Moderation can be described as a dialogue between two or more teachers, and between teachers and other professionals, to agree and make judgments about what pupils understand, know or can do, and the extent to which they are consistent in demonstrating their understanding, knowledge and skills. Moderation activities can range from informal (for example, a discussion with a teaching assistant about an interesting observation of a pupil’s work) to a formal external process (e.g. local authority moderators reviewing teacher judgements). Moderation partners may include colleagues within your school, teachers from other schools (e.g. from a local school network) and local authority advisors and moderators.

The agreement or moderation of assessment judgements is essential so that all those involved (e.g. teachers, pupils, parents and local authorities) can make effective use of the information. Moderation is used to ensure that the assessment judgements made for any one pupil are accurate, fair, comparable with those made for all other pupils in the same class, and consistent with those made in other classes and in other schools. Achieving comparability involves teachers and other teaching professionals working together, supported by any external moderation activities organised by the local authority.

**Levelling work**

National curriculum level descriptors provide the starting point for moderating judgments about the levels at which your pupils are working; they describe the national standards that are expected in relation to each level. The P scales descriptors should be used for pupils in year 1 and above who have special educational needs and are working below level 1. In the foundation stage, moderation is supported by the exemplification materials in the *Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*. In all cases, consistency and comparability will develop over time as those involved in the moderation dialogue internalise the standards and become familiar with the process.

The dialogue that accompanies the levelling process can be of vital importance in that it can lead to a better understanding of the underlying standards. Before agreeing a judgement, spend time explaining to colleagues the developments evidenced in the pupils’ work, the context in which the work was produced (independently, in a group, at home, etc.) and the progress made. With your colleagues and other moderation partners agree which terms or sliding scale of terms you will use (rarely, generally/usually, frequently/mainly, etc.) and what these terms mean. This will help you to apply them consistently.

Examples of levelled work can be used to support your judgements and to aid moderation discussions. When collecting such examples, use detailed annotations to indicate the assessment criteria for which they provide evidence.
Moderation does not require you to assemble individual pupil portfolios (although you may wish to develop these for other reasons) or extensive collections of evidence. Sufficient evidence should be collected to help you to interpret, understand and internalise the criteria or standards for attaining a particular goal or level, and to aid moderation discussions with other teachers and professionals involved in the moderation process. It may be helpful to have marked levelled work representing the average and spread of performance in your class or year group.

Moderation, like assessment, may be more manageable if it is viewed as an ongoing process throughout the year rather than something that is only carried out occasionally or at the end of a school year.

Sharing good practice

It can be extremely instructive and beneficial to be involved in moderation activities outside of your own year group or key stage. Such activities can help you develop a better understanding of how pupils develop over time.

Moderation takes time and effort but can be very profitable and can feed into reviewing objectives and improving marking quality. For subject coordinators, moderation activities across a number of year groups can reveal strengths and weaknesses that may give rise to whole-school curriculum or assessment focuses. Wherever possible it is important and valuable to carry out cross-curricular moderation. For example, writing should be assessed across all areas of the curriculum – not just on the basis of written work in literacy.

Ideas to consider

• develop ‘bridging’ work extending from the summer term into the autumn term, which will involve two or more teachers discussing and levelling work
• use cross-phase and cross-year group moderation within your school to ensure consistency of levelling (e.g. collect and compare examples of level 3 work from years 3 to 6)
• build links with other local primary schools or with schools similar to yours further afield
• explore opportunities with local secondary schools for moderation activities, e.g. sharing portfolios of work or levelling work across key stages 2 and 3
• pick a contentious sample of work to stimulate debate about what counts as evidence and why
• share and discuss other types of evidence (not just written evidence), such as photographs, audio recordings, video, etc.
• use a system such as ‘NOFAN’ (Never, Occasionally, Frequently, Always, Naturally) or low/weak, secure, high/strong categories to indicate the extent to which a pupil demonstrates knowledge or skills in a particular area. These categories can aid moderation of work and transition, minimising the risk of pupils appearing to go backwards.