Key skills

Six skill areas are described as key skills because they help learners to improve their learning and performance in education, work and life.

Communication

The key skill of communication includes skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Skills in speaking and listening include the ability to speak effectively for different audiences; to listen, understand and respond appropriately to others; and to participate effectively in group discussion. Skills in reading and writing include the ability to read fluently a range of literary and non-fiction texts and to reflect critically on what is read; and the ability to write fluently for a range of purposes and audiences, including critical analysis of their own and others' writing. Opportunities for developing this key skill are provided through English in particular and through pupils' use of language across the curriculum.

Application of number

The key skill of application of number includes developing a range of mental calculation skills and the ability to apply them within a variety of contexts. Skills include developing the understanding and use of mathematical language related to numbers and calculations in order to process data, solve increasingly complex problems and explain the reasoning used. Pupils need to be able to apply calculation skills and the understanding of number to problems in other National Curriculum subjects and to real-life situations. Opportunities for developing this key skill are provided explicitly in mathematics.

Information technology

The key skill of information technology includes the ability to use a range of information sources and ICT tools to find, analyse, interpret, evaluate and present information for a range of purposes. Skills include the ability to make critical and informed judgements about when and how to use ICT for maximum benefit in accessing information, in solving problems or for expressive work. The ability to use ICT information sources includes enquiry and decision-making skills, as well as information-processing and creative thinking skills and the ability to review, modify and evaluate work with ICT. Opportunities for developing this key skill are provided explicitly through the subject of ICT and through pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum.

Working with others

The key skill of working with others includes the ability to contribute to small-group and whole-class discussion, and to work with others to meet a challenge. If pupils are to work with others they must develop social skills and a growing awareness and understanding of others' needs. All subjects provide

opportunities for pupils to cooperate and work effectively with others in formal and informal settings, to appreciate the experience of others and consider different perspectives, and to benefit from what others think, say and do.

Improving own learning and performance

The key skill of improving own learning and performance involves pupils reflecting on and critically evaluating their work and what they have learnt, and identifying ways to improve their learning and performance. They need to be able to identify the purposes of learning, to reflect on the processes of learning, to assess progress in learning, to identify obstacles or problems in learning and to plan ways to improve learning. All subjects provide opportunities for pupils to review their work and discuss ways to improve their learning.

Problem solving

The key skill of problem solving involves pupils developing the skills and strategies that will help them to solve the problems they face in learning and in life. Problem solving includes the skills of identifying and understanding a problem, planning ways to solve a problem, monitoring progress in tackling a problem and reviewing solutions to problems. All subjects provide pupils with opportunities to respond to the challenge of problems and to plan, test, modify and review the progress needed to achieve particular outcomes.

Thinking Skills

For details of North Yorkshire LEA activities related to Thinking Skills go to:

www.n-yorks.net

By using thinking skills pupils can focus on ‘knowing how’ as well as ‘knowing what’ – learning how to learn. The following thinking skills complement the key skills and are embedded in the National Curriculum.

Information-processing skills
These enable pupils to locate and collect relevant information, to sort, classify, sequence, compare and contrast, and to analyse part/whole relationships.

Reasoning skills
These enable pupils to give reasons for opinions and actions, to draw inferences and make deductions, to use precise language to explain what they think, and to make judgements and decisions informed by reasons or evidence.

Enquiry skills
These enable pupils to ask relevant questions, to pose and define problems, to plan what to do and how to research, to predict outcomes and anticipate consequences, and to test conclusions and improve ideas.

Creative thinking skills
These enable pupils to generate and extend ideas, to suggest hypotheses, to apply imagination, and to look for alternative innovative outcomes.

Evaluation skills
These enable pupils to evaluate information, to judge the value of what they read, hear and do, to develop criteria for judging the value of their own and others' work or ideas, and to have confidence in their judgements.

Levels of Learning within Thinking Skills

It has long been recognised that students learn at different levels, through low order skills such as:

- **Knowledge - What do you want students to know**

- **Understanding - What do you want students to understand**

- **Application - What do you want students to be able to do**

- **Attitudes - What attitudes do you want students to develop**

And through high order skills such as:

- **Analysis - Examine in detail and explore the personal usefulness of**

- **Synthesis - Combine information from a variety of sources and make personal use of**

- **Evaluation - Judge the value to themselves of the things they have encountered**

(Blooms Taxonomy)