



LOOKING FOR
LEARNING

The Looking for Learning Toolkit



Case Study

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Clifton Upon Dunsmore Primary School in Rugby, Warwickshire received an Outstanding for Teaching and Learning from Ofsted and say it's the Looking for Learning Toolkit that helped to achieve this. Here Deputy Headteacher, Jason Henderson and a teacher and child from Clifton Upon Dunsmore talk about the impact of the Looking for Learning Toolkit on the school.

Interview with Jason Henderson, Deputy Headteacher

Q: You took on the Looking for Learning Toolkit from a position of strength – you're already a good school with outstanding features. What did you initially see in the Looking for Learning Toolkit that could help strengthen your school further?

Jason Answers: "We became aware of the Looking for Learning Toolkit through the Warwickshire schools pilot. David (David Briggs, Headteacher) and I already felt very passionate about wanting to develop our focus on learning, but weren't sure how to go about it and when Sheila Dentith started talking about Looking for Learning we felt it was what we needed. So we began with the Toolkit in Spring last year (2009).

Four weeks ago (November 2010) we achieved Outstanding for our Teaching and Learning from Ofsted. Much of this was down to the way the children were talking about their learning. The inspector was impressed with what and how the children learnt, the lesson observations, and the active learning methods involving the children in the reflecting of their learning. The Looking for Learning Toolkit definitely gave us a head start to making this change.

What Looking for Learning did was give us a shift to looking at what the children are learning rather than how we are teaching. Over the years that I've observed teachers, so much of what I was observing was what the teacher was doing. I would sit at the back of the classroom looking at the teacher, only seeing the backs of most children's heads. The way the Looking for Learning Toolkit has changed our approach to observing has been a subtle but significant shift. Now, when we're observing we're right in with the children, finding out how their learning is progressing. Looking for Learning has sharpened our focus. The questions that Looking for Learning suggests to ask children during observation really help us to focus our attention

on what learning is going on. This has made us realise that you can observe good teaching practice, where children are really enjoying a lesson, but they aren't actually learning anything new.

We've taken a team approach with our learning observations. Everyone is working together on this and that's really made a difference to the learning observations. In some cases we have several teachers in a classroom at one time. The observers then also act as facilitators within the lesson, sitting with and supporting small groups of children and as a result, it's providing a lot of support to the teacher and promoting a lot of honesty without being invasive or critical. The team approach has taken the focus off the one-observing-one scenario and so the teacher being observed doesn't feel like they're being judged as a teacher; they feel they're part of a learning development process to improve the whole school.

In the feedback sessions we look at the positive examples of how good learning happens, as well as any key development points; identifying what works well to help children learn and what could be done differently to move the learning on more effectively. Everyone benefits from this discussion.

We are taking a whole-school approach with the Looking for Learning Toolkit. In the new year we will also be using the Looking for Learning approach for our Performance Management appraisals."

Q: Prior to working with the Looking for Learning Toolkit did you believe that, as a school, you were focusing sufficiently on learning and has your work with the Looking for Learning Toolkit changed that opinion in any way?

Jason Answers: "We knew the importance of the link between teaching and learning but we were more focused on teaching and what was being delivered



rather than looking at the learning outcomes. The outcomes, we were assessing at the end of a half-term or unit of work but certainly not each day. Now we're realising how crucial this is in order to constantly amend the way we're delivering the learning to ensure every child is learning.

Prior to Looking for Learning we'd done quite a lot of work with the staff on Assessment for Learning strategies and on the children reflecting on their learning. But it was a bit of an add-on and we didn't devote enough time within each lesson to look at what learning had occurred. Looking for Learning helped us to realise we need to give more time to the plenary and for self and peer reflection in order to find out what learning has taken place and what we need to learn next."

Q: How easy/difficult was it for you as a leader to start implementing Looking for Learning?

Jason Answers: "Initially David went to a Warwickshire Headteachers briefing and then we looked at the Toolkit together. We picked out Manual 1. I took it home and read the whole thing from start to finish. It was easy to read and totally relevant and made so much sense.

From there we ran a staff meeting to introduce the staff to the principals of Looking for Learning including the language; words such as new learning, treading water, drowning and consolidated learning. We also talked a bit about the neural pathways which they found really helpful. We talked about learning and the learning we'd like to see in our school. The meeting generated a lot of excitement. We have a fantastic staff here who are all very positive and they were very enthusiastic about this and wanted to find out more. But even so, questions were raised such as 'aren't we doing this already?' and there was some anxiety that it was another new thing to take on. Our answer to 'doing this

already' was 'yes, but Looking for Learning is going to help us firm it up'. We also reassured everyone that time was allocated for Looking for Learning, that we had costed-in release time for lesson observations and that nothing was expected of them related to Looking for Learning in their home time.

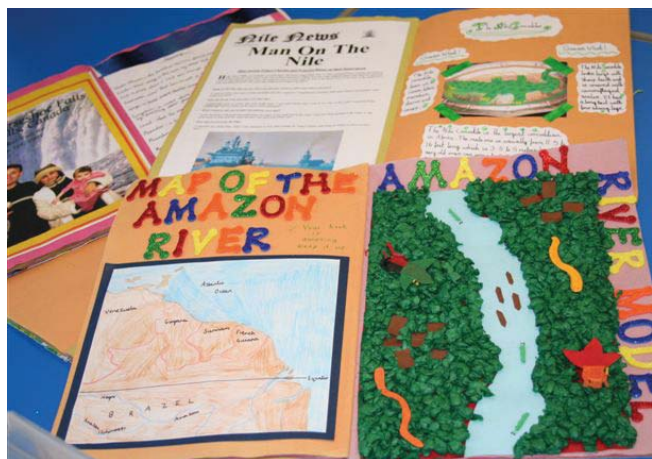
The Toolkit clearly guided us through the implementation of Looking for Learning with our teachers; it's an excellent resource for leaders."

Q: How easy/difficult was it for your staff to start implementing Looking for Learning?

Jason Answers: "We split the staff into two teams: Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, to do pilot observations. All four teachers within each team planned the observations together. Having four voices was really nice and it generated a lot of positive teamwork. It helped everyone to understand and also to see other classes in action and how their colleagues operate.

When I was being observed, of course it feels different than when you're by yourself with your children but I was using the other teachers in the room to help me and to help the children learn. When the children went into group work, it meant the teacher-observers were able to support the children as well as observe their learning. The first time we observed, each teacher had the full list of observational questions from the Looking for Learning Toolkit and so they asked far too many questions to too many children. In the next observation, we focused on observing a few children and asking just a few questions for more time. This produced better quality feedback.

After the observation, we held a de-brief. Following the observation in my own class, the teachers raised some really interesting points; things I'd never have picked up myself. For example, children that I would have thought were doing brilliantly, the observers



said they needed more support to move them on further. And especially interesting was the recording element. In talking with the children, some of the children who had not recorded so well in their books had definitely understood the learning in their heads; they just couldn't record their learning into their books effectively. It's made me realise that I mustn't assume that those children who don't record as well or as accurately as others aren't necessarily doing well with their learning. Sometimes that's absolutely not the case"

Q: Who is involved with Looking for Learning in your school?

Jason Answers: "We've presented Looking for Learning to our Governors who do recognise the value of learning in our school and who are very supportive of our efforts to develop this focus further. We also presented Looking for Learning to all the Teaching Assistants to help them understand the principals behind Looking for Learning and the language of learning so that we're all using and understanding the same words. We're introduced the language of learning to our children too and they immediately started using terms like 'treading water' really well.

We're building Looking for Learning into a whole school approach. We're rebranded our Friday assemblies. They used to be our 'Celebrate' assembly, now they are our 'Celebrate Learning' assembly and here we talk about some of the great learning that's gone on throughout the school during the week and celebrate some of the children who have learnt particularly well during the week. We add their names to our Learning Wall which identifies what exceptional or notable learning a particular child has done.

We have also rebranded our homework as 'Home Learning' and have changed the approach to home learning to make it a more holistic continuation of the

children's learning in school. The children have their own Home Learning folders for the theme they are learning in class. We paste into the folder a mind map of the theme with three home learning tasks as well as a wide range of home learning suggestions that they can pick from if they want e.g. for the rivers theme, there are ideas such as write your own river song and record it, make a model of part of your chosen world river, find out about the wildlife in or by your chosen world river, and research industry on your chosen world river. We have a Home Learning wall out in the playground where we display laminated copies of the children's home learning activities and we also have a home learning exhibition where the children can look at each other's folders. We encourage them to share learning ideas and to be inspired by each other. For example, if they see that someone has written a song that they like, then we encourage them to do something similar. This approach is working really well and more children are producing great pieces of home learning as a result.

Also our children write and produce our weekly newsletter The Learning Gossip. This is a weekly newsletter for parents which focuses on the learning the children are doing in class and the learning they'll be doing next week, also any specific home learning tasks they need to focus on. Each week two different children write and produce the Gossip."

Q: In his recent White Paper (November 2010), Michael Gove talked about improving the standard of teachers. Do you think the Looking for Learning Toolkit has a place in working towards this aim?

Jason Answers: "Yes. I think the Looking for Learning Toolkit has definitely helped us as a whole school to go back to the children in order to understand about their learning. It's helped us to discuss and reflect in lots of ways what learning means for us and for our children. It's helping our children to have the confidence to say



to their teacher 'I don't think I've learnt well today' - that's an important articulation; knowing where they want to get to with their learning and knowing when it's not going particularly well. It's really helping children to get there. Looking for Learning is helping the whole staff to know how to help children get there with their learning and we're now all realising that it's the 'getting there' that's important. We're also helping our parents with this learning journey approach. We're helping them to understand that learning can happen in lots of different ways. The Home Learning books and the Gossip newsletter are particularly helpful in achieving this."

Q: What are the most valuable aspects of the Looking for Learning Toolkit for you as a school?

Jason Answers: "Creating a team approach to improving learning, and talking and questioning children about their learning is also really powerful."

Q: Do you think the Looking for Learning Toolkit is value for money?

Jason Answers: "Very good value. The sign of value for money is constant and continued use. One year after introduction, we are still using the Toolkit; in fact we are becoming more and more embedded with the Looking for Learning approach. We know it's an ongoing thing for the whole school. We constantly dip into the manuals for sections to share with the staff and for inset and staff meetings. We've used some of the principles from Manuals 3 and 4 and we've also listened to what other Looking for Learning schools are doing. In particular, we've responded to ideas from Lillington Primary; their ideas made real sense to us. We're looking at making close and strong links with one other Looking for Learning school (the Revel in Monks Kirby) where we hope to organise cross-team lessons so that teachers from both schools can share

the learning observations.

What we're doing is taking the bits from the Toolkit that are most relevant to us, but there are lots of bits! And what it has definitely done is help us to put a focus on learning throughout the whole school.



Interview with Lisa Bernard, Class 6 Teacher

Q: How easy/difficult was it for you to get to grips with Looking for Learning?

Lisa Answers: "I think this is a very positive move for us as a school. For me it's nice to collaborate with other colleagues on the way we think and focus on learning."

The learning observations are really excellent as they are focused on what the children are achieving with their learning and, as the person who is teaching, it is not threatening as we know we are there to support each other. During a recent observation, one of the observers used a Flip camera and deliberately filmed the children and not the teacher. This really helped for us all to see what was actually going on in the classroom when it came to learning; you could witness how the children were learning and, because it only focused on the children, it really helped us to see that the learning is all about the children.

Also in one observation when the children were learning about the triangle, the observers interviewed key children at the beginning, middle and end of the lesson and they were able to articulate very well how their learning was going. As the lesson progressed, you could see how the children developed their knowledge and understanding of what a triangle was and how it could be used to make symmetrical patterns and how they could apply skills to create these patterns. The observers were able to identify the new learning and, by asking the Looking for Learning questions, were able to identify that children were not drowning in the learning process. Knowing the right questions to ask really is important and the Looking for Learning Toolkit has really helped us with this. Also as the Looking for Learning observations have progressed, the children are becoming more familiar with the questions which is also helping.

Q: What are the most valuable aspects of the Looking for Learning Toolkit for you as a teacher?

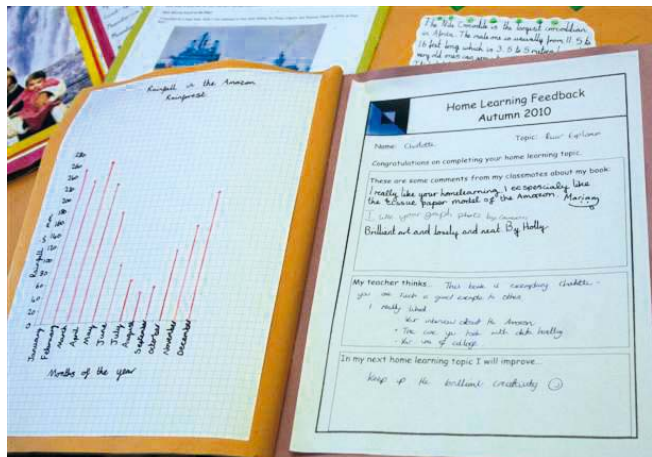
Lisa Answers: "All the support that the Toolkit gives for the observations is really good; the questions to ask the children are excellent. I would like to get the Toolkit manuals online so that I can access them when I need them. So far, as teachers, we haven't delved into the other manuals but we're getting great direction from David and Jason."

Q: If you could give any advice to a teacher about to start using the Looking for Learning Toolkit, what would it be?

Lisa Answers: "Give it a chance. Some teachers were quite wary of it to begin with; because it's new and something different and requires change. But it's important to remember that as teachers, we're continually learning as well and Looking for Learning creates an excellent opportunity for you to develop your own practice; it's a very good tool for that."

Q: Can you share a great learning-focused tip with us – something you've found particularly useful from the Looking for Learning Toolkit or something that you have developed yourself that may have been inspired by Looking for Learning?

Lisa Answers: "Evaluating the learning that's taken place in the classroom today; really thinking about what new skills have been learnt as well as thinking about the other skills and knowledge that we already know and that we've been able to apply to help with our new learning today. This is really helping the children and I think it's definitely worth making enough time to do this reflection. I've produced little slips for the end of the lesson to help them answer the learning questions and we use these in most lessons and sometimes the children will assess each other."



Interview with Lily, aged 9 and Jessica, aged 10

Q: What is your favourite learning?

Lily Answers: "I like my Home Learning, because it's not just a work sheet. You can build models and things. You can learn, but you're doing fun things at the same time. When I made a model of a castle I learnt what parts are important to build a castle. I can also make cakes and things with my Home Learning, and make a PowerPoint."

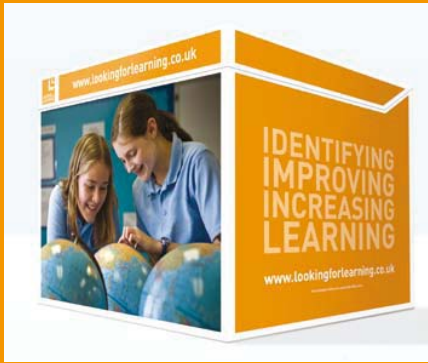
Q: Do you like knowing that you are making progress with your learning?

Jessica Answers: "Yes. I like the new learning because you don't have to do the same old thing."

Q: What do you do when you find the learning hard?

Jessica Answers: "When learning gets hard you can ask your friends if they know and they can help. Each Friday we bring our Home Learning books in and share what we've been learning at home and if you find something you like that someone else has done, you can use that idea and do it at home yourself. It makes me feel happy that other people like my ideas and want to use them. I think that's a good idea."

Lily Answers: "It makes me feel free as I can look at other people's work without getting told off for copying; I'm just using their ideas."



The Looking for Learning Toolkit is based on six years of consultancy work with leading schools around the world. The rationale for the creation of a toolkit version of the consultancy support was that all schools should have access to a meaningful and jargon-free development programme at a cost that wasn't prohibitive. The Looking for Learning Toolkit was launched in March 2009 and is already being used in over 260 schools.

The Looking for Learning Toolkit is a cost-effective, practical, results-oriented leadership toolkit to help schools become more focused on learning. The Toolkit, described by one Head as "my new management bible" includes five manuals and supporting DVDs containing strategies and suggestions relevant for any school to become learning-focused. This includes the very latest information about

learning and how it happens, a unique protocol to identify, improve and increase learning in the classroom, an online database to record and disaggregate improvements in learning by kind, subject, class, year-group and whole school, a series of fully explained rubrics that help schools identify how learning-focused they are in more than thirty elements of school life, a collection of management strategies to help school leaders develop learning-focused schools and membership of The Learning Network; a live on-line community of learning-focused schools from around the world sharing best practice and experiences.

To find out more about the Looking for Learning Toolkit or to talk to a school working with the Looking for Learning Toolkit in your area call us at 020 7531 9696 or email info@lookingforlearning.co.uk

IDENTIFYING IMPROVING INCREASING LEARNING

in YOUR school

