The Improving Schools Programme (ISP)

Supporting schools to secure the progress of all learners

Department for
Education

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This leaflet provides information for schools, School Improvement Partners and Local Authorities about the core elements of ISP. It shares the learning from ISP and explains what works in supported school improvement and why.

What is the Improving Schools Programme?

ISP is a supported whole-school improvement programme. The core elements central to ISP support the development of school-wide systems to raise standards, accelerate and sustain progress, build leadership capacity and support school self-evaluation. The programme focuses on children's learning and the skills, knowledge and understanding that teachers and headteachers need to enable all children to make good progress and achieve success as learners.

ISP can be tailored to the specific needs of any school. It has been particularly targeted at schools where attainment is low and (or) groups of children are underperforming or making slow progress. The programme builds on effective school self-evaluation processes and is based on the cycle of audit, target-setting, tracking, planning, action and review. The starting point is pupil attainment data, and the core elements of ISP support the school to enable all children to make expected or accelerated progress so that as many children as possible are working at age-related expectations or above.

To find out more about the detail of the programme and see case studies from schools and LAs who have been involved in the ISP visit:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/wholeschool/isp

www.whatworkswell.standards.dcsf.gov.uk

What has ISP achieved?

Schools that have been part of ISP have consistently achieved double the national rates of progress in Key Stage 2 outcomes. Evidence from a wide range of sources including children, schools, Ofsted, HMI, LAs and independent evaluation confirm the sustainability of improved rates of progress. They identify the positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching, the conditions for learning and the development of the whole school as a professional learning community.

To view the evidence visit:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/wholeschool/isp

Who is it for?

The ways of working used in the ISP are suitable for all schools. The model developed captures the essential elements that need to be in place to support and to sustain whole-school improvement. It is both highly structured and responsive and can be used by schools at very different stages of development, for example to:

- strengthen leadership and governance, supporting headteachers new to a school or developing more distributed leadership across a school
- develop a whole-school focus on learning and accelerating children's progress
- improve the quality of learning and teaching in a single subject
- enable children to reflect on, evaluate and be responsible for their learning
- support curriculum review and the provision of a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all learners

The model supports personalising learning to enable all children to make progress.

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The school improvement cycle

Schools are responsible for their own improvement. The diagram below illustrates the termly ISP cycle that supports school improvement and school self-evaluation, with pupil progress at its centre. All of the core elements within the cycle need to be in place to ensure improvement. The school leadership of these core elements is essential to the leadership of learning, the strengthening of school self-evaluation and to the school as a sustainable improving institution.

Pupil progress meetings:
- provide a regular timetabled forum for analysis and discussion of the factors that have supported progress and identifies collaborative actions to overcome barriers to progress
- require teachers to share evidence of pupil progress with members of the leadership team and be accountable for progress
- provide a forum to answer questions which tracking poses and moves tracking off the page and into actions for learning
- support the development of pupil conferencing, enabling children to reflect on, control and improve their learning
- demonstrate and celebrate success
- provide a forum to support teachers and their professional development.

The school improvement cycle
The cycle of analysis, action, evaluation and review is the key to building sustainable improvement. This model demonstrates that the cycle is ongoing and provides the means to build capacity for leadership, drawing upon and contributing to school self-evaluation.

Tracking:
- provides a picture of pupil progress whole-school and at class level
- provides a focus for professional dialogue to support assessment for learning and personalised learning
- at whole-school level enables targeted mapping of intervention to support pupil learning, identifying the progress of individual children who are slow-moving, stuck, in need of support to accelerate progress, achieving or exceeding age-related expectations
- provides evidence of the impact of actions on progress and strengthens the accountability of teachers and headteachers.

The single plan drives the improvement against school priorities and is informed by self-evaluation and linked to the school improvement plan. It:
- provides a detailed, time-limited map translating priorities into action
- aligns the work of the school (and any external support) around the agreed priorities and maintains a sharp focus on these
- identifies clear lines of accountability for actions and outcomes and supports all stakeholders in understanding their responsibilities linked to the priorities
- The plan is:
  - monitored and evaluated against pupil progress
  - challenging and achievable
  - a means of communicating planned actions and expected outcomes to the whole-school community

Termly school improvement cycle supporting on-going school self-evaluation processes

Annual review of attainment and progress – School Self-Evaluation; analysing the data from transitional assessment, attendance data and whole-school tracking and mapping of attainment. Identifying priorities to support pupil progress

Monitoring, evaluation and review of impact on pupil progress using qualitative and quantitative data from periodic assessment and the views of the pupil and relevant adults

Single Plan – reviewed termly to address priorities to support the progress of all learners linked to tracking, mapping provision and resources

Plan → **Teach**

Review

Ensuring the progress of all learners: pedagogy for personalisation; day to day assessment; Quality First Teaching plus Wave 2 and 3 intervention; curriculum; conditions, motivation and skills for learning; subject progression; the Primary Framework; tracking into action in the classroom

Apply

Whole-school, systematic CPD – developing leadership for learning and teacher professional learning through collaborative classroom-based CPD

Assess

CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT

An explicit focus on learning and teaching:
- establishes the context from which school leaders can lead improvement through a focus on learning
- identifies the key areas of learning and teaching, including the use of whole-school curricular targets, that are priorities and ensures a common language for adult learners to talk about children's learning
- identifies the focus around which teacher knowledge and understanding is to be secured and supports increased pupil involvement in this key area of learning
- identifies quality first teaching as an entitlement for all children.

Whole-school systematic CPD:
- focuses professional learning around the agreed priorities
- provides an opportunity for people to learn collaboratively and to develop systems as well as knowledge
- is directly related to quality first teaching and leads to changes that have a positive impact on pupil progress
- establishes whole-school community responsibility and accountability for improvement.

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Who is involved?

The school

The responsibility and accountability for improvement lies with the school, driven by the leadership team and the governing body. The ISP core elements support school leaders to be effective leaders of learning by strengthening school self-evaluation and the mechanisms to ensure pupil progress.

The headteacher and distributed leadership team lead all aspects of the programme in school to ensure impact on progress. They involve all the school community and develop a positive culture focused on progress and achievement for all.

Governors are accountable for school improvement. Their involvement with the core elements develops their skills and abilities. They know what is expected of their school and how it needs to improve.

The tracking of pupil progress and explicit identification of priorities linked to CPD supports **teachers** with planning, teaching, learning and assessment. This strengthens accountability for pupil progress.

The focus on progress and overcoming barriers to learning strengthens **parents'** involvement in their children's learning.

The focus on making learning explicit supports **children** to reflect on, control and improve their learning.

The Local Authority

ISP provides a clear framework within which LAs can support and challenge schools. The focus on the core elements ensures that this challenge and support is aligned around the school's priorities and has impact on children's progress. This leads to more rapid improvement than the school could manage alone.

School Improvement Partners (SIPs) support and challenge the quality and impact of the school's self-evaluation to help the school arrive at an accurate judgement of how well it is serving its pupils and what it needs to do to improve. The brokering of ISP into a school supports the quality and impact of future self-evaluation and addresses the priorities identified.

The core elements of ISP are used by **LA additional advisers** in their work with leadership teams to strengthen monitoring and evaluation and review the impact of all actions on pupil progress.

LA consultancy works alongside the leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and groups of children. They support teacher learning in order to strengthen the capacity of the school to improve the quality of learning and teaching and leadership for learning.

The core elements ensure that the **wider LA services** are involved according to the needs of the school. This means there is better evidence of the impact of services such as governor support, speech and language services, educational psychologists, special needs teams and others who align their support to the school around the single plan.

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