PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- identify the teaching and learning priorities for your school context and make an informed, positive contribution to curriculum development
- confidently plan to provide learners with engaging and meaningful learning experiences that motivate, promote understanding and development of skills
- demonstrate a clear understanding of the relationship between planning and assessment.

**Introduction**

This chapter addresses the following Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2013a), which apply to trainees and teachers across all Key Stages:

- Standard 1 Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils.
- Standard 2 Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils.
- Standard 3 Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge.
- Standard 4 Plan and teach well-structured lessons.
Statutory curricula are dynamic and change to meet new needs and with new governments. This chapter introduces you to ways in which schools and teachers translate national requirements (DfE, 2013a) into whole-school plans for their school, and develop medium-term plans from the long-term plans and use these to plan lessons on a weekly and daily basis. Planning is integrally related to assessment, so that sequences of work continuously build on pupils’ previous knowledge. This chapter examines the decisions involved in planning and some of the controversial aspects of the process, thus illustrating that teaching is ‘a complex engagement with children’ (John, 2006). Constructivist theory, put very simply, indicates that children build their knowledge through extending their prior understanding. Piaget (1953) found that when new knowledge is presented it needs to be assimilated, using what the child already knows. If this information does not fit into prior knowledge, adaptations need to be made and accommodated to form new knowledge. Early years education, particularly, is based around providing stimulating opportunities for children to construct their own learning, through a range of experiences, many of which are ‘play’ based. Children are given the opportunity to choose from the range of experiences available and to repeat an experience while it has interest for them. Planning is therefore concerned with listening to the interests of the children, assessment of their prior learning, and then providing opportunities for the children to challenge and develop their understanding.

Effective planning contributes to every area of teaching and learning including:

- Behaviour management – if pupils are bored or frustrated this may have an impact on their attitude to learning and behaviour in the classroom; therefore, planning activities appropriate for the abilities of the class is essential.
- Learning environment – integrating display into planning enables teachers to utilise additional resources to support children’s learning and independence. This may be in the form of word banks, number lines or grids, topic-based information or interactive exhibitions.
- Motivation – if planned activities are not meaningful and/or inspiring children may not willingly participate, therefore knowing what interests the children and incorporating this in your planning is essential.
- Inclusion – all children’s needs should be considered so that they do not feel isolated or excluded from the lesson content. This is a challenging area for teachers to manage because of the range of issues that may be present, from academic ability to aspects of health and well-being.

There is a range of approaches to planning. This chapter aims to meet students’ beginning needs and give a firm foundation for further development, while being
mindful that ‘for some, the encounter holds creative possibilities; for others, it is a brick wall of bewilderment and anxiety’ (John, 2006, p. 483).

The examples below illustrate the impact different government priorities can have on teaching and learning in the classroom, particularly on the curriculum content and how it is organised. A focus on different curricular agenda can help us to understand how education priorities are developed. Although the examples given present a narrow view, in terms of global priorities, they show how, since devolution within the UK, different countries have different values and ways of implementing these.

**Scotland: ‘Curriculum for Excellence’**

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need to flourish in life, learning and work: ‘The knowledge, skills and attributes learners will develop will allow them to demonstrate four key capacities – to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors’ (www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum).

**The National Curriculum in England, statutory from 2014**

The 2014 National Curriculum is the result of the Coalition government’s consultation on how best to meet the educational needs of children. It states that:

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum, which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and

The latest version of the National Curriculum specifies the aims, purposes and content for English, mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, computing, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education for each Key Stage, with the introduction of a foreign language at Key Stage 2. It is worth noting that free schools and academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum.
A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life

The Welsh Curriculum 3–13 identifies skills for each subject and the range of contexts, opportunities and activities through which these should be assessed. A new curriculum is currently being designed that will be implemented in 2018. The Welsh Curriculum includes a requirement for the teaching of the Welsh language to all pupils:

The four purposes will be at the heart of our new curriculum.

- Ambitious capable learners
- Healthy, confident individuals
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical, informed citizens

Planning for learning: Levels of planning

The statutory curriculum is mediated and interpreted at different levels. The statutory curriculum and policies are translated into a whole-school curriculum plan and then further broken down into school policies.

Whole-school plan

Whatever the statutory content, schools must translate it into whole-school plans for their school. The whole-school curriculum plan is developed from national requirements and the school ethos and priorities. This is usually organised in Key Stages/age phases and is often referred to as the ‘long-term plan’. In this you can observe the cyclical ‘spiral’ nature of the curriculum, with subjects being revisited throughout a child’s time in school. Also, cross-curricular links or themes can be identified, and the long-term plan ensures that all areas of the curriculum are taught at appropriate times and in relevant detail across the age phases. For example, looking at the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013b) requirement to teach ‘significant people in British history’ at Key Stage 1 teachers may decide to teach about optional examples given in the curriculum: Queen Victoria, Christopher Columbus, Rosa Parkes or Mary Seacole. These may be selected for good reasons. But has thought been given to the locality of the school, available resources and the personal skills, interest areas and knowledge of

the teaching team? It is also possible to respond to the enthusiasms and interests of the children in your class, although this is more normally at lesson level than for longer-term planning.

**Different approaches to the curriculum**

**School ethos and philosophy**

All schools have individual mission statements and aims, and the values and attitudes stated are the underlying principles on which all activity in the school is built. There are many ways that curriculum expectations can be met and the decisions taken by a school, based on their mission statement and aims, can have a significant impact on the overall ethos. This individual philosophy is what makes every school different, so that when you walk in you get the ‘feel’ of the school from the environment (displays, welcome, orderliness, learning conversations) around you. As a student, you need to adapt to this as quickly as possible, although when you are a member of the teaching team you will be able to contribute to the ethos and to the development of the whole-school curriculum plan and policies. While subject content, and possibly how much time should be dedicated to individual subjects are set by government policy, the way that these are organised is the responsibility of school leaders and staff. This discussion explores some of the issues facing teachers today. How to teach areas of the curriculum can be dependent on teachers’ own philosophical beliefs concerning how children learn or on school approaches to learning and ethos. Changes to the curriculum at national level will resonate with some teachers and not with others.

**Single subject or linked subjects**

Schools can choose to teach each subject separately or link several together. However, to teach all subjects in a discrete (subject-specific) way can sometimes introduce seemingly rigid boundaries between content, making it difficult for children to see the commonality between subjects. In the real world we learn experientially and the distinctions between subjects tend to be blurred, making learning meaningful and intrinsically motivating. Therefore, enabling children to learn more naturally, rather than planning disjointed learning blocks, would seem to be highly advantageous in today’s classrooms. In addition, depending on the number of subjects included in the curriculum, it may be difficult to teach all of them every week. Some schools choose to focus on particular foundation subjects in specific terms rather than teaching them all year to accommodate this difficulty.
Cross-curricular approach

Some schools redress the balance by using a cross-curricular approach rather than always teaching through discrete subjects. In using a cross-curricular approach it is important to ensure that there is breadth across the curriculum and that all the necessary curriculum objectives are taught. In an effective cross-curricular lesson there will be shared emphasis on the learning outcomes from different subject areas. Barnes (2011, p. 259) explains how effective units of work may also include opportunities for children to use creative approaches to applying the learning to new situations, thus allowing the teacher (and child) to assess how well the learning has been understood.

Themes

Many schools use ‘themes’ to link subjects under an umbrella context. Lessons can be taught using either a subject-discrete or a cross-curricular approach. The choice depends on what knowledge, skills or understanding is intended to be developed, and teacher judgement about how the children will best be able to learn this. The chosen theme may be taught in a variety of ways, for example, one day per week for several weeks, or it may be fully timetabled with all lessons linked to the theme. One of the key advantages of a thematic approach is that, as for cross-curricular lessons, it is thought to be a more contextually-based approach to learning, by encouraging children to make connections between different areas of learning. In addition, many believe that this promotes deep learning and supports transference of skills, knowledge and understanding between the areas of learning. A concern in some schools is that children may not naturally transfer the skills learnt in one subject, say literacy, into other subject areas. Conversely, some teachers believe that depth of subject knowledge can only be taught through discrete subject teaching and are concerned that a surface approach to the curriculum may be the result of a thematic approach.

The Mantle of the Expert

The ‘Mantle of the Expert’ (O’Neill, 2015, pp.109–46) is another approach to teaching and learning that some schools find helpful in enabling children to take ownership of their learning. Children in a class work as a business or take on a project whereby they identify the key areas they want to develop. The teacher works as a facilitator to guide pupils to devise programmes of action, for example, conservation projects, so that they can take ownership and lead their own learning. While many of the curriculum areas can be included in this approach there can be challenges related to making sure core skills are explicitly taught, so skilled planning across the curriculum is essential. Another possible approach is Philosophy for Children (P4C), which has
Introduction to Professional Studies

a key focus on enquiry and questioning as the basis of lessons. James Nottingham (2013) discusses strategies for the development of P4C through the ASK approach (attitudes, skills and knowledge).

Areas of learning

The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (IRPC) (DCSF, 2009) suggested an approach to making cross-curricular links that is still relevant and could enable whole-school curriculum planning through restructuring of the curriculum into six ‘areas of learning’:

- understanding the arts
- understanding English, communication and languages
- historical, geographical and social understanding
- mathematical understanding
- understanding physical development, health and well-being
- scientific and technological understanding.

‘The areas of learning capture the essential knowledge, key skills and understanding that children need to develop as they progress through their primary years’ (QCDA, 2010, p. 16). These ‘areas of learning’ may be a useful place to start when considering combining subjects in your lesson planning. While the Rose Review proposal outlined ‘a design for the curriculum which promotes challenging subject teaching alongside equally challenging cross-curricular studies’ (p. 4) it also ‘insisted that literacy, numeracy and ICT must be prioritised’ (p. 6). An additional emphasis was placed on the importance of talk, as Rose considered the ‘prime skills of speaking and listening to be essential in their own right and crucial for learning to read, write, to be numerate and, indeed, to be successful in virtually all of the learning children undertake at school and elsewhere’ (p. 6).

The Cambridge Primary Review

The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) made suggestions about the interpretation of the primary curriculum based on extensive research undertaken between 2006 and 2009. The investigation took into account the views of the general public on primary education including suggested changes, as well as carrying out 31 research reports investigating ten key themes. Suggestions included that the National Curriculum should take up just 70 per cent of teaching time with a locally set ‘community curriculum’ for the remaining 30 per cent. The curriculum should comprise
eight ‘domains’: arts and creativity; citizenship and ethics; faith and belief; language, oracy and literacy; mathematics; physical and emotional health; place and time; science and technology. In addition teaching and learning should be situated in the local area as much as possible, particularly the community curriculum.

**Reflective task**

Consider your personal views on this issue of subject-based teaching versus theme-based and cross-curricular teaching. Are these values-based judgements? Are they linked to how much worth we apportion to each subject? Do you believe it is necessary to prioritise basic skills over the arts and humanities? In your experience so far what do you believe to be the ‘best’ approach? Why? What strategies do you have to address the potential issues? What do you consider may be the benefits of using ‘the locality’ to promote and inspire learning? What potential difficulties may arise?

**The way forward?**

It is worth considering that the Rose Review and the Cambridge Primary Review proposed a reorganisation of the curriculum into areas or domains rather than maintaining a separate subject-specific focus. Whatever the curriculum, and acknowledging that change is likely to occur throughout a teacher’s career, it is likely that schools and teachers will increasingly need to make decisions about how different curricular areas can be linked in meaningful ways. There are many opinions on and rationales for this (Barnes, 2011; Rowley and Cooper, 2009). One suggestion might be some units of work ‘blocked’ and taught intensively over a short period of time, for example. Another consideration could be the extent to which the local community and expert visitors could be utilised to enhance children’s learning within a thematic curriculum. Some schools have worked with local archaeologists, for example, or with a local firm of architects, builders, the National Trust, a theatre, or with a children’s writer, ballet dancer, artist or musician – even fashion designers. What contribution can parents or grandparents make to a wider and more diverse curriculum? Even within the constraints of recent years, many schools have developed exciting curricular opportunities, so be brave and ‘think outside the box’. It is possible and important to interpret changes in statutory requirements mediated by your own professional philosophy; this chapter will give you strategies for doing this, in terms of planning and assessing what is taught and learnt, with confidence.
There is an ongoing tension related to the prioritisation of literacy and numeracy above other areas of the curriculum, with some teachers believing it is important for children’s education to focus on core subjects and others believing that core skills can be taught contextually through other subjects.

**Applying your philosophy to mediate statutory requirements**

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with different ways of knowing and considering what are the most valid ways of knowing. How can we get beyond our personal opinions to something we can feel has validity? Some things we know because they are based on reason. Other things we know from experience. We think we know how children learn based first on reason, on what we have learnt from research and from the authoritative experience of others about learning. In addition, we have our empirical knowledge: what we observe about the children in our classrooms. We develop our personal educational philosophy based on a combination of what we learn from scholarly authorities and our personal experience. We may therefore find ourselves in agreement with the current prevailing ideology of education, or at times find ourselves teaching in ways that we fundamentally believe to be misinformed. It is vital that we adopt the view presented by Pollard:

Professional ideologies are always likely to remain strong among teachers – they represent commitments, ideals and interests. Reflective teachers should be open-minded enough to constructively critique their own beliefs, as well as those of others. (Pollard, 2008, p. 94)

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**Work in school**

The following discussion takes place during a staff meeting:

**Amy:** I prefer to teach my literacy skills when the children are learning other subjects so they have a context. So, this week we are looking at the structure of newspaper reports and writing up our activities in groups to make a report for Year 2, to let them know about what happens in Year 3, when they come to visit.

*(Continued)*
Andrew: No, I prefer to teach the skills separately. How can you tell how much each child understands about the newspaper features? Once we have learnt the skills in literacy then we use them in history to write about the Ancient Egyptians.

Amy: If I do it that way I don’t feel I have enough time to give quality teaching to all the subjects. I find a more thematic approach works better for me.

Barbara: But how do you make sure you plan for all the individual needs? In my class, some children prefer the ‘joined up’ thematic approach but others really seem to thrive when they can focus on one subject at a time. So, I plan from knowing my children, their prior knowledge, and then what I am to teach is tailored to that. So, sometimes I plan to teach in a theme, sometimes not.

This discussion explores some of the issues facing teachers today. How to teach areas of the curriculum can be dependent on teachers’ own philosophical beliefs concerning how children learn or on school approaches to learning and ethos. Changes to the curriculum at national level will resonate with some teachers and not with others. Planning a successful learning experience then depends on the children, the teacher, the school, and its community, all within the context of a wider curriculum.

Long-term plan
Table 3.1 shows how a long-term plan for a Year 4 class based on the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013b) might look.

The 2013 curriculum requires children to learn about electricity in Year 1 (electric lights), Year 4 (circuits) and Year 6 (circuits, voltage and symbols). This illustrates the spiral nature of the curriculum, with subjects being revisited to ‘build’ on prior knowledge and allow for consolidation of learning through experience. After each unit of work has been taught, teachers would make a ‘summative’ assessment to ascertain the level of individual understanding. Formative assessment is used regularly to inform planning and support learning.
Table 3.1  Example of a Year 4 long-term plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 4/ Curriculum area</th>
<th>Autumn 1</th>
<th>Autumn 2</th>
<th>Spring 1</th>
<th>Spring 2</th>
<th>Summer 1</th>
<th>Summer 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Living things</td>
<td>Animals, including humans</td>
<td>States of matter</td>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots</td>
<td>Depth study of Anglo-Saxon art and culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Early civilisations: Mayan</td>
<td>Ancient Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Similarities and differences between own region and …</td>
<td>United Kingdom and a region in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Understand political system of the UK and how citizens participate in democratic government</td>
<td>Great artists</td>
<td>Sketch book recording of observations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing and painting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing/design and technology</td>
<td>Design and write programs</td>
<td>D/T design/make/evaluate a game</td>
<td>D/T cooking and nutrition: cook a series of healthy savoury dishes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Compose music for play related to Christmas concert</td>
<td>Play composition prepare for performance</td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>Dance – basic skills</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Games; adventure camp</td>
<td>Athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language (French)</td>
<td>Portraits</td>
<td>Les Quatre Amis</td>
<td>Ça pousse! On y va</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflective task

Some of the areas lend themselves to a cross-curricular approach and would be taught in this way. Examine the long-term plan in Table 3.1 to see which lessons you would teach using this approach. For example, explain how you might combine sound in science and music, art with history, design and technology with geography or dance and music.

Medium-term plan

To help deliver specific areas of the curriculum, the whole-school long-term plan is organised into medium-term plans, which are targeted at specific year groups and often for a specific term, half-term or ‘unit’ periods. The long-term plan can be delivered in cross-curricular themes or subject-specific chunks or a mixture of the two, as decided by the school management team to best meet the learning needs of the children. Barnes (2007, p. 184) states that

A medium-term plan should show the proposed relationship between key questions and attention to specific subject-based skills and knowledge. It must show progression towards a questioning stance and the development of ever-deeper understanding.

Many schools plan in teams or in subject groups in order to share their knowledge and experience. The medium-term plan (unit of work) should also show when assessment is to take place and begin to make clear the differentiation strategies to be used across the ‘unit of work’. These should include a range of approaches to assessment, to enable all learners to demonstrate their successful learning. We shall discuss differentiation and assessment later in the chapter and in Chapter 4.

Weekly plans

Short-term plans are often called ‘weekly plans’. From these an individual lesson plan can be constructed. These are necessary to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are taught effectively and in adequate depth to enable children to learn. Although weekly plans are meant to outline specific activities and sessions throughout the week, they need to be flexible, so that you can respond to changes, in order to extend children’s learning.
The Process of Mediation from National Curriculum to weekly plan

The different levels of mediation/interpretation at each level are shown in Figure 3.1. The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) illustrates the development of planning for maths using the useful structure outlined below. This can be applied in any subject area, and the principles can also be applied in thematic approaches to planning.

**Figure 3.1** Showing the different levels of planning and the stages at which teachers can interpret the statutory curriculum and policies to reflect the philosophy of the school and teachers
Features of effective practice

An effective structure for curriculum planning shows how mathematics is planned for at the long-, medium- and short-term level. Effective planning:

Has a long-term plan (planning for progression) which:

- clearly states an expected pathway of progression across the Key Stage
- breaks down the Key Stage progression into a yearly plan
- reflects the school's vision and national priorities.

Has a medium-term plan (structuring the planning of units) which:

- links clearly to the long-term plan
- makes clear what is to be taught and when
- is based on prior attainment, not what year group the pupils are in
- contains differentiated teaching objectives addressing process as well as content
- gives clear links to rich and interesting activities and resources
- indicates teaching approaches which will engage and interest the pupils
- contains a schedule for various assessment items in line with school policy
- reflects the school's vision and national priorities.

Has a short-term plan (lesson planning) which:

- links clearly to the medium-term plan
- makes clear what is to be taught
- encourages the teacher to plan a sequence of lessons rather than ‘standalones’
- gives guidance for a range of teaching approaches to be used within the sequence of lessons
- indicates key vocabulary that might be barriers to learning
- gives guidance to support teachers to plan in more detail the approaches and resources which will engage and interest the students
- gives guidance for assessment activities and strategies, for example, probing questions, self- and peer assessment opportunities
- gives examples of ways in which learning can be taken beyond the classroom, for example, consolidation, extension, application, historical links
- offers prompts for reflecting on and evaluating the lesson in order to inform/ review the planned next steps for this unit
- reflects the school's vision. (https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/21510)
Key questions you may ask

We now look at some key questions that you may have as a student teacher:

1. ‘What MUST I get right when I’m writing a lesson plan?’

Five key things are:

- Know what children have previously done, and whether they remember and understand this.
- Know exactly what you want children to achieve and have a target that reflects this.
- Plan for inclusion, for example, differentiation.
- Know what resources are available.
- Plan and manage the length of each stage of a lesson and what you and any other adults in the classroom will be doing at each stage.

2. ‘How can I plan for differentiation?’

This is an essential question to ask in order to have both a child-centred and a focused approach to learning and teaching. It indicates that you recognise that personalisation and differentiation are necessary in each effective lesson. You need to learn how to set the correct level of challenge for individual children. The Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2013a) require you to ‘set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions’ (Standard 1.2). There are lots of ways you can begin to do this. For example:

- Know the children well and understand what their interests are and how they learn most effectively.
- Plan based on your assessment of the previous lesson.
- Ask the class questions at the beginning of, during and at the end of a lesson to gauge different levels of understanding. (Formative assessment)
- Observe children working and listen to them talking to each other. Talk to them about their work.
- Consider using ‘choice and challenge’ – allowing children to choose from three levels of difficulty depending on their self-evaluation. (Peacock, 2016, pp. 117–188)

Always plan extensions for those who may not be sufficiently challenged, although these should include opportunities to deepen children’s skills, knowledge and understanding, and should not just be more of the main lesson content. Get to know and
take into account children's different personalities, interests and backgrounds, including cultural backgrounds, their language levels and any special educational needs, and consider what will motivate and interest different children (Standard 5, DfE, 2013a).

In many subjects, for example, in art or history, you can design open activities that children can respond to at their own levels. Or you can give children the choice of working at the level of challenge they want to try ... using labels such as hot/spicy, medium or mild (or curry types vindaloo, dhansak, korma).

For some activities ask children to work in pairs or groups of mixed abilities so that they can support and extend each other.

3. ‘I don’t know much about this so I’m having trouble finding ideas for activities which will fit the learning objective. Where can I find ideas? I don’t have enough time to research this thoroughly.’

Standard 3 (DfE, 2013a) expects you to ‘have a secure knowledge of the relevant subjects of the curriculum’, but this isn’t acquired overnight! You increasingly consolidate your subject knowledge over time through your own research, with the support of colleagues or through continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities.

The internet can be a useful resource, both websites for teachers and those that are not specifically educational. Websites for art galleries or museums, for example, can stimulate informed creative thinking – see, for instance, the National Gallery’s Take One Picture at www.takeonepicture.org.uk/ – or books of course, including those for children. And don’t be afraid to ask other students and experienced teachers, particularly subject leaders – they will appreciate your request for ideas. Are there visitors with expertise in this subject who might be invited to work with you: archaeologists, musicians, artists, parents, local businesses? Are there resources in the local history or archive library, or a local museum with an education department?

There are often many opportunities for collaborative planning practice in schools and students have said that they have learnt many good strategies in this way, for example, through children devising the lesson focus, cross-curricular teaching, interactive lessons, learn-apply-experiment or learning outside.

4. ‘I have learned, at university, that I should take initiatives in my planning, but when I have been in school the teachers expect me to rely on their planning methods, which I don’t really agree with. In one school differentiation was frowned upon and in another I was criticised for responding to a surprise opportunity that arose during a lesson rather than sticking to my lesson plan. Yet we are assessed on our ability to do these things. This has caused tensions with my mentor and not done my self-esteem much good!’
It is important, whether a student or teacher in a school, that you take time to read the policies and understand their expectations. All schools have a range of policies that outline their approach to teaching and learning, as well as health and safety and safeguarding. Having discussions with mentors and teachers about lesson planning and how this is done helps to develop positive relationships and avoid misunderstandings.

The research of Hattie (2012) shows that the greatest benefits to all involved come from:

- increased experience in schools observing a range of teachers
- planning for a wider range of children
- being part of the community of teachers
- having dialogue related to planning.

As John (2006) has said:

It seems that greater exposure to teaching challenges the novices to see planning and preparation less as an unalterable event and more as a concept associated with unpredictability, flexibility, and creativity. It was as if the student teachers were seeing planning as the glue that held the various pieces of learning and teaching together and the linear format, despite being a course requirement, was largely superfluous to their needs as teachers. (p. 489)

What are the children going to learn or what am I going to teach?

Planning and assessment or assessment and planning, which comes first? There is no definitive answer. It is like the proverbial ‘chicken and egg’. Many beginning teachers become involved in what they need to teach rather than focusing on what the children will learn. If governments continue to define prescriptive and crowded curricula, teachers may be led to ‘covering’ the objectives, for example, ‘delivering the literacy objectives’ rather than fostering a love of literature, or focusing on ‘facts’ to be learnt rather than the excitement of enquiry-based learning. It is worth considering who the lesson plan is for when deciding how much content needs to be included. Obviously observed lessons need to be very detailed so that the observer can follow your thinking process and you can demonstrate your knowledge of the children, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and your ability to plan a satisfying and complete learning experience at the correct level. Lesson planning in general needs to contain as much information as is necessary to enable learning to occur and so that you can teach with confidence.
When planning the beginning of a new topic it is helpful to start from the big picture, share the overall goal, show children where they are going and then break it down into manageable steps. Successful athletes use a positive mental attitude technique where they visualise themselves achieving their goal and this can be used with children. What will it feel like and look like to be successful? How will they know? It is also important, as a teacher, to know what you are aiming for, what skills, knowledge and understanding you want children to learn, how you will get there and how you will know that the children have learned. From this it is clear that teaching and assessment are cyclical and dependent on each other. Skemp (1979) states that learning is either innate or taught, formal or informal, and very often, although teachers think they are teaching something, the messages that children receive are not necessarily what was intended. In order to learn, children need to classify new information and then relate it to what they already know. How the new information is explained will have an impact on what is understood and how it is used. For example, a trumpet could be described as: a very loud instrument, a coiled brass cylindrical pipe with valves and a mouthpiece or something you use in an orchestra. All of these descriptions are correct but do not necessarily support learning what a trumpet is. Therefore, understanding definitions and explanations depends on prior experience and fitting new knowledge into what is already known. The percentage of new knowledge taught in lessons can be anything between 50 per cent and 90 per cent depending of the complexity of the subject matter (Hattie, 2012; Allison and Tharby, 2015). This finding suggests that lesson content needs to be carefully monitored in terms of challenge so that key messages are understood and added to previous knowledge but pupils are not bored or frustrated. Allison and Tharby (2015, p. 42) advocate that challenge should be set ‘just outside their comfort zone’, which concurs with Vygotsky’s ideas on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where children, with support, work above the level that they could cope with alone. This needs careful management, resilience and perseverance (Dweck, 2012) on the part of the children and is reliant on the classroom ethos established by the teacher. It is essential that teachers model problem solving methods by showing children how they deal with challenges without giving up.

Two factors are essential to ensure the best pupil outcomes and these are content knowledge and quality of instruction (Allison and Tharby, 2015, p. 5). In addition, ‘expert teaching requires:

- Challenge – so that students have high expectations of what they can achieve
- Explanation – so that students acquire new knowledge and skills
- Modelling – so that students know how to apply the knowledge and skills
Questioning – so that students are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy.
Feedback – so that students can evaluate and further develop their knowledge and skills'.

(Allison and Tharby, 2015, p. 7)

This leads us to consider, what is knowledge?
Kinds of knowledge

Biggs (2003, pp. 41–3) gives a theoretical analysis of the kinds of knowing that can result from the need to ‘get through the prescribed curriculum’ and the kind of knowing that changes the way we tackle problems and look at life, leading to learning which is deep and transformative:

• Demonstrating what you know, without necessarily understanding it (declarative or propositional knowledge) – for example, rote learning, repeating times tables, delivering the curriculum, learning that ‘area’ is length times breadth.
• Using such knowledge to solve problems (‘functioning knowledge’) – for example, planning a class party, solving problems in maths or science, applying your formula for area in a context.
• Knowing what comes next in a sequence without understanding why (procedural knowledge) – for example, following through a series of lessons as outlined in a ‘scheme’ or unit as written, or knowing that after area comes teaching of volume.
• Using what you know in order to make informed judgements, which is by far the most important kind (‘conditional knowledge’) – for example, you know the area of carpet needed for your classroom, but now you consider the use of the room, the children and alternative solutions.

It is useful to know whether the process or the product of a learning episode is of greatest importance. Is the correct answer most critical as in learning times tables or the method through which it is achieved? These issues are part of the planning process in that they will indicate what should be the focus of your attention during the lesson and what should be left until a later date. Stobart (2014) discusses the importance of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in that, although it is necessary to have secure subject knowledge, knowing how to share this in a clear and logical manner is equally significant. Stobart (2014) discusses layers of learning, building one upon the other in order to reach an end goal, knowing what you want children to achieve and what it will look like is a key part of this process. A study carried out by
Lui and Bonner (2016) found that when marking children’s work strong conceptual knowledge enabled in-service and pre-service teachers to be more accurate in their marking than those who worked at a procedural level. This demonstrates that, while it is important to know the sequence of learning, having a deep conceptual understanding of the subject being taught is necessary in order to enable the children to progress effectively. When planning lessons a deep understanding of the subject content and a knowledge of how to break it down into manageable chunks are essential. We have all seen comedy programmes where the lead character is talking to a foreigner who does not understand, and rather than find a different way to approach the problem merely shouts louder. The ability to recognise where misconceptions or misunderstandings may occur and develop a range of strategies to deal with these in a timely and sensitive manner is the skill of an excellent teacher.

Planning for learning

Individual lesson plans

Each school will have a particular approach to the individual lesson plan with a preferred proforma. Your initial teacher education (ITE) provider may also have a recommended format. So rather than confuse you with a table to be completed, we thought it more important to identify the key elements that should be included in an individual lesson plan.

General information

- year (e.g. 4)
- class – number of students, may be wanted in gender numbers, that is, male and female
- teacher
- time of lesson and duration.

Lesson-specific information

- Title of lesson (usually taken from medium-term plan).
- Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and assessment criteria.
- Previous assessment information (if any is available).
- Current assessment opportunities and strategies.
- Activities – should be linked to the learning outcomes and the assessment, the more aligned with each other these are, the better the learning opportunities.
Introduction to Professional Studies

Fautley and Savage (2013) suggest that these should be in the form of learning episodes with timings so that learning can move through several stages during the lesson. This is a good strategy for inexperienced teachers but lessons very rarely go as planned, so ongoing evaluation and flexibility are also required.

- Differentiation – what strategies will be utilised? This should include reference to any school support plans for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) or strategies for specified children, though some activities may be better differentiated by outcome.
- Groupings – these may be based on partners, mixed-ability or friendship or ability. There are good reasons for any of these groupings, but it is essential to be clear about why you have chosen a particular grouping for a particular activity and do not keep the same groups all the time. Consider why you might decide on different grouping for different activities.
- Key vocabulary – this is very important and should include any new language you want children to use in the lesson as well as consolidating previously taught vocabulary.
- Key questions – adding key questions to your lesson plan is a good idea so that you don’t forget your focus during the lesson.
- Possible misconceptions – this includes possible issues that may occur within the new subject content being taught but also any misconceptions that were noticed in previous lessons so that they can be dealt with before moving on.
- Resources, including staff (other adults) – having resources ready and available well beforehand enables you to prepare properly for the beginning of the lesson. Sharing planning, including your expectations, with additional adults in the classroom means that you will all be working towards the same goal. This is especially important if particular strategies or procedures need to be followed including aspects of health and safety.
- Plenary – or a series of mini-plenaries, to correct misunderstandings, consolidate learning or introduce next learning steps.

Once you are familiar with the needs and abilities of your class and the intricacies of planning for learning, then it is possible, and enjoyable, to move to less structured/linear approaches. It is important to note that experienced teachers may seem to have minimal planning but this is usually because a large amount of the information has been ‘internalised’, much akin to the skills needed in driving a car.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Teachers use the statutory curriculum and national strategies to devise ILOs for each lesson. These are then shared with the class, sometimes in the form of ‘We Are
Learning ‘To…’ (WALT) or child-friendly notices. From these and the discussion that follows, ‘Success Criteria’, which may be called ‘What I’m Looking For’ (WILF), can be constructed. This is called constructive alignment and is the explicit connection between what is to be learnt and what you will be assessing. As each child is an individual, how they will learn and be able to demonstrate this learning may be evidenced differently. ILOs are critical to successful learning and form the basis of the content of the lesson. It is easy to make the mistake of finding an interesting activity and then deciding what your ILO will be, but it is much more effective to identify the ILO and then design a relevant activity. By doing this you will make sure that you are teaching what you think you are and that children’s needs will be met. Bloom’s taxonomy can support the planning of ILOs but an additional model that may be of assistance is the ‘Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes’ (SOLO) (Biggs and Collis, 1982), which outlines five levels of language associated with the quality of children’s work. Although it is similar to Bloom’s Taxonomy there are differences, as Bloom’s Taxonomy describes a learner’s behaviour but SOLO describes their quality of thinking. This may seem to be a very subtle difference but both Hattie (2014) and Stobart (2014) advocate the value of SOLO as a means of making judgements about children’s understanding and learning.

According to Biggs and Collis (1982), SOLO is ordered into five stages, which build progressively.

The five stages are:

- Prestructural – children do not understand at all or incorrectly.
- Unistructural – they can understand one particular aspect.
- Multistructural – they understand several pieces of information but do not necessarily make connections between them.
- Relational – children can connect several pieces of knowledge and explain how they are connected.
- Extended abstract – they can use their knowledge beyond the immediate problem in a new situation and can generalise to other areas of learning.

The first two stages relate to surface learning through the ability to memorise facts and the last three to deep learning demonstrating developing conceptual knowledge and understanding. Examples of how different schools have used Bloom’s Taxonomy and SOLO Taxonomy to support planning and assessment can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/349266/beyond-levels-alternative-assessment-approaches-developed-by-teaching-schools.pdf.

The ILOs may be differentiated for ability groups within the class, and consequently there will be a similar number of differentiated success criteria. Personalisation of
approach to enable individualised learning is perhaps too idealistic a goal for every teacher in every lesson, if it is the teacher who has the ‘control’ and determines what is learnt. However, through self-determination and personalisation of the success criteria, children can be encouraged to be involved in the lesson outcomes. This does come with a caveat though. Whilst children perceived to be ‘gifted and talented’ and those confident in the curriculum area in question may relish this ‘challenge’, there may be some children whose self-esteem is too poor for them to believe they can achieve in any way. Giving this group of children the opportunity to set realistic, attainable yet high standards may take some encouragement and support, until they become comfortable and confident in this area. Good planning based on prior knowledge (from assessment) will ensure allocation of the correct resources (including staff) to support the children in their early steps until they become more confident in this approach. A useful approach may be through adding a context to the lesson by presenting a ‘This Is Because…’ (TIBS) aspect to help children understand how the knowledge and/or skills they have learnt in the lesson may be of wider use. This could also be linked with an aspect of children’s prior experience and learning.

**Homework**

The Teachers’ Standards (Standard 4) requires teachers to ‘set homework and plan out-of-class activities to extend the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired’. Careful consideration needs to be given to what kind of homework is set and why. Bearing in mind that Standard 4 also requires teachers to ‘promote a love of learning and children’s intellectual curiosity’, many primary schools expect children to at least undertake reading, literacy and/or mathematics tasks at home. The amount increases with age, and the frequency is variable, although weekly spelling homework and daily reading are still fairly common. Some teachers and many parents believe that homework is a useful extension to the school day and if parents are supportive then this may well be the case. However, limited space at home, insufficient backup from adults and limited access to computers must be taken into consideration (Alexander, 2010, pp. 83–4).

Thought needs to be given to the content of the homework. Is it to be carried out independently by the child, or with the support of their parents or carers? Do they have the support of parents and carers and the necessary equipment at home to be able to complete the homework successfully?

When work is returned, judgements need to be made about how much the child has understood independently and how much they may have been supported. For this reason, it is important to have additional evidence of learning by the child before conclusions are reached about their understanding and achievement.
Differentiation

Planning should include ‘differentiation’. This is the term used to explain when the teaching and learning are specifically targeted and made different, to meet the needs of all children within the class. This will include varied aspects of education: learning, social, emotional and any physical needs. In any classroom of children there will be a range of abilities; whether this is linked with understanding of concepts, skill levels or factual knowledge, for example, for children for whom English is an additional language (EAL), or who have physical, social or emotional barriers to learning. Because of this expected range of abilities (for want of better terminology), which may well alter for individual children across the curriculum, teachers should aim to plan specifically to support children to succeed at the differentiated levels.

In addition to this there are children who require a more individualised approach to their learning, which may involve an Individual Education Plan or development plan to meet their specific needs. Additional staffing and resources to support these children in their development and learning may be available depending on the severity of their needs.

Teachers will need to use their thorough understanding of whichever statutory curriculum requirements apply underlying principles with regard to inclusion and their knowledge of the strengths and needs of the individual child to plan with a flexible approach. This approach will in no way involve reduced expectations of achievement, rather a personalised approach with each child achieving appropriately.

Reflective task

Consider a class of children you have worked with at some point of your ITE so far. Can you identify a spread of abilities? What strategies did you and the class teacher use to remove any barriers to learning and help all children to achieve? How were these identified in your planning?

Strategies you may have noticed could include grouping (classroom organisation), support, outcome, task or resource. If so, make notes about how well you feel these worked for the child, the teacher, other children.

Logically, as planning involves many aspects to ensure inclusion and achievement by all, then assessment must also be varied and differentiated in approach to allow all children to demonstrate their strengths. As Wearmouth (2009) puts it, ‘Students’ sense of themselves as having the potential to be effective in the community of practice of
learners may be constructed and/or constrained by the forms of assessment that are used with them’ (p. 93).

Remember, you cannot plan effectively without reference to previous assessment and you must include opportunities for assessment throughout the lessons you plan.

Lesson evaluations
These should focus first on the learning and then on the teaching, leading to an end product that informs the next planned teaching (Standard 4, DfE, 2013a). A further area to consider is children’s attitudes to, and enjoyment of, the learning. These are professional judgements that will both support teacher knowledge of an individual child and inform future planning decisions.

Case study
Sometimes a surprise event can help you rethink your teaching strategy, such as in the following example. In a music lesson with a Year 4 class of 20 boys and nine girls, the children were listening to Saint-Saëns’ *The Carnival of the Animals*, identifying how the musical elements combined to create the effect and help us relate this to particular animals. The children used language to describe how the music represented the animals, and described the mental images the music evoked. Partway through the lesson the ‘surprise’ happened: a group of boys asked if they could dance to illustrate the movement of the animals, in addition to describing the musical elements that contributed to the effect of the music. The assumptions this teacher made when planning had not included the boys wishing to dance. The children’s desire to respond this way impacted on future planning to include more opportunities for dance.

An evaluation of each lesson taught will support the teacher’s knowledge through identifying children who have achieved the learning objectives, those children who have achieved more than expected and those who have yet to fully achieve the ILOs, as well as any children who have misconceptions that will need to be addressed. Teachers will also evaluate how children responded to the teaching strategies used and which learning strategies children relied upon.

Resources, learning environment and classroom management are also areas for consideration due to the impact they have on a lesson. It is important also to obtain
feedback on your teaching from the children; for example, with young children through drawing or role play, by consulting a focus group of children you perceive to be having problems, or by pupils commenting on an aspect of their learning through analysing a video of a lesson.

Purposeful lesson evaluations and record keeping are useful tools to aid memory and impact upon future planning. Therefore, they need to be ‘user-friendly’. In most situations, making annotations on the planning sheet is an acceptable form of record keeping for day-to-day evaluation. This should be clear and specific to aid planning for the next appropriate lesson.

Teachers and schools have differing methods for recording children’s achievement through records of progress and attainment; it is usually the medium-term end of unit summative assessments that go to build up this record.

**Reflective task**

When next on placement ask your school for a copy of the long-term plan and a subject-specific or themed medium-term plan and then try to see how an individual lesson you have observed (or taught) fits into the big picture. Evaluate the lesson to identify the strategies needed to teach the next lesson to the same class. Which misconceptions need to be corrected? What will the gifted and talented children learn? How will you differentiate appropriately?

**Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of the statutory curriculum, then discussed different ways in which it may be structured, as single subjects or through cross-curricular approaches, the value judgements involved and the impact of changing government priorities on these decisions. The English National Curriculum (DfE, 2013b) and its rationale was compared with the curricula for Scotland and Wales, and with previous recommendations (DCSF, 2009) and the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010). We considered the many decisions that teachers must make in order to mediate national requirements at the levels of long-term, whole-school planning, medium-term planning, daily planning and lesson planning. The importance of integrating planning and assessment in a cyclical way, at all levels, was emphasised and is developed in Chapter 4. Finally, the process of needing to reflect on teachers’ planning and on children’s learning was explained in order that both may be taken forward.
Questions for discussion

Refer to the *National Curriculum: A Framework* (DfE, 2013b)

- It was said (p. 64) that teachers’ planning involves ‘listening to the children’. Discuss ways in which this can be done, based on the planning guidance above, within the statutory curriculum.
- Consider ways in which you aim to make your teaching and children’s learning inspiring.
- Discuss ways in which planning for different subjects in the new curriculum can begin with the locality, as advised in the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) and how this could link with the National Curriculum subject content.
- Differentiation: reflect on how you have differentiated for a particular child; how might you have done this better?

Further reading


This book is a key text for supporting the development of your personal philosophy of planning. It is research-based and begins from the focus of what is important … the learning and the individual child.


A review of the research of John Hattie, this article is both interesting and provides a challenge to consider multiple perspectives on any one area of research.

**References**


Department for Education (DfE) (2013a) *Teachers’ Standards*. Available at: www.education.gov.uk/.


