# St Louise's Comprehensive College
Planning and Developing an Integrated Approach to Assessment

## Introduction

St Louise's Comprehensive College is a non-selective girls' school with over 1500 pupils. This case study highlights some of the processes involved in planning and developing an Assessment for Learning (AfL) model that supports an integrated approach to assessing subject knowledge and understanding, Thinking Skills, and Communication Skills. It also illustrates how assessment has been developed as an integral part of a Key Stage 3 curriculum that promotes connected learning through a thematic approach. The aim is to give pupils a more relevant and coherent learning experience. This is the first school year (2011/2012) when all Year 8, 9, and 10 classes are following the new connected, pupil-centred curriculum.

## Developing the Curriculum to Promote Connected Learning

In 2008 the school established a Quality Learning and Teaching Team (QLTT) with representation from all departments. The team aimed to promote a whole-school approach to curriculum and assessment planning and development. A research partner from Queen's University, Belfast supported the work of the QLTT.

The initial development focus for the QLTT was informed by a staff survey and an evaluation of a connected learning unit of work, involving Drama, English, Home Economics and Science. The survey and evaluation highlighted staff concerns about aspects of assessment such as:

- over reliance on summative assessment and grades;
- consistency of standards across subjects;
- the impact of assessment on quality learning and teaching; and
- the limited evidence of real cross-departmental planning and therefore the limited opportunities for connected learning.

In response to these findings, the QLTT conducted a comprehensive review of the statutory requirements for the Northern Ireland Curriculum and accompanying guidance materials as a first step towards developing a connected, pupil-centred curriculum and an integrated approach to assessment.

To promote greater learning connections between subjects it was decided to design and deliver most of the curriculum through three enquiry-based, thematic units for each year of Key Stage 3 as shown in Table 1.

## Table 1 Key Stage 3 Thematic Units

| When developed | Key Stage 3 Connecting Learning: Thematic Units | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Individual** | **Society** | **Economy and Environment** |
| Year 8 2008/09 | Who am I? | All Together Now | Your Health is Your Wealth – Healthy Living |
| Year 9 2009/10 | You and Me – Us | Going Green | Healthy Mind, Healthy Body |
| Year 10 2010/11 | Those Around Us | Key Topics from Minimum Requirements | International Dimension – Our World – Your World |

The themes are aligned to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and designed to help pupils make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. The themes, designed for Year 8 in particular, focus on helping pupils to become familiar with their new school and surroundings.

In 2008 all departments began the development process by agreeing on a shared focus of enquiry as the basis for each thematic unit, taking account of key elements of the curriculum.

## Concept maps

To ensure that all teachers at Key Stage 3 are aware of what is being covered in different subjects, each department produced a concept map. This sets out the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, Thinking Skills and Cross-Curricular Skills, and the focus for assessment.

The departmental overviews or concept maps are collated, to produce a Key Stage 3 school plan, and shared across all departments. This means that every teacher is aware of what is being taught and assessed in different subjects. This enables teachers to make learning connections that they might not have previously been aware of, enabling pupils to make connections across subjects (Appendix A).

## Planning and Developing an Integrated Approach to Assessment

The focus for assessment is planned at the outset, alongside learning and teaching. Designing worthwhile and challenging assessment tasks is central to the planning and development process. These assessment tasks are integrated into 'stepped' and 'overall' learning opportunities, building towards a significant assessed outcome (known as an overall Learning Opportunity) on a monthly basis. Setting a significant assessment challenge makes it easier to plan for necessary steps along the learning journey over a 10–12 week period, so that students are given differentiated learning opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop specific Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Cross-Curricular Skills.

## Subject schemes of work

Each department develops individual concept maps into detailed schemes of work (Appendix B) that identify Stepped Learning Opportunities for classroom activities and home learning tasks, building in AfL strategies.

## Assessing Pupils Using a Progression Matrix

Teachers assess pupils at the end of each unit of work (every four to five weeks). Pupils are assessed against the assessment criteria in the Integrated Progression Matrix (Appendix C).

The matrix is used across all departments in the school at KS3 to help plan for challenge and assess with greater consistency across departments. In line with *Every School a Good School* and the new *Count, Read: Succeed*, the integrated framework has also emphasised the opportunity for the ongoing development of Literacy and Numeracy across the curriculum. It facilitates more informed professional dialogue across subject departments as a result of an increased understanding and recognition of expectations and progression in Thinking and Communication (which includes consideration of all aspects of Communication: reading, writing, talking and listening) Using Mathematics and Using ICT. It is planned to try to develop the matrix into a pupil-friendly format to give pupils a better understanding of what making progress means.

## Recording of Progress and Feedback

Pupils are given detailed feedback on what they have done well, their focus for improvement and how to make that improvement. Their work is awarded a level (between three and seven) which is recorded on Assessment Manager. Feedback to pupils is comment only and non-numerical. It is based around pupil's individual targets (see below). Pupils are told whether they are 'On Target', 'Above Target' or 'Progressing towards Target'.

## Target Setting

Pupil targets are set using the MidYIS (Middle Years Information System) test at the beginning of Year 8. This is used to predict the level each pupil is expected to achieve for each subject at KS3. At the beginning of Year 8, pupils are given an individual target for each area of learning. These targets are continuously reviewed against internal outcomes from ongoing assessments and reset where necessary.

## Monitoring Progress and Raising Achievement

Targets are monitored by the subject teacher and year leaders of learning, on an ongoing basis, to ensure that pupils are making progress. Leaders of learning meet regularly with the vice principal (curriculum) to identify underachievement and provide monthly progress updates.

The monitoring process is helped by the traffic light system (green/amber/red). Where a pupil is continuously On Target (amber) targets are re-adjusted upwards to motivate and encourage the pupil. Where a pupil is identified as needing help or support (red), an intervention programme of individual support is put in place. This begins with an action plan identifying the support needed at individual subject level. It may include support with reading, writing and/or numeracy, as well as support from the SENCO or outside agencies. If a pupil continuously exceeds his or her targets, the teacher works with the pupil to set more challenging tasks and learning targets.

## Informing Parents

Parents are informed of the Assessment for Learning process in a range of ways. A newly planned induction programme for parents and their daughters will take place in September 2012. At the beginning of each subsequent academic year, an information/parents' evening also focuses on achievement.

Reporting takes place three times a year. Year 8 pupils receive their first progress update at the end of October. At Christmas and in March, each pupil receives a report that shows whether they are On Target, Above Target or Progressing towards Target. In June the report includes detailed comments on progress in each subject.

## Making Effective Use of Data

As part of its ongoing self-evaluation process, the school makes effective use of quantitative and qualitative data to inform development planning and school improvement. This includes analysing quantitative assessment data generated by Middle Year Information System (MidYIS) scores to determine the value added for all Areas of Learning at Key Stage 3.

Qualitative data is gathered from a range of sources, for example 'Book Looks' are used to examine the quality of pupil work in and across departments and to monitor progression within and between year groups. Teacher surveys are used to evaluate educational initiatives, and teaching, learning and assessment policy and practice. Pupil surveys and focus group interviews provide a valuable insight about the pupils' views of their learning experience.

## Concluding Thoughts

We are on a constant journey of ongoing improvement to refine and embed the revised curriculum and to develop greater consistency, comparability and creativity in assessment practices internally. We also aim to ensure progression from KS2 to KS3 by engaging with our primary feeder school partners.

Our teachers point to evidence that the connected curriculum is working in terms of raised awareness of skills, enhanced pupil engagement and enjoyment. Using the integrated matrix of level descriptors to create success/assessment criteria enables pupils to better understand how they are being assessed through a task. Alongside other AfL strategies, this helps pupils to know where they are in their learning, where they are going, and how they are going to get there.

At the end of this academic year St Louise's will take part in a Quality Audit process that allows us to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the Curriculum Planning and Learning and Teaching Process. Alongside this the QLTT are working on a Learning and Teaching manual for staff that maps the whole school curriculum and assessment journey and, at departmental level, the individual subject curriculum and assessment journey. This manual will then provide a model for a pupil/parent friendly manual on the learning journey.

As this process continues, pupils and parents will become more involved in assessing the quality of pupil experience as well as outcomes. St Louise's is currently involved in two projects that emphasise consultation and co-constructing learning with pupils:

- Research Lesson Study – a joint project with QUB/GTCNI; and
- Consulting Pupils on Assessment for Learning through QUB.

The learning from these two projects will hopefully allow pupils to develop as co-constructors in the learning process.

## Appendix A

### Concept Map
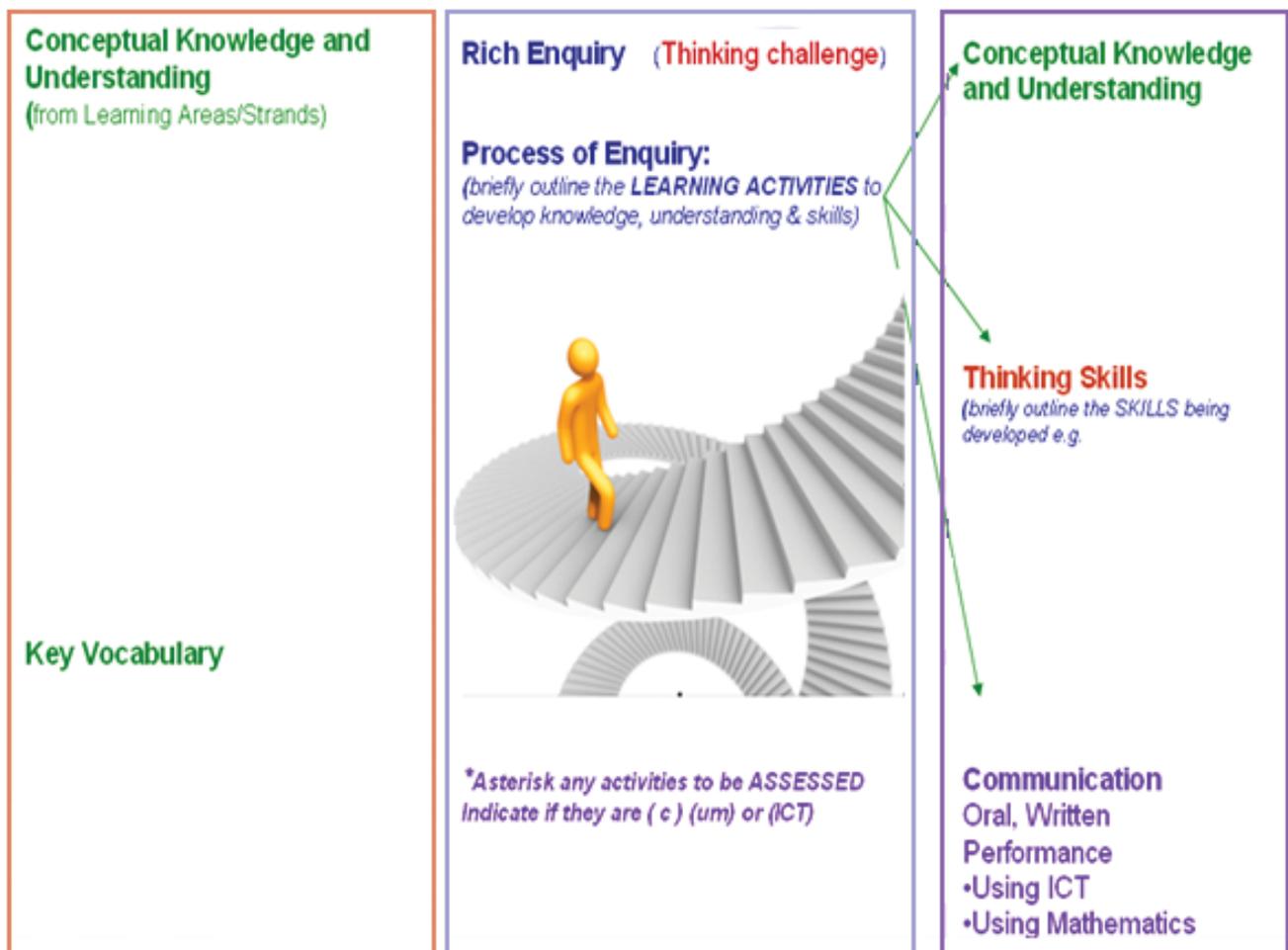


(Source: *Class Dynamics*)

Column 1:    shows the content/concepts/thinking focus of the work.

Column 2:    indicates the method of enquiry and enquiry-based learning through the development of Thinking and the extension of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Cross-Curricular Skills.

Column 3:    shows the overall purpose/outcome/assessment of the work, including the stepped learning opportunities to achieve intended outcomes.

## Appendix B

### Scheme of Work

**Learning Intention**
- Analyse a moving image

| Success Criteria | Learning and Teaching Experiences Strategies and Activities | AFL Opportunities | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Making a Presentation**<br><br>**I must:**<br>✓ Use an appropriate voice **classroom voice** –slowly, loudly, clearly.<br>✓ Make eye contact with audience – don't just read notes<br>✓ Use appropriate vocabulary<br><br>**Researching a topic**<br>**I must:**<br>✓ Identify key areas you need to locate information on.<br>✓ Use a search engine to carry out a complex search<br>✓ Identify factual information & opinions in your findings<br>✓ Evaluate the reliability / usefulness of your sources<br>✓ Write up notes using own words to show understanding | **Stage 2 (i) Narrative Structure**<br>Introduce pupils to narrative structure:<br>Exposition/Complication/Conflict/Resolution by asking pupils to sort the terms in chronological order. R6 Pupils should then sort and classify the opening pages of the novel into the four elements of narrative structure.R7<br>Instruct pupils to adopt the role of a film director. In groups pupils must create a 6- 8 frame storyboard for the opening scene of a film version of Great Expectations. The storyboard should incorporate the four elements of narrative structure. Pupils must make ideas real by experimenting with different designs when creating a storyboardR8.<br>Pupils should present their storyboards to the rest of the class.<br>**Stage 2 (ii)**<br>Introduce pupils to a variety of camera shots and discuss impact of the various shots.<br>Pupils should then go back and individually create a storyboard including references to camera shots.<br>Peer assess storyboards applying the agreed success criteria<br><br>Watch the opening scene of Great Expectations considering factors such as sound, type of shot, atmosphere. In groups discuss the scene and together complete the table. R9. Allow pupils to watch the opening scene again and provide them with completed correct table of shots.<br>Pupils should then analyse the effectiveness opening scene, using R10 as a prompt.<br>Share with partner completed analysis and compare with novel extract.<br><br>Pupils should create a thought shower about Charles Dickens. Using R10 as a framework in pairs pupils should research Charles Dickens.<br><br>TSPC: Managing Information   Working with Others   Self Management<br>Being Creative   Problem Solving & Decision Making<br>CCS: Communication   Numeracy   ICT | **S.L.O 4 Storyboard**<br>*Success Criteria:*<br>✓ Include main elements of narrative structure ¿<br>✓ Appropriate setting<br>✓ Interesting costume<br>✓ Interesting props<br>✓ Detailed accompanying explanatory notes including reference to camera shots<br><br>**Learning Opportunity 6 Great Expectations Test**<br><br>**Success Criteria:**<br>✓ Show an understanding of the plot<br>✓ Show an understanding of writer's craft<br>✓ Show an understanding of the characters<br>✓ Show an understanding of the research you have completed<br>✓ Be creative (when appropriate)<br>✓ Answer each question in detail<br>✓ Proof read and edit your work | R.6 Narrative Structure Terms<br><br>R.7 Narrative Structure Table<br><br>R8 Storyboard Template<br><br>R9 Camera Shots |

## Appendix C
## Integrated Progression in Knowledge and Understanding Thinking and Communication

| Nature of task<br>*Level of challenge*<br>*Amount of scaffolding and support* | Structured tasks<br>Small steps<br>Familiar contexts | Less structured tasks<br>More steps<br>Contexts beyond immediate | Increasing number of steps/aspects<br>Contexts beyond familiar/observable | Increasingly opened-ended, multi-dimensional tasks | Increasingly abstract opened-ended, multi-dimensional tasks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Uni-structural** | **Multi-structural** | **Relational** | | **Extended abstract** |
| **KNOWLEDGE UNDERSTANDING**<br>*How are breadth and depth of knowledge related to create meaning and understanding applied to a variety of contexts?* | understanding limited to single aspects disconnected from other learning | quantitative increase in recall brings together several pieces of information but relationship with the whole is not made | able to link and integrate various aspects, illustrating a deeper and more coherent understanding of the whole | | relationship between components is looked at and understood in a new way, creating individual meaning as a basis to reflect, generalise, make predictions and create new understanding |
| | **Pre-reflective**<br>single concrete observations *(rote or routine, lacking detail)*; *and* discrepancies not noticed. | **Quasi-reflective**<br>aware that knowledge may be uncertain; **essential** information provided with some **detail** and implicit points *(unconnected)*; *and* knowledge and justification undifferentiated. | **Quasi-reflective**<br>understands knowledge is uncertain and must be understood within a context; *and* justification is context-specific and limited in perspective *(significance may not be grasped).* | **Quasi-reflective**<br>knowledge is uncertain, constructed by **selecting and comparing** appropriate and **sufficient** evidence on different sides across contexts. | **Reflective thought**<br>knowledge is the outcome of a process of reasonable enquiry; *and* knowledge is provisional and analysis must be supported with reference to robust evidence. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **THINKING**<br><br>**Manage information**<br>- *question to clarify*<br>- *access and select evidence*<br>- *plan and record*<br><br>**Problem solving/<br>Decision making**<br>*consider evidence and points of view;*<br>*seek reasons, patterns and relationships;*<br>*explore alternatives*<br>*develop a line of reasoning; and*<br>*justify thinking.* | Ask **basic** questions<br>select useful tools/info;<br>break into smaller steps;<br>work through stages;<br>sequence/order/rank;<br>record in different ways;<br>**identify** obvious:<br>• **characteristics;**<br>• **comparisons;**<br>• **connections;**<br>• **pros/cons; and**<br>• **ideas/solutions**<br>give simple reasons for answer/choice/action; and<br>support answer with **simple** reference to text. | select appropriate tools;<br>**use more than one source;**<br>select **relevant** information;<br>consider usefulness/ reliability;<br>group/classify information;<br>identify common characteristics;<br>compare and contrast;<br>make and test predictions;<br>make obvious connections;<br>link some causes and effects;<br>identify fact from opinion;<br>recognise **another view;**<br>offer some ideas/ reasons /options/ solutions/pros/cons; and<br>support views with **specific** reference to text. | use a **range of** info/ sources;<br>recognise **different interpretations;**<br>appreciate **difference of view; explain** why different views are held;<br>compare and contrast in more detail;<br>weigh up pros and cons;<br>distinguish fact and opinion;<br>explain **links and patterns;**<br>explore options/ alternatives;<br>construct arguments;<br>**support with evidence;**<br>**develop an opinion;**<br>**drawn appropriate conclusions;**<br>**support and justify** with reference to evidence;<br>provide relevant **supportive detail**; and<br>**summarise and paraphrase** clearly. | **use complex information from a range of sources;**<br>Adapt and acknowledge sources effectively;<br>identify points of view, lines of reasoning, bias;<br>Analyse and explain **interpretations;**<br>make connections;<br>predict consequences;<br>challenge ideas;<br>develop own opinion;<br>**draw generalisations and conclusion; and**<br>**explain, support and justify** with reference to evidence. | **discriminate** between sources;<br>Identify **sound robust evidence;**<br>work through critical questions<br>**authenticate and justify choice;**<br>**quote sources accurately;**<br>weigh up **strengths/ weaknesses;**<br>**identify** superficial elements;<br>challenge assumptions;<br>**evaluate alternatives;**<br>explain **complex interrelationships;**<br>**expand** on opinions;<br>appreciate parts in relation to whole;<br>**develop** own conclusion;<br>**evaluate/refine and justify views;**<br>support analysis with reference to robust evidence;<br>**synthesise coherently** generalise; and connect and transfer beyond the given. |
| **COMMUNICATION**<br>*Structured*<br>*Sequence*<br>*Clarity*<br>*Expression*<br>*Vocabulary*<br>*Style***<br>*Grammar Spelling* | chose appropriate format;<br>plan answer;<br>describe main points;<br>sequence in some order;<br>check over and improve sentences; and<br>spelling, punctuation. | match format/style to **engage;**<br>plan and sequence ideas in **paragraphs;**<br>**vary** start of sentences;<br>**describe clearly;**<br>check over to improve;<br>sentences linking words; and<br>spelling punctuation. | match format/style to **maintain interest;**<br>**plan and sequence** for clarity;<br>include descriptive detail;<br>**summarise and present clearly;**<br>use precise vocabulary; and<br>re-draft to improve accuracy/consistency/ meaning. | match style and tone for **impact** and to **persuade;**<br>communicate in a **developed way;**<br>express **coherently and persuasively;** and<br>redraft for effect. | match style, tone and presentation for **impact;**<br>communicate in a developed **and sustained way;**<br>use **discriminating vocabulary;**<br>use punctuation for effect; and<br>redraft and refine for impact. |

(Source: *Class Dynamics*)