

GS003

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**English Key Stage Three Strategy:
Teaching, Learning and Planning**

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If pupils have difficulties in reading and writing how can they convey what they know about other subjects? Therefore English literacy is one of the most important cross-curricular skills, and the need to improve standards in the subject has been the main rationale for the *Key Stage 3 National Strategy*. “Effective literacy is the key to raising standards across all subjects, and equipping pupils with the skills and knowledge they need for life beyond school.”¹ The objectives, therefore, in both teaching and learning is to run a more interactive method of speaking, listening and writing in every lesson.² “Teachers will want to follow these guidelines...so that all pupils have opportunities to participate in all activities.”³

The framework for this strategy covers the short, medium and long term planning needed to involve a scheme of work with the above objectives in mind. The overall plan is the National Curriculum itself, which should be used to feed the lessons making up the short and medium term plans, the latter being concerned with what will be taught over a period of weeks and when, while the former concentrates on how, i.e. the lesson plan itself.

To organise an English lesson, one has to include the three levels of text, sentence and word as per specific framework objectives. The word and sentence levels helps to “secure proper attention to the skills of spelling, vocabulary, sentence construction,

¹ “Framework for teaching English: years 7, 8 and 9”, from *Key Stage 3 National Strategy* (Department for Education and Employment, London, 2001), p.9.

² See Jane Dowson, “Working with the National Curriculum”, from *Learning to Teach English in the Secondary School* (Routledge, London, 1998), p.59.

³ *Ibid.*, p.58.

grammar and style, which underpin excellence in Text level work.”⁴ The latter concentrates on the objectives of reading, writing, speaking and listening, but all three lessons overlap and feed into each other.

The starter section, usually taking up the first ten minutes of the lesson, could effectively deal with the word and sentence levels of the objectives being taught. This should launch the lesson towards the main activity although it need not be directly linked to whatever text is to be explored. The study of the text will promote short bursts of writing. This will help to deter the notion of writing being the chore that schools inadvertently imply when their mission statements include the goal of hard work from the pupils.

The study of text progresses from description (what happened), to appreciation (how it was written) to interpretation (why it was written and for whom). Pupils need to be shown that they are at least capable of description – putting down in words what is factual and cannot be disputed as opposed to involving an argument which may need to be defended. However, once defence is potentially at play higher levels of learning can be achieved. The focus is on purpose, audience and content – in other words, what the text is about, whom it is written for and why it is written.

The aims of writing should be accompanied by an example and a clear definition of the conventions involved. This includes a demonstration of what is needed with participation from the class in order to pull together an overall first attempt, highlighting important features such as key words, style of language used and

⁴ “Framework for teaching English: years 7, 8 and 9”, p.11.

sequence of paragraphs. The pupils then apply themselves to a timed piece of independent writing, which is reviewed according to the learning achieved.