

Marking and Feedback Policy

*Make no mistake: this is the most important thing you do as a teacher. All the other stuff is of no use whatsoever if you don't mark your books properly. You can be endlessly enthusiastic, have great subject knowledge, be fully cognisant of every rule and regulation, manage behaviour wonderfully, teach fascinating lessons at a cracking pace, which feature bucket loads of flannel-free praise, and it will be all to nought if you don't mark their books. They won't progress; **but mark their books with dedication and rigour and your class will fly.***

Mission Statement

We believe feedback and marking should provide constructive feedback to every child, focusing on success and improvement against the learning objective, enabling children to become reflective learners and helping them to close the gap between current and desired performance.

Principles

Marking and feedback should:

- Be manageable for teachers and children.
- Relate to learning objective, which need to be shared with children.
- Involve all adults working with children in the classroom.
- Give children opportunities to become aware of and reflect on their learning needs.
- Give recognition and appropriate praise for achievement.
- Give clear strategies for improvement and development.
- Allow specific time for children to read, reflect and respond to marking.
- Involve children in the same process (whether oral or written), to ensure equity across subjects and abilities.
- Take a sensitive approach (where attainment is based on that person's previous attainment) within the context of marking towards the learning intention.
- Respond to individual learning needs, marking face-to-face with some and at a distance for others.
- Inform future planning and individual target setting.
- Be accessible to children
- Use consistent codes throughout the school.
- Ultimately be seen by children as positive in improving their learning
- Encourage and teach children to self-mark or pair mark wherever possible before the teacher works with the child.
- Where possible mark with the child.
- When working with a group, mark that group with them to give them instant positive feedback or next step.

Strategies

Summative feedback/markings

This usually consists of ticks and circles around anything incorrect and is associated with *closed tasks or exercises*. We do not use crosses for any incorrect responses.

Formative feedback/marking

With oral feedback, in the course of a lesson, teachers' comments to children should focus firstly on issues about the 1. learning intention, 2. Success criteria and 3. other features. The teacher, where possible should write on any work if oral feedback has been given using the code VF (verbal feedback) with a bullet pointed list of items discussed.

Quality marking

Work will be "quality marked", work will be looked at by the teacher and the child will know that it has been seen. The following is a guide to this action:

Teacher Action #1

The LEARNING OBJECTIVE is to be written as a 'Can I?' All work from years 1 to year 6 will be marked (by the leader of the lesson and/or group) using a traffic light marking system or similar, e.g.

- Green – achieved learning objective; Smiling mouthed face;
- Yellow – not quite there; Straight mouthed face;
- Red – not understood the work and needs to work with the teacher; unsure mouthed face.

Teacher Action #2

The SUCCESS CRITERIA (shown for every lesson in English and Mathematics) is to be written as a 'Can I?' All work from years 1 to year 6 will be marked (by the leader of the lesson and/or group) using a traffic light marking system or similar, e.g.

- Green – achieved learning objective; Smiling mouthed face;
- Yellow – not quite there; Straight mouthed face;
- Red – not understood the work and needs to work with the teacher; unsure mouthed face.

This is a very visual way of showing the children that they are on track or not.

Child Action

All children through school will complete the success criteria, using the same system that the teacher does to complete it.

Teacher Action #3

Wherever the task is open or narrative, feedback should focus first and foremost on the learning intention of the task. The emphasis in marking should be on **both success against the learning intention and improvement needs against the learning intention**. All marking should take note of the following points:

- For younger children (mainly year one) children most feedback is given orally on the children's work and then read it to them to explain what they have written.
- For the children who can read well, feedback will be both oral and written. The teacher may comment and ask questions (as in KS2).

- Notes of verbal feedback made during a lesson should be made in the pupil's book. This can then reduce the feedback made following the lesson.
- Children will be asked to talk verbally about others' work but formal paired marking will not begin until KS2.
- Sometimes comments will be written on the work to explain how it was done eg 'Scribed by Teacher' or 'Used a word bank'
- Children can use traffic light marking system or faces showing how they felt while they were doing their work.

Where appropriate, the teacher should provide a follow up task for the child to complete and should be focussed on either correcting a mistake or moving the child's understanding/learning forward. This will vary depending on the subject and the age of the child and is not expected to be done against every piece of work.

English

KS1: There will be a growing expectation through KS1. In Y1, initially the most able pupils should be set simple secretarial requests such as correcting a capital letter, full stop or a spelling. Through the year all pupils in Y1 should be attempting these tasks, although some pupils may still need support in achieving this by the end of the year. This expectation will continue through Y2, with pupils becoming increasingly independent. Pupils in Y2 may also be asked to improve pieces of work by editing/re-writing sentences in addition to the basic secretarial skills previously mentioned.

KS2: Pupils throughout KS2 should be correcting pieces of written work, identifying improvements to be made in both secretarial skills and improving the composition and effect of their work. There should be a growing expectation through KS2 but this must also remain relevant to the ability level of each individual child.

Secretarial features

In KS1 the 'Magic Five' will be used to remind pupils of early expectations, in Lower KS2 and Upper KS2 progressive prompts are used, including visuals from Roz Wilson's 'Big Writing'. These basic essentials should not make up success criteria.

Spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc., might not be asked for in every piece of narrative writing, because children cannot effectively focus on too many things in one space of time. When work is finished, ask children to check for things *they know are wrong in their work* when they read it through. They should not be told to correct all spellings, or they are likely to write further misspellings or waste time looking words up. Key words must always be spelt correctly.

Only give children feedback about those things you have asked them to pay attention to. This will mean that some aspects of writing are unmarked, but over time will be marked.

Child Action KS2

Children in Key Stage Two will reflect on their own learning at the end of a unit of work. Pupils will make a comment against each of the following:



Heart – What did you enjoy?



Head – What did you learn?



Bag – What skill will you take away?

Children will be given time to respond to these points.

NB. Foundation Stage

Most feedback in the Foundation Stage is given orally both by the teacher and by the children themselves. Staff will write their assessments on sticky notes and be put into their profiles.

Maths

The use of learning objectives and success criteria will continue in the same way as stated above. Marking will focus on ensuring pupils are following the correct methods to firstly answer fluency questions and then solve problems.

KS1:

Most feedback will be offered verbally. Where pupils have misunderstood work the teacher or teaching assistant will work through this with them.

KS2:

Pupils will be expected to correct work they may have misunderstood or made simple errors with. Where appropriate (and owing to the styles of teaching this will not be with every piece of work), children may be extended in their learning by the teaching setting a short task that extends the child's understanding.

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Phil Beadle explains why decent marking is the key to pupil progress

Make no mistake: this is the most important thing you do as a teacher. All the other stuff is of no use whatsoever if you don't mark your books properly. You can be endlessly enthusiastic, have great subject knowledge, be fully cognisant of every rule and regulation, manage behaviour wonderfully, teach fascinating lessons at a cracking pace, which feature bucketloads of flannel-free praise, and it will be all to nought if you don't mark their books. They won't progress.

Antithetically, you can turn up hungover every morning, wearing the same creased pair of Farahs as last week, with hair that looks like a bird has slept in it, then spend most of the lesson talking at kids about how wonderful you are; but mark their books with dedication and rigour and your class will fly.

Marking burdens vary widely

There is a substantial difference in the marking burdens of different subjects. Broadly, and obviously, the more writing you have to do in the subject, the more difficult it is to keep up with the marking. Drama and PE have it easy; music, art and D&T likewise; maths teachers enjoy the blanket ticking session whereas scientists have to be slightly more focused.

Where it gets more vital and difficult is when you move from geography (hard, but you can always get them doing maps) through history (harder, but you can always get them doing historical maps) into English (nigh on impossible).

However, no matter what subject you are teaching you have a responsibility, and it's a biggie, to your students, your colleagues and to society as a whole, to make sure that you focus really heavily on ensuring that there is a point to the work you are setting your classes.

A journey through a year 10 book

As an example, I'd like to share with you the story of a young lady I have been teaching this year. Her name isn't Cerise, but we'll call her that to stop me being sued. She is a very bright girl and, as I write this, a few weeks before results day, is expected to get a good grade in English. I have only been teaching her in year 11, but have read every word she has written over those eight months, commenting lovingly on it. By chance I came upon her book from year 10, and was interested to see how she had done that year. Let me take you on a journey through Cerise's year 10 book.

The first thing we notice is that it is covered in graffiti: pictures of love hearts, stars, scrawled nascent attempts at a signature. Then we open the front cover and delve inside: the first page is well presented, but unmarked. The second page has been left blank. Third page: well presented, unmarked. Page four: blank. Five: less well presented, unmarked. Page six: blank. Page seven: token effort from student, unmarked. Page eight: blank. A whole (admittedly pitiful) term's work with no evidence that any teacher has even considered opening the book to read what Cerise has written.

We return from the Christmas holidays and Cerise appears to have a new attitude. Her first page after the holiday, page nine, is covered with work – autobiography. We read it. Cerise writes, "I live with my

brother and my dad. My mum died and it's kind of hard at the moment, but as people have said to me, look into the future, not the past, so therefore that's what I must do."

What did the teacher notice? Nothing

What would a teacher worth their money notice about this? Decent complex sentences, correctly applied commas and ambitious use of a high order, conjunctive adverb, perhaps? Maybe they would notice that, in the line, "It's kind of hard at the moment" that Cerise's mum died relatively recently, and that, in writing this, she is telling the teacher that something cataclysmic has happened in her life, and she is struggling. What did the teacher notice? Nothing. She didn't read it.

Page ten: blank. Page eleven: almost blank. Page twelve: blank. Page thirteen: more autobiography. We read. "I live with my brother and my dad. It's good living with them but unfortunately it would be better if my mum was still here. This thought actually touches deep inside, but she died at Christmas, and is therefore no longer living with us. I always thought I was going step-by-step up in life, but this devastating cause, caused me to go two steps back, so eventually I gave up." We look at the date, 12th January. We relate that to Christmas. We realise that Cerise's mum died three weeks ago. We start to hate the teacher who has left this piece of work unmarked.

Page fifteen: unmarked. Page sixteen: blank. Page seventeen: unmarked. Page eighteen: blank. Page nineteen: unmarked. Page twenty: blank. Page twenty-one: organized writing, and finally we note there is a teacher's comment at the bottom of the page.

Cerise has written, under the heading 'Bad Day', "One day I woke up for Christmas, and I got a phone call from the Doctor's. My dad's face dropped. I asked him what's wrong. His face changed colour. I tried to ask him what was going on, and he told me that it was something serious, but I was just to hurry up and get ready. We left the house, and I found out that my mum was just about to die. I couldn't believe it. My life had ended. I felt dead. I felt to cry. I was just speechless."

A single tick in red

What do we see at the bottom of this devastating *cri du coeur*? A sympathetic word, a gentle touch of encouragement, the marking equivalent of an arm round the shoulder, an empathetic tear and the warm adult assurance that it will get better, one day it will, I promise you? No. We get none of this. Cerise got none of this. What did she get, as an exchange for opening her heart and revealing the state of utter torment she was in? A single tick in red pen, accompanied by the line, "You need to use capital letters properly."

There is probably a reasonable explanation behind this crime perpetrated upon a vulnerable young lady. There always is. But whatever the reason, it isn't anywhere near good enough.

It's all about professional integrity

For me, professional integrity boils down to one key rule: a teacher who places marking their books properly at the heart of their practice is a teacher who possesses professional integrity.

The reasons you should prioritise marking above every other facet of the role are manifold, but simple enough. Firstly, what is the point of kids doing the work if no one reads it? None. Like the tree in the

forest that falls when no one hears it when a kid writes a piece of work for you to read, and you do not read it, it is, to them, like they haven't written it at all.

Their effort is pointless if you don't read it

Not reading it sends all manner of negative messages to the child: effort is pointless, their work is of no value to you and they could have got away with not bothering. This is how kids are made to feel in crap teachers' classes. Don't make them feel that way in your class.

Where work is not properly marked or, worse still, is not marked at all, a pernicious negative message gets through to those kids whose work has been ignored in double quick time: they stop trying, stop caring and stop working. Pages get left blank, presentation goes awry, discipline disappears. An unmarked book rapidly becomes shocking, and tells any observer everything about you they will ever need to know.

A key observer's trick, with which you can tell whether the teacher is good, bad or indifferent in seconds, is to look at the first page of an exercise book, then the last page. If there is evidence of progress in the standard of the work, then the teacher is a good teacher: if the work has gone downhill, they are not. Simple.

Make your career fly

Decent marking is the key to pupil progress. If you do it regularly and with a degree of professional fascination, proof marking every word and setting gradational targets, you will, whatever else your faults and flaws, be a very good teacher indeed. Your pupils will make exponential gains, the results that they attain will outstrip anyone's expectations and your career will fly.

This excerpt is from Phil Beadle's essential and irreverent guide to the classroom, *How to Teach*, ISBN: 9781845903930