

Writing an Effective Policy for Technology

Geoff Howard

Senior General
Inspector/Adviser (D&T) for
N. Yorkshire and Jenny
Hotson, of the N. Yorkshire
Design and Technology Team

Everyone accepts that all schools need a policy for technology, but how do you avoid producing a mound of paper which is ineffective? Geoff Howard and Jenny Hotson suggest that there are three goals which will help: brevity, simplicity and ownership

Gone are the days when a frantic deputy head could spend the first few weeks of a new school year still patching up the school timetable and looking for 'volunteers' to take 5D. Gone also (and similarly unlamented) are the days when making key fobs or carving a fish to sit uncomfortably on a stick could be relied on to buy us all time during the first half term to decide what to do for the rest of the year.

Everyone accepts that planning and policy documents are essential but, unfortunately in some cases, the result has been a mountain of irrelevant paperwork and indecipherable tick-boxes. The OFSTED manual is formidable, and many teachers, panic-stricken, may react by produce great tomes in the name of policy. What follows is some of the advice we give to schools in North Yorkshire, and although there is no one way of doing this, it is offered in good faith in the hope that DATA members might find it helpful in drawing up their own school policies on technology. It goes without saying that advice should also be sought from local LEA advisers and others too.

■ What is a policy?

A policy may be described as a set of guidelines which provide a framework for achieving a purpose or goal. Policies should relate to school and development plans.

Technology policies should take into account whole-school policies where appropriate. They should specify, in general terms, the shared understanding of the reason for teaching technology, its purposes and how these will be achieved as an entitlement for all pupils. They should guide everything which goes on in the department and which children do in the name of technology.

Accompanying the policies should be agreed implementation plans which identify targets, timescales and responsibilities to translate the policies into teaching and learning actions.

Policies should be short, be written in simple language and represent the consensus view of all staff affected by them. Evaluation and review should take place on a regular basis.

Effective policies can be used to:

- develop curriculum plans
- shape classroom practice

- encourage a shared understanding between the school and local community
- promote confidence
- evaluate practice
- help in the induction of new staff
- resolve disputes.

Effective policies:

- respond to local needs
- will affect practice
- relate to teachers, children and parents
- are easy to write
- are short, easy to read and easy to understand
- represent a consensus view.

To meet the aim of producing short policies, it will be necessary to produce separate policies for different aspects of technology, including:

The curriculum
Special needs
Assessment, recording and reporting
Homework
Display
Awards and competitions
Industry/community links
Resources
Behaviour and discipline, including rewards/sanctions
Health and safety
Staffing.

Some of these policies may be very brief indeed and comprise a single agreed statement in the first instance, for example: *At all times marking of work will respect pupils' achievement, give positive feedback and avoid defacing the product.*

As policies are developed through a regular review process, each will eventually contain the following elements:

- A rationale: a brief statement of *why* you think it is important to teach technology in your school
- Aims: a set of statements describing *what* you hope to achieve by teaching technology
- Guidelines: stating briefly *how* you are going to achieve your aims, representing a consensus view, and referring to children and teachers and what will happen in *your* school

- Conclusion: a final 'bottom line' statement which acts as a reminder to all of what teaching technology is really about.

Points to remember

Policy making should be a shared process

The process of making policy is at least as important as the policy itself

Policy making should be used to develop a shared understanding

Policies should be brief and be written in simple language

Policies should be reviewed regularly.

The schools which are skilled in formulating policy are usually very effective in providing for students as they know where they are going, why and how they are going to get there.

However, many policies have little effect on what children or teachers do because:

- they are written and held by a 'higher power'
- teachers are unaware of their existence
- they are copied from national or regional documents and therefore do not relate to the specific needs of the school
- they are hard to understand because of the language used
- they are out of date
- they are too long
- they were written without the involvement of the users
- they ignore the process of policy making.

Effective policies, on the other hand:

- relate to current classroom practice and national legislation
- can be useful in changing teaching and learning styles
- are written by those who use them
- respond to local needs
- are short and easy to read and understand
- are accessible
- are regularly reviewed and updated
- relate to each other and are consistent.

D&T Curriculum Policies Step by Step

Rationale — the 'why'

Policies should begin with a clear statement of the school's vision for the subject — a mission statement perhaps.

Why is technology important and relevant for your pupils? How will pupils gain from experience of it in terms of knowledge, skills and values? What would be missing from a child's experience if technology did not appear in the timetable? What for you and your school is its unique contribution to a child's entitlement?

Purposes — the 'what'

What are your agreed aims for technology?

There should be references to the National Curriculum:

- What PoS elements do you wish to emphasise?
- What range of materials will each child experience?
- What experiences of designing would you hope to see?
- What attitudes and values will you encourage?
- What will be D&T's contribution to cross-curricular themes?
- What teaching and learning styles will be emphasised?
- What will be your criteria for success? What assessment, reporting and recording strategies will you adopt?
- What will you do to ensure continuity and progression?
- What is the relevance of D&T to the 'real' world?

Broad guidelines — the 'how'

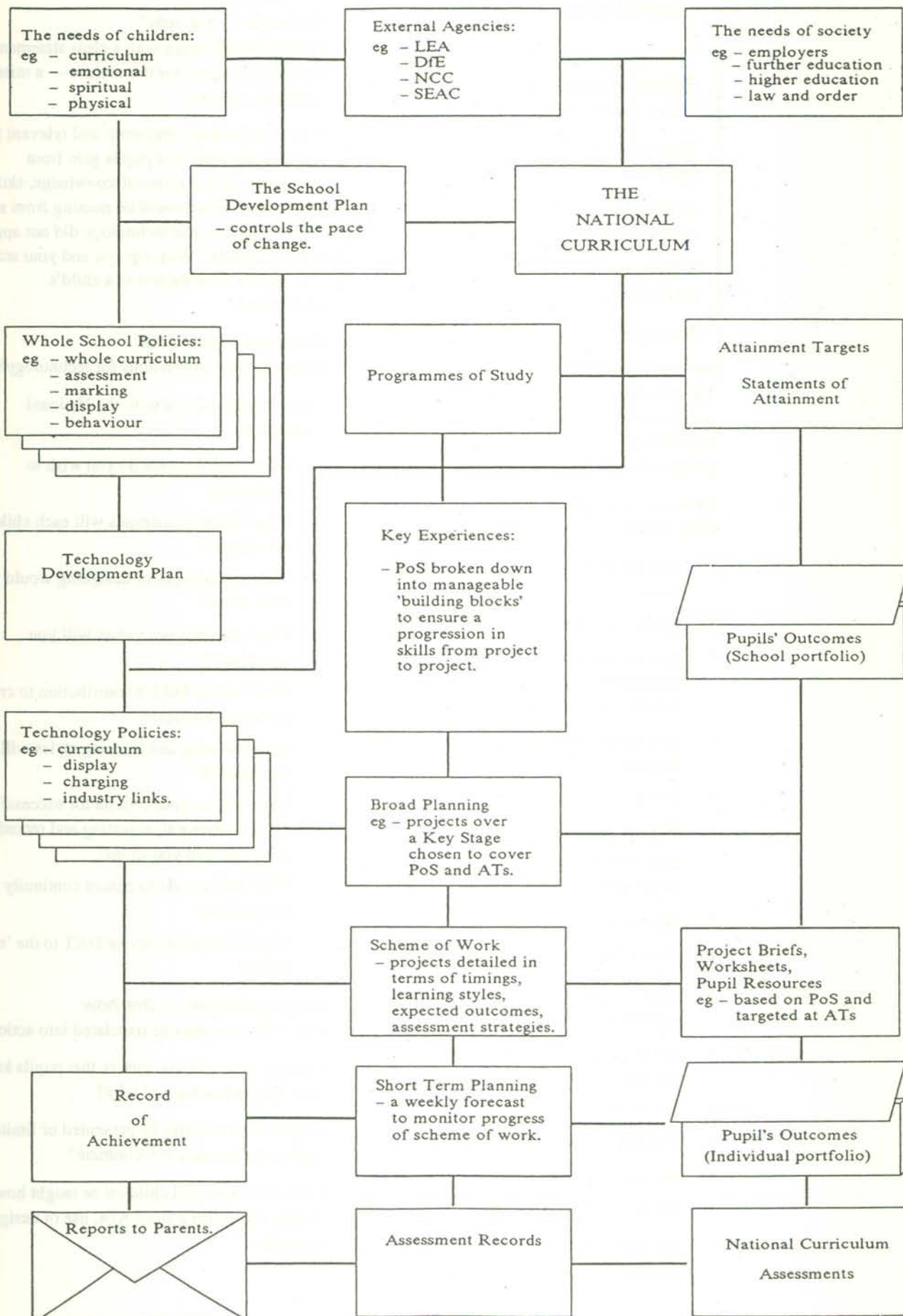
How will your aims be translated into action?

Context: how will you ensure that pupils know what they are doing and why?

Choice: how will this be presented or limited to control the learning environment?

Creativity: how will children be taught how to design, e.g. starting from AT4, use of design methods?

A POSSIBLE PLANNING FRAMEWORK



Communication: how will this be encouraged, e.g. graphically/orally between peers and with adults?

Quality: how will this be ensured?

How will display be used to stimulate and celebrate good quality work?

How will you ensure progression in the acquisition of skills?

How will you ensure a balance of tasks, e.g. short/long, open/closed?

How will you use group work or individual learning styles?

How will you ensure equal opportunities in terms of gender, race and ability?

How will you differentiate to accommodate differing abilities both within and between groups?

How will your strategies for assessment, recording and reporting be used, e.g. to inform planning, to encourage pupils and inform parents?

How will you take account of pupils' experiences and achievements at each key stage?

How will you organise resources to support your aims?

How will you ensure the health and safety of pupils?

Conclusion — the 'bottom line'

What, for your school and for your children, is design and technology all about?

What is it for?

Why do it?

How is it different from other subjects of the curriculum?

■ An Implementation Plan

What are your *targets* for action for the next year? — e.g. devising projects which enable pupils to achieve a successful outcome more rapidly

What *strategies* will you use to achieve this? — e.g. hold a review of all current projects and resources used, review balance between open and closed tasks

What are the *responsibilities*? — i.e. who will be responsible for each of the strategies?

What *resources* will be required? — timescales, materials, staffing, equipment

What is the agreed *timescale*? — when will the proposed new projects be timetables for discussion?

What are the *indicators of success*? — e.g. new projects are included in next year's scheme which motivate pupils, maintain progression, produce quality outcomes and take less time to complete.

It used to be said that the job wasn't done until the paperwork was completed. It may be more appropriate now to consider that the job cannot really *start* until the paperwork is done — or at least that it cannot be fully accomplished with any real chance of success.

RELATING TO
PEERS

RELATING TO
ADULTS

STUDY
TECHNIQUES

PHYSICS OF
MUSIC

NUCLEAR
PHYSICS

CARBON
CHEMISTRY

ATOMIC
POWER

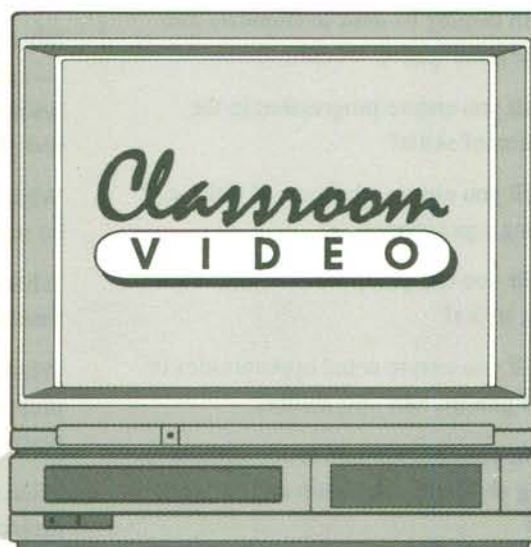
NATURE OF
MATTER

CHEMICAL
EQUILIBRIUM

RAINFORESTS

VOLCANOES

RIVER
LANDFORMS



GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A CLEARER VIEW...

The use of audio visual aids in the classroom is a proven success story, enabling teachers to present factual information in an entertaining and thought provoking way.

Classroom Video brings a fresh and innovative approach to its range of educational videos, originally made for Australian schools, and now selected for their relevance to the British curriculum.

Programmes cover a wide spectrum of subjects and are individually designed for different school ages to ensure relevance of material. All have been developed, produced and written in conjunction with teachers and experts on the subject matter involved. Accurate content is presented in an imaginative and enjoyable way.

Each video comes with informative Teacher's Notes giving guidance on the content of the programme as well as suggested study and follow up material. All programmes are planned to fit into the classroom schedule, averaging 20 minutes in duration.

All videos are VHS and are available on 14 days approval (delivery charges only apply) - if the material is not suitable then you are under no obligation to purchase.

Production is of the highest quality and prices are affordable, making these videos a valuable long term resource for your school and department.

For further information and a free brochure contact:
Classroom Video, Darby House, Bletchingley Road,
Merstham, Redhill, Surrey RH1 3DN
Telephone: 0737 642880 Fax: 0737 644110

AUSTRALIAN
GEOGRAPHY

VISUAL
DESIGN

TECHNICAL
GRAPHICS

ADVANCED
TECHNICAL
DRAWING

HOW TO USE
A LIBRARY

ADVERTISING

CHRISTMAS
AROUND THE
WORLD

DEBATING
SKILLS

WASTE
DISPOSAL

RECYCLING
PROCESSES

GREENHOUSE

... AND MANY
MORE