

## **What happens when I use exit passes in the classroom?**

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### ***Rationale***

The Assessment is for Learning (AifL) initiative was launched in Scotland in 2002 with a focus on promoting effective formative assessment in classrooms. It involves the use of various activities by teacher and pupil to assess and gain information on current levels of understanding in order to guide and inform the content of subsequent lessons. Pupils are active in their own learning and the evidence points to significant learning gains particularly in low achieving pupils (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This supports the Scottish Government's vision of reducing the attainment gap in Scotland's schools through The Scottish Attainment Challenge (The Scottish Government, 2015).

In the improvement plan of my current school, Improvement Priority 1 states that "Learner attainment and achievement will be increased at all levels..." and that learners will "...benefit from effective ranges of assessments and quality learning and teaching experiences" (Our Lady's High School Cumbernauld, 2018). With this in mind, AifL was chosen as the area of study for this enquiry because of its positive effect on attainment. From experience, techniques such as show-me boards and traffic lighting are used quite extensively in classrooms but the use of exit passes is not commonly observed.

### ***Aims***

The aims of this enquiry were to investigate whether exit passes are an effective AifL technique for progressing pupil learning and attainment, and to find out which styles of exit pass are most successful at achieving this.

### ***Methodology***

The enquiry was carried out over a 4-week period with a secondary 3<sup>rd</sup> year (S.3) chemistry class consisting of 19 pupils of mixed ability. The pupils were made aware of the enquiry and their involvement from the outset. A6 size pieces of paper were prepared with a number and letter code on each, which corresponded to the class seating plan. This ensured a degree of pupil anonymity and enabled traceability when it came to reviewing the responses. A hanging storage bag containing 3 pouches (Appendix 1) was provided for the pupils to place their completed exit passes in at the end of each lesson. The pouches were ranked according to how the pupils felt about their learning experience e.g. the top was a cartoon face representing 'confident', the middle was a 'doubting' expression representing 'unsure' and the bottom was a neutral expression for 'didn't understand'.

The exit pass technique was utilised in a series of 9 consecutive lessons of 50 minutes duration. Marzano (2012) states that there are 4 types of prompts that teachers can use in order to gather different responses. Hence, various styles of question were used to ascertain how effective each style was on pupil learning and understanding, and in raising achievement. Learning intentions were provided at the start of each lesson to enable pupils to gauge how successful their learning had been as advocated by Harris (2007).

### ***Findings***

The most effective style of exit pass questions were found to be those which Marzano (2012) refers to as “prompts that provide formative assessment data”. Asking pupils to write down the answer to a chemistry question, which tested them on their understanding of the main learning points from the lesson, delivered valuable information on whether the key concepts had to be re-taught or approached from a different perspective in the next lesson. This was one of the first prompts tried in the enquiry and because it was found to be highly informative, 50% of the exit passes were based on this style.

Other questions employed were based on prompts that encourage student self-analysis and those that focus on instructional strategies. When asked to rate their learning on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best, the majority of pupils rated themselves as 4 or 5 which seemed to achieve little more than a sense of accomplishment that the lesson had been delivered effectively and the pupils felt confident about what had been taught. No information was gained on actual levels of understanding. Of more use was the feedback obtained on preferred teaching strategies. When the pupils were asked to write down which part of the lesson they enjoyed the most, 90% opted for the activity involving the show-me boards which confirms the popularity of this technique. Samples of pupils’ exit passes are shown in Appendix 2.

Past paper questions were used in one of the lessons to further test pupil understanding. From the classwork jotters reviewed it was evident that the pupils had a good grasp of the concepts taught and could apply it to the problems. A sample of a pupil’s work is shown in Appendix 3. Such high performance could be attributed to the use of exit passes during that week.

A questionnaire was provided to pupils towards the end of the enquiry (Appendix 4) in order to gauge how they felt about using the exit passes. 65% liked using them (Figure 1) and 39% preferred it when they had to answer a chemistry question (Figure 2) which was consistent with the initial findings about this style of prompt being the most informative. However, a similarly high percentage (33%) preferred it when they had to rate their own learning, which Harris (2007) points out promotes the idea of pupils taking ownership of their own learning. When asked to assess the impact of exit passes on their learning (Figure 3), the majority selected ‘just the same’ which may be a reflection on the short period of time over which the enquiry was carried out. Perhaps with regular use, over a longer time-frame, more pupils would feel that their learning had improved.

Figure 1 A bar graph representing the results of Qs1-4 from the pupil questionnaire.

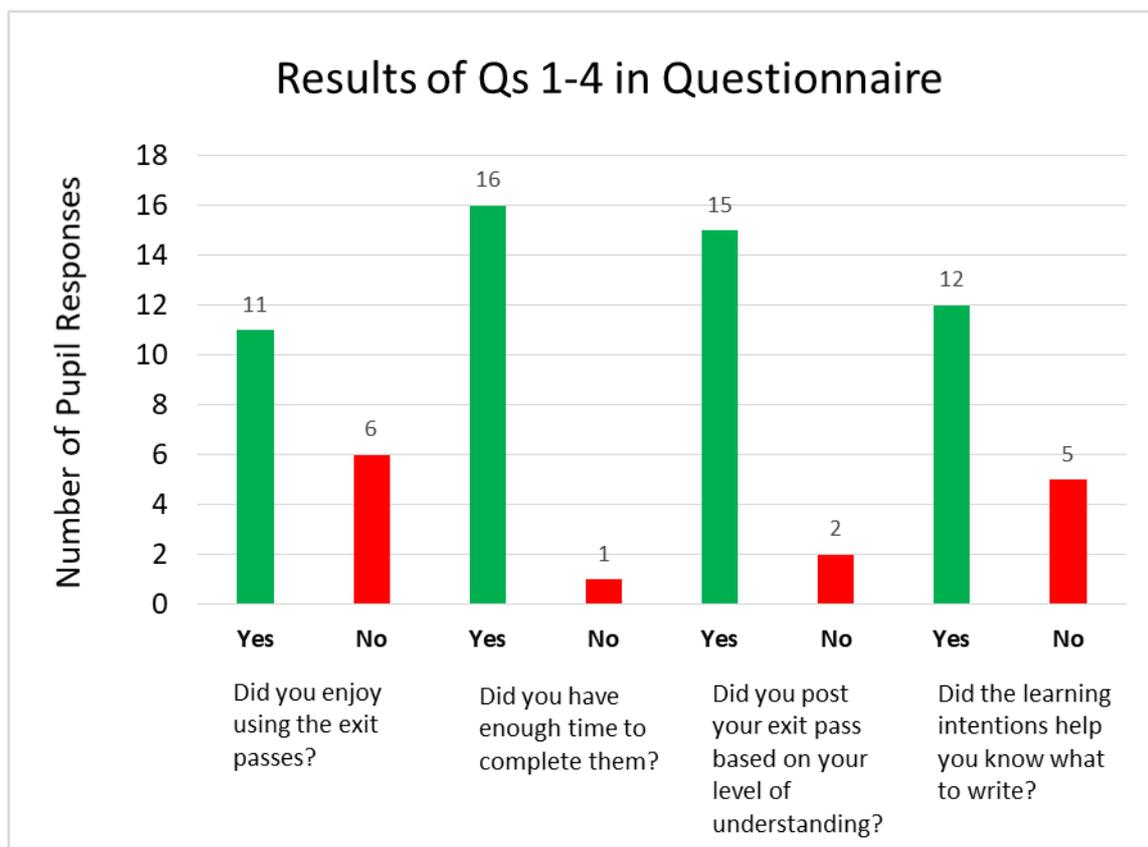


Figure 2 A pie chart representing the results of Q7 from the pupil questionnaire.

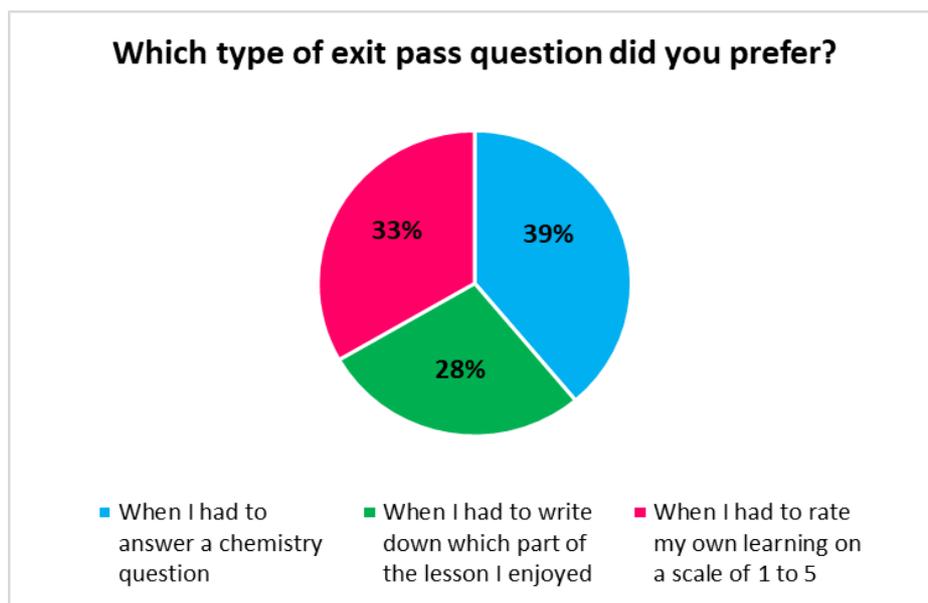
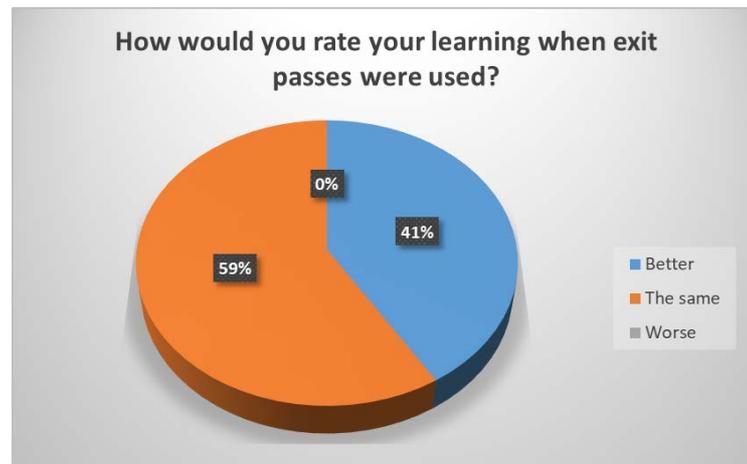


Figure 3 A pie chart representing the results of Q6 from the pupil questionnaire.



### ***Conclusions***

From the findings it can be concluded that exit passes are an effective AifL technique for progressing pupil learning and attainment. Verbal feedback and written comments from the questionnaire summed up how individuals felt about using the exit passes e.g. “they helped to recap the lesson” and “they made sure that we understood the work”. This is consistent with the findings of Leigh (2012) who states that “the exit slip provides powerful clarification of how students are making sense of content”. The style of exit pass which produced the greatest effect in terms of pupil subject knowledge and understanding was the one which involved using a chemistry question to capture the essence of the whole lesson. This was backed up by the evidence from pupils’ classwork jotters and results from the questionnaire. Overall, the majority of pupils enjoyed using the exit passes and being part of the enquiry.

### ***Implications for Future Practice***

As a result of this enquiry, my own opinion of exit passes has changed. I wasn’t aware of just how informative such a simple technique could be and how much pupils would enjoy using them. Going forward, I plan to incorporate exit passes into my lessons on a frequent basis, mostly to check pupil understanding of difficult concepts and to inform the start of sequel lessons. It remains to be seen however, whether their effectiveness would continue to be enhanced with prolonged use or whether the novelty of the technique would eventually wear off.

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### Appendix 1



## Appendix 2

<p>Isotopes are atoms with the same atomic number but different mass numbers. (same protons and electrons but different neutrons)</p> <p>3F</p>	<p>Covalent molecular - low melting / boiling point</p> <p>Covalent network - high melting / boiling point</p> <p>2E</p>
<p>I enjoyed the show me boards they boosted my confidence on my answers</p> <p>3G</p>	<p>○—○ — diatomic element 3D ●—○ — heteronuclear diatomic molecule</p>

## Appendix 3

<p>Q- Bromine has two isotopes. One has a mass no. of 81 and the other has a mass no. of 79. The relative atomic mass is 80.</p> <p>What does this tell you about the percentage of each isotope in bromine?</p> <p>A- Each isotope is present as 50%</p> <p>Nat 5 (2017) past paper Q1</p> <p>1g) The term used to describe these different types of the argon atom is isotopes.</p>	<p>sample of argon is 36. ✓</p> <p>- <math>^{36}_{18}\text{Ar}</math></p> <p>Study Questions</p> <p>1 - A - mass numbers ✓</p> <p>2 - A - 11 ✓</p> <p>3 - B - 382 ✓</p> <p>4 - C - atomic numbers ✓</p> <p>5a -</p>
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## Appendix 4

### S.3 Exit Pass Questionnaire

By taking part in this questionnaire you are helping to provide important information about the use of exit passes in the classroom.

1. Did you like using the exit passes? Yes/No
  2. Did you have enough time to complete them? Yes/No
  3. Did you put your exit passes into the hanging bag according to how well you understood the lesson? Yes/No
  4. Did the learning intentions at the start of the lesson help you know what to write? Yes/No
  5. What did you like/dislike about using the exit passes?
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6. How would you rate your learning when the exit passes were used?

better

just the same

worse

7. Which type of exit pass question did you prefer? (circle one)

When I had to answer a chemistry question.

When I had to write down which part of the lesson I enjoyed.

When I had to rate my own learning on a scale of 1 to 5.

Write down anything else you would like to add about using the exit passes.

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