



# Understanding progress: Engaging parents and pupils

Guidance for schools  
and teachers

# Introduction

The understanding progress materials aim to help primary and secondary school teachers develop their conversations with pupils and their parents<sup>1</sup> and carers when talking about what pupils can do at different National Curriculum levels and how to make progress.

These materials support two objectives of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Assessment for Learning Strategy:

- to ensure all children understand what they need to do to progress through National Curriculum levels, and have a growing range of strategies for learning how to learn
- to ensure parents understand or can access what a level in English (speaking and listening, reading and writing) and mathematics represents and how they can help their child make progress.

Pupils need to understand the aims of their learning, where they are in relation to these and be equipped with a range of strategies to help them reach their aims.

**"Now I know exactly what I am doing, I'm not just trying my best, I actually know I am getting better because I have the information."**

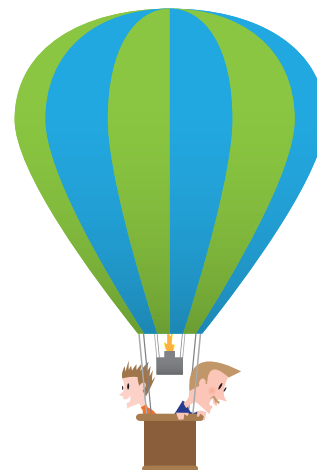
*Year 8 Pupil*

Parents need clear information about the progress of their child and how they can best support this.

**"In the report I remember it saying he was at level 4 for maths, which I was really pleased about, but there wasn't a lot of information about what level 4 actually means..."**

*Parent of child in Year 5*

<sup>1</sup> References to parents in these materials includes carers.



Developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCA) for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) the materials provide:

- understanding progress guides for parents and carers, one for English (speaking and listening, reading and writing) and one for mathematics
- video sequences showing a range of strategies for engaging pupils and parents in discussions about progress.

## Parents' guides

The parents' guides, *Understanding progress in English: a guide for parents* and *Understanding progress in mathematics: a guide for parents* support schools in dialogue with parents and carers about their child's progress.

The guides respond to requests from schools and parents to provide accessible information on what their child knows and can do and to

understand how they can support their child's learning at home. The guides are designed to be mediated by teachers with parents.

Each guide provides information about:

- an overview of the subject
- what pupils are expected to know and be able to do at each of National Curriculum levels 1 to 8 and Exceptional Performance
- how parents can support their child's learning
- how learning, the National Curriculum and assessment is organised in schools.

Parents' guides are available to download as booklets or single sheets from the National Strategies website or from the CD accompanying this booklet.

## Video sequences

These materials have been designed for use in the following continuing professional development (CPD) contexts when schools:

- are reviewing their assessment practice and policies about how assessment information is shared with parents and pupils
- are looking at how Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches can better inform conversations about assessment
- are considering the role of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) in the wider context of AfL
- are developing the way they work with parents and how they might demonstrate the different ways teachers identify and use evidence to support assessment.

Although the sequences show activities in the context of English and mathematics classrooms, the guidance for discussion is sufficiently broad to be relevant to teachers of all subjects.

The video sequences are organised into three linked sections:

- Introduction (page 4)
- Assessment for Learning approaches in the classroom, that includes three separate video sequences (page 5)
- Working in Partnership (page 9).



## Introduction



The introduction gives an outline of what pupils, teachers and parents need to understand about the assessment process and why they need to be involved.

A range of different primary and secondary schools' approaches to assessment is shown. The introduction provides a context for the subsequent video sequences.

Schools could open up discussion on the issues raised in the introduction by considering the following questions.

- How is the 'assessment journey' in your school shared with pupils and parents? Is it effective? Could it be better?
- Does everyone (teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, parents) understand the ways in which progress is achieved and measured?
- What opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in their own assessment?

- How does your school provide pupils with the language they need to talk about their progress? How might this develop through the key stages?
- How does periodic assessment, for example, Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), inform discussion with parents and pupils?

### Activities to support discussion

- Work with a representative group of parents to establish what they already understand about how their child's progress is measured and what they would like to know more about.
- Make opportunities to talk with pupils about how they see the process of assessment and establish how involved they feel in it.
- Your school might like to audit their current practice using the reflecting on practice questions.

# Assessment for Learning approaches in the classroom



These three video sequences look at specific aspects of developing conversations about progress with pupils. They can be used individually or together as a focus for discussion. The three sequences are:

- Where are the opportunities for assessment?
- How do pupils know what progress looks like?
- How do teachers share the language of progress?



## Where are the opportunities for assessment?

This video sequence shows some of the ways teachers create opportunities for capturing assessment evidence in their day-to-day teaching. There is a strong focus on the importance of oral evidence and how effective lesson structures and good teacher questioning help teachers understand what their pupils know and can do. The sequence also considers the value of peer assessment as an assessment tool.

### Discussion prompts for viewing

- What elements has this teacher structured into the lesson to create opportunities to generate assessment evidence?
- How is peer assessment used as a tool for assessment and what do pupils have to say about its effectiveness?

- How do the pupils' reflections demonstrate evidence of their learning? How are opportunities for pupil reflection organised?

### Reflecting on your own practice

- What opportunities do we make through our planning for pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do?
- The issue of 'choice' emerges in this sequence. What does choice look like in our classrooms?
- How do we recognise and use the evidence available to us?
- How can we make better use of questioning to inform ourselves about pupils' learning?
- How could this video sequence be shared with parents as a means of demonstrating the different ways teachers generate a range of evidence for assessment?

## How do pupils know what progress looks like?

This video sequence emphasises the importance of pupils and teachers having a shared understanding of what progress looks like. Seeing how knowledge, understanding and skills build and develop across time enables pupils to see the progress they have made, make connections in their learning and helps them to be more independent. The sequence shows examples of the ways teachers have used assessment criteria with pupils in order to demonstrate progress and help them to develop.



### Discussion prompts for viewing

- How can we use APP as a tool to engage pupils in discussion about their progression English and mathematics?
- What do the pupils say that indicates that the teacher has been successful in this?
- How are these pupils building their skills to tackle more challenging problems?
- How are these pupils being encouraged to be independent learners?
- How do these teachers use talk in the classroom?

### Reflecting on your own practice

- How can we use APP as a tool to engage pupils in discussion about their progress?
- Would the pupils we teach be able to identify how they are moving on in their learning?
- What are the different ways in which we help pupils recognise what progress looks like in our subject?

## How do teachers share the language?

If pupils are to play active roles in their assessment, they need to have the language to do so. This video sequence shows examples of how teachers empower pupils with the language to talk about their learning and progress. In doing so, they encourage pupils to articulate their progress in explicit ways that support reflection and give pupils ownership of their learning. Although the contexts for the sequences are English and mathematics, teachers of all subjects will be able to use this material to reflect on the importance of language for their own specialism.

### Discussion prompts for viewing

- How do these teachers encourage the use of precise mathematical language?
- Why is the precision so important?
- What sorts of contexts and activities do they provide for pupils to use language to talk about what they understand?

### Reflecting on your own practice

- Do our pupils have the language skills they need to talk effectively and precisely about their learning and progress?
- What are the skills and vocabulary we need to teach to support our pupils in talking about how they learn and make progress?
- What range of contexts can we provide for discussion about progress within a lesson?
- As a school, how can we embed a culture of talking about learning and progress?



# Working in Partnership

This video sequence looks at the ways schools can work in partnership with parents and pupils and can be used in conjunction with the parents' booklet materials.

It demonstrates how assessment evidence is shared with parents and pupils and how pupils are actively involved in the assessment cycle.

The video clip links to the *AfL approaches in the classroom* video sequences by showing how classroom practice can lead to better informed and more focussed discussions about progress.

## Discussion prompts for viewing

- What are the advantages of conversations that include everyone involved in a child's progress?
- What do pupils and parents need before they can be active participants in these sorts of conversations?
- How do teachers use a pupil's work and the APP criteria in their discussion with parents?

## Reflecting on your own practice

- How clear are we about what parents understand about the assessment process?
- How can we maximise the potential of opportunities to talk with parents and pupils about progress?
- Could the systems we have in place for sharing progress with parents be improved? What are the strengths of our school's approaches? How might practice be improved?
- How could we use the booklets *Understanding progress in English: a guide for parents* and *Understanding progress in mathematics: a guide for parents* to mediate and inform our discussions with parents?
- How can we use APP to inform conversations about progress?
- Are there ways in which we could help parents better understand the range of ways assessment happens by using any of the video sequences in these materials?

## Partnership with Parents

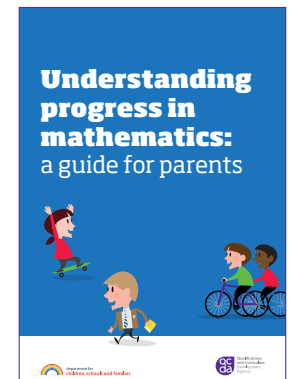
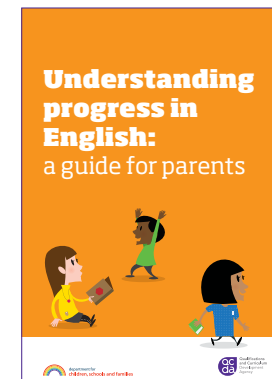
Parents and carers have a key role in the successful education of their children. If a child sees their parents or carers are enthusiastic about education, they are far more likely to view their schooling in a positive light and be more receptive to learning.

Parents and carers are essential partners in a child's education. They determine the child's home environment, where children spend most of their time. They can support school by making sure their child understands and meets expectations, such as completing homework on time. Engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital part of providing children with an excellent education.



You can find a range of suggestions about how you can improve your school's relationship with parents and carers on the Parental Involvement area of the standards site at: [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement).

**The DCSF has a website for parents ([www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk)) which may be helpful when thinking about ways to work with parents, and especially in providing information which can be given to them easily.**



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