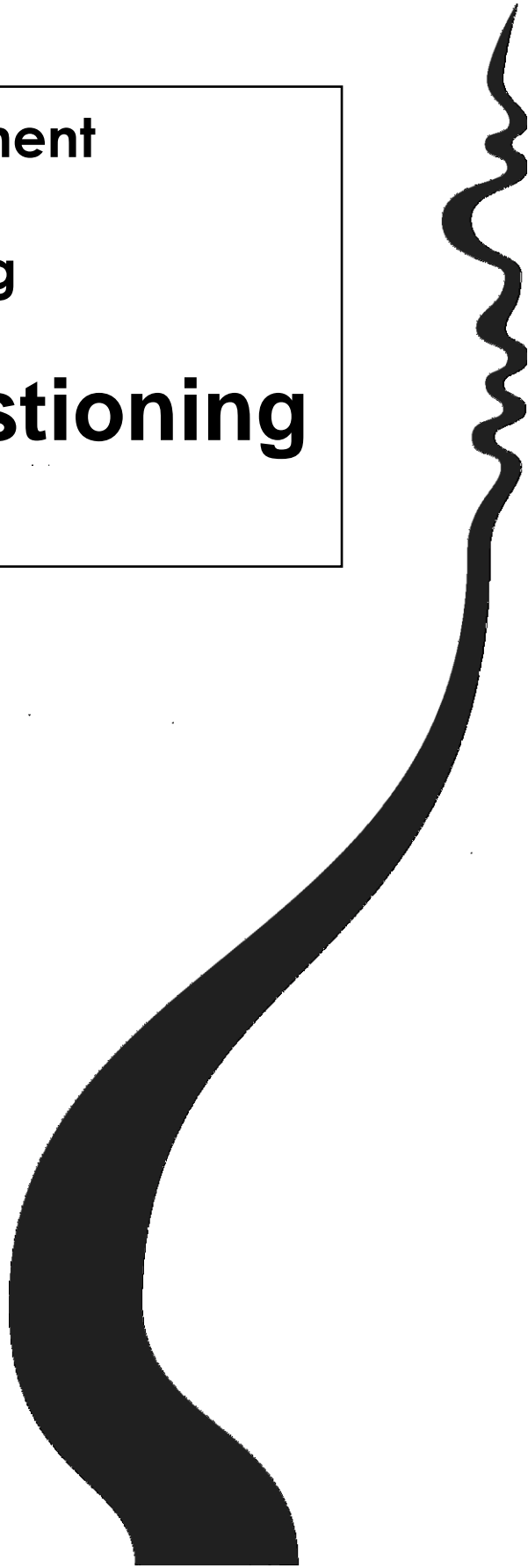


**Assessment  
For  
Learning**

**Questioning**



## 1 Questioning

How does questioning contribute to assessment for learning?

How can we develop questioning techniques to engage all pupils and promote active learning?

## 2 Why are questions so important to Assessment for Learning?

Questions focus pupils on the key issues - "*knowing what they know*".

Questions can give immediate feedback on pupils' understanding.

Questioning models for pupils how experienced learners seek meaning- moving them towards greater independence.

Questions can help pupils to develop their thinking from the concrete and factual to the analytical and evaluative.

Higher order questions help pupils explore ideas and make connections.

Questions prompt pupils to inspect their existing knowledge and experience to create new understandings.

**Questioning is therefore an integral part of all strands of – self and peer assessment, feedback and sharing learning intentions.**

### 3 Prepare to ask fewer, better questions

Be clear about your learning intentions - link your key questions directly to them.

Plan a few key questions to use -

- collaboratively or within schemes of work
- as mind map with additional questions:



**Decide on the level** and order/ timing of the questions

**Extend the key questions** with subsidiary questions to ask

**Analyse the answers** you are given and decide on "follow-up" responses

**Embed the key questions early in the lesson** - make them a focus for recall

#### 4 Fewer, better questions - sharing strategies to ensure:

##### Distribution

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##### Pitch

- who is this question aimed at?
- will X be able to answer this question?
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- 

##### Appropriate Language

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##### Alternatives to recall questions

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##### Alternatives to hands up

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## 5 Strategies for extending pupils' responses

**Pausing** - giving thinking time -before and after asking, and after response

**Prompting pupils** - extending answers

**Probing** - identifying misconceptions/ insecurities/ sharing and modelling thinking

<p>When they begin a piece of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you think that...?</li> <li>• How are you going to...?</li> <li>• Do you think that...?</li> <li>• Is it important to....?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>If they have difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could you try to...?</li> <li>• What about...?</li> <li>• Why not...?</li> <li>• Have you compared your ideas with...?</li> <li>• Would a ... help?</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>Whilst they are working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you decide to...?</li> <li>• Where might ....?</li> <li>• Have you....?</li> <li>• Can you think of.....?</li> <li>• Can you explain how you...?</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>At the end of a lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What/ how could you improve....?</li> <li>• How did that happen?</li> <li>• What did you get out of it?</li> <li>• Why was that?</li> <li>• Which were your best...?</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## 6 Using pupils' responses, (even though they may be "incorrect") in a positive way

In classrooms where contributions about learning are encouraged, exchanges between pupils may be as helpful as teacher intervention in advancing thinking and understanding:

Teacher: Can anyone tell me, is this apple dead or alive?

Gemma: *It's dead.*

Teacher: Why do you think it's dead?

James: *It's been picked off the tree, and when it was there, it was part of the living tree. It's not now, so it's dead.*

Teacher: Who agrees with James? Is there anyone who disagrees?

Sara: *I don't agree with him.*

Teacher: Can you tell us why Sara?

Sara: *Well, we don't **know** that the apple is dead – a bit of it could still be alive.*

Melanie: *I think that's possible because there are pips inside, and if you put them in the ground they'd grow.*

James: *They wouldn't you know Melanie, they wouldn't grow – not if the apple's dead.*

Tom: *I planted some pips once and they started to grow – so they weren't dead.*

Phillippa: *Because it's got pips it doesn't mean that it's still alive. Leave it alone and it'll shrivel up, just like dead person.*

Simon: *I agree with Tom. If part of something is still alive, it's still alive ...like the pips.*

Sara: *I think that part of it is still alive, and part is dead, because it's been broken off the tree.*

Teacher: So what does being alive or dead mean?

Rebecca: *To be alive you have to be part of something living, like an apple on a tree....*

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**In summary:**

**Try to use pupils' incorrect responses to advantage – aim to point out the error, but focus on a better answer at the same time.**

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**Elaboration:**

- *“Could you say a little more about that?”*
- *“Go on...”*
- *Non- verbal cues, e.g. hand upturned, silence with continued eye-contact etc*
- *“Can you show me what you mean? “*
- 

**Echoing:**

- *“So you think that...?”*
- *“So what you’re saying is.....”*
- *Can someone summarise what James has just said....”*
- 

**Reflecting:**

- *“Yes, I sometimes think that...”*
- *“I know what you mean I also think.....”*
- *“Do you feel that .....*

**These techniques enable teachers to identify and challenge misconceptions so that their next steps can address the learners’ real needs.**

## 7 Encouraging pupils to ask questions

### Classroom management

- 'special ' time for questions
- modelling appropriate types of questions
- post its – questions prior to teaching input and what they still don't understand
- traffic lights –

### Developing pupils' confidence

Explicit strategies which promote pupil questioning:

- 5Ws – Who? what? where? when? why?
- Hot- seating
- Phone a friend
- Previewing a question in advance
- Pair rehearsal
- Rules for hands up

**Research has found that training learners to generate thought-provoking questions and then answer them is a very effective study technique. Pupils trained to ask questions of one another significantly out-performed those who had not. Teachers who model a question in mind by thinking aloud and asking good questions help pupils to be active in questioning.**



## 8 Ideas for enhancing the quality of questioning

- Do you use the 'individual, work as a pair, share as a group, present to the class' method to its best effect?
- Do you provide pupils with the sort of questions they might want to ask?
- Do your questions motivate?
- Can you preface your questions with an individual's name and a motivational challenge? 'Gemma, I know that you can give me three examples...'
- Can you do this in ways that make it safe to get it wrong?
- Do you ask pupils to explain their thinking?
- What do you do when you ask the question 'What makes you think that Rapeshe?' and get the answer 'Dunno, miss'? Do you provide other, extending questions: 'What other alternatives did you consider? 'Why did you reject them?' 'What makes this choice the best?'
- Do you reflect back? 'So, if I'm right what you're saying is....'
- Do you ask pupils to listen accurately? Summarise? Speculate?
- Do you play devil's advocate?
- Can you encourage upside – down thinking by asking for the opposite point of view, or an outrageous alternative?
- Do you encourage thinking about thinking through your use of questions?
- Do you provide opportunities for pupils to explain the processes they chose, as well as describe the outcome?

## 9 The Dos and Don'ts of questioning

Dos ~ Effective questions are those that:	Don'ts ~ common errors that everyone makes at times:
extend and raise the discussion to a higher level of thinking	using questions that pupils cannot understand and respond to
start with a narrow focus and broaden out ~ recall first, then encourage fresh thinking	asking a question and answering it yourself before the pupil has a chance to think
start with a broad focus and narrow down to detail	asking too many questions
take a circular route ~ a series of questions leading back to the original idea	asking questions of only the brightest and keenest pupils
take a straight route using questions of a similar type	continually asking the same type of question
provide a 'skeleton' on which to hang ideas	asking questions in a way that pupils find intimidating
signal that participation is valued	failing to acknowledge pupils' responses positively and putting them down
help pupils externalise their knowledge and put it into words	failing to deal with an answer sensitively
stimulate and sustain continuing interest in a topic	failing to build on and extend answers

## 10 Planning Questions ~ a suggested framework

### **RECALL**

recalling, revising material that has already been covered – facts, terms, basic concepts.

**Question cues:** who, what, why, when, where, find, spell, match, name, tell, show.

### **COMPREHENSION**

understanding the main points of the story by giving descriptions, stating major ideas.

**Question cues:** describe, explain, predict, interpret, outline, summarise.

### **APPLICATION**

transferring knowledge learned in one context to another.

**Question cues:** complete, illustrate, plan, make use of, choose, experiment with, change.

### **ANALYSIS**

analysing mood, setting, characters, expressing opinions and preferences, make inference & deduction.

**Question cues:** compare, connect, arrange, select, discover, simplify.

### **SYNTHESIS**

developing a critical stance based on information from a range of sources.

**Question cues:** compile, propose, imagine, improve, develop, create, generalise, rewrite, improve.

### **EVALUATION**

making judgements and explaining the reasons for them, developing reasoning using evidence.

**Question cues:** conclude, prove, disprove, criticise, convince, recommend.