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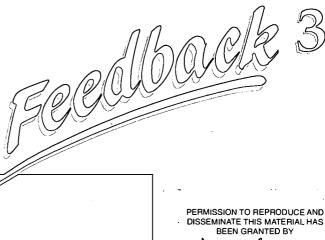
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ABSTRACT

This publication presents information derived from the fourth Assessment of Achievement Programme (AAP), a survey of students' attainment in science (Scotland, 1996). The main AAP objectives are to describe national levels of attainment and to provide evidence of changes in these levels over time. This booklet was developed primarily as an information resource for teachers to serve as a tool for improving teaching and learning. Assessment tasks were used with a sample of students at three stages: (1) Primary 4; (2) Primary 7; and (3) Secondary 2. The tasks were matched against Strands, Targets and Levels from the science component of National Guidelines for Environmental Studies. In this way the performance of students at different levels could be assessed in the five Strands: (1) Knowledge and Understanding; (2) Planning; (3) Collecting Evidence; (4) Recording and Presenting; and (5) Interpreting and Evaluating. Averaged scores are presented by grade for each strand. Gender-related differences are analyzed as well. Results from a pilot study portion of the 1996 survey to investigate students' attitudes towards science and learning science are also included. Scores are analyzed and results summarized under a Key Findings heading for each strand, for gender differences, and for attitudes to learning science. Results of a questionnaire sent to all participating schools are also presented. A list of questions on teaching and learning issues is provided for reflection and discussion. (PVD)

SCIENCE



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Information for teachers – from the Assessment of Achievement Programme



WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Feedback is an information resource for teachers. It is derived from the findings of the Assessment of Achievement Programme (AAP) which is a major research programme funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

Feedback can be used:

As a source of information about the achievement of
pupils in Science.
When reflecting on achievement in your classroom.
When reviewing teaching plans in relation to attainment targets.
When considering effective teaching strategies in Science.
When assessing class work and reviewing performance in areas of the Science curriculum.
When preparing assessment materials.
As a stimulus for discussion at staff meetings or in-service days.
With student teachers as part of their professional training
and as an aid to classroom preparation.



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INTRODUCTION

The Assessment of Achievement Programme

The fourth Assessment of Achievement Programme (AAP) survey of pupils' attainment in science was carried out in 1996 by researchers at the University of Strathclyde, Jordanhill Campus. As in other AAP surveys, the assessment tasks were used with a sample of pupils, selected to be representative of all pupils in Scotland, at three stages – Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 2.

The assessment framework was based on the science Strands of the 5-14 Environmental Studies Guidelines covering knowledge and understanding and a number of skills important for successful scientific enquiry. These were assessed in written and practical tasks.

AAP and the 5-14 Guidelines

The tasks used in the AAP science survey were matched against Strands, Targets and Levels from the 5-14 guidelines for the science component of *National Guidelines for Environmental Studies* (ES 5-14). In this way the performance of pupils at different levels could be assessed in the five Strands: *Knowledge and Understanding* (KU), *Planning* (P), *Collecting Evidence* (CE), *Recording and Presenting* (RP), *Interpreting and Evaluating* (IE). A number of Targets within Strands could not be effectively assessed using the AAP tasks. These Targets are more effectively assessed by the classroom teacher over a period of time.

A scoring system was developed which gave an *index of* achievement for each task between 0 and 1. Broadly speaking, a low figure indicates little competence on a particular Target while a higher index reflects more secure knowledge and understanding. Similarly, within a task the percentage of pupils achieving an index of achievement of less than, say, 0.35 could be categorised as showing little understanding, 0.35 – 0.8 as making steady progress and 0.8-1.0 as having a secure grasp.

Interpreting the Levels

In the 5-14 programme pupils can be expected to attain the following levels of performance:

Level A attainable by almost all P1-P3 pupils

Level B attainable by some P3 pupils, or even earlier, but

certainly by most in P4

Level C attainable by most P4-P6 pupils

Level D attainable by some P5-P6 pupils, or even earlier, but

certainly by most in P7

Level E attainable by some P7-S1 pupils but certainly by most

in S2.



There are additional factors in *Knowledge and Understanding* and here the expectations are:

Level A secure knowledge and understanding of the key features for P1-3

Level B Level A plus steady progress on the key features for P4-6

Level C secure knowledge and understanding of the key features for P1-6

Level D Level C plus steady progress on the key features for P7-S2

Level E secure knowledge and understanding of the key features for P7-S2

For all Strands the focus is on those proportions which constitute *almost all*, *most* and *a few*. The following cut-off figures were established for the 1996 survey:

almost all = 90 per cent of pupils

most = 75 per cent of pupils

a few = 15 per cent of pupils.

(Unless otherwise stated scores and key findings refer throughout to most pupils).

This booklet

- outlines the main findings of the 1996 AAP science survey and gives examples
- gives the 5-14 Strands and Levels assessed by the examples
- draws together learning and teaching issues.



"

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The knowledge and understanding Targets are specified as key features by (st)age bands in the 5-14 guidelines and the expected level of performance is stated in the *Knowledge and Understanding* Strand (see page 2).

The Attainment Outcomes are:

AOI Understanding Living Things and the Processes of Life

AO2 Understanding Energy and Forces

AO3 Understanding Earth and Space

In this section there were a total of 33, 54 and 71 tasks of differing levels, across the three Attainment Outcomes, tackled at P4, P7 and S2 respectively.

AO1: Understanding Living Things and the Processes of Life

This task assesses the key feature for the (st)age P4-6, dispersal of fruits and seeds by animals (externally/internally), by wind and by self.

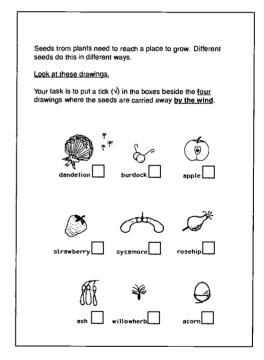
Most P4 pupils scored 0.7

Most P7 pupils scored 0.83

Most S2 pupils scored 0.82

As in the previous survey, the most commonly selected wrong answers at all three stages were burdock, rosehip and acorn.

EXAMPLE 1





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AO2: Understanding Energy and Forces

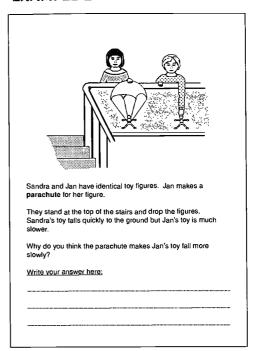
This task assesses pupils' understanding of air resistance for stages P4-6.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.48

Most P7 pupils scored 0.81

14 per cent of P4 pupils confused wind with air and 23 per cent simply reiterated the question.

EXAMPLE 2



AO3: Understanding Earth and Space

This task assesses knowledge of oxygen and its properties from the target for P7-S2.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.36

Most P7 pupils scored 0.61

Most S2 pupils scored 0.89

EXAMPLE 3

Nita lit a candle and let it burn for a few seconds. Then she placed a jar upside down over the candle and the flame burned for a few seconds then went out.
Why do you think the flame went out?
Write your answer here.

Key findings

- Most P4 pupils performed at Level B
- Most P7 pupils performed at or were approaching Level D. Significant areas of weakness included AO2: Understanding Energy and Forces
- Most S2 pupils attained Level D but showed considerable weaknesses in AO2 and AO3. S2 pupils were failing to meet 5-14 expectations of Level E
- Most S2 pupils were making steady progress on P7 S2 content
- There were wide variations in performance levels within Strands across all three stages.



PLANNING

Six sub-categories of the Strand *Planning* were identified within the 1996 AAP Science framework.

P1 Question raising
 P2 Identifying information sources and resources
 P3 Sequencing plans
 P4 Planning for recording and reporting
 P5 Anticipating problems
 P6 Planning for safety and hygiene

As AAP focuses on the individual and what she/he can do unsupported, tasks were at Levels D/E because Levels A/B required interaction with the teacher.

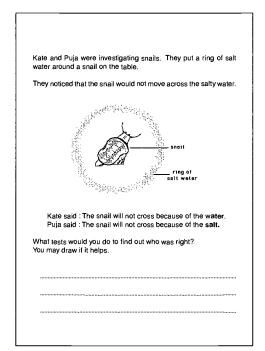
It was felt that much of this Strand could not be reliably assessed within the constraints of national monitoring and is more appropriately dealt with by the teacher in ongoing classroom activities. As a result there are no key findings for this section.

This Level D/E task assesses the target, decide on a sequence of tasks or procedures checking for possible difficulties and adapting where required.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.32

Most P7 pupils scored 0.39

EXAMPLE 4





COLLECTING EVIDENCE

A number of sub-categories of the Strand Collecting Evidence (CE) were identified within the 1996 AAP Science framework.

These were:

CE1	Recognising similarities and differences
CE2	Recognising changes
CE3	Extracting information
CE4	Using simple techniques
CE5	Estimating and measuring
CE6	Collecting evidence fairly and safely.

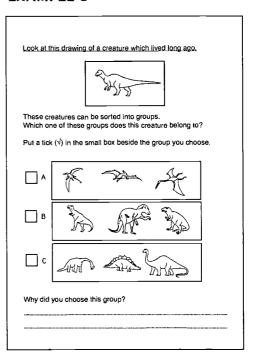
In one Level C task pupils were asked to: observe living things, objects and phenomena, noticing obvious features, and group by a single attribute.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.56

Most P7 pupils scored 0.72

In the Level C example shown, using a key to identify dinosaurs, P7 pupils scored 0.93 and \$2, 0.95.

EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 6

In this example pupils were asked to select information to answer specific questions.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.84

Most P7 pupils scored 0.96

In a similar task, most S2 pupils scored 0.98.

All three stages attained Level C on this task.

Name of butterfly	Food plant	Egg colour	Colour of catterpillar
common blue	bird's foot trefoil	pearl white	green with brown line
swallow tail	fennel	yellow then brown	black with white marks
painted lady	spear thistle	pale green	grey-black
cabbage white	cabbbage	creamy white	green then yellow

Use the table to answer these questions.

Here is some information about butterflies.

- a. What is the food plant of the swallow tail butterfly?
- b. Which butterfly's eggs change colour?
- c. One butterfly lays pale green eggs. What is the colour of its caterpillar?



Practical Tasks

Pupils were also presented with 12 *Collecting Evidence* tasks in the Practical Circuits at primary and 14 at secondary.

In this Level C practical task pupils were expected to follow the instructions to create a chromatogram of colour from a small sweet and match it with one of three others given.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.67

Most P7 pupils scored 0.78

Most S2 pupils scored 0.8

EXAMPLE 7

	these instructions carefully
	a piece of paper and lay it on the tray in front of you.
	a sweet on to the piece of paper
	8 drops of water on the sweet and watch carefully soaks into the paper
	dropper
	sweet paper
	a few minutes. carefully at the colours on the paper.
5. Look	at the three cards labelled P, Q, R.
a bro	ide which of these patterns was also made with own sweet. e the letter of the card here
Why do	o you think so?

Key Findings

- Most P4 pupils were successful on a minority of written and practical tasks at Level B, but were making progress towards Level C
- Most P7 pupils were successful on Level B tasks and on the majority of Level C tasks. They were not attaining Level D but were making steady progress towards Levels D and E
- Most S2 pupils were successful on all but a few Level E tasks.



RECORDING AND PRESENTING

Two sub-categories were generated from the ES 5-14 Strand *Recording and Presenting (RP)* for the 1996 AAP Science framework:

RP1 Recording in a variety of formats

RP2 Presenting in a variety of formats.

There were no RP2 tasks as these could not be assessed in the survey. It is worth remembering that relatively few tasks were tackled at each stage so conclusions in this Strand should be treated with caution.

In this Level C written task pupils were expected to use information in the drawing to construct a bar graph showing the numbers of different types of teeth.

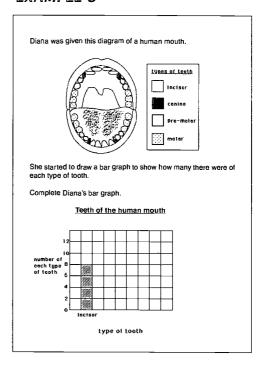
Most P4 pupils scored 0.79

Most P7 pupils scored 0.97

Most S2 pupils scored 0.96

Almost all P7 and S2 pupils attained Level C on this task.

EXAMPLE 8

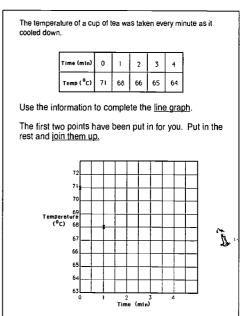


In this Level D task pupils had to construct a line graph from data given in a table.

Most P7 pupils scored 0.58

Most S2 pupils scored 0.76

EXAMPLE 9



A number of tasks were also set in the Practical Circuits.



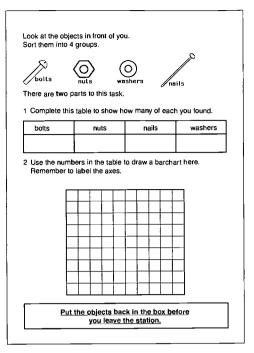
Practical Tasks

In this Level D task primary pupils were expected to count the number of different types of nuts, bolts etc. and to construct a bar graph to display their findings.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.75

Most P7 pupils scored 0.92

EXAMPLE 10



Key findings

- Most Primary 4 pupils attained Level B and C and were working towards Level D
- Most Primary 7 pupils attained Levels B, C and D although they did have some problems with line graphs
- Almost all S2 pupils attained Level C on pencil and paper tasks but most were marginally below Level D. Most S2 pupils were working towards Level E but had some way to go.



INTERPRETING AND EVALUATING

There were two sub-categories in the ES 5-14 Strand *Interpreting* and Evaluating (IE):

IE1 Assigning meaning

IE2 Evaluating evidence

In this Level B task pupils had to identify the relationship given by the data.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.38

Most P7 pupils scored 0.58

Most S2 pupils scored 0.84

EXAMPLE II

Lucy made a model bridge out of two blocks of wood and a piece of card.

Celhs

Length of bridge

She measured the length and counted the number of 2p coins which the bridge could support. She did this several times.

Here are her results:

| length (cm) | Number of 2p coins | 10 | 2p

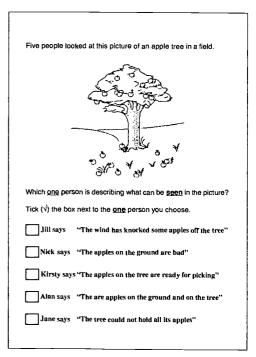
The second type of *Interpreting and Evaluating* tasks were all of a similar structure and assessed understanding of the 5-14 target distinguish between fact supported by evidence and opinion and speculation.

This Level C task was tackled by pupils in P4 and P7.

Most P4 pupils scored 0.59

Most P7 pupils scored 0.76

EXAMPLE 12



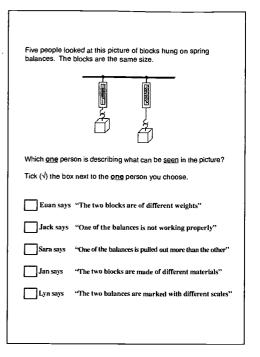


EXAMPLE 13

This Level D task was tackled by pupils in P7 and S2.

Most P7 pupils scored 0.39

Most S2 pupils scored 0.36



The most common error which pupils at both stages made was to choose the inferential statement rather than the observational one which they were asked to choose.

Key Findings

- Most pupils at all three stages were operating well below 5-14 expectations
- Pupils at all stages need more experience of interpreting data presented in a variety of formats
 - Pupils tended to 'jump to conclusions'.



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INVESTIGATING

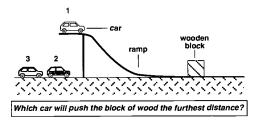
A sub-sample of pupils at all three stages undertook a more extended investigation conducted on a one-to-one basis with a trained Field Officer. Each child was given one of two investigations to carry out. Once it was clear the child understood what was expected of them, they were left to carry out the investigation while the Field Officer observed and checked procedure against a standard check-list.

These extended investigations covered a number of ES 5-14 Strands. Statistical analysis was not carried out because the subsample of pupils was not representative of the population. But findings indicate some problems pupils encounter in carrying out investigations and can be useful in planning teaching and learning.

The Investigations

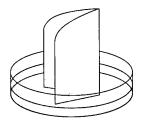
The Race Track investigation asked primary pupils to find out which car pushed the block the furthest distance. Secondary pupils used small balls of differing weights instead of cars. Additional struts for the ramp were also supplied, allowing the angle of the slope to be altered. Secondary pupils had to find out which combination of ball and height pushed the block furthest.

RACE TRACK



In *Rising Damp*, pupils had to find out which grade of filter paper allowed water to rise the fastest. This was made more difficult for secondary pupils by using two different liquids.

RISING DAMP



Key Findings

- Pupils at each stage generally performed at a higher level on Race Track than on Rising Damp
- P4 and P7 indicated a lack of awareness of the need to control variables to ensure a 'fair test'
- Many P4 and P7 pupils failed to record results.
 Final conclusions were based on reflection on their observations rather than interpretation of data recorded.



GENDER-RELATED DIFFERENCES IN PERFORMANCE

In each survey there is an analysis by gender. Differences at, or less than, the 5 per cent level of significance were taken to be statistically significant.

Table A shows the number of written tasks and the number of gender-related significant differences at each stage.

TABLE A: Number of tasks and number of significant differences at each stage.

	P4	P7	S2
number of tasks	60	100	125
number of significant differences	11 (18%)	33 (33%)	56 (45%)

A clear gender-related pattern of performance could be seen from P4 through to S2.

At P4 girls performed significantly better than boys on eight tasks. Of these eight tasks, four were in *Knowledge and Understanding* and the remaining four were spread across the other four process Strands. Boys performed significantly better than girls on three tasks, all in *Knowledge and Understanding*.

At P7 girls performed significantly better than boys on 19 tasks, four in the *Knowledge and Understanding* Strand and the remaining 15 across the four process Strands. Boys performed significantly better than girls on 14 tasks, 12 of which assessed *Knowledge and Understanding* and two *Collecting Evidence*.

At S2 girls performed better than boys on 30 tasks, four of which were in *Knowledge and Understanding*, the remainder belonging to the four process Strands. Boys performed significantly better than girls on 26 tasks, 23 of which were from *Knowledge and Understanding*, one from *Collecting Evidence* and two from *Interpreting and Evaluating*.

Differences were also analysed by Attainment Outcome.

At P4, the context of six of the eight tasks on which girls performed better belonged to AO1, the remainder belonging to AO3. The context of the three tasks on which boys performed better were spread across AO2 and AO3.

The context of 16 of the 19 tasks at P7 on which girls performed better belonged to AO1. Only one of the 14 tasks on which boys performed better belonged to AO1.

At S2 a similar pattern emerged with the context of 14 of the tasks on which girls performed better belonging to AO1, seven belonging to AO2 and nine to AO3. Only one of the 26 tasks on which boys performed better belonged to AO1 with 14 from AO2 and 11 from AO3.

Key Findings

In written tasks:

- clear patterns of gender-related differences which increased with age
- girls performed better on process-based tasks, boys on knowledge-based tasks
- girls tended to perform better on AO1 tasks, boys on AO2 and AO3.

In practical tasks:

no clear pattern of difference at any stage.



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SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRES

A questionnaire sent to all participating schools produced the following three points:

Policy for Science

 Only 18 per cent and 17 per cent of primaries and secondaries respectively said that the Environmental Studies Guidelines were fully operational within their school. A further 64 per cent and 78 per cent respectively said they were under consideration.

Learning and Teaching Science

- Some 60 per cent of primary schools claimed to be devoting a reasonable amount of time to science, a considerable increase on 1993. However, about 40 per cent were still giving insufficient time to science.
- Virtually all secondary schools were giving appropriate time to science.

Goals of Science

- Primary teachers now perceived 'understanding basic science concepts' as one of the five (of 12) most important goals for science teaching. This was not one of their top five goals in 1993. However, 'enjoyment of science-based activities' and 'a questioning attitude towards their surroundings' remained the two most important goals as perceived by primary teachers.
- As in 1993 secondary teachers perceived 'understanding of basic science concepts' as the most important goal of science teaching, with 'enjoyment of science-based activities' third behind 'development of problem-solving skills'.



ATTITUDES TO LEARNING SCIENCE

A pilot study was carried out in the 1996 survey to investigate pupils' attitudes towards science and learning science. A questionnaire, given to all pupils, was designed to find out:

- how confident pupils were in their knowledge and understanding of common science topics and their perceived main sources of this information
- pupils' preferences across the three science Attainment Outcomes
- the variety of learning activities that might occur and pupils' views of these activities. This part was given to P7 and S2 only.

There were clear differences in gender preferences. Girls remained relatively stable over time with greatest preference for AO1 topics, boys displayed an increasing preference for physical science topics with a corresponding decrease in preference for AO1 topics (Figures 1 and 2).

FIGURE I

Boys' preferences for topics

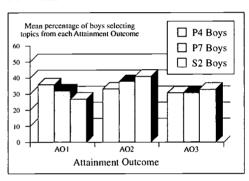
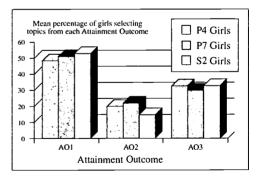


FIGURE 2

Girls' preferences for topics





Key Findings

- Pupils at all stages expressed greatest confidence in AO1: Living Things and the Processes of Life. The gap between Attainment Outcomes narrowed in P7 and again in S2, perhaps because of increased teaching focus on physics and chemistry topics as pupils get older.
- Confidence in knowledge of all Attainment Outcomes noticeably decreased between P4 and S2.
- S2 pupils depended on school as their main source of science information. There seemed to be no well-established alternatives to sustain interest and knowledge outside the science classroom.
- Girls remained fairly constant in preferences within AO1: Living Things and the Processes of Life. Boys tended to prefer physical science-based topics as they grew older.
- S2 pupils had more opportunity than P7 pupils to follow their own investigations in class.
- 70 per cent of S2 pupils said they never used computers in science and 19 per cent only sometimes. This contrasts with 53 per cent and 39 per cent of P7 pupils. 8 per cent of P7 pupils said they used computers often.



TEACHING AND LEARNING ISSUES

Knowledge and Understanding

- It can be difficult to give balance across the three Attainment Outcomes. How can weaknesses in specific areas be addressed?
- What approaches can be used to address the apparent lack of progress between P7 and S2? Closer links between primary and secondary schools?

Planning

- Do you employ investigative strategies in dealing with science topics?
- How often do pupils plan and carry out their own investigations?

Collecting Evidence

- How can you develop the skills of 'fair testing' in the context of a practical investigation?
- How can younger pupils be encouraged to articulate their reasons for noticing similarities and differences? Observation games? Discussions?

Recording and Presenting

- How can younger pupils be encouraged to record their results during practical investigations?
- How can secondary pupils develop skills of recording and presenting in a variety of formats?

Interpreting and Evaluating

- How can pupils be encouraged not to 'jump to conclusions'?
 Class discussions? 'Detective' competitions?
- Can pupils be given more practice in interpreting data from their own, and other, investigations?

Pupils' Perceptions of Science

- How can we encourage older pupils to explore avenues other than school for learning about science? Exhibitions?
 Television? Work experience?
- Girls' attitudes to science remain constant but boys tend to change as they grow. Are the gender differences important?
 Can all pupils be encouraged to take a greater interest in the Attainment Outcomes?
- How can we make better use of computers in science, particularly in secondary schools? Business links?



22.

OTHER ISSUES

- Do secondary teachers build on information received from the primaries? Do primaries provide sufficient information on what has been achieved up to P7?
- How can primary and secondary schools coordinate science teaching more?
- Has your school identified staff development needs and resourcing implications for science within 5-14? Can these be used to inform and develop the *Feedback* series?



FURTHER READING

Further details of the methods used in AAP surveys and the findings of the 1996 science survey are in the report entitled Assessment of Achievement Programme, Science 1996. The report was published by SOEID in March 1998 and is available from:

Dissemination Officer Educational Research Group Scottish Office Education and Industry Department Victoria Quay Edinburgh EH6 600

Tel: 0131 244 0167 Fax: 0131 244 8881

E-mail: dissemination@hmis.scotoff.gov.uk Web site: http://www.hmis.scotoff.gov.uk/riu

For full information about the government's 5-14 curriculum guidelines, see Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland, National Guidelines, Environmental Studies. This is available from:

The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum Gardyne Road Broughty Ferry Dundee DDI 5NY

Tel: 01382 455053

Fax: 01382 455046

E-mail: reception@sccc.ac.uk

Web site: www.sccc.ac.uk



AAP PUBLICATIONS

Other AAP publications include:

English Language Feedback - Assessment Tasks

English Language Feedback - 5-14 links

English Language Feedback 2

English Language Feedback 3 - Information for Teachers

Science Feedback - primary and secondary

Science Feedback 2 - 5-14 links

Science Feedback P4 & P7

Science Feedback P7 & S2

Mathematics Feedback - Secondary 2

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5-14 guidelines on environmental studies

Attainment outcomes for science

Understanding living things and the processes of life

Understanding energy and forces

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