

Supporting transition

Asima Qureshi and James Petrucco offer ideas around supporting the transitions between year groups and stages of schooling



Children taking part in a transition event

Meadowbrook Primary School has explored the use of TAPS Focused Assessment to support transition, initially for transfer to secondary school and now for transition from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7). This article will consider an example of a secondary transition project and discuss the potential of the use of TAPS resources to support transition in other year groups.

Using TAPS Focused Assessments

Teachers were asked to complete a TAPS Focused Assessment with their classes and then collect examples of pupils' work to bring to a staff meeting aimed at supporting moderation discussions. The advantage of using Focused Assessments is that a specific skill can be focused upon, which allows teachers to see who has 'got it' by the end of the lesson, together with helping to define the next step for teaching, thus providing information for

both summative and formative assessment.

Teachers have commented that: *'Focused Assessments give a clear indication to support future planning'* *'Using Focused Assessments helps us to integrate assessment within a topic'*.

Using Focused Assessments to support transfer to secondary

In July 2016, Focused Assessments were used as part of a transition project for Year 6 (age 11) to Year 7 (age 12) at Meadowbrook Primary School in Bradley Stoke, South Gloucestershire (part of the Olympus Academy Trust – OAT). The transition project built on previous transition projects: for example, by Martin Braund at the University of York (Braund, 2008).

The aims of this project were to:

- Improve progression and continuity from Year 6 to Year 7;
- Develop formative assessment and the teaching of 'working scientifically';
- Allow collaboration between

secondary and primary teachers to create better cross-phase partnerships with primary schools (Ofsted, 2015); and

- Improve cross-curricular links.

Since many of the chemistry topics within the English National Curriculum are often completed in Year 5 (age 10), this project focused on consolidating and developing Year 6 children's working scientifically skills within a *chemistry* context. Children undertook six chemistry investigations, which were jointly planned with the secondary teacher and set out as Focused Assessments (see Table 1). Five of these were taught by a primary school teacher and one by a secondary teacher at the local secondary school. The assessments also included a context for the investigation and experiments introduced pupils to both Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) Chemistry Knowledge and Working Scientifically objectives.

Each Focused Assessment also had a literacy focus (e.g. Box 1) supported by the project being based around the book *Itch* by Simon Mayo, which describes a boy who has made it his mission to collect elements of the periodic table. This provided a context and a literary audience for the Focused Assessment lessons; for example, in Box 1, the letter sets up an investigation regarding the factors that affect how quickly salt dissolves in water.

Box 1 To write an explanation and use causal connectives

Dear Students,
Itch has done some research on salt and found out that it is made of the elements Sodium and Chlorine. He wants to investigate which factors affect how quickly salt dissolves into water. The factors he will look at are water temperature and stirring. Can you help him?

Jack

Outcomes of the project:

- Collaborative planning and reciprocal visits ensured that there was consistency in teaching between different schools and a shared understanding of progression – a key part of the TAPS pyramid.
- Allowed teachers to assess working scientifically skills and conceptual knowledge together in one lesson.
- The TAPS Focused Assessment planning structure provided teachers

Table 1
Our chemistry
Focused
Assessment
lessons

Activity	Science focus	Literacy link
Making bath bombs – a chemical reaction that produces a gas	To observe what happens when an acid and alkali interact	To write an explanation
Dissolving salt – investigate which factors affect how quickly salt dissolves in water	To record data and results using tables To make predictions using scientific knowledge and understanding	To write a set of instructions for Itch's cousin Jack on how to do this investigation
Raising hands – combine baking soda and vinegar (with rubber glove on top)	To use appropriate scientific language and ideas to explain, evaluate and communicate their methods and findings	To write an explanation To use scientific vocabulary
Hardness of rocks	To interpret information in a table	To identify if evidence supports the statement
Periodic table (led by secondary teacher)	To investigate the varying physical and chemical properties of different elements using flame tests	Finding things out using a wide range of secondary sources of information.
Burning candles – How will changing the size of a beaker affect the time it takes for the candle to go out?	Planning a scientific enquiry to answer a question, recognising and controlling variables.	To write an explanation

with a list of questions to ask pupils and assessment indicators.

● Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11) and Key Stage 3 teachers moderated examples of children's work, which encouraged collaboration – another key part of the TAPS pyramid monitoring layer.

Potential for smoothing the transition from EYFS to Year 1 (age 5-6)

As a teacher in Reception currently and previously in Year 1, I can say that moving from the EYFS Development Matters curriculum (2012) in Reception (age 4-5) to the Science National Curriculum in Year 1 can be a giant leap for some children and to ensure this happens successfully is a constant conversation in primary schools. There are many different ideas as to how this should be achieved and I have outlined below the thoughts, ideas and reasoning for some of the decisions.

To implement the Development Matters curriculum successfully in Reception, children learn best when they 'do', when they discover and explore. Children need the chance to go out and experience the world in order for them to understand it and, in Reception, the role of the teacher is to expose children to prompts to promote discussion in order to help them formulate their ideas of what they see around them.

When moving on to the National Curriculum, the role of the Year 1 teacher is also to provide experiences in a fun, practical, play-based way, mirroring the Reception classroom environment, but also to provide more formal opportunities to record ideas, record results and draw conclusions. This can be achieved by working with small groups of children to develop their working scientifically skills, building on the practical play that

they have experienced. This will help the children to think more formally about the science they do.

For example, when conducting an ice balloon activity with a Reception class, the teacher has to carefully plan and think about how to organise the class and activity for the children to access. Early on in the Reception year, it might be more appropriate to have the activity accessible to children through continuous provision, for children to explore the ice balloons if they choose. Alternatively, if the teacher would like to actively assess specific children, organising them into groups to do this adult-led activity may be more appropriate. To aid transition into Year 1, where whole class teaching will increasingly be the expectation, the ice balloons could be explored as a whole class, passing the ice balloon around the circle with children taking turns to describe it, as we have written in the TAPS focused task. This would ensure that all children will be exposed to the scientific concepts taught, but the teacher would struggle to assess every child in this way.

There is some debate as to when more formal science should begin and this could be determined by the children being taught. Some teachers think that, by the end of Reception, children should be experiencing more formal education and lessons to prepare them for Year 1 and this can work if there are children mature enough to apply themselves to it. This exposing to science can help to set the expectation of what science is like the following year and give the children a firm foundation to start with. However, other teachers expect that this period of transition happens at the beginning of Year 1, as many children will still be getting used to working in a more formal Year 1 environment, so a period of time

at the beginning of the year to settle them in is more useful to help children to understand the new expectations put upon them. It is worth noting that good Reception and Year 1 teachers will have had transition conversations to determine where their children are, to best determine how the beginning of Year 1 should look; therefore, this could potentially differ from year to year, or indeed from child to child from the same cohort of children.

Next steps

At Meadowbrook Primary School, we use the TAPS Focused Assessments to support both our in-class assessments and discussion between phases and schools. We are creating our own Focused Assessments, which include engineering and other cross-curricular links. We would like to continue to develop dialogue between phases by planning and creating opportunities for discussing pupil outcomes together.

References

Braund, M. (2008) *Starting Science ... Again?* London: Sage.
 DfE (2012) *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*. London: Department for Education.
 Mayo, S. (2012) *Itch*. Croydon: Random House.
 Ofsted (2015) *Key Stage 3: the wasted years?* Manchester: Ofsted.



Asima Qureshi and James Petrucco are Science Subject Leaders and class teachers at Meadowbrook Primary School, Bradley Stoke, South Gloucestershire.

See Asima explain more about the *Itch* project at: <http://tinyurl.com/TAPSmeadowbrook>

