The National Strategies'
Raising Attainment Plan (RAP)
Management Guide

Supplement

Essential features of an effective RAP

Essential features of an effective Raising Attainment Plan (RAP)

The extracts in each section below are taken from the exemplar RAP priorities given in Appendix 1 at the end of this supplement. Exemplars below refer to a RAP written under the following headings:

Objective	Actions	Timescale	Responsibility	Milestones	Outcomes	Monitoring	Resources	Status

The aim of this document is to show how RAPS should be written to meet the Quality Standards. Most sections have an example which does not meet the standards, followed by a revision which conforms to the standards. **The intention is not to assert that the headings above are the only way of setting out a RAP**, or that they necessarily appear in that order – although clearly objectives and actions come at the beginning.

Before the plan is drawn up the headteacher and the school improvement partner (SIP) or the National Challenge adviser (NCA) will have prepared a high-level position statement. This will provide a detailed account of the school's progress, priorities for the RAP, and the support and resources needed. It is also useful for a synopsis of the position statement to be included at the head of the plan to provide a context for the priorities. During its life the document will be used by a range of people, and the contextual information will support their understanding of the challenges and possibilities.

RAP priority exemplification

Priority 1 shown in the exemplification materials supplied at the end of this document states: *Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school*. This school has identified that the quality of everyday planning and delivery of lessons is not good enough and is not enabling pupils to make the progress required. The school relies on high levels of intervention to achieve its current standards.

Each section below is headed by the commentary in the 'Essential features for an effective RAP' in the *RAP Management Guide*. The exemplar statements come from the 2 priorities exemplified in appendix 1. A single objective has been provided for each priority in the exemplar, this is for illustration purposes only. In a complete RAP it is likely that each priority could only be addressed fully by having several objectives.

Objective – What are the specific improvements needed in order to address the overall priorities identified?

The key word here is 'specific' – the following objectives just express an intention of improving planning, with no indication of the specific improvement which is required:

Objective
Improve quality of lessons across the school

Objectives are too vague and general; they lack detail and specificity to communicate clearly what is to be achieved

Objective
Develop Assessment for Learning (AfL) across the school

It is important that all parties are clear from the outset about the specific objectives, rather than just a vague idea of improvement. The following objectives provide a much more detailed picture:

Objective
Improve consistency and quality of lesson planning and deliver more active and engaging lessons to provide higher-quality personalised learning for all pupils

> Objectives are specific, detailed and clear in purpose

Objective
Evaluate current level of skills in, develop consistent planning for and application of approaches in AfL to provide high-quality personalised learning for all pupils across the school
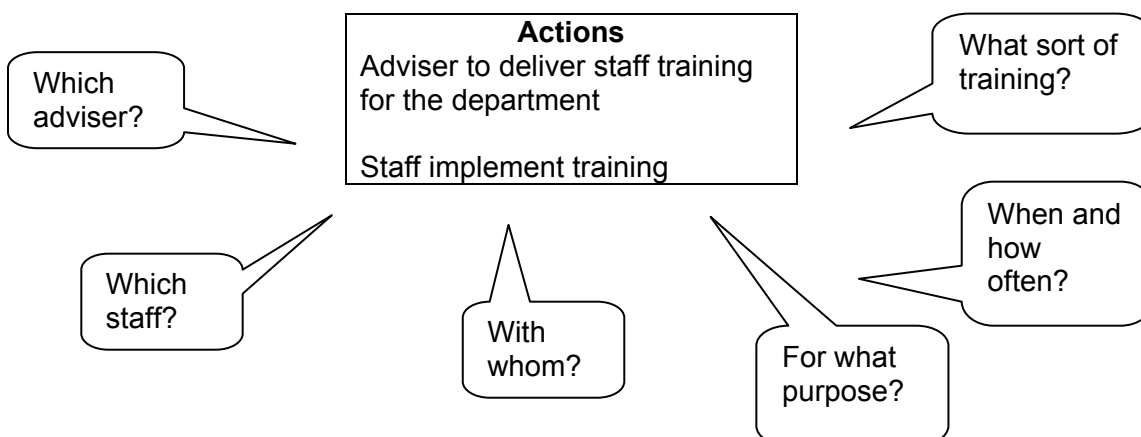
> Clear and specific steps. The purpose of the objective are aligned to the priorities and subsequent actions

---

Actions – What needs to be done:
- *have all key actions that need to be taken to achieve the objective and increase the pace of improvement and change been identified?*
- *are actions in clearly defined small steps?*
- *will the actions lead to recognisable outcomes (e.g. improving pupil learning and progression)?*

Set alongside the actions there should be elements of continuing professional development (CPD) or related support from external partners that are required to ensure staff can successfully carry out the specified actions. To facilitate increased pace and close monitoring it is essential that actions are broken down into a number of short manageable and measurable steps required to achieve each objective

---

The main weaknesses in the Actions section of RAPs are a lack of detail, particularly by omitting the steps to be taken, and insufficient links between actions and outcomes. The following appeared in a RAP as actions for a target to improve the numeracy of middle-range boys:

> Which adviser?

Actions
Adviser to deliver staff training for the department

Staff implement training

> What sort of training?

> Which staff?

> With whom?

> For what purpose?

> When and how often?

This exemplar provides a more detailed account:

Actions
1.1.1 CPD provided for all staff to establish and communicate characteristic of a good lesson and a good lesson plan (National Strategies Stronger Management Systems Element 7)
1.1.2 Common approach for orderly start to all lessons established and instigated
1.1.3 Common lesson planning pro forma made available on intranet and used by all staff
1.1.4 Staff peer learning triads set up for all staff
1.1.5 Staff triads work together weekly to share and apply a wider range of teaching strategies in lessons using TLSS materials (Pedagogy and Practice Pack), with a particular focus on questioning and group work

How the action is to be done and broken down into clear, manageable, ordered steps

What is to be done, where and how it will be achieved

A small item, but part of the action and important to mention

When and why the materials are to be used and the purpose of the

Personnel/responsibility *– Who will carry out the action (who is responsible for ensuring the action takes place and who else is involved)? Within the plan this section should make it clear who is to be held to account (and by whom) for the successful completion of the identified action.*

In plans which lack detail this column often looks like this:

Responsibility
SMT
Consultant
All staff

Which member of SMT? Which Consultant

Too vague, who will be held to account and how?

The approach above leaves the situation open to confusion as to exactly who is responsible and therefore who is also accountable for the action to be completed. Presumably the school has more than one member of SMT and the LA more than one consultant. The plan needs to identify the specific staff involved, and make their responsibilities clear so there can be no confusion as to who is responsible for each action:

Responsibility
Sally Hardcastle (SH) (DH, CPD coordinator)
Graham Taylor (GT) – DH
GT – DH
Andy Houseman (AH)

Name and responsibility provides clarity of role and purpose, increases visibility and therefore motivation. Also provides a clear chain of accountability

Timescale – When will the action take place? This should be a specific date within a short time frame, for example, '23 April' not 'April' or 'spring term'. Key questions to ask when setting timescales:

- *Are timescales realistic but still communicating urgency?*
- *Is the overall timeline for execution of the plan clear?*

Timescales in RAPs should include short-term **Milestones** (see below). In the RAP priority which has been written for this exemplar, milestones have a separate column. However, they can be incorporated into the timescale column if there is a need to save space across the page. The issue is not one of layout, but whether the plan is aligned to the Quality Standards by breaking down timescales into smaller steps for monitoring purposes.

Timescales must be clear and precise, which the following are not:

Timescales
Ongoing
Spring term
February

Too vague and open-ended; too much room for slippage; a whole term could be lost

In priority 2 they are specific, realistic and sequential, and the timescales are still precisely linked to dates:

12/01 14/02 13/03
w/b 23/01
29/01 –24/ 03

Period over which the action continues is stated and completion date is clear and unequivocal. The time allocation for the action, the number of repeats and the length of sessions are already stated in the action

---

Milestones – *Any action that will take a long time should be broken down into a series of smaller actions, each of which could be achieved within a week or two, thus creating a series of milestones that can be monitored.*

Are key dates specifically identified for monitoring, evaluating and subsequently reporting on activity and progress? Do they follow the correct sequence in time?

The use of milestones is an essential feature of an effective RAP. Without a clear account of the succession of short timescales needed to implement the actions RAPs will not be effective tools for change, and the RAP management group (RMG) will find difficulties with their monitoring role. The main issue with RAPS is not that milestones are badly written, it is that they are not included at all. Not all actions have milestones, but they should be used when appropriate.

Milestones
Evident in 70% of observed lessons by 21/10
100% of observed lessons by 18/12

Provides an interim target for those with responsibility for monitoring, and for an RMG which is monitoring the plan

They can also be used to make clear when meetings and consultations should take place:

Milestones
Twilights 25/09–18/10–14/11–12/12

All staff are clear about the sequence of events. Those with responsibility for coordinating this section of the plan are aware of when they need to take action

*Outcomes – What will success look like when the action has been successfully completed? This is particularly important for evaluation as it should provide a focus on whether or not the action has produced the desired outcome, **not** the extent to which the action has been completed or not. For example, if writing schemes of work for Year 9 is the action, then the outcome is not simply that they are written, but rather that they are completed to the required standard and, more importantly, are having an impact on classroom practice.*

The most frequent style seen in RAPs is 'Action to do, action done'. This is not good enough; the impact on pupils' learning or improvement in systems and processes must be evident in outcomes. Many actions can be completed without changing anything for the pupils and their learning, so what is the point?

Outcomes
Staff training completed
SoW re-written

So what? What do we want to see happen as a consequence of this action?

This outcome from priority 1 notes that the action has been completed, but then relates it to the impact on pupils:

Outcomes
Pupils on task within the first 5 minutes of every lesson
Reduction in recorded late arrival to lessons to <1% by 18/12
All lessons are planned for inclusion, taking into account the learning needs of specific pupil groups

Specific outcomes are related to teacher behaviour and pupil engagement and are measurable

Outcomes must state the improved practice which will arise from the actions, but must also be measurable. The following is from priority 2:

Outcomes
Planning takes account of the need to use Assessment for Learning (AfL) to make each pupil a partner in their learning
Appropriate challenge is visible in at least 80% of lessons; planning allows all pupils to make good progress

Outcomes staged, staff skills increase and then impact on pupil learning increases and is measurable

Specific references to improved practice and success can be evaluated by appropriate monitoring – see below

Since the Outcomes are the focus of the Monitoring of the plan it is useful to have the two columns adjacent.

Monitoring – *How will change be monitored (how, by whom and how often)? The monitoring process is essential for checking that the planned actions have taken place and on time.*
- *Are all monitoring activities clearly stated in the plan?*
- *Is it clear who is responsible for each monitoring activity?*
- *Is it clear when monitoring will take place – at least every fortnight by the RMG?*
- *How will the outcomes of monitoring be used?*
- *Are those carrying out the monitoring able to make accurate judgments?*
- *Does the governing body have a clear role in monitoring?*

Evaluation – *How will change be evaluated (by whom, when and how)? Evaluation is about assessing the impact of the planned actions on standards in the school and so has a clear and separate definition and purpose to monitoring.*
- *Are names/groups clearly stated?*
- *How will results and outcomes from all monitoring activity be communicated to those carrying out the evaluation?*
- *Are procedures and responsibilities for evaluating and reporting on test and examination results clear?*
- *Are those carrying out the evaluation sufficiently skilled to make accurate judgments?*

Monitoring and evaluation do not need to have individual columns, but those responsible for writing and implementing RAPs need to keep aware of the linked but separate functions of these two elements. The checklists above are extensive, and within the confines of the written plan it will not be possible to include every detail. However, the checklists must inform the practice of monitoring and evaluating the plan. Element 9 of Stronger Management Systems can support line managers and the RMG in this task.

In this example there is too little information for the monitoring and evaluation to be effective:

Monitoring/Evaluation
SH
Governors
Leadership team
NCA/SIP

What will SH actually do? How often will she report to RMG and what will she report?

All the governors or SLT? What will they do, and when will they do it?

Is this monitoring or evaluating? Will the timescale coincide with NCA/SIP? visits?

The Monitoring/Evaluation column in the exemplar priority is intended to be specific and informative:

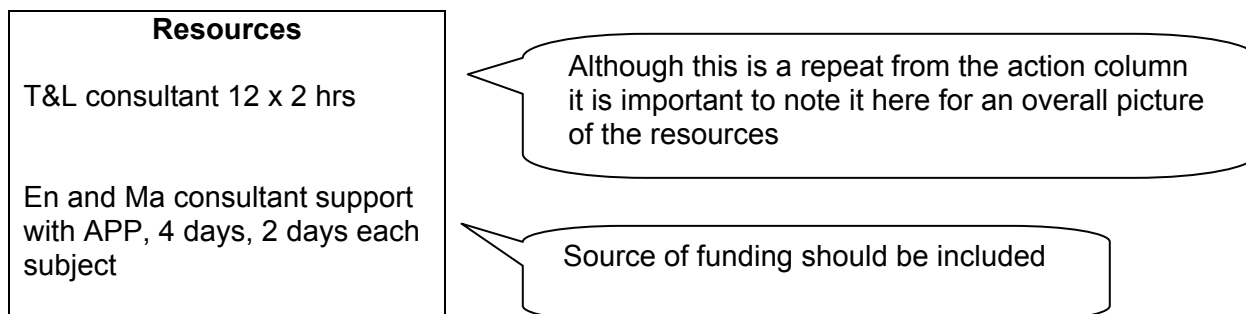| **Monitoring/Evaluation** |
|---|
| Lesson observation and scrutiny of planning – GT, SH, BB as part of routine, calendared cycle for M&E |
| All SLT drop in to start of lessons twice each week 27/09–17/12 |
| Reports on progress standing item on RMG agenda |
| SH monitors staff lists and interviews sample of staff – 30/09 |

We know:
- **who** is responsible for the monitoring
- **what** monitoring activities will take place
- **when** these activities will happen
- **who** is going to assess the impact of the monitoring
- **how** the outcomes of the monitoring will be used

A common weakness in development planning is the writing of rather vague outcomes, with no indication of how they are to be measured – phrases such as 'Improved practice by teachers' or 'the quality of learning is enhanced'. The monitoring column in priorities 1 and 2 clearly states how the outcomes, quoted above, are to be monitored. It also demonstrates the advantage of adjacent columns.

Outcomes	**Monitoring/Evaluation**
Reduction in recorded late arrival to lessons to <1% by 18/12	Class registration analysis – AH completed 21/10 and 16/12
Pupils on task within the first 5 minutes of every lesson	All SMT drop in to start of lessons twice each week 27/09–17/12
All staff have at least two colleagues with whom to work to share and improve practice	SH monitors staff lists and interviews sample of staff – 30/09

Resources – Are all required resources stated (in particular staffing, funding, CPD time and external consultancy)? This is particularly important as it must be very clear what resources are requested and what their impact will be to ensure value for money.

This priority uses few financial resources, and most of the staffing is already available. However, where extra staffing is needed it should be included:

Resources
T&L consultant 12 x 2 hrs
En and Ma consultant support with APP, 4 days, 2 days each subject

Although this is a repeat from the action column it is important to note it here for an overall picture of the resources

Source of funding should be included

Status – Has each action been completed to a standard that meets the specified outcome: yes, partially or no; or Red, Amber, Green (RAG)?

Senior management teams or RAP Management Groups will need to monitor the progress of the whole plan closely and frequently. RAG (red, amber, green) ratings provide a quick visual check for the group each time it meets. This approach also quickly reveals which, if any, member of staff is not completing actions for which they are responsible and can be held to account.

The exemplar plan has three ratings. The first is green as the DH has completed the first task, staff CPD has taken place and common lesson planning format and characteristics are agreed and in use. The fifth action is amber as work is in progress; the first milestone has been reached but not yet the second part. If the plan is on track at this milestone, the flag would change to green.

Keeping track of the plan

RAPs are intended to be detailed and time-limited plans which are entirely focused on raising the attainment and achievement of pupils. The accelerated timescales mean that individuals and groups responsible for implementing the plan must be absolutely clear about what they need to do and when they have to do it. In order for this to happen the RMG could consider the following two work-in-progress versions of the plan.

The monitoring calendar
If the plan is written effectively there will be clear dates by which the RMG should receive monitoring reports. These will be scattered throughout the plan, and the purpose of the monitoring calendar is to plot them by date, thus providing a quick visual check. The calendar can be displayed in the staffroom, headteacher's office, conference rooms, etc.

Individual responsibilities
Like the monitoring deadlines these will also be scattered through the plan. A list of all staff with particular responsibilities, together with timescales and deadlines, will enable people to keep track of their work. Individuals need their own copies, but it could also be displayed.

Appendix 1

Thurlow Park Comprehensive School Raising Attainment Plan
Context
The school has made some good improvements over the last three years, moving from 19% to 27% 5 A*–C EM. Much of this has been done through improved tracking and intervention with a particular focus in Year 11. However, the new headteacher has evidence that all short-term strategies and interventions are now embedded as normal practice and there is little more to be gained.. He sees the way forward for the school and the pupils is to build long-term sustainable improvement through a focus on quality first teaching across the whole school, improving the quality of teaching and learning for every pupil in every lesson. A substantial part of the professional development day at the beginning of the autumn term is to be used to plan this. The improvements in teaching and learning implemented in the autumn term will support the AfL initiative in the spring term.

Priority 1 Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school

				Success criterion Percentage of observed lessons judged to be good or better greater than 60% by the end of the autumn term, and greater than 80% by July 2010				
Objective	Actions, including CPD	Time scale	Responsible	Milestones	Outcomes	Monitoring	Resources cost	Status
1.1 Improve consistency and quality of lesson planning and deliver more active and engaging lessons to provide higher-quality personalised learning for all pupils	1.1.1 CPD provided for all staff to establish and communicate characteristic of a good lesson and a good lesson plan (NS Stronger Management Systems Element 7	02/09	Sally Hardcastle, (SH) – (DH, CPD coordinator)		Agreed characteristics of a good lesson are regularly and consistently applied in all lessons	Lesson observation and scrutiny of planning – GT, SH, BB as part of routine, cycle for M&E	T&L and B&A consultants	Green
	1.1.2 Common approach for orderly start to all lessons established and instigated	02/09	Graham Taylor (GT) – DH	Evident in 70% of observed lessons by 21/10	Pupils on task within the first 5 minutes of every lesson	Class registration analysis – AH completed 21/10 and 16/12		Green
				100% of observed lessons by 18/12	Reduction in recorded late arrival to lessons to <1% by 18/12	Every member of SMT drop in to start of lessons twice weekly 27/09–17/12		
	1.1.3 Common lesson planning pro forma made available on intranet and used by all staff	08/09	GT – DH		All lessons are planned for inclusion, taking into account the learning needs of specific pupil groups	Reports on progress standing item on RMG agenda		Green
	1.1.4 Staff peer learning triads set up for all staff	25/09	Andy Houseman		All staff have at least two colleagues with whom to	SH monitors staff lists and interviews		Green

Objective	Actions, including CPD	Date	Responsible	Milestones	Outcomes	Monitoring	Resources cost	Status
			(AH)		work to share and improve practice	sample of staff – 30/09		
	1.1.5 Staff triads work together weekly to share and apply a wider range of teaching strategies in lessons using TLSS materials, with a particular focus on questioning and group work	25/09 –15/12	SHYes	Twilights 25/09– 18/10–14/11–12/12	Increased pace noted in lessons and pupils more actively engaged in the learning	Lesson observations as above. Pupil interviews – GT, SH, AH. During tutor time once per month	Staff time to meet and share practice	Amber

Priority 2 Implementing the effective use of AfL across the school

Success criterion The implementation of effective AfL practice enables the school to achieve its targets in all years

Objective	Actions, including CPD	Date	Responsible	Milestones	Outcomes	Monitoring	Resources cost	Status
2.1. Evaluate current level of skills in, develop consistent planning for and application of approaches in AfL to provide high-quality personal-ised learning for all pupils across the school	2.1.1 All senior and middle leaders carry out audit of current practice in AfL	Wb 05/01	Each individual Subject leader, SL		All managers are aware of and take into account current stage of development of AfL to plan next stage of implementation	Governors review outcome of audit at curriculum committee meeting 24/01		Green
	2.1.2 Spring term CPD time, 3 x 2 hrs, used by all departments to develop understanding of AfL	12/01 14/02 13/03	SH		All staff self-evaluate skills and understanding in AfL	Minutes of meetings reviewed HT , GT	T&L Yes 12 x 2 hrs	Green
	2.1.3 All departments write and submit AfL implementation plans	w/b 23/01	GT		All departments have clear and agreed plan for improving practice in AfL	Plans collected and reviewed by RMG – 1/02		Green
	2.1.4 Teachers plan for use of chosen aspect of AfL in each lesson	29/01 –24/ 03	SH		Planning takes account of the need to use AfL to make each pupil a partner in their learning	Pupil interview – AH during tutor time once each month		Amber
	2.1.5 Teachers use assessment data/foci to set learning targets for all pupils	29/01 –04/ 04	SH	Evident in 50% of observed lessons by end of spring term, and 80% by end of summer term	Appropriate challenge is visible in at least 80% of lessons; planning allows all pupils to make good progress	Pupil interviews, SH, work scrutiny GT 03/04	En and Ma consultant support with APP, 4 days, 2 days each subject	Amber