

Our approach to feedback and marking

It is important to distinguish between feedback and marking, as the two are often confused for the same thing. Feedback can take many forms in the classroom, be it written marking in children's books or verbal advice to improve. It may also come from a source other than the teacher, for instance through peer- or self-assessment. Marking refers to the written comments from a teacher in a pupil's book.

Every contribution a child makes to a lesson, be it the verbal response to a teacher's question, an answer in a multiple-choice quiz, or an extended written piece requires feedback from the class teacher. It is essential that all work produced by a pupil during a lesson is seen the same day by the class teacher.

We understand that the feedback that works best might differ across subjects and age groups. This is why we do not prescribe one specific type of feedback over another. What is absolutely essential is that feedback or marking is used to help pupils improve their work and make progress. This should be evident even where written feedback is not.

But feedback is a two-way street. The process of looking over a set of books provides opportunities for teacher as well as pupil feedback. Our staff complete whole class marking forms that form the reflections from the lesson, their experience and what the books are telling them: what went well, and what needs to be retaught. It is a better use of a teacher's time to tweak and refine tomorrow's lessons, as opposed to writing comments in every pupil's book.

Marking is sometimes useful. Most written marking is for making corrections (e.g. calculations, spellings, punctuation) or for addressing basic misconceptions where a conversation may not be necessary. We insist that all mistakes – where a pupil can self-correct – are addressed by the class teacher. Visible marking in books is not a proxy for good teaching, and Senior Leaders do not use the quantity or quality of staff's written feedback in books as an accountability tool.

Research tells us that the most effective feedback is that which happens at the point of learning. This is where the majority of feedback happens. We give a mixture of individual, group and whole class feedback. Whole class feedback occurs where the teacher has noted either misconceptions or points for improvement that could benefit the whole class. This will normally be shared at the beginning of a new lesson, but not always.

At all times, staff are encouraged to ask themselves the question, "what is the learning return on the feedback I am giving." We believe good feedback should be:

- For teachers as well as pupils;
- Designed to close the gap between current performance and end goal;
- Given at the point of learning, or at the earliest possible opportunity – the effectiveness of feedback given several days after the work is submitted is diminished and often counter-productive;

- Diverse, depending on the needs of the student and the class, as well as the curriculum area;
- Epistemic, rather than merely corrective, where possible – meaning clues will be given to instruct the child why they have erred, in order to improve their method and in turn, to produce to a better product;
- Never used for accountability purposes;
- Meaningful, manageable, and motivating for all.