

# How do plenaries affect pupils' achievement of learning intentions in class?



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## **Group 1B**

### ***Rationale***

My decision to conduct this enquiry was based on a number of factors. Firstly, as a newly qualified teacher I feel that having structure in my lessons is very important. All lessons should have a structured beginning, middle and end as this helps raise achievement for pupils (Smith, 1985). Furthermore, through observations in my probation year it has been highlighted to me that I should think about how I know pupils have achieved their learning intentions at the end of lessons. Finally, the Curriculum for Excellence places a high level of importance on Assessment is for Learning, with the aims of this strategy to improve attainment for all pupils, and to develop teachers' skills to ensure 'their judgments (on pupils' progress) are dependable (Scottish Government, 2005). The focus of this enquiry therefore is to use the plenary strategy of exit passes in class to assess the impact it has on achievement of the learning intentions. Exit passes in particular were used as they encourage students to take ownership of their successes and achievements in class (Fisher and Frey, 2004).

### ***Aims***

- To analyse the impact the use of exit passes has on pupils' achievement in class.
- To observe any changes in pupils' motivation during enquiry period.

### ***Methodology***

The enquiry took place over a four-week period in an S.1 Social Subjects class of 31 pupils. Initially, the intervention was to take place with a focus on all pupils in the class however, it quickly became apparent this was an unmanageable workload and so a smaller target group were identified. Therefore, through use of departmental tracking and monitoring folders, 9 pupils were highlighted who were not yet achieving the relevant Social Studies outcomes. Other pupils in the class completed the same exit passes however; their data is not included for manageability reasons. At the end of each period pupils were asked to use exit passes to assess their learning in that lesson. Pupils were asked to write down two things they learned today, and one aspect of the lesson they would like to know more about. This method of gathering evidence was maintained throughout the four week intervention period in order to ensure consistency. Furthermore, at the end of each week pupils take part in a 'Golden 10' quiz, aimed at testing their learning of that week's intentions.

### ***Findings***

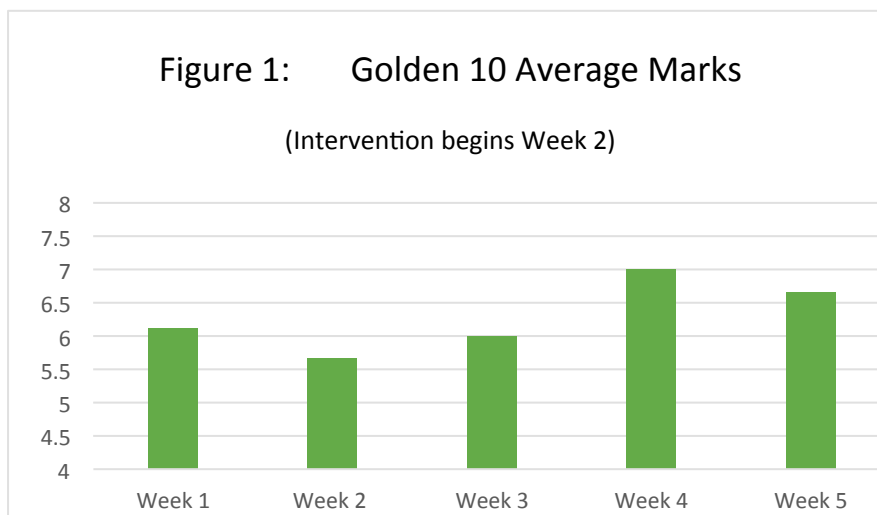
The enquiry's initial findings do not appear to show a direct correlation between the use of exit passes and pupil's achievements of their learning outcomes. In the first week of the

intervention pupils' response on exit passes were often non-specific, and not perhaps related to the specific learning outcomes. To change this and make it more focussed, further direction was provided with this in the following weeks. Learning intentions were written on the whiteboard and displayed throughout the lesson leading to much more focussed exit passes from pupils such as:

*'Today I learned why William Wallace was considered an outlaw by the English, and how he was captured by soldiers'*

This feedback was helpful as it showed an understanding from Pupil 1 of the learning outcomes and what they had achieved in the lesson. However, this feedback remained inconsistent throughout the four week enquiry, with some pupils giving detailed feedback on their learning, and others often struggling to convey their learning in writing without further prompting.

In terms of how verbalising their achievements and actively thinking about their learning translated into attainment there is no clear pattern that develops throughout the enquiry as shown in Figure 1. Average marks of the 9 pupils in question only slightly varied from before the intervention to the final week. Average Golden 10 marks in week 1 were 6.11 and by week 5 (the fourth week of the intervention) these were up slightly to 6.66. However, this change was again not consistent throughout, and the very slight movement in average marks would more easily be assigned to variations in difficulty on given weeks.



In terms of pupil motivation, judging this more holistically, there was a clear change in attitude from the first week until the last. Initially, pupils mostly viewed exit passes as a barrier to the end of the lesson, something that had to be done so they could pack up rather than an integral part of the lesson plan. However, by the final week pupils were now accepting exit passes as a routine, and assessing their learning as a useful process. Many pupils were now, rather than rushing their answers, challenging themselves and each other to really quantify their achievements in each lesson. Role of the teacher and indeed the teaching process has on student motivation is undoubtedly an area worth revisiting for further study.

## ***Conclusions***

Despite the fact there was no definite impact on the primary aim of this enquiry, this process is undoubtedly most useful in critically reflecting on professional practice within the classroom and its impact on pupil learning. Achievement of the learning intentions among my target group of pupils showed little change throughout the four-week intervention however, this is indeed an integral part of professional enquiry and should always inform future practice. Another conclusion that could be drawn from the enquiry is that pupil motivation in class appeared to improve generally. Through listening to discussions and conversing with pupils it was clear motivation to achieve in class was increasing throughout the enquiry period.

## ***Implications for Future Practice***

Information and knowledge gained from professional enquiries should always inform the future practice of a teacher in their classroom. Hulme, Cracknell and Owens tell us practitioner enquiry is vital to the professional development of a teacher throughout their career (2009). Based on the findings of this enquiry the focus group could be widened to assess the impact among those already deemed to be meeting learning intentions. This would give more well-rounded and reliable conclusions. Furthermore, in future practitioner enquiries there could be a larger focus on pupil motivation, and how this relates to pupils' achievement in the classroom.

## ***Bibliography***

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