

# Key Stage 3 National Strategy

## Guide for school leaders

### Guidance

#### Curriculum and Standards

#### **Headteachers, school strategy managers, senior leaders and subject leaders**

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# About this guide

This guide is for headteachers, school strategy managers, senior leaders and subject leaders.

The Government's agenda for transforming secondary education builds on high expectations and a commitment to meeting the needs of every child. The aim is to transform educational achievement by ensuring that:

- every school is a good school, with year-on-year increases in overall attainment at every age and above-average improvement for underachieving groups;
- high excellence is achieved together with high equity through personalised learning for every pupil. Careful attention is given to pupils' individual learning styles, motivation and needs; there is rigorous target setting linked to high-quality assessment; lessons are enjoyable and pupils are supported by others well beyond the classroom;
- workforce reform allows teachers more time to teach and schools to use a wider range of skilled staff;
- partnerships are developed beyond the classroom to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the classroom and improve behaviour and attendance;
- schools have more freedom and flexibility in how they use and target their resources, in the way they design the curriculum and in the teaching methods they use, but work within a framework in which they are accountable for their performance.

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is designed to support schools to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning across the curriculum for all pupils aged 11–14. Its goal is to meet the Government's ambitious targets for 2004 and 2007.

This guide is designed to help school leaders to implement the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. It can help shape and refine strategic thinking about how the Strategy may be used to support whole-school improvement and thus raise standards.

This guide shows how the Strategy links with the principles of school improvement and the actions that school leaders should undertake to promote improvement. It also offers practical guidance for senior leaders on working on whole-school initiatives, working with subject leaders and working with teachers.

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## Leading the Key Stage 3 National Strategy

*'Excellent schools have excellent leaders. Leaders who are able to shape the vision for their schools; to identify and develop strengths and weaknesses; to chart a course for school improvement and to engage the whole school and its community in a concerted effort to raise standards of education.'*<sup>1</sup>

Effective leadership is a key component of a successful school. Headteachers and senior leaders have a vital role to play in making the Key Stage 3 National Strategy a success. This document helps headteachers and senior leaders in that role.

Since 2003, the Strategy has shifted its emphasis from working through separate strands to working towards whole-school improvement. This shift has clear implications for senior leaders in schools, who need to ensure coordination and coherence while maintaining a tight focus on raising standards.

The Key Stage 3 Strategy aims to raise standards by:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects by the application of the principles of teaching and learning and the development of pedagogy to meet the individual learning needs of pupils;
- promoting inclusion and tackling underperformance so that all pupils make good progress and many more achieve the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3;
- strengthening the whole curriculum so that pupils may improve their learning skills and develop as independent learners;
- supporting school leaders to use the Key Stage 3 Strategy to bring about whole-school improvement.

<sup>1</sup> *A New Specialist System: Transforming Secondary Education* (DfES 0173/2003), page 13



# The Key Stage 3 National Strategy and school improvement

School improvement is 'a strategy for educational change that focuses on the learning and achievement of students by enhancing classroom practice and adapting the management arrangements within the school to support the teaching and learning process'.<sup>2</sup>

The following principles of school improvement underpin the work of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

## Principles of school improvement

1. Focus systematically on teaching and learning.
2. Base improvement activity on evidence about relative performance.
3. Build collective ownership and develop leadership.
4. Involve collaboration with other organisations.
5. Create time for staff to learn together.
6. Embed the improvement in the school's systems and practices.

## Principles of school improvement in action

### 1. Focus systematically on teaching and learning

The Key Stage 3 Strategy has shifted from establishing individual strands to whole-school improvement. Senior leaders increasingly need to tailor their use of the Strategy, selecting from the guidance, training and support materials according to the needs of their pupils, teachers and support staff. They have a key role in ensuring that attention, time and resources are focused on the priorities that have the greatest impact on raising standards, particularly in the core subjects and ICT.

*'Matching Key Stage 3 priorities to the school's vision and statement of intent was our starting point.'*<sup>3</sup>

It is important that Key Stage 3 Strategy work is fully integrated into the school improvement plan (SIP), which addresses the school's priorities and targets.

*'The Key Stage 3 Strategy is embedded within whole-school improvement planning, and is not a bolt-on initiative. We have achieved this by looking at which elements of the Strategy best suit our needs in the context of raising pupil achievement.'*

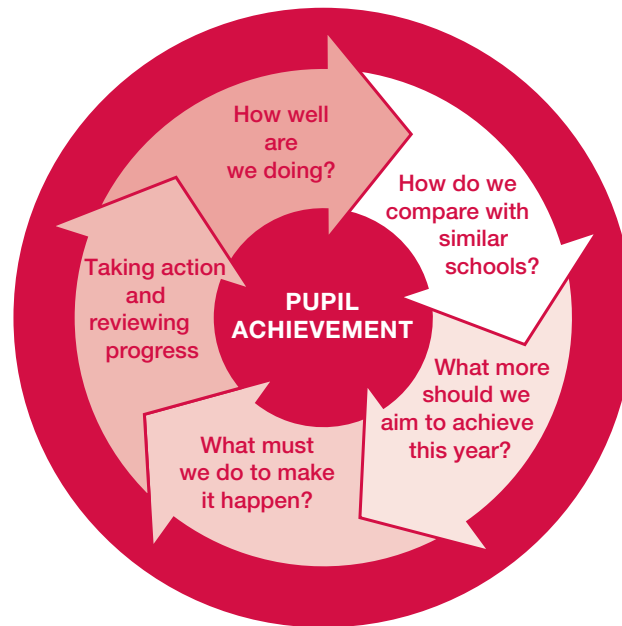
<sup>2</sup> *Meeting the Challenge: An Improvement Guide for Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances*, D Hopkins, DfES, 2001

<sup>3</sup> All the quotations in italics on a shaded background are from school leaders.



## 2. Base all improvement activity on evidence about relative performance

Schools seeking continuous improvement systematically review their work in order to improve and refine their practice. To improve teaching and learning, schools can use the DfES improvement cycle.



*'Our evaluative approach means that auditing is part of the improvement cycle, with new priorities emerging.'*

The Key Stage 3 Strategy supports this cycle by:

- supporting self-review through subject audits, data analysis, work sampling, lesson observation, and pupil and teacher discussions;
- providing guidance, training and support for headteachers, school strategy managers, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers;
- providing subject-specific frameworks and guidance, generic guidance in teaching and learning, and specific guidance to support pupils falling behind national expectations;
- providing support for sustaining improvements in the longer term through coaching, running networks and capacity building.

*'Existing quality assurance processes have been amended to include a sharper focus on teaching and learning. The majority of our teachers include teaching and learning in their performance management targets and their plans for achieving them.'*



### 3. Build collective ownership and develop leadership

Effective leadership is a key component of successful schools. Ofsted reports consistently highlight the importance of leadership and management in driving school improvement. They also stress the link between effective leadership and high-quality teaching and learning.

Effective leaders provide direction, vision and the drive to raise standards. They are important in building effective teams through developing and harnessing the skills of individuals, providing opportunities for collaboration and creating support for change. All teachers are progressively drawn into the process of improving teaching and learning across the school. Effective leaders build up the capacity of teams to develop further.

*'Our subject leaders have a key role to play in taking ownership of developments in teaching and learning and building leadership in members of their team. They are supported in this role by the Key Stage 3 subject leader development programme and the NCSL's Leading from the Middle.'*

The Key Stage 3 Strategy supports senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers. Senior leaders can use the Strategy to build collective ownership by:

- ensuring Key Stage 3 developments are integral to the school improvement plan (SIP);
- highlighting the important tasks for the school strategy manager and the Key Stage 3 management group;
- providing training for senior, middle and subject leaders;
- encouraging teachers to work collaboratively and share their successes.

Whole-school initiatives in 2004–05 will give senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers further opportunities to develop their expertise.

### 4. Involve collaboration with other organisations

Successful leaders learn from best practice and share their professional knowledge and expertise. There is a growing range of opportunities for schools to collaborate with other partners through various LEA and national networks and through funded activities such as the Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG).

The Key Stage 3 Strategy promotes collaboration through its work with leading teachers, departments and professionals to encourage dissemination of knowledge and good practice. These developments have led to a variety of improvements to teaching and learning through school visits, cross-departmental discussions and the development of local networks. These in turn have helped to raise standards.





*'Four schools within our LIG collaborative have been working together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in identified foundation subject (FS) departments. The four FS departments participated in a peer review of teaching and learning. Each department then agreed a focus for improvement linked to the Teaching and learning in secondary schools study guides. Teachers from each department have completed one of the study guides through self-study and with coaching support. The teachers and coaches from the four schools meet regularly to share their work on the guides. The next cohort of teachers and coaches has been identified. The good practice will be "showcased" at our next collaborative training session on effective teaching and learning.'*

As such activities can be costly in terms of time and effort, effective leadership is important to maximise their value. Collaborative work should have a clear focus with worthwhile outcomes. Those involved should be willing to participate and keen to learn. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) provides a range of learning and development opportunities for school leaders, notably the *Leading from the Middle* programme for subject leaders.

## **5. Create time for staff to learn together**

Supporting the continuing professional development of teachers has been an important part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy from the outset. A range of training and support materials provides common messages about the teaching and learning strategies which lead to improvement in standards. Schools can select and use them flexibly to address their own priorities.

However, training alone is not sufficient to change practice. Teachers need time to share their learning so that practice and expectations are consistent across the school. They value opportunities to learn with and from colleagues in their own and other schools. These opportunities are most effective when the school develops as a professional learning community.

*'Teachers work in pairs to share their expertise on whole-school CPD days. They have been given time to plan workshop sessions together.'*

The Key Stage 3 Strategy supports this by developing materials, such as the *Sustaining improvement* modules (DfES 0565-2003 G), that build capacity for sustainable improvement, for example, through coaching. Coaching is a powerful model of professional development, enabling teachers to try out new ideas and approaches, and to reflect on their practice.

*'From a small, manageable beginning involving two members of the leadership team, our coaching programme is now growing. By the end of 2004 we will have 18 trained coaches, including at least one from each faculty. This will ensure that we build capacity and consistency in each faculty and across the school. We are utilising time during mock and actual GCSE examinations to release staff for training and for the coaching itself.'*



## 6. Embed the improvement in the school's systems and practices

School development work needs to be spread across the school and sustained over time. Successful school improvement means that improvements in the classrooms of individual teachers are 'scaled up' from single classrooms to departmental level and to the whole school.

Changes in the school's structures and procedures may need to take place to support this. School management structures need well-developed systems of communication, with procedures for dissemination, monitoring and evaluation; for example, planning continuing professional development needs not only to meet the training needs identified through audit, but also to take into account how to disseminate the main messages.

*'AfL strategies have been clearly identified in medium-term plans. We are currently evaluating the impact of AfL strategies on the quality of teaching and learning with support from our SLT line manager and the school's Key Stage 3 strategy manager. This has involved lesson observations, work analysis and interviews with groups of Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils. The outcomes from this review will inform the development of a new assessment policy for the department.'*

Key Stage 3 consultants are a valuable resource in helping to embed developments in departments and across the whole school.

*'We have recently held a CPD day and two "twilight" sessions on teaching and learning, focusing on priorities identified by audit. Pairs of teachers worked collaboratively to prepare workshops. Supported by the Key Stage 3 consultants, the training has been very successful in giving teachers practical strategies to promote pupil motivation and achievement. Training sessions have been followed up by using faculty meeting time to create resources linked to objectives.'*



## Using the principles of school improvement

The table overleaf shows how the principles of school improvement may be used to guide the work of senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. It describes the actions which may be taken to use the Key Stage 3 Strategy to support school improvement and raise standards. It may be used to support school improvement planning, the allocation of roles and responsibilities, or to support monitoring and evaluation.

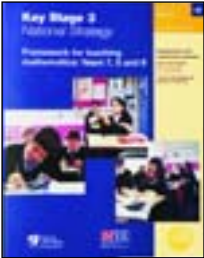
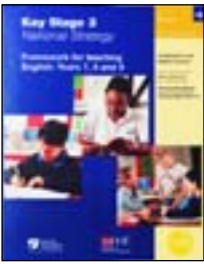
## Using the principles of school improvement

Principles	Senior leaders
1. Focus systematically on teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a clear direction for KS3 developments, tailoring the Strategy to support whole-school improvement, to ensure school-wide impact.</li> <li>• Secure KS3 priorities in the school improvement plan (SIP).</li> </ul>
2. Base improvement activity on evidence about relative performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse pupils' performance in order to identify: progress made by pupils and groups; variations in progress linked to prior attainment, gender or ethnicity; and underperforming or vulnerable groups.</li> <li>• Use Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) to benchmark performance against local and national results and compare performance between subject departments.</li> <li>• Evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the subject in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision.</li> <li>• Use evaluation outcomes to set priorities for development and to identify continuing professional development (CPD) needs and opportunities for extending and sharing good practice.</li> </ul>
3. Build collective ownership and develop leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain an overview of the Strategy and keep in touch with developments.</li> <li>• Set up a KS3 management group to oversee and drive forward KS3 developments.</li> <li>• Ensure that work on KS3 whole-school priorities is effectively led, with the involvement of colleagues from across the school.</li> <li>• Encourage and support subject leaders in their work on improving teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Seek out and celebrate success.</li> </ul>
4. Involve collaboration with other organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage colleagues to seek out new ideas and resources.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for colleagues to link with and learn from other schools and organisations, such as leading departments, teachers and professionals; leading edge, specialist and training schools; Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG).</li> </ul>
5. Create time for staff to learn together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and develop CPD policy and strategies to take account of Strategy developments.</li> <li>• Plan a coherent CPD programme and provide time for staff to attend KS3 training, share information, undertake collaborative work and review their progress.</li> <li>• Develop a coaching programme, deploying leading teachers and advanced skills teachers (ASTs), in order to improve the consistency of teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to recognise and share good practice in schools and beyond.</li> <li>• Link together development activities from different subjects and areas to strengthen and consolidate improvements.</li> </ul>
6. Embed the improvement in the school's systems and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the school's policies and management practices change to reflect successful developments in teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Align performance management objectives with KS3 improvement priorities.</li> </ul>

Subject leaders	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the link between improvements in teaching and learning and higher standards in KS3.</li> <li>Use the KS3 audit with the whole department to identify development priorities which contribute to the SIP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support departmental and whole-school improvement priorities by contributing to auditing and action planning, trying out new ideas and evaluating their impact.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use numerical data, the findings of work scrutiny, classroom observations and pupil surveys to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and provision in the subject and to set learning goals for pupils and teachers.</li> <li>Identify subject priorities for development based on self-evaluation and an understanding of subject, school, LEA and national priorities.</li> <li>Identify underperforming groups of pupils in the subject and provide intervention programmes matched to their needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in discussions about whole-school and subject performance data.</li> <li>Use individual pupil-level and teaching-group data to inform lesson planning, teaching objectives and learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the KS3 subject leader development programme to improve leadership and management expertise.</li> <li>Encourage and support departmental colleagues to lead aspects of the department's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share in the leadership of the department's work on improving teaching and learning.</li> <li>Lead an aspect of the department's development work, e.g. AFL.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take up opportunities to join networks.</li> <li>Take up opportunities to work with leading departments.</li> <li>Access NCSL and higher education programmes to support KS3 work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take up opportunities to join networks.</li> <li>Take up opportunities to work with leading professionals and ASTs.</li> <li>Access NCSL and higher education programmes to support KS3 work.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities for relevant teachers to attend National Strategy training and to disseminate key information to colleagues.</li> <li>Promote collaborative working and support colleagues developing work in planning, teaching and evaluating lessons.</li> <li>Manage meetings to ensure collaborative time for work on teaching and learning.</li> <li>Contribute to in-service training and CPD meetings.</li> <li>Participate in the coaching programme to develop and share expertise.</li> <li>Provide training and support for new part-time, supply, second-subject and returning teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe colleagues teach, and discuss their lesson with them.</li> <li>Work collaboratively with departmental colleagues and with teachers from other departments.</li> <li>Contribute to in-service training and CPD meetings.</li> <li>Participate in the coaching programme to develop and share expertise.</li> <li>Undertake classroom-based research with other teachers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the improvement of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice the focus of each departmental meeting.</li> <li>Build new ideas and approaches from development work and training into schemes of work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate new ideas and approaches from development work into lesson planning.</li> </ul>

# Key Stage 3 National Strategy documents and web links

The main Strategy documents and web links are set out below, together with a brief description for each document.



## 1. Focus systematically on teaching and learning

- **Framework for teaching: English** (DfEE 0019/2001), **mathematics** (DfEE 0020/2001), **science** (DfES 0136/2002), **ICT capability** (DfES 0321/2002), **modern foreign languages** (DfES 0084/2003), **design and technology** (to be published September 2004) – These frameworks provide guidance for teachers on planning and teaching appropriately challenging work for pupils.
- **Key messages from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy** (DfES 0208/2003) – These leaflets summarise key points from Strategy guidance or training.
- **Management summaries (English, mathematics, science, ICT)** – These summaries describe the contents of the Frameworks and some of the management issues. (See Key Stage 3 website: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3))
- **Foundation subjects management folder** (DfES 0559/2003) – This suite of three modules supports the implementation of the foundation subjects strand.
- **Key messages: Behaviour and attendance strand** (DfES 0391/2003) – This leaflet provides an overview of the behaviour and attendance strand.
- **Pedagogy and practice** (DfES 0125/2003) – This leaflet sets out the Strategy's underlying principles of teaching and learning and aims to encourage professional dialogue.

## 2. Base improvement activity on evidence about relative performance

- **Target setting at Key Stage 3** (DfES 0141/2002) – This DfES guidance sets out the statutory requirements for maintained schools to set targets.
- **Auditing a subject in Key Stage 3** (DfES 0756/2001) – The audit helps a department or faculty to decide on priorities for strengthening its work and to draw up an action plan to raise standards. Versions of the audit for use in special schools and units (DfEE 0137/2001) and in middle schools (DfES 0423/2002) are also available.
- **Intervention audit** (DfES 0121/2003) and **Intervention toolkit** (DfES 0178/2003) – The audit assists schools in identifying underperforming pupils and the specific areas in which they need support. The toolkit is a range of various catch-up activities and resources which can be used to support these pupils.
- **Behaviour and attendance: an initial review for secondary and middle schools** (DfES 0207/2003 R) – This is an initial review and in-depth audits to support more detailed analysis, planning and action.
- **Organising a work sample** (DfES 0390/2003) – This booklet provides guidance on work sampling as part of school self-evaluation.



- **Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT)** – This is a software package for analysing pupils' performance and assisting with target setting. (See website: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance))

### 3. Build collective ownership and develop leadership

- **Securing improvement: the role of subject leaders** (DfES 0102/2002) – This booklet is intended to support subject leaders and, in particular, identify core tasks and areas for development.
- **Subject leader development programme** (DfES 0390/2002) – This suite of seven training modules focuses on the leadership and management skills essential to raising standards at Key Stage 3.



### 4. Involve collaboration with other organisations

- Key Stage 3 website: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)
- DfES Standards website: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)
- National College for School Leadership: [www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk)
- Teachernet: [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)
- QCA: [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)
- Ofsted: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- DfES multimedia resources: [www.curriculumonline.gov.uk](http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk)
- Becta ICT advice: [www.ictadvice.org.uk](http://www.ictadvice.org.uk)



### 5. Create time for staff to learn together

- **Key messages from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy** (DfES 0208/2003) (see above)
- **Sustaining improvement** (DfES 0565-2003 G) – This suite of four training modules is designed to help schools embed the gains made through their involvement in the Strategy and associated improvement activities.
- **Key Stage 3 Strategy good practice case studies** (See Key Stage 3 website: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3))
- **Pedagogy and practice: teaching and learning in secondary schools** (to be published September 2004) – This suite of study units supports CPD and school improvement.



### 6. Embed the improvement in the school's systems and practices

- **Management summaries** (see above)
- **Sustaining improvement** (DfES 0565-2003 G) (see above)



## Working on whole-school initiatives

The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is designed to address the needs of pupils across the whole curriculum through strengthening teaching and learning.

Working on whole-school initiatives such as Assessment for learning (AfL), ICT across the curriculum, Literacy across the curriculum (LAC) and Leading in learning (learning and thinking skills) is important as it reinforces and strengthens pupils' key learning skills across the subjects. It improves pupils' capacity for independent learning and thus their self-esteem and motivation. Expert learners differ from novice learners in their ability to notice meaningful patterns of information and to organise and connect their knowledge. This expertise is most likely to be successfully developed if it is made explicit in a variety of subject contexts.

The commitment and energy of senior leaders is vital to the successful implementation of these whole-school initiatives. Schools need to be selective and choose the particular whole-school initiative which is likely to best meet the individual learning needs of pupils and thus raise standards of attainment.

The challenge for senior leaders is to ensure that work in different subjects is linked coherently through consistent expectations and the use of an agreed common approach. They need to help subject leaders and teachers see how they relate and contribute as individuals to whole-school developments.

For whole-school work to succeed, the person leading it needs a clearly defined and publicly shared role with sufficient status and authority to drive it through. It is also important to involve all departments and ensure that the work is not seen as 'someone else's responsibility' or only takes place in the 'obvious' department, for example, LAC in the English department.

Experience from the Strategy suggests that it is critically important to have high expectations from the outset. Such developments are not solely for the enthusiasts; they are to improve the practice of all.





Actions for school leaders	Examples of good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review current provision and pupils' standards in school.</li> <li>Investigate underperforming groups and variations between subjects.</li> <li>Identify the whole-school initiative that will make the greatest impact on pupils' standards.</li> <li>Establish how the work will be linked to and support current school improvement priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auditing is thorough and is a well-established part of a wider self-review process undertaken at department and whole-school level.</li> <li>Value-added data is scrutinised using PAT, and the progress of pupils carefully tracked.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine who will lead and manage this and what processes will be used to create wider learning and draw in the staff.</li> <li>Make expectations explicit for all the staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a considered plan for staged implementation which provides the 'big picture' view of improvements to be made as well as the steps to be taken.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review policies and planning and audit the current work to decide on next steps.</li> <li>Recognise the stage the school is at: is this a new development or does it sustain and extend good practice already begun?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current practice is evaluated and strengths and weaknesses identified precisely.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate time and resources to support the work.</li> <li>Consider the training and support which will initiate and sustain developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular meeting time is allocated to share professional learning.</li> <li>Training is supported by pairing staff to trial new ideas and approaches.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a system for joint planning and collaborative working between departments.</li> <li>Ensure that the work is included in subject teaching plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole-staff meetings are used to share and demonstrate good practice.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor progress and evaluate the impact of the work on pupils' standards through the school's self-evaluation procedure, modifying practice accordingly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are interviewed and their work scrutinised to assess the impact and spread of new practice.</li> </ul>



## Working with subject leaders

*'It is the very good leadership of the head of department which distinguishes the outstandingly successful department from others. These very good leaders provide a stimulating and professional working environment in which teachers are highly motivated and enthused about their work, and where they strive continually to improve their performance.'*<sup>4</sup>

The work of subject leaders in schools is vital. They provide leadership and management to secure high-quality teaching, effective use of resources, and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils. Subject leaders are uniquely placed to influence the quality of teaching and learning in their subject, to promote collaborative working and to contribute to whole-school developments.

Together with the school's Key Stage 3 strategy manager, subject leaders are the key link between the Strategy and teachers. They provide the leadership, subject expertise and enthusiasm that teachers need to understand and implement the Strategy. The Key Stage 3 Strategy booklet *Securing improvement – the role of subject leaders* (DfES 0102/2002) offers a self-evaluation process for subject leaders and their line managers as they use the Strategy. In particular, it aims to help school strategy managers work with subject leaders to review their capacity and needs in three areas: judging standards, evaluating teaching and learning, and leading sustainable improvement.

Across a year group, the leadership role of the year team leader is similarly critical in ensuring that individual pupils are appropriately challenged and supported. The year team leaders hold an overview of the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils across the curriculum.

The *Subject leader development programme* (DfES 0390/2002) supports the professional development of subject leaders and year team leaders. It consists of a suite of free-standing training modules which focus on the leadership and management skills essential to raising standards. The programme may be customised and adapted to meet the school's needs and circumstances.

The *Sustaining improvement* modules (DfES 0565-2003 G) provide guidance to both senior and middle leaders on how to build school or team capacity to create continuing professional learning, specifically to sustain longer-term improvements in teaching, learning and attainment.

<sup>4</sup> *Good teaching, effective departments*, Ofsted, HMI 337, page 58



Actions for school leaders	Examples of good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise publicly the vital role subject leaders play in school improvement.</li> <li>• Ensure subject leaders are clear about what is expected of them – leading improvements through securing high-quality teaching and learning to raise standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear targets are set for pupils and their progress is carefully monitored.</li> <li>• Data are used to identify and target underperforming pupils.</li> <li>• Teaching plans set high expectations and provide challenging work for pupils.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide appropriate professional development for subject leaders to make sure that they have the knowledge, skills and expertise they require to undertake their role effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items designed to build the skills of subject leadership are included in heads of department meetings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give collaborative working, professional learning and the sharing of good practice high status, providing support and resources as necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Non-contact' time is allocated and protected to set up a whole-school coaching programme.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support innovation and risk-taking by subject leaders. Celebrate success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers demonstrate new classroom pedagogy at the start of staff meetings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regular feedback and formal evaluation of the progress being made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject leaders meet regularly with their line manager to review progress as part of the school's performance management system.</li> </ul>



## Working with teachers

Supporting teachers to raise pupils' standards lies at the heart of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The principles of teaching and learning which guide the Strategy are:

- set high expectations and give every learner confidence they can succeed;
- establish what learners already know and build on it;
- structure and pace the learning experience to make it challenging and enjoyable;
- inspire learning through passion for the subject;
- make individuals active partners in their learning;
- develop learning skills and personal qualities.

The Strategy makes a major contribution to the professional development of teachers through increasing their knowledge, skills and expertise and building on and extending good practice already in place in many schools. Senior leaders improve the practice of teachers by:

- modelling professional learning in their own classroom work;
- auditing the skills of teachers and consistently affirming and sharing the good practice seen;
- challenging the less-effective practice;
- ensuring teachers take up appropriate professional development opportunities;
- creating regular opportunities for professional collaboration;
- valuing those successful efforts made to trial, develop and embed new pedagogy.

A key challenge is also to work on issues of underperformance by using the school's pupil performance data to pinpoint concerns, then implementing tailored support and challenge using external guidance and support as necessary.

Actions for school leaders	Examples of good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview to help colleagues understand both the big picture and their role in school improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject leaders have time with teachers to investigate the links, especially pedagogical, between different improvement activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support teachers in the use of performance data and other evaluation findings to review their practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers use pupil data to set targets, shape the teaching in their subject and monitor pupils' progress.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage teachers to share their developing practice with colleagues and to contribute to in-service training and professional development for colleagues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers work in pairs to support and sustain each other through initial uncertain implementation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to teachers trying out new ideas and approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom observation is used to validate and affirm changes in classroom practice.</li> </ul>



## Next steps

The following questions may be used by school leaders to reflect on their work in Key Stage 3.

- To what extent do the core principles of school improvement (see pages 10–11) match your school's approach to development work at Key Stage 3?
- In what ways is the work being undertaken in Key Stage 3 improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising pupils' standards? What is the extent of the improvement and how many of the staff are engaged in the work?
- In your Key Stage 3 work:
  - what has been particularly successful?
  - what has not worked?
  - what should you do more of?
  - what should you stop doing?
- Schools that have made major gains as a result of using the Strategy have:
  - sought profound transformation involving whole-school changes in practice and organisation, rather than small-scale, localised or temporary impact;
  - set about creating a deeper impact through developing expertise in teaching and learning, rather than simply adding a small number of strategies to teachers' repertoires;
  - built in mechanisms for sharing and extending good practice, such as coaching.How does this compare to your school's experience of using the Key Stage 3 Strategy?

## Notes



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