The challenge of lesson endings

If we take Mike Hughes’s research ideas it can be seen from the first graph on page 16 that much learning is also undertaken at the end of lessons. In order to maximise this there are a number of tactics which can support you to make the time more organised and productive.

- End early. Don’t try to cover too much material in one hit. Don’t mistake pace for manic activity. Leave at least eight minutes to finish off the lesson properly.
- Use a structured plenary to end the session. This should be a group or individual reflection on what has been learned.
- Ask the pupils to identify two or three key points they have learned from the lesson. These can be shared in small groups either written or as drawings and cartoons. A review of these points could become a regular feature of a homework routine.
- Summarise the learning.
- Set the scene for the following lesson.
- Have clear routines for an organised departure. Don’t fall into the trap of not clearing away apparatus in good time. Make sure that pupils put on their coats as a last task before leaving the room.
- Vary the way in which the pupils are dismissed, for example, row-by-row, small groups, alphabetically, one by one after answering a question. This will help keep the lesson focus right until the end.

Planning plenary activities

Your Key Stage 3 science consultant can help out by providing lots of ideas which are both generic and activity-specific. The big challenge is to make these as varied as possible. The Key Stage 3 Strategy leaflet Making good use of the plenary lists the purposes of the plenary as to:

- draw together what has been learned, to highlight the most important rather than the most recent points, to summarise key facts, ideas and vocabulary, and stress what needs to be remembered;
- generalise from examples generated earlier in the lesson;
- go through an exercise, question pupils and rectify any misunderstandings (misconceptions);
- make links to other work and what the class will do next;
- highlight not only the progress that has been made and remind them about personal targets;
- set homework to extend or consolidate classwork and prepare for future lessons.

You can also find ideas for plenary activities in the science-training unit Effective lessons in science (2003).
**Task 11**

### Improving endings

15 minutes

As with the previous task, choose a class you are confident to work with. Keep in mind the tactics mentioned above, plan a lesson ending to include a plenary activity. At the beginning of the lesson explain to the class what you have planned for the plenary and why. This will help them to prepare. With your teacher partner, review how the lesson ending went, then plan to incorporate more into future lessons.

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### Structuring the learning

You will have been asked on a number of occasions through your career to state what you believe constitutes a good lesson. While we all have a slightly different view of this there is some consistency in the views held by the majority of teachers. Most would agree that the requirements for good teaching and learning require that teachers:

- focus and structure their teaching;
- actively engage pupils in their learning;
- develop systematically pupils’ learning skills to support independence;
- use assessment for learning to reinforce learning and support reflection and target setting;
- have high expectations of each pupil’s effort and achievement;
- make the learning motivating (well-paced, stimulating activities, range of learning styles);
- create a settled and purposeful atmosphere.

Within this there are some fundamental aspects of a lesson designed with the learner in mind which can be summarised as:

1. Locate the lesson (scheme of work, prior knowledge, preferred learning styles)
2. Identify the essential objectives (knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, personal development)
3. Structure the lesson as a series of episodes
4. Decide how to teach each episode (pedagogic approach, teaching and learning strategy, organisation)
5. Ensure coherence (starter, transition between episodes, a final plenary)
This diagram demonstrates how lesson planning needs a number of different inputs in order to be successful for pupils. In this unit we have looked at climate and organisation which should pervade each ‘episode’ of the lesson.

**Task 12**  
**Reflection**  

Locate the map that you drew for task 1. Think about the tasks and reading that you have undertaken through completing this unit. Look for areas that you have developed and perhaps some areas that you know about now but were unaware of before.

Alter your map to reflect your current thinking about the learning climate.

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**Summary of evidence**

**Summary of research**

Summarised from *Effective teaching: a review of the literature*, by David Reynolds and Daniel Muijs, available at www.teachernet.gov.uk

In any lesson a major factor in determining how effectively pupils learn is time on task which is in turn related to classroom management. Five significant aspects of classroom management have been identified:

- Starting the lesson
- Seating arrangements
- Establishing clear rules and procedures
- Maintaining momentum during the lesson
- Ending the lesson

**Starting the lesson**

Teachers can ensure as fast and smooth a transition to appropriate classroom behaviour as possible by instituting some set procedures for dealing with lesson starts. These might include: writing instructions on the board before the pupils come in so they can get started on the lesson immediately, training pupils to take the roll and read instructions and having certain set activities that pupils can start doing as soon as they come into the classroom.

**Seating arrangements**

These need to be suitable for the type of lesson teachers intend to give. For co-operative group work it is recommended that groups sit around tables to allow them to interact easily with each other, an arrangement which is not effective if pupils need to work individually. Seating pupils around a big table or in a circle or semicircle can facilitate whole-class discussion, whereas seating in rows must be avoided.