



CWLC Teaching and Learning News

Autumn 2016

Those teachers who are students of their own impact are the teachers who are the most influential in raising students' achievement."
Professor John Hattie

A marking revolution?

Marking: it's the issue that perhaps adds most to the workload of teachers and for many of us seems like painting the Forth Bridge, but harder. These days it gets paired up to make a double act: **marking and feedback**, but in fact these are two quite separate things.

We know from the work of Prof. John Hattie and the Sutton Trust that feedback has one of the highest effect sizes in all evidences teaching strategies. This alone gives us the mandate to seek to improve the quality of our feedback to students, and why so many of us spend so long doing it. But is *marking* the same as *feedback*? It would seem not.

As the recent report by the Education Endowment Foundation, 'A Marked Improvement' (Elliott et al., April 2016) states: "*Careless mistakes should be marked differently to errors resulting from misunderstanding.*" This makes the distinction that marking highlights errors: spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, carelessness through lack of effort or not proof-reading. Feedback, then, should aim to clear up misunderstandings, and if we want students to understand where they have gone wrong, we traditionally write our feedback on their work, and this takes the most time and effort.

We often find ourselves writing the same thing over and over as we plough through student books or writing lengthy comments to re-iterate what we said in class. And it's this that contributes to make marking such a chore.

The EEF's report outlines some key findings that we can learn from when we assess the impact of our marking and our feedback to students. Here are some of the main points and what they might mean for us:

"The quality of existing evidence focused specifically on written marking is low."

This is surprising, as it makes up such a huge part of our workload. However, what little has been discovered helps us form a more flexible approach to the way we mark. What has been gleaned is detailed below:

"Careless mistakes should be marked differently to errors resulting from misunderstanding. The latter may be best addressed by providing hints or questions which lead pupils to underlying principles; the former by simply marking the mistake as incorrect, without giving the right answer."

'Careless mistakes' are likely to take the form of SPaG errors, primarily. Two strategies that can help with this: 1) Ensuring that work is proof-read before it is handed in. Students can either

do this themselves, or swap with a peer to check against key words stipulated by the teacher or directed inclusions about workings-out and presentation. Don't take work in unless this has been done. This would take 5 minutes tops.

2) Any errors you spot can be pointed out by underlining the error and marking it with a © (Check and Correct). Subjects such as MFL may have a list of marking codes here to support more complex grammatical errors, although keeping codes to a minimum has more impact. Have dictionaries on desks and students can correct these errors themselves.

"Pupils are unlikely to benefit from marking unless some time is set aside to enable pupils to consider and respond to marking"

DIRT (Directed Improvement and Response Time) is essential: without it you can feel like a yappy dog barking at the postman from the other side of the door, as your barking, or rather, feedback will have minimal impact. Building DIRT into lessons is not time-wasted, it's time invested. But do heed the following warning too:

"Some forms of marking, including acknowledgement marking, are



unlikely to enhance pupil progress. A mantra might be that schools should mark less in terms of the number of pieces of work marked, but mark better."

DIRT is to allow the students make the work better and produce improved responses to the standard you have asked for. A comment from a teacher saying 'You need to write more for an 8 mark question' can elicit the response 'Ok thanks Miss, I will next time', which is all very polite, but has little impact. The feedback (oral or written) 'Please re-do this again, this time with more detail' should be an instruction and that is what the DIRT is for.

"There is an urgent need for more studies so that teachers have better information about the most effective marking approaches."

We're on it! In a bid to make feedback more meaningful but less onerous for the teacher, several subject areas at CWLC have been trialing different approaches to marking and feedback. One particular resource is being tried out in maths, MFL and English:

The whole-class feedback grid

A generic copy of a whole-class marking & feedback grid (referred to now as M&F grids) is shown at the bottom of this page.

Methodology: The idea of these sheets is that, instead of marking every book closely and writing individual comments on every book, teachers read every book and only make the minimum number of interventions: e.g. question marks, any SPaG marking codes agreed by the dept., comments for that particular student based on your knowledge of their effort, etc.

As teacher reads the books, they jot down notes using the M&F grid to highlight excellent work/effort, common problems, misconceptions, missing work, absences, common keyword issues, etc. The next lesson begins with this feedback being shared with the whole group, which can be done in a number of ways. The students then act on this feedback before moving on.

Generic Marking and Feedback Grid			
Topic:			
Praise:	Incomplete or missing work:	SPaG:	
Concern:	Misconceptions:	Presentation:	
Action to be taken:			
Absent when set:			
Absent when handed in:			
Teacher:	Group:	Targets:	Date:

Martin Goffe (HoD MFL) presented to the T&L group recently how he and others in MFL had been using the M&F grids. MFL use a list of annotation codes to indicate a range of issues that commonly occur in MFL written work. The teacher annotates work with these codes in green.

S/he then uses the grid to make further notes. In the example Martin gave, he had typed his feedback comments onto powerpoint slides so the whole class would see (he said this only took 5 minutes as he was simply copying from his notes). The first 2 slides started with **WWW** comments with students gaining individual praise for work done well, with examples of why this was excellent. This worked as a model for improvement.

The next 2 slides were highlighting common errors (this time with no student names/initials). This acts as a prompt so students can look to see if they made the same errors. Going through the slides took 10 minutes then the DIRT that followed was probably 15 minutes more.

Martin's pros: 'Marking took less time; I was able to give more specific praise and therefore felt it impacted positively on students' self-esteem and confidence; it promoted more independence in the students.' Cons: 'None as far as marking/feedback method goes, but I think the marking codes MFL are using could be reduced as students progress, reducing the level of scaffolding and promoting even more independence in improving their own work.'

Tess Thomas (AHT & maths) presented how the whole maths department has been using these M&F grids (*right*). With maths being marked far more frequently (in terms of right or wrong answers) than some other subjects, Tess said she doesn't write the feedback onto slides. Classwork is always marked there and then for instant feedback with the students doing self and peer marking. Tess only marks homework closely. She then gives the feedback orally and directs it towards individuals. Best work is highlighted first, with two 'BBs' (Best Books) chosen each week. The BB students then act as Learning

Ambassadors to support other students during DIRT. Students needing support are told why and then paired with Learning Ambassadors to improve the work. Each maths teacher also keeps their grids and files them as a record of student progress which Iglia Gillam (maths) says is very helpful when writing reports. Although it has been adopted across the maths department, teachers are using their grids in slightly different ways. For Tess, pros: 'I feel the quality of my feedback has improved; I'm able to reflect more on

what I plan for subsequent lessons more accurately; the time taken to mark is reduced.' Cons: 'None as yet!'

If departments want to try this method out, we would advise you adapt the generic form, as each department will have different needs and priorities in their marking. For more details and examples, see the T&L Hub write-up in the Marking & Feedback section.

The elephant in the room?

When sharing these and other alternative feedback methods, the most commonly-heard response from teachers tends to be "But what will Ofsted and SLT say? Won't they want to see lots of teacher comments and student/teacher dialogue?"

The good news to this is a resounding "NO", from Ofsted and from CWLC SLT. Ofsted Chief Sean Harford's recent document "Marking and other myths" (Nov 2016) states: 'I have asked our inspectors when reporting to not give any impression that marking needs to be undertaken in any particular format and to any particular degree of sophistication or detail; this lines up with our myth busting document and the school inspection handbook deals with this.'

Read the whole (short) article for details but he is very clear on this.

And our own Headteacher Neil Morris says: 'In our reviews, student work is always going to be scrutinised and will help provide

CWLC Maths Department Marking and Feedback Grid		
Topic: Length, Area and Volume Scale Factor	Grade/Level: B → A (6-7)	SPaG: (mathematical keywords or command phrases)
Praise: Extra Task = challenge Aylesha Q1 only Carlton Q1 only Scarlett = all Scarlett = Q1 > Q2 Math → Learning Ambassador	Incomplete or missing work: Ex 32.2 lit: James Partridge Q3 = Q4 b/d D catch up in DIRT	Q3 - How can you write a sentence to explain what 'and' is correct - using maths vocab?
Concerns: Jillad - tasks "push" → D David = positive → C	Misconceptions: Jasmine = Q4, Q2 Celine = Q3, Q4 Jude = Q4, 2(a) 2(c) Jake = Q3 - more evidence needed Jake = Q4 - not area. Some error.	Presentation: (this could include workings, diagrams in pencil, units) Aylan - ruler Greg - heading underline AND OTHERS! *heading, date, underline* David - ruler → WORKING
Action to be taken: Discuss implication of C in lesson	Absent when set: Jesse Savannah Lucy = Q2 → BBBS + Mia + Amyr Freda Bonnie - marked books Absent when handed in: Parvisha	General - units missing - calculation errors 20:10:18
Teacher: T.J.	Group: 9G1	Targets: 3/4 → Date: 3/1

evidence for student progress over time. But that progress is achieved in a variety of ways. As long as we demand high standards of literacy and presentation, and students have improved work when it is not good enough or when it shows misunderstandings, then that is evidence enough that feedback has informed this, whatever form the feedback takes. We don't need stickers or stamps, or written conversations because that's clearly done for me, or SLT, not the students! We do read students' work, so we know when it reflects good teaching and high expectations.'

Our action research on this continues and will help inform policy when we review our whole-school approach to both marking and feedback. Watch this space!