real evidence of a particular AF, tick the Insufficient Evidence (IE) box

Now make an overall level judgement, balancing the evidence across the AFs

- at level 3/4, award level 4 overall if level 4 is ticked in AFs 2, 3 and one other. Otherwise award level 3
- at the other boundaries, award levels 5 or 6 if there are four ticks at the higher level

Consider how confident you are that the level has been achieved  
Look across the AFs and decide whether the level is 'secure' or 'low'  
Tick the box at the bottom of the page

- if across the AFs the criteria are mostly highlighted, then that level is likely to be 'secure'
- if there is highlighting above and below the boundary or the evidence is thin, then a 'low' level is appropriate

Keep the marking guidelines sheets with the pupil's work

- the guidelines help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses

The CD-ROM contains an index of all the tasks, together with a summary of the teaching sequence and details of the framework objectives and the tests read or writing triplets addressed.

## 6 Using information from assessments to improve teaching and learning

To gain full benefit from using APP, it is important to make maximum use of the information that it yields. The information can be used for assessing the overall progress of individuals and groups of pupils, for setting curricular targets for individuals and groups of pupils and for reviewing the effectiveness of curriculum provision.

Following a round of APP assessments, the information available for each pupil will be:

- a reading assessment sheet showing the profile of attainment across five assessment focuses (AFs);
- a National Curriculum level for reading;
- a writing assessment sheet showing the profile of attainment across eight AFs;
- a National Curriculum level for writing.

This information has a number of invaluable uses for subject leaders, class teachers and pupils.

### For subject leaders

- Identifying pupils whose progress towards their end of key stage target is unsatisfactory.
- Identifying common weaknesses in a cohort of pupils, which can then be addressed through changes in the teaching programme.
- Identifying gaps in the assessment evidence provided by pupils' work, which can lead to a review of the range of work pupils are set.

*'After reviewing a round of assessments, I identified that most pupils were achieving their lowest levels in writing AF6. After discussion with other members of the department, we agreed that in the following term there would be additional emphasis on punctuation, both in teaching and marking, and that identified pupils would be asked to work through a booklet for homework that is designed to revise their knowledge of punctuation. I also noticed that teachers often found little evidence on which to base their assessment of reading AF4. After some discussion, we realised that there was no need to revise the content of the scheme of work but that the tasks set for pupils when they are asked to respond to reading should be revised to give pupils a chance to show their understanding of text structure and organisation.'*

### For class teachers

The uses are the same for subject leaders but include the following additional uses.

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the attainment of individual pupils, which can lead to the setting of curricular targets and focused teaching in future lessons.
- Evidence on which to base clear, constructive feedback to pupils in class and to their parents via the school's systems for reporting.

*'Following a round of assessments, I identified that all but four pupils were securely at level 4 for reading AF2 and that there were six pupils who would be level 5 readers if they could improve their performance on AF5. I decided to set up guided reading opportunities for these two groups to try and raise their attainment in the respective assessment areas. To help plan the guided group sessions, I looked at the **Reading Matrix** (from **Increasing progress in English** DfES 0025-2005CD) as a guide to the teaching objectives that would apply and for examples of classroom approaches that would help.'*

## For pupils

Added direction and motivation that results from a clear understanding of:

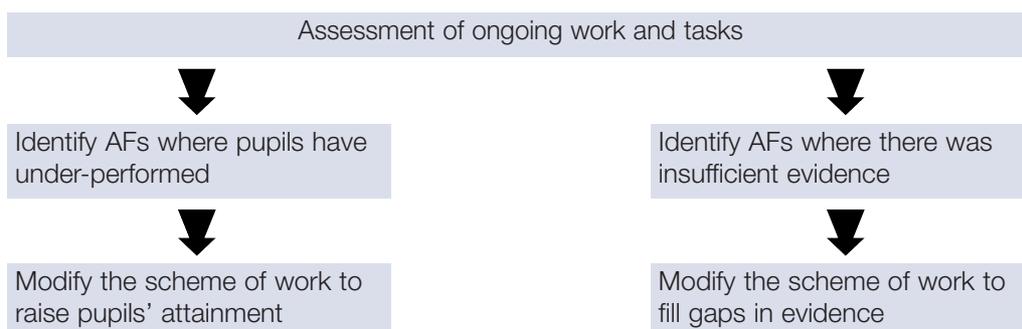
- the progress they are making towards their end of key stage target;
- what they have achieved already in terms of progress within a level;
- where they need to improve in order to make progress into the next level of attainment.

*'John entered Year 7 as a level 4 reader and a level 3 writer. He was level 4 in English overall. In his first assessment in February of Year 7, he was still at the same level for both reading and writing. I told him that if he improved his sentences through better use of connectives and by adding some variety to his sentence structure, he could move to level 4. In his second assessment at the end of the summer term, he did move to level 4 for writing as he has focused on his curricular target and made improvements in sentences. He stayed at level 4 for reading but I could give him some positive feedback on progress because he had now achieved level 5 in two out of the five AFs.'*

*'I predicted that Amal would get a level 5 in English at the end of the key stage but, when I did the assessment in November of Year 9, she was still level 4 in reading because of weaknesses in AFs 4, 5 and 6. She was level 5 in writing but with weaknesses in AFs 3 and 4. In March, there were improvements in her writing and I judged her to be a secure level 5 in this aspect of her work. In reading, there had been improvements in AF6, but AFs 4 and 5 remained weak. I organised booster work focused on this area of attainment for Amal and a number of other pupils with a similar profile in reading. Amal was keen to attend because she could see that she had made progress already and, with some focused additional work, could definitely secure a level 5.'*

## 7 Assessment and the curriculum

One advantage of the APP approach is that the outcomes of the assessment process can be used to make improvements to the curriculum, as shown in the flow chart below.



There are important links between assessment and planning, but a scheme of work should not be assessment led. It should be constructed around teaching and learning objectives, because what pupils need to be taught must be the main consideration. An English department's schemes of work must cover the National Curriculum programmes of study, and in Key Stage 3 this can be achieved using the objectives in the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9* (DfEE 0019/2001). A good scheme of work also takes account of the need to assess pupils' progress and is constructed so that the intended outcomes in terms of pupils' work yield a range of evidence for assessment. The outline plan shows how the ongoing work completed in a term can provide a good range of evidence covering reading and writing, fiction and non-fiction, and all of the assessment focuses (AFs). This outline does not show the exact nature of the tasks set and, of course, the detail of the tasks would affect what could be assessed, so the AFs given are only for illustration.

Outline plan for a ten-week term to show the evidence for assessment of ongoing work					
Week	Units	Ongoing work	Assessment evidence: reading	Assessment evidence: writing	Nature of evidence
1	Fiction text	Following reading of chapter 1, pupils write their predictions for the novel	AF2, AF3	All AFs	Written work
2		Presentations (drama techniques) exploring main characters	AF3 (evidence for some pupils only)		Teacher record
3		Annotation activity on significant section of the text	AF5		Annotated texts
4		Oral presentations on key themes from the novel	AF4, AF6 (evidence for some pupils only)		Teacher record
5		Formal written assignment on novel linked to oral presentations	AF2, AF4, AF6	All AFs	Written work*
6	Non-fiction: information texts	Sequencing and annotation activities on information texts	AF3, AF4		Annotated texts
7		Pupils read independently and answer questions on an information text	AF2, AF3, AF5, AF6		Written work*
		Pupils write paragraphs from information texts		AF4, AF5, AF6, AF7, AF8	Written work
8		Pupils write own information text		All AFs	Written work*
9	Poetry	Pupils make oral presentations (based on frame) on poems they have chosen from an anthology	AF2, AF5, AF6 (evidence for some pupils only)		Teacher record
10		Pupils write their own poem		AF1, AF2, AF3, AF5, AF6, AF7, AF8	Written work

At the end of this term the collection of ongoing work for each pupil would consist of:

- three pieces of writing of special significance (marked with an asterisk) – note that the poem would be too late for inclusion in this term’s assessment and would contribute to assessment in the following term;
- four other pieces of paper-based evidence;
- one or two teacher records from oral work.

Pupils would do other work (e.g. writing in preparation for oral work), but this is not assessed as part of their ongoing collection.

*Please note that this example is designed just to illustrate how a collection of ongoing work is generated, and should not be seen as a model for writing schemes of work.*

What can actually be assessed as outcomes from teaching a scheme of work depends on careful planning and setting of the pupil tasks. It is important for both teachers and pupils that from the outset they are clear about what will be assessed and the criteria for the assessment. Where such clarity exists and is shared with pupils, the process of marking and giving feedback will be more manageable for teachers, and will make more sense to pupils.

## Planning for assessment evidence

The quantity of ongoing work that is produced in any given assessment period will vary because of a number of factors, including:

- the length of time;
- the scheme of work being followed and its objectives;
- the attendance and relative diligence of pupils.

Experience from the pilot project shows that there is considerable variation between schools, and even within schools, in the quantity and range of ongoing work that pupils do. It is clear that in classes where pupils have produced a reasonable body of work, not only is it easier for teachers to make judgements on their progress, it is also more likely that progress will have been made.

When planning or reviewing medium-term plans, it is, therefore, important to consider assessment opportunities and to try to maximise the ongoing work that pupils produce. Assessment should not, however, be the main driver of the curriculum, so these considerations must not compromise the quality of the scheme of work in other ways. It is equally important to strike a balance between the amount of evidence for the three attainment targets: speaking and listening, reading, and writing. For the satisfactory assessing of pupil progress in reading and writing, the aim should be to generate in a term of ten weeks:

- significant evidence of writing (perhaps two to four pieces), some of which may also give evidence of attainment in reading;
- some shorter pieces of writing or paper-based evidence (three to five pieces), such as annotation of a text, some of which give evidence of attainment in reading;
- some teacher records of oral work that provide evidence of attainment in reading.

It will not be possible to see a full range of types of reading and writing in any one term, but it is desirable for the range to include both fiction and non-fiction, literary and non-literary, texts every term. An example of how such a selection of work might be generated in a school term is shown in the plan on the previous page.

*‘After talking over our assessments with the LEA consultant, we noticed some patterns in what pupils struggled with and realised these were also gaps in our planning. We need to do more work, in terms of both quality and quantity, about how texts are structured and about authorial intention.’*

## 8 Embedding APP and securing standards

Once APP has been successfully started, it is important to sustain the practice and to continue to build accuracy and consistency of assessment. There has been an initial investment of time and energy and this will only prove worthwhile if the approach continues to underpin the department's assessment. This is particularly the case because data collected over a number of years is needed to track a pupil's progress through the key stage. Continued use of APP will also build understanding and skills so that it works increasingly effectively for subject leaders, class teachers and pupils.

### Subject leaders

The key requirements for the subject leader are that:

- systems for recording and communicating assessment information are working effectively;
- pupils whose progress is a cause for concern are being identified and action taken;
- implications for the curriculum are recognised and acted upon;
- assessments are accurate and standards are being applied consistently across the department.

The basic information to record is the levels achieved in reading and writing by each pupil. These levels need to be recorded in a system that allows for the tracking of progress across the key stage and allows easy identification of those pupils who are not on course to meet their targets. The entry of this information is a task that can be completed by an administrative assistant using the completed assessment guideline sheets.

*'It wasn't possible for me to analyse the guideline sheets for all the pupils, so I asked the class teachers to tell me two things: something about the pupils – the ones we could reward for good progress, the ones who were a concern; and something about the curriculum – what were the common weaknesses in their class and what aspects were hard to assess because they had little or no evidence. Entering the levels was the easy bit because someone in the office did that, although admittedly I did have to show them what to do at first.'*

Part of the process of embedding APP is to ensure that teachers have confidence that their judgements of pupils' progress are sound and securely linked to national standards, and that parents too can have confidence in them. This is particularly important for reading and writing where, inevitably, there is always a subjective element. The processes of standardisation and moderation are designed to encourage agreement in teacher judgements between and within schools by providing opportunities for teachers to check their judgements against national standards. This is best achieved through structured sessions, so building a consensus on standards.

Standardisation is an essential part of the training for teachers in using the APP approach. To be effective it needs to be regular, providing annual incremental opportunities for teachers to develop and confirm their understanding of standards across a range of aspects of reading and writing. The Standards Files are an essential reference point for individual teachers, departments and schools working together to develop a shared understanding of standards in ongoing work. The marking guidelines and annotated exemplar responses provide a comparable reference point for standards in the reading and writing tasks. Subject leaders will need to decide when departmental time for standardisation is required during the year and what its focus should be. The

timing of standardisation is likely to be most effective if it occurs prior to the first assessments.

Other factors that could influence the timing include:

- staff turnover in the department;
- evidence of previous inconsistency in the application of standards;
- the extension of APP to another year group;
- arrangements with other local schools.

The focus for the standardisation meeting could be ongoing work or tasks, reading or writing, a particular year group, or a particular level.

Once teachers have become familiar with standards in a training situation, they need the opportunity to check their application of standards so that they can be confident that their judgements are in line with colleagues and with national standards. There is a range of ways in which to organise moderation. At a department meeting, for example, discussion could focus on one collection of evidence brought by each teacher:

- for reading in Year 8;
- for writing at level 5 from any year;
- for reading or writing at the level 3/4 borderline.

These discussions should draw in all teachers and compare judgements with relevant work in the Standards Files.

In the pilot project, teachers found the experience of moderating their judgements with colleagues from other schools invaluable. The major benefit of such cross-school moderation was to increase teachers' confidence and trust in their judgements once these had been scrutinised by colleagues from other schools. Additional benefits accrued simply from seeing how a range of aspects of practice were dealt with elsewhere, for example how other schools targeted particular assessment focuses (AFs), how evidence was planned for, or the range of evidence available. This kind of moderation exercise would provide an excellent focus for a subject leaders' network meeting.

It is intended to offer further support to schools on standardisation and moderation in the near future. This will be based on good practice that has been established with pilot schools.

*'We know we need to assure more consistency in the standards we are applying. This is a big department – maybe we are all on the same wavelength, but I couldn't be sure of that. So far we have just talked about ways of moderating but haven't carried anything through. Finding the time is the issue and using whatever time is made available to best advantage.'*

## Class teachers

Time is the most precious resource for teachers and usually it is in short supply. So, for class teachers, the key priority is to operate a system that is manageable as well as one which provides information that can improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

The process of reflecting systematically on the progress of pupils and considering any implications for future teaching is an essential part of good teaching. It requires the investment of some time, but this is time well spent if it leads to a better understanding of how to teach pupils more effectively. In addition, to feel secure that their assessment judgements are in line with national standards is an entitlement for all teachers.

*'It was interesting to see that pupils weren't working at the same level across all the AFs. You had to balance the AFs to come up with a level and you could explain why that pupil was at that level at that point – what they could do well and not as well.'*

Manageability is achieved when teachers know well in advance what will be required so they can plan for it. Subject leaders should ensure that other demands are not scheduled at the same time and that teachers understand what is required so that no one spends too long or produces work in excess of what is needed. It is inevitable that the introduction of any new system will create some initial difficulties, as teachers have to familiarise themselves with new materials and a different way of working. For this reason, the first assessments will take longer than those undertaken when the system is embedded.

For teachers to sustain the APP approach effectively as part of their practice, senior managers and subject leaders need to ensure that:

- administrative support is available for entering basic assessment data;
- APP assessments are an integral part of the school's system of assessment and reporting (i.e. there is no duplication of work) and that this system is planned so that the demands on teachers are manageable;
- teachers understand that their part in the process is a component of effective teaching and learning and not a bureaucratic exercise;
- assessment information is used effectively to give feedback to pupils and their parents;
- there is a regular investment of time to build and sustain the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessment judgements.

## Pupils

If the APP approach is working for pupils, it will improve their motivation, their understanding of the subject and their performance. For this to happen, pupils need to be involved in the process of assessment, not merely be assessed. This means that teachers share the assessment criteria with pupils in a way that they can understand and that these criteria become part of the language used when discussing the quality of pieces of work. Pupils then:

- receive clear feedback on what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further;
- see where they have made progress within a level even if they have not yet crossed the level boundary;
- understand where their work may have fallen in standard and why that judgement is made;
- see clearly that positive actions follow from the way they are assessed;
- are confident they are being assessed in the same way as other pupils.

*'So far, as well as the pilot project pupils, all the department has now used the ongoing marking guidelines with their Year 9 classes for diagnostic purposes in preparation for SATs. We've also shared the AFs with the Year 9 pupils, and for reading got them to devise some questions on the texts we're reading that would target the AFs.'*

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