

Key Stage 3

National Strategy

Literacy Progress Unit
Reading between the lines

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Prolog ref no: DfEE 0476/2001

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Reprinted September 2001

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Introduction to Key Stage 3 Literacy Progress Units

The context of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy

A key factor in raising standards is ensuring that more pupils have the competence and confidence in literacy to cope well with the learning challenges of the secondary curriculum. The government is committed to giving more pupils access to that curriculum by extending the principles and practice of the National Literacy Strategy into Key Stage 3.

There are three major elements to the drive to raise standards of literacy in secondary schools through the Key Stage 3 National Strategy:

- i training for English departments on increasing achievement through effective teaching based on the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9*
- ii cross-curricular training on literacy for all staff
- iii support materials for teachers of pupils who attained below Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils who enter Year 7 on Level 3 need additional support if they are to develop the literacy skills that can unlock learning and enable them to reach the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 3. Literacy Progress Units have been developed to offer such support.

The need for Key Stage 3 Literacy Progress Units

The evidence from national test results 1996–2000 shows that almost two-thirds of pupils who enter Year 7 without having achieved Level 4 in English, fail to reach Level 5 at the end of Year 9. Many of them also fail to do justice to their abilities in other subjects because they find it difficult to handle the pressures of reading and writing with sufficient speed and skill. That is a situation the government is determined to tackle. The need for specific support in relation to writing is clear, given the disparity in attainment between reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2. (In 2000 83% of pupils gained Level 4 in reading, as opposed to only 55% in writing.) Similarly clear, within the context of equality of opportunity, is the need to motivate and support the boys who form the majority of Year 7 pupils who have not yet achieved Level 4.

What so many of the pupils still on Level 3 need is tangible progress that will build their belief in themselves as successful learners. Experience with the Additional Literacy Support (ALS) in primary schools has shown that such progress is possible, using well-structured, fast-paced and carefully targeted intervention. The Literacy Progress Units provided for the Key Stage 3 National Strategy reflect the principles and practice of ALS which has proved so successful.

These Literacy Progress Units reflect the belief that all pupils on Level 3 should aspire to Level 4 by the end of Year 7, and should aim to catch up with their peers by achieving Level 5 or above at the end of Year 9. Public indications of progress will be provided through the end of Year 7 progress tests for pupils who entered secondary school below Level 4.

Moving from Level 3 to Level 4

In achieving Level 3, pupils have shown themselves capable of reading with some understanding and fluency and of using different forms of writing with a degree of accuracy. What they need to learn is how to read with greater insight and understanding and how to express themselves in accurate, well-organised writing that uses language effectively at word and sentence level. In many cases this will involve revisiting aspects of English which they have met in primary school, but doing so with material that respects their status as secondary school pupils and assumes a 'can do' approach, which builds in and builds on pupils' existing experiences and abilities.

We know what we have to do to move pupils towards Level 4. The characteristic constraints for pupils who attain Level 3 at Key Stage 2, identified in relation to the three strands of the National Literacy Strategy, are:

Word level

- uncertain choices for long and unstressed medial vowel sounds
- limited grasp of spelling rules and conventions
- insecure understanding and use of possessive apostrophes.

Sentence level

- limited use of complex sentences
- variable use of commas to mark boundaries within sentences
- limited ability to use pronouns and verb tenses accurately
- uncertainties over speech punctuation.

Text level

- limited use of paragraphing and other organisational devices
- limited ability to organise non-narrative writing
- insufficient planning, reviewing and editing of writing for clarity, interest and purpose
- literal rather than inferential reading.

Key Stage 3 Literacy Progress Units have been informed and shaped by QCA analyses of Key Stage 2 English test results in recent years, by the evidence from OFSTED and by the emphases of the National Literacy Strategy. They focus on the critical features which move pupils on to Level 4 which are:

- developing effective strategies for information retrieval
- reading using inference and deduction
- using full stops, capital letters and commas accurately in longer sentences
- varying sentence structure
- organising texts in ways other than chronological
- using paragraphs effectively
- applying knowledge of spelling rules and conventions.

These features are reflected in the Literacy Progress Units, since addressing these aspects of English is the surest way to ensure progress towards Level 4 and beyond.

Literacy Progress Units overview

The six units and the main areas they cover are:

- *Writing organisation*: organising and shaping writing effectively
- *Information retrieval*: extracting and evaluating information from a range of non-literary sources
- *Spelling*: spelling accurately, as a result of knowing the conventions and having strategies for improving spelling
- *Reading between the lines*: using inference and deduction in interpreting literary texts
- *Phonics*: applying knowledge of phonics in their own writing
- *Sentences*: having a repertoire of sentence structures and using them effectively.

Many teachers will be familiar with the content, if not the focus and methodology, in the units on *Writing organisation*, *Reading between the lines* and *Information retrieval*. The Literacy Progress Unit least familiar to many secondary teachers will probably be *Phonics*, but OFSTED evidence continues to indicate that the quality of phonics teaching in primary schools is variable and if pupils do not know about phonics they need to be taught. This aspect of word level work is of central importance in pupils' acquisition of literacy skills. The *Spelling* unit offers ways of addressing an area of continuing concern to teachers, to employers and to pupils themselves. Similarly significant, although an area of uncertainty for some teachers, is the *Sentences* unit: pupils need to understand enough about sentence grammar to be able to appreciate the choices available to them as writers, and to make those choices effectively.

Management and organisation

The role of senior staff

In relation to Key Stage 3 Literacy Progress Units, senior staff need to:

- lead from the top by giving visible support and, if possible, by becoming personally involved
- make any necessary timetabling changes
- explore the possibilities for having Literacy Progress Unit sessions outside the usual time of the school day
- ensure that Literacy Progress Unit sessions take place in situations which promote a positive learning atmosphere
- identify or, if funding permits, appoint staff for Literacy Progress Units
- agree monitoring procedures with the people involved
- inform staff not directly involved in delivering Literacy Progress Units
- provide the resources and equipment needed
- determine evaluation criteria
- encourage staff and pupils and celebrate achievement.

The role of the teacher

In relation to **pupils**, teachers need to:

- select pupils who will benefit from Literacy Progress Units, basing their assessments on judgements about current attainment, informed by the assessment guidance in each unit, and test results from Key Stage 2
- prepare the pupils by establishing appropriate expectations about how they will work during the Literacy Progress Unit sessions
- ensure that work done in mainstream lessons based on the *Framework* relates to, reinforces and builds upon what has been done in Literacy Progress Unit sessions
- monitor pupil progress in attitude as well as attainment.

In relation to **teaching assistants and other colleagues**, teachers need to:

- make sure that the staff involved understand the principles and practice of Literacy Progress Units
- plan and liaise effectively
- offer support, especially during the initial stages
- help to monitor pupil progress
- observe or participate in some of the sessions.

In relation to **parents**, teachers need to:

- inform parents why their children have been chosen to work on Literacy Progress Units and explain how the units can support their children's progress
- suggest how parents can help
- keep parents informed.

Timing

Each of the six units has 18 sessions of 20 minutes. It is therefore possible to deliver a unit in six weeks, with three sessions each week. The units relate to the revision objectives in Year 7 of the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9*, but they are not an alternative to the English programmes of study of the National Curriculum. They should be thought of as complementing or contributing to English lessons, not as replacing them.

Literacy Progress Unit sessions can be provided in or outside the school day, such as before school, lunchtime or after school. Sessions can also be fitted in to English lessons which follow the pattern recommended in the *Framework* and therefore include structured group time, but teachers need to recognise that this limits the opportunity to consolidate the aims of the main lesson.

Teaching and learning

Literacy Progress Units are flexible enough to be adapted to suit the contexts of different schools but they have been developed with group work, rather than whole-class activity, in mind. They can be delivered by teachers, by teaching assistants or by other staff such as librarians.

The units are based on the teaching principles and practice which have proved their worth through the National Literacy Strategy. Central to the approach in Literacy Progress Units is a movement from demonstration to independence in small secure steps. The small-group context allows the teacher to be aware of how effectively pupils are applying what has just been taught, and to intervene at the moment of maximum impact. Each session of 20 minutes usually includes:

- building on prior knowledge
- linking writing with speaking and listening and with reading
- a highly interactive approach
- an emphasis on teacher modelling
- gradual drawing in of pupils with scaffolded activities
- building pupil confidence through supported application
- consolidation of individual learning through revision and reflection
- a deliberately fast pace
- a sense of enjoyment through working together.

The teaching sequence which underpins every session is:

Remember	Identification of prior knowledge and key objectives
Model	Teacher demonstration of process
Try	Shared exploration through activity
Apply	Scaffolded pupil application of new learning
Secure	Consolidation through discussion/activity

Units have been written for the adult who is delivering them, but few sessions are scripted verbatim since the teacher's own words will often be the best.

Pupils

Literacy Progress Units are intended for pupils who have attained Level 3 in English and are working towards Level 4. The proportion of pupils in that category varies so widely across schools that the decision whether or not to use a particular unit with a pupil must rest with the school. It will depend on the diagnosis of individual need, based on the analysis of Key Stage 2 results and evidence from a pupil's current work. It might be appropriate for some pupils to tackle six units during a school year, since the whole suite of units constitutes a powerful preparation for Level 4, while others, who have reached Level 4 in reading, might need only the units which will help them to improve their writing. Guidance on preliminary assessment is given in the Appendix to this Introduction, and more detailed diagnostic guidance accompanies each unit.

One of the teacher's permanent aims should be that pupils' self-esteem is enhanced by Literacy Progress Unit sessions. We want pupils to be confident enough to take risks, and to learn from their mistakes. The small-group situation envisaged for Literacy Progress Units offers particular opportunities for insecure learners: it is highly interactive and creates a close community of learners who come to trust each other enough to be honest with each other. The teaching sequence is designed to scaffold success for all, and the steps between the learning activities are small enough to allow little mistakes to be picked up so naturally and quickly that no one needs to make a big mistake. This means intervening early to correct errors, not allowing them to become embedded.

Ways of supporting pupils include:

- establishing that we all make some mistakes, and that they are usually valuable starting points for learning
- giving clear guidance over tasks and timing
- allowing sufficient thinking time
- using pair work to avoid individual embarrassment
- giving pupils strategies for signalling uncertainty and creating a 'not sure' option
- using supportive body language
- rewarding and commenting on positive behaviour, rather than noticing only negative behaviour
- being clear about errors, and not dodging the issue
- unearthing underlying misconceptions

- going back a stage when necessary to model and explain first principles
- always preserving the pupil's dignity as well as the teacher's.

Staffing

In many schools the units will be taught by support staff as well as by teachers or librarians. The government has provided funding for an increasing number of teaching assistants in secondary schools, and the style of the units reflects an expectation that in many schools the teaching will be done by a teaching assistant, working with a group of around six pupils. The unit authors have therefore tried not to take subject knowledge for granted, and have been deliberately explicit about terminology and pedagogy. Schools are recommended to have training sessions for the colleagues involved, prior to the introduction of the units, and to ensure time for liaison between those teaching mainstream lessons and those delivering the Literacy Progress Units.

The role of teaching assistants

The number of teaching assistants in secondary schools is rising, since the government has recognised and welcomed the increasingly important contribution that teaching assistants are making to raising standards in secondary schools. Funding for teaching assistants in secondary schools has been increased substantially through the Standards Fund, as part of the government's commitment to provide an additional 20,000 (full-time equivalent) assistants for schools by 2002. It will continue to provide funding to maintain that level until 2004.

There are considerable variations in the quality of support and training for teaching assistants, and in the effectiveness with which they are deployed. As a matter of good practice, each school should have an agreed policy on the role of teaching assistants. This policy should include provision for training and for shared planning time.

The DfEE will be providing a training programme for secondary teaching assistants which consists of four days training and includes a module of two half-days on supporting pupils' literacy skills. The literacy module will include a session on the Literacy Progress Units. Local education authorities will be expected to disseminate this training to secondary teaching assistants and their mentors in the autumn term 2001 or spring 2002. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy will also be providing two days of training for English consultants on the Literacy Progress Units in June 2001. Consultants will be expected to offer this training to teachers and teaching assistants and schools will also be able to use these materials to do their own in-house training. At a later date there will also be training available to secondary practitioners on *Phonics* and *Spelling*.

The Literacy Progress Units have been written specifically for teaching assistants. This is reflected in the style and in the use of terminology. If a teaching assistant (or anyone else) is to deliver Literacy Progress Units effectively, that person will need to:

- feel confident about working with groups of Year 7 pupils
- be familiar with the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9*
- be willing to plan and prepare with other colleagues
- have the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and deliver the materials
- prepare sessions in advance
- know and relate to the pupils.

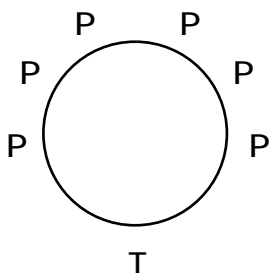
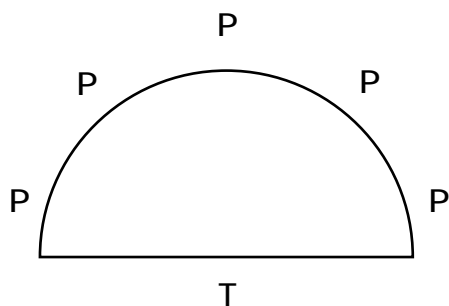
Shared discussion over implementation is essential. It is good practice to involve a wider group of colleagues (including the Head of English and the SENCo) in discussion of how the materials will be introduced and evaluated.

Preparation

Each session needs careful preparation in advance, since many of them depend on games or resource sheets which need to be at hand in the session to avoid slackening the pace. The timing of the sessions has such momentum that there is no time for finding or making resource materials. Many sessions need an OHP or a flipchart with the necessary accessories. The support materials are all photocopiable and there is always a list of the materials needed for a particular session. This means that careful storage of cards and other materials for future use is a good investment of time. Some units need posters and pupil response sheets available for a series of sessions if the learning opportunities are to be optimised. These need to be prepared in advance.

Location

It is not fair to the pupils, the teachers or to the materials if problems arise, not because of what is being taught, but where it is being taught. Many schools, in their planning for Literacy Progress Units, have ensured that they can take place in suitable situations. For example, they have arranged for pupils to be seated in an arc around the teacher in a way that maximises face-to-face contact and ensures that no pupil has to see a text upside down.



Parents

Parents have the right to know what is happening to their children and why. It is important to inform and involve parents as much as possible by providing information about Literacy Progress Units.

Appendix: Initial assessment for Literacy Progress Units

Note: Focus only on pupils who gained Level 3 in reading and/or writing.

Using the outcomes of Key Stage 2 assessment

The ideal way to assess a pupil's suitability for Literacy Progress Units is to use Key Stage 2 data and to talk with the pupil's former teacher. The Key Stage 2 school mark sheet for end of Key Stage 2 assessments enables teachers in the secondary school to identify differences in patterns of attainment across attainment targets. (For writing there is a spelling mark, a handwriting mark, a writing mark and the overall total which determines the level for writing. For reading there is a reading mark and reading level.) Many pupils who gained Level 4 in reading, but not in writing, need the Literacy Progress Units on writing, but not those for reading.

Individual pupil cover sheets, available from primary schools, give a more detailed breakdown of the marks for writing and are useful for identifying specific areas of strength and weakness. These cover sheets give the marks for purpose and organisation, for style and punctuation in addition to spelling and handwriting. Such evidence can help to identify which units are priorities for a pupil.

Using evidence from pupils' work

If Key Stage 2 test evidence is not available, schools should consider Key Stage 2 teacher assessment. If this indicates that pupils are not secure in Level 4, pupils' current work should be assessed. Assessment guidance for each unit is available in the unit-specific introductions.

Introduction to Reading between the lines

This unit focuses on developing the skills pupils need if they are to progress from Level 3 to Level 4¹ in English. It is meant to supplement, but not to replace, the English curriculum for Year 7 pupils. That curriculum should be based on the objectives of the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9* which ensure coverage of the Programmes of Study for English.

This unit is intended for Level 3 pupils working towards Level 4. It sets out to develop pupils' ability to 'read between the lines': to use inference and deduction in order to understand what is meant, as well as what is stated openly. The key skills which underpin such understanding are:

- ability to pick up clues from a text using inference and deduction
- visualisation
- prediction
- empathy
- recognition of narrative perspective.

These skills are identified, exemplified and revisited throughout the unit.

The sessions are grouped into threes, on the assumption that many schools will offer three Literacy Progress sessions in a week. There are therefore seven distinct but related areas of focus:

- 1: Engaging with text through prediction and inference
- 2: Reading around a text, picking up clues about characters and settings
- 3: Interpreting images
- 4: Prediction and retrospection
- 5: Interpreting and presenting character
- 6: Narrative techniques
- 7: Reading in a writerly way.

One of the guiding principles of the unit is that understanding needs to be contextualised. Hence the use of comparatively few texts which, like Ann Turnbull's story *Deep Water*, are the focus for a series of sessions. This enables pupils to develop a cumulative understanding and therefore a wider range of skills. Where extracts are used, it is hoped that pupils will be given the opportunity to read the whole text from which the extract is taken.

¹ Level descriptors for AT2 English National Curriculum DfEE 1999

Teaching and learning style

The unit builds on the successful approaches of the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools, and therefore features a core teaching sequence which promotes active learning. That teaching sequence, common to all units, is:

Remember Identification of prior knowledge and key objectives

Model Teacher demonstration of process

Try Shared exploration through activity

Apply Scaffolded pupil application of new learning

Secure Consolidation through discussion/activity

Each 20-minute session is fast-paced and interactive. After the teacher has introduced and modelled a particular aspect of writing or reading, pupils try it out together as a group or in pairs. They then have the chance to apply their new learning, usually with support, and to secure it through consolidation activities or discussion. Each step in the learning process is therefore small enough for the teacher/adult to intervene early to prevent any pupil from making major mistakes which could undermine a learner's confidence. The intention is to construct success for all.

The teaching and learning techniques used during the unit are intended to promote active and interactive learning. Oral, visual and practical activities feature prominently: these include text marking, highlighting, annotation, thinking aloud, sketching and drama techniques.

The 'script' for each session is written for the person delivering the unit. So too are the annotated extracts which indicate the kind of comment that a teacher might want to make on specific aspects of a text. Where specific wording is suggested (indicated by italics in the session plans) this should not be seen as limiting the teacher's professional judgement. Whenever appropriate, colleagues teaching the unit should adapt the suggested script to meet the needs of the context and of the pupils. The sample session plan on pages xvi–xvii identifies the key strategies being used.

The unit consists of 18 session plans, plus support material in the form of annotated teacher sheets and a pupil reading journal. In many cases exemplar responses are included, but this is to give a clear image of what is expected, rather than to define 'the' correct answer. All the sessions need advance preparation, but some need more than others in terms of photocopying and cutting up. Each set of session plans includes a space for teachers' notes and comments.

Reading between the lines pupil assessment:

The story below and the multiple-choice questions can be used to assess a pupil's suitability for this unit.

Boo! by Kevin Crossley-Holland

She didn't like it at all when her father had to go down to London and, for the first time, she had to sleep alone in the old house.

She went up to her bedroom early. She turned the key and locked the door. She latched the windows and drew the curtains. She peered inside her wardrobe, and pulled open the bottom drawer of her chest-of-drawers; she got down on her knees and looked under the bed.

She undressed; she put on her nightdress.

She pulled back the heavy linen cover and climbed into bed. Not to read but to try and sleep – she wanted to sleep as soon as she could. She reached out and turned off the lamp.

Answer these multiple-choice questions about the story. Circle the correct answer.

1. Does she live in a new house?
 - (a) yes
 - (b) no
2. Why did she peer in the wardrobe?
 - (a) to find her nightdress
 - (b) to check nothing was in there
3. Why did she want to sleep as soon as she could?
 - (a) because she was scared
 - (b) because she didn't have a book to read
 - (c) because her light wasn't working

Result

3 appropriate answers:

Review the evidence suggesting that inference and deduction are the source of this pupil's difficulties. It may be better to identify and teach whatever the problem is rather than enter the unit.

1–2 appropriate answers:

Enter this pupil for the unit.

0 appropriate answers:

This pupil obviously has problems with understanding implication. He or she might well benefit from the unit but will need constructive support.

Sample session plan

Session 3 *focus of session*

Session 3 **Inference and deduction**

key terms explained *information on materials and preparation needed*

Objectives	Key terms	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To be able to search for evidence in the text that supports or indicates something further and leads to inferences. 	<p>Inference: interpretation which goes beyond the literal information given.</p> <p>Deduction: understanding based on the evidence in the text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reading Journals (pages 2 and 4) ■ Teacher Sheet/OHT 2.1 (from last session) ■ Teacher Sheet 3.1 (one set of statement cards, cut up) ■ Teacher Sheet 3.2 (exemplar) ■ Teacher Sheet 3.3 (extract 2 from <i>Deep Water</i> by Ann Turnbull), enlarged or OHT ■ Teacher Sheet 3.4 (exemplar) ■ Highlighter pens ■ Flipchart and pens

specific objective(s)

Remember **Time: 1 minute**

- Remind the pupils about the need to look for clues and information in the text.
- Tell pupils they are going to read between the lines. They will use the text and clues in it to deduce what the writer is trying to tell us, beyond the purely factual information. They will infer meaning. They will check the text for evidence to support inferences.

building on prior learning

Model **Time: 4 minutes**

- Using the cards from Teacher Sheet 3.1, offer a statement on a card such as 'Jon is unhappy at school' and model searching for evidence from the text that supports this statement.
- Annotate extract 1 (Teacher Sheet/OHT 2.1) again, highlighting phrases to show any evidence that indicates that this statement is true. The text does not actually use this statement but the author indicates this to us if we read between the lines. Articulate as you go. (See exemplar, Teacher Sheet 3.2.)
- Remind the pupils to be aware that some inferences may be challenged as we gain more information in a text. Things may not be exactly as they seem as the story progresses.

demonstration by adult expert *explanation of key points*

Try **Time: 5 minutes**

- Using the remainder of the cards, pupils in pairs should choose a statement from the following:
 - 'Jon is unhappy at home.'
 - 'Jon's mother hits him when she is cross.'
 - 'Ryan is not Jon's friend.'
 - 'Jon is not doing very well at school.'
- Ask the pupils to search the text in their Reading Journals (page 2) for evidence that supports or indicates that the statement might be true, and to underline it.

supported application of learning

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Session 3

- During the activity use the opportunity to discuss with pairs why they have made particular choices and help pupils where necessary.
- Remind pupils that some inferences need to be confirmed by further information, for example, Jon's mother bullies and nags Jon, but it is not proven that she hits him. We may initially assume (infer) that Ryan is not Jon's friend, but later evidence shows that we would be wrong.

Apply Time: 5 minutes

- Read extract 2 (Teacher Sheet/OHT 3.3) aloud to the group.
- Ask pupils to underline on their own copies (Reading Journal, page 4) things they deduce or know for sure (or literal information) and to highlight any part of the text that leads them to believe or infer something further, annotating it to explain what it leads them to infer.

Secure Time: 5 minutes

- Using Teacher Sheet/OHT 3.3, take pupil feedback and annotate or mark text accordingly, praising good explanations and filtering obviously wrong responses. (See exemplar, Teacher Sheet 3.4.)
- Remind pupils that as we read on further in a text, we may gain more information that may contradict or change initial inferences. For example, in extract 2 we learn that Ryan is Jon's friend whereas previously we may have inferred that he was not.
- Ask pupils to add to their own annotated extracts.

Notes

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consolidation of learning as part of teaching sequence

detailed guidance for person delivering the session

challenging pace of learning

reflection on what has been learnt

space for teachers' notes and evaluation

