

Marking and feedback : research into best practice

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A marked improvement?

A review of the evidence
on written marking

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf



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2014 Workload Challenge survey – reform of **marking policies** was the **highest workload-related priority for 53%** of respondents. It was identified as **the biggest factor of unsustainable workload.**

Marking should be
**‘meaningful,
manageable and
motivating.’**

Ofsted confirmed that an **assessment of marking would be included in inspections**, but that decisions about the type, volume and frequency would be at the discretion of individual schools.

Grading

- The removal of national Curriculum Levels in 2014 means that teachers now have to think more deeply about what feedback needs to say and do
- **Only 15% of secondary school teachers do not give a mark for all pieces of work**, whereas at primary its 5%
- Grade only marking does not give pupils the information they need to improve. It reduces the impact of formative comments because **the grade becomes the student's main focus**
- Pupils are **less likely to act on feedback** if grades are awarded

Thoroughness

- 'flick and tick' and 'simple praise' is not as effective as intensive forms of marking
- **Students sometimes perceive praise as not being genuine**
- When students mark essays a large focus is placed on spelling, grammar and word choice, rather than content, organisation or the construction of arguments

Pupil Responses

- Surveys in school suggest that pupils do not engage with or **find it hard to act on the feedback** they are given
- If pupils use class time to provide superficial responses then this is unlikely to improve outcomes
- **Pupils who receive mid-project written feedback are more likely to act on it and view it as helpful**
- Students should do at least as much work responding to their feedback as the teacher did to give that feedback

Creating a Dialogue

- ‘triple impact marking’
- ‘dialogic marking’ in which a written conversation is developed over time between teachers and pupils
- **Only 8% of secondary teachers write a response to students’ responses**
- Use of **questions in feedback help to clarify understanding** and stretch pupils, encouraging them to become more reflective
- **Students often do not understand the terms/vocabulary used in written feedback**

Targets

- At secondary level, 2% of teachers provide no target – **42% always provide a target**
- Specificity of feedback is a key determinant of its impact on performance, while **feedback that is imprecise may be viewed by pupils as useless and frustrating**
- Setting clear targets in marking and **reminding pupils** of these before they complete a similar piece of work is beneficial
- Short-term goals are more effective than longer-term goals
- **Targets may be more effective if pupils have a role in setting them or are asked to rewrite them in their own words**
- May act as a barrier to improvement

Frequency and Speed

- More feedback may lead to faster improvement
- **Next lesson feedback has a positive effect on student progress** – faster feedback is more valuable as learners find it easier to improve if their mistakes are corrected quickly
- It would not appear to be justified to adopt a high-frequency or high-speed approach if it led to a decrease in the precision or depth of marking

Corrections

- Teachers need to distinguish the difference between an error and a mistake. A mistake is something a student can do and does do normally but on this occasion has not, whereas an error occurs when a student has not mastered a skill or has misunderstood.
- **Only 5% of secondary teachers indicate mistakes in pupil's work but do not correct them**
- **Providing the correct answer to mistakes was no more effective than not marking the work at all. Providing the correct answer meant that pupils were not required to think about mistakes**

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SPaG errors which were **circled but not corrected**

- 6 students corrected their own work when they rewrote the paragraph
- 2 students corrected some mistakes but made some mistakes again
- 1 student did not pay attention to the marking and repeated their SPaG errors
- 2 students corrected one of their mistakes but avoided using another spelling, suggesting they didn't know how to correct it and didn't bother to ask.

SPaG errors which were **circled and corrected**

- 5 students corrected their SPaG errors when rewriting the paragraph
- 1 student ignored the correction and made the same mistake again
- 2 students corrected some and made some mistakes again
- 1 student corrected one mistake and avoided another
- 1 student completely changed their paragraph and didn't make any new mistakes
- (1 absent)

Main Findings

- 3 students whose mistakes were only circled made the effort to ask me what they had done wrong and how to correct it
- Lazier students corrected mistakes when they had realised what they had done wrong independently – some made some mistakes again and others changed their work to avoid them
- Some students did not pay attention to my marking whether mistakes were circled or not
- Some students whose mistakes were corrected changed their work completely, even though they had the right answers. – Did seeing the mistakes highlighted lower their confidence?
- An equal amount of students corrected all of their mistakes in both marking strategies

Case Study

- Using tablet computers to record verbal feedback over videos of annotations of students' work. The oral element is designed to **overcome the abstraction between what the teacher intends and what the pupil understands in written feedback**. The pupils get two improvement points, with a photo of their own work side by side with a photo of a model text. Then when improving their text, pupils can **replay the teacher's voice** as often as they like.
- For SEN pupils the headphones enable them to block out distractions
- Pupils **set their own targets** based of self-assessment and use an e-portfolio as a reflection tool