

Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship

Understanding how Pupils Learn and Develop.

Knowledge 1

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Introduction:

Developing effective learners

'Developing effective learners' refers to approaches that support pupils to plan, monitor, understand and manage their own learning, in order to develop inquisitive, self-motivated learners. These approaches include peer tutoring, collaborative learning, feedback, and metacognition and self-regulation strategies.

Assessment Methods:

To demonstrate how you have developed the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding and behaviours required to be proficient in this area of development, your TLC will utilise a wide range of assessment methods to allow explanation through written work and audio recorded professional discussions.

They will also undertake direct observation of your practice to record your performance levels when dealing with work duties that relate to the areas featured within each section

Work products produced should be recorded within a direct observation

This first part of the knowledge module, relating to understanding how pupils learn and develop is divided into three main assessment criteria, all of which are supported within this guide and will be covered by your allocated Teaching and Learning Coordinator.

The assessment criteria to be met are:

- Understand the need to provide feedback to support and facilitate an appropriate level of independence.
- Comprehend appropriate levels of learning resources to identify and help address weakness, consolidate strengths and develop individualised expectations.
- Recognise different stages of child development through school, e.g. transition between key stages.

A/C 1: Understand the need to provide feedback to support and facilitate an appropriate level of independence.

Pass Criteria:

Share findings from delivered sessions in a required format.

Produces and implements visual aids appropriate to the situation, with evidence of a positive outcome, uses alternative communication and strategies to effectively support learning and promote independence.

Distinction Criteria:

Demonstration of knowledge of a range of methods for teaching enhancement. Evidences their knowledge of development theory and how this is used for the development of the pupils they are working with in a staged approach to their cognitive and social growth.

What is feedback?

Feedback is providing information to an individual which focuses on their performance or behaviour.

The feedback provided should be delivered in a positive manner and lead to action to affirm or develop an individual's performance or behaviour.

Feedback provided should not be of a personal nature and should focus on hard data, facts or observed examples of evidence.

Types of feedback

Affirmation feedback:

Affirmation feedback is provided as soon as possible after a performance has been observed. 'Well done, Ben, you observed safe working practices while preparing a window mount for your artwork.'

Developmental feedback:

'Nancy, next time you stretch paper, use gum strip instead of masking tape to secure the paper to your drawing board.'

Effective feedback:

Effective feedback is tailored to meet the needs of the individual and is directly linked to observable evidence – either a learner's written or practical work or a performance of a given task.

- It focuses on individual action points.
- Effective feedback deals with one point at a time.

When learners complete a piece of work and hand it in to the teacher, they expect two responses:

- the assessment decision (grade or mark), but more importantly, feedback on their performance.

Sometimes learners focus too much on the grade or mark out of 10 that they have been awarded for a particular piece of work without taking the necessary notice of the information contained within the written feedback which could help them improve the work or affect the way they approach the next task or assignment. Learners need to be guided into the appropriate use of feedback – it does not happen incidentally.

Opportunities need to be created for learners to use feedback appropriately and take the required action.

The benefits to learners of effective feedback

Feedback should act as scaffolding to support learners' skill building and the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers and Teaching Assistants provide the 'x' factor in promoting learning through intervention strategies and feedback on learners' performance.

Feedback must not be confused with doing the work for the learners or giving them so much help that it becomes the teacher's work. There is an art to providing support and feedback and it is definitely not giving learners the solution to a problem as soon as they become stuck.

Learners must be given opportunities to think a problem through for themselves, which is a crucial part of the learning process, so that the piece of work is their own and the end result evidences their learning through which individuals can take much satisfaction in their progress and achievements.

There is no doubt that learners can and do benefit from effective feedback.

- They know how well they are progressing.
- They are informed of their strengths and of areas they need to improve.
- They know what they need to do to improve.

The benefits of effective feedback are greatly enhanced when feedback is applied on a number of attempts so that progress can be tracked from one attempt to the next and illustrated by developmental improvement.

Effective feedback and its appropriate use can improve:

Progress: progress is made when learners know and understand what they need to do to improve and are given time to undertake the required action to bring about an improvement in their work.

Achievement: as a result of progress being made in each teaching and learning session, opportunities for learners to achieve will increase. Learners handing work in on time: work being handed in and the return of marked work with feedback is a two-way contract. The dates for handing in and returning marked work should be adhered to by both parties. If feedback is valued, it will promote the desired effect – work is handed in on time.

Learner confidence: effective feedback which recognises what the learner has done well and instigates further progress promotes learner confidence.

Motivation: motivation is enhanced when learners can see for themselves that they are improving as a result of taking the action recommended in the feedback. Attendance and timekeeping: when feedback is valued and thereby worth receiving, learners are encouraged to attend teaching and learning sessions and timekeeping does not become an issue.

Retention: when feedback is valued, and progress is seen by the learner to have been made, retention does not become an issue.

Behaviour in class: the most effective behaviour management strategy is the demonstration of progress which has resulted from effective teaching and learning.

Learner–teacher relations: when feedback is effective, learners value teachers' contributions and this is apparent in the quality of the learner–teacher relationship.

Learner participation in class: when learners receive helpful and constructive feedback, they are encouraged to contribute to classroom activities.

When observing a teaching and learning session, observers will ask themselves the following questions:

- Do learners understand the purpose of assessment?
- Do learners receive constructive feedback from teachers?
- Is the marking of learners' work consistently detailed and evaluative to prove helpful?
- Does feedback provide learners with clear guidance about how to improve their performance?
- Do assessment procedures meet the requirements of the validating and examining bodies?

Effective feedback is:

- written in plain English
- written clearly
- detailed
- evaluative
- constructive
- positive
- identifies strengths and weaknesses
- provides effective guidance on how a learner can improve
- begins by saying what the learner has done well
- progresses to areas the learner could have done better
- ends on a positive note
- specifically linked to task/assignment/unit assessment criteria (cross-referenced to what teachers have asked learners to do)
- must be prompt.

Oral feedback

Learners receive oral feedback every time they are in contact with their teacher and teaching assistants, whether it is consciously or subconsciously. Learners sometimes do not class informal discussion with their teachers as feedback, but this can often be the most valuable form of information where hints and tips for improvement are shared with learners and vocational tricks of the trade are imparted by vocational experts while monitoring learner activities in an effective learning environment.

It is widely believed that oral feedback has a greater impact on learners' work than written feedback, possibly because most oral feedback is provided instantly or within a very short period of time of an activity taking place or a piece of work being generated. If teachers are observed delivering a teaching and learning session, they are keen to receive feedback as soon as possible after the completion of the observation; if they are told it will be provided at

the end of term, it will have minimal effect on their performance when the feedback is eventually provided as the experience of delivering will have faded along with missed opportunities for learning.

Teachers and teaching assistants need to:

- build in feedback to learners as an important element of each lesson as part of effective lesson planning, whether it is group or individual progress
- share the structure of the lesson with learners as part of introducing the session, highlighting the opportunities for feedback
- encourage learners to take notes when oral feedback is being shared
- provide opportunities within each session for learners to absorb the feedback they have received and undertake the required action if appropriate within the timeframe of the lesson
- encourage learners to action plan using targets based on feedback received
- ensure learners do not leave any session without knowing how well they have performed
- demonstrate that they genuinely believe that all learners can learn and improve against their own previous performance, not that of others.

Written feedback

Even the most reluctant learners want and value assessment feedback. Teachers should never say anything in writing that they would not say to a learner's face. They should focus on feeding back on the quality of work and not on the person to minimise the possibility of personality issues coming into play.

Personal comments such as: 'You are lazy, and this has reflected in the quality of your work' are not helpful and only serve to detract from the content of the feedback. They also create a barrier between teachers and learners, resulting in the learners digging in their heels and refusing to act on the teachers' advice even though it is their work which will suffer. As with oral feedback, teachers should use only the assessment criteria as defined in the briefing of the task on which to base the assessment. To mark learners down for not doing something that was not a requirement stipulated in the initial briefing is unfair and will only serve to promote mistrust.

Standardised feedback sheets on which a teacher details written information on assessment decisions are often well received by learners, particularly when they are used by all teachers across the institution.

A common approach to written feedback in terms of a cross-institutional document is advisable as is a standard turnaround period for work to be assessed and feedback to be formulated and provided to learners.

Teachers need to:

- compile a standardised feedback sheet that has general agreement across the institution
- define the length of time that learners will have to wait for their work to be returned with written feedback and adhere to this deadline
- be consistent in their assessment decisions and ensure there is no favouritism
- use the assessment criteria and mark against the requirements set out in the task/assignment/activity briefing
- make sure that handwritten feedback is legible, and information presented is set at an appropriate level

- evaluate what has been done well and provide praise while ensuring it is not condescending
- highlight the areas of work which need further development, putting forward constructive advice in a way that conveys to the learner that the teacher genuinely believes that the individual can improve and ultimately achieve if they act upon the advice and guidance provided.

Peer and self-assessment

It is widely recognised that when learners are fully engaged in the learning process, learning increases. A fundamental requirement of Assessment for Learning is for learners to know what they have to learn, why it is required (how it fits into the course of study and which unit it is part of) and how it is to be assessed. When learners are able to understand the assessment criteria, progress is often maximised, especially when individuals have opportunities to apply the assessment criteria to work produced by their peers as part of planned classroom activities.

Peer assessment using the predefined assessment criteria is the next stage to evaluate learner understanding and consolidating learning.

Benefits of organising peer assessment activities include:

- learners clarifying their own ideas and understanding of the learning intention
- checking individuals' understanding of the assessment criteria and how it is to be applied to learners' work.

As with teacher assessment, learners should only be judged and thereby assessed using the published assessment criteria. It must be stressed that peer assessment must be managed carefully.

If peer-assessment activities are not appropriately managed by the teacher:

- learners will be publicly ranked according to their performance – this will only serve to demotivate less able learners
- learners who are performing well will not find peer-assessment activities challenging and therefore their learning will not be extended, which defies the very principles upon which the Assessment for Learning philosophy is based

Building in interim reviews and feedback opportunities

Assignments, particularly for portfolio units, often reflect the length and depth of the units themselves. The assignments may last between six and eight weeks and the initial briefing seems a long time ago.

Learners think they have forever to complete an assignment, especially extensive assignments which are designed to generate evidence, possibly in its entirety for a portfolio unit. If learners' progress is not checked at key stages throughout the assignment, individuals may and often do lack focus in pursuing the learning objectives and become confused about the outcomes. Deadline dates for these assignments are often the ones that are not adhered to.

Teachers need to:

- compile assignments that are broken down into a series of tasks, building in reviews and feedback opportunities

- prescribe a completion date for each task and provide support to ensure that learners set individual targets to meet the required outcomes of the task
- provide informal oral feedback as and when required as part of classroom monitoring activities
- review progress against targets and provide feedback
- provide opportunities for learners to reflect on feedback provided and act on advice given
- provide opportunity for consolidation work to be undertaken by less able learners. Advocates a commitment to 'personalised learning' and that the 'pace and progression' of learning should be determined by learners' needs
- make sure that any remedial work is again reviewed, and feedback provided before learner's progress to the subsequent task
- create opportunities for learners to participate in peer assessment and self-assessment activities on completion of the overall assignment
- undertake formal assessment of learners' work and return assessed work with written feedback within the agreed period.

A/C 2: Comprehend appropriate levels of learning resources to identify and help address weakness, consolidate strengths and develop individualised expectations.

Pass Criteria:

Evidences knowledge of several resources and strategies that are available, explaining how these can be used to support more than one group of learners including those from vulnerable groups, special educational needs and those with an additional learning support requirement.

“Learning Resources”

These can describe any person(s) or any material, whether acquired or locally produced with instructional content or function that is used for formal or informal teaching/learning purposes.

Learning resources may include, but are not limited to:

- print and non-print materials
- audio
- visual
- electronic and digital hardware/software resources
- and human resources.

A resource-based learning approach supports, enriches, and helps to implement the educational program of the school through the interaction of professional personnel, students, and parents/guardians in the school community.

It is your duty and the duty of all professional staff to provide students with a wide range of materials at varying levels of difficulty, with a diversity of appeal, and representative of different points of view.

It is your duty and the duty of all professional staff to select resources that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the diversity of interests and perspectives, and the variety of abilities, learning styles and maturity levels of the learners served.

- select resources that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and knowledge of societal standards
- select resources that positively and accurately reflect diverse perspectives on controversial issues, ensuring that learners have an opportunity to develop, under guidance, the practice of critical analysis and the ability to make informed judgments in their daily lives
- select resources representative of gender, appearance, sexual orientation, ability/disability, belief system, family structure, race and ethnicity, and socio-economic status.
- assure a comprehensive collection appropriate to the school community by considering the appropriateness of placing principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of specific resources.

In selecting learning resources, professional personnel should evaluate available resources and curriculum needs and consult reputable, professionally prepared selection tools/aids and other appropriate sources. The actual resource should be examined whenever possible.

A/C 3: Recognise different stages of child development through school, e.g. transition between key stages.

Pass Criteria:

Evidences an understanding of common transitions that children will experience during their education, for example: moving up to the next class or key stage.

Evidences knowledge of how a pupil's background and experiences can impact on their learning.

Understand the different learning styles and adapt approach accordingly depending on the children they are supporting.

Understand that pupils have different preferred ways of learning, and be able to adapt tasks to meet pupil's interests and needs

The ethos behind every school should be to ensure children to feel happy, safe and secure. The quicker they settle in, the more confident they become.

Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2

Moving from Infant to Junior school can create anxieties for some children and we understand that this can be a difficult adjustment.

The quicker children settle in to their new key stage, the more confident they become helping them to develop independence and enjoy their learning. There is a philosophy around '**little and often**'

This philosophy attached to transfer, makes children feel relaxed about their exciting move. Year 2 children should have frequent opportunities to spend short times in their new class – This could be once a month from December - leading up to a full day late in summer.

This means that, by the time the children join their new class, they know teachers and teaching assistants really well already! Children who join your school at times other than September should be made welcome to visit the school with their parents and are given the opportunity to meet some of the other children within their newly allocated class

A good way to support transitions is for all children have a 'Buddy', usually a Year 5 child, who looks out for them and offers a little extra support.

Key Stage 2 to Secondary

The transition of a child into secondary school is also of importance to staff working in your school and you should strive to prepare all children and equip them with the skill, knowledge and confidence to continue their learning journey.

Children may move on to a variety of schools – both selective and non-selective although the majority of children may transfer to the local secondary school.

Close liaison with all secondary schools ensures that all needs of older children are met accordingly. Year 6 teaching staff should always share their knowledge about each child with their future schools and provide detailed information in response to secondary school requests.

How can schools, teachers and teaching assistants improve transition?

There are five key realms of school life – sometimes referred to as transition “bridges” – in which the transition process can be improved:

1. Administrative.
2. Social and personal.
3. Curricular.
4. Pedagogic.
5. Managing learning.

The administrative bridge is concerned with the general management of the transition process, such as the formal liaison between secondary and primary, usually at a senior leadership level. In practice, this might take the form of the transfer of pupil records and achievement data, meetings with pupils and parents, and visits from headteachers, senior leaders and teachers.

The social and personal bridge is concerned with forging links between pupils/parents and their new school prior to and immediately after transfer. It is also concerned with the pupil induction process into their new school and might take the form of induction days, open evenings, school orientation activities, team-building days, taster classes, the production and issuing of prospectuses and booklets, and so on.

The curricular bridge is concerned with improving curriculum continuity between the primary and secondary phases of education by sharing plans that show what content is taught on either side of the transition. This involves teachers and teaching assistants, rather than senior leaders and might take the form of cross-phase teaching, the teaching of bridging units at the end of year 6 and start of year 7, summer schools, joint CPD networks and INSET days, the sharing of good practice and shared planning, and teacher exchanges.

The pedagogic bridge is concerned with establishing a shared understanding of how pupils are taught – as well as how they learn – in order to achieve a greater continuity in classroom practice and teaching. This is achieved by understanding differing teaching styles and skills, by engaging in shared CPD and teacher exchanges, and by primary and secondary teachers observing each other in practice.

The managing learning bridge is about ensuring that pupils are active participants, rather than passive observers, in the transition process. This is achieved by empowering pupils and their parents with information about achievement and empowering them with the confidence to articulate their learning needs in a new environment.

This might take the form of giving information to parents/pupils, providing pupils with learning portfolios and samples of achievements, and raising pupils’ awareness of their needs and talents by sharing and explaining data.

Additional support for vulnerable children

In addition to the transition process outlined above, a school might decide to appoint a teaching assistant for transition (TAT) to support vulnerable pupils.

What they might do:

Year 6: Spring term

The teaching assistant for transition (TAT) might visit their feeder primary schools with a member of the senior leadership team to meet staff, pupils and parents and outline their role and responsibilities, how the vulnerable pupils have been identified, what support will be offered and why. They might also meet year 6 teachers to take suggestions for further referrals. They might then establish their groups and book dates for the summer term.

Year 6: Summer term

The TAT might meet individual pupils in their primary school setting and take groups of pupils (six to eight) on visits to their secondary school on a number of occasions over the course of the summer term. These groups and visits may be mixed with children from other primary schools in order to help pupils make new friends.

The programme might be based around concerns and issues raised by the children and what practical strategies will support them in secondary school and may also include some generic coping strategies and soft skills.

Practical skills for survival might include:

- What is a friend/a real friend/making friends?
- Packing a bag the night before.
- Anti-bullying work.
- What would I do if...? (Problem-solving.)
- What is homework club?
- Being a good listener.
- Using your leisure time.
- How do I make my work more successful?

Year 7: Autumn and spring terms

The TAT continues to work with their identified children, listening to them and being responsive to their concerns.

How a pupil's background and experiences can impact on their learning.

As a teaching assistant it is vitally important that you know and understand the children who you are caring for and educating. Children from disadvantaged areas and from poorer families may have need of extra support and may demand more of your time. They may even resist participation in learning and put barriers in place.

Some children may have difficulty in overcoming barriers such as English not being their first language and these children will require an approach that overcomes this.

Some children experience poor lifestyles where parents are unable or unwilling to support their development. This sort of background can lead to learning difficulties, poor health and time off from school

Children have five areas of development, these are:

- cognitive (thinking and learning)
- social and emotional
- speech and language
- fine motor skills (small muscle control)
- gross motor skills (large muscle control)

Environmental Influences

A child's environment - for example, his family or school - plays a huge part in his or her development. Simply stated, a nurtured child will do better than a deprived child. That may seem like common sense, but you may not realise the little things that make a difference. Some assume that a rich privileged child will automatically thrive more than a child living in poverty. That is not always the case.

Some of the main factors that influence a child's development are his family, where he lives, and socio-economic status. These factors often cross over and blend as they are often related.