Tailored intervention support for secondary school pupils in English: A guide for English subject leaders and teachers leading on intervention

Introduction
This brief guide aims to refresh the knowledge of English subject leaders and teachers who have a responsibility for intervention in English. The guide is in three sections:

1. **No pupil left behind**: the rationale for intervention support
2. **Leading and managing intervention**: the role of the subject leader and/or leading teacher in securing the progress of pupils at risk of underachieving
3. **Resources guide**: a guide to National Strategies’ materials that support school provision for intervention.

1. **No pupil left behind**
The aim of any school is to help children achieve the level of attainment which reflects their true potential. In the most successful schools there is a relentless commitment to the belief that achievement is for all and that no pupil should be left behind.

Pupils falter in their progress for many different reasons, but they can be brought back on track if the barriers to progress are correctly identified and there is appropriate intervention. Intervention is defined by the National Strategies in this way:

> Intervention is any action planned to improve the progress of targeted pupils who have been identified as falling behind the expected level of attainment and who are at risk of not fulfilling their potential. Effective intervention helps pupils make up shortfalls in their learning. It enables them to make fast progress in the key areas so that they can close learning gaps and meet or exceed expectations.

Clearly for some pupils the main reasons for lack of progress have their roots outside the English classroom and will need action at whole-school level or outside school in the family or community, but for most pupils, improvements in English can be brought about through interventions that are matched carefully to the pupils’ needs. Tailored intervention support of this kind includes:

- teaching in main lessons that meets pupils’ specific learning needs;
- additional programmes and/or planned support designed to accelerate learning.

**Intervention in the context of main lessons**

Also known as ‘Wave 1 intervention’ (see Appendix), this is inclusive teaching targeted at addressing all pupils’ needs and prior learning. Where there are large numbers of pupils who share the same learning needs (such as in a setted group), then the best solution is to adjust the planning to cater for them. This involves setting a new trajectory for the learning programme to take pupils to where they need to be in terms of age-related expectations. Materials that can support this approach are:

- Targeting level 4 in Year 7: English
- Targeting level 5 and above: teaching responses to reading
The National Strategies | Secondary
Tailored intervention support for secondary school pupils in English: a guide for English subject leaders and teachers leading on intervention

- Literacy progress units (adapted for whole-class use).

To tailor support for a group of pupils or an individual within the class, the key strategies are to use:
- precise curricular targets based on clear assessment evidence;
- guided group work for pupils working towards the same targets;
- targeted deployment of a teaching assistant (TA) or learning support assistant (LSA) where these are available.

**Curricular targets** identify the next crucial step in learning for a pupil or group of pupils. Once the teacher and the pupil have agreed a small number of targets the teacher can take account of these in lessons through:
- questioning
- guided group work
- directing a TA or LSA
- task setting
- resources
- marking.

Pupils can expect to:
- be given opportunities to develop the target areas
- focus on the targets when they are working
- evaluate themselves on progress towards them
- receive feedback from the teacher in these areas.

The English progression maps are a useful resource to support the setting of clear curricular targets in a language that pupils can understand. These targets are linked explicitly to the APP assessment guidelines and are designed to mediate the assessment criteria to pupils without changing these criteria in any way.

**Guided group work** is where a small number of pupils (four to six) are grouped together within the lesson and take part in a planned session designed to help them meet a common target. Such sessions are usually planned to take about twenty minutes while the rest of the class work independently. The main features of effective guided group work are:
- the learning is planned to address the specific needs of the group;
- the teacher is working closely with the group and can identify and tackle misconceptions and other barriers to learning as they emerge.

TAs or LSAs may be allocated to some classes. These members of staff are most effective when they have a planned role in the lesson such as supporting pupils who need to catch up. They can do this through one-to-one work or by working with a group. Alternatively, they can supervise the independent work of the whole group while the teacher works with a guided group. Whichever approach is chosen, the teacher should ensure that the support is focused by means of the curricular targets.

**Additional intervention programmes**
Also known as ‘Wave 2’ or ‘Wave 3 intervention’, these programmes are designed to increase rates of progress and secure learning for groups of pupils or individuals, in order to put them back on course to meet or exceed national expectations. The programmes usually take the form of
Tailored intervention support for secondary school pupils in English: a guide for English subject leaders and teachers leading on intervention

Tightly structured sequences of tuition, carefully targeted and delivered by teachers or teaching assistants who have the appropriate skills to help pupils achieve their learning objectives.

Providing additional intervention programmes will normally require additional resources in terms of time, staff, accommodation and materials. For this reason, these interventions should be planned together with the school senior leader responsible for intervention so that they can be:

- properly planned and resourced within available budgets;
- coordinated with other intervention programmes that are run in the school.

The National Strategies has developed a number of these intervention programmes for English and literacy. Some programmes are for groups (‘Wave 2’) and some for individuals or very small groups (‘Wave 3’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stage 3</th>
<th>Key Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group programmes</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘Wave 2’</td>
<td>Literacy Plus&lt;br&gt; Literacy progress units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual programmes</strong>&lt;br&gt;‘Wave 3’</td>
<td>Reading Challenge&lt;br&gt; Writing Challenge</td>
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These programmes are designed to address weaknesses in pupils’ skills at an early stage, with the aim of building capacity over time.

Other intervention strategies available to schools are:

- one-to-one tuition;
- revision and booster sessions targeted at pupils who are identified as at risk of underachieving in forthcoming examinations;
- mentoring programmes.

Guidance on one-to-one tuition can be found in the One-to-one tuition toolkit; go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using the reference 01068-2008.

National Strategies guidance on revision for GCSE is available in the form of a GCSE revision planner; go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using the reference 0406-2006.

2. Leading and managing intervention

When intervention is led and managed effectively, the starting point is the pupils. ‘Pupils not programmes’ means that intervention should be planned and carried out in response to identified pupil need, so that pupils are not subjected to intervention programmes that are of marginal relevance to their development. It also means that intervention must be timely, targeting difficulties as soon as they are identified and avoiding Ofsted’s recent criticism of secondary schools that:

‘intervention was often too late, just before national tests, and not related sufficiently to the teaching in the students’ main English or mathematics lessons.’

*English at the crossroads<br> An evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools, 2005/08<br> June 2009 Reference no: 080247*
Step 1 is to identify those pupils who require additional support in order to make expected progress. This identification will be based on assessment information from a variety of sources such as:

- test results
- school progress tracking
- teacher assessments.

This process of identification may be carried out by a senior leader who is coordinating intervention, by the achievement manager of a given year group or by the subject leader. Whoever has this responsibility in a particular school, it is important that there is communication beyond the English subject area, so that the provision for individual pupils can be coordinated across subject boundaries.

Step 2 is to assess the barriers to the pupil’s progress and what can be done to help overcome them. Some barriers may not be subject-specific or directly related to the curriculum. Where the lack of progress is specifically in English, it will be important to identify which attainment targets are at risk and what aspects of these are responsible for below-expected attainment. A look at the pupil’s APP assessment profile for Key Stage 3 will identify this immediately. Otherwise, the subject teacher will need to make a judgement based on the pupil’s recent work. A key leadership role at this point is to decide whether the pupil can be expected to catch up just with some extra focus in main lessons, or whether additional provision is needed. Leaders should know what is available in the way of relevant additional programmes and how participation in them can be facilitated and resourced. Part 3 of this guidance lists relevant National Strategies programmes.

Step 3 is to focus any intervention action by setting clear curricular targets for the pupil. This should be done by the teacher in consultation with the senior leader who is managing the process. Teachers can find clear guidance on targets to set in the progression maps.

Step 4 is the intervention itself, which takes place in main lessons and/or through additional action. The diagram shows a double-ended arrow connecting the two. This represents the crucial point that any additional programmes must complement the work in main lessons and, conversely, main lessons must provide opportunities for the application of learning that takes place in intervention programmes. If this two-way connection is not made, in the minds of both pupils and teachers, then the effectiveness of the action will be limited. This means that a key
leadership and management role is to ensure effective communication between the relevant members of staff and to facilitate opportunities for joint planning and review.

**Step 5** is to assess the pupil’s progress against the targets set and to decide whether the pupil requires additional targets and further support. This process is essential from the point of view of the pupil and his or her development, but is also important as part of school management.

Intervention outside main lessons uses up additional resources and so an essential management job is to evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions. If a programme is not improving pupils’ progress then it should be discontinued, and an alternative approach should be sought. The monitoring and evaluation of intervention is a crucial leadership task. Ofsted’s recent report on English mentions ‘rigorous monitoring’ as a key feature of secondary schools with effective intervention. These schools:

…used their knowledge of students’ performance to identify those who would benefit from further help and to provide programmes carefully matched to individual needs. This additional provision linked with, and reinforced, the skills being taught in the main English lessons. Another important factor was rigorous monitoring, with programmes being modified or abandoned entirely if they did not show impact.

*English at the crossroads*

An evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools, 2005/08

June 2009 Reference no: 080247

**Linking assessment and intervention**

Intervention is effective when it is linked to a secure system of assessment and pupil progress tracking. Accurate assessment of what a pupil can do and understanding of the next steps required for further progress are prerequisites for properly targeted support. A key role for subject leaders is to ensure that this link is made.

In Key Stage 3, the Assessing Pupils’ Progress (APP) approach to periodic assessment will not only identify whether a pupil is falling behind but will also highlight the aspects of English that are relatively weak. Once these weaker areas have been identified, the progression maps will supply the relevant curricular targets. Programmes such as Reading Challenge that are designed to be used at the outset of Key Stage 3, when detailed assessment information may not be available, include their own assessment processes designed to diagnose the pupils’ needs.

**Leadership to secure effective intervention in English**

Intervention for pupils cannot be successfully secured by leadership that operates within English only. Effective provision for intervention in a school can only be achieved if a team of staff is involved. The roles required are:

**Intervention leader:** a senior member of staff responsible for planning for the provision of intervention programmes across the curriculum and building the capacity of the intervention team through training and coordinating its work. To support the latter part of this role, online intervention training for leaders, teachers and teaching assistants is available in the secondary English area of [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies). Go to intervention and search ‘Intervention training modules’.

**Subject leaders:** subject leaders coordinate the approach to intervention within a subject department, champion the target group of pupils and act as the ‘informed professionals’ on this issue by providing training and support for colleagues. Within the English department this role may be delegated by the subject leader to a teacher who leads this area of work.

**Teachers:** all teachers need to understand the approaches to tailored support within main lessons. A smaller number of teachers will have the responsibility of teaching specific intervention programmes such as Literacy Plus; these roles require some additional knowledge and skills, such as working effectively with a teaching assistant.
Teaching assistants: TAs work with English teachers and support intervention by working on planned initiatives with specific pupils (groups or individuals) within the area of English. In programmes such as Study Plus, the role is to support a teacher, but programmes such as Literacy progress units can be delivered by TAs who have been trained for the role.

The role of the English subject leader is either to assume the leading role for intervention within the English department or to delegate the responsibility and monitor the effectiveness of this delegation. Whichever arrangement is in place, the key role for the English lead on intervention is to work with the senior leader so that:

- pupils requiring intervention in English are correctly identified and appropriate actions planned;
- staff within the department are kept informed;
- training for staff is provided where required;
- the implementation of specific programmes is properly resourced and teachers or TAs are supported in delivering the programmes effectively;
- processes are in place to ensure that pupil progress can be tracked and the effectiveness of interventions can be monitored and evaluated.
Resources guide

English subject leaders should know what intervention programmes are available for use in schools and should discuss the adoption of these with senior staff, making the case for additional resources where required. Below is a brief guide to the resources for intervention in English that are available through the National Strategies. The resources are listed alphabetically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is it?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is it for?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do I need to use it?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where will I find it?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Literacy progress units</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is it?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Who is it for?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What do I need to use it?</strong></td>
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### Literacy progress units (adapted for whole-class use)

**What is it?**
A suite of units designed to develop the key literacy skills that are needed for successful learning in secondary education. These are four of the units described above with plans modified for use with a whole class. The four 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

**Who is it for?**
A class of Key Stage 3 pupils who need to progress from level 3 to level 4. The most likely application is with Year 7.

**What do I need to use it?**
- 20-minute sessions planned three times a week within lessons
- teacher preferably supported by a TA
- literacy progress unit session plans and resources

**Where will I find it?**
- Literacy progress unit: Spelling (whole class)
  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 0475-2001

- Literacy progress unit: Information retrieval (whole class)
  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 0476-2001
## Reading Challenge

**What is it?**
A programme of one-to-one coaching for pupils who need to improve their reading skills. Pupils are set targets based on an analysis of their reading and coached towards achieving those targets.

**Who is it for?**
Designed to help Key Stage 3 pupils whose reading skills are about two years below expectations. They might be Year 7 pupils who have been assessed at level 3 in reading at the end of Key Stage 2, or Year 8 pupils whose reading skills are at a similar level.

**What do I need to use it?**
- A teacher to organise the scheme, assess the pupils and set the targets
- A number of reading challenge coaches, who can be TAs or senior pupils who have been trained
- Reading Challenge Handbook
- 20-minute coaching sessions organised outside of main lessons

**Where will I find it?**
- Reading Challenge Handbook for school organisers
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 0293-2003.

## Progression maps

**What is it?**
This material helps teachers to support pupils who have fallen behind in aspects of their work. There is a progression map for speaking and listening, reading and writing. Each map contains:
- characterisations of six stages of progression
- curricular targets linked to each level and each AF
- exemplification of teaching and learning associated with each target area
- guidance for parents, carers and mentors
- links to other useful material

**Who is it for?**
Designed to be used in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 by teachers who want to tailor their teaching for pupils who need to make better progress

**What do I need to use it?**
- Individual pupils or groups of pupils who have been identified as needing to make better progress in specific aspects of English
- An understanding of how to use curricular targets to focus learning and teaching

**Where will I find it?**
Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search for ‘English progression maps’.
## Study Plus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>A two-year Key Stage 4 programme timetabled for two lessons a week for a class supported by a TA. It consists of units of work that aim to teach specific aspects of English (and/or mathematics) in the context of engaging, interactive teaching around a topic of interest to the pupils. The materials contain sample units with full planning and resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is it for?</td>
<td>Key Stage 4 pupils who are predicted to achieve GCSE grade D or E but have the potential to achieve a higher grade with additional support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What do I need to use it? | • planned time within the school timetable – at least two lessons a week.  
• Study Plus guidance and sample units of work  
• TA allocated to the Study Plus lessons |
| Where will I find it? | Study Plus Handbook  
Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 00327-2007 |

## Targeting Level 4 in Year 7: English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>A suite of units for use with whole classes of pupils who need to move up to level 4. There are 12 lessons for reading, 12 for writing and 12 consolidation lessons. The reading and writing units have been revised in 2009.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is it for?</td>
<td>Key Stage 3 pupils who are at level 3 on entry to secondary school and who are grouped together in a class in Year 7.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What do I need to use it? | • A class of pupils grouped by attainment level  
• Planning and resources from the published materials |
| Where will I find it? | • Targeting level 4: teaching reading  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 00042-2009PDF-EN-02  
• Targeting level 4: teaching reading pupil booklet  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 00339-2009PDF-EN-01  
• Targeting level 4: teaching writing  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 00052-2009PDF-EN-03  
• Targeting level 4 in Year 7: English  
  Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 0103/2003 |

## Targeting level 5 and above: teaching responses to reading

| What is it? | These teaching units are designed to support the teaching of reading skills and writing responses to reading. They consolidate pupils’ skills in understanding and commenting on the structure and organisation of texts (AF4); explaining and commenting on writers’ uses of language (AF5); and identifying and commenting |
### Tailored intervention support for secondary school pupils in English: a guide for English subject leaders and teachers leading on intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is it for?</th>
<th>Pupils who are aiming to attain level 5 or better at the end of Key Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What do I need to use it? | • a class of pupils grouped by attainment level  
• Targeting level 5 in Year 9 materials |
| Where will I find it? | Targeting level 5 and above  
Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 00042-2009PDF-EN-01 |

### Writing Challenge

| What is it? | A programme of one-to-one coaching for pupils who need to improve their writing skills. Pupils are set targets based on an analysis of their writing and coached towards achieving those targets. |
| Who is it for? | Designed to help Key Stage 3 pupils whose writing skills are about two years below expectations. They might be Year 7 pupils who have been assessed at Level 3 in writing at the end of Key Stage 2, or Year 8 pupils whose writing skills are at a similar level. |
| What do I need to use it? | • a teacher to organise the scheme, assess the pupils and set the targets  
• a number of writing challenge coaches who can be TAs or senior pupils who have been specially trained  
• Writing Challenge Handbook  
• 20-minute coaching sessions organised outside main lessons |
| Where will I find it? | Writing Challenge handbook for school organisers  
Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using 0314-2003 |
Appendix

3-wave model of curriculum provision

These ‘waves’ signify types of provision and not categories of children. The ‘waves’ model provides a useful tool to support effective curriculum planning, inclusive teaching and personalised approaches that address diverse needs and minimise underachievement for all learners.

Wave 1 – Tailored teaching in classes (quality first teaching for all)
Effective wave 1 teaching anticipates the needs of all pupils based on good use of feedback from periodic assessment, and yearly transition data and information. Where there are large numbers of pupils who share the same learning needs, then the best solution is to adjust the planning to cater for them. This means setting a new trajectory for the learning programme to take pupils to where they need to be in terms of age-related expectations.

Wave 2 – Wave 1 plus additional, time-limited, tailored intervention support programmes
Wave 2 provision is designed to increase rates of progress and secure learning for groups of pupils that puts them back on course to meet or exceed national expectations. This usually takes the form of a tight, structured programme of small-group support, carefully targeted and delivered by teachers or teaching assistants who have the appropriate skills to help pupils achieve their learning objectives. This can occur outside (but in addition to) whole class lessons, or be built into mainstream lessons as part of guided work.

Wave 3 – Wave 1 plus increasingly individualised programmes
Wave 3 provision is intensive personalised support designed to accelerate and maximise progress and minimise performance gaps. This may involve one-to-one tuition, or very small
Tailored intervention support for secondary school pupils in English: a guide for English subject leaders and teachers leading on intervention

group support via a specialist teacher, highly trained TA or academic mentor, to support pupils towards the achievement of highly specific targets.

Classroom teachers need to be aware of the progress of pupils involved in intervention schemes and raise their expectations in line with that progress. Effective interventions give lasting benefit if classroom teaching capitalises on them.