

Learning tasks matched to ability and pace

Lesson planning:

Ideally

- A sequence of lessons rather than standalone
- One overall lesson topic/ subject/ Intent, varied for ability
- Different groups/ individuals start in different places/ have different activities/ have varied planning dependent on assessment in previous lesson in sequence
- Assessment is planned, so that teacher focuses on one group, TA focuses on one group, two groups are independent, and this rotates through the week, equally
- All pupils are challenged a little
- The lesson intent is realistic, so it does not try to teach too much
- Planning should be three-way – lower, middle, higher ability or not yet understood/ some understanding, good understanding of the concept (NB this is for practical/ workload reasons. Ideally, each pupil would be planned for individually)
- Recorded work. If a lesson is history, then the outcomes will be history knowledge, skills or understanding. If a pupil is writing about The Victorians, then why are they writing? Be clear about the purpose of what you are asking pupils to do
- Any and all pupils are asked questions

Lesson pace

- All pupils ready to start listening within three minutes of first pupil appearing at classroom door
- All pupils ready to listen within three seconds of being asked/ signalled by teacher
- TA and TA's group are quiet/ silent when teacher is addressing the class
- Teacher talks for no more than five minutes (ten minutes maximum) at lesson starter, or at any other point in the lesson
- No mention of behaviour
- Pupils move to independent work as soon as possible, and for as long as possible (NB 'independent' here means working together to complete a task, challenge or problem without adult support)
- Plenary develops learning using pupil example, rather than is an opportunity for pupils to talk about their work
- Challenge is appropriate to ability
- Teacher is not disturbed when working with a group for ten to twelve minutes, and with another groups for five minutes
- Expectations for work completed are realistic for each individual
- Good systems for entry and exit to the room
- Pupils are not disturbed by visitors to the room, but are keen to talk about their work
- Pupils understand why they are carrying out the lesson activity, what they are learning, and how this fits in the sequence of learning

- Teacher talks in a calm, measured voice, so pupils have the opportunity to assimilate what is being said
- Ability groupings enable pupils to challenge each other's thinking. This cannot be a one-sided relationship
- In a mastery approach, pupils must start at the most appropriate place, and not all pupils should start at the beginning of an activity
- Open-ended challenge works better than lists of set tasks
- Pupils must be moved on as soon as they have good KSU (knowledge/ skills/ understanding). This means teachers must check their work during a lesson, usually after they have worked with a group for ten minutes; or they can develop pupil / peer assessment techniques

Match to ability:

- Assessment in one lesson leads to planning for next, and groupings of pupils
- Well-planned, realistic success criteria, outlining learning intent clearly and enabling clear measurement of impact
- Groups are fluid
- Groups are mainly ability-based. Where they are mixed ability, this must be justified
- Teacher works initially with the group that have not fully understood the concept from the previous lesson in the sequence
- Where the lesson is the first in the sequence, the teacher relies on professional intuition to create initial groups (NB teacher intuition is preferable to a test or a 'cold task', as these do not tend to produce wholly accurate outcomes)
- For mastery lessons, the task should be varied, or pupils should start at appropriate points, or the lesson should be adjusted to suit the varying abilities of pupils in the class
- In other approaches, pupils may be asked to carry out different tasks, depending on their ability
- Lessons should only rarely be assessed by outcome
- Questions are matched to the ability of the pupil being asked
- The teacher should work with all pupils equally, as should the TA (unless assigned to a particular pupil). Where either finds they are working more with the lower ability group, this indicates that the task has not been planned well enough for the group to complete independently
- Behaviour in outstanding lessons is rarely if ever a problem – the interest and challenge of the work is so well matched, all pupils are motivated
- The teacher knows every pupil very well
- Not all pupils are expected to achieve all of the success criteria. What is the base knowledge/ understanding/ skill which is the minimum? What does challenge look like at every level? Which pupils are not yet ready to access this learning? Which are ready to move beyond?
- As a general rule, pupils should be pushed on to learn as much as they can. However, this knowledge/ skill/ understanding must be secure, and this is often achieved through need, familiarisation and repetition. How is this planned within the year and across year groups?

- In reading, for example, should pupils have new text or repeat text they have not read or understood properly?

Ideal lesson

- 3 minutes and all pupils ready to listen
- 5 minute introduction/ learning instruction
- Move to independent work/ teacher works with those who have not previously understood
- Teacher checks quickly for any misconceptions across the classroom
- Teacher works with specific group for ten to twelve minutes
- Teacher checks learning across all groups and moves pupils on
- Teacher works with same or different group for five minutes
- Plenary develops learning

In an outstanding lesson, if a pupil is asked 'Tell me about what you are learning?' they will answer: 'Last week we did this work, and you can see some on the working wall, and we went out to the school field to have a look at... That means that today I am working on ... with the rest of the table. Next week we will be looking at, and the work today means that ...'

What is meant by 'pace'?

A good pace is achieved if:

- All pupils are learning all of the time
- There are no hold-ups to the lesson, for example, explaining to all pupils what only some need to know; more able pupils starting a task at the beginning when they could start further through; behaviour is mentioned; pupils are compliant rather than exhibiting good behaviour for learning; pupils arrive late or go out during the lesson; teacher talks for too long; etc.
- Work is matched to pupils of all abilities, so that all are slightly challenged all of the time
- Learning is tightly planned and what pupils learn is inevitable
- The content is well-matched to the time available
- Planning is realistic
- Pupils understand why they are learning what they are and the route they are following in order to learn it/ the steps along the way
- Equipment work (e.g. whiteboard pens, IT, etc.)
- There is no, or very limited and well-planned use of workbooks or textbooks
- Learning is open-ended and based on solving problems collaboratively

Features of a good lesson plan:

- Match to past learning

- How learning will be varied to meet the needs of three ability groups
- The questions which might be asked to pupils in each group
- What the learning will be, with a brief outline of the activity
- How learning will be assessed
- The measures in place to check the impact of the teaching
- Adult roles
- Response appropriate to subject
- Match to future learning/ how this fits in the sequence of learning

There is no one best way to plan a lesson

