C HAPTER 5

Analysing needs, setting objectives and drawing up action plans

- ■ Analysing needs

- ■ Setting an objective

- ■ Drawing up action plans

- ■ When a new teacher is struggling

Analysing needs

Identifying learning needs is important because it really isn't that easy. Identifying needs can be done superficially, with people saying what they want rather than what they need – or why. Most people benefit from a real and accurate analysis in order to get the help they need. For instance, does someone with control problems need a behaviour management course? Perhaps, but in my experience problems with behaviour are the symptom of something else: the root cause might be to do with planning, relationships, attitude, organisation or expectations.

It's very hard to decide what to work on when things are not going right, because each problem has a huge knock-on effect – and some NQTs have suffered from not having areas for development accurately diagnosed. Particularly when someone has a problem, it needs to be reflected upon and analysed in order to draw up the most useful objectives and plan of action. These steps are useful in analysing development needs:

1. *Brainstorm the problem's features*. It's good to look at exactly what the problem is and its consequences. For instance, new teacher Annie's control problems included the following:
   - ■ Her voice is thin and becomes screechy when raised.
   - ■ Sometimes she comes down hard on the pupils and at other times she lets them get away with things.
   - ■ She takes a long time to get attention.
   - ■ She runs out of time so plenaries are missed, the class is late to assembly, etc.

- Pupils call out.
- Pupils are too noisy.
- A small group of pupils is behaving badly.
- Even the usually well-behaved pupils are being naughty.

When you've made the list, look at it. Does it seem a fair picture? It's easy to be too hard or too generous.

2. *List some positive features* relating to the problem area. For instance, Annie:
   - really likes and cares for the pupils;
   - speaks to them with respect;
   - plans interesting work for them;
   - is very effective when working with individuals or small groups;
   - works hard and has better control in the early part of the day.

3. *Reflection time*. Think about why things go well – reflection on successes is very powerful. For instance, Annie realised that things were better in the mornings because she was fresher and when she had a teaching assistant with her. The process of analysing strengths is very helpful and this positive thinking can now be used to reflect on problems. It's important to diagnose the reasons for the problem – the root cause. For instance, rather than saying that 'noisy pupils cause Annie problems', be more diagnostic: 'noise causes Annie to overstretch her voice, which compromises her authority'. Test out your hypotheses with the teacher and anyone else who can comment.

Setting an objective

Once needs have been analysed, it's useful to encapsulate what to develop into some sort of objective or target. This will provide a framework for doing a complex job at a very fast pace. Setting an objective encourages you to prioritise, be realistic, make best use of time and other resources, and feel a sense of achievement when small steps are made. The very act of writing an objective down forces you to consider whether it is the real priority and gives you something to focus on. Induction tutors could ask questions to structure the setting of an objective, as is shown in Table 5.1.

Michael Tidd, a new teacher in West Sussex, enjoys setting a mix of targets: a few of the 'I'm not very confident in this' type but also an 'I'm fairly knowledgeable about such-and-such, but I'd really like to develop that further' one. He trained to teach Key Stages 2 and 3 and got interested in the whole area of how schools help or hinder young people managing transitions. So, one of his objectives that builds on this strength is to increase liaison between his middle school and the local high schools to examine the continuity of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

A frequent problem with objectives is that they're not made specific enough – 'I want to be a better teacher' – which can lead to failure. Objectives should be SMART:

- Specific

- Measurable

- Achievable

- Relevant

- Time-bound.

Table 5.1 Questions to structure the setting of an objective

Questions	Examples of answers
What would you like to improve?	Challenging higher attainers.
Why? What's the current picture? (What's the evidence?)	Observation, work samples and my gut feeling show that higher attainers could be doing better. Some mess around and avoid working.
How will you know that things have improved?	Higher attainers will be engaged in lessons and will produce good work.
What do you need to do to meet this objective?	Plan more challenging work. Raise expectations of what they can achieve.
	Develop my questioning skills so that I can really get them thinking. Where possible, set them purposeful problems to solve.
	Seize opportunities for pupils to extend themselves, e.g. competitions or projects.
What professional development will help you?	Discuss with gifted and talented coordinator.
	Find ideas from websites such as www.londongt.org.
	Read and use Bloom's taxonomy of questioning.
	Observe two teachers (one in present school, one in another) with a reputation for challenging higher attainers, and discuss strategies.
How should your progress and its impact be monitored?	Keep track that activities happen by the date agreed.
	In the third week of March, observe a lesson and look at the work of three pupils to see impact.

An objective such as 'Improve control' may be too large. It's better to be more specific about what needs most urgent attention. For Annie this was: 'To improve control, particularly after playtimes, in independent literacy activities, at tidying-up time, and home-time within a half-term'. Is that specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound? I think so.

It's useful to think about how you will know whether things are better in a year's time: aim high, but be realistic. These points then become the success criteria around which you draw up an action plan of what needs to be done when. Think of actions to remedy situations – they can be surprisingly easy. It's often the small things that make a difference.

Drawing up an action plan

Once you've chosen an area to develop, you need to decide how you're going to do so – and draw up an action plan with dates. What budget or time allocation is there? You may think there's none, but ask around. All schools have to meet their staff development needs and there should be money, time and resources available. Choose something that's going to work for them within the timescale, whether it's reading a book, watching Teachers TV, going on a course or observing someone's lesson.

Annie completed a very detailed action plan (see Table 5.2). Such detail is not always necessary, though it illustrates how breaking a problem into manageable chunks helps. For her, these were:

- to get attention more quickly;
- to shout rarely;
- to plan for behaviour management;
- to set up procedures for sorting out disputes after playtimes, tidying, hometime, and independent literacy activities.

Table 5.2 An action plan to meet an objective: improving control*

Name: Annie   Date: 10 Sept.   Date objective to be met: 19 Oct.

Objective: To improve control, particularly after playtimes, in independent activities, at tidying-up time, and hometime.

Success criteria	Actions	When	Progress notes
Pupils will know what the class rules are	Write class rules with the children and discuss why they're important. Display prominently. Refer to them when individuals are sticking to the rules and when they're breaking them	11 Sept.	*12 Oct. Working well. Children remind each other sometimes!*
I will get attention more quickly	Brainstorm attention-getting devices with other teachers. Use raised hand	15 Sept.	
I will rarely shout	Voice management within NQT course Project the voice Don't talk over children	29 Sept.	*19 Oct. Using more range in voice – working!*
I will have 20 strategies for rewarding good behaviour	Brainstorm (with other teachers) ways to respond to positive and negative behaviour. Order them in terms of	26 Sept.	*8 Oct. Working well when I remember but when I'm tired I'm more inclined to nag!*
I will have 20 strategies for responding to poor behaviour	positiveness (a treat) and negativity (leave the room). Remember to use light touch responses to negative behaviour and plenty of responses to good behaviour and ask teaching assistant to, as well. Ask teaching assistant to give me feedback on how I'm doing		
There will be procedures for sorting out disputes after playtimes	Glean ideas from other teachers Ask playground supervisors to note serious incidents Children to post messages in incident box	11 Oct.	*18 Oct. Incident box really working for those who can write and I can now tell when there's a serious problem.*
Tidying will be done more quickly	Discuss and observe what other teachers do Start tidying earlier and time it with reward for beating record. Play a track of music – all to be finished by the end!	18 Sept.	*25 Sept. Working well though still a few children not helping. Might try minutes off playtime.*
There will be procedures for hometime	Observe and discuss ideas with other teachers Monitors to organise things to take home Start hometime procedures earlier and time them (with rewards?)	25 Sept.	*12 Oct. Changed routine so tidy earlier. Some Year 6 children helping give out things to take home.*

*See Template 1 in the Appendix for a blank version.

Her professional development didn't cost much: one course on voice management and lots of observation and discussion. The impact, however, was great because the CPD was so finely tuned to solving problems with managing behaviour.

Writing annual reports to parents is another area guaranteed to overwhelm even the most organised of new teachers, so there's an action plan in Table 5.3 that you could adapt for your own purposes by putting in dates appropriate to your situation.

Table 5.3 An action plan to meet an objective: reports (See Template 1 in the Appendix for a blank version)

Name:	Date:	Date objective to be met:		
Objective:	Write annual reports to parents that give a clear picture of children's progress and achievements.			
Success criteria	*Actions*		*When*	*Progress*
You have an evidence base - i.e. you know what each child can do	Collate assessment information so that you know what each child can do in the key aspects of every subject. Gather information from other teachers if necessary. Fill gaps in knowledge of what the class can do. Give pupils a self-assessment so that you have insight into what they think they've learnt and their greatest achievements.			
You know what the school expects.	Find out the school system for writing reports – speak to the assessment coordinator. Read some examples that have been identified as being good. Note stylistic features and key phrases.			
You have written one report to an acceptable standard	Read the children's previous year's report. Write one child's report in draft. Give to the headteacher for comment.			
You have a timetable that will enable you to meet the deadline.	Set up the system for reports (i.e. computer format). Draw up a timetable of when you're going to write the reports, allowing about two hours for first five, one hour for next twenty, three quarters for last five, one-third over half-term. Liaise with other teachers who are contributing to the reports.			
You meet the deadline	Write the reports. Give them to the headteacher for checking and signing. Celebrate!			
Review				

When a new teacher is struggling

I know it's fashionable to say that less is more, but when it comes to action plans I think detail really helps: breaking tasks into bite-sized chunks helps and makes you feel as though you're

making progress. Where a new teacher is struggling it's even more important to diagnose the problem and put into action a detailed plan. In the example in Table 5.4, the induction tutor, the head of department and the SENCO were involved in different aspects. The induction tutor and SENCO focused on the improvement and implementation of behaviour strategies while the head of department concentrated on the teaching and learning strategies. No class will behave if the work's boring! Everyone kept records of all the support and monitoring they did and all notes of meetings and lesson observations were signed and dated by the NQT and whoever else was present. Copies of all paperwork were kept in folders by both the induction tutor and NQT.

Table 5.4 An action plan to meet an objective: behaviour (See template in the appendix for a blank version) (based on Bleach *et al.*, 2004: Appendix 4.3)

Name:	Date:	Date objective to be met:
Objective: To implement appropriate behaviour strategies so that all pupils behave well and make satisfactory progress throughout the lesson		

Success criteria	Actions	When	Progress
Use a range of strategies to establish and maintain the satisfactory behaviour of pupils throughout lessons. All pupils will be on task throughout lessons and make appropriate progress.	1. NQT is asked to read the school behaviour policy and note issues causing difficulty or areas which need further guidance 2. NQT and induction tutor discuss the school behaviour policy and how to implement it. NQT agrees which behaviour strategies are to be implemented immediately 3. NQT implements the behaviour strategies agreed 4. Induction tutor arranges for head of department to observe lesson and identify any teaching and learning issues hindering good behaviour 5. NQT and head of department discuss the lessons observed. Appropriate teaching and learning strategies discussed. Exemplar lesson plans explained to NQT. NQT agrees a way forward re planning 6. NQT implements the teaching and learning strategies discussed with head of department 7. NQT reads appropriate professional texts on teaching and learning strategies 8. Induction tutor arranges for phase coordinator to observe lessons and focus on teaching and learning 9. NQT reads the individual education plans of pupils with behaviour difficulties in their classes and notes issues and areas which need further guidance 10. NQT and SENCO discuss the individual education plans and how these can be implemented 11. NQT implements the behaviour strategies suggested by the SENCO and evaluates the impact of these strategies in lessons 12. Induction tutor observes one lesson to focus on NQT's implementation of strategies 13. Induction tutor researches and identifies an appropriate behaviour management/assertive discipline course. Books a place and arranges cover for NQT 14. Induction tutor researches and identifies appropriate behaviour management/ assertive discipline texts to recommend to NQT		

15. NQT attends behaviour management course and
    identifies behaviour strategies to implement
16. NQT implements additional range of strategies
    identified on behaviour management course and
    agreed with tutor
17. Induction tutor observes a lesson to focus on NQT's
    implementation of behaviour strategies from course
18. Induction tutor arranges for NQT to observe with the
    induction tutor at least two other teachers teaching the
    pupils who pose most difficulty for NQT
19. NQT implements additional behaviour strategies
    identified from joint lesson observations with tutor
20. NQT has in-class coaching using earpiece for the NQT
    and microphone by the tutor
21. NQT given a critical friend/buddy (a second year
    teacher) for support
22. NQT evaluates, as an ongoing process, the effectiveness
    of strategies with different groups

Identifying and analysing needs can be time-consuming but – as with any in-depth look at pupils' learning needs – the effort is worthwhile. The next challenge is to find the best way to meet the identified needs, which is the subject of the next chapter.