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The websites referred to in these materials existed at the time of going to print.

Please check all website references carefully to see if they have changed and substitute other references where appropriate.
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1. Assessing pupils’ progress – an introduction

In May 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published the *Assessment for Learning (AfL)* Strategy. The aims of the strategy are that:

- **Every child** knows what progress they are making, and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there. They get the support they need to be motivated, independent learners on an ambitious trajectory of improvement.

- **Every teacher** is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils’ attainment, understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan, particularly for pupils who are not fulfilling their potential.

- **Every school** has in place structured and systematic assessment systems for making regular, useful, manageable and accurate assessments of pupils, and for tracking their progress.

- **Every parent and carer** knows how their child is progressing, what they need to do to improve, and how they can support the child and their teachers.

The AfL Strategy document provides a vocabulary that helps to clarify the three linked aspects of assessment and that can be consistently applied across curriculum areas and phases.

**Day-to-day** assessment provides a wide range of evidence of learning in specific contexts which shapes immediate next steps.

**Periodic** review of this evidence gives a clear profile of pupils’ achievement across a whole subject and informs and shapes future planning and targets for improvement.

When required, these judgements and insights can be more formally shared between pupils, parents and teachers at **transitional** points between year groups, schools and phases.

The key features of these three assessment viewpoints are summarised here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day-to-day</th>
<th>Periodic</th>
<th>Transitional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning objectives made explicit and shared with pupils</td>
<td>Broader view of progress across subject for teacher and learner</td>
<td>Formal recognition of pupils’ achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer and self-assessment in use</td>
<td>Use of national standards in the classroom</td>
<td>Reported to parents/carers and next teacher(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils engaged in their learning and given immediate feedback</td>
<td>Improvements to medium-term curriculum planning</td>
<td>May use external tests or tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Assessing Pupils’ Progress (APP) approach supports teachers’ assessment and their understanding of pupils’ attainment and progress in each of these three linked aspects but it is particularly designed to strengthen periodic assessment.

1.1 What is Assessing Pupil Progress (APP)?

Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) is a structured approach to periodic assessment, enabling teachers to:

- track pupils’ progress over a key stage or longer;
- use diagnostic information about pupils’ strengths and weaknesses to improve teaching, learning and rates of pupils’ progress.

Using APP materials, teachers can make more consistent level-related judgements in National Curriculum subjects.

The APP approach improves the quality and reliability of teacher assessment and has proved to be robust, manageable and effective in practice.

APP supports planning for progression in learning and helps teachers to develop their skills and judgements in assessing pupils’ progress. It involves generating evidence of progress through effective teaching and learning and then ‘stepping back’ periodically to review pupils’ achievement in relation to National Curriculum levels.

1.2 What are the benefits of adopting APP?

APP is valuable to teachers because it has the potential to enhance pupils’ progress by:

- increasing the consistency and reliability of teacher assessment;
- supporting teachers in aligning their judgements systematically with national standards;
- linking day-to-day and periodic approaches to assessment;
- providing high-quality evidence to inform next steps in pupils’ learning and reporting on pupils’ progress;
- integrating assessment into planning for progression;
- providing a National Curriculum attainment target level when needed, from an informed, holistic evaluation of progress against APP assessment criteria.
School leaders and teachers who have been involved in the APP pilots have reported that the main advantages for a department of adopting APP are that it:

- gives a detailed profile of what a pupil can do in relation to the assessment criteria;
- contributes to improved learning and more responsive teaching;
- contributes to the professional development of all teachers, particularly of less experienced colleagues;
- helps teachers prioritise areas of the curriculum where teaching and learning need to be strengthened;
- strengthens AfL, and in particular questioning and talk about pupil understanding in lessons.

1.3 How does APP contribute to the Assessment for Learning (AfL) Strategy?

APP provides systematic support for the three linked aspects of assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>AfL Strategy</th>
<th>APP contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day-to-day</td>
<td>Learning objectives made explicit and shared with pupils</td>
<td>APP encourages recognition of a wide range of evidence from pupils' ongoing, day-to-day work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer and self-assessment in use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils engaged in their learning and given immediate feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic</td>
<td>Broader view of progress across subject for teacher and learner</td>
<td>APP enables the review of evidence to be systematic by focusing closely on level-related criteria in each of the assessment focuses (AFs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of national standards in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements to medium-term curriculum planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>Formal recognition of pupils’ achievement</td>
<td>APP strengthens teachers’ assessments and their understanding of pupils’ progress, so that this more formal sharing can be valid, reliable and detailed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reported to parents/carers and next teacher(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use external tests or tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DCSF’s AFL Strategy describes how AFL is not an isolated activity but feeds into the school’s cumulative understanding of pupils’ achievements. This comes from both day-to-day and periodic assessment, with evidence contributing to an increasingly well-informed, rounded and reliable picture of an individual pupil’s performance. APP will support senior leaders in schools to ensure that their approach to AFL is part of a manageable and school-wide system.
1.4 APP across phases and subjects

APP materials have been developed through extensive piloting in schools. This has involved the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA) and the National Strategies and has been funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

APP is now available to support a consistent approach across subjects and phases as follows:

- Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics
- Key Stage 3 English (including speaking and listening, reading and writing) mathematics, science and ICT.

Further information on the APP approach to teacher assessment is available on the QCDA website at www.qcda.gov.uk/assessment and on the Secondary Framework area of the National Strategies website www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/secondary/framework, where, together with support for effective teaching and learning, APP materials for English and mathematics are available to view and download.

DCSF has produced a helpful pamphlet, Getting to Grips with Assessing Pupils’ Progress, which summarises the guidance and information displayed in this area of the National Strategies website.

1.5 How to use this handbook

This handbook is for subject leaders and their departments, to help them implement APP effectively in the classroom. Section 2 of this guide provides advice on putting APP into practice and Section 3 demonstrates how schools can implement APP. Section 4 shows the process required to make APP assessments.

The APP pilots have shown that the active involvement of a senior member of school staff is critical to successful implementation of this approach. An additional leaflet is provided that suggests the initial considerations for the headteacher and school senior leadership team (SLT), the planning decisions required to identify the staff to be involved, their continuing professional development (CPD) and training needs, and the activities to secure teachers’ assessment judgements through planned in-school standardisation and moderation activity.
2. APP in practice

APP has a number of linked purposes:

- The identification through periodic assessment against national criteria of relative strengths and weaknesses in the different assessment focuses (AFs) for speaking and listening, reading and writing which can:
  - indicate the next important learning steps for individual pupils (curricular targets);
  - reveal areas of learning that need to be strengthened in a whole class or year group through curriculum changes.

- The planning of specific outcomes for teaching and learning and well-matched assessment opportunities in schemes of work, to ensure that pupils make two levels of progress over a key stage.

- The periodic assessment of pupils’ progress through the assignment of a National Curriculum level at given intervals throughout the key stage to supply secure tracking information.

Achieving these purposes using the APP approach is straightforward:

- At the point of planning for a sequence of teaching, APP is used to identify intended assessment outcomes linked to the Framework objectives being taught, for the range of pupils in the class.

- At regular intervals, which are planned to fit in with school assessment policy, teachers review pupils’ work using APP guidelines to build a profile of their attainment and assign overall levels for reading and writing.

- The assessments are used to inform future learning and teaching in class, curriculum planning and provision for additional support and intervention for pupils struggling to make progress.
2.1 The APP resources

There is a range of APP resources available:

- This document, the APP Handbook, explains the whole-school context for assessment, and introduces APP as a tool for periodic assessment. It provides all of the practical guidance that departments will need to develop and embed APP in English for speaking and listening, reading and writing.

- The Standards Files are exemplifications of the national standards. These will help departments to reach consistent and reliable judgements about National Curriculum levels for the AFs in reading and writing. Video files to exemplify standards in speaking and listening are available on the National Strategies web area: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/app. The Standards Files are described more fully in the appendix of this handbook.

- The Assessment Guidelines set out level-related APP assessment criteria for each AF. They offer a simple recording format for an individual pupil, providing assessment criteria for the AFs separately. These guidelines are available in two formats. In A3 format, all levels from 2 to 8 are shown on one sheet. This is particularly useful as a reference point, allowing teachers to spot gaps in pupils’ profiles and contributing to their understanding of how pupils progress up through the levels. The A4 format, which shows two levels on a page (three levels for speaking and listening), is recommended for recording judgements for individual pupils and is the version referred to in the guidance that follows.

- English subject leader development materials: Assessing pupils’ progress in English – additional guidance (00017-2009BKT-EN) provides additional support for departments in implementing the APP approach.

These materials update and replace the original APP English materials published in January 2006.
### 2.2 The APP process

The diagram summarises the sequence of events involved in APP as a series of seven steps. The sequence assumes that teachers will already have participated in standardisation exercises to ensure consistent interpretation of the assessment criteria.

| Day-to-day teaching, learning and assessment | Step 1 | Over a period of time, decide on the outcomes to be assessed and generate evidence of pupils’ attainment from day-to-day teaching and learning. |
| Periodic, level-related assessment | Step 2 | Review an appropriate range of evidence. |
| | Step 3 | Select the appropriate assessment guidelines sheet. |
| | Step 4 | Highlight assessment criteria for which there is evidence. |
| | Step 5 | Use the pupil’s developing profile of learning to decide upon a level and sublevel. |
| | Step 6 | Moderate assessments. |
| | Step 7 | Make any necessary adjustments to planning, teaching and intervention. |

At certain times, the outcomes of Step 5 will be used for the purposes of transitional assessment such as reporting on a pupil’s attainment at the end of a school year.

Section 2.3 of this handbook describes each of these steps in more detail.
2.3 APP step-by-step

Step 1: Over time, decide on the outcomes to be assessed and generate evidence of pupils’ attainment from day-to-day teaching and learning

As part of the planning of teaching and learning for any class, teachers will identify relevant AFs and criteria. Evidence is then generated over a period of time and forms the basis of the APP process of periodic assessment, which involves stepping back from the daily and weekly process of teaching, and assessing progress made across the subject over a longer period – perhaps a whole term.

Step 2: Review an appropriate range of evidence

Teachers will need to take account of a manageable range of evidence to inform and support APP assessments against the APP criteria. While some exercises and worksheets may provide some evidence of pupil achievement, teachers in the pilot project found that open-ended, less scaffolded tasks and activities allowing pupils to demonstrate more independent understanding were a richer source of evidence. Teachers will also need to consider more ephemeral evidence of pupil achievement, such as discussions between pupils and between teacher and pupils in the assessment of reading and writing as well as in speaking and listening.

Step 3: Select the appropriate assessment guidelines sheet

Teachers will usually start with a broad idea of the National Curriculum level that a pupil is working from – perhaps based on prior attainment. Each pupil will need an assessment guidelines sheet that will be used to record assessments by highlighting relevant criteria. Each assessment guideline form contains a table covering two National Curriculum levels (or three in the case of speaking and listening), with overlaps. In reading and writing, for example, there are forms with tables covering levels 3 and 4, 4 and 5, 5 and 6, and so on. (In speaking and listening the sheets cover, for example, levels 2, 3 and 4, levels 3, 4 and 5 and so on.) Referring if necessary to the full set of guidelines in A3 format, teachers should choose an appropriate form for each pupil so that periodic assessments can build up a profile of the pupil’s learning over time. Follow the instructions set out in section 4 of this handbook (‘How to make APP assessments’).

Step 4: Highlight assessment criteria for which there is evidence

Teachers should now consider the APP criteria in relation to the assembled evidence and highlight the criteria that have been met. For many teachers, it will take time before this process becomes quick and efficient; however, the experience of the pilot project suggests that the process of agreeing levels within the department, based on the guidance in the Standards Files, will help teachers to develop a better feel for levels and progression. The appendix to this handbook contains full guidance on using the Standards Files for reading and writing. Standards files for speaking and listening can be accessed on the National Strategies web area: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/app

Step 5: Use the pupil’s developing profile of learning to decide upon a level and sublevel

As successive assessments are made by highlighting criteria in the table, a profile of learning for each pupil is established. For each strand shown in the table, a box can be ticked to indicate that a particular level has been reached. Judgements for each attainment target are refined into ‘Low’, ‘Secure’ or ‘High’ within the level. Alternatively, ‘IE’ can be chosen to indicate that there is currently insufficient evidence to judge progress in a particular strand, or ‘BL’ if the judgement is below level.

At intervals, teachers will use the process described in section 4 of this handbook to arrive at an overall
National Curriculum level for individual pupils. This is done by taking into account how independently, how consistently and in what range of contexts pupils demonstrate their attainment across the separate strands or English AFs. The overall level can be recorded at intervals in the boxes provided at the bottom of the form.

**Step 6: Moderate assessments**

Assessment against criteria inevitably involves a degree of interpretation and professional judgement. Departments will need to ensure before they start to use APP that teachers have the chance to become familiar with the assessment criteria, and how these are consistent with national standards (standardisation). Once they begin to make their own judgements, they need to have the chance to explain and justify a sample with other teachers to ensure consistency (moderation). The Standards Files will help both these processes, as explained in the Appendix. Teachers should make regular reference to the Standards Files to strengthen their understanding of the levels across the National Curriculum strands, and to help to resolve ambiguous or borderline assessments. Regular collaborative assessment and discussion is an important means of ensuring that assessment standards across the department are reliable and consistent.

**Step 7: Make any necessary adjustments to planning, teaching and intervention**

A key purpose of APP is to inform and strengthen planning, teaching and learning. This aspect of APP can have a direct and positive impact on raising standards, and can assist in the personalisation of learning. The diagram below summarises the key aspects of this part of the APP process.
2.4 Links between APP, the Framework for secondary English and the National Curriculum

The APP assessment criteria are based on the National Curriculum level descriptions and AFs for speaking and listening, reading and writing and link to the Framework for secondary English.

It is important that planning for teaching and learning is based on the objectives from the Framework for secondary English. This will ensure that pupils have their broad curriculum entitlement as described in the National Curriculum. The APP assessment criteria should be used to assess learning outcomes, not to lead the curriculum.

The assessment criteria do, however, inform planning because teachers need to have an idea of the type of assessment evidence that any sequence of lessons will generate. For this reason, in the Framework for secondary English, the objectives are linked to APP AFs and to a relevant range of criteria. This allows teachers to see, in advance, the areas and focuses for assessment their planned unit of work will allow.

This is represented in the diagram below:

To see how the objectives are linked to the APP AFs and criteria, go to: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/secondary/framework
This table clarifies the distinction between the learning objectives of the Frameworks and the assessment guidelines of APP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Strategy Frameworks</th>
<th>APP guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on the statutory programme of study for the subject, each Framework sets out in detail</td>
<td>Based on the statutory level descriptions for the subject, the criteria which are set out in the assessment guidelines describe the characteristic performance of pupils at each level within key aspects of the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the learning objectives which form the basis for teachers’ medium- and short-term planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They seek to identify progression in the curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Framework objectives are the principal reference point for planning full curriculum</td>
<td>The APP guidelines give teachers a basis for periodically considering the available evidence and judging how well pupils have succeeded across the subject as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coverage of a subject.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While schools and teachers are free to plan a curriculum which will engage their particular</td>
<td>The assessment criteria are sufficiently broad to allow a wide range of evidence to be taken into account. Much of this derives from classroom teaching of the subject but evidence can be drawn from other subjects and from pupils’ learning beyond the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learners, the Frameworks specify what needs to be covered within the teaching of a specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework learning objectives are presented within ‘strands’; teachers can use the curriculum</td>
<td>The assessment guidelines provide a structure for looking at the evidence of pupils’ learning. They focus on significant aspects of performance in the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progression within these strands to determine the appropriate pitch of the work for pupils of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different abilities within the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework learning objectives set out in reasonable detail the knowledge, skills and</td>
<td>APP criteria generally describe a small number of features of pupils’ work or learning which are characteristic of their independent performance at each level in each strand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding which need to be acquired in that subject across a period of time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity about the objectives of specific teaching gives pupils a greater sense of purpose</td>
<td>Use of the APP criteria gives teachers and pupils a broader view of learning across the whole subject over a period of time (typically over a term) and across different contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and direction. It also provides a strong basis for immediate feedback to the pupil in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific context of the teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The learning objectives represent the basis of a curriculum experience for every learner;</td>
<td>APP criteria are predicated on pupils of all abilities having access to the full curriculum; they allow the variation in pupils’ responses to be assessed periodically and they help teachers identify where more work is required in day-to-day learning and teaching and where medium-term planning needs to be adjusted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers will organise and present them in a variety of ways and pupils in all types of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>settings will engage with them differentially.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Implementing APP

Embedding APP practice should not be seen as an end in itself. Rather, the department should be working on reviewing and strengthening all aspects of teaching and learning, using the full range of resources available in, for example, the renewed Framework and the planning toolkits. Within this work, departments should aim to make at least some APP judgements collaboratively, especially during the early stages of implementation. A collaborative approach to strengthening assessment will provide important feedback on the impact of developments in teaching and learning.

There are various ways in which the collaborative development of APP can be organised. For example, time could be allocated within departmental meetings for standardisation and moderation. Other arrangements could be made to suit the needs of particular departments. For example, a newly qualified teacher might work with a more experienced colleague to review APP judgements made for a particular class, or an advanced skills teacher could take responsibility for leading APP developments across the department and sharing experiences and expertise with neighbouring schools.

3.1 Steps towards implementation

This section provides guidance to subject leaders and other teachers involved in implementing APP in secondary English departments. It is helpful to think of implementation in terms of the seven steps described in Section 2.

Step 1: Over a period of time, decide on the outcomes to be assessed and generate evidence of pupils’ attainment from day-to-day teaching and learning

APP is a process of periodic review of work already done, not a new assessment event. At the point of planning from the Framework, teachers will need to be aware of intended outcomes and assessment opportunities. The school assessment policy will influence when teachers will make APP judgements, although subject leaders will need to discuss with senior leaders how APP will be developed to complement and strengthen existing assessment practice. As a basic principle the work reviewed in each periodic assessment should cover a range of areas of English and at least one term’s progress. This suggests that departments will most likely formalise their judgements termly, allowing meaningful contributions to whole-school pupil tracking programmes. For English departments that are making initial APP judgements, it will be useful to work collaboratively at first, to ensure that the all the teachers in the department develop an understanding of the approach and a common interpretation of the APP criteria.
Step 2: Review an appropriate range of evidence

Before departments start to make APP assessment judgements they will need to:

- become familiar with the APP criteria for the relevant levels and AFs for speaking and listening, reading and writing through standardisation;
- identify in planning and teaching the relevant assessment opportunities as necessary to ensure that a full range of evidence is generated;
- be aware of the range of pupil work and records of interaction relevant to the success criteria to be addressed.

These preparatory steps could usefully be tackled over a short series of departmental meetings.

For example, a department might have agreed to work together to make APP judgements for the first term’s work in Year 9. The department could then work on these activities:

- Identify the APP criteria that are addressed in the relevant units.
- Decide whether the teaching and learning approaches in the existing units allow sufficient scope for generating relevant evidence. For instance:
  - Are there enough opportunities for discussion and guided group work that can allow teachers to probe pupils’ understanding? How will ‘ephemeral’ evidence of this kind be collected?
  - Are there open-ended tasks that allow pupils to demonstrate their independent mastery and understanding of the key areas?
- If necessary, adjust unit plans so that a comprehensive but manageable set of evidence will be available in pupils’ books and/or folders.

Step 3: Select the appropriate assessment guidelines sheet

Teachers can now work together, perhaps in small groups, to select the appropriate assessment guidelines sheet for an initial sample of pupils, based on their knowledge of the approximate National Curriculum levels at which pupils are working. The process of arriving at a reliable APP assessment can be thought of as ‘zooming in’ on a pupil through increasing levels of detail.
Step 4: Highlight assessment criteria for which there is evidence

This is the crucial stage at which teachers decide what constitutes ‘success’ for each of the criteria being considered. It is important that all the teachers in the department develop a secure and consistent interpretation of the APP assessment criteria, so that reliable assessments can be made against national standards. For most departments, developing this expertise is likely to be a major piece of collaborative professional development to be tackled over a significant period of time. It is important that all teachers are involved in a continuing professional discussion in order to reach a consistent interpretation within the department. The Standards Files provide an agreed set of national benchmarks against which the department’s judgements can be standardised and then moderated. There is more guidance on using the Standards Files in the Appendix to this booklet.

Step 5: Use the pupil’s developing profile of learning to decide upon a level and sublevel

Reaching a reliable level and sublevel is another aspect of the APP process that will benefit from collaborative development. For example, pairs of teachers could work through completed assessment forms from their respective classes, and discuss and decide upon overall levels, using their knowledge of the pupils concerned.

This stage should not be rushed. It may take time before the developing profile of learning shown on the guidelines sheet has sufficient coverage to allow an overall judgement to be made. It is also likely to take a significant amount of time for teachers to develop the confident grasp of the criteria that is required to allow overall judgements to be made.
5. Use the pupil’s developing profile of learning to decide upon a level and sublevel

6. Moderate judgements

7. Make any adjustments required to planning, teaching and intervention

**Step 6: Moderate judgements**

Moderation activities could form a regular part of departmental meetings. For example, teachers could be asked to present judgements made against APP assessment criteria for a particular pupil, and to justify these judgements using evidence from the pupil’s work. The use of the Standards Files to resolve differences of interpretation would be an important aspect of this work.

**Step 7: Making any adjustments required to planning, teaching and intervention**

As the use of APP develops, departments will be building up a profile of learning for individual pupils, and will also be developing their understanding of patterns of achievement across year groups, classes and units of work.

A continuing focus on moderation and standardisation will be essential to ensure that APP data is accurate and reliable. Providing this happens, APP will provide a wealth of data that will enable departments to make informed decisions about planning, teaching and intervention.

For example:

- Where there is a disparity in performance on particular assessment criteria or AFs between similar classes following the same scheme of work, the teachers involved could work together, perhaps observing each other’s lessons, to identify and share features of effective practice.
- APP data can be used to inform pupil tracking, and to assist early identification of pupils at risk of underachievement, for whom intervention teaching might be appropriate.
- As departments review their schemes of work, APP evidence can be used to help to evaluate the effectiveness of current approaches, and identify areas for development.
4. How to make APP assessments

When making periodic teacher assessment judgements using the APP approach there is a process to follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials required</th>
<th>Process to be followed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will need:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence from pupils’ books or folders of what they have achieved independently that is significant and representative, and any relevant notes or records you have kept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment guidelines at the appropriate level boundaries for the pupils to be assessed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flow chart for completing the relevant assessment guidelines in reading/writing/speaking and listening (see below).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Standards Files for reference.</td>
<td><strong>Stage 1: Making AF judgements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Select the appropriate assessment guidelines for the level borderline at which you think the pupil is working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider the evidence for each AF in relation to the criteria and highlight those which have been met.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decide which level offers the best-fit for each AF, referring to the Standards Files as necessary, and tick the appropriate level-related box.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Stage 2: Making an overall level judgement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow the flow chart guides on pages 19–21 to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make an overall level judgement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decide whether the level is low, secure or high. The process can be summarised in this way:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− the overall level is the highest level at which all or most of the assessment criteria for the majority of AFs are highlighted;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>− the flow charts define this process more precisely for reading and writing and describe how to assign low, medium or high sublevels.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The terms ‘low’, ‘secure’ and ‘high’ broadly equate to sublevels a/b/c for the purpose of recording and tracking data. Rather than being based on a mathematical formula for sub-dividing a level, ‘low’, ‘secure’ and ‘high’ reflect the professional nature of the judgements that are made through APP, based on a teacher’s consideration of a range of evidence over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Stage 3: Checking the overall level judgement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Check the final judgement against the relevant Standards Files.</td>
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</table>

There is a specific process to follow when making level judgements for each attainment target and these are described in the flow chart guides that follow this page.
4.1 Speaking and Listening: guide for completing assessment guidelines and making a level judgement

The following guidance may be helpful in determining an overall level for speaking and listening, and then whether the level is low, secure, or high, since there are key requirements for each level.

Step 1. Making AF judgements

- Begin with the assessment guidelines for the appropriate levels.
- Look at the criteria within each AF. Decide which level describes the pupil best.
- Record the level for each AF in the appropriate box.
- Record ‘insufficient evidence’ (IE) if you do not know enough about this aspect of the pupil’s speaking and listening to make a judgement. This may have implications for planning.

If you feel the pupil is operating below the level, check the criteria on the assessment guidelines for the level below, or in the case of level 1, record ‘below level’ (BL). Any gaps noted may also have implications for planning.

If you have ticked all, or almost all, of the criteria for the higher level, check whether you should be using the assessment guidelines for the level borderlines above.

Step 2. Making an overall level judgement

- Your assessment focus judgements give an impression of the best-fit level for each AF. Use these judgements to make an initial overall level decision for speaking and listening. The minimum requirement for awarding a level is for at least three of the relevant criteria to be met.
- Now use your professional judgement to decide whether the level is low, secure or high. There is not a sum to be done in terms of adding up a set number of bullet points to determine graduations of performance within a level:
  - Take into consideration how fully, consistently, and independently the criteria for each AF have been met in different contexts by looking at the stems:
    - in some contexts for levels 1 and 2
    - in most contexts for level 3
    - across a range of contexts for levels 4 and above.
  - Tick the box for low, secure, or high as follows:
    - Low – meets at least three of the criteria for the level across some of the AFs
    - Secure – meets most of the criteria for the level across the full range of AFs
    - High - meets all, or almost all of the criteria for the level across the four AFs with some highlighting of criteria in the level above.

Step 3. Check your overall judgement

Finally, check your overall judgement by comparing the evidence with the relevant Standards Files, and cross checking with the national curriculum level description.
4.2 Reading: guide for completing assessment guidelines and making a level judgement

The following guidance may be helpful in determining an overall level for reading, and then whether the level is low, secure and high, since there are key requirements for each level.

Step 1: Making AF judgements
For each AF, starting with AF1 for level 2 and level 3 and AF2 for all other levels:

- look at the evidence in relation to all the criteria for both the higher and lower levels at this borderline and highlight those that have been met;
- make a best-fit judgement whether the higher or the lower level has been achieved and record your judgement by ticking the appropriate level-related box;
- if there is some evidence for an AF but not enough to make a judgement at the lower level, record a judgement of ‘below level’ by ticking the BL box;
- if there is no evidence for a particular AF, record this by ticking the IE (Insufficient Evidence) box.

If you have ticked BL for more than one AF, check whether you should be using the assessment guidelines for the level borderline below.

If you have ticked all, or almost all, of the criteria for the higher level, check whether you should be using the assessment guidelines for the level borderline above.

Step 2: Making an overall level judgement
Check your AF judgements against the requirements for each level:

For level 2:
- ticks at level 2 for AF1, AF2 and some highlighting at level 2 for AF3.

For level 3:
- ticks at level 3 for AF2, AF3 and one other AF out of AFs 1, 4, 5, 6, 7.
- AF1 is not assessed separately beyond level 3.

For level 4:
- ticks at level 4 for AF2 and AF3 and at least one other AF.

For level 5:
- ticks at level 5 for any four AFs provided there is at least level 4 for AF3.

For all other levels:
- ticks for any four AFs at the target level.

If you have ticked IE for more than two AFs, there may be insufficient evidence to make an overall level judgement, in which case IE should be recorded.

Now finalise the overall level judgement by deciding whether the level is low, secure or high:

Low – meets the minimum requirements for the level as described in the wording above. The pupil is working within the overall level, but there are significant areas that need to be developed further before secure performance at the level is demonstrated.

Secure – meets the minimum requirements for the level with some additional highlighting of criteria at the level in most other AFs. There may be a few unmet criteria, but the highlighting shows that the standard for the level has been substantially met across the AFs.

High – the criteria for the level are highlighted across all, or almost all, the AFs, with some criteria in the level above being highlighted for some AFs.

Your decision should take account of how fully and consistently the criteria have been met and how far the pupil demonstrates independence and choice across a range of evidence.

Step 3: Checking the overall level judgement
Finally, check the overall judgement by comparing the evidence with the relevant Standards Files.
4.3 Writing: guide for completing assessment guidelines and making a level judgement

The following guidance may be helpful in determining an overall level for writing, and then whether the level is low, secure and high, since there are key requirements for each level.

**Step 1: Making AF judgements**

For each AF, starting with AF5:

- look at the evidence in relation to all the criteria for both the higher and lower levels at this borderline and highlight those that have been met;
- make a best-fit judgement whether the higher or the lower level has been achieved and record your judgement by ticking the appropriate level-related box;
- if there is some evidence for an AF but not enough to make a judgement at the lower level, record a judgement of ‘below level’ by ticking the BL box;
- if there is no evidence for a particular AF, record this by ticking the IE (Insufficient Evidence) box.

If you have ticked BL for more than one AF out of AFs 1 to 6, check whether you should be using the assessment guidelines for the level borderline below.

If you have ticked all, or almost all, of the criteria for the higher level, check whether you should be using the assessment guidelines for the level borderline above.

**Step 2: Making an overall level judgement**

Check your AF judgements against the requirements for each level:

**For level 2:** ticks at level 2 for three out of AF5, AF6, AF1 and AF2 and either AF7 or AF8.

**For all other levels:** ticks at the target level for any four AFs out of AFs 1 to 6.

If you have ticked IE for more than two AFs, there may be insufficient evidence to make an overall level judgement, in which case IE should be recorded.

Now finalise the overall level judgement by deciding whether the level is low, secure or high:

- **Low** – meets the minimum requirements for the level as described in the wording above. The pupil is working within the overall level, but there are significant areas that need to be developed further before secure performance at the level is demonstrated.

- **Secure** – meets the minimum requirements for the level with some additional highlighting of criteria at the level in most other AFs. There may be a few unmet criteria, but the highlighting shows that the standard for the level has been substantially met across the AFs.

- **High** – the criteria for the level are highlighted across all, or almost all, the AFs, with some criteria in the level above being highlighted for some AFs.

Your decision should take account of how fully and consistently the criteria have been met and how far the pupil demonstrates independence and choice across a range of evidence. Your judgements on AF7 and AF8 are likely to confirm rather than decide your overall level judgement. Where evidence for AF7 and AF8 is significantly better or worse than the evidence for other AFs, it is likely to influence your judgement of low, secure or high.

**Step 3: Checking the overall level judgement**

Finally, check the overall judgement by comparing the evidence with the relevant Standards Files.
5. Appendix

Standards Files
The Standards Files for reading and writing and the video standards files for speaking and listening are a central part of the APP approach. Their main purpose is to exemplify standards by giving guidance on accurate assessments and acting as a resource and reference point for teachers:

- on assessing pupils’ work;
- on diagnosing pupils’ strengths and weaknesses;
- for training and professional development purposes.

Each Standards File includes:

- examples of pupils’ ongoing classroom work, which have been assessed to exemplify the APP approach and show national standards;
- commentary on the evidence at AF level, which leads to a summative judgement on the pupils’ work;
- the assessment guidelines sheet that records both a profile of attainment across the AFs and a National Curriculum level for the attainment target.

The reading and writing files exemplify attainment from Years 7, 8 and 9 at National Curriculum levels 2 to 8. For speaking and listening, the video files of pupils’ work exemplify attainment from Years 1 to 9 and at National Curriculum levels 1 to 8. The separate collections of work for speaking and listening, reading and writing are provided so that the annotations and commentaries are presented as clearly as possible to focus on the evidence for each mode separately and to help sharpen teacher judgements accordingly. In some circumstances a collection of pupils’ work could well provide evidence for the assessment of reading, writing, and speaking and listening together, but teachers will need to judge the three modes separately.

5.1 Pupils’ work in the Standards Files

Each Standards File comprises a number of pieces of work from schools directly involved in the piloting and further development phases of APP. Some of the evidence is written, and some of it is in the form of notes made by the teacher when working with the pupils, or when observing them in class and for speaking and listening, the evidence is presented in video sequences of different classroom activities. In the Standards Files the level of annotation or commentary on the work presented is far more than a classroom teacher would be expected to record. The Standards Files have a large amount of annotation and commentary as they need to stand alone and the classroom teacher is not available to discuss what the evidence amounts to and what additionally they know about a pupil’s work.

Background information about the context of the work has been kept to a minimum since each collection has been selected primarily to exemplify attainment at a particular National Curriculum level and in a relevant year group, rather than as an example of recommended curriculum practice. In some cases, the pupil’s work in a file represents the pupil’s entire output during the period; for others, it is a small sample. In each case, the criterion for the size of the collection is the same: how much is sufficient to support a teacher in making a level judgement against the AFs?
5.2 National standards exemplified (reading and writing)

Each collection of pupils’ work has been assessed using an assessment guidelines sheet. Four kinds of annotation or commentary may support assessment of the pupils’ work:
2. Marginal annotation

These indicate where a particular criterion in the guidelines is met. The annotations refer directly to criteria for an AF at a particular level.

3. Commentary on a piece of evidence

At the end of each piece of a pupil’s work in reading or writing a commentary summarises what has been demonstrated across the AFs.

Response to Robert Westall’s The Watch House

Task 1

Most relevant points clearly identified (AF2 L5 b1)

Comments generally supported by relevant textual reference or quotation (AF2 L5 b2)

Comments develop inferred meanings drawing on evidence across the text (AF3 L5 b1)

This response to Robert Westall’s The Watch House focuses on the relationship between Anne and her mother as it is presented in chapters 1–9 of the novel. The relationship is described with close textual reference and attention to detail and the comments are beginning to develop some explanation of the inferred meanings in a way that securely meet the level 5 criteria for AFs 2 and 3.

Assessment summary

10. Assessment summaries

These consider all the evidence and conclude with a level and sublevel judgement for the attainment target.

Assessment summary

There is considerable evidence throughout the selection that this pupil can operate quite effectively at the level of literal meaning (AF2). The criteria for level 4 are usually fulfilled in that the selection is generally relevant, although some appropriate details may be overlooked and ‘references tend to repeat what is in the text’. In moving beyond literal meaning to attempt to use inference (AF3), comment is limited to the most straightforward range of deductions, although there is some evidence of interpretation of questions in providing relevant material in response to these. There is also evidence of being able, with the support of appropriate scaffolding in the question, to identify words and phrases relevant to their suggested purpose and effect, although comment is only of a very generalised nature. There is little evidence here of AFs 4, 5, 6 or 7. There are level 3 judgements for AFs 3, 5, 6 and 7 and a level 4 judgement for AF2. This more than meets the minimum requirements for level 3. Although the range of evidence in the collection is limited to a number of tasks relating to one text, the level 3 criteria for AFs 2, 3 and 5 are fully and consistently met and the responses show sufficient independence to warrant the overall level judgement of secure level 3.
### 5.3 Available Standards Files

#### Speaking and Listening Standards Files

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IE = Insufficient Evidence  
BL = Below Level
### Writing Standards Files

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HWP = Handwriting and presentation, which is only assessed at levels 1–3. The KS3 Standards Files for level 3 do not provide evidence of this aspect.
5.4 Using the Standards Files

The Standards Files enable classroom teachers to have a common understanding of different levels, and the nature and demands of the AFs that underpin each one.

There are different ways of using the Standards Files:

- to standardise judgements, i.e. to ensure teachers’ judgements are in line with national standards before making assessments;
- as a reference when assessing your own pupils;
- to support moderation activity;
- to clarify what it means to make progress;
- to exemplify the APP approach.

**Standardisation materials – reading and writing**

To ensure that judgements made by teachers in your school are in line with national standards, standardisation training in school could use the materials in the following ways:

- each teacher assesses one of their own pupils, and agrees their level judgement with a colleague by comparing and contrasting the pupil’s work with that of a Standards File pupil at that level;
- teachers assess the work of one Standards File pupil using a training version with the references to level judgements removed, and then compare their judgements with those in the full Standards File;
- copy one or two collections of work from their own pupils, without any annotation or commentary, and ask colleagues to identify pupils in the Standards Files to which each is closest in performance;
- copy two Standards Files at the same level (e.g. low 6 and secure 6) with all the annotations, but take out the assessment summaries, or assessment guidelines sheets, so that groups can discuss and agree which is low and which is secure;
- to clarify progress you can look through all Standards Files that cover one identified attainment target to track the evidence for a particular AF or group of AFs.

**Standardisation materials – speaking and listening**

A structured approach to becoming familiar with the speaking and listening AFs, making and standardising judgements is provided in the training and guidance materials found on the National Strategies web area in the section entitled:

‘How do I use the AFs to assess standards?’

**Reference**

When assessing your own pupils you should use the Standards Files for reference:

- as a benchmark when making periodic assessments;
- to compare the performance of your pupils at a particular level with exemplars that have been assessed against national standards;
- to check what constitutes sufficient evidence of attainment in an AF at a specific level;
- to refine your judgement of what is typical of performance in adjacent levels, for example comparing two collections of work in the same attainment target, one on either side of a level borderline;
- to check what progression in a particular AF looks like.
Supporting in-school moderation

Moderation activity generally involves a group of teachers reviewing a sample of class teachers’ initial assessments, reconciling any disagreements and agreeing a final judgement. The Standards Files are essential tools in this process of bringing differing views to agreement in an evidence-based way that is in line with national standards. Disagreement can be resolved by recourse to the question: How does the pupil under discussion compare with pupil X or Y from the Standards Files?

Exemplifying the APP model

Subject leaders and others running training sessions could use selected pupil Standards Files, to illustrate how the principles that underpin the APP model of periodic assessment operate in practice, or to illustrate particular aspects of assessment. Discussion could be focused, for example, on:

- attainment at a particular level in different year groups, or in a particular AF at different levels;
- the range of potential evidence, for example how much evidence of attainment for a particular AF is required to support a judgement;
- differences between evidence gathered from oral work and writing;
- whether it is harder to find evidence for some AFs than others;
- identifying the next steps in teaching and learning for a particular pupil, or groups of pupils.