



The International Primary Curriculum
Self-Review and Accreditation Manual

**GREAT
LEARNING
GREAT
TEACHING
GREAT
FUN**

Introduction

Over the past five years, the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) has been adopted by more than 200 schools around the world. At least a half of those schools has joined the IPC in the past two years.

Since it began the IPC has believed that an effective curriculum is one of the most important supporting elements in the development of learning-focused schools. We haven't, therefore, made any pre-qualification requirements to schools that wish to join the IPC, trusting that the IPC will be of help in the developments each school has identified as being important.

But the question of quality is an important one. The IPC is a rigorous, learning-focused curriculum that sets out to help teachers help children learn and develop academically, internationally and as people.

Many schools contact us with requests for help about improving the quality of learning in their schools or improving their implementation of the IPC. We respond to these requests with telephone support, web-based support, face-to-face advice, in-school training and development, regional conferences and our annual summer school.

As our membership grows, we know that the quality of learning schools achieve with the support of the IPC varies. This accreditation protocol is a further tool that will help schools both define and improve the quality of IPC implementation. It has been two years in development and has received critical feedback from headteachers, principals and teachers in many IPC schools. We are grateful for their help in making it as user-friendly and as practically helpful as possible.

Theresa Forbes

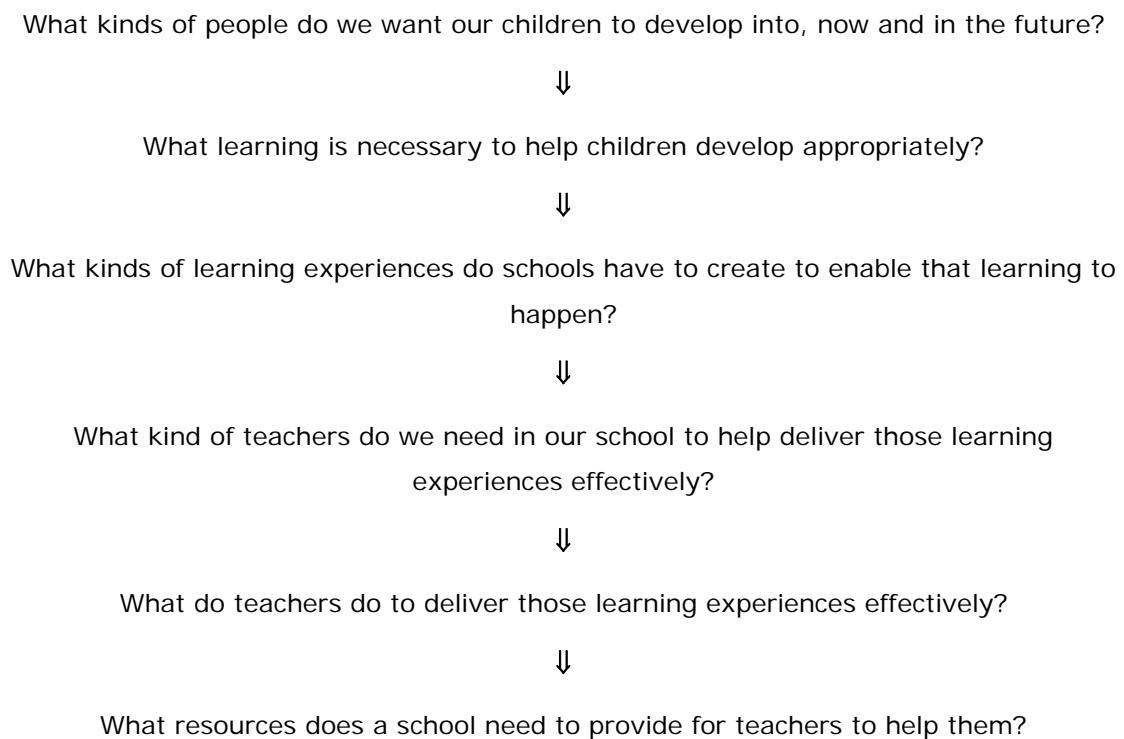
Director, International Primary Curriculum, October 2006

The Big Picture

Some key IPC ideas

The place of curriculum

Our view is that curriculum is not the most important factor in developing learning-focused schools, even though it is an important one. Our experience of working with schools and reviewing the research into the practice of effective schools tells us that there is a hierarchy of questions successful schools have answered. They are represented in the diagram below:



You can find out more about our ideas about, and responses to, these questions on our website, www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com, but it is part of our view that curriculum is one of the answers to the last of these questions. That's why we would much rather schools talk about the children they are helping to develop or the learning they hope to achieve. It's why we sometimes surprise people by asking them not to say

'We do the IPC here'. The IPC is the tool; it isn't the outcome. To put it boldly, there are no points for *doing* the IPC; there are only points for using the IPC effectively to help children learn and develop.

It's all about learning

Put simply, learning is the star of the show. Learning is the process by which children become the kinds of people we hope they will become, now and in the future. What they learn, the breadth of that learning and how they learn all impact on their development. The IPC has been designed to help teachers help children learn effectively and with enjoyment.

Three kinds of learning

When the IPC was being designed we talked to lots of people about the qualities and attributes children will need to function effectively and at ease in the 21st century. These qualities and attributes fall into three categories:

- *High academic standards.* We believe it is important that children should develop as fully and appropriately as possible their knowledge, skills and understandings across a range of subjects. We do not believe in shallow learning or narrow learning.
- *High levels of personal development.* Although we believe that high academic standards will be essential for living in the 21st century they won't be sufficient. It is also important that children develop a portfolio of personal skills and attitudes that will enable them to take part in a changing and dynamic world.
- *A high degree of international mindedness.* We believe that a growing awareness of others, and in particular, an awareness of and ability to work with other cultures and nationalities, is essential to living in a global world.

Rigorous learning

Just as curriculum is a tool that schools can use, so the activities in a curriculum are the tools that can enable learning to take place. We believe that if learning is to happen then children should engage in the activities contained in the IPC with rigour and engagement. 'Doing' the activities is not what the IPC is about. It is about engaging rigorously and enthusiastically in the activities so that learning will happen.

Brain friendly

The explosion of research into the brain may herald the golden age of learning and teaching, when we will be able to design and facilitate activities to enable learning better than ever before. But there is also the possibility that it may not. Brain research is still in its infancy and the links being made between its, as yet unproven, findings and classroom action are sometimes too tenuous for words. We need to go very carefully.

Nevertheless, the design of the IPC has been influenced by some of the evidence of brain research which we believe to be well-founded and recognisable by teachers in classrooms.

The purposes of IPC Self-Review and Accreditation

The purposes of IPC Self-Review and Accreditation are to enable schools to:

- review their implementation of the IPC and its impact on learning
- implement the key elements of the IPC that most impact on learning
- make decisions about developments they need to make to improve the contribution the IPC makes to learning
- receive, when they request it, an external view of the school's own review and, when schools choose, for the IPC to:
- award an externally validated mark of quality to the school.

A brief description of IPC Self-Review and Accreditation

IPC Accreditation is based on nine key criteria. They are:

- A clear focus on children's learning.
- Shared outcomes about the kinds of children we are helping to develop.
- Awareness of classroom practices that help children develop as we would like.
- International mindedness.
- An appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and reflection leading to understanding.
- Appropriately rigorous children's learning, and teachers' high expectations of it.
- Implementation of brain-friendly elements of the IPC.
- Implementation of themes through integrated yet separate subjects.
- Assessment and evaluation that supports and informs learning rather than dictates it.

Each of these criteria is explained in more detail in the section below.

The developmental stages of each of these criteria are described in a rubric. The rubric follows the established IPC pattern of *Beginning*, *Developing* and *Mastering*. Each of these is a description of a stage that the school currently occupies. Each is also capable of development. Mastering does not imply that everything is perfect. It implies that the school is working and developing at the highest level of implementation.

The self-review and accreditation process is supported by advice in this introduction. Updated written and spoken advice can always be found on the IPC website: www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com

The accreditation process – and the attainment of an accreditation certificate and award – is also supported by external validation of the school's own self-review.

The main criteria explained

A clear focus on children's learning

In the opening paragraphs to this document, we said that 'learning is the star of the show', and there is hardly a school in the world that doesn't profess itself to be learning-focused.

But there is a gap between schools that take this view seriously and those that pay a degree of lip-service to it. Our experience has shown us that the most successful schools – the schools in which children learn best academically, personally and internationally – are those that are able to embed the idea of learning deep into everything they do. (We might think of the adult who says that they want the world to be a peaceful place and who is able to embed a real awareness of the 'other' into their own lives and the adult who expresses the same hope but isn't able to live their own life without antagonism and anger. Both intentions are good but the practice of one is more appropriate than that of the other.)

Because the IPC is committed to children's learning, it has been designed to help teachers help children learn. But this learning will take place best when it is set in a context of a whole school focus on learning. To think for a moment what such a focus might look like, we can ask the following few questions as pointers. What is the difference between:

- a lesson, and a learning-focused lesson?
- a staff meeting, and a learning-focused staff meeting?
- a parent consultation evening, and a learning-focused parent consultation evening?

You can try this question with everything you do in your school. 'What would be happening if this activity was really learning focused?'

Shared outcomes about the kinds of children we are helping to develop

We have already indicated that we believe that the fundamental question schools need to address is 'What kinds of people are we helping children develop into, both now and in the future?' Everything a school does should be built on a vision of the kind of child we believe we are helping to develop. A school that wants to develop independent thinkers will be a very different place than a school that wants to develop obedience to an external authority. A school that wants children to develop broad interests will be a different place than a school that only wants children to pass exams.

The schools that have already achieved great success with the IPC are those which have identified the link between what the IPC has to offer and the contribution they hope to make to the development of their children.

We believe that this overarching view should be made explicit by schools; it is the most important 'wall' against which most of the school's decisions can be bounced. There are many ways in which schools can produce such a description and you'll find a range of ideas on the website. The staff of one school, for example, thought about what life in the 21st century might be like and then identified people – both famous and unknown to most others – whom they felt demonstrated at least one of the qualities or attributes that they believed would be helpful to children as they move into the world. They then reviewed the list of qualities and attributes they had identified and refined them into a set of 'exit outcomes' for their own children.

Awareness of classroom practices that help children develop as we would like

We have already mentioned the way in which classroom practices and the learning experiences they provide for children should reflect the kinds of children we are hoping to develop. This criterion encourages schools to make this link explicit rather than implicit.

In doing so, we know that each child and each class must experience a wide range of activities if their 'exit outcomes' are to be achieved.

For example, the 'ability to think independently' means that children must be given the opportunities to develop their own ideas and not slavishly to follow the textbook or a teacher's ideas; it also means that teachers have to be able to deal with disagreement and occasional conflict. Developing the ability to 'think independently' requires classroom experiences that are flexible and open-ended.

Developing the 'ability to work with rigour' means that children have to be helped to see that high standards of thinking, responding and recording are vital if they are to become deep rather than shallow learners.

There is a temptation to think that flexible and open-ended classrooms cannot co-exist with rigour and discipline of the best kind. But if both *independent thinking* and *working with rigour* are two of the qualities we want children to develop then flexibility and rigour must be able to co-exist.

Linking the kinds of children we want our children to become with classroom experiences will help schools build consistency and help them explain to others the variety of ways in which their classrooms operate.

International mindedness

The IPC was designed only after we had engaged extensively in our own discussions and research about the world our young children are, and will be, a part of. (In other words, we began by asking our own questions about the qualities and attributes young children will need to develop.)

We believe that *international mindedness* is one of those attributes and one that is going to be central to the lives of children who may

- travel more
- work away from their home country in different cultural settings
- work in their home countries but for organisations operating within different cultural parameters
- live in their home countries but alongside increasingly diverse cultures

- be a part of solving world problems, such as the environment, that require the contribution of different cultures
- live in a world that is influenced significantly by events generating from within cultures other than their own.

Equally, though, we appreciate that the development of international mindedness is not straightforward. It is a complex issue with just one of the complexities being the links between the developmental levels of young children and what it means for them to be internationally minded at different ages through the primary and elementary school.

It is a basic principle of the IPC that it isn't possible to use the IPC without implementing those elements related to the development of international mindedness. This criterion encourages schools to make that commitment explicit and to make judgements about the progress they are making.

An appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and reflection leading to understanding

Teachers and colleagues who have experienced IPC professional development courses will be aware of the importance of *knowledge, skills and understanding* to the IPC and of the way they underpin the many activities within each of the PC units.

We believe that 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'understanding' are all important in the development of children's learning. We also believe that the development of *understanding* is far more complex than many curriculum developers acknowledge and that the relationship between knowledge, skills and understanding has still to be adequately defined. We believe that this is true for all learning but is particularly true for the learning of children between five and twelve.

We also believe that *knowledge, skills and understanding* have their own distinct characteristics that impact on how each is learned and, by definition, what teachers have to do in the classroom to facilitate the learning of each.

This criterion encourages schools to make the learning goals of the IPC the starting point for their work, to look reflectively at the balance in children's learning between the different kinds of learning goals and to reflect on the classroom practices that help children develop each.

Appropriately rigorous children's learning and teachers' high expectations of it

When we were working to choose the 'strap line' for the IPC a colleague in one of our member schools suggested 'Great Learning, Great Teaching, Great Fun'. It summed up so much of what we want to help schools achieve that we adopted it immediately.

It remains our strap line after four years but its meaning has deepened for us as each year has passed. Rather than becoming tired of it, we are only now appreciating quite how powerful this expression is.

One of the reasons for this is that as we have observed our own learning and that of our friends, colleagues and others as we have looked for learning in classrooms around the world and as we have discussed learning with both practitioners and academics, it becomes clearer to us that *rigour* is an important component of each of those three elements.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi talks of the state of 'flow' as being one of the components of great fun, expressed through deep engagement in activities so that time appears to slip away. 'Great fun' in this context is something that results from rigorous engagement in an activity as much as it results from a quick hit of immediate gratification.

We know that deep learning results from the willingness to be interested and committed to one's work; interested and committed to the processes of both research, through which ideas and issues are investigated and explored, and to the process of recording, through which we make sense of what it is we have experienced.

We know that the difference between the best teachers and the rest is the rigour they bring to the planning of their work and, even more importantly, to the appropriateness

of their interventions with children in the classroom and the feedback they give children that improves children's learning.

This criterion, therefore, encourages schools to move away from a superficial execution of the IPC towards a more rigorous and deeply felt range of learning experiences and responses.

Implementation of brain-friendly elements of the IPC

We have already said that recent research into the brain is having both a positive and negative impact on learning and teaching.

Positive because it is providing teachers with some new insights into how to facilitate learning; it is providing a research base for ideas that teachers have held intuitively for many years; and it is helping children to be more aware of the processes of their own learning.

Negative because there is a danger that evidence from laboratory experimentation is being transferred too quickly to the classroom either before it is corroborated by other researchers or before its applicability to human learning has been verified. Even worse, some current 'brain-friendly' advice to teachers is based on no evidence at all.

Fieldwork Education, the sister organisation of the IPC, has been working with teachers for nearly ten years on the links between brain research and the classroom and we have used the knowledge gained in that work in the design and implementation of the IPC. We believe that six aspects of brain research currently provide input to the learning and teaching process that are both valuable and helpful. They are the evidence about:

- the behaviour of neurons and the importance of connections (IPC link – The Big Picture)
- neuronal constellations, the existing neuronal clusters to which new learning is added or existing learning consolidated (IPC link – The Knowledge Harvest, Mind Mapping)

- the links between stress and learning and the importance of ‘high challenge, low stress’ or ‘relaxed alertness’ (IPC link – Rigour and Engagement)
- learning styles, or the way learners take in information and experiences differently (IPC link – Researching)
- multiple intelligences, or the way in which information and experiences are processed (IPC link - Reflecting and Recording)
- slow thinking, or the way the brain processes complex information over time (IPC link – Reflecting and revisiting)

This criterion helps schools and teachers to check that well-researched methodologies that help learning and that are supported by the IPC are being used in classrooms and to evaluate how well they are being used and the impact they are having.

Implementation of themes through integrated yet separate subjects

The IPC is a curriculum based on the western canon. As such, we believe that it is important for young children to be introduced to a number of the subjects – science, history, geography, music etc – that make up that canon.

At the same time the IPC is based on the study of themes. This is because ‘themes’ (such as ‘Chocolate’) provide motivation to children and reflect the interests of primary and elementary aged children.

The IPC is also based on the idea that themes are better studied from a multi-disciplinary perspective. This is partly because it makes no sense, for example, to think of a city as only a geographical or historical entity (or ‘Chocolate’ as only something scientific) and partly because multi-disciplinary responses are more appropriate to the 21st century. (What single discipline solutions can you think of that will respond to our concerns about the environment, about Aids or about international relations?)

One of the legitimate criticisms of much ‘topic’ work in primary schools is that it isn’t always well-founded on any particular knowledge or discipline, but an equally legitimate

criticism of single-subject teaching is that it creates unnecessary and unhelpful barriers between subjects and a narrower view of the world than is helpful.

By designing interdisciplinary units that children learn through the different subjects ('For the next few weeks we will be learning about chocolate through our science lens but in the few weeks after that we'll be learning about chocolate through our geography lens') the IPC has tried to ensure that children are introduced to both the separate subjects of the curriculum and to the way in which they come together to develop a broader perspective.

This criterion helps schools and teachers to reflect on the impact of this design on their children's learning and what they can do to improve it further.

Assessment and evaluation that supports and informs learning

rather than dictates it

To be a learning-focused school is also to be focused on assessment and evaluation; assessment and evaluation are no more than the ways in which we find out whether learning is taking and has taken place. Learning, assessment and evaluation work together.

There are two purposes of assessment and evaluation – to report on learning and to improve learning. We think both are important.

Assessment and evaluation for reporting is necessary because a number of stakeholders have the right to know how well children are learning compared with other similar children in school or elsewhere, or how well children have learned at the end of a year or a period of time in school.

Assessment and evaluation for learning are important because they provide the feedback loop through which children can receive the information they need to improve their own learning.

(In the IPC, we distinguish between *assessment*, meaning the use of hard data, and *evaluation*, meaning the use of qualitative judgements, to inform both assessment and evaluation for reporting and assessment and evaluation for learning. What distinguishes assessment and evaluation for learning is the existence of the feedback loop. You might want to see the IPC's Assessment for Learning Programme for more about this.)

Although there is a growing appreciation of the importance of assessment and evaluation for learning the emphasis in schools still tends to be on assessment and evaluation for reporting. In accepting the importance of reporting, we don't believe that there is a causal link between reporting and improvements in learning. (You don't get someone to jump higher only by telling her how high she is currently jumping.)

This rubric, therefore, encourages schools to increase the amount and quality of their assessment and evaluation for learning processes and to help them reflect on how they can improve these processes.

Putting the IPC Self-Review and Accreditation process into practice

The big picture

The IPC Accreditation process is available to all schools with Enhanced Membership status. These member schools will receive the Accreditation Rubric and this guide to the IPC Self-Review and Accreditation process. It will also be available on the IPC website.

Providing your school is an Enhanced Member school you can use the IPC Accreditation Rubric as one of the tools of your own school self-evaluation. As a result of using it this way, you will be able to carry out your own check on the implementation of the key aspects of the IPC and create improvement targets that will form a part of your school improvement plan. When you use the Accreditation Rubric in this way there is no formal involvement of the IPC in the process and no charge for the use of the Rubric or this guide.

But your school can also use the IPC Accreditation Rubric to obtain a formal accreditation from the IPC which can be used publicly to validate the quality of work going on in your school.

To obtain this accreditation, your school will still go through the process of self-evaluation and target-setting. Having done this, a review team from the IPC will visit the school to provide an external review of your IPC self-evaluation and the targets you have evolved from it. The team will provide a written report of their visit and, if the team's view is that your self-evaluation reflects the level of progress you describe, and providing that the review team agree that you are at least at *Developing* level in your implementation of the IPC, the IPC will award you a Certificate of Accreditation that will be valid for three years. This certificate will

describe your school as having been accredited by the IPC at either *Developing* or *Mastering* level.

Securing the services of an accreditation review team will incur a fee that covers team members' time, travel and their subsistence. As one of the purposes of IPC Accreditation is to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the IPC, schools should know that paying this fee is no guarantee that accreditation will be granted.

It is also possible for your school to ask for assistance from the IPC in the preparation of your self-review, whether you opt for a stand-alone self-review process or to use it as the first part of the accreditation process. There will be a charge for the time spent at school to cover time, travel and any subsistence.

The descriptions of each part of the process that follow are indicative of how your school might approach IPC Self-Review and Accreditation, but they are not definitive.

Stage 1 – The School Self-Review

Beginning with the end in mind

The purpose of the school self-review is to gather sufficient evidence around the nine criteria of the IPC Accreditation Rubric so that your school can identify whether it is at the *Beginning*, *Developing* or *Mastering* stage of each of the criteria, to celebrate what you are doing well and to make decisions about how best to improve further.

The pre-visit

Your school might decide to ask for one of the IPC team members to work with you and your colleagues for up to one day before you begin the self-review process. During this visit, each aspect of the Accreditation Rubric will be explored and discussed, with particular attention paid to the kinds of evidence that already exists in school about the school's stage of development. The purpose of the visit would be to make sure that everyone has had a chance to discuss each aspect of the rubric and that there is a shared awareness about the criteria for making judgements and about the difference between *Beginning*, *Developing* and *Mastering* stages.

Gathering evidence

It is essential that your eventual judgements are supported by evidence. If they are not, then the targets you create for your school improvement plan may be inappropriate. (If your school opts to use the self-review process as the first part of the full accreditation process then your report will have to include the evidence on which your judgements are based in order for the accreditation review team to work with you.)

It is possible to use different kinds of evidence to support your judgements:

- *Hard* evidence might be thought of as statistical evidence – '75% of our children were at the level of IPC development that we identified for them but 25% were at a different level.'

- *Soft* evidence might be thought of as more subjective, but nevertheless still well informed – ‘From listening to children’s responses in their IPC lessons, the following of which are just some examples, we feel that children are now focusing much more on what they have learned than previously.’

The self-review and accreditation process does not ask you and your colleagues to do more than is necessary. So the quality of evidence you use is more important than the quantity. It is a good idea to review what evidence your school has with regard to each particular rubric and then to decide what will provide the best indicators for you that describe the full picture of your school.

The clarity of each rubric should make it easier for you and your colleagues to identify what evidence counts and what doesn’t and what evidence is more useful and which is less useful. What follows are examples of the kind of evidence we have seen in many schools:

Rubric	Possible evidence
A clear focus on children’s learning	The beginnings and endings of lessons; listening to teachers talking with children during lessons; working with and talking to children during lessons and also outside of lessons; teachers’ record books, computerised, recording programmes, IPC Assessment for Learning Programme; classroom displays; discussions with parents.
Shared outcomes about the kinds of children we are helping to develop	Visible evidence of children’s personal qualities on the wall, in brochures, letters and elsewhere; discussions with new and existing teachers, children and parents.
Awareness of classroom practices that help children develop as we would like	Your school’s teaching for learning policy; observations in classrooms; discussions with teachers, children, parents, class assistants and others; records of staff professional development; school teacher resource library; parent newsletters; school brochures.
International mindedness	Talking with children; watching children in action with each other; listening to children talk about issues; talking with teachers; watching teachers in action with each other, children, parents and others; listening to teachers talk; classroom learning and activity; wall displays; records of learning; talking with

	parents; policy documents; staff meetings and staff-meeting minutes; school improvement plans.
An appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and reflection leading to understanding	Lesson plans; learning and teaching in classrooms; recording of learning; discussions with children
Appropriately rigorous children's learning and teachers' expectations of it	Observations in classrooms; reviews of children's own records of their work; teachers' plans; discussions with children about their learning; a review of the learning intentions set for lessons and plenary sessions that end them.
Implementation of brain-friendly elements – entry point, knowledge harvest, research/record etc	Teachers' lesson plans; their coverage of the IPC; lesson observations; wall displays; conversations with children; reviews of the quality of learning; individual children's reviews.
Implementation of themes through integrated yet separate subjects	Classroom observations; lesson planning; conversations with children; year-group and staff meeting discussions and minutes; discussions with teachers, classroom assistants and others.
Assessment that supports and informs learning rather than dictates it	Direct links between assessment, evaluation and the defined learning intentions; classroom evidence of feedback to children; evidence in children's books of feedback comments and children's engagement on those comments; children's awareness of how to improve their learning; discussions focused on learning rather than activity; use of an assessment for learning programme; recording of learning; comments on reports and at parent evenings.

The quality and type of evidence in the self-review and accreditation process draw links between it and the IPC Assessment for Learning Programme. In IPC Assessment for Learning, the evidence is not derived from specially designed or bought-in tests but from the work children are doing in the classroom. One of the key elements of assessment for learning is that assessment must be authentic – as near to real – as possible. The evidence for assessment for learning is already available in front of us in the classroom.

The same is true for the IPC Self-Review and Accreditation. The best evidence is that which is closest to the ground, evidence of what is actually happening. It isn't necessary to devise new research tools to take part in IPC Self-Review and

Accreditation. If you and your colleagues are already sharing and discussing practice, monitoring what is happening in your school and disaggregating your hard data, your decision should focus on choosing which evidence will present you with an honest and rounded picture of your school.

Making your judgements

Once you have gathered your evidence the next part of the process is to make your judgement against each particular rubric.

Before you begin this part of the process, have confidence that making a judgement – rather than finding exactly the right answer – is exactly what professionals do. What is important is that if anyone asks you to defend or explain your judgement you can do so by using the evidence you have gathered as the background to the judgements you have made.

Also, it is quite likely that not all of your evidence will fall neatly and wholly into *Beginning*, *Developing* or *Mastering* categories. You are most likely going to come to an overall conclusion that says something like 'Even though we have some evidence that we are only at *Beginning* stage at "international mindedness", overall we believe that the evidence shows that we are at *Developing* stage'. (You may even reach a similar conclusion within an individual criterion.) Conclusions such as this are much closer to the reality of most schools and show that you and your colleagues are able to make professional decisions.

There are a number of ways you can use the evidence you have gained to draw your conclusions about where your school currently is in its development. For example, you might:

- draw the conclusions yourself and tell everyone else (not recommended, but you might)
- draw conclusions with one or two other colleagues
- invite a group of colleagues to come to a draft set of conclusions before presenting them to the rest of your colleagues for critical friendship

- ask different groups of colleagues to take responsibility for one criterion and then bring their conclusions to the whole staff for discussion and ratification
- use professional development days in your school so that all staff can be engaged in the process at the same time
- ask a small group of colleagues not to be involved in the early stages of the process so that they can act as the group offering critical friendship to your draft conclusions
- invite a small group of teachers and parents to act as the critically friendly group to your draft conclusions.

Devising your targets

Your self-review should produce a series of judgements about your use of the IPC to support learning and teaching that you recognise as valid. It will almost certainly highlight aspects of your use of the IPC to support learning and teaching which you can celebrate and aspects you can improve. With regard to the latter, for example, you may think it important:

- to begin the move from one stage to the next of a particular rubric; perhaps *Developing to Mastering*
- to consolidate at one stage across all of the rubrics: 'We are definitely at *Developing* stage in everything except international mindedness where we are at *Beginning* stage. Our next move is to get international mindedness to *Developing* stage, too.'
- to work on one of the statements within a rubric; 'We are very much at *Mastering* stage in international mindedness with the exception of helping all of the stakeholders become aware of our commitment to it. We're really at *Beginning* stage here and we need to improve that.'

and so on.

Whatever you decide, you are in the process of identifying your improvement targets for learning and teaching using the IPC. You will decide later which of these should go into your school improvement plan. To help you think about targets constructively, here are four important points.

First, remember that all targets should be supported by and derived from evidence, whether hard or soft. You must be able to explain the conclusions you have reached and the targets you have identified against the evidence you have found.

Second, and thanks to the work of Eliot Eisner, we have found it helpful to write targets in one of two ways. *Instructional targets* are those that explicitly contain their own outcomes (simplest example: this lesson will finish by 14.45). Instructional targets don't need success criteria because we already know what counts as success; this lesson will finish at any time up to 14.45 but no later. Whenever possible we should try to write targets as explicitly – or as instructionally – as possible.

Expressive targets are targets that cannot be explicit by their very nature but are still important. (Children's motivation towards math will improve this year in Years 5 and 6). There is no obvious hard data that will give us useful evidence of whether we have achieved this target or not. So, expressive targets need success criteria because success criteria are evidence-related statements that *indicate* but can't prove that a target has been achieved. Often, more than one success criterion is used to double check on the achievement of expressive targets. (Success criteria for the target about motivation might include the number of children in Years 5 and 6 who report at the end of the year that they like mathematics is above 80% or that most children show some pleasure when its time for mathematics.)

Third, all targets should be assessed and evaluated throughout the year for progress and achievement. There is always slippage; this is just a fact of life. You need to make regular checks to make sure that the targets are still on everyone's radar, that there is still a shared awareness of them and that you are making progress towards their completion.

Fourth, you don't want too many targets. A school improvement plan is not a wish list. It should helpfully be seen as a contract between everyone in the school that sets out the agreement between everyone about how the school will have improved by a given time in the future.

We cannot tell you how many targets is the 'right' number; that is partly dependent on the level of complexity of the target and on the time it will take to achieve and partly on the capacity of you and your colleagues. But we urge you to make sure that you end up only with targets in your improvement plan that you know you can achieve within the timescale of the plan.

This means is that because you may also have improvement targets for mathematics and language arts, you will need to make sure that you choose targets from your IPC Accreditation and Self-Review process that, when achieved, will make a significant improvement in learning and teaching but which don't overload the overall school improvement process. That you can't solve everything in one year is also a fact of life; it's why the process is called 'continuous improvement'.

Stage 2 – The Accreditation process

Before accreditation begins

The self-review is the beginning of the accreditation process. (When you have completed your self-review you are about two-thirds of the way through the accreditation process, too.)

During your self-review you will have:

- Used all of the rubrics in the IPC Accreditation and Self-Review process.
- Gathered appropriate evidence that will give you information about each.
- Made your judgements about your school's level of development in each of the rubrics.
- Decided what to celebrate.
- Identified the improvements you can make to your use of the IPC to improve learning and teaching.
- Devised clear targets that describe those improvements.
- Devised a priority for the different improvements you need to make.
- Incorporated the most pressing improvements into your school improvement plan, with action steps, timelines and responsibilities.
- Begun the process of achieving the targets you have set.

To begin the accreditation process there is one more step you need to make; you need to write a concise report of what you have done so far.

Writing the self-review report

A written report is the essential beginning to the process of receiving accreditation. If you are only going to be engaged in a self-review it is not essential to write a formal report, although you might still find it helpful to do so. The purposes of a written report are to provide:

- an overview of the work you did in the self-review

- an overview of the linkage between the evidence you found, the judgements you made and the targets which you devised
- a start point for the accreditation team's work with you.

Your report should follow the following format for each of the nine rubrics so that a) it is concise and b) you spend no longer on it than you need to do:

- Title as the Accreditation Rubric (eg 'A clear focus on children's learning').
- The judgement you have made about your current stage of development (eg 'We think that we are currently in the *Developing* stage').
- A summary of the evidence that has led you to this conclusion (eg a note of the findings of classroom visits made and the evidence you found; an overview of the conversations you had with children and parents and so on).
- The targets you have identified and the timeline by which they are going to be achieved (eg 'Although we want to move the way displays indicate the learning has taken place from '*Developing*' to '*Mastering*' it is not a priority for the year 2006–07 but will be a part of our 2007–08 improvement plan')

What the report looks like is a choice you can make. Because the IPC helps teachers respond to children's different learning styles and multiple intelligences we do not insist on a narrative report. However, whatever form you adopt should present the required information as clearly and as concisely as possible.

Organising the accreditation visit

There are a number of steps you will need to take as you move towards the accreditation visit and, hopefully, the award of Accredited school.

First, make the decision as soon as you can about whether you are going to carry out a self-review or a self-review leading to accreditation. You might not be able to do this right at the beginning of the process as accreditation will

not be given to schools unless they are at *Developing* level in each of the nine criteria. You may want to make a very early judgement call about this but you may want to review some of the early evidence from your self-review before you decide.

Second, as soon as you have made your decision, contact the IPC to arrange the dates of either your initial visit or your accreditation visit. (Remember that you might choose to have an optional initial visit to go through the process with yourself and your colleagues.) This will mean you have to decide how long your self-study will take, although a period of between three and six months is reasonable.

To take advantage of all the reflection in which you have been engaged, it is a good idea for the accreditation visit to take place as soon after the end of your self-review as possible. Contacting the IPC to arrange this as soon as possible is helpful to you because it sets you a deadline; it is helpful to us in the IPC as it helps us to develop our work diaries to everyone's benefit.

Third, make sure that your school is ready for the visit. The length of the visit (in terms of the number of people days) will depend on the size of your school. It is unlikely to be less than two people days and equally unlikely to be more than six people days. Whenever possible, the IPC would prefer that at least two colleagues make up an accreditation team as this improves the quality of the judgements and increases the validity of your accreditation report.

What the visiting team will do

The main purpose of the team's visit is to validate your own judgements about your school and to provide helpful insights and guidance into how to refine those judgements if necessary or how to move forward.

Each visiting team will:

- Hold an initial meeting with all staff and anyone else the school invites.

- Read your self-review report before visiting, noting your judgements, looking at the breadth of evidence that supports them and identifying your targets for improvement and timeline.
- Visit a number of classrooms at random to see learning and teaching through the IPC in action. The number of visits a team will make depends on the size of the school but we expect that each member will make around three different visits each day, usually lasting for around 30 minutes.
- Arrange meetings with the head of the school, the IPC coordinator, if designated, and a number of staff, children and parents.
- Review the actual documentary evidence you collected during your self-review and which you described in your self-review report.
- Meet together to judge the validity of your report and to make their recommendation for accreditation.
- Hold a meeting with the staff to discuss their recommendation, respond to questions and, where appropriate, provide advice on the way forward.
- Write a report of their visit and recommendation which, together with your own self-review report, will go to the IPC for approval.

The award of accreditation

To ensure quality control in the visits different teams make around the world, each report will be read and reviewed within the IPC. Once it and its recommendations have been accepted, your school will be formally notified of the decision to accredit your school or not. The award, which is signified by a letter and a certificate or plaque, will be valid for three years. It will either be sent to the school or presented at an appropriate early opportunity.

Further information

You will be able to find more information about the IPC Self-Review and Accreditation process, including the experiences of accredited schools and accreditation teams, frequently asked questions and more on the IPC website: www.internationalprimarycurriculum.com