

# Key Stage 3 National Strategy

## Intervention strategy: key messages

This leaflet for senior and subject leaders summarises the main points from the briefing on the Key Stage 3 intervention strategy. It is best used as part of a senior leadership team meeting or heads of departments meeting.

The purpose of this leaflet is to help you to prepare an effective intervention plan tailored for underachieving pupils in Key Stage 3. An accompanying booklet, *Intervention toolkit* (DfES 0178/2003), reviews the materials produced by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to support an intervention programme.

### Effective intervention

Not all underachievers are low attainers. Some able pupils could be doing better. Equally, not all low attainers are underachievers; some are achieving well, given their difficulties or special needs. What all underachievers have in common is that they are not fulfilling their potential. It is important that schools identify underperformers by using all the data that is available to them. The intervention audit is the key to this identification and should be used systematically with each year group within the key stage. The audit will then enable schools to draw up a coherent and effective intervention plan to support their underperforming pupils.

An effective intervention plan will:

- make sure that resources are used efficiently;
- translate 'catch-up' learning into long term progress;
- be flexible enough to address the needs of individuals, groups or cohorts;
- avoid indiscriminate application of the programmes;
- be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Providing an effective catch-up programme is not easy. There may be constraints of time, staff and accommodation to work around. In spite of the logistical difficulties, there are schools that have found ways of creating a coherent programme.

### Resources to support intervention

This year all schools will receive a standard amount of money from the Standards Fund to support intervention. In addition, there is a variable element allocated by the LEA, reflecting the number of pupils in a school who need intervention and the needs expressed in the intervention plan.

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy provides a range of catch-up materials, but none of the materials provides a miracle cure, and none is suited to every pupil. The art lies in matching provision to need, bearing in mind constraints of time, numbers, staff and expertise.

Catch-up resources from the Strategy to date include:

- *Transition units* in English and mathematics;
- literacy and numeracy summer schools, supported by resource packs;

- *Literacy Progress Units*;
- *Springboard 7*;
- *Year 9 booster kit* and revision classes.

In its third year, the Strategy is extending the suite of materials from which schools can draw to suit local conditions and their intervention plan. These new materials are described in the *Intervention toolkit*, distributed at the briefing, and will be available to schools by calling the DfES publications hotline (telephone: 0845 60 222 60). Strategy materials, including those listed above, are posted as they are published on **[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)**.

## Tackling underachievement

The well-recognised ways of tackling underachievement are:

- adjusting schemes of work;
- assigning classroom assistants to assist pupils in the classroom;
- providing well-paced, well-structured teaching;
- providing extra programmes for particular groups or individuals;
- mentoring individuals;
- using parents and volunteers to help pupils in their learning;
- setting personal targets for pupils;
- prioritising underachieving pupils in grouping, staffing and timetabling policies.

A good way of thinking of the various types of intervention is in three waves.

Wave 1 is about offering the pupils an inclusive and well-differentiated experience in everyday lessons, with plenty of support and opportunity to catch up with age-related expectations.

Where it is clear that large numbers of pupils share the same problem, then the most efficient and effective solution is to adjust the scheme of work to cater for them. The kinds of adjustment that can be made will often involve:

- introducing new topics, units of work or mini-courses (e.g. *Targeting level 4 in Year 7* in English and *Level 3 to level 4 lessons* in mathematics), concentrating on misconceptions, gaps or weaknesses;
- organising optional groups to address common problems (where classes are blocked);
- embedding revision lessons at key points of the scheme;
- using transition units linking work in the previous year or key stage with the first units of the next one.

Adjustments to the scheme of work are made more effective by:

- focusing and structuring teaching so that pupils know what is to be learned and how, and how it fits with what they know already;

- using the 'model – try – apply – secure' sequence;
- motivating learning with pace, dialogue and stimulating activities;
- involving pupils when you assess their progress;
- having high expectations of the effort that pupils should make;
- creating a settled and purposeful atmosphere for learning.

Wave 2 is about offering groups of pupils short-term extra help to accelerate the key points of learning. This enables smaller groups of pupils to cover what they have missed or address learning which is insecure. Examples of extra catch-up programmes for particular groups of pupils are:

- *Literacy Progress Units*;
- *Springboard 7*;
- booster classes;
- holiday schools.

Wave 3 is about offering intensive targeted support to individual pupils when small group interventions fail to work, for example, through the use of learning mentors and materials such as *Reading challenge*, *Writing challenge* and *Mathematics challenge*. This is where individual support is linked to very precise personal targets and timescales.

## Pursuing personal targets

Personal targets for pupils can be pursued through schemes of work, catch-up classes, school-wide campaigns, and so on. Be aware that once they have been set, they need to be monitored and supported if they are to work. Manageability is key. Personal targets can be ineffectual if there is insufficient time for them, or no system in place for reviewing them. Even where implementation is strong, some pupils can be overwhelmed with multiple targets set for the cohort, the tutor group and each subject.

It helps if there is a clear system for setting, reviewing and following up targets and if teachers make sure that pupils know:

- why a target has been set;
- exactly what they have to achieve;
- where to turn for help;
- how and when progress and success will be checked and by whom;
- how success will be acknowledged;
- which teacher they are accountable to for their personal targets.

Year tutors are often the best placed to coordinate the layers of target setting. Many targets will overlap and should be rationalised at year group level. To do this well, tutors should be well informed about what is expected and briefed on how to respond and support pupils. This is a case for year team training.

## Tailoring to local conditions and marshalling support

There is no 'ideal' model for an intervention plan. The art is to resolve or work around the organisational or logistical problems, without losing the impact. All schools have to work within local constraints and capitalise on opportunities. For example, one school may not be able to offer after-hours, catch-up classes because of travel considerations, but it may have a flexible timetable, or local helpers, who make it possible to organise a voluntary scheme during breaks in the school day.

Schools may decide not to implement every catch-up programme offered by the Strategy, but to select those that suit its main needs and which will work with the staff and time available.

Different schools will be able to marshal support for their catch-up programmes from different sources, for example, they may assign teaching assistants to support particular classes or groups and invite parents to help with revision timetables or learning spellings. Some schools will lack volunteers, but may have governors, librarians or sixth formers who could help as mentors. Other schools will enlist the support of after-school clubs or ethnic minority achievement staff.

The intervention audit is the first step in designing provision tailored to your school's needs and circumstances. It may help to form a short-term group to advise, devise an intervention plan, and launch an intervention programme. The group might comprise:

- the Key Stage 3 strategy manager;
- a key member of the English department;
- a key member of the mathematics department;
- a representative of the science department;
- the SENCO (and the member of staff responsible for teaching assistants if this is not the SENCO);
- a teaching assistant;
- the head of Year 7.

This group could get things under way by being given a remit to:

- review the pattern of underachievement in Key Stage 3 using data, work samples, Ofsted reports ...;
- identify the pupils' main needs for catch-up provision;
- review the available materials, staff, time and accommodation, and any constraints;
- draft for the agreement of senior managers a costed intervention plan;
- support staff who will take forward elements of the plan;
- monitor and review the plan.