

# **Key Stage 3**

*National Strategy*

Literacy Progress Unit  
**Writing organisation**

Copies of this document can be obtained from:

DfEE Publications  
Tel 0845 60 222 60  
Fax 0845 60 333 60  
Textphone 0845 60 555 60  
e-mail [dfee@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfee@prolog.uk.com)

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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.

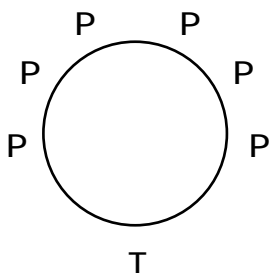
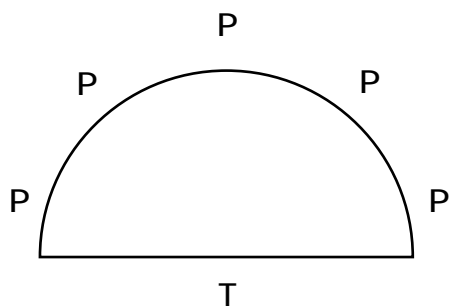
Shared discussion over implementation is essential. It is good practice to involve a wider group of colleagues (including the Head of English and the SENCo) in discussion of how the materials will be introduced and evaluated.

### 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 Writing organisation

This unit focuses on developing the skills pupils need if they are to progress from Level 3 to Level 4<sup>1</sup> in writing. 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 pupils who gained Level 3. The pupils most likely to benefit from the unit are those who have ideas, but find it difficult to express them: they do not plan their writing effectively, they have a limited repertoire of connectives and their current writing shows uncertainty about paragraphing. A rapid way of deciding on a pupil's suitability for the unit is to take a selection of current writing and to assess it using the guidance given at the end of this introduction.

## 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 enough to prevent any pupil from making major mistakes which could undermine a learner's confidence. The intention is to construct success for all.

A key feature of this unit, as of others, is recognition of the need to contextualise learning. Consequently the text types that feature in the *Framework* provide the context for exploring aspects of writing organisation. For example, writing *explanation* is the context which gives point and purpose to the sessions on causal connectives, while *discursive writing* is the context for developing planning skills using an ideas grid.

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<sup>1</sup> Level descriptors for AT2 English National Curriculum DfEE 1999

By the time they have completed the unit pupils should be able to do most of the following:

- categorise information in different ways
- relate general to specific information
- sort information using different strategies
- plan writing around key ideas
- recognise and use topic sentences
- employ different strategies for giving paragraphs greater cohesion
- decide which planning tools are needed for which writing tasks
- take account of audience, purpose and context.

The principles behind the unit are apparent in the annotated version of a session plan on pages xvi–xvii.

The unit consists of 18 session plans, plus support material in the form of teacher and pupil sheets. 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. For example, session 9 depends on the rapid deployment of a range of large cards which need to be cut up in advance if the activities based on the Great Fire of London are to be effective.

In order to assess pupils’ progress as a result of this unit, teachers should look for evidence of planning, organisation and paragraph demarcation from extended writing across the curriculum.

To gain a quick snapshot picture of the pupil’s progress during the unit, the pupil assessment used at the beginning could be reviewed against a recent piece of work.

Each set of session plans includes a space for teachers’ notes and comments. The experiences and evaluations of colleagues in the pilot who have delivered Literacy Progress Units have made an important contribution to the process of revising the units for national dissemination.

## Writing organisation pupil assessment:

Look at a recent piece of extended writing. Tick if:

- 1. Paragraph breaks are used.
- 2. The order makes sense.
- 3. Paragraphs start where there is a shift in topic, time or perspective.
- 4. Paragraphs are coherent, ie contain information which hangs together.
- 5. There is a 'topping and tailing', eg key sentences, a concluding paragraph.
- 6. There are links between paragraphs, eg 'Next...', 'Another reason...', 'The next day...'

Note: Features 3–6. Tick if the pupil has organised the material even if they have neglected the break itself. This pupil is writing virtual paragraphs and lacks only the confidence or effort to put them in.

### Result

5–6 ticks: You could probably address the outstanding problems by teaching the particular point to these pupils and getting them to go back and use proofreading marks on their old work to catch the error. Follow up in marking.

0–3 ticks: Enter the Progress Unit.

4 ticks: Borderline case. Be guided by the feel of the work. If it feels securely organised, then teach the missing points. If it feels as if the material is not quite under the control of the writer, then enter the Progress Unit.

# Sample session plan

*tight/specific/limited*

*key terms*

*preparation*

**Session 1**    **Paragraphs**

Objectives	Key terms	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To identify a paragraph.</li> <li>■ To be aware of physical layout/conventions of paragraphing.</li> <li>■ To understand the function of paragraphs in organising texts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Paragraph:</b> a section of a piece of writing. A new paragraph marks a change of focus, a change of time or, in dialogue, a change of speaker.</p> <p><b>Indent:</b> visual indication of a new paragraph.</p> <p><b>Topic word:</b> a word which sums up the main contents of the sentence or paragraph.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ OHP/flipchart/whiteboard</li> <li>■ Pupil Sheet 1.1 (one per pupil)</li> <li>■ OHT or enlarged version of Pupil Sheet 1.1</li> <li>■ Teacher Sheet 1.1</li> <li>■ Example of handwritten work with clear paragraph indentations (teacher to supply)</li> </ul>

**Remember** Time: 1 minute

- Refer to the term paragraph written on the whiteboard or flipchart.
- Remind pupils that paragraphs divide longer texts into shorter sections/groups of sentences, which help the writer to organise information logically/helpfully and help the reader to follow the text more easily.

**Model** Time: 5 minutes

- Introduce OHT or enlarged copy of Pupil Sheet 1.1, 'Caring for your Pet Rats'.
- Model good reading aloud to the class, which includes appropriate pace, tone, volume and expression.
- Explain that the piece is divided into paragraphs.
- Ask the class what they notice about the physical layout of the text. Guide pupils to identify:
  - indents: a visual indication of a new paragraph in handwritten text, set in from the margin
  - empty line between paragraphs in word-processed text
  - end of paragraph does not always reach the end of the line.
- Refer to example of handwritten, clearly paragraphed text.
- Tell pupils that paragraphs are used to organise information and they are now going to examine each paragraph to decide why the writer chose to divide the text in this way.
- Using OHT or enlarged version of Pupil Sheet 1.1 on a bookstand, focus pupils' attention on paragraph 1.
- Reread and model for pupils how to identify that this paragraph introduces the topic or subject and tells the reader where to buy rats. Note on grid area of OHT 1.1 using one or two words (see Teacher Sheet 1.1).
- Repeat modelling for paragraph 2, pointing out criteria for rat choice.

2                      **Writing organisation** Session 1                      © Crown Copyright 2001

*apprenticeship model is very strong*

*meta-cognitive activity – make the skills of the skilled reader/writer explicit*

*demonstrates/articulates again*

*tight timing forces pace of lesson*

*non-fiction information text – uses a variety of texts*

*all expected key answers/responses identified to support non-specialists*

*importing techniques from good primary sources*

*demonstrating the activity concerned*



Session 1

**Try** Time: 5 minutes

- Issue pupils with Pupil Sheets 1.1 (if not already done so). Tell pupils to record key topic words on grid as on class model.
- In pairs, ask pupils to read aloud paragraph 3 and then 4.
- In each case they must decide what the topic is for each paragraph and note in one or two words on their grid.
- Take quick feedback to ensure that pupils have identified topics correctly. Add to class model – pupils amend their sheets if necessary.

**Apply** Time: 5 minutes

- Direct pupils' attention to the final section of the text on OHT/Pupil Sheet 1.1. Read this aloud and instruct pupils to listen carefully.
- Explain that this last piece of the text has not been divided into paragraphs. They must help the reader by deciding where the paragraphs must go. Tell them there are three topics dealt with and to draw two lines where they think the paragraph division should go (or indicate paragraph decisions using the symbol chosen by the school). Also ask them to choose a word which best describes the topic and record it opposite on their grid.
- Read the last piece of text aloud and instruct pupils to listen carefully.
- Pupils complete task individually.

**Secure** Time: 4 minutes

- Pupils explain where they have put lines and why.
- Teacher uses correct pupil answers to complete the OHT/class example 1.1, recapping and reinforcing the key points. Pupils amend their own sheets as necessary. (Teacher Sheet 1.1 offers a completed version.)

**Notes**

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*mimics teacher activity*

*supportive paired work gives security/aids pace/willingness to respond*

*new/extended context*

*individual or paired work but independent*

*securing here by articulating reasons (there are many ways to secure key points)*

*space for teachers to write their own notes*

*developing 'corporate' model – class working together with oral explanation*

*opportunity for teacher to add what may not have been said*

*Pupil Sheet provided. Teacher sheet shows expected outcomes to support non-specialists.*

