



Recording and tracking pupils' attainment and progress – the use of assessment evidence at the time of inspections

Guidance produced by the Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA) Summer 2007

The tracking and recording of pupils' progress is based on assessment information that serves a number of purposes over different timescales:

- **Directly supporting learning and teaching**
- **Informing the monitoring, evaluation and planning of learning**
- **Reporting outcomes, either for individual pupils or for the school as a whole.**

The ways in which assessment judgements are recorded and progress is tracked may differ according to which of the above purposes it serves. However, assessment judgements recorded for one purpose (for example, monitoring pupils' progress in relation to learning objectives in planning) can be used for other purposes (for example, making end of year summary assessments of pupils' attainments or presenting evidence of pupils' progress at the time of an inspection). This guidance has been prepared to support schools in deciding how they should record and track pupil progress in order to fulfil the above purposes, and how schools can use this information to provide evidence of attainment and progress at the time of inspections, including schools in OFSTED categories that are revisited. It does this by considering three key questions:

- 1. Will an inspection team expect to see pupils' progress recorded and tracked in a particular way?**
- 2. Giving an account of progress at the time of inspection – what options are open to schools in presenting evidence of progress in the short to medium terms?**
- 3. Giving an account of progress at the time of inspection – how can levels, grades within levels and point scores be used to show progress?**

These questions are addressed on the following pages.

During the preparation of this document, AAIA has been in discussion with OFSTED. OFSTED has reiterated that it does not expect to see schools using any particular approach to tracking and recording progress.

References in this guidance are taken from the following documents:

Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005
OFSTED 2005

Conducting the inspection OFSTED January 2007

Handbook for assessing pupils' progress in English – a practical guide
Secondary National Strategy 2006

Assessing pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 3 - a practical guide
Secondary National Strategy 2007

1. Will an inspection team expect to see pupils' progress recorded and tracked in a particular way?

- The Framework for the inspection of schools states that:

Inspectors should evaluate ... the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning and monitoring learners' progress

(Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005
Part C: The Quality of Provision - How effective are teaching, training and learning? - page 19)

- At the same time, the Framework states:

The principles of inspection are that inspection of providers will ... make use as far as possible of the existing documentation and systems of the organisations inspected and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on them

(Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005 Part D: Quality Assurance - Principles of Inspection - page 22)

An inspection team will not therefore expect or require a particular way of recording and tracking progression within a school. However, it will want to be able to come to a judgement about the effectiveness of the assessment, recording and tracking systems that a school has in place and about the pupils' progress.

- In OFSTED guidance for inspectors a key concept is 'fitness for purpose'.

*A basic principle of gathering first-hand evidence is **fitness for purpose**. Inspectors should ask: what is needed to investigate particular issues or assertions made by the school? The inspections are intended to be tightly focused and efficient but they must also ensure that the judgements are valid and securely based upon sufficient evidence.*

(Conducting the inspection OFSTED January 2007)

While this guidance relates to the gathering and use of evidence by inspectors, the same principle of **fitness for purpose** applies to the systems that schools develop. In relation to assessing pupils, and tracking and recording their progress, a school's systems would be fit for purpose if they support learning and give a valid and accurate account of attainment and progression that informs evaluation, planning and reporting (see the purposes of tracking and recording on page 1 of this document). If this is the case, it is likely that the same systems can also provide the evidence that is needed at the time of inspections without the need to develop additional systems in a particular way specifically for that purpose.

2. Giving an account of progress at the time of inspection – what options are open to schools in presenting evidence of progress in the short to medium terms?

- The inspection framework makes it clear that schools will need to provide evidence both of the standards of pupils' work and their progress relative to prior attainment:

Inspectors should evaluate ... the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals and ... learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential ...

(Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005
Part C: Achievement and Standards - How well do learners achieve? - page 19)

- There is an expectation that a range of evidence will be available to an inspection team:

The inspection team, in discussion with the school, must come to a balanced view of the learners' progress using the full range of available data and other evidence, for example talking to learners about their work and examining the school's analysis of progress over the recent past. Inspection teams should also give full consideration to any other additional data provided by the school, particularly when this is more up to date than that provided in the Panda report.

(Conducting the inspection OFSTED January 2007)

Given that inspectors will want to examine '*the schools' analysis of progress over the recent past*' much of the evidence for progress will come from the schools' tracking of pupils' progress in the short to medium terms against the learning and teaching objectives in the medium term planning. This evidence/ these records can take a variety of forms such as informal notes and highlighting on planning, class/group records in relation to learning objectives and pupils' work including the marking comments on this work. If the objectives in the medium term planning are pitched appropriately and reflect progression then evidence of attainment against these objectives will show the extent to which pupils are on track to achieve longer term targets, either end of year or end of key stage.

The ways in which medium term plans are written vary from school to school and subject to subject. For example, the National Strategy Frameworks for English and mathematics provide learning/teaching objectives for each year group in these subjects, which are pitched to deliver national expectations. These objectives provide a reference point for the development of medium term planning and for talking about attainment and progress. If pupils are achieving the objectives from the current year as they encounter/experience them through the taught curriculum, then they are on track for national expectations. If they are working very confidently on the current ones and in addition are working on some from the next year, they are beyond expectations for the year group in those areas. Similarly, if they are working on objectives from earlier years, they are working below expectations for the year group. Where pupils are working below expectations, sound evidence of previous attainment would need to be available in order to indicate that progress had been made. Where the Frameworks do not provide the same reference points for other subjects, other sources are sometimes used such as the QCA Schemes of Work. However, the same principle applies – progression must be clearly defined in the planning of these subjects and then evidence in relation to the learning objectives in the planning will reflect attainment and progress for teaching groups/classes.

- Indications of attainment and progress in relation to the learning objectives in medium term planning will express attainment and progress in curriculum terms. While this can be quantified numerically (for example, x% of pupils are achieving most of the objectives for the year group, y% are beginning to work beyond them, etc), essentially attainment and progress are being expressed in relation to the curriculum and what pupils have learnt. **If appropriate progression is built into the medium term planning, there is no necessity to provide additional numerical data in terms of levels or point scores over the medium term** (see below – 3. *How can levels, grades within levels and point scores be used to show progress?*)

3. Giving an account of progress at the time of inspection – how can levels, grades within levels and point scores be used to show progress?

- In the longer term, the information from pupils' progress against the learning objectives in medium term planning can be translated into level judgements and recorded alongside other information, such as levels from the end of year QCA optional tests. Recording over the longer term in this way allows for information from tracking to be related to the attainment data in RAISEonline, which of course utilises National Curriculum levels/examination grades and average point scores to show attainment at the end of each key stage. Average point scores are also used in the calculation of schools' progress measures, i.e. contextual value added scores.
- When summarising attainment on an annual basis using levels, many schools also use grades within levels (a/b/c) to indicate the extent to which pupils have attained particular levels. Some schools use National Curriculum levels, a/b/c grades and point scores more frequently than this to show progress. Their use in this way presents serious difficulties:

The point scores system was devised to provide a common system of expressing attainment between key stages, for example in value added analyses. As such, point scores are an effective tool for use in retrospectively evaluating progress over the longer term, presenting this progress in a simplified, linear way. In practice, learning is an uneven process characterised by periods of progress and periods of consolidation. Consequently, point scores or even grades within National Curriculum levels can be problematic for tracking learning as it happens in the short to medium terms, because it is difficult to reflect this progress accurately and meaningfully in other than curriculum terms. This is not only because of the unevenness of learning in the short to medium term, but also because a level represents progress over a period of two years. In addition, in order to cover the scope of a subject (e.g. writing or ICT), level judgements need to be made across a range of work and contexts over time, with evidence related to the programmes of study and Strategy learning/teaching objectives, before they are meaningful.

- Recently the Secondary National Strategy and the QCA have produced the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) materials for tracking pupils' progress and supporting learning during key stage 3.¹ The need to arrive at level judgements over time and over a range of evidence is recognised in these materials:

Arriving at a secure view of a pupil's level is an ongoing process in which you take account of assessment evidence as it arises and weigh it against your current picture of the pupil's performance.

(Assessing pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 3 - a practical guide
Secondary National Strategy 2007)

APP recognises that schools may wish to summarise attainment using levels more frequently than on an annual basis. However, it emphasises that the use of levels (and by implication point scores) for tracking in the short to medium terms does not in itself provide information that teachers can use to inform their planning and support learning – the basis by which tracking systems can be judged as 'fit or purpose' (see above – **1. Will an inspection team expect to see pupils' progress recorded and tracked in a particular way?**).

- APP also recommends making level judgements as 'low' or 'secure' rather than using a/b/c:

The basis of the APP approach is to track pupils' progress by identifying where specific strengths and weaknesses lie and assigning them an overall level. Many schools also want to identify progress within levels, for example through the use of sub-levels (i.e. level 4a/b/c). APP suggests that it is helpful to note whether a level is 'low' or 'secure'.

¹ A similar project *Monitoring Children's Progress* is currently being developed by the Primary National Strategy/QCA for key stages 1 and 2.

The use of sub-levels will be decided in schools to fit in with the overall policy for assessment, recording and reporting. A focus on sub-levels should not, however, distract from attention to the diagnostic profile that APP generates for each pupil in order to inform future teaching and learning.

(Assessing pupils' progress in English – a practical guide
Secondary National Strategy 2006)

- The APP materials recognise that in the short to medium term the over-riding purpose of assessment should be to inform teaching and learning. Whatever the method of tracking and recording progress, the evidence on which these records are based has to be the progress that pupils are making in relation to the learning objectives in the medium term planning. This evidence not only supports subsequent learning and teaching but also provides evidence that can be used at the time of inspections (see above – **2. Giving an account of progress at the time of inspection – what options are open to schools in presenting evidence of progress in the short to medium terms?**). Consequently, numerical data in the form of levels and points scores are only necessary for inspection purposes when presenting evidence of attainment and progress in the longer term.