Key Stage 3
National Strategy

Literacy Progress Unit
Information retrieval
Acknowledgements

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Pupil booklet
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Consolidation through discussion/activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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 Information retrieval

This unit focuses on developing some of the reading skills pupils need if they are to progress from Level 3 to Level 4. 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. The unit focuses pupils clearly on the need to transfer skills into the wider curriculum.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Identification of prior knowledge and key objectives</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unit consists of 18 session plans, plus support material in the form of teacher and pupil sheets. In many cases exemplar questions and responses are included, but this is to give a clear image of what is expected, rather than to define ‘the’ correct answer. All the sessions need advance preparation, but some need more than others in terms of photocopying and cutting up.

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

About this unit
Reading for specific purposes, and doing so effectively, is fundamental to pupils’ progress within secondary education. This unit is intended for pupils who have gained Level 3 in reading and who have the ability to:
- read a range of texts fluently and accurately
- use appropriate strategies to establish meaning
- understand the main points of texts
- use their knowledge of the alphabet to locate books and find information.

1 Level descriptors for AT2 English National Curriculum DfEE 1999

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In order to reach and move beyond Level 4, these pupils need to learn how to locate and use information more effectively and to cope with comparatively complex texts. By the time they have completed this unit they should be able to do most of the following:

- activate their prior knowledge in relation to purpose
- recognise which questions it is useful to ask of texts
- understand the main features and functions of page layout and organisation
- scan for specific information
- skim for overall patterns, main points and key ideas
- read images as well as print
- interpret more complex texts
- cope with different types of ambiguity
- select relevant information and reject the irrelevant
- summarise and generalise
- make notes which enable them to support their ideas by reference to what they have read, seen or heard
- use notes as the basis for communicating response
- have a repertoire of strategies for reading and responding to non-fiction.

The focus of the unit is firmly on non-fiction, to complement the unit Reading between the lines which is fiction-based. The Information retrieval unit seeks to extend pupils’ repertoire of reading strategies by helping them to read the context as well as the text: activities are based on materials which are typical of those they meet across the curriculum. There are texts from areas such as science, sport, geography, history and general information. Text resources are offered, but teachers could select different text sections, provided they fulfil the same function.

The sample session plan on pages xvi–xvii identifies key features of the session plans.

Each set of session plans includes a space for teachers’ notes and comments. The pupil booklet pages are to be found loose at the end of the folder and will need to be reproduced and bound for pupil use. Pupil booklets could be taken to all lessons as an aide-memoire. Other members of staff need to be kept informed of the weekly focus of the unit in order to be able to make the best of opportunities to reinforce and exploit the learning.

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.
Pupil assessment for Information retrieval

If Key Stage 2 information is not available, use the evidence of recent reading behaviour to make the following assessments of reading ability in relation to the unit for each pupil who gained Level 3 in reading at Key Stage 2.

Tick the appropriate box.

**Name of pupil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This pupil can</th>
<th>Rarely (score 1)</th>
<th>Sometimes (score 2)</th>
<th>Often (score 3)</th>
<th>Usually (score 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Scan text to pick out specific information</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Skim for an overall impression and main points</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recognise the impact of page layout and organisation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Select relevant information</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Summarise accurately</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Make notes effectively</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:**

**Result**

- 0–6: The unit will be very challenging for pupils at this level. Before entering them for the unit, try out elements of the first session with them informally to see how well they engage with the material.
- 7–12: The unit should be suitable, but individual support and encouragement will be needed.
- 13–18: The unit should be appropriate.
- 19–24: Pupils at this level may not need the unit. It may be better to identify their specific difficulties and address them through guided reading or individual reading conferences.
Session 17 Timelines

Objectives
- To select relevant information for note keeping.
- To make a timeline.
- To turn notes into sentences.

Key terms
- Timeline: a line which identifies dates of key events.

Materials
- Teacher Sheet/OHT 17.1 (Martin Luther King), enlarged
- Teacher Sheet 17.2 (exemplar)
- Pupil booklets, page 16

Remember Time: 1 minute
- Remind pupils of the previous sessions when they have looked for key information and highlighted main points.
- They will have read and completed timelines - in history or RE, for example - information that shows the sequence of events.

Model Time: 3 minutes
- Draw a line on the whiteboard or a large sheet of paper and put enlarged text of Teacher Sheet 17.1 or OHT where it can be seen by all pupils.
- Explain that the information will be used to complete a timeline of Martin Luther King's life.
- The beginning of the line will represent when Martin Luther King Jr was born, and the end of the line will represent his death. (Teacher Sheet 17.2 offers exemplar.)
- Explain that key events in his life will be marked up on this line to show the order in which things happened. Ideas will be brief and to the point.
- Read the first paragraph and highlight the reference to Dr King's birth.
- Mark this at the start of the timeline.

Try Time: 4 minutes
- Refer pupils to page 16 of their pupil booklets. In pairs, ask pupils to read the sections on school and marriage.
- Ask pupils to highlight the main information and to complete the timeline from birth to marriage.
- Take feedback and mark details onto the large copy or OHT.

Sample session plan

focus of the session

Session 17

information on materials needed

drawing on good primary practice
detailed guidance for adult delivery

specific tangible objectives

building on prior learning
demonstration of process by 'expert' adult

explanation of key terms

use of visual cues to support learning

scaffolded pair activity to apply what has been modelled

Session 17

information retrieval Session 17 © Crown Copyright 2001
Secure: Time: 5 minutes
- Go through each section, taking ideas from pupils and completing the class timeline.
- Ask pupils what sort of information would suit recording on timelines.
- Outline the benefits, eg seeing the order in which events take place, seeing the pattern better than a list or spider diagram.
- Outline the disadvantages, eg loss of detail from the extended text.
- Expand the first point back into a sentence.
- Ask the pupils to expand another point into a sentence, taking one each.
- Take oral feedback, praising creditable contributions.

Notes: