



Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

Bridging plans: from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4

Leadership guide
2005 edition

**Senior leaders in
secondary schools**

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The context and purpose of bridging plans

Towards the end of Year 9, pupils select subject options for Key Stage 4. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, discussion centres on the nature, value and interest of these subjects.

A well-managed process helps pupils to make informed choices and fosters a sense of responsibility for their own learning. As pupils start to study their chosen options, there is an opportunity for subject teachers to engage them afresh, conveying a flavour of the subject and the skills that pupils will be expected and enabled to develop.

The second half of the summer term, after national tests or reported teacher assessments, can be a valuable opportunity to:

- engage pupils in the challenges of subjects chosen for study in Key Stage 4
- offer something different and a renewed sense of purpose in the core subjects.

The booklets of bridging plans for the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, published in 2004, and those for ICT, modern foreign languages and design and technology, published in 2005, outline projects of varying length in each subject that link learning across the key stages. Some projects may relate closely to what subject departments are already doing, others may provide fresh ideas. The projects draw on a range of existing materials and resources, including Key Stage 3 publications.

As explained in each booklet, a bridging plan is about more than just starting GCSE courses early. It is a chance to create a sense of moving on, with an expectation of increasing maturity as a learner. The booklets share a philosophy and an approach, so that work done in one department can reinforce what is done in others. Although they differ in the amount of detail given, each subject booklet creates a bridge to the skills that will be needed in Key Stage 4, in order to encourage work initiated in Year 9 to be followed through.

Common features of subject booklets

You have been provided with two sets of booklets, one to distribute to subject leaders or heads of department and the other to retain for planning and reference. Each booklet follows the same structure. It is suggested that you:

- read one of the booklets to get a flavour of them all – the introductory pages are common to all booklets
- read the overviews of the bridging plans in each of the booklets to get an understanding of suggested projects for each subject.

Developing pupils' learning skills

A major aim of the set of booklets is to develop pupils as independent learners. This means:

- developing the greater degree of independence that pupils will need, for example to complete coursework. Independence does not mean isolation; collaborative work can be a vehicle for developing the skills pupils need when working alone
- developing pupils' awareness of themselves as learners. If teachers think about pupils as learners, not just about their subject capabilities, they can foster the self-awareness that will help pupils in all their work.

To support this aim there is a common section on developing pupils' learning skills, in each booklet.

Focus on identified key skills

A feature of suggested projects in each subject is the link to identified key skills, for example:

- encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own progress by involving them in peer and self-assessment activities – **Key skill: Improving own learning and performance**
- using supported collaborative work to prepare pupils for independent in-depth tasks, such as coursework, including investigative and research techniques – **Key skill: Working with others**
- developing pupils' reasoning skills and the ability to communicate their thinking in a logical and ordered manner – **Key skill: Communication**
- developing pupils' problem-solving skills to encompass a wider range of contexts and applications – **Key skill: Problem solving.**

This commonality should be drawn to the attention of subject leaders by comparing the grids showing an overview of the bridging plans in each booklet, so that they can exploit opportunities to help pupils make links across subjects.

Working with departments

The impact of bridging plans will be far greater where there is a coordinated approach across departments.

- Support from senior management will provide encouragement and facilitate practical arrangements, perhaps including collaboration with local schools.
- Discussion across departments will establish a common approach and sharpen plans in each subject.
- Pupils will experience a more coherent programme during the period of transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.

Suggested agenda for a short subject leader meeting

Ideally, a school would hold two short meetings – one to initiate plans and another after individual departments have discussed proposals. Try to have at least one meeting to facilitate developments, distributing copies of booklets to subject leaders for them to read before you meet. The following points for discussion could form an agenda for such a meeting.

- 1 The value of reviewing bridging plans and taking a concerted approach across subjects.
- 2 The potential for boosting pupils' learning skills and independence in Key Stage 4.
- 3 Possible projects in each subject:
 - new projects as well as adaptations to existing ones, including bridging plans
 - links between subject projects and how to convey these to pupils
 - linking core with foundation subjects, or collaborating with local schools.
- 4 Practicalities:
 - planning and preparation
 - resources and timetabling.

Making your plans successful

The key to success will be to:

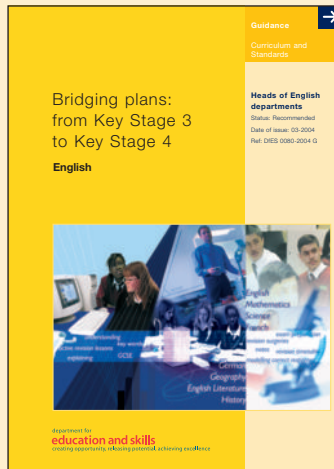
- start by acknowledging what is already being done by departments
- keep proposals realistic, taking account of time and scope for development
- encourage thorough implementation by ensuring that, as far as possible, projects are inclusive of all pupils and teaching groups
- ensure that projects initiated in Year 9 are followed through in Year 10.

Evaluating your bridging plans

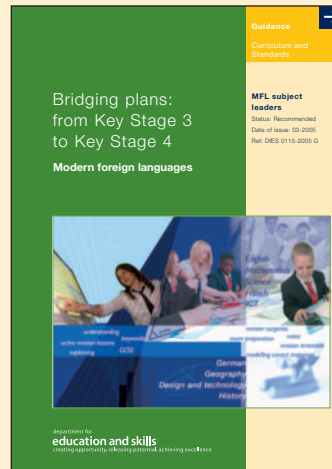
Finally, consider how to evaluate the impact of your bridging plans during the first half of the autumn term. This could include:

- interviews with a small number of selected pupils
- departmental reviews, followed by a meeting of subject leaders
- proposals for revision and development for the following year.

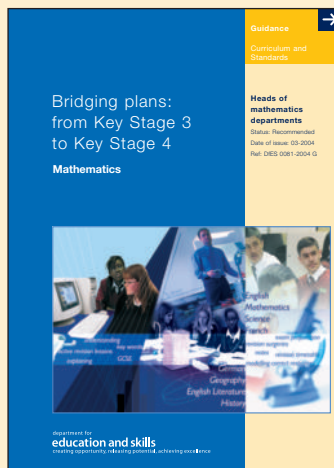
Bridging plans: from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 in ...



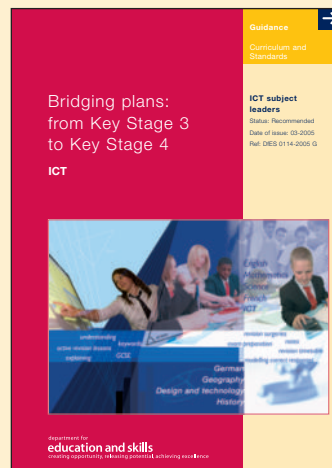
English



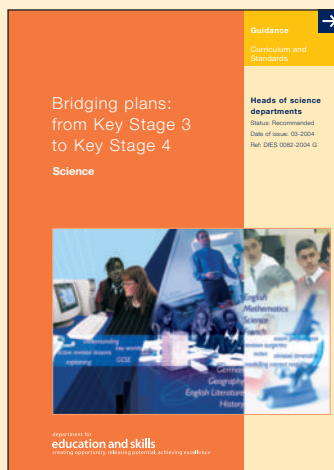
Modern foreign languages



Mathematics



ICT



Science



Design and technology

Bridging plans: from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4

- Do you have specific plans for lessons that bridge between the end of Key Stage 3 and the beginning of Key Stage 4?
- Do your pupils have a sense of a new beginning when they start Key Stage 4 courses?
- Do you develop pupils' expectations for future learning in your subject?
- Do you take the opportunity to enhance pupils' skills as independent learners?

Giving attention to these questions can ensure that Year 9 pupils receive a fresh stimulus at the end of Key Stage 3 and that their work links effectively with the challenges of Key Stage 4.

This booklet is one of a set of three, focused on ICT, design and technology and modern foreign languages. This set follows an initial set of three, for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, published in 2004. The aim is to capture and make best use of time at the end of Year 9 and into Year 10. Each booklet:

- suggests a common approach to fostering pupils' development as independent learners
- identifies aspects of the chosen subject that might be developed to improve transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.

The maximum benefit will be found where these developments are led and supported across the school by senior leaders.

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