

A one-page guide to writing success criteria.

Success criteria must be SMART

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Timed (within a time period, or by a date)

...and should demonstrate impact (on teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils)

For action plans and the school improvement plan:

Success criteria should not 'maintain' or 'continue to': you are trying to improve something, not keep it the same.

Avoid generalisations, e.g. 'Staff are more aware', 'students are more confident'

Keep it simple. You can't measure everything, so don't try to. Pick out two or three key features and check up on those.

'Clearly demonstrates', 'effective questioning', 'have clear understanding', 'staff to monitor', 'Monitoring of pupil progress' – how will you measure these?

Focus on core purpose – outcomes for children. If it doesn't enhance life chances and achievement for pupils, then why are you doing it?

Use 'Milestones'. Success criteria dated to be specific to a time during the improvement, rather than at the end ('By the end of October', 'By the end of the academic year'). These describe and measure progress towards the final intended outcome.

Use language all can understand, particularly governors. Avoid technical jargon.

Success criteria can be both 'soft' (qualitative) and 'hard' (quantitative). Not every success criteria need to focus on SAT or exam statistics. Think instead about 'outcomes' for pupils.

For lesson plans:

3 core elements: Knowledge, skills and understanding.

Measure only what can be achieved over the lesson, or sequence of lessons. Many success criteria fail because they try to measure more than can realistically be achieved in the time, or too many things.

A success criteria is what you expect a child to know, understand or be able to do at the end of the lesson or sequence of lessons, which they did not know, did not understand, or could not do at the beginning (so your assessment needs to be up to scratch!)

Match the success criteria to ability. Don't use criteria for the most able to measure the success of the least able, or vice-versa.

Success criteria describe succinctly what you want pupils to learn during your lesson or sequence of lessons.

Focus on skills, NOT activity. Completing an activity is not a good success criteria.

Write the criteria simply, so they can be used for self, peer and TA assessment.

Avoid 'I can' statements as they are often generalised statements and not always specific enough to what you are trying to achieve.