

# Key Stage 3 Strategy, Foundation Subjects strand: key messages about assessment for learning

This leaflet provides information for teachers about the 'Planning and assessment' section of the training materials for foundation subjects.

## Why is assessment for learning important?

Classroom-based research has shown that assessment for learning makes a difference to both pupils' attainment and their levels of engagement and motivation.

In *Assessment for Learning – Beyond the black box* (1999), the Assessment Reform Group usefully identifies the key characteristics of effective assessment for learning. Assessment for learning:

- is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part;
- involves sharing learning goals with pupils;
- aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for;
- involves pupils in peer and self-assessment;
- involves feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;
- involves both the teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment information and data.

Assessment for learning depends **crucially** on teachers and pupils actually using the information gained to benefit future learning.

Planning for assessment for learning can sharpen the focus of teaching to meet pupils' learning needs better and to improve pupils' progress. In lessons, objectives are used to make the learning goals explicit to pupils and to act as the basis for assessment and target setting.

The three 'Planning and assessment' modules focus on aspects of the characteristics of assessment for learning. Each provides a description of the principles underpinning effective practice, practical examples and suggestions for trying things out in the classroom.

## Which modules focus on planning and assessment?

Assessment for learning is one of the key themes of the foundation subjects strand and should be seen as an element of all the training modules. The three modules which explicitly address it are:

- Assessment for learning in everyday lessons;
- The formative use of summative assessment;
- Planning lessons.



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Each module can be used as 'stand alone' training and will fit into a typical session during a training day or twilight event. Alternatively the modules can be linked to address a broader range of issues and professional development needs.

## Assessment for learning in everyday lessons (module 1)

This module provides a foundation for modules 2 and 3. It introduces the 'key characteristics of assessment for learning' (see above) some of which are explored in greater depth in modules 2 and 3 and then in other foundation subject training modules.

Its key messages are listed below.

- Assessment for learning is more than simply marking and feeding back grades. It involves teachers in identifying the next steps for learning as well as responding to the errors pupils make and the difficulties they experience.
- Essential to good assessment for learning are:
  - the sharing of learning objectives with pupils;
  - pupils' peer and self-assessment;
  - feedback to pupils to inform next steps in learning.
- Good planning and teaching skills are crucial for making assessment for learning a productive part of lessons.

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Peer and self-assessment also feature strongly in **The formative use of summative assessment** module which includes a useful video clip.

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The **Planning lessons** module takes this point further.

## The formative use of summative assessment (module 2)

Modules 1 and 2 work together to clarify the 'key characteristics of assessment for learning'. Module 2 looks further into the relationship between **assessment for learning** and **assessment of learning** and how they can serve each other.

Its key messages are listed below.

- Teachers can use summative assessment to inform learning by using the information gained to:
  - draw pupils into the assessment process;
  - improve motivation and self-esteem;
  - enhance the quality of target setting;
  - contribute to raising standards;
  - increase pupils' understanding of the standards they are aiming for.
- It takes time and support for pupils to gain the skills and confidence they need to assess their own work and to provide constructive and helpful feedback for their peers.

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For further support in developing these skills in pupils, use the modules on **Thinking together** and from LAC **The management of group talk**.

## Planning lessons (module 3)

Module 3 focuses on the relationship between lesson planning and formative assessment and so explores in more depth some of the key characteristics of assessment for learning.

Its key messages are listed below.

- Good lesson planning is essential to assessment for learning.
- Teachers should start with what they want the pupils to learn and then decide what strategies and activities will best enable that learning. Planning should be learning led not activity led.
- Lesson plans should help teachers make clear to pupils what they are trying to learn, the relevance of that learning, the standards they are aiming for and how they can demonstrate achievement.
- Lessons need to have a clear structure so that, for example, pupils have opportunities to reflect on their learning and support each other as active learners.
- Lesson plans should not be over-elaborate and detailed. They are a means to better teaching and learning, not an end in themselves.

## Where next?

How you go about using the foundation subjects training materials to help you to develop assessment for learning depends, to a considerable extent, on your starting point, your aims and your current level of expertise. Here are some suggestions for getting started.

*If you are relatively new to assessment for learning and feel that it needs to have a higher priority you could consider the following.*

- Attend a training session, provided either in your school or in your LEA, on [Assessment for learning in everyday lessons](#). Use handout 1.3 to help you to analyse and reflect on your current practice. Either complete this yourself or, better still, ask a colleague to observe you teaching and gather first hand evidence to help you to identify areas you want to develop.
- Attend a training session, provided either in your school or in your LEA, on [Planning lessons](#). Focus on developing objectives led planning in your lessons, referring to OHTs 3.2 and 3.3 for guidance. Try different ways of sharing the lesson objectives with your pupils and of reflecting on them during plenaries.
- Attend training sessions, provided either in your school or in your LEA, on [Assessment for learning in everyday lessons](#) and [The formative use of summative assessment](#). Produce marking criteria in 'pupil speak' for one assessment opportunity from your scheme of work. You will need to consider the degree to which the mark scheme should draw on your subject's National Curriculum level descriptions. Use this mark scheme with the pupils throughout the learning sequence.

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This module links closely with the **Challenge** and **Engagement** modules. The modules in 'Teaching repertoire' can also support effective lesson planning.

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The **Starters** and **Plenaries** modules provide further training in structuring lessons. The four 'Knowing and learning' modules can support the development of pupil collaboration and reflection.

If you have been developing your practice in assessment for learning for some time you could consider the following.

- Attend a training session covering module 2, [The formative use of summative assessment](#). Use this as the basis for developing strategies for peer assessment and pupil target setting in a sequence of lessons.
- Review the lesson plans used in your department and agree with colleagues the characteristics of high quality lesson planning. Consider using the [Planning lessons](#) module to initiate discussion. You may find it helpful to plan collaboratively one or more lessons, using your departmental lesson planning template, to exemplify effective lesson planning in your subject for non-specialists, trainee teachers or others.

If you already have considerable experience in developing assessment for learning you could do the following.

- Look closely at the links with the other foundation subjects training modules to see how they may help you to develop your repertoire to support assessment for learning. For example, how might teaching thinking (see modules 11–14) help to 'close the gap' between pupils' present state of understanding and the learning goal?
- Consider the role of assessment for learning alongside the 'Subject leader development programme' training module entitled 'Analysing and interpreting pupils' attainment data and reviewing their progress'. This focuses on assessment **of** learning. How might one benefit the other?
- Gather evidence of good assessment practice within your school and share these approaches with colleagues. Is whole school policy, reflected in consistent good practice within and across departments?
- Help a colleague in another department to develop particular aspects of assessment for learning through a programme of coaching.

### ... and finally

There are three further foundation subjects key messages leaflets: 'Teaching repertoire' (DfES 0047/2003), 'Structuring learning' (DfES 0044/2003) and 'Teaching thinking' (DfES 0046/2003). These can be found on the website at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)

All training modules referred to in this leaflet can be found in the 'Training materials for the foundation subjects' folder (DfES 0350/2002) unless otherwise stated. LAC refers to 'Literacy across the curriculum' (DfEE 0235/2001). The subject leader development programme reference number is (DfES 0390/2002).