



Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study

Handbook for headteachers,
leading teachers and
subject leaders

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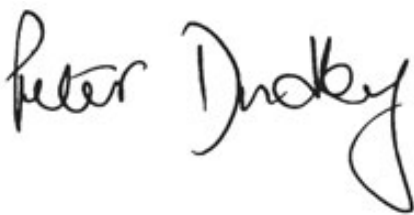
Foreword

The report 'How the world's best school systems come out on top' by Sir Michael Barber (McKinsey, Sept 2007) identifies some key features which the most successful systems share. A common feature in the area of continuing professional development was how all the systems managed to:

- encourage people who are focused on teaching and learning to become headteachers;
- ensure headteachers focus their energies and time on prioritising the improvement of teaching and learning;
- enable teachers to learn from each other – in real classrooms and with the children they have responsibility for teaching, developing classroom practices which demonstrably work, and innovating ways of improving them further. One of the three examples of this he cites is Lesson Study.

In his report on the teaching of mathematics in primary schools (May 2008) Sir Peter Williams identifies Lesson Study as a key professional learning model for improving mathematics teaching. Coaching is becoming increasingly well embedded within the work of LAs and schools, and through the work of National Strategies leading teachers and consultants. Lesson Study, which has its origins in East Asia, was introduced as one of the National Strategies Collaborative Classroom Professional Learning (CCPL) models in summer 2007.

This booklet draws on research carried out in England since 2003 and builds on the experiences of a two-year national pilot. Lesson Study works because it is a very clear deliberative process. It builds upon **joint assessment** of 'case pupils'. It sets out clearly how to use these assessments to assist in joint planning of **high impact pedagogical approaches** such as guided writing or talk for mathematics. These are **planned, taught, observed and jointly evaluated** by the Lesson Study group – focusing on the learning of the pupils they are responsible for teaching. The result is a shared view of how to personalise that teaching for 'real learners', and a widening repertoire of practices for the teachers involved. Used wisely, Lesson Study has the potential to build the bridge between 'assessment' and 'for learning'.



Pete Dudley
Director
National Strategies, Primary

Introduction

This booklet is a step-by-step guide on how to use **Lesson Study** to **develop** and **refine** teaching techniques.

The booklet contains information about:

1. getting Lesson Study going in school;
2. planning, teaching and analysing the study lesson;
3. involving pupils in the process;
4. suggestions for distilling what the participants have learned, how practice has been improved and how to pass it on to others.

Lesson Study is a professional learning process. It works because it focuses on the **learning** and **progress** made by children as their teachers develop specific pedagogic techniques designed to improve a particular aspect of teaching and learning that they have identified within their school.

Lesson Study is a model for collaborative classroom professional learning which embodies all the features of effective CPD; namely, high quality input followed by activity where:

- two or more teachers work together, developing practice in the classroom, focusing on the needs and learning of real pupils and trying to solve a teaching- or learning-based problem which is affecting pupils' progress;
- teachers are engaged in developing a teaching technique which is designed to improve a specific aspect of learning for identified pupils;
- teachers keep a record of what they learn and pass on the practice knowledge which they gain to others – for example, by coaching, leading a professional development meeting or providing a demonstration lesson.

Lesson Study has been used successfully in the UK to improve teaching techniques and pupil progress in core subjects in primary and secondary schools and to develop broader pedagogic approaches such as Assessment for Learning. During a Lesson Study cycle a small group of teachers (or even a pair) will:

- use the data they have gathered from day-to-day and periodic assessment (using the APP materials in the Primary Framework) to agree a focus for pupils' learning and progress;
- jointly identify a teaching technique to develop or improve the agreed area of focus, see page 6;
- identify three case pupils. Each should typify a group of learners in the class – for example high, middle or lower attaining in the strand being taught and developed.
- jointly plan a 'study lesson' which uses, develops and closely studies the effects of this new technique – while keeping in mind the three case pupils. (These are also known as research lessons; there can be a danger that people think study lessons are for conducting experiments rather than developing practice. They are definitely for developing practice.)
- teach and jointly observe the study lesson focusing on the case pupils' learning and progress. They may repeat and refine this over several lessons or teaching sequences. Not all these need to be observed study lessons.
- interview the case pupils to gain their insights into the study lesson;
- hold a post-lesson discussion analysing how the case pupils responded to the technique, what progress they made and what can be learned about the application of the technique – next time;

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- formally share the outcomes with a wider audience of other teachers – in a presentation, by demonstration or by coaching.

The remaining sections of this booklet provide guidance for each of these stages in turn. The guidance is drawn from what we know about how Lesson Study has worked in other schools.

Two final sections provide ideas on how school leaders can:

- create time for Lesson Study and build it into school systems;
- use leading teachers to support and develop the professional learning from Lesson Study, and use the Lesson Study model as a platform for in-school coaching.

Following this CPD we will ask you to carry out one Lesson Study cycle in your school focusing on one of the following:

- developing guided writing in Year 1, 3 or 5;
- developing number concepts or mental calculation using guided practice in Year 1,3 or 5.

The choice of year group, subject and strand will depend on the strengths and weaknesses evident in your school.

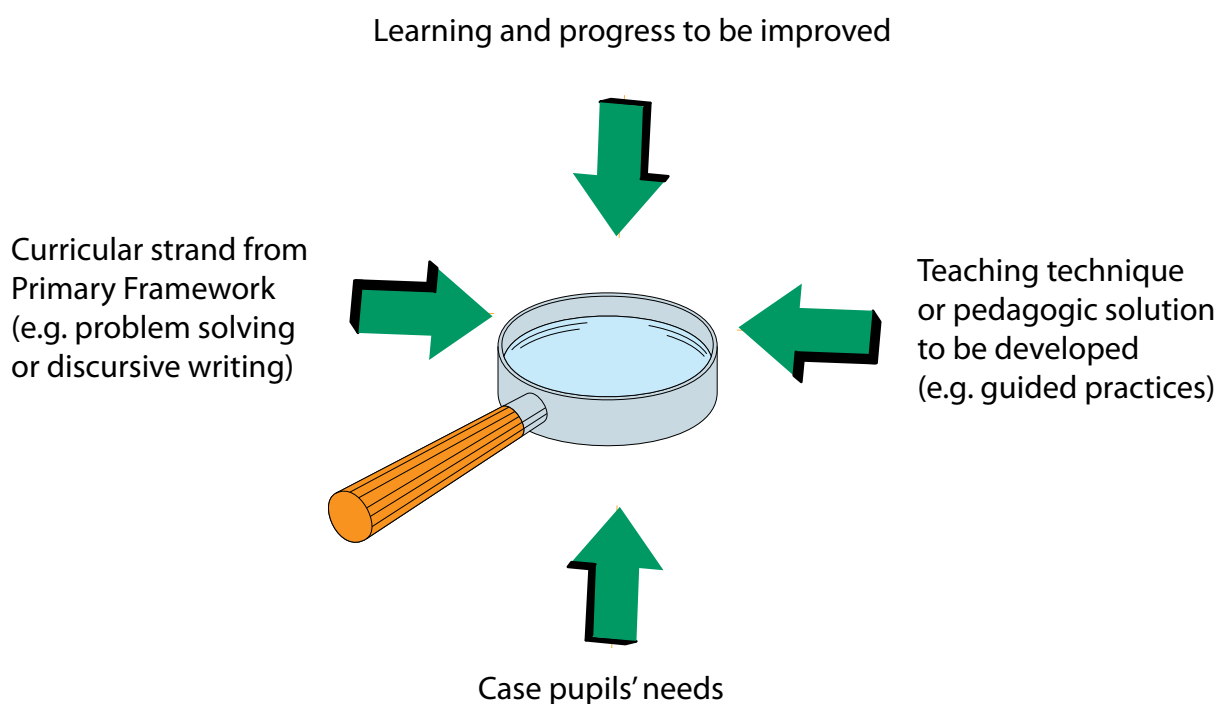
Getting Lesson Study going in school



What has worked well	Notes
<p>Choose a group of teachers – three works well – who are likely to enjoy the challenge of starting up a new professional learning approach in the school. We know Lesson Study works well when there is at least one member of the senior team involved and the teachers have a mix of teaching experience.</p> <p>Hold a meeting with them to set out expectations and ground rules which enable people to feel free to take risks and not feel they are under scrutiny. In a Lesson Study all members of the group are of equal status – as professional learners.</p> <p>Give them some parameters which are based on identified school or class/year group needs. (For example, to develop boys' writing using shared and guided techniques.)</p> <p>Use common formats for planning, observation or analysis. (Examples you can use are included in this booklet.)</p> <p>Give the teachers dedicated time (an hour at least) to plan the first study lesson.</p> <p>Protect their time on the day of the study lesson and make sure they can have a post-lesson discussion within a day or so of carrying out the study lesson.</p> <p>Take an active interest in how the process is going.</p> <p>Make sure they have dedicated opportunities to share what they have developed with other colleagues – for example, a staff meeting, or a coaching opportunity.</p> <p>Use these members of the group as Lesson Study champions in the school to convene and develop the next Lesson Study groups.</p>	

Planning the first study lesson and identifying the 'case pupils'

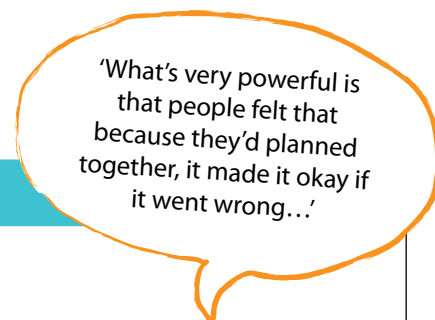
Determining your Lesson Study focus



'Focusing down on the case pupils has enabled a number of really important things to be revealed'

What has worked	Notes
<p>Agree which class you will conduct the first study lesson in and then identify three pupils who reflect different groups of learners in the class. They should be pupils who are making good, average or below average progress in the lesson focus strand – for example, writing, or mental calculation.</p> <p>Agree the level each pupil is working at in the focus strand and whether they are working at the lower, secure or high points in the range of the National Curriculum (NC) level. You may find it useful to refer to Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) materials on the Primary Framework website.</p> <p>Write out in full exactly what you want each pupil to be able to do by the end of the teaching sequence in relation to the focus strand and what they will do in the study lesson to show they are on track for this. (You can use the planner on page 9.)</p> <p>Make sure you have the Primary Framework to hand and that you are all familiar with the relevant guidance – for example, on progression in objectives, or on using teaching sequences.</p> <p>Plan each stage of the lesson with particular attention to the sequence where you will use the teaching technique you are refining or planning. Note down what you hope the response of each case pupil will be. What will each pupil do at this point to evidence their progress?</p> <p>Identify as carefully as you can what resources will be used and how, what you will write on the board, and indicate timings for the lesson stages.</p> <p>Agree which teacher will focus their observations on which case pupil(s). It helps to have some rules to ensure you don't all gather data about two pupils and miss the third.</p> <p>A Lesson Study planner is provided on page 9. It should be enlarged to A3 for use. Each Lesson Study group member should have a copy at the start of the lesson, because it also serves as an observation annotation sheet and the basis for the post-lesson discussion.</p>	<p>Case pupil A</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Current approximate NC level in writing Low / Secure / High</p> <p>Success criterion for this focus:</p> <p>By the end of the sequence Pupil A will... (describe what they will do to demonstrate progress in the identified aspect of writing in the lesson)</p> <p>Additional notes:</p>

Teaching the first study lesson



What works	Notes
<p>Take real care over the joint assessment of the stages at which the three case pupils are working. You can make reference to the APP materials on the Primary Framework (January 2008) to help in making judgements. It is really important that the group clearly identifies what they want each pupil to be able to do in the focus strand by the end of the lesson, and what they will be looking for as evidence of this.</p> <p>Because the study lesson is jointly planned, it is jointly owned by the group. This means the focus for the observers is less on the teacher and more on the learners – the case pupils. Teachers should try to start each observation as if 'zooming in' on the case pupil and then 'panning back' to allow a bigger group or the whole class to come into frame.</p> <p>Observers should try to capture the case pupils' responses at different points in the lesson – and how they match or differ from what was predicted at that stage. Note also any critical incidents. If there is a common pattern (e.g. all the case pupils misunderstand something in the same way), note it in the right-hand column.</p> <p>Note the time against each annotation if you can.</p> <p>At the conclusion, look for the evidence of progress for each pupil against what was planned and the extent to which goals have been achieved. What are key points for the next lesson for the case pupils, their groups or the class? What might you want to ask them in their post-lesson interview? Jot this down in 'initial thoughts' at the bottom of the planner sheet.</p>	

Study Lesson planning, observation and discussion sheet

Subject: _____ Focus: _____ Strand _____ Year group: _____ Teacher/observer: _____

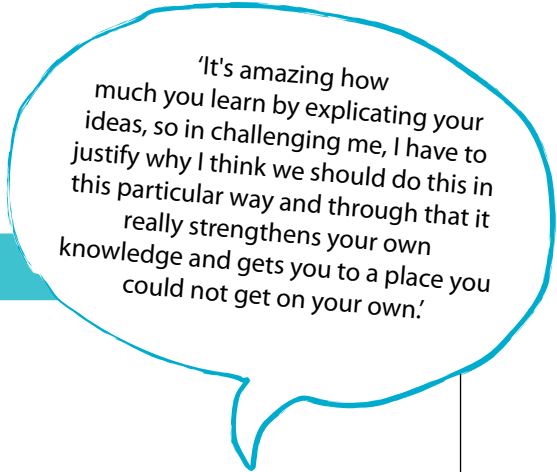
What is this study lesson aiming to teach? <i>It may be a section of a longer teaching sequence.</i> What teaching technique is the study lesson aiming to develop? <i>We are improving...</i>			
Current attainment and success criteria <i>Describe what you are looking for from the pupils by the end of the lesson in the identified aspect</i>	Case pupil A Current approximate NC Level in writing Low / Secure / High (delete) Success criterion for this focus	Case pupil B Current approximate NC Level in writing Low / Secure / High (delete) Success criterion for this focus	Case pupil C Current approximate NC Level in writing Low / Secure / High (delete) Success criterion for this focus
	How you hope case pupil(s) A will respond	How you hope case pupil(s) B will respond	How you hope case pupil(s) C will respond
Stage of lesson sequence	How they are observed to respond	How they are observed to respond	How they are observed to respond
Stage: <i>(approximate time)</i>			
Stage: <i>(approximate time)</i>			
Final stage: <i>(approximate time)</i>			
What were the case pupils able to do? (What progress have they made, and how do you know?)			
Initial thoughts			

Interviewing case pupils after the lesson



What works	Notes
<p>In the UK, Lesson Study groups often interview the case pupils after the study lesson to get their perspectives on what worked for them, what they felt they learned, and how they think the lesson could be changed if it were taught again to another class in order to make it work even better.</p> <p>The interview should be short (no more than 5 minutes) and can be done with all the case pupils in a group, or individually.</p> <p>Try to conduct the post-lesson pupil interview at the first opportunity – ideally at the end of the lesson.</p> <p>Try to capture some of the pupils' exact words in your notes.</p> <p>Some people conduct the post-lesson pupil interview with pupils other than the case pupils but who are in the same three learner groups. This can help triangulate findings – but it can also complicate the data set.</p>	
Suggested questions for a post-lesson interview with the case pupils	
<p>What did you enjoy most about that lesson?</p> <p>What did you learn? (What can you do now that you could not do before?)</p> <p>What can you do better? How is it better?)</p> <p>What aspect of the teaching worked best for you?</p> <p>If the same lesson is being taught to another group, what would you change? Why would you change that aspect?</p>	

The post-study lesson discussion



'It's amazing how much you learn by explicating your ideas, so in challenging me, I have to justify why I think we should do this in this particular way and through that it really strengthens your own knowledge and gets you to a place you could not get on your own.'

What works	Notes
<p>Make sure the group can meet for at least 45 minutes as soon after the study lesson as possible. If you go beyond 36 hours much is lost.</p> <p>One person should be chosen to chair the discussion and to make sure that the key points are recorded.</p> <p>Someone else should be chosen to keep a record of what was agreed. They can use the proforma on page 12 for recording the post-lesson discussion.</p> <p>The chairperson should ensure that all points made or questions asked should start with an observation about one of the case pupils. For example, <i>'At that point I observed pupil B writing 'xx xxxx xx' on his own. This suggested to me that...'</i> Or, <i>'When the guided session began pupil A moved to sit with (pupil); I wonder if...'</i> This is an important feature of Lesson Study, as it keeps the focus on the learning before moving to the teaching.</p> <p>All study group members should contribute. The chairperson should keep the discussion focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● what was planned for each pupil to learn; ● what actually happened; ● what accounts for any differences between these; ● how much progress each pupil made; ● what aspects of the teaching technique could be adjusted to improve the progress of each pupil; ● what you will do next time you use this teaching approach; ● what you will not repeat another time; ● what is worth sharing with colleagues. <p>Then – agree what your next steps should be as a Lesson Study group. What will you focus on developing next time?</p> <p>Sign and date the record.</p> <p>Keep the notes in a professional learning log in the staffroom.</p>	

Post-lesson discussion record			
	Case pupil A	Case pupil B	Case pupil C
What progress did each pupil make? Was this enough? What about others in the group of learners they typify?			
How did the technique being developed help or hinder? (Maybe a bit of both.) What surprises were there?			
What aspect(s) of the teaching technique could be adjusted next time to improve the progress of each pupil?			
What techniques should we try next time?			

Initials Date

Formally sharing the outcomes with others

What works	Notes
<p>Arrange an opportunity ahead of the Lesson Study for the group to share with colleagues what they have done, learned and refined – especially in the key teaching technique being developed. If people know in advance that they will have to share their findings with others, then they will bear this in mind throughout the proceedings. This helps the Lesson Study group keep their thinking and their findings clear, more useable and replicable by others.</p> <p>Video clips of the study lessons and digital photos embedded in PowerPoint presentations are a popular way of conveying lesson practice and processes. (You will need to ensure you have a school policy in place on the use of video and photos.)</p> <p>Arrange opportunities for members of the Lesson Study group to work with other teachers in order to help coach the pedagogic technique they have evolved, adapted or refined.</p> <p>Remember that articulating and explaining practice and making it visible to others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● helps those learning from their peers improve their practice; ● improves the performance of the person doing the explaining or coaching. This is because the process makes visible what is often tacit knowledge of practice – which teachers use but never express. Articulating this helps them become more aware of their knowledge themselves and therefore more able to improve it further. <p>Celebrate and value what has been learned and shared.</p> <p>Create a ‘learning wall’ in the staffroom where a Lesson Study group can display their work – photos, notes, observations, discussion outcomes, pupil interviews and tentative conclusions. This creates staffroom talk about professional learning long after the formal sharing is over.</p>	<div data-bbox="991 300 1525 651" style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>‘Because the typical teacher is extremely busy, they want to see that what you’re putting forward is going to be of use to them and so little snippets with a video are really helpful for that.’</p> </div>

Creating time for Lesson Study and building it into school systems

'What I've been surprised and really pleased about I think is that people who normally close the door and get on with what they do in a lesson, have suddenly thought, "Oh hang on, this is good for me, within my lesson. It's good for the kids within my lesson, it's practical, I'm doing something". And they've really got on board. And that's been remarkable in our place.'

What works	Notes
<p>Lesson Study is very good value for money if you really create the opportunity for its outcomes to feed into the practices of those involved in the study and others in the school.</p> <p>Some headteachers have created dedicated professional learning time when Lesson Study groups can plan and analyse their lessons; this is time normally allocated to professional development and management.</p> <p>Judicious use of PPA time, specialist teaching time, staggered timetables or break times and any other means which allow some teachers to be free to talk together, can create opportunities for planning or post-lesson discussion which do not always demand supply cover.</p> <p>Some headteachers have built Lesson Study into their school teaching and learning policy by creating a staff professional learning policy. This gives teachers and others entitlement to professional learning and CPD opportunities which include the models now recognised as having most impact on classroom practice. (See page 15.)</p> <p>One example of the productive linking of Lesson Study with performance management was created by treating participation in Lesson Study and sharing of the outcomes with colleagues as a component of performance management. Staff involved felt that with Lesson Study they improved areas where they felt less confident, rather than 'playing safe' in areas of relative teaching strength.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that it is important to keep Lesson Study separate from performance monitoring.</p> <p>Some Lesson Study groups demonstrate the techniques they develop to other teachers in a public study lesson. Here children stay behind after school and the lesson is taught in the hall in front of an invited audience from neighbouring schools. A lively discussion follows.</p>	

Using leading teachers to support and develop the professional learning from Lesson Study and using the Lesson Study model as a platform for in-school coaching

What works	Notes
<p>Leading teachers or consultants can support the Lesson Study process if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demonstrate a technique (such as shared or guided writing) in the school immediately prior to a Lesson Study cycle beginning; ● join a Lesson Study group as they plan a study lesson and contribute ideas and suggestions; ● sit with a Lesson Study group and discuss the study lesson they have prepared – contributing to suggestions about how the pedagogic technique could be developed; ● join a study lesson as an observer (with equal status) and participate in the post-lesson pupil interview and discussion. Subject leaders can play a similar role – especially if they have participated in a Lesson Study cycle themselves and become a champion in school. <p>Additional interest and value can be created around Lesson Study if it is used by teachers to develop a portfolio to evidence particular teaching standards, or to contribute towards professional or academic qualification or recognition.</p> <p>When your teachers have developed some practice which has had a clear impact on learning and progress of pupils and which you think others would be interested in, you can log the practice as a case-led study at:</p> <p>http://whatworkswell.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/</p> <p>This is a website designed to help practitioners search for and share practice in classrooms and school improvement which have worked in one place and could work elsewhere.</p>	

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