

Transfers and Transitions newsletter

Issue 2, Summer 2007

Transfers and transitions – the challenge and the support



In a recent research paper that QCA published, of a commissioned NFER international survey into the claimed phenomenon of the 'Key Stage 3 dip', there are some interesting findings that are pertinent to our work on strengthening transfers and transitions practices. In general it found that:

'In both policy and research documentation, the dip phenomenon appears to cut across the international arena, although it is not described in all countries studied. What does seem to be consistent is that the middle years in general (after primary school; age 11–14) appear to constitute a phase in education where least progress is made by students. This middle year phase is also characterised by the period of transfer from primary to secondary education. Students go through a number of transfers and transitions during their education and each of these points appears to hold the potential for a dip in performance, particularly in relation to the traditional academic subjects.' (p.2)

'The effect of transfer was identified as a specific factor related to a dip by six countries/states other than England: Germany, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain and Tasmania (Australia). The transfer period was identified as a time of significant change and explanations of a dip therefore focused on discontinuities in learning that can arise at this stage.' (p.21)

'Also mismatch between children's expectations and what they actually experience in the next phase of schooling, and associated perceptions of lack of challenge and repetition, has also been reported (Lord and Jones, forthcoming).' (p.29)

'Other literature suggests encouraging student-centred teaching that meets the needs of all students. This may encompass teaching and learning that is challenging, involves novelty and encourages autonomy (Gottfried et al., 2001; Hall and Kennedy, 2006).

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If you have good practice to share... please don't hesitate to get in touch. We are already looking for case studies for our next edition.

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Pedagogies which encourage providing feedback (Rivers, 2006) and recognising students' learning, progress and achievements may also guard against a dip in performance, particularly where there are year groups without tests or markers of progress, such as in Year 8 in England.' (pp. 37-38)

'In addition, the literature seems to identify that parents may be able to address any potential dip in performance by encouraging reading, providing a stimulating home environment, and emphasising non-extrinsic motivational goals.' (p.38)

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The challenge of strengthening transfers and transitions practices is at the heart of addressing 'dips' in pupil performance and not only on transfer from Key Stage 2 to 3. The above research paper also states that;

'In England, for example, research has suggested that a dip may occur in primary level education at the transition from key stage 1 to key stage 2.'

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Thus transfers and transitions processes provide a potential barrier to continuity of pupil progress, not only in this country, but internationally as well. The challenge is how to successfully address these issues.

How are LAs and schools going to be further supported in overcoming these barriers in order to raise standards?



The developing role of transfers and transitions in the National Strategies' Annual Plan 2007–2008

The place of transfers and transitions has been strategically enhanced within this year's annual plan. The commitment of the National Strategies to supporting transfers and transitions practices was inherent in the work of the cross-phase strengthening transfers and transitions pilot programme.

This year's annual plan gives transfers and transitions a more consistent and strategic role in aligning this work throughout the National Strategies.

This will be achieved by the following:

- The cross-phase strengthening transfers and transitions pilot programme will be evaluated and dissemination of effective practice will be published through internet-based case studies.
- The transfers and transitions regional advisers (RAs) will embed support for strengthening transfers and transitions in all cross-phase programmes. This will include strengthening the effective use of data, AfL (Assessment for Learning) practice and tracking pupil progress.
- The transfers and transitions RAs will support work in all regions, where strengthening transfers and transitions practices meets the needs of regional priorities in improving pupil performance and raising standards.

This means that, in effect, support for strengthening transfers and transitions has been expanded beyond work with only the pilot LAs. This gives added importance and impetus to the evaluation of the pilot programme, as it will support and inform much of this expanded work.



New materials to support LAs and schools

The transfers and transitions team has, since the last newsletter, produced a range of materials designed to support LAs and schools in strengthening practice in these areas.

The diagnostic self-evaluation toolkit

Work has been completed on writing a Primary toolkit for transfers and transitions. Along with the Secondary toolkit these can be found at:

www.supportingselfevaluation.org.uk

Electronic professional development (ePD) tool – guidance for senior leaders and teachers in strengthening transfers and transitions

This is an interactive website that is designed to complement and support the five areas of the self-evaluation toolkit:

- using data and information
- targeting support and intervention
- continuity of curriculum, teaching and learning
- school ethos and climate for learning
- parent partnerships

This guidance is designed to help senior leaders and teachers in primary and secondary schools identify and implement strategies, structures and systems that will strengthen the transfers and transitions of pupils.

It uses examples of transfers and transitions from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, but much of the content is relevant for other key stages. It can be used in a number of ways:

- sequentially or discreetly
- by individuals or in groups
- for revision, or support in a particular area

There are transcribed video clips, suggestions for discussions, and further materials and activities to support the development of strategies that produce effective transfers and transitions practices. This ePD can be found at:

www.supportingselfevaluation.org.uk/training/d4/index.html

Transfers and transitions roadshow powerpoint

A cross-phase powerpoint (PPT) presentation has been produced to engage senior leaders in strengthening

transfers and transitions. It aims at promoting understanding to improve continuity of learning by embedding effective teaching and assessment practice within and between key stages.

There are five main sections:

- Identifying issues and challenges and agreeing key values
- Considering the National Strategies focus on transfers and transitions
- Identifying effective practice
- Becoming familiar with the self-evaluation toolkit
- Looking at some key questions and identifying next steps

It includes video clips of pupils sharing their experiences of the impact of transfer on their learning journey as well as teachers' perspectives.

All National Strategy RAs will receive a CD-ROM that contains the following:

- the PPT presentation
- the script outlining delivery and key messages
- accompanying materials and handouts

This presentation can be used with individual schools or clusters of partner schools where it is identified that closer collaboration across transfer would increase rates of pupil progress.



Pupil progress

The '2020 Vision' review suggests that personalisation in education is a matter of moral purpose and social justice. At the heart of this is that every child should have the opportunity to progress in their learning at a rate matching their ability, and yet a significant minority of children and young people do not make even one level's progress between one key stage and the next. In 2005, one in ten pupils were either 'stuck' or regressed between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 (DfES analysis).

The recently published 'Making good progress' (MGP) consultation document suggests we could adjust our approaches to assessment and testing to support a clearer focus on the progress of every individual pupil and that, armed with better evidence of individual rates of progress, schools can explore techniques for accelerating that progress. It picks up a proposal in 2020 Vision that national and school-level targets for progression should be introduced.

The message is clear. A child's progress is a matter for ongoing scrutiny, not just at the end of a key stage. Only by tracking and responding to that progress can we aspire to provide every child with the opportunity to achieve the expected, age-related, levels of attainment.

The report describes how this might look:

'In the personalised classroom, the teacher has the data, information and tracking systems to know what each pupil can do and the things they are finding difficult. Assessment for learning is a live policy which mobilises everyday observations and periodic checks on how children are doing, such as end-of-unit assignments and end-of-year tests. Pupil-to-pupil talk is encouraged and facilitated. All the evidence gained is used to plan the future lessons, to target resources, to help those who are struggling and to stretch those who are excelling.'

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The challenge for schools working in partnership to support pupil transfers or transitions is to provide the 'personalised classroom' from day one.

Some partner schools are using teacher assessment and other data to collaborate in setting curricular targets across transfer. They are aligning tracking systems and maintaining collaboration to target intervention and support further achievement. They are engaging pupils as active partners, with responsibility for participating in designing their learning and providing feedback. They are pioneering approaches to learning how to learn and equipping pupils with the self-awareness

and confidence to take greater control of their learning journey.

Such approaches require levels of mutual trust and professional esteem that can only be forged through partnership – a partnership that promotes an understanding of each other's cultural, systemic and pedagogical elements. From this understanding continuities can be established with an aim to maintain pupils' rates of progress across and beyond transfer.

A vital element in our endeavour to sustain or accelerate progress is the ability to track it. 'Tracking for success' (TfS) (DfES 1545-2005 FLR-EN) identifies some of the principles behind doing this effectively:

- pupil progress is tracked using a range of performance measures including teacher assessments and test results. All staff work collaboratively to gather, share and use information. Identification of a pupil's underperformance is early, rapid and accurate;
- data are collected and shared with pupils and with all staff involved in teaching the pupils. Pupils' achievements are benchmarked against local and national data;
- pupils have regular opportunities to discuss their progress and are

involved in setting their own targets. Annual and key stage targets are shared with all staff involved in teaching the pupils;

- teaching and interventions are informed by regular monitoring, and are adjusted in the light of pupils' needs;
- parents and carers are informed and involved in order to support pupils' achievements;
- performance data are managed through a school-wide system, teachers have ready access to the data they need, and new data can be entered and processed easily.

These principles were designed with tracking within a school in mind. Partner schools aspiring to these principles across transfer need to consider:

- how can continuity in the use of a range of performance measures be established across transfer?
- what is the earliest point at which Year 6 and Year 7 teachers' collaboration can identify underperformance?
- how can pupils and parents best be involved in the process?
- what would a 'family of schools-wide system' look like?

'Tracking for Success' emphasises the importance of the first term of Year 7; the suggested actions include the following:

- gather Key Stage 2 pupil-level data to inform target setting and pupil grouping;
- set Year 7 targets (expect every pupil to add two sub-levels);
- set curricular targets in subjects for groups of pupils and/or individual pupils as necessary;
- adjust teaching programmes and use specific intervention programmes as necessary;
- organise a mid-term review of pupils' effort and progress across all subjects.

The first six weeks in a new school are critical; long-term engagement of pupils

is won and lost. They can reinforce foundations for success or initiate a gradual drift from learning. Relying on end of key stage tests will not provide the needed level of understanding to recognise early signs of disengagement or highlight where teachers are having particular success with individuals.

MGP and TfS imply we need a system for ongoing classroom assessment, testing and to enable us to respond as early as possible to the individual pupil's need for progress, and that we need to increase efforts to engage and empower pupils with ownership of their learning.

Identifying structures to support robust, ongoing assessment to support transfer is a matter for further action research but an insight into how it might look can be found in 'Assessing pupils' progress' (APP)¹. It is a structured approach to assessment designed for use in secondary schools but encompassing the principles outlined in TfS. It is based on the assessment focuses (AFs) that underpin National Curriculum assessment and is already established in many English departments, showing

it to be both manageable and effective. APP was developed in a two-year project involving 100 schools in 20 local authorities. The basic approach is straightforward. At regular intervals, teachers review pupils' work to build up a profile of their attainment. The information gained from the process allows teachers to:

- analyse by AF the relative strengths and weaknesses of each pupil;
- assign each pupil an overall National Curriculum level;
- set curricular targets to strengthen pupil learning and inform future teaching.

The strength of APP is the structured approach to identifying pupils' current abilities and the application of this information in supporting individuals and planning for cohorts. Teachers identify pupils' levels through ongoing observations of day-to-day written and oral work completed in lessons or as homework.

It offers pupils a clear understanding of the progress they are making, what they have already achieved, and where

they need to improve. This approach allows pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and supports teachers' efforts to provide the conditions for their success.

It is almost ten years since Black and Wiliam gave us *Inside the Black Box*² and the simple message that we need to help pupils understand where they are in relation to learning goals and how to make further progress. The simplicity of the message has remained with subsequent publications such as '2020 Vision' and 'Making good progress', and they have reinforced the need for commitment to the principle and robust structures to make it a reality. Partner schools share a responsibility to continue that commitment through collaboration. Pupils' entitlement to progress at a rate matching their ability across and beyond transfer relies on it.

¹ More detail is available in the *Handbook for assessing pupils' progress in English, a practical guide* (DfES 1789–2005 CDO-EN)

² Black and Wiliam (1998) *Inside the black box: raising standards through classroom assessment*, King's College, London

Making good progress – the proposals

The pilot

The DCSF proposes to pilot the ideas behind the document in a limited number of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 schools in selected LAs.

The pilot would have four main elements:

Assessment for Learning, and level-by-level tests for progress

Trialling new approaches to assessment design to focus teaching and learning on progression

Progression tutoring

Testing the impact of providing targeted pupils with exceptional help through up to 20 hours of individual tutoring to get back on track

Progression targets

Exploring how best to formulate measures and set targets for improved pupil progression

Progression premium

Alongside a support grant, testing the value of an incentive payment to schools to meet these targets, especially for under-attaining pupils



Transfers and transitions case studies

Churchfields School case study

Over recent years, structures for supporting pupil progress have been developed for use in primary and secondary schools. Essential to the success of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) in primary schools and Assessing pupils' progress (APP) in secondary schools are effective pupil tracking and tactical curricular target setting. Churchfields School in Swindon is working with its partner primaries (Lainesmead Primary School, Oaktree Primary School, Mountford Manor Primary School and Drove School) to align ISP and APP practice in English in order to improve pupil progress across transfer. The intention is to extend successful practice to further areas in subsequent years.

Initial meetings and discussions outlined a focused piece of action research and established the principle requirements. A two-day residential planning conference was arranged for Year 6 and Year 7 teachers to collaborate in developing a scheme of work as a vehicle for the action research. A bridging unit based on Roald Dahl's 'Boy' was devised. The finished product is an impressive piece of design but the value of

the conference went much further. The opportunity to engage in focused professional dialogue over an extended period was seized by all, and levels of trust, understanding and mutual professional esteem reached new heights. Pedagogical similarities and differences were explored along with the more subtle, cultural, adjustments a Year 7 pupil is required to make on day one at Churchfields School.

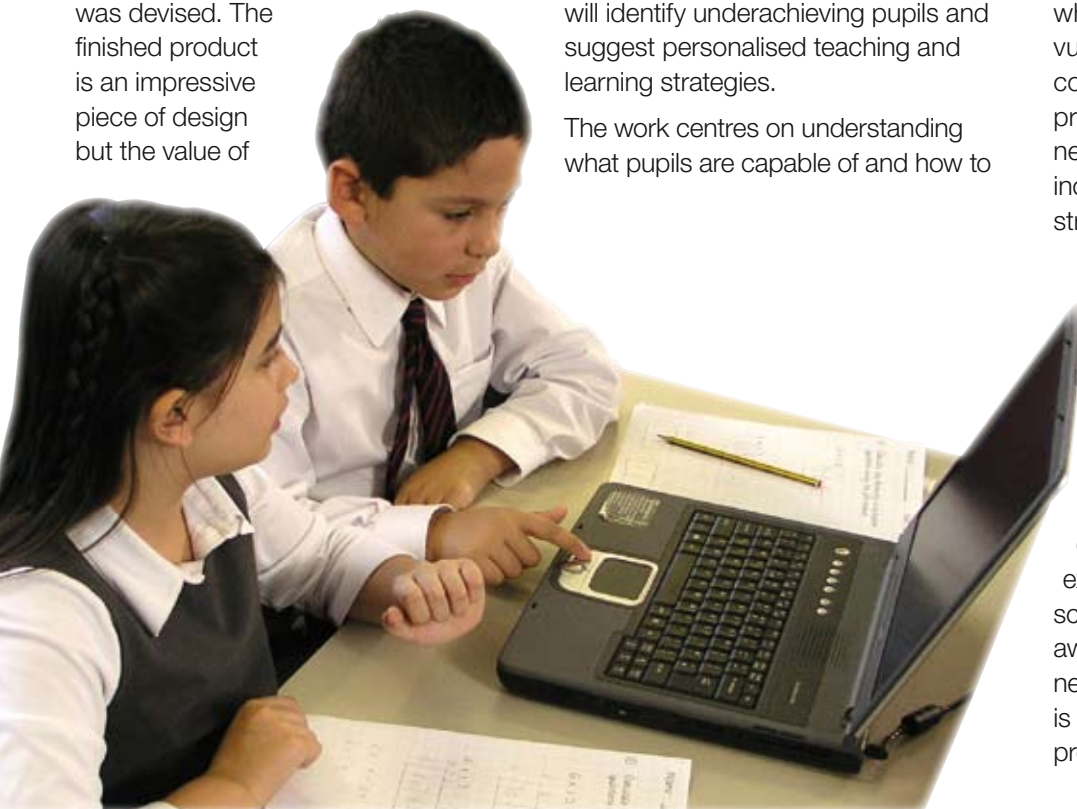
Layered curricular targets, relating to the scheme and spanning transfer, were agreed at the conference, and plans were drawn up for further measures. Joint levelling of work will establish a shared understanding of pupil achievement and Year 6 teachers will use their profound insight into their pupils to identify expectations of progress for individuals. An assessment task will be completed by pupils at each end of the scheme. Each task will be aimed at particular assessment focuses, and prior to transfer Year 6 teachers will discuss with Year 7 teachers the progress they would expect the children to make. In addition, Year 6 teachers will identify underachieving pupils and suggest personalised teaching and learning strategies.

The work centres on understanding what pupils are capable of and how to

support them in achieving it. It requires an appreciation of the skills and abilities pupils arrive with in Year 7 and also of the pedagogical approaches that have facilitated their development. This cannot be achieved by meetings alone and Year 7 English teachers are undertaking a round of visits to observe or work alongside Year 6 classes and teachers.

It is important to Churchfields School that the benefits of this work are not restricted by considering it in isolation. It is part of a larger programme to strengthen transfer arrangements. These include many of the familiar elements such as transfer days and guidance for parents and some more innovative initiatives, particularly pertaining to supporting vulnerable children. The Discovery Pathways Project involves selected pupils being taught the majority of subjects by one teacher. The project leader visits all Year 6 teachers to discuss pupils who might benefit from this approach and talk about children's individual needs. The leader also liaises with the local authority Behaviour Support Service which runs a programme to support vulnerable children at transfer. A strong commitment from senior leaders has provided the strategic perspective necessary to get the most out of the increasing investment of resources to strengthen transfer.

The family of schools is striving to remove barriers and make the most of the momentum in learning that has been built up throughout Key Stage 2. The collaboration with Year 6 teachers allows Year 7 English teachers to tap into that momentum, respond to the individual needs of children and have realistically high expectations for their progress. The schools are ambitious for their pupils, aware of their social and emotional needs and recognise that collaboration is vital for providing the conditions for progression.



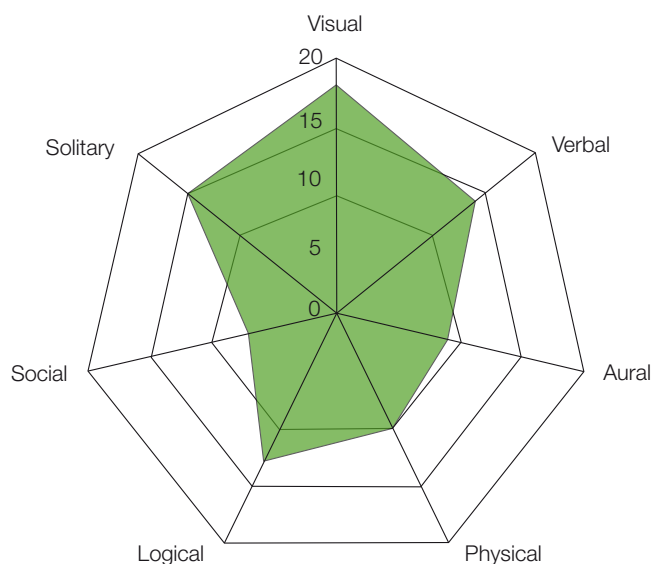
Costello Technology College case study

A family of schools in Basingstoke are exploring ways to afford pupils greater ownership of their learning across the transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.

Costello Technology College is working with Fairfield's Primary School, Great Binfields Primary School, Rucstall Primary School and St Mary's Primary School to better understand how the pupils' learning can be supported on arrival at secondary school. Their intention is to unlock the pupils' natural understanding of their own learning process and allow teachers to use the information to accelerate progress. The initial focus is on mathematics but the intention is to expand the initiative to support all areas of learning.

The primary schools already encourage their pupils to think about how they learn and this year their pupils have completed a questionnaire that produces a radar chart of their learning preferences. Teachers are discussing the outcomes with them and the chart will form part of a PPT presentation that each pupil will produce, expounding themselves as learners. They will deliver the presentations in Year 7 during curriculum time dedicated to developing them as independent learners. **The intention is not to label children as particular types of learners but to increase their awareness that they are in control of their learning and that they have the ability to expand their learning style.** Year 7 tutors will have an important role and will receive training to lead these sessions.

Me as a learner



By the end of Year 6, primary teachers have developed an invaluable understanding of the children in their class and what works with them to move them forward. Year 6 and Year 7 teachers are collaborating to ensure Year 7 maths lessons provide an appropriate level of continuity and challenge, and offer opportunities for the pupils to continue the development of skills that they began to acquire in primary school. The teachers are meeting to discuss pupils' aptitudes and approaches to learning in July and again in October to discuss pupils' progress.

A series of lesson observations have been undertaken to gain an insight into current teaching and learning in Year 6 and Year 7. Lessons have been tracked at five-minute intervals to record teaching approaches and pupil responses. At the end of each observed lesson, pupils give feedback on their learning. Year 7 maths lessons are being planned in such a way as to use approaches that are working and to ensure pupils have the opportunity to use strategies they have found successful in primary school. To facilitate this there will be a standardisation of equipment available to pupils and an emphasis on pupils selecting their own approach to mathematical exercises.

Name cards are used by a number of schools after transfer to increase the rate at which teachers can build relationships with the pupils. The cards sit on the front of desks, enabling teachers to use names from the outset and making it easier for written work to be considered in conjunction with oral and practical ability. Costello Technology College is enhancing this to support personalised learning. Each card will be colour-coded to show the pupil's predominant learning styles and will include their radar chart along with their name on the front, and a pupil-identified curricular target on the back. The teacher will be able to see a profile of the class's learning styles along with individual names from the front of the class, and the individual radar charts and curricular targets while circulating, thus supporting planning for classes and interacting with individuals.

The Basingstoke schools have founded this work on the premise that a pupil has the central role in their own progress and teachers have the responsibility to work together to provide them with that awareness, skills and opportunities to adopt the role with confidence.



The Gateshead action research project involves one secondary and five partner primary schools. Its research question is:

'How can dialogue be used effectively to impact on the transfer of pedagogy to facilitate commonality across a cluster of schools, utilising AfL strategies of success criteria, feedback, peer and self-assessment?'

This work is an extension of the LA's existing AfL action research work and work on coaching.

Cross-phase meetings

Teachers were organised into cross-phase triads, where coaching could take place on the Leading in Learning model. Cross-phase headteacher, and teacher, half-termly meetings were organised and attendance has been excellent. These meetings have given the project momentum, collegiality, and opportunities for further training, reflection and self-evaluation.

In January 2007 the cross-phase headteachers' meeting was given the outline of the action research project by the LA. Headteachers had the opportunity to discuss this, and their knowledge and support has given the project real status and impetus.

The initial February cross-phase teachers' meeting created a tight timetable for actions and the next review meeting. This disciplined approach, applied by the group themselves, has continued to give the action research project real momentum with a focus on outcomes and review through use of the self-evaluation toolkit.

The second teachers' meeting, in March, built on the initial exchange visits of secondary teachers to primary colleagues. It gave them a chance to reflect and to discuss their initial thoughts following classroom observations. Key issues were discussed such as the quality of dialogue, how secondary practice can build from the primary classroom, and what was common and what was different in each other's environments. Lack of 'talking partners' and collaborative work in the secondary school was commented on by the secondary teachers following their visits to primary classrooms. Mixture of terminology was another important observation, for example learning objectives/learning intentions.

Dialogic teaching

There was then an input from the LA on 'Dialogic Teaching', focusing on Robin Alexander's work on types of dialogue. Discussion followed on what opportunities could be created in the classroom to develop dialogue and what strategies could be used to move classes further on in their use of dialogue.

The interesting aspect of the Gateshead model is the cross-phase headteachers' meeting that monitors the action research project within the pilot schools. These meetings follow on from the teachers' meetings. This

meeting considered issues of dissemination of the project and the inclusion of parents and carers.

How is it going?

An unscheduled meeting of the secondary teachers involved took place in April. This reflected on the outcomes of the teacher exchange visits to primary colleagues. Pedagogy observed in the primary classrooms was being trialled successfully, not just with Year 7 classes, but with other Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 classes. The secondary teachers wanted to meet again at a later date to continue the discussions about how new teaching strategies could be applied within their subject specialisms. This meeting took place in early May and focused on the use of dialogue in the classroom. It was felt that pupils were confident in using dialogue in primary classrooms partially because they have developed trust towards the class and the teacher that they are with. The challenge for secondary schools is to make pupils feel confident in applying strategies in new contexts. The use of common language and expectations across the five departments involved in the project may be key to this. It was interesting that on LA visits to primary schools, one colleague noted that developing dialogue had made an impact on the quality of pupils' written work.

The last cross-phase teacher meeting in May focused on pupil progression and initial discussions took place concerning evaluation of the pilot. Colleagues were asked to review their existing practice through completion of a questionnaire on 'Developing autonomous learners through talk' and a self-evaluation grid on questioning and dialogue that the LA had produced, which was based on the model of the self-evaluation toolkit (focusing, developing, establishing and enhancing) with sections for both teacher and pupil practice. The next round of teacher exchange visits with Year 6 teachers visiting secondary colleagues was then organised.

Views of headteachers

The last cross-phase headteacher meeting reviewed and evaluated the project at this stage.

Primary school headteachers felt that the project was going well and had raised the profile of AfL, although an emerging issue was the difficulty of embedding AfL across a school. One school had used a teacher involved in the project being observed by other colleagues, so that everyone got to see successful strategies in practice and to observe their impact on pupils. This was felt to be a way forward in engaging staff that had not yet fully embedded AfL into their teaching.

There was agreement that the project was timely. The focus of questioning and dialogue had fitted in well with other key messages on developing speaking and listening. The project had also highlighted for some schools the need to further develop dialogue.

The secondary school also felt that the project was timely. Five of their staff had been given teaching and learning responsibilities that included responsibility for transition, and the project had provided a focused opportunity to develop links with primary colleagues. Good relationships were being established and the teacher exchange visits had raised expectations about what pupils were capable of achieving. This has led to more effective planning of CPD, with time being planned for opportunities for more cross-phase teacher observation, more inter-departmental working and the development of common learning routines and the use of common vocabulary.

All departments receive regular feedback on the project, although the enthusiasm to trial strategies is patchy at this stage, depending on workload and staff being convinced that it will make a difference. All departments have trialled some new strategies at some time.

Next steps

Teacher exchange visits will continue into the autumn term so that Year 6 teachers can observe how well their pupils are transferring their skills into the secondary school.

A booklet will be developed that draws together pupils' understanding of common terminology. This could be used with staff, pupils, parents and carers.

Less experienced / 'harder to move' staff could perhaps be invited into the project as a method of implementing more effective CPD.

Colleagues involved in the project are convinced of its worth in terms of both their own professional development and the positive impact on pupil progress. As one secondary colleague said at a recent meeting, when talking about his experience of introducing the practice of 'talking partners' into his lesson:

'It now takes a bit more time to get something, whereas in the past it had taken no time to get nothing.'

Thanks to Gateshead LA and the participating schools in their action research pilot for allowing us to share their valuable experiences.

Introducing WhatWorksWell

What**WorksWell** is an interactive web tool designed to facilitate the capture of successful practice. It provides a means for collecting and sharing useful developments. It aims to create an environment where it is safe to take risks, seek out what's worked well for others, and adapt and adopt them.

How does it work?

What**WorksWell** uses case-led studies that start and end with the learning needs of the pupils and the difference made to their achievement and progress by the practice described. So What**WorksWell** is vivid and accountable at the same time.

Contributors are guided through the creation of their case-led study. The tool aims to be flexible enough to allow for a multitude of different contexts but tight enough to allow cross-case analysis. This will enable people to read across similar case-led studies to find out not only what works well in one context but also what usually seems to work well in many contexts.

It is hoped that the transfers and transitions pilot programme will produce a selection of case-led studies from various contexts and with various focuses to contribute to this initiative.

To search for case-led studies which might help you in developmental work, to contribute an example of successful practice, or to find out more about What**WorksWell**, register at www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk and use the enrolment key to access What**WorksWell**.

Acknowledgements

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