Workload Challenge Research Project Posters

Conference-style posters produced by the schools involved in the Workload Challenge Research Projects

March 2018

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Introduction

In 2016, the National College for Teaching and Leadership awarded grants to 11 groups of schools to carry out collaborative research projects into efficient and effective approaches that reduce unnecessary workload. One additional group of schools from the WOWS consortium in Wigan also carried out a research project investigating reducing unnecessary workload relating to marking.

The research projects built on the principles and recommendations from 3 independent reports into workload.

Lead schools worked with professional researchers and their school partners to investigate current practices and develop long-term solutions to better manage teacher workload. The schools were also asked to produce a conference-style poster to provide a ‘bite-sized’ summary of their project. This document contains all of the posters, grouped by theme.

Marking

Five research projects investigated approaches to marking. These approaches involved strategies such as using live marking, marking codes and self- and peer-assessment to replace detailed written feedback.

Reducing teacher workload through ‘real-time’ personalised feedback

Researchers: R. Protsiv(St Patrick’s), P. Pipola(St Patrick’s), Prof. G. Welch(Institute of Education, UCL)

Schools: Holy Family Secondary School, Our Lady and St George’s Primary School, St Joseph’s Junior School, St Patrick’s Primary School, Trinity Catholic High School

Introduction

The research examined the diversity of assessments as well as the extent to which the workload associated with gathering and use of assessment information impacts on teacher workload and improves student outcomes.

The aim of the research was to find the ways to:

- Reduce the amount of formal testing, data collection and its analysis by adopting the principles of quality formative assessment
- Reduce the amount of marking and improve the value of feedback to students and teachers through high quality verbal feedback

The research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of the current practices in the trust’s schools on the teacher workload and student outcomes?
2. What is the impact of personalised, ‘real-time’ assessment and feedback on the teachers’ workload and the outcomes for pupils?

Research design

A between-class design was used with a post- test only. To address the aims of the research the independent variable of intervention type was operationalised by creating two conditions:

- IV Level 1 (Control condition) – no intervention
- IV Level 2 (Active control) – increased verbal (reduced written) feedback given

In addtition, the teachers from seven schools participated in the questionnaire to evaluate impact of the the current practices on teacher workload.

Method

Participants

To introduce the interventions to the assigned groups, within the chosen Yr4, 5 and 7 Year groups, 24 parallel classes were divided into the trial and control conditions. In the trial classes, teachers were required to make formative assessment and give verbal feedback during the lessons instead of written feedback. Teachers in the control classes continued with their current school practice of giving written feedback according to their marking policies.

Procedure

The intervention tested the impact of the increased personalised feedback and formative assessment writing on teacher workload and student outcomes. The data collection was done through the teachers’ logs, teacher questionnaires, teacher and student interviews.

All teachers planned lessons for the following learning outcome - *Draft and write by using a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs.*

The teachers were able to choose the writing genre most suitable for their year classes. The lessons were no longer than 45 min and need to be delivered as follows:

Day 1 - Teachers provided a general outline of the new concepts being taught and modelled examples which exhibited the planned outcomes. Students generated their own examples which incorporated the taught material. Teachers assessed students’ outcomes throughout the lesson offering personalised feedback and requiring the students to make improvements in their next attempts.

Day 2 - The lessons continued in the similar manner throughout the first two days in order to master the skills.

Day 3 - The students were given opportunities to apply the learned skills. The teachers shared the expected standard of writing and asked students to produce an extended purposeful piece of writing which was marked in depth by the teachers.

Day 4 - The teachers clarified the common misconceptions. The students analysed the teachers’ feedback, edited their work and produced a final version. The final version was discussed with peers critiquing and making comparative analysis against the expected standards shared by the teachers.

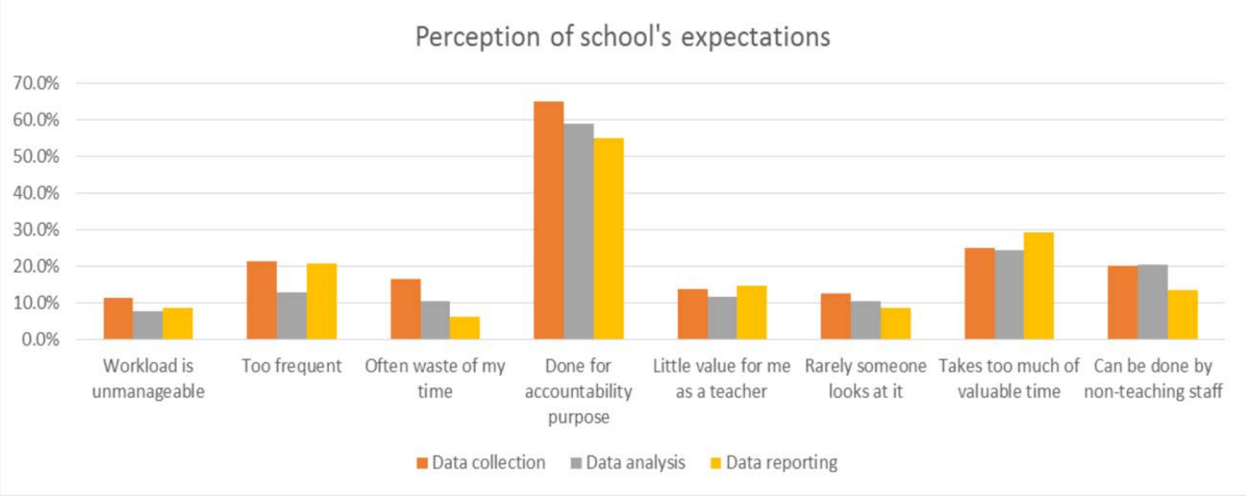
Materials

Time logs were completed by the teachers before and during the trial period.

Online questionnaire was used by the teachers of seven schools.

Results

Impact of previous practice



Impact on teacher workload

The amount of time gained in providing less written feedback varied from at least one hour per week, with which one teacher was “delighted”, to a more common 50% reduction from four hours to two hours. Furthermore, having given extensive verbal feedback, the written feedback could then be “whizzed through” for some, making “the whole process work really well.”

Impact on student learning

Overall, verbal feedback was seen as having a “significant impact”; students were observed to apply what was said and so stopped making the same mistakes.

The need for re-drafting was reportedly reduced and there was no need to plan for an extra lesson, as student errors were “fixed” during the lesson. The experimental group teachers said that they had thought much more about what they expected from different ability groups and that their planning was much more thorough. A recurring theme concerned the difference that verbal feedback had had with lower attaining students. “The lower ability started feeling so much better, standards improved simply because it impacted on their self-esteem.”

Impact on quality of work

The use of verbal feedback was seen to have a significant impact on the quality of the written work produced by the end of the week. The experimental trial teachers, compared to the control teachers, believed that - because of the one-to-one verbal feedback - there were notable improvements in the quality of the work in the trial week than evident in the previous week.

Conclusions

Teachers reported significant reduction in weekly marking time English – between 25% and 75% of usual 2-4hrs of English marking per week. Almost all teachers agreed that the verbal feedback had either moderate or significant positive impact on student progress. Most teachers commented on the major decrease in their workload associated with marking. Those who cited minor decrease explained that they were able to spend more time preparing better quality lessons or catching up on other work which otherwise would not be possible. There is a scope for significant financial savings in schools through improving the efficiencies of teacher deployment.

Recommendations for future research

Research on effective use on teacher assessment and verbal feedback.

Research on how the school leaders collect and use the assessment information and evaluate its impact on the school performace.

Study the value for money of school activities associated with assessments and marking.

Reducing teacher workload: the ‘Re-balancing feedback’ trial

What is the impact on teacher and student outcomes of replacing marking with three classroom-based feedback strategies?

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Jason Lowe (Tarporley High School): Teaching School Lead
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Stuart Kime (Evidence Based Education): Researcher

Cheshire Vale Teaching School Alliance
Schools:

- **Tarporley High School**
- **Queen’s Park High School**
- **Helsby High School**

Introduction

This research presents and describes findings from a small-scale randomised controlled trial (with class as the unit of randomisation) involving 30 teachers’ Year 10 and Year 12 classes studying English and English Literature (GCSE and A Level) in three secondary schools (Queen’s Park High School, Tarporley High School and Helsby High School) in the northwest of England. The trial was conducted between 7th March 2017 and 26th May 2017, and was coordinated by senior leaders from Tarporley High School.

The 2015 publication ‘Government response to the Workload Challenge’ (DfE, 2015) was instrumental in informing the research reported in this document, as was ‘Eliminating unnecessary workload’ (DfE, 2016) and the Education Endowment Foundation’s ‘A marked improvement?’ report (Elliott et al., 2016).

Also, the seminal meta-analysis by Kluger and DeNisi (1996), John Hattie’s ‘The Power of Feedback’ review (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and Susan Askew’s book ‘Feedback for Learning’ (Askew, 2000) informed the work in this project.

Furthermore, the work of Harks, Rakoczy, Hattie, Besser, and Klieme (2014) on the effectiveness of different types of written feedback (which acknowledges that process-oriented feedback seems to have a greater positive effect than grade-oriented feedback) was of interest in the design of the intervention.

Method

Participants

30 teachers of Year 10 and Year 12 students studying English and English Literature (GCSE and A Level) in three secondary schools (Queen’s Park High School, Tarporley High School and Helsby High School) in the northwest of England. All teachers volunteered for the project and were randomised by the researcher to receive either the intervention or control (business as usual) condition.

Procedure

The randomisation was concealed so that all participants – schools, teachers (including intervention developers), students – did not know to which group they were randomised until after it was done. There was no foreknowledge of randomised allocation.

Teachers of English who were randomised to the treatment condition suspended their usual practice of providing written feedback comments (marking) in Year 10 and Year 12 books between 7th March 2017 and 26th May 2017.

During the same period, teachers of English who were randomised to the treatment condition replaced the written feedback with three specific feedback strategies: ‘front-end feedback’, ‘register feedback’ and ‘strategic sampling’ (described earlier in this document).

Teachers randomised to the control condition continued with business as usual. This differed slightly across the three schools, due to the nuances of their individual policies on feedback and homework

Materials

Teachers were given training by the Project Leads at Tarporley High School, and then used dedicated exercise books for students to complete class and homework tasks in for the duration of the project.

Results

The data collected and analysed in this trial indicate that the ‘re-balancing feedback’ intervention saves teachers time, and creates space for them to be more reflective practitioners, all while not having a detectable detrimental impact on student outcomes in Year 10 and Year 12 English and English Literature.

Below are presented to indicative sets of results from the project (teacher self-reported hours spent marking and Year 10 student attainment data for English). Results for other data collected (teacher-level and student-level are available in the full written report).

With very limited data from teachers involved (the initial sample was small, and non-response to follow-up problematic), drawing robust conclusions about the impact of the intervention on self-reported hours spent marking is not possible. Teacher comments from the focus groups have been included to show the perceived impact on teachers.

Teachers’ comments from the focus group

“I have found that I have been probably been wanting to do more, it is not a chore anymore, if you see what I mean, so you have got those four or five more hours extra than you would normally”

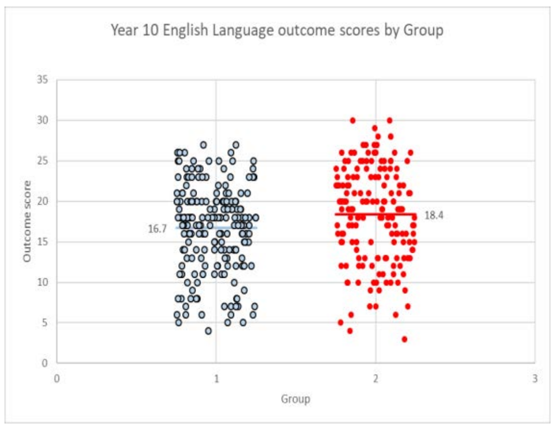
“I think it is a better use of my time rather than writing the same thing in 25 books and it not being effective for the other 5.”

“[The misconception] had been addressed within 24 hours…but normally it could have been left a week maybe.”

“Doing Jekyll and Hyde at the moment one of the big things was a lot of them had mentioned that the garden was dead, but they hadn’t referred to the Garden of Eden, the fall of Adam, but then I fed that back to the whole group within three or four minutes rather than writing it 32 times.”

Year 10 English Language outcomes

On the outcome measure, the intervention group moderately outperformed the control group, by 1.7 marks. This difference is enough to be statistically significant; in other words, it is unlikely to have arisen by pure chance in a sample of this size.



Conclusions

As far as is possible to conclude from the data collected and analysed in this trial, there is an indication that the ‘re-balancing feedback’ intervention saves teachers time and creates space for them to be more reflective practitioners, all while not having a detectable detrimental impact on student outcomes in Year 10 and Year 12 English and English Literature.

The lack of a significant disturbance to student outcomes, but the presence of evidence (from focus group discussions) of a reduction in teacher workload is encouraging and should add to the growing body of evidence in this area. This was, in essence, a trial of a relatively inexpensive intervention (involving two days of staff training), and one which had very little additional resource required to implement it.

There are several limitations to the findings in this study.

Firstly, the absence of student baseline achievement scores made the analysis of impact on this variable of interest less precise that had they been present. Secondly, the small sample size of teachers, and the subsequent low response rate to calls for pre- and post-test data (TSES and hours worked) also make conclusions drawn less robust than otherwise they would have been. Thirdly, the absence of better compliance data means that complier average causal effect (CACE) analysis cannot be done. This kind of analysis would have helped shed greater light on the effectiveness of the intervention. Fourthly, while the randomisation process was as robust as possible under the circumstances, blocking and stratification could have been used to provide a clearer understanding of impact. Finally, any findings from this study can only be generalised to a very small sub-set of English and English Literature teachers (and their Year 10 and Year 12 students) in three schools in the north west of the United Kingdom.

The ‘rebalancing feedback’ trial indicates that it is possible for schools to investigate the impact of school-led initiatives designed to improve working conditions by reducing workload. But this is not enough. As well as removing from the diet of teachers’ lives the unnecessary, the inefficient and the ineffective, there needs to be a sharp focus on bringing in the necessary, the efficient and the effective in their places. In essence, it is important to use this research – and others in the same field – to investigate how to use the opportunity of reducing workload to increase student learning.

Finally, this trial was interesting because of its ‘reductionist’ approach. Many interventions in education are of the ‘additive’ sort – ones which work on the assumption that to do more is to do better. Trials which assess the impact of not doing something are to be welcomed.

Flying High Trust report

Conference Marking:

An effective way to reduce teacher workload?

Cotgrave Candleby Lane School

Context of Project:

With approximately 600 children on roll at the school, the project involved 3 teachers in Year 2 and 2 teachers in Year 6 who were open to trialling a new approach to marking and feedback within their classrooms. Altogether, there were 90 children in Year 2 (30 in each class) and 70 children in Year 6 (35 in each class).

Method:

Trialling of the 'Conference Marking' approach branched into 3 levels to measure its effectiveness in different ways:

Whole class **Small group** **1:1 with adult**

A multi-method approach was undertaken to obtain detailed and rigorous findings, including questionnaires, focus groups, pupil interviews, review of research journal notes, class-council minutes and written examples of conference marking.

Method	Justification	Key Findings
Questionnaires	To gain a broad view of opinions of all children involved (160)	Usefulness of conference marking with their teacher (Very useful): As a whole class **47%** Small group **76%** 1:1 with teacher/other adult **91%**
Pupil Interviews	A range of 5 children from each class were chosen for a more in-depth response.	**Year 2 and 6 – all children commented positively on receiving 1:1 conference marking with their teacher or another adult.** E.g. **Yr 2**: *"Talking on your own as a private conversation is best so no-one else can hear and know the answers"* **Yr 6**: *"1:1 with your teacher is the best way of marking. You get your say. In class, you don't, it's rare. If it's just you and the teacher, they can give you specific ideas for your piece of work to make it unique."* **Mixed responses to small-group and whole-class conference marking:** E.g. **Yr 2**: *"I least like group conference marking because you might get put with people that mess around a lot and you don't get as much done."* **Yr 6:** *"Conference marking in a small group is better than a whole class. Sometimes you can't hear your own voice in a whole class and having other people to help you mark as well as the teacher is good".*
Teacher Focus Groups	To ascertain experiences of teachers involved.	All teachers found 1:1 conference marking worked most effectively and saw good progress with children's work but said finding time to do this was very difficult. Year 2 teachers found small-group conference marking least effective because of distraction from other children in the class. Year 6 teachers found a mixed approach to conference marking worked best – working with the whole class, small groups or 1:1 children when needed.
Review of Research Journal	Monitoring personal experiences of project.	**Entry 1 – 21.3.17** *"Trialled small group conference marking with Year 2 today. Use of time/progress for other children when not working with an adult was not effective. Classroom was noisy and felt very stressful, taking all day to complete with all children in the class, even with TA support. Less teacher marking, but high stress!"* **Entry 2 – 27.4.17** *"Completed lots of 1:1 feedback today with conference marking approach. Children made good progress and could see their mistakes. TA also conference marked effectively with several 1:1 children."* **Entry 3 – 15.6.17** *"Whole-class conference marking of India reports was successful but had to have same next step to make it manageable. Not sure it totally pushed all children at the correct levels but was a calm and supportive atmosphere with children helping each other to mark"*

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Whole-class Conference Marking

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1:1 Conference Marking

Conference Marking as…	Pros	Cons
Whole Class	Calm, manageable, 1 marking sheet to produce for all	Least preferred style for majority of children – not specific for them, less challenge
Small Group	Encourages conversations between children (peer-assessment).	Distractions from other children in the group. Takes a long time. Children need to be grouped according to next step. 'Holding activities' for other children – limited progress
1:1 with adult	Very specific for each child and each piece of work. Preferred approach for majority of children.	Takes time - if work is marked beforehand it does not reduce workload.

Next Steps:

1. Continue use of '1:1 Conference Marking' with an adult and explore ways of ensuring more time is dedicated to this.
2. Further research to be undertaken into other marking strategies that may reduce teacher workload further whilst ensuring good progress is still made.
3. Adapt 'Whole Class Conference Marking' strategy to allow next steps to be more specific for each child.

"For the first time ever, I had a middle ability child complete all of the success criteria and this was purely down to the marking conferences." Y5 teacher *"It was…for the benefit of the children ." Y5 teacher*

Reducing Teacher Workload through the use of Marking Conferences

Becky Howard

Ravenshead C of E Primary School

Written Comments
Next Time Target
Green highlighter
Symbols
Daily Success Criteria
Ticks and codes
Responding to marking
Peer Feedback
Self-assessing

What we already do for Marking and Feedback

Aims

- To explore perceptions of our current marking policy.
- To investigate ways of reducing the marking load of our teachers without putting the children at a disadvantage.
- To work with staff to design a new marking policy.

Words of staff used to describe the demands of the current marking policy

Rationale

Marking and feedback is central to a teacher's role. The Sutton Trust 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit' (Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2012) found that high quality feedback led to 8+ months improvement for pupils. However, Oxford University's 'A Marked Improvement?' (EEF, April 2016) recognised that time available for marking is not infinite and looked for the best way for teachers to spend their time feeding back to pupils. They found that, to date, not enough robust studies had been done to provide definite answers.

Alongside this, it is widely recognised that teacher workload is unsustainable and that many teachers are leaving the profession as well as fewer young people choosing to join the profession because of the workload demands. It is felt by many that the single biggest contributor to this unsustainable workload, is marking.

As a school we had reviewed our marking policy in 2013 and, at the time, had followed research and guidance to produce a system that relied on written feedback using comments, ticks, symbols, corrections, pupil responses, red edit pens and green highlighters. Although this had reduced the workload, the majority of our staff still felt that it was unmanageable and the SLT felt that it was time for us to research and review again to find a better, more manageable system of feeding back to our pupils in a meaningful and motivating way.

Investigate the current picture
- Teacher questionnaire
- Review of current policy

Trial a new approach
- Marking Conferences
- Year 1 and Year 5 (4 classes, 5 teachers)
- Monthly Focus Group meetings
- Recognising issues, reviewing and adjusting
- Discussions with all stakeholders

Review new approach
- Staff questionnaires
- Final Focus Group meeting
- Pupil questionnaires
- Pupil interviews
- Whole-staff review

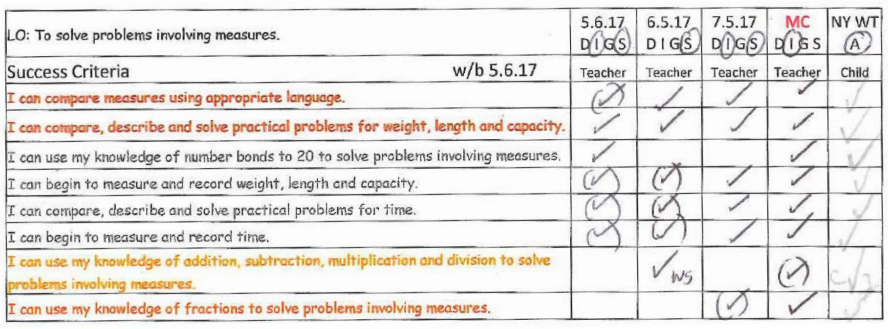
Marking Conferences

We define Marking Conferences as any time where an adult works with the children in the class to give them verbal feedback about how successful they have been in their work and what their next steps are, with the aim of them improving their work. This could be as a whole class, a group focusing on the same main thing or on a 1:1 basis.

What our Marking Conferences looked like

- English and Maths
- Once a week or more often if a need was identified
- Mostly during the English and Maths lesson with some groups in the afternoon if needed
- All children in Year 1 and 5 (107) involved
- Groups based each time on children's gaps
- Weekly success criteria used to identify gaps
- Weekly success criteria also used to provide feedback to pupils (tick, tick in brackets, dot)
- No written comments

Weekly Success Criteria (Maths Year 1—lower ability child)



LO: To solve problems involving measures.	5.6.17 D I G S	6.5.17 D I G S	7.5.17 D I G S	MC D I G S	NY WT A
Success Criteria w/b 5.6.17	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher	Child
I can compare measures using appropriate language.	(✓)	✓	✓	✓	✓
I can compare, describe and solve practical problems for weight, length and capacity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
I can use my knowledge of number bonds to 20 to solve problems involving measures.	✓			✓	✓
I can begin to measure and record weight, length and capacity.	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓
I can compare, describe and solve practical problems for time.	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓
I can begin to measure and record time.	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓	✓
I can use my knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solve problems involving measures.		✓ WS		(✓)	c✓
I can use my knowledge of fractions to solve problems involving measures.			(✓)	✓	✓

Pupil Questionnaires

101 Pupils completed a questionnaire asking them to consider the usefulness of the new approach and the usefulness of the previous method of written feedback in helping them to get better in their learning.

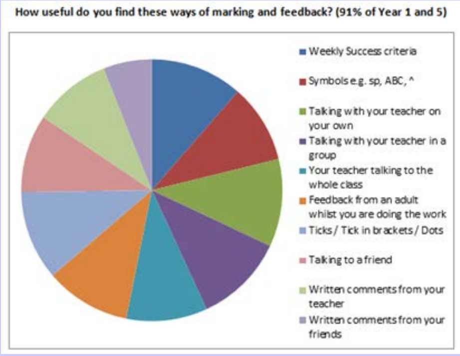


Table 1: **Analysis of responses towards Marking Project Foci**

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because some children did not respond to all the questions.

Weekly Success criteria	Positive response	Neither + or -	Negative response
Year 1	82%	12%	0%
Year 5	59%	33%	8%

Talking with your teacher in a group (Group Marking Conferences)	Positive response	Neither + or -	Negative response
Year 1	70%	16%	10%
Year 5	61%	20%	20%

Written comments from your teacher	Positive response	Neither + or -	Negative response
Year 1	56%	18%	20%
Year 5	43%	35%	20%

Table 2: **Which method do you find most useful?**

Weekly Success criteria	Most
Talking with your teacher in a group	
Ticks / Tick in brackets / Dots	
Talking with your teacher on your own	
Feedback from an adult whilst you are doing the work	
Your teacher talking to the whole class	
Symbols e.g. sp, ABC, ^	
Talking to a friend	
Written comments from your teacher	Least
Written comments from your friends	

References

Education Endowment Fund (EEF) (2016) *A Marked improvement*, London: EEF

Higgins, S., Kokotsaki, D. and Coe, R. (2012) *The Teaching and Learning Toolkit*, London: EEF

Pupil Interviews—Key Findings

8 children from each class taking part in the project were interviewed in groups of 4. They were selected from questionnaire responses to explore a range of opinions.

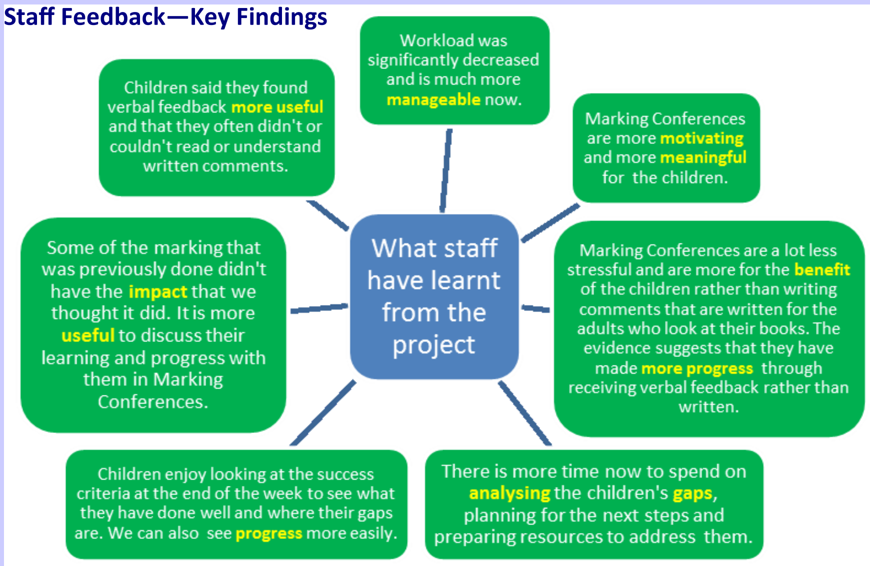
Marking conferences (MC) vs Written Comments (WC)

- Talking to a teacher helps them improve their work.
- Most pupils preferred MC as it helped them understand *what* they needed to do to improve.
- The majority of Year 5 pupils preferred 1:1 MC so that they could focus on what they needed and no one else would know.
- The majority of Year 1 pupils preferred group MC so that they could share ideas with other people.
- Many pupils found a range of feedback techniques useful.
- Many pupils didn't read WC unless asked to or couldn't read or understand them on their own.
- Some didn't like WC at all because they couldn't tell from them what to do next and the teacher was 'ruining my work'.
- Pupils who didn't like MC felt embarrassed about their mis-takes and didn't want everyone to know.
- Older pupils who valued WC said this was so they could work on their own whilst the teacher helped those who needed it.

Weekly Success Criteria (WSC)

- Almost all pupils thought this was useful in moving their learning on.
- Almost all pupils said this was the best way to get feedback from their teacher.
- All pupils knew how to find what they did well and things they needed to improve on using the WSC.
- Pupils who didn't find WSC useful said it didn't have enough detail and they needed more information from the teacher *or* that it told them *what* to improve but not *where* to improve it.
- Pupils who didn't like using WSC said this was because they didn't like seeing the dots (the things they had not achieved yet) and they didn't like it when they thought they had achieved something and then didn't get a tick.
- Most pupils said that WSC was better than a new list everyday because you could have 'more than one go' and you could see how you got better during the week.

Staff Feedback—Key Findings



What staff have learnt from the project

Workload was significantly decreased and is much more **manageable** now.

Marking Conferences are more **motivating** and more **meaningful** for the children.

Marking Conferences are a lot less stressful and are more for the **benefit** of the children rather than writing comments that are written for the adults who look at their books. The evidence suggests that they have made **more progress** through receiving verbal feedback rather than written.

There is more time now to spend on **analysing** the children's **gaps**, planning for the next steps and preparing resources to address them.

Children enjoy looking at the success criteria at the end of the week to see what they have done well and where their gaps are. We can also see **progress** more easily.

Some of the marking that was previously done didn't have the **impact** that we thought it did. It is more **useful** to discuss their learning and progress with them in Marking Conferences.

Children said they found verbal feedback **more useful** and that they often didn't or couldn't read or understand written comments.

Concerns and possible solutions

"It is very hard to get through all your marking conferences when you are in class on your own."

How do we manage marking conferences if there is only one adult in class?

- Manage time carefully across the week
- Swap lessons around to make the best use of adults across the year group.
- Pull groups out of topic sessions if necessary

"We…have to work out the best way to manage them while making sure the rest of the class are carrying out meaningful learning tasks."

What do the other children do whilst marking conferences are going on?

- Spelling activities
- Handwriting
- Carrying on with a piece of writing independently
- Edit and improve their work independently (using SC to find gaps)
- Plan their next paragraph
- Maths fluency activity
- Independent work in another area of the curriculum

"The time taken out of the curriculum is a concern."

How do we ensure that we still cover everything and don't let the rest of the curriculum suffer?

- Be flexible with the when, where and how many Marking Conferences and group sizes
- Use them for lengthier pieces of writing in English and when they will have most impact.
- Use success criteria to give feedback everyday, ensuring that they know how to use this.
- Sometimes give a quick written comment on a post-it note for things that children can do on their own.
- Use AFL lessons where they have whole-class marking conferences where appropriate.

Conclusions

"I've learnt that written comments do not have the impact I thought that they did." Y5 teacher

Teacher workload has been reduced and they feel more positive about the impact they are having on children's learning. The research has shown that pupils are more motivated when discussing their work with their teacher. It is more meaningful for them and they are more able to use the feedback to improve their work. Using weekly success criteria to support the Marking Conference process has been beneficial to staff and pupils, and has contributed to greater progress— this can also be more easily be monitored by the SLT. There are some issues to consider which will need monitoring. However, we believe that we can work around these issues and that flexibility and constant use of AFL is the key to being successful with the Marking Conference approach.

Next Steps: The findings of this project have been shared with staff. Together, we have revised our marking and feedback policy. Our school is going to adopt Marking Conferences and Weekly Success Criteria across the school from September. To ensure future success, this will be trialled for the Autumn term, then reviewed. We will not be using lengthy written comments any more.

"My workload was significantly decreased and I found that I had longer to spend on really analysing where the children's gaps were and what they needed to do next rather than spending my time writing comments that were often not read or were meaningless to the children." Y1 teacher

"With the ticks, tick in brackets or dot, it shows what we've done well and what we need to improve." Y5 child *"I like to talk in a group together. Then you get to find out what you're doing." Y1 child* *"Talking to a teacher in a group and feedback while you are working all help you improve." Y5 child*

"The marking conferences seemed to motivate the children as they felt they had more guided support…able to clarify their next steps." Y5 teacher *"I feel like it's really useful…and it's specific to me." Y5*

Marking Workload Project
No comment marking

Richard Scott| Assistant Head |Everton Primary School School

Problem / Question

Is it possible to provide pupils with meaningful , motivating and manageable feedback without writing any comments in their books?

Hypothesis

- Feedback is best given at the point of teaching.
- Verbal feedback can be as effective as written comments.
- Marking can be a simple validation of the progress made within a lesson.

Context

Everton Primary School is a small (100 pupil) rural primary school. We have mixed age classes with 15 pupils in each year group.

We already ran a light touch marking policy with a focus on providing quality feedback within lessons, this project took us one stage further, deliberately forbidding the use of comments in books.

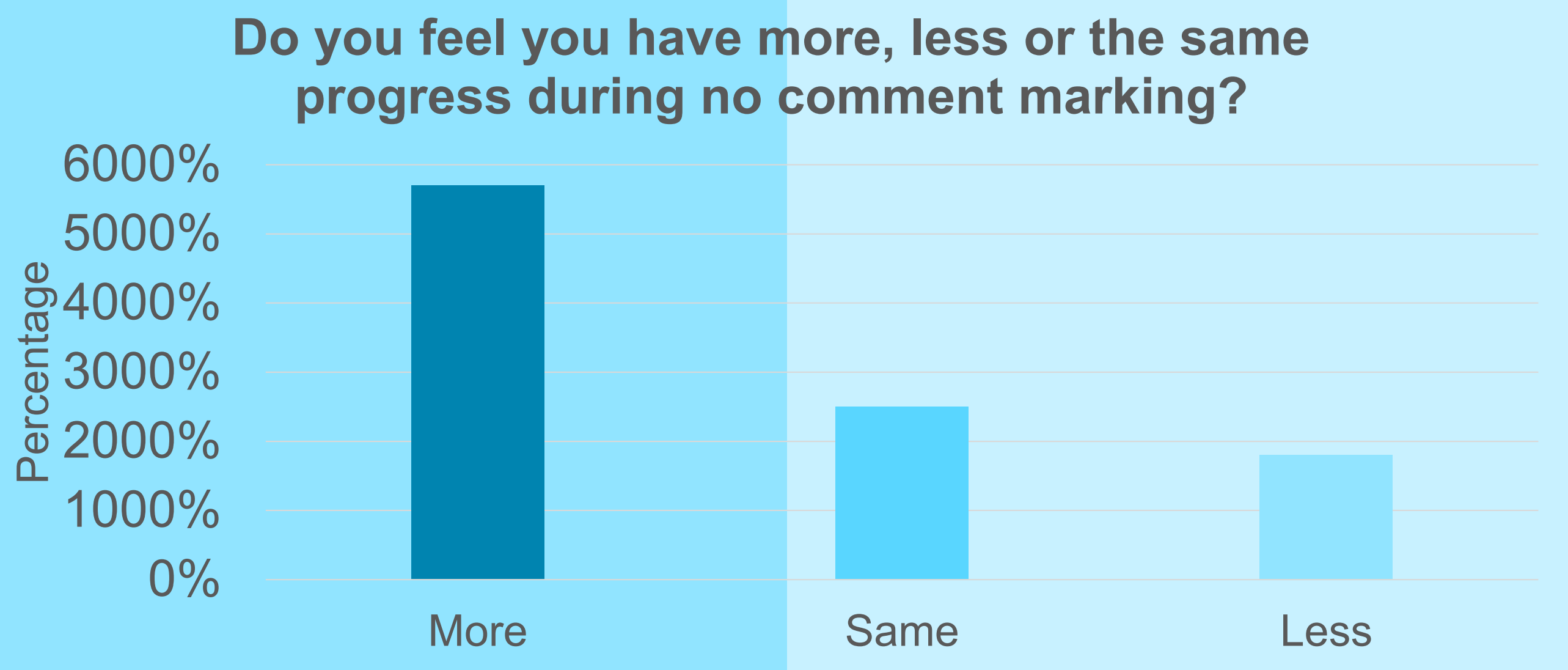
Participants

All four teachers (2 work as a job share) in the three mixed age classes volunteered to take part in the study. These classes included 86 pupils from years 1 to 6

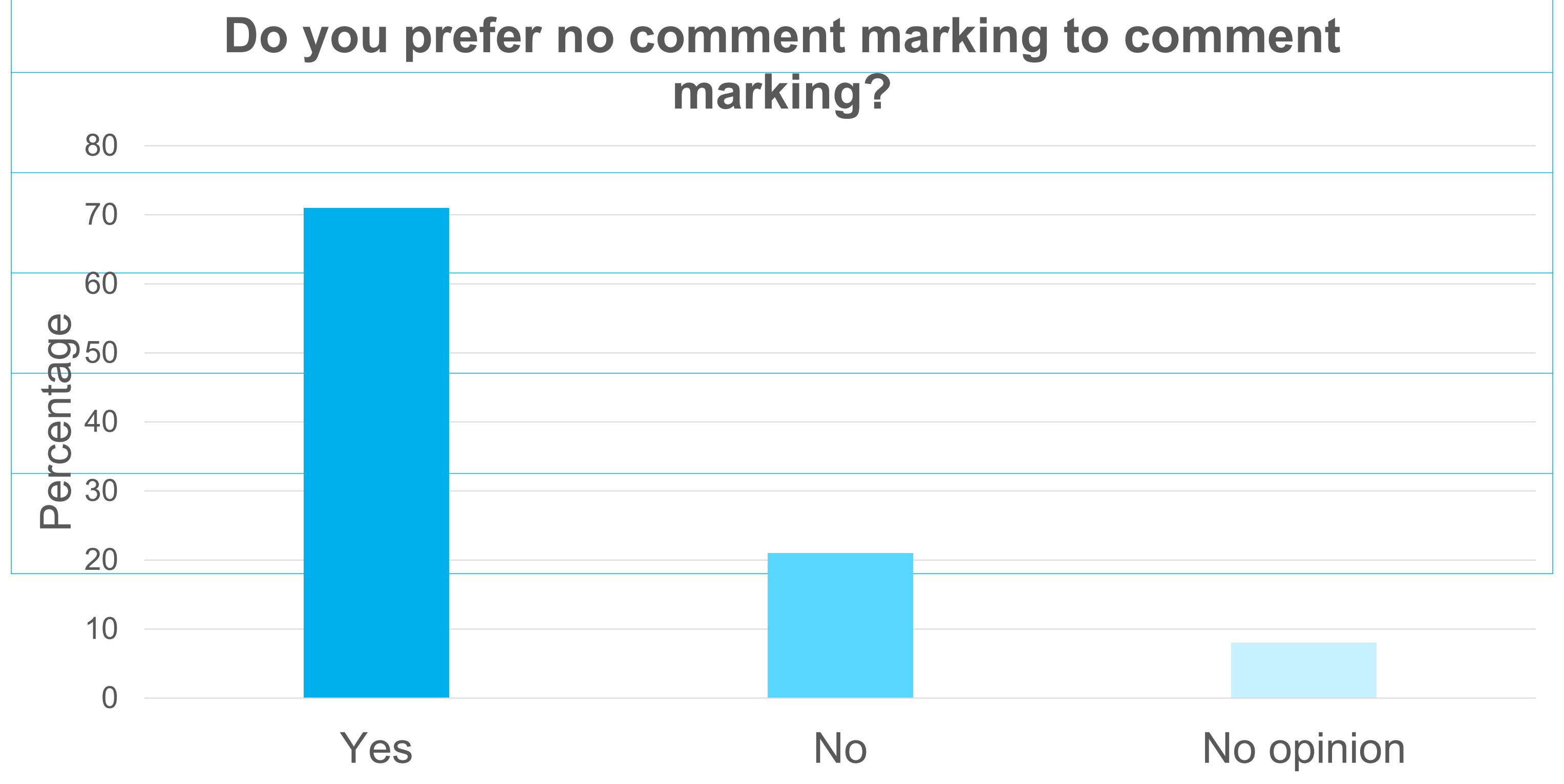
Time Line

- Time line
- March 2017 staff briefing and launch, letter sent to parents.
- April-May Process used across all classes, staff reviews held after 3 and 6 weeks
- May 2017 Review of half termly assessment data to ensure there was no negative impact on pupil progress.
- June 2017 Continuation of research, class teachers adapting the approach based on the circumstances of their classes.
- July 2017. Pupils provide feedback on their experiences through questionnaires, focus groups and interviews.

Impact on Pupils



28 pupils data from end of project questionnaire.
The 18% of pupils who felt they had made less progress were all working at age related expectations.



- Again, the 21% were pupils working at Age Related expectations.
- All Greater Depth Pupils preferred no comment marking.
- All SEND pupils preferred no comment marking.

Pupil Comments

- “My teacher talks to me more in lessons now – I prefer talk because I can understand it more.” (SEND pupil)
- “I can ask for feedback at any time in a lesson and verbal feedback is easier to understand and act on.” (Year 6 GD pupil)
- “I think I have made more progress because I now spend more time marking my own book and can see what I need to do.” (Y6 ARE pupil)
- “I feel I get enough feedback, but I got more when we had comment marking.” (Year 6 GD)
- “In every lesson I am provided with targets and how to improve.”
- “I preferred comment marking – I could read what I needed to do to improve in the next lesson.” (Y5 ARE)

Impact on Staff

Work/Life Balance

- “I now spend less than an hour a day marking.”
- “I now leave school before 5 p.m. every night.”
- “ I no longer take books home with me.”
- “I have joined a running club.”
- “I have joined my local bowls club.”

Teaching and Learning

- “I spend more time in lessons feeding back to pupils, who then respond within the lesson.”
- “I have more time to plan lessons that meet the individual needs of pupils.”
- “I plan lessons that allow me to feed back within the session.”
- “Pupils take more responsibility for reflecting on and improving their own work.”
- “No comment marking is too proscriptive, there are a few times where a comment after the lesson is necessary.”
- “As an SLT, we have to change our expectations for what we see in books in work scrutinies.”

Conclusions

- Our results mostly support the hypothesis- it is possible to give meaningful and motivating feedback to most pupils verbally within lessons.
- All Greater Depth and SEND pupils prefer no comment marking.
- 30% of ARE pupils felt this method did not work as well as comment marking. They felt they did not get enough teacher time within lessons to compensate for comment marking.

Next Steps

- Consider how to adapt the approach to support the 30% of ARE pupils who do not like the approach- spend more time with them in class or comment mark?
- Ensure time taken from marking workload is then not soaked up on other tasks.
- Revisit SLT policy on work scrutiny to ensure it reflects the ethos of no comment marking.

- My thanks got to all staff and pupils at the school for giving their time to this project. Without your commitment, this work would not have been possible.

Marking Workload Challenge - Research Project

Flying High Academy, Ladybrook

Aims

To discover the impact of 'Minimal Marking' on reducing teachers' marking workload without having a detrimental impact on pupil achievement.

School context

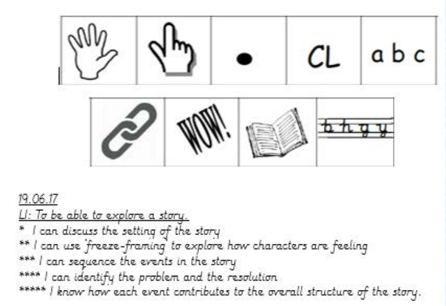
We are a larger than average primary school (399 on roll) in North Nottinghamshire and most children attend from the local area. The majority of children are white British and a very small number of children speak EAL. The proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium is above the national average. The school has a higher than national percentage of children requiring SEN support, almost double. The school has a higher deprivation indicator than national.

Research process

The project was carried out in three classes (Year 1, Year 3, Year 4/5) all taught by experienced teachers. Children's views were sought throughout the project by the means of a comment box, which could be completed anonymously. Towards the end of the project, group interviews were held by the research champion with a selection of children with differing abilities from each class. Teachers' views were sought by questionnaires, focus group interviews and journal entries.

Our definition of 'Minimal Marking'

- ✓ Success criteria achieved during the lesson to be highlighted green
- ✓ Examples of success criteria achieved within the work to be highlighted green
- ✓ Mistakes/errors to be highlighted in pink (but not corrected by the teacher)
- ✓ KS1 – marking symbols to be highlighted green or pink
- ✓ Spellings to be corrected
- ✓ Children to continue to respond in red pen
- ✗ No written comments



19.06.17

LI: To be able to explore a story.

* I can discuss the setting of the story

** I can use 'freeze-framing' to explore how characters are feeling

*** I can sequence the events in the story

**** I can identify the problem and the resolution

***** I know how each event contributes to the overall structure of the story.

Reducing workload

All teachers reported a reduction in time spent marking. Teachers were not taking home books each day and, if they did, it was only 6-10 books. Teachers report that this is a manageable marking workload. However, the time spent marking is being reallocated to other tasks. "Overall the pros do not outweigh the reduced workload as there are always other jobs to fill the time." (Year 3 teacher) Nevertheless, many teachers found the tasks were now more motivating... "The replacement of marking with adapting lessons, designing engaging activities, and spending quality time feeding back to pupils has meant that I have more opportunity to be creative now that I am not bogged down with hours of marking." (Year 1 teacher)

Assessment for Learning and Progress

"I certainly don't feel as if I have any less of a grasp upon what the key strengths and areas for development across the class are and what my next steps should be as a result – so really marking in depth wasn't serving that particular purpose. If the ultimate goal of marking is as an assessment tool then this proves that deep marking is unnecessary! I am definitely reshaping my subsequent planning more as a result – a real positive." (Year 4/5 teacher)

Teachers are using AFL to adapt planning and to plan for focus groups for further targeted support. "The children understood the purpose of these tasks and enjoyed more practical ways of extending their learning." (Year 3 teacher) Teachers feel that this is time much better spent and therefore more motivating and meaningful. An overwhelming majority of children preferred verbal feedback to written, "Maybe you're not a good reader and you can't understand what it says." (Year 1 child) "Easier to explain that write it down." (Year 3 child) or areas for improvement to be highlighted "it's fun to spot the mistake rather than be told – learn better that way" (Year 4 child)

Challenges

One of the biggest challenges faced during the project was teacher mind-set. Many comments were made about feeling as though they haven't marked 'properly'. Staff felt that they would be judged as not doing their job properly if others were to view their books. "This is the bit I can't get used to. I know they have that sticker on the front but I always feel really weird when other teachers are looking at the books, especially those from other schools – I realise this is my problem, but I just can't get used to it!" (Year 4/5 teacher)

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Next steps

Consider replacing the marking policy with a feedback policy. Within this, consider that feedback should be appropriate to the age and development stage of the child. Whilst there is a need for some consistency across the school, what is appropriate in Year 6 may not be in Year 1. If changes are made to policy, potentially, work would be needed to change the mind-set of some teachers. Continue to seek children's views on their perception of marking and feedback. Continuing Professional Development opportunities based around marking and feedback for teachers and teaching assistants.

Minimal Marking – Replacing written feedback

Where everyone feels valued
Radcliffe on Trent
Junior School
and wants to do their best

Aims

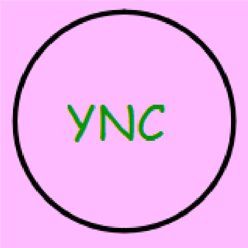
- To make marking meaningful, manageable and motivating for children and teachers.
- To replace written comments with different forms of feedback.
- To reduce teacher workload.

Rationale

The DfE published the results of a teacher workload survey in February 2017 which stated that primary teachers with less than 6 years of experience worked on average 18.8 hours a week outside of school time, more experienced teachers worked on average 2 hours less than this.
On average primary teachers spend 8.2 hours a week on marking and correcting children's work.
This research was concerned with trying to find ways to reduce this aspect of teacher workload.

What we did:

Initially we decided to create a new marking code to replace written feedback. However this proved inefficient, not meaningful and confusing. After this, we focussed on using highlighters, YC, YNC, YWT next to the L.O., smiley faces and verbal and small group feedback. This proved much more manageable for teachers and motivating and meaningful for pupils.



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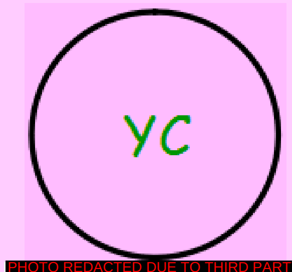

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Teacher comments

Motivating: "Most children found the use of smiley faces and WOW written in their books much more motivating than lengthy comments written by me earlier in the year. They felt proud when they saw a smiley or wow in books because they knew this meant they had done well."

Meaningful: "When highlighting work in different colours (green good, pink to improve) children immediately could identify what they had done well and what they needed to improve."

"Verbal and Guided Group feedback was the most meaningful to children"

Manageable: "I have I have been able to spend weekends away from working as a general rule, this has been through the ability to mark quicker in the week and allow time for planning to be done instead."

"I have not taken any books home to mark since the project began…it has meant I've been able to have some wind – down time each evening rather than having to mark books."

Pupil comments

"I like the idea of not having lots of words because I don't know what Mr Rudkin is on about. I think personally we should keep the new way because it's easier to read and it doesn't fill the whole page".

"I prefer the new marking policy because it helps us find our mistakes and saves time".

"I like it because the teachers don't write all over your work, it is easier to understand"

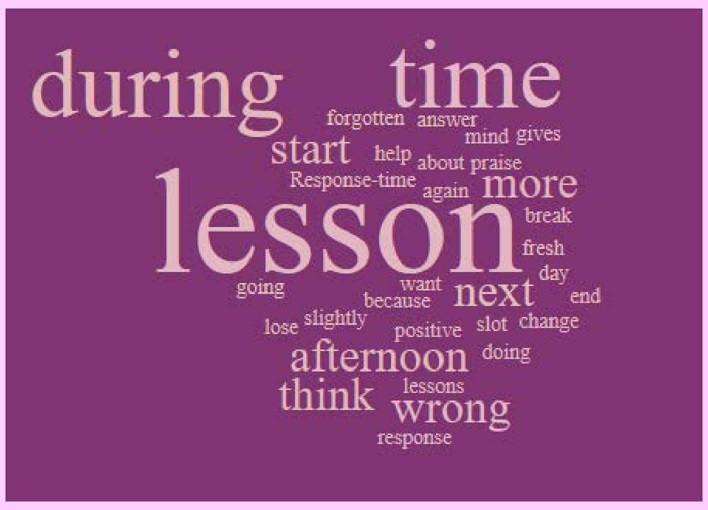
"I think it's easier with the GG (Guided Group with teacher) because you can work with the teacher and you understand it more with the teacher"

Do you prefer feedback from the teacher – verbally 1:1, in a group, written in your book?

How do you know what you have done well?

How do you know what you need to do to improve?

Do you prefer feedback from your teacher during the lesson, in the next lesson, in 'response' time?



Conclusions, next steps

Based upon pupil comments and interviews it appears that pupils find smiley-faces, ticks, WOW, YC, YNC and verbal praise particularly motivating.

Verbal and group feedback, along with highlighted work, also was the most meaningful form of feedback for the children – they felt like they made much more progress in addressing misconceptions this way
.
All teachers found not having to write "green" positive comments a time-saver but there was some concern about how to "stretch and challenge" more able pupils without writing in books.

All children made good progress during this trial, and they saw that within their own work, rather than basing this opinion on teacher comments in books.

I will share these findings with colleagues with the intention of amending the school marking policy to reflect an emphasis on verbal and group feedback over written comments.

As pupils have suggested feedback is preferable during or at the end of lessons we will have to discuss the most appropriate time to implement this to ensure consistency across school.

References:

Workload Survey 2016 Findings - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592499/TWS_2016_FINAL_Research_report_Feb_2017.pdf

What is the impact of pupil self- assessment on marking workload? Hucknall National C of E Primary School

Aims

- To explore the impact of pupils' self-assessment on teachers' marking workload in English lessons
- To develop children's use of marking symbols to assess their own work.
- To encourage children to set their own 'Next Steps' to move their learning on.

Methodology

To collect appropriate and relevant data, the following methods were used:

- Initial questionnaires were sent to 19 teachers; both full and part time, to gain information regarding the amount of time they spent marking. Responses included:
- “When I mark, I feel like I'm ticking boxes for a work scrutiny.”
- “There has to be a better way.”
- “I feel like my whole day is arranged around when I can mark each book.”
- Four teachers were selected to become involved as one class from Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 were chosen to pilot the project. Each class contained 30 children.
- The format of success criteria was amended to include the use of marking symbols and next steps. These were explained to the children in the classes involved.
- Pupil interviews to establish their opinions on the success of using marking symbols and next steps.
- Teacher questionnaires to discover the impact of children's self-assessment on teachers' marking workload.

Pupil Responses

- “Symbols help me to mark my work.'”
- “The use of symbols helps us to see how far we have come with our learning.”
- “Where symbols have been used, it has made a massive difference to my writing.”
- “They help me reflect on my learning.”

Findings

- All staff involved reduced their marking workload.
- “My marking is now manageable and less stressful.”
- “I now have more time to think about planning purposeful activities for the children.”
- “I finally have a work life balance.”
- Pupil interviews revealed that children prefer the use of marking symbols and found these easier to use when setting their next steps.

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Rationale

As a school, we had created a series of marking symbols to be used in English lessons. These were designed to help children self-assess their writing. My research focused on the effect of developing the children's independent use of these symbols on teachers' marking workload.

Ethical Considerations

- Parental consent- a letter was sent to parents of children in the classes involved.
- Pupils interviewed remained anonymous.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Findings suggest that making pupils more independent, using marking symbols to self-assess, has reduced teachers' marking workload in English.
- Children's confidence in their own self-assessment has improved.
- Those teachers involved in the project will continue to develop the use of self-assessment in their new classes, with a view to rolling it out to all classes in January 2018.
- Success criteria throughout the school will be adapted to incorporate marking symbols and 'Next Steps.'

Mapplewells Primary & Nursery School
SUCCESS is in our hands

Do marking and feedback have a positive impact on children's progress and how does it affect teacher workload?

Aims:

- To investigate children's understanding of the purpose of marking and feedback and whether they see the value of this process
- To challenge the need for traditional marking and feedback methods
- To investigate ways to reduce the volume of workload produced by intensive marking and feedback methods

Rationale:

Teaching is a rewarding and enjoyable profession, however ask most teachers what their most debated topic is and the majority will say workload. There are many aspects contributing to a teacher's workload and it is widely accepted that most of these factors cannot be avoided or streamlined. However, when questioned, many teachers would admit that workload is the main cause of stress, anxiety and even a reason to seek employment in a different field entirely.

A large proportion of teachers spend many hours marking and giving feedback to pupils and it would seem that the older the children, the more hours are spent ticking, writing comments and stamping children's work against success criteria and objectives. But how valuable is this task? Does it have an impact on the amount of progress the children make and do the children value the feedback given to them?

Marking is widely known to constitue a large proportion of the workload, about which many teachers feel negatively. Is there a way that this process can be improved, to not only retain value and provide a positive impact on the pupils, but also be delivered in a 'smarter' more time-efficient way, decreasing the number of hours teachers spend doing it?

Our research aims to investigate the impact of marking and feedback on pupils and look at ways of making it a more manageable task to teaching staff.

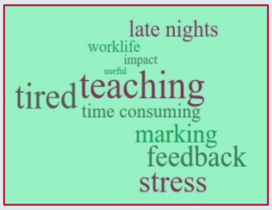
Pupil Interviews:

Prior to starting the project we asked children what they felt about the current marking and feedback system used:

Question	Yes	No
Do you think marking is helpful?	64%	36%
Do you read the pink comments?	37%	63%
Do you think your teacher gives you enough time to respond?	42%	58%
Do you think the marking and feedback help to improve your work?	59%	41%

Mapplewells Staff:

Staff at Mapplewells were fairly positive about how useful giving marking and feedback is and most agreed it has a positive impact on the progress children make. However it was widely agreed that it would be useful if there was a less time-consuming method for doing this.



On-line Findings:

There are a number of sources on-line debating the subject of teacher workload:

The Department for Education (2017) says:

"We are working to remove unnecessary workload for teachers, to help them concentrate on teaching and their own development. Teachers say 3 of the biggest areas that can lead to unnecessary workload are: marking, planning, data management. We vow to take action on this issue and set up independent teacher workload review groups, which will produce detailed reports offering advice for teachers. We are committed to tracking teacher workload in the future."

An article in the Guardian Newspaper (2016) highlighted that Ofsted shouldn't pass judgment on marking, and therefore schools were putting unnecessary strain on teachers for making this a focus:

Ofsted's latest update for inspectors stresses – again – that inspectors should not be passing judgement on marking in schools. In the update, Sean Harford, HMI National Director for Education, explains: "There is remarkably little high-quality, relevant research evidence to suggest that detailed or extensive marking has any significant impact on pupils' learning."

He advises inspectors that "until such evidence is available, and regardless of any area for improvement identified at the previous inspection, please do not report on marking practice, or make judgements on it, other than whether it follows the school's assessment policy."

Mapplewells Project:

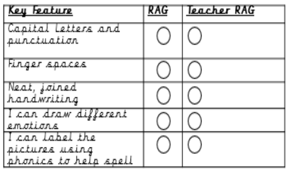
Prior to starting the project, there was a discussion during a staff meeting about marking and how it impacts on workload. Staff agreed that they could see the purpose and value of marking and feedback, but also stated that it was time-consuming and was most effective for the older children, as it was felt they were more able to read and understand the feedback and respond independently. For the younger children it was felt that the impact was less effective due to most children not being able to access the feedback independently, which therefore meant an adult had to go through this with them – taking even more time.

It was agreed that implementing a new marking and feedback method throughout the whole school might not be suitable for Mapplewells, at this time – however, this system would potentially be something that implemented across the school at a later date.

We are a one form entry school with approximately 30 children per class. We wanted to have a range of participants across different year groups and key stages, so Year 1, Year 3 and Year 4 were chosen. This meant three members of staff would be involved in the project - an experienced KS1 teacher, an NQT and a member of the SMT. We felt that this would give a good range of workloads and differing pressures.

The staff involved discussed a range of tools that could be used and it was agreed that a traffic light system would be the most suitable. A grid was devised that allowed children to self assess against a set of success criteria, with a column for teachers to also assess. It was felt that a simple visual tool like this would be most effective across a range of ability levels. For KS2 there was an added level where children could give evidence next to each of the criteria and provide detail of what improvements they made and why. This gave children the opportunity to really take ownership of their improvements, which when interviewed was one of the positives of the new system.

This system will be used in English and Topic books initially, with a view to possibly using it for other subjects once it is established.



Key Feature	RAG	Teacher RAG
Capital letters and punctuation	○	○
Finger spaces	○	○
Neat, joined handwriting	○	○
I can draw different emotions	○	○
I can label the pictures using phonics to help spell	○	○

Example of KS1 grid

Staff Interviews:

Initial interviews and discussions took place prior to commencing the project:

Teacher X: "Marking takes up a lot of my time and I do sometimes feel guilty about how this effects my own children. I feel that I sacrifice quality time with my family. Having said that, I can see the purpose of giving feedback, I just wish there was a quicker way of doing this."

Following the implementation of our trial self assessment system, the teachers involved were asked to summarise their opinions on how they felt it had affected their workload and how the children had reacted:

Teacher A: "The self-assessment system helped the children identify where they needed to improve. The traffic light system we adopted led to the children being able to visually recognise their strengths and weaknesses independently – leading to a rise in their own confidence, particularly when editing and improving extended pieces of writing."

Teacher B: "Although I find marking very time-consuming, I can see the benefit and do believe there needs to be some form of feedback system in place. My children were very young so I adapted our self-assessment tool to be a little more simplistic than the one used by KS2. However it was very well received by the children who were very positive about how it helped them to see where they needed to make improvements and the things they had done well."

Teacher C: "I think our new self-assessment tool is great because it reduces marking pressures, but also allows the children to reflect on their learning and the outcome. "

Key Findings:

The self-assessment tool was used in English and Topic books, although it could be adapted for other subjects.

The success criteria were tailored to each individual lesson.

At the end of the summer term children were asked to answer questions about how they had found using the self-assessment tool, with most being very positive about it and saying they preferred it to the traditional 'teacher comment' method used previously.

Staff said that children seemed confident about being able to assess how they had done.

Question	Yes	No
Did you find the self assessment useful?	72%	28%
Did the self assessment system help you understand what you did well?	61%	39%
Did the self assessment system help you understand what you need to improve?	68%	32%
Do you prefer the new self assessment to the old pink and green comments?	83%	27%

References:

Department for Education, (Feb 2017) "Reducing teacher workload"
The Guardian, (Nov 2016) "It's official: your school marking policy is probably wrong"

Conclusions / Next Steps:

This project has identified that although marking and feedback is useful and does have an impact on the progress children make, there was a need for a 'smarter' way of doing this due to time and workload pressures. Traditional methods were also shown to have a lower impact on some groups of children, or even no impact at all.

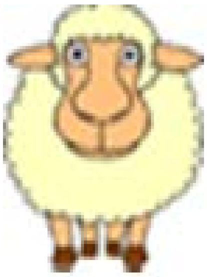
The methods trialled at Mapplewells have been received very positively, both by the children and by the staff. The children found them easy to use and the visual aspect made it clear 'at a glance' what needed to be improved or worked on.

Staff have said that although the 'making the resource' aspect of the tool takes time, this is far less time-consuming than traditional marking and feedback methods. They also agreed that handing the children some responsibility for identifying the amendments needed improved their understanding of what needed changing and why.

Our school's marking policy has been reviewed for the 2017-2018 academic year and it has been agreed that self-assessment grids will now be used across the whole school. Initial,y this will be for one piece of written work a week, alongside one traditional detailed piece each week. The effectiveness and impact of this will be monitored throughout the year to ascertain whether to continue with or increase the use of this tool.

To develop an effective marking system using symbols.

"I don't like it when I am asked to correct my spellings, if I knew how to spell the word I would have spelt it right in the first place." year 3 pupil



Is your Marking;

Meaningful

- Are pupils progressing?

Manageable

- Remember feedback can be spoken, peer and self-assessed – aim to use more symbols instead of written feedback.

Motivating

- Does it celebrate achievement and progress made?
- Encourage children to check their own work by using the Success Criteria.

Please share examples of effective marking by sticking a post it note of effective practise below. We will share what is working well in staff meetings.

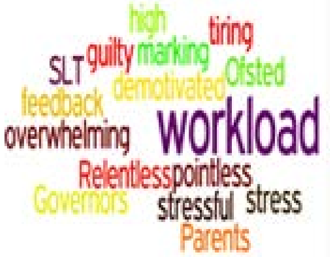
"I don't like it when teachers use too much of their handwriting we can't read it. Teachers need to follow the correct handwriting policy." Year 4 pupil

Rationale

Recent studies have highlighted the fact that many Teachers have been struggling with the demands of their extremely high workload. There is an expectation that teachers mark children's work in depth, highlighting what each pupil has done well and giving them next step targets to improve and make progress. Teachers are spending hours every day marking books but what impact does detailed marking have on children's academic progress?

Thoughts from staff

Key words that were used to describe the workload associated with the current marking and feedback policy within our school were that it is *overwhelming, stressful* and *relentless* and in general *too high*. Analysis of the teacher questionnaire stipulated that teachers found the current marking system frustrating as it was felt that this was mainly for Ofsted, parents, and the Senior Leadership Team and for completing a book scrutiny. They stated that the expectation for written feedback increased the teacher workload enormously with what felt like little impact on children's progress.



Student's opinions on the current marking System

- I don't like things being written in the margin because I don't – it looks untidy. I would like it underneath my writing
- I don't like it when my teacher circles my words
- I don't like it when I get a? by the word or at the end of the sentence when I don't know what it means
- I don't like the symbols because I never know what they mean
- Sometimes I can't read my teachers writing

How can our marking system be improved? Comments from year 3/4 pupils

- Less writing in books I can never read it and it wastes my time trying
- More writing so I can read how well I have done
- Less symbols because I forget what they all mean
- I would like a sticker if I have done well
- I don't always want a target I want to feel that my best is good enough
- I would like to see what I can do to improve my work
- Clear what is good and clear what is not good
- I want Mrs S to tell me what I have done wrong.

Conclusions and next steps.

Taking on board the pupils' views of the new marking system, the following recommendations need to be acknowledged:

- Feedback needs to be instant.
- Marking needs to be clear.
- Children like to know that their work is valued – whether they have made mistakes or not.
- Children on the whole do not tend to like lots of written work from the teacher as they are unable to read it – some feel that they spend too long trying to figure out what the writing says.
- Too many symbols makes the marking meaningless as children forget what each of the symbols mean and therefore are unable to act on the marking.
- Children like to have their corrections made for them so they know what is expected of them and what it should look like. One pupil clearly stated that *"I don't like it when I am asked to correct my spellings. If I knew how to spell the word, I would have spelt it right in the first place."* I thought this was a very valid point to make.

Lambley Primary School is an average-sized village school, with 126 pupils. Our research was initially carried out in a year 3 /4 class (28 pupils), with close communication with a year 6 class teacher, to see how marking could affect her feedback. We used many different strategies to collect our data – pupil 1:1 interviews (4 year 3 and 3 year 4 pupils), small focus groups (x3), written comments in the comment box, whole class discussions and pupil and staff questionnaires. 22 questionnaires were returned by year3/4 pupils.

"I like to know what I have done well and I don't like to read too mean stuff. Symbols should be good if I know what they mean. If I don't know what they mean then I wouldn't be able to get better" (year 3 pupil)

Marking Workload Research Project – Adam Cook (Lovers’ Lane Primary School)

Aim

To see if the time spent marking English books could be reduced by marking with SYMBOLS rather than the School’s normal marking policy, without having a negative impact on pupils’ progress.

Rationale

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In 2014 the DFE launched an online Workload Challenge asking three open questions about the unnecessary or unproductive tasks that teachers carry out, 53% of the respondents cited marking as an area in which workload could be reduced.

As the report stated, it was not that marking was not seen as important in improving pupil outcomes but more that teachers felt ‘the way in which they were asked to carry out these tasks could have unnecessary or unproductive consequences’ such as ‘being required to use ‘deep’ or ‘dialogic marking’ or being required to write detailed feedback notes in books of pupils too young to read them,’ – Government Response to the Workload Challenge (Clegg and Morgan ,2015).

Time spent on marking is an issue in my school context with some teachers feeling that some marking is not done for the benefit of the pupils - “Marking doesn't feel like it's for the children's benefit, but for whoever is doing book scrutiny!” - and that it had a big impact on their work life balance - “I am concerned about extra hours spent [marking] in my own time.”

RESEARCH

Research Outline

Our school was invited to be part of the research group - ‘Marking Workload Project.’

Lovers’ Lane was assigned a marking trial to use in the project - ‘Symbols’.

Teachers were invited to give their thoughts on marking by completing an initial survey. Six members of staff completed the survey.

Members of staff were asked if they wanted to take part in the project - two teachers agreed.

The trial was then carried out in two classes, involving 50 pupils. They were initially asked about their views on the current marking in school and then tasked with deciding what symbols would be used by their teachers during the project.

During the trial, both teachers kept diaries to record their thoughts and met regularly with the Project Leader to discuss the impact the trial was having on their workload and their classes progress.

At the end of the project both the teachers and their pupils were re-interviewed to find out what they thought about the impact of the project.

Next steps – review of schools marking policy in light of the findings of the trial.

Teacher Interviews (initial survey and participant survey) –

When completing the initial teacher interviews, there was a range of responses that reflects the general experience of the staff at Lovers Lane, from NQTs to staff who have been teaching over 15 years. Out of the staff responses there were however two questions on which there was a general view. Four out of the six members of staff completing the survey indicated that time spent marking was a big source of frustration, and all of the staff completing the survey felt that Ofsted and SLT were the two groups who had the biggest impact on their marking workload.

Both the teachers who took part in the project found the whole experience very positive and that their workload had decreased significantly :-

“Overall, my workload has decreased by a few hours a week.”

“I have reduced my marking time by 6-8 hours a week.”

Significantly, both found that by using symbols to mark their books they had had more time to think about their teaching, and felt that it had improved their classroom practice:-

“I have learnt how to give more meaningful feedback to the children, they are receiving better quality lessons because feedback is instant. It has changed my teaching practice.”

Interviews

Student Interviews (Key findings)

Have changes improved learning?

“The positive symbols are easier to understand so I focus more on the ones I am stuck on.”

“Makes me think more about my corrections. “

“Symbols make me more proactive (I go and get a dictionary to look at my spellings). “

“They are easier to understand rather than reading comments.”

33 out of the 50 pupils involved thought that the use of symbols had actually improved their learning, of the 17 pupils who dis-agreed some thought:-

“There are too many symbols and I forget what they mean.”

Do the symbols make you think more about marked work?

“I can see the place where I need to improve my work more easily.”

30 of the pupils thought that they did as a result of symbols being used.

Perception? Change over time….. Although the majority of pupils felt that the changes in the marking positive, it was interesting to note that 27 out of 50 felt that their work had been marked less as a result of symbols being used rather than written comments!

Teacher Welfare

It was interesting to note how pupils were concerned about the amount of marking that their teachers had to do, which prompted the following responses:-

> “It [marking] doesn’t take her a long time so she can do more of her other work.”
> “She has more time free, so she can help us more.”
> “The marking [use of symbols] is easier for the teacher.”

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REFERENCE

References

Clegg, N. and Morgan, N. (2015). Workload Challenge for Schools: Government response. Department of Education, pp.0-23.

Lovers’ Lane Teacher Interviews

Address: Newark NG24 1LT

Phone: 01636 683353

CONCLUSION

Conclusions, next steps

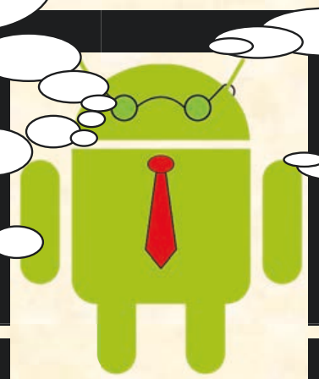
Consultation with all stakeholders about current marking policy and review in light of trial of symbols in marking.

What is better (in terms of marking) ?– “Sitting with the teacher, written comment, symbols marking.”

Out of 50 pupils interviewed at the end of the project the following 50% said they preferred sitting with the teacher, 30% said they preferred symbols marking and 20% said they preferred a written comment – food for thought!

A research project by Michael Gorton supervised by Pr

Teachers' thoughts



Vi-king9173

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''This is not changing my workload. My workload is still as bad as marking is not our main area of issue'

EYFS teacher!

'I feel guilty that I'm not putting in the effort that they are'

KS2 teacher 1

''In a nutshell it's made a lot of difference to workload'

KS2 teacher 4

''We'd trained them to expect us to do all the thinking for them'

KS2 teacher 2

'It's amazing what we all thought we needed to be doing when actually we were all just wasting time'

KS2 teacher

''I cant remember the last time I had to take books home'

KS2 teacher 3

What impact does replacing a marking policy with a feedback policy have on teacher workload?

Ethics

In order to comply with BERA ethical guidelines informed consent was sought both from the children in the school and their parents. Out of 474 pupils only 1 child opted out.

Why?

In 2013, the school became involved with a project funded by the Local Authority called the Raising Achievement Network. The focus was to look at marking and share good practice. This was the beginning of the journey to effective marking. As an outcome, the school decided on a policy based on pink and green, where 'green to be seen' consisted of positive comments and 'pink to think' was an opportunity to challenge, question or improve a section of work. Stamps were also used to support this in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years. Over time, this method had become time consuming with many teachers taking bags of books home every night and across the weekends. When this DfE marking workload challenge project was introduced, it provided an opportunity to change.

What?

We took part in the DfE Marking Workload Challenge Project. Our aim was to find out if there was a way to make the marking workload for teachers more manageable without having a negative impact on the progress of pupils.

Aims

We wanted to design a feedback policy which reduced teachers marking workload without having a detrimental impact on the progress of pupils. We needed a system which was manageable, meaningful and motivating.

Desired outcomes

- More efficient ways of marking
- Marking appropriate to the needs of the children (ability, age)
- Teachers to work less without impacting on the children's progress
- Open staffs' eyes to the bigger picture of teaching and the place feedback and marking sits within it.

What we did

- 17 teachers completed the marking workload survey detailing how much time they spent marking each week. We then worked in year groups to look at our existing marking and consider whether it was meaningful, manageable and motivating. From this each year group designed their own feedback approach which aimed to reduce teacher workload whilst still ensuring children continued to make progress. To complete the project we did the following:
- Discussed as a whole staff what made feedback effective
- Designed and planned a new approach , specific to each year group which staff felt would maintain the children's standards whilst reducing workload.
- Resourced and introduced new, year group specific feedback policies
- Asked the children for their thoughts about our marking
- Carried out weekly reflections on the project so far using research journals
- Carried out a staff focus group to see teacher's opinions on the impact of the new policies
- Carried out child interviews with children from FS2– Year 6 to find out their views on the changes to marking
- The research team carried out informal book looks to see how the new feedback systems were being implemented.
- Staff completed a follow up questionnaire to explain how they felt the changes had impacted on both their workload and their children.

Findings

The impact on workload

In terms of the stated aims of the project, reducing marking workload without having a detrimental impact on the children's progress, it was a success. Staff from Year 2 to Year 6 noticed a difference in their workloads, many significantly and the atmosphere around the school reflected this. Key changes which were noted by both staff and the head teacher were:

- Less marking
- More time to focus on the fun delivery and resourcing
- More free time
- Staff leaving at an appropriate time and doing more leisure activities

It should be noted that staff in FS1– Year 1 did not feel that changes to marking had had an impact on their workload, as they felt marking is a much smaller contributor to workload in their settings.

The impact on the children

The children's interviews and feedback throughout the project showed that the children had mixed views about the ways in which their books were marked, in much the same way that they had done with the previous marking policy. For some children the increased expectation of independence was seen as a negative, whilst for others they enjoyed this challenge. When considering these views, many staff mentioned that the children had been well trained to buy into our previous system of marking, so it may be the case that over time this added independence could be seen as a positive by more children. Most importantly, with the exception of FS2 staff, who wished to return to their previous marking policy, staff agreed that by changing the marking policy there had been no detrimental impact on the childrens' progress.

Childrens' thoughts

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'You learn more with the gold because you are made to do it yourself.'

Child 1

'You have to look up the spellings, it's harder but better.'

Child 2

'I like to work out what I need to improve- it's a challenge.'

Child 8

'Time with the teacher makes it clearer, comments don't always make sense and then you have to ask what it means.'

Child 3

'I love the idea of the stamps and I get so hyper when I get gold stars.

Child 6

'Stamps, they are quite good they have LO achieved, a learning thing and working towards. People who get things wrong, if you put an orange stamp they feel better as it's not written in words.'

Child 4

'I love it all because he doesn't really put much stuff so it gives us some more things to work out so we learn more'

Child 7

'I think it is better because it isn't as messy and it is even better if you do really well because you get a star.'

Child 5

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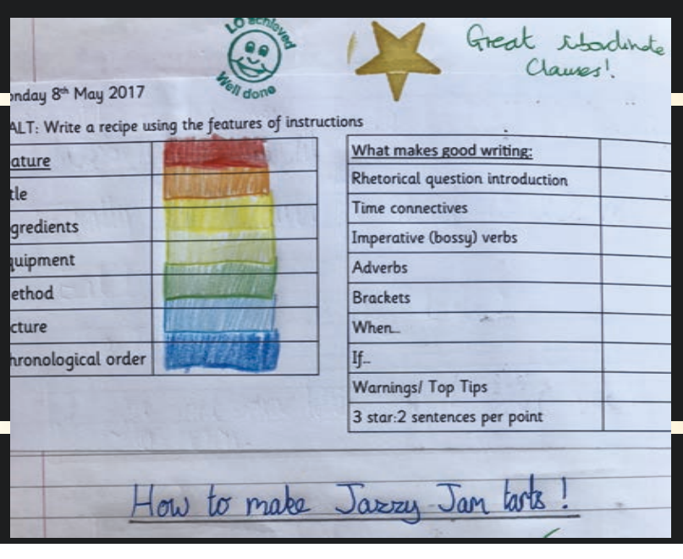
An example of the previous marking approach, where children were not necessarily able to make use of the comments as they did not always understand them.

Teacher: 'What is the contraction for 'have not?''

Child: Orit [alright]



LO achieved

Well done

Great subordinate Clauses!

onday 8th May 2017

ALT: Write a recipe using the features of instructions

ature	
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cture	
hronological order	

What makes good writing:	
Rhetorical question introduction	
Time connectives	
Imperative (bossy) verbs	
Adverbs	
Brackets	
When...	
If...	
Warnings/ Top Tips	
3 star:2 sentences per point	

How to make Jazzy Jam tarts!

An example of the new marking in practise– children self assessing their work using a WILF checklist, Teacher using stamps to reduce written comments.

Evidence

Childrens' views

Interviews

The interviews appeared to show a real mixture of childrens' views on marking.

- Many children were positive about their year groups new approach to marking and were happy with the way in which their books were marked.
- A recurring theme across many year groups was the growth of independence which the new marking had introduced, this tended to be the point which decided whether or not children liked or disliked the new marking, with children either enjoying being challenged by having to think more or missing the old way where corrections were done for them as they had found it easier.
- In one year group this split was noted to be between boys and girls: the boys liked being made to think, whereas the girls didn't.

Comment box

The comments received in the comment boxes throughout the project seem to suggest that:

- Most children were either happy or ambivalent about the new ways in which their books are marked.
- Although there are some children who still preferred the old approach to marking, they are not in the majority.
- Interestingly there were some year groups where the views of children differed noticeably between classes, which could be worth further investigation.

Teachers' views

Research journal

The research journals highlighted the fact that, for teachers from Year 2—Year 6, it was possible to reduce marking workload without impacting on childrens' progress.

- A recurring theme, particularly in the early weeks of the project, was a sense of guilt which teachers felt for doing less.
- Teachers identified no negative impact on children's progress. (With the exception of FS2)
- Teacher's were beginning to reflect on why they marked and how they could change their own practise to ensure feedback was more meaningful.

Focus group

The focus group highlighted the independence as a key issue when looking at feedback.

- Teachers felt that the added independence was a good thing (9/15)
- Noted that it required further development.
- It was felt that by marking in this way we now saw a truer picture of childrens' abilities, rather than what they could do when we did their corrections for them.
- Work needed on dictionary skills etc.

Conclusions

In the case of the teachers and school involved in this study it was clear that the project had a positive impact on teacher workload for staff working in Year 2—Year 6. What also became clear was that marking is not the only contributor to workload, and further work will need to be done to ensure that staff who teach in Early Years' workload issues are also addressed. The project highlighted that over time marking had become a task which was seen as for people other than the children (SLT, Ofsted etc) and as such had become a time consuming activity which may have looked good but did not necessarily have any greater impact on children's learning. As a result of the project it appears that it is possible to design a feedback policy which reduces the workload of marking without reducing the progress of children. Our project showed that there is no one right way to achieve this, but in order to achieve it you must re-evaluate existing approaches using the three tests: Is it Manageable? Is it Meaningful? Is it Motivating? Our next step is to take what we've learnt and translate it into a whole school feedback policy, to ensure consistency between year groups whilst keeping sight of what we've learnt about the purpose and point of marking.

Limitations

This study involved looking at data from 474 pupils in one school. In other settings, with different children and staff the results may not be the same. Furthermore, although the children have shown no drop in their performance during the course of the project this is no guarantee that in the longer term the approaches to marking trialled here would not become less meaningful and motivating. It will be important to monitor the motivation of the children over time to ensure no negative impact.

Ernehale
JUNIOR SCHOOL

The Marking Workload Project

How can ‘Marking in the moment’ reduce teacher workload, without compromising pupil progress?

Why marking?

The Government’s 2014 Workload challenge survey identified the frequency and extent of marking requirements as a key driver of large teacher workloads. Increased workload is one of the main reasons that teachers will cite for leaving the profession. As teacher shortages increase then it is an area that needs to be explored further.

The 2016 report of The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group noted that written marking had become unnecessarily burdensome for teachers and recommended that all marking should be driven by professionals’ judgement and be ‘**meaningful, manageable and motivating**’.

To investigate this further the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF 2016) commissioned a national survey of teachers in both primary and secondary schools in England. This identified that there is an urgent need for more studies so that teachers have better information about the most effective marking approaches.

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Marking in the moment

What is ‘Marking in the moment’?
This is where a conversation between teacher and child takes place as the child is working. Suggestions for improvements will be made and work will be annotated by the teacher so it is clear that an intervention has taken place. Progress within the lesson will be checked by the teacher a short time later to ensure that the improvements prompted by the discussion have been sustained.
The work will not be marked after the lesson.

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OF is a marking code used to signify oral feedback. A quick note is made of areas discussed and then the teacher initals the work when revisiting later in the lesson.

Aims

- To trial ‘Marking in the moment ‘ across Year 3 (70 pupils) and Year 5 (61 pupils). Four teachers took part.
- To evaluate the strategy in terms of reducing teacher workload
- To assess whether it has a detrimental impact on pupil outcomes.

Research Methods

- Research journal (Staff taking part)
- Questionnaires (Pupils and staff , both before and after)
- Focus groups (Staff discussing progress throughout research)
- Data analysis (Pupil progress in English (Writing and EGSP))
- Group/pupil interviews (On completion of research)

Pupil Outcomes

Pupils made expected progress in English compared to progress in other year groups. Therefore, there was no measurable negative impact.

Initially while pupils valued feedback during the lesson they preferred written comments in their books.
However at the end of the trial, whilst they still appreciated written feedback away from the lesson they were more in favour of ‘Marking in the moment’. (Pupils questionnnaires and feedback)

	Score Before	Score After
Its more helpful if your teacher marks your work in the lesson (gives you hints while you are working)	208	297
Its more helpful if your teacher marks your work when its finished (highlights what went well and writes an IP)	254	239

“It’s easier because we can change it there and then and remember it for the next paragraph instead of waiting to see if we got it right the next day.” (Year 3 pupil)

“It’s more helpful when my teacher marks my work during the lesson because it helps me straight away.” (Year 5 Pupil)

Teacher Outcomes

Four teachers took part from Year 3 and Year 5. All teachers felt that ‘Marking in the moment’ had a positive impact on their workload. However, this was not necessarily all linked to time spent marking.

- Whilst all teachers felt that their workload was reduced (up to third in some cases), the need to distance mark as well was a hard habit to break.
- Marking had become more focused with a more concise written comment.
- There was felt to be a higher level of engagement between pupil and teacher.
- Teachers felt that children made more progress in lessons and it actively encouraged conversations with those children who might otherwise not have been spoken to in depth.

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The children valued the 1:1 time

(Year 5 teacher)

It reduced the daily marking time

(Year 3 teacher)

Conclusions and next steps

Our evidence suggests that ‘Marking in the Moment’ has a positive impact on teachers workload without compromising pupil progress.
Teachers can not only see a reduced workload but also the marking is often more meaningful for the children. Pupil progress was not affected and teachers felt that it actually improved their working knowledge of children's abilities.
Next steps:

- Extend across the curriculum
- Introduce whole school approach
- Ensure feedback policy in school reflects the process and there is consistency in books

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Suggested Reading

‘*Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking*’
Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group
March 2016
‘*A marked Improvement?*’ – Education Endowment Foundation April 2016

How can Marking in the Moment reduce teacher workload, without compromising pupil progress?

Education has been ‘reaching crisis point’ (The Independent, 2017) for some years and it has been predicted that by 2025 there will be a national shortage of teachers compared with the number of children needing to be educated, highlighting the need for change.
In 2014, the government recognised the need to act following the feedback received from the Workload Challenge (2014) and the DfE have since published an action plan to help reduce teacher workload.

Aims:

To introduce ‘Marking in the Moment’ as a means to provide pupils with feedback.
To trial a marking method that aims to reduce teacher workload.
To ensure pupil progress is not affected.

Our previous marking policy was one that was based around the teacher providing a lot of written feedback that was inaccessible for children below age related expectation. It was a written dialogue between learner and teacher which took hours to write and did not necessarily impact on pupil progress.

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What is ‘Marking in the Moment’?

Marking in the moment is a process in which the teacher provides the learner through a dialogue which enables the child to make improvements and act on advice instantaneously.

Hattie (2009) suggests that the success of a task is determined by the amount and quality of feedback given. By allowing time for the children to discuss and reflect on their work within the context that it has been set, ‘***teaching should be more evident to the learner and learning should be more evident to the teacher’***
(Hattie, p.25, 2009)

‘Marking in the Moment’ aims to facilitate the needs of the learner by allowing the teacher to identify the more quickly.

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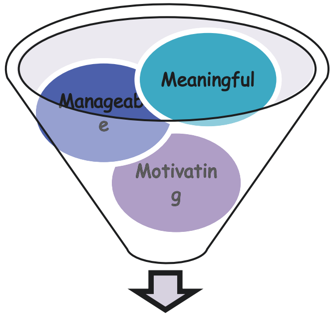
(Ethics considered and parental consent gained for picture)

The findings of The Independent Teacher Workload review Group (2016) report recommends that marking should be:



Effective Feedback

Because of the way marking now allows for the dialogue to happen between the learner and teacher ‘in the moment’, the progress is evident in the lesson and allows educators to reflect on impact (Hattie, 2016). ‘OF’ indicates that feedback has been given orally and the highlighting identifies successes in the child’s work, again, lightening the burden of teacher workload.

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Research methods: Larkfields Junior School is set on the outskirts of Nuthall, Nottingham. The children who attend are between the ages of seven and eleven years old and generally live locally to the school. There are currently 244 children on the school’s roll. The school is organised into two phases within the Key Stage: upper and lower. We decided to use the following research methods for our research: questionnaires (staff and pupil), focus groups during staff meeting, data analysis and pupil interviews.
We chose these methods as we felt it would monitor how staff and children felt throughout the project and would highlight changes to how both groups felt about marking- either positive or negative. We analysed the data to check that the changes to our feedback were not detrimental to the children’s progress.

‘43% of teachers in England plan to leave; 98% are under increasing pressure; 82% say their workload is unmanageable.’ The Guardian, 2017.

What did the pupils think?

When asked what she thought of ‘Marking in the moment’ and how it helped her learning, a Year 6 pupil replied, ***“I like it because you don’t write it on a piece of paper and you say it to us which helps me understand more.”***
The children were extremely positive about the marking process and really enjoyed that time discussing their work with their teacher, without the feeling that their work was being heavily criticised. For the child, the context in which feedback was being given was certainly meaningful.

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Conclusions and next steps:

The impact that the ‘Marking in the Moment’ project has had in the classroom has been extremely positive. Staff members feel that their workload has lightened and they have more enthusiasm for providing feedback to children’s work. The children are also feeling more positive about the feedback process. Not only do children feel that their understanding of a task is better but many children commented on how much more positive they feel about their work.
Next steps:
To look at how to apply this approach to marking to other curriculum areas.
To ensure that staff are consistent in their approach to marking across school.

Further Reading:
Visible learning into Action (Hattie, J., Masters, D. and Birch, K. 2016)
Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement (Hattie, J. 2009)
‘Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking’, Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review, March 2016

West Bridgford Junior School

Marking Workload Project

West Bridgford Junior School

What is the impact of verbal feedback during English lessons on teacher workload in Key Stage 2?

Why Marking?

The DfE Workload Challenge Survey in 2014 helped identify marking as one of the key elements of disproportionate workload among teachers – 53% of respondents reported excessive marking as being burdensome. As **workload is one of the key drivers of teachers leaving the profession**, it is important to further research this area to find solutions to this problem.

> **a time-wasting burden for teachers that has to stop**

The modification of marking arrangements was cited by respondents (32%) as one of the more common solutions to this issue. As a high profile workload issue, the culture of marking was reviewed by the DfE Workload Review Group, who found a number of issues. They highlight that marking has become **"a time-wasting burden for teachers that has to stop.**" The report recommended that practice be reviewed in order to be **"meaningful, manageable and motivating," while being "based on professional judgement."**

The impact of marking on teacher workload is significant and is an issue that needs to be addressed. Further research is required into the effectiveness of marking practices in schools across the country in order to lessen the burden on teachers in the future.

What is 'Marking in the Moment'?

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

'Marking in the Moment' is a feedback strategy that involves the teacher interacting with a child during a lesson. The teacher and child will discuss the child's work, looking at both positives and improvements that could be made during the period of independent work. **The teacher will still follow the school's marking policy** as usual when using this method and often there will be a symbol that indicates verbal feedback has been given.

After a short while, the teacher will check back in with the child to attain whether progress has been made and whether further feedback is necessary. It is important to note that the work **<u>will not</u>** be marked formally after the lesson and no written comment will be given.

V – This is the symbol used to indicate that verbal feedback has occurred during the lesson, negating the need for formal written feedback. This will be written towards the end of the lesson after the teacher has revisited the child to check for progress.

Aims

- To explore the effect of 'Marking in the Moment' on teacher workload in classes in Year 3, 4 and 5.
- To explore how 'Marking in the Moment' could reduce teacher workload.
- To assess whether 'Marking in the Moment' has a detrimental effect on children's progress.

Research Methods

During the course of this project, the following research methods were used to gain evidence about the effects of 'Marking in the Moment':

- Questionnaires – 12 staff and 144 children were given questionnaires at the start and towards the end of the project.
- Research journal – 5 staff involved in the project had a WhatsApp group to communicate ongoing opinions and issues arising throughout.
- Focus groups – 5 staff involved in the project had focused discussions periodically throughout.
- Data analysis – pupil progress in English was monitored by 5 class teachers.
- Group interviews – 50 pupils were interviewed upon completion of the project.

Pupil Outcomes

Pupils maintained expected progress in English over the course of the project compared to other classes across the school. The change in marking practice had no negative effect on pupils.

Pupils were receptive to the idea of verbal feedback and the chance to discuss their work with their teacher to begin with. Many enjoyed the opportunity to make immediate improvements to their writing. However, towards the end of the project, opinion changed and many found 'Marking in the Moment' a distraction when writing. There was a rise in the number of children preferring their work to be marked post-lesson. There was also a distinct difference in opinion between marking and discussion during lessons.

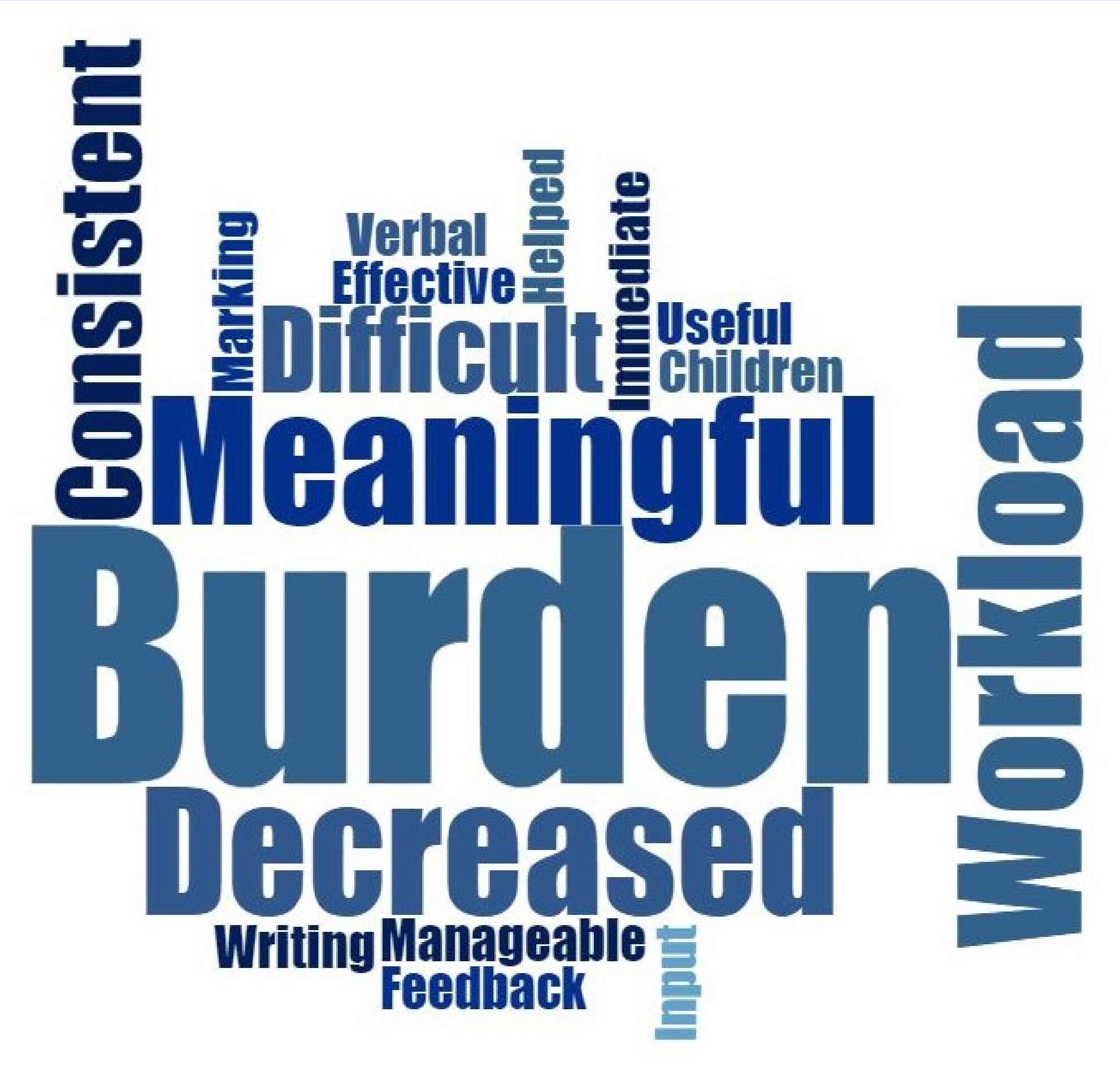
	Start of project score*	End of project score*
Is it helpful when your work is marked after the lesson?	37	54
Is it helpful when your work is marked during the lesson?	33	17
How helpful is talking about your work with your teacher during the lesson?	59	41

*Score was calculated using positive minus negative views in questionnaires.

Teacher Outcomes

Five teachers took part in the project across Years 3, 4 and 5. They all felt 'Marking in the Moment' was a positive step to reducing workload, however not to the extent that was first hoped. There were also positive outcomes in other areas too:

- Teachers' workload was reduced, but many felt they could not complete the two groups (12 pupils) initially agreed and switched to just one (six pupils), either because it was not possible to get around to this many children efficiently or the feedback was less effective when seeing more children.
- Feedback was more meaningful and effective during lessons and teachers felt children were able to make more progress during lesson because of this.
- Teachers use 'Marking in the Moment' as much as possible where it was appropriate, but breaking old habits and being caught up in the lesson meant it was not always conducted.
- Teachers' felt that verbal feedback was a positive tool which they would endeavour to utilise more often in their practice in the future.
- Teachers valued the input of pupils when giving verbal feedback during lessons, which often led to more meaningful and motivating feedback.



Conclusions

The evidence suggests that 'Marking in the Moment' has **a positive impact on teacher workload**, actively reduce the amount of marking at the end of the school day, without affecting pupil progress in English. However, this study suggests that the impact is only small due to the nature of the tasks being marked. **Verbal feedback is seen as a more useful tool** than previously thought and teachers feel they are having more impact on their pupils' learning than with traditional written feedback. The feedback they are giving is more meaningful and they also value the pupils' input in the feedback process.

Next Steps:

- Share findings with colleagues with a view to implementing 'Marking in the moment' across the school.
- Review marking policy to ensure 'Marking in the Moment' is more prominent and consistent.

Further Reading

- DfE (2014). *Workload Challenge: Analysis of teacher consultation responses*. Department for Education. London
- DfE (2016). *Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking*. Department for Education. London.

Research Question

What is the impact of feedback during the lesson, with minimal follow-up adult written feedback, on teacher workload in English and Mathematics?

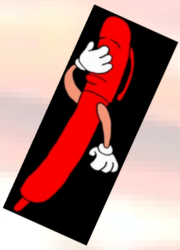
GREENWOOD PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

Rationale:

The school is a large two-form entry primary school with approximately 450 pupils on roll including the attached nursery. There are 30 children in each class and children are in mixed ability classes. From Year 2 upwards, children are taught in ability sets for Maths and English.

Previously, the marking policy consisted of the 'Two stars and a wish' method, where the expectation was a written response to the majority of Maths and English work. Teachers would comment by leaving 2 positive comments (2 stars) and a comment as to how the work could be improved further (a wish). Children would then be expected to respond to the written feedback at the start of the following lesson.

The initial teacher questionnaire showed that this had its implications, particularly for children in Key Stage 2 classes working below the expected standard, and for younger children who might not always be able to read the written feedback. This was frustrating and demotivating for both pupils and teachers who had often spent hours writing lengthy written annotations because it was an expectation to mark the work in detail, despite knowing that children would not read their feedback.



Previous research by the EEF (2016) identified that high quality feedback could lead to 8months+ improvement in children's progress, but highlighted that written marking is only one form of feedback. However, written feedback has become the biggest contributor to unsustainable workload. Whilst it was highlighted that the use of targets to make marking as specific and actionable as possible is likely to increase pupil progress, it does not state whether verbal or written feedback is more effective. It was also found that acknowledgement marking is unlikely to enhance pupil's progress and that it would be beneficial to 'mark less but better.'

Aim:

The purpose of the study was to find out if by teachers 'working the room' and 'marking in the moment' with verbal feedback during the lesson, workload would be reduced without impacting negatively on the children's progress and attitudes towards their work.

Without teachers writing in depth comments following the lesson, could feedback be:

* **Meaningful?**

* **Manageable?**

* **Motivating?**

These 3 elements laid at the heart of the project and were considered throughout the study.

Methodology:

* Teacher questionnaires (12 in total completed)

* Pupil comment box (completed in Year groups 2 - 4, 114 comments collected in total)

* Reflection journals for teachers (14 teachers)

* Data tracked to whether there was a

Actions:

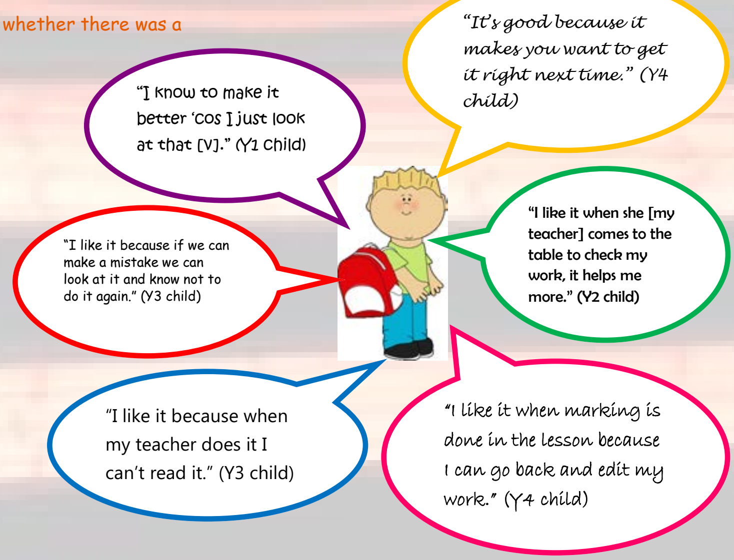
- Meeting with Senior Leadership to discuss research question and how this would be actioned in school.
- Decision made to temporarily amend the whole school feedback policy and involve all class teachers (F2—Y6) to ensure everybody would adhere to changes.
- Research question shared with teaching staff and all staff agreed to be part of the focus group discussions.

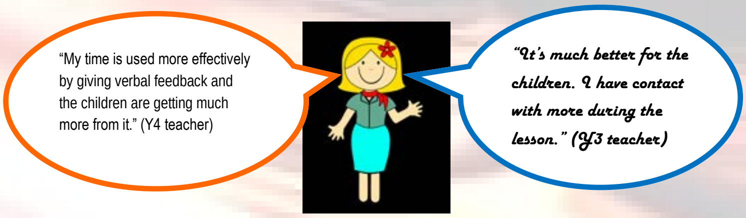
What did 'marking in the moment' look like in our school?

- Teachers focused on 'working the room', attempting to give verbal feedback to 2 or 3 groups of children, identifying misconceptions during the lesson
- Verbal feedback was recorded in books with the letter 'v' and one word during the lesson e.g. v– conjunctions
- Groups who were not given feedback during the lesson would be marked after with an L.O and a tick, and/or a short comment where appropriate, in order for teachers to provide evidence of assessment. This also allowed more quality time for teachers to reflect on learning for individual groups and to better inform planning.
- Feedback was for the child and not for external observers to comment on, therefore it was agreed that during book scrutiny observed by the senior leadership team, progress was measured by children's improvement in work, not the amount of teacher comments.

Findings- Pros:

- Teachers largely felt less stressed and felt that the 'marking in the moment' strategy reduced their workload.
- Teachers felt it was better for the children as they had contact with more children through the lesson and could identify misconceptions quicker and move learning forward.
- Teachers also commented that it made use of their time so much more effective and that children are progressing quicker.
- Some teachers commented that in particular it was better for the children working at Greater Depth as they were less likely to be left to just 'get on'.
- Others commented that it was much better for the children who were working below the expected level as they understand verbal feedback and can action it instantly.
- On the whole, children's comments showed that they preferred the new feedback method too. Comments showed they thought marking was clearer, more personalised and they preferred not having to go back to previous work at the start of the lesson.
- Most children also felt more motivated as they appreciated the time the teacher was giving them during the lesson. Reading comments afterwards 'takes too long' and is 'boring'.





Findings- Cons:

- Some teachers felt it was more difficult to 'work the room' if there was no Teaching Assistant present, as children working below the expected standard often need more in-depth guided support from an adult with their learning.
- Class teachers were concerned that they were not writing enough in books– it was difficult for them to get out of the conditioned habit of feeling they had to provide evidence with a written comment.
- Senior leaders were concerned about the lack of positive praise evident in books - is it enough for parents and external observers who might look in the books?
- Few children did not like being interrupted mid flow and preferred the old style written feedback, but it did not hinder their progress.

Recommendations:

'Marking in the moment' providing verbal feedback with limited written feedback is effective. This should continue to be used as a whole school approach.

Where individual children's needs vary and additional adults are limited, other approaches may need to be implemented alongside this method e.g. the class teacher may need to work with a specific focus group for some lessons.

When using the 'marking in the moment' method, plan accordingly for children working at a lower level– if working the room, ensure the activity set can be achieved independently, or that additional adult support is given.

Consider quick marking symbols alongside the feedback e.g. a double tick to show response to feedback, a star stamp to show recognition for excellent work or a marked improvement in something specific.

References

EEF (2016) *A marked improvement? A review on the evidence of written marking* University of Oxford. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf (Accessed 20th September 2017)

What is the impact of feedback during the lesson, with minimal follow-up adult written feedback, on teacher workload in English and Mathematics?

Niki Phillips

MEANINGFUL - MANAGEABLE - MOTIVATING

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

AIMS

- Provide 'in the moment' feedback to pupils through a variety of strategies
- Minimise the amount of follow-up marking taking place during break times, dinners and at home
- Ensure the process has a positive, or neutral, impact on progress

PROCESS

- Class split into four mixed ability groups
- Adults work with two focus groups to provide 'in the moment' feedback
- Work from groups that are not focused on in the session will be taken for follow-up marking
- Maintain marking in-line with school marking policy to provide consistency
- Replace extensive comments, and stampers, with visual symbols and specific targets

IN ACTION!

Suggested Strategies

- Develop and use marking symbols throughout EYFS, KS1 and KS2
- Use singular worded prompts and targets
- Verbal feedback
- Mini-group and class interventions to correct misconceptions during the session
- Group marking and feedback
- Directed Improvement and Reflection Time—D.I.R.T
- Teaching Assistant with a focus group and recording essential information
- Positive praise!

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Has the project changed your marking workload?

Whole School Marking Symbols

Pupil Opinions FOR 'In the Moment' Feedback

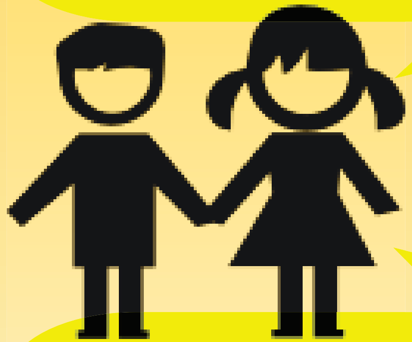
Year 5 Boy, "…you can correct it immediately, can make more progress in less time."

Year 4 Boy, "When they come to mark it in the lesson, you can look at the question and see what you have done wrong."

Year 4 Girl, "I think why did I get it wrong? As I thought I got it right. Then I look into it more to see where I went wrong."

Year 4 Girl, " When you start new work you just want to get into that work, not go back through old work."

Year 2 Girl, "You can correct straight away and you might not notice the next day, so can't correct it."



16% AGAINST

75% FOR

9% EITHER

Pupil Opinions AGAINST 'In the Moment' Feedback

Year 3 Boy, "…it's annoying because it's disturbing and you can't concentrate on what you're doing."

Year 4 Boy, "Spoils it, rather find out at the end if they do it wrong."

Year 5 Girl, "As long as it's marked I'm happy."

Year 3 Boy, "After, its more surprising…"

"Marking is so you can learn from your mistakes." Year 5 Girl

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide feedback 'in the moment' with two mixed ability target groups
- Minimal still means providing some feedback for ALL the class after the session
- Whole school progressive approach to using marking symbols for immediate impact
- Write short, specific targets, aiming towards single word comments

Teacher Opinions—What went well?

⇒ "Marking is a lot simpler."

⇒ "Improved marking pace."

⇒ "Not affected progress."

⇒ "Pupils move on during the lesson."

⇒ "Move pupils on to more challenging questions and can expand learning."

⇒ "Progress seen after marking symbols used during an activity, instead of at the end."

⇒ "Symbols have been fantastic for saving time."

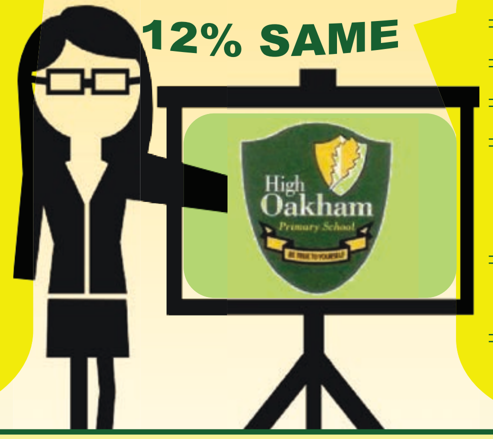
⇒ "Time can be better used to plan future sessions."

⇒ "Less work to stay, or take home, in an evening."

0% INCREASED

88% REDUCED

12% SAME



Teacher Opinions—What needs developing?

⇒ "Not be fixed with one group."

⇒ "Mark all books, as already marking less."

⇒ "Doesn't feel right to not mark all books."

⇒ "Monitoring progress with assessment tools ended up being made more (work) later on to fill in assessment."

⇒ "Still need written comment if necessary… mainly for praise."

⇒ "Works better in Maths, not as easy in long written tasks in English."

PROJECT CONTEXT and METHODOLOGY—Two form entry town school with approximately 450 pupils on roll. School was classified as 'Good' in 2017. Eight classes, from Year 2 to Year 5, participated in this research project. Feedback is used to describe the process of responding to a child's work through marks, symbols and written or verbal comments. All staff , aside form Year 6, participated in the consultation process on developing Key Stage appropriate marking symbols. A focus group ,incorporating the Mathematics and English Coordinator, was formed and regular meetings took place to discuss the project, its impact and its progress. Pupils were selected via register numbers 5, 15 and 25 to participate in pupil interviews. 63 pupils answered the question about whether they preferred feedback 'In the Moment, were against it or liked either. A class for Year 2, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 provided whole class feedback in notelet form. Parents were informed by letter about the project and could opt out. Pupils and staff were asked for permission to have their comments used in publications.

Marking Workload Research Project
Working the Room – Marking in the Moment

Mapperley Plains Primary School

Aims:

- To identity workload pressures created from marking
- To identify and test innovative strategies (and in particular our focus on marking in the moment)
- To share the results through a toolkit, case study and by presenting findings at a conference

Rationale

In March 2016, the findings of the Department for Education's Marking Policy Review Group were published and stated that '[marking] has become disproportionately valued by schools and has become unnecessarily burdensome for teachers'. It also noted concerns that marking can be '…demoralising and a waste of time for teachers..' however recognised that there were a number of possible reasons behind this including, 'the impact of Government policy, what has been promoted by Ofsted, and decisions taken by school leaders and teachers'.

The Education Endowment Fund's report titled 'A Marked Improvement' reviewed the current evidence regarding marking and concluded that, 'the quality of existing evidence focused specifically on written marking is low'. They went on to explain that most of the studies that did exist considered the impact of written marking over a short period of time, with very few identifying evidence over a longer period of time. The DfE's 2016 Workload Survey found that primary teachers spend 8.2 hours per week on average marking or correcting pupils' work. In addition to this, 76% of primary teachers claimed they spent 'too much time' marking or correcting pupils' work (this includes the 42% of primary classroom teachers who stated that they spent 'far too much time'). The Education Endowment Fund's report questions the rationale behind teachers being asked to mark so much, so frequently with seemingly so little significant evidence to support school leaders' expectations.

School's Current Position

Mapperley Plains Primary School is a larger than average primary school on the outskirts of Nottingham. Prior to the start of this project, the school had undertaken a review of its marking policy and had made a number of changes which intended to reduce the burden of marking on teachers. The new policy recognised the recommendations of the DfE's marking workload group and explains that marking should be 'meaningful, manageable and motivating'. In addition to this, the policy recognises the advice provided by the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics which suggests the most important activity for teachers is the teaching itself, supported by the design and preparation of lessons.

Having already reviewed the marking policy to incorporate much of the advice given in many of the documents referenced in the rationale, **all** teachers were in a position to be able to adopt the 'Working the Room - Marking in the Moment' as part of their everyday practice. The school's Feedback Policy also explicitly introduces three types of feedback: immediate, summary and review. Examples of 'Immediate feedback' included gathering evidence from teaching, talking with individuals or groups, verbally informing children of next steps and re-directing the focus of teaching or tasks. Our project 'Working the Room – Marking in the Moment' added an additional element to this and required teachers to spend more time in lessons reviewing children's learning 'at the point of learning' in order to identify gaps in understanding or to move children's learning forward.

With regard to the project, as all teachers (and therefore all classes) were taking part, it was decided that the pupil interviews would focus on children in just three classes. Children in these classes were encouraged to jot down their thoughts regarding teachers' marking and feedback in to the pupil comment box. Six children were also randomly selected from one of the classes to take part in the formal pupil interviews. All teachers were expected to contribute to the teachers' comments portal and a number of teachers were formally involved in the teachers' focus group.

Initial Staff Questionnaire

The initial questionnaire was designed to attain a picture of teachers' current feelings towards marking. At the time of completing the questionnaire, the school's new feedback policy was beginning to be implemented and teachers had been introduced to the changes. On reflection, this may have affected the findings, and possibly explains why the replies to the question about time spent marking wielded answers that were generally lower than the average of the responses from all schools involved in the project.

Teachers were asked describe their feelings towards marking as part of the online questionnaire. Their responses mirrored many responses that were described in the DfE's workload survey. A sample of responses is listed below:

- "Can be excessive."
- "At the limit of what I can take."
- "Can be a drain on time."
- "Just about managing.."
- "..onerous.."
- "..constant pressure."

"Is it always necessary?"

It is important to point out, however, that a number of responses to the same question elicited responses which referred to the reducing workload created by the introduction of the new policy which had recently been introduced at the time of completing the survey. Comments regarded this included:

- "It has become more manageable because of a new marking policy."
- "Since we changed our marking policy, I am feeling much better."
- "Currently, it is manageable due to sensible expectations.."
- "..much better since we started immediate feedback.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted of the number of children working at the expected standard (EXS) at the end of the Autumn term (prior to the project) and the number of children working at the EXS at the end of the summer term. Reading and maths saw small improvements (approximately 7 – 8 more children at the EXS). Writing saw a very small decrease (one child) in the number of children working at the EXS.

	AUTUMN 2 (%)	SUMMER 2 (%)	DIFFERENCE (%)
READING	76.41	79.4	+2.99
WRITING	77.52	77.16	-0.36
MATHS	81.58	83.84	+2.26

Interviews with Children

What do you think about feedback/marking?

- "..good for improvement."
- "..good thing because we get to see what we have done wrong.."
- "It helps sometimes but not always."

What is your favourite way to receive feedback?

- "I prefer to **talk** to a teacher and know what I did wrong.."
- "Getting things wrong…because it means I can learn from my mistakes."
- "**Direct advice** or help from a teacher."
- "..when the teacher **writes** what we could include in our books.."

How can feedback be useful?

- "It tells me what I still need to learn."
- "It can help you improve."
- "It helps me understand and helps me improve my writing."

Who gives you feedback?

- ".Our teacher.."
- "My partner or my editing partner in writing lessons."
- "Teaching assistants"

Which do you find more useful:

- "I prefer to **talk** to a teacher and know what I did wrong.."
- "Getting things wrong…because it means I can learn from my mistakes."
- "**Direct advice** or help from a teacher."
- "..when the teacher **writes** what we could include in our books.."

Staff Focus Group Comments

The staff focus group commented extensively on the benefits of the new feedback policy (and in particular, Marking in the Moment). All staff within the focus group could give positive examples of how the reduced expectations in marking had a positive effect on their well-being. All staff commented on how they found they had additional time to prepare and resource 'better' follow-up lessons. Most teachers described how they also had more time for themselves and a couple even told how they had started running! Staff were also pleased to learn as a school that data hadn't been negatively affected by the project, and some teachers even expressed their beliefs that some children had made more progress since providing immediate feedback!

Conclusion, Next Steps

CONTINUE – school policy to be continued in to 2017/18

REFLECT – findings from all of the project's working parties to be considered.

ADAPT – continue to adapt policy to meet the changing needs of the children in our school.

MEANINGFUL, MANAGEABLE AND MOTIVIATING

Further Reading and References

Workload Survey 2016 Findings - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592499/TWS_2016_FINAL_Research_report_Feb_2017.pdf
EEF: A Marked Improvement - https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf
Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511256/Eliminating-unnecessary-workload-around-marking.pdf

Southwark
Teaching School Alliance

Exploring strategies to reduce teachers’ marking workload while maintaining strong pupil outcomes.

Aims

- To develop teachers’ feedback skills.
- To develop children’s skills to self- and peer-assess.
- To reduce the amount of time spent on written marking.

Background and rationale

The Government’s Workload Challenge consultations from 2014-2016 identified marking as a key area contributing to teacher’s workload. In March 2016, the Department for Education published *Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking*. The report argued that marking should be:

Meaningful, Manageable, Motivating

‘One message was very clear: marking practice that does not have the desired impact on pupil outcomes is a time-wasting burden for teachers that has to stop.’

In April 2016, the EEF published *A Marked Improvement: a Review of the Evidence on Written Marking*, which found that ‘*The quality of existing evidence focused specifically on written marking is low*’ but advised that:
‘*A mantra might be that schools should* ***mark less*** *in terms of the number of pieces of work marked,* ***but mark better***.’

Project design and evaluation

Eight teachers from five primary schools in Southwark stopped all written marking for one term (Spring 2 and Summer 1). Instead, they used a combination of verbal feedback and self- and peer-assessment. Control classes continued with written marking for the duration of the intervention.

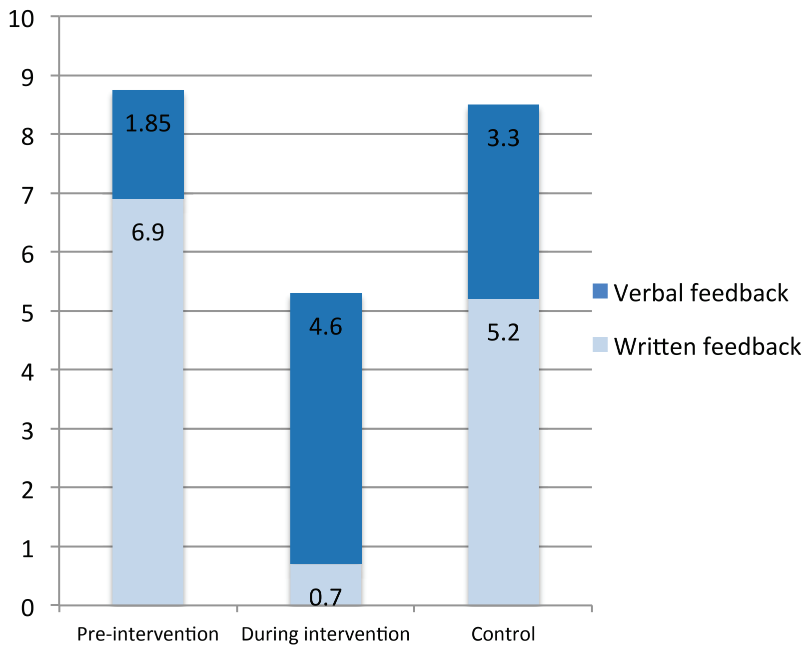
Teachers in both intervention and control groups completed a questionnaire about the amount of time they spent on written marking. This questionnaire was repeated at the end of the intervention to assess the difference over the course of the study.

We also wanted to assess the impact on pupil outcomes in Maths and English. Children were assessed at the start of the intervention and again at the end using GL Assessments Progress Tests in Maths which gave age-standardised scores, making a comparison of progress over the five months fairly straightforward.

Moderation sessions were held on writing and children’s levels were assessed at the start and the end of the intervention.

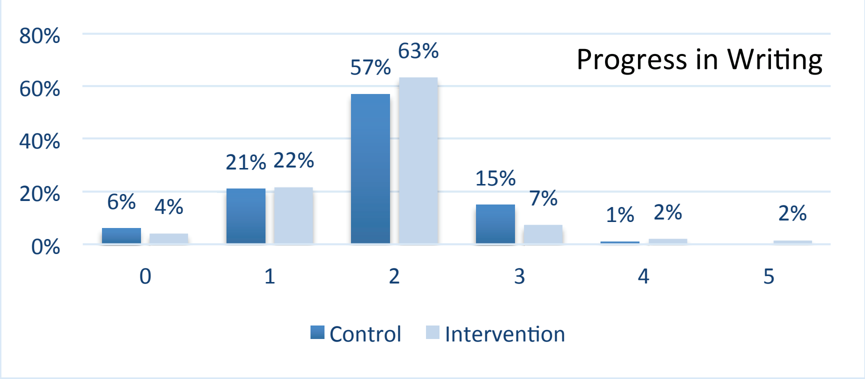
Impact on teacher workload

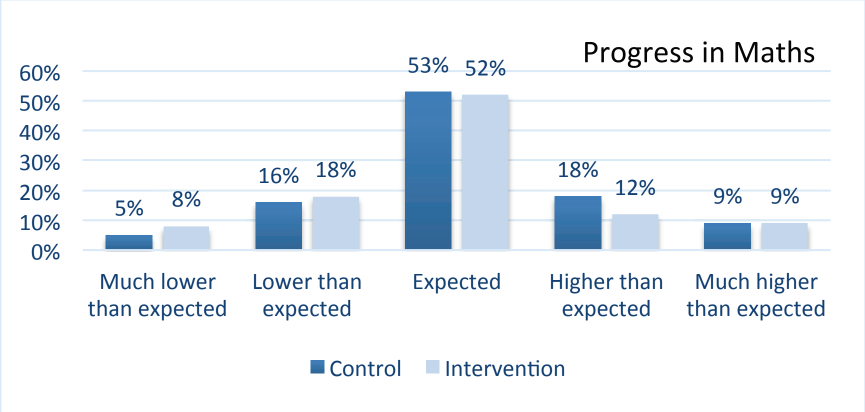
- Teachers in the intervention group spent on average **4.5 hours per week less on written marking** than those in the control group and 3.2 hours less on feedback overall.
- Teachers in the intervention group spent **6.2 hours per week less on written marking** than they had prior to the intervention and 3.45 hours less on feedback overall.



Impact on pupil outcomes

Across the term, overall, **the intervention had no measurable impact on progress in writing or maths** when compared to control group data.





The WOWS consortium report

Reduce teacher workload around unnecessary marking

Author: Julie Hargreaves: Headteacher. www.highfieldsaintmatthews.wigan.sch.uk

Introduction

Before joining the WOWS Marking project, our verbal feedback was also recorded in the child's book with a 'VF' and a commentary. In Year 1 teachers were writing the learning objective and then writing a sentence to say 'Well done you have achieved your learning objective' for children who couldn't read it! The majority of the marking was taking place after the children had left.

When children were asked in the younger years about marking, they said "I don't like green writing." One child said "I haven't got all day to read them." All children asked from Y1 to Y6 wanted to be told if it was wrong immediately so they could sort it out.

After reflecting on The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group Report, Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking, we wanted to work with the principles of **Manageable, Meaningful and Motivating.**

Our approach to the project included:

- a review of current practice across in our school shared with the WOWS Consortium of schools;
- an evaluation of current practice against the 3 principles of:
    - meaningful;
    - manageable; and
    - motivating;
- the establishment of features of good marking practice to be trialled in school;
- an evaluation of the modified approaches to marking against their impact and effectiveness in achieving the three principles.

Our revised approach:

Teachers highlighted the Learning Objective in yellow when achieved, a small yellow dot at the side if partially met and left alone if not met.

Teachers were to comment appropriately if they had not marked the book with the child.

The marking code was kept to highlight the type of errors made e.g. Sp for spelling.
Verbal Feedback was not to be recorded.

Teachers were encouraged to plan marking work with the children in the lesson and have increased dialogue with the children.

With writing, the success criteria the children achieved was to be highlighted so it was obvious what the next steps were.

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Children were to be more actively involved with self-marking and self/peer assessing and given time to fix work or celebrate achievement within lessons.

Gains and evidence

The children's reactions to the new marking system were the greatest gain. They liked instant feedback. They looked immediately for the yellow highlighting. children were far more involved in their own assessment and wanted to fix any misunderstandings and errors quickly.

Teachers gained more time! Originally some teachers had recorded 15 hours a week. The highest recording second time around was 7 hours.

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Teachers felt they were able to spend more time talking to the children about their work.

Conclusion

Teacher's feedback was positive and the children's feedback even more so. Throughout the whole process our main aim was to ensure the marking resulted in children making progress.

We do not have a perfect system but it is improved from our previous practice. What is important is that all staff are working together and are keen to adapt and change to ensure progress for the children. We have to keep that in our mind, that if it does not benefit the children we don't do it.

Reducing Teacher Workload Through Revised Marking

Gill Leigh – Marsh Green Primary in collaboration with WOWS schools

Introduction

The project was undertaken in response to the government's commitment to reducing teacher workload, in particular through marking. We came together as a group of schools to undertake our own research to discover ways of refining our own marking to reduce workload but maintain a quality approach to pupil feedback.

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Research Approach

This was based upon a review and evaluation of current practices across all WOWS schools, in terms of marking being meaningful, manageable and motivating. Good marking practices were identified, modified then implemented to maintain the effectiveness of feedback to pupils, across all of the schools.

Method

Participants

All teaching staff were involved in discussions around workload and it was identified that the most time-consuming aspect was marking work and showing evidence of feedback.

Procedure

We revisited the Marking Policy and questioned some of our embedded practises – such as showing evidence for every time there had been an interaction or offering copious amounts of written feedback to pupils.

Materials

We revised the Marking Policy to have less emphasis on written feedback and gave permission not to have to evidence that everything had been looked at in minute detail.

Results –*Being Able to Reduce Marking*

Staff found that having confidence to give more oral feedback during the lesson, rather than focus on written feedback at the end, gave them more time to address misconceptions or add in greater challenge for children. 'On the spot' marking and verbal feedback became a far more useful tool for teachers to use in terms of moving children's learning. Staff felt they could give more time to creating high quality and interesting lessons and felt less on the treadmill cycle of preparing lessons then marking and handing books back to children. This also created fresh approaches to teaching: spending time working with small groups giving feedback during the lesson and addressing pre-learning needs. Marking was therefore more effective and its immediate nature led to instant addressing of misconceptions within the lesson.

Conclusions

Staff continue to feel they have reduced their workload as much of their marking is completed throughout the school day. Senior leaders no longer look for evidence of marking in books but instead look for progress with children's' learning and improvements to their understanding. As well as reducing the workload this project has enabled us to look more closely at ensuring the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

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Ofsted

Following the project Ofsted fully endorsed the new marking regime, recognising the impact of valuable feedback given in lessons. This had added further confidence regarding the effectiveness of new practices

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Can marking be reduced in a way that reduces workload whilst maintaining standards? A research project. 2017.

Marus Bridge Primary School part of the Rowan Learning Trust. Working in collaboration with WOWS Schools, Wigan.

Introduction

The research project was prompted by the feedback in staff surveys, stating that the highest impacting factor on work-life balance was marking and feedback. With an agreement that marking should be meaningful, manageable and motivating and drawing from key research, a draft marking policy was designed.

Key documents that supported the marking project:

Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking, DfE, 2016

NCETM: Primary Marking Guidance, April 2016

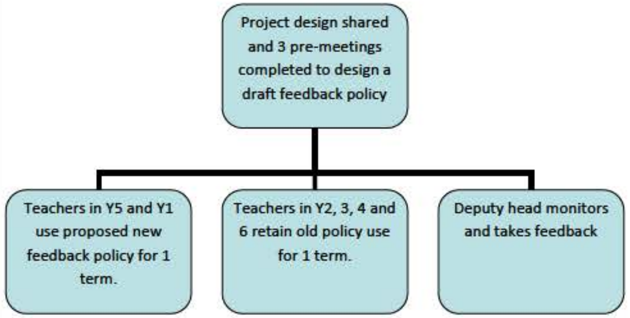
Debbie Morgan: Teaching for Mastery and Closing the Gap, 2016

OFSTED: Myth Busting, 2017

Blog: The Wing To Heaven @daisychristo Daisy Christodoulou's blog – 'Making Good Progress?'

Research design

Process for the project year:



Project design shared and 3 pre-meetings completed to design a draft feedback policy

Teachers in Y5 and Y1 use proposed new feedback policy for 1 term.

Teachers in Y2, 3, 4 and 6 retain old policy use for 1 term.

Deputy head monitors and takes feedback

Method

Participants

Y5 and Y1 teaching staff. All teaching staff.

Procedure

Following Term 1 (where staff followed the previous policy), staff met on three occasions to share research and design a new feedback policy, with the aim of reducing workload. The new policy was used for a full term by Y1 and Y5 staff. The impact was then measured against non-pilot staff. In term three the staff would decide and finalise the feedback policy for adoption.

Key new staff-agreed feedback mechanisms (with key research statement):

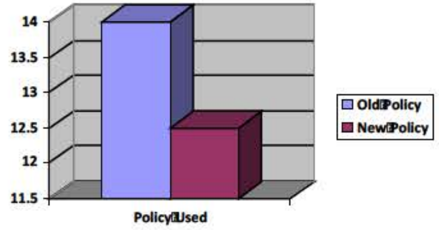
- Teachers writing 'next steps' or rewording the WALT in feedback has little impact. Instead, time to be spent adapting and preparing the next lesson and reseources to impact on learning.

- The more **immediate** the feedback, the more impactful it is. Therefore, in-lesson, every opportunity taken to address misconceptions verbally. **Then, pre or post lesson intervention** to be used rather than written feedback.

- Paired marking can add value to learning – with a more able pupil to support understanding and self-regulation (marking partners) has impact on retention of knowledge, understanding and teacher marking. Use this form of marking twice per week in core subjects.

Results

Y5 and Y1 pilot teachers diaries (case study) and report since adaptation of the draft feedback policy, a reduction of 1.5 hours in marking time can be identified per week. Pupil progress data for these year groups indicated that progress continued to be broadly in-line with the rest of school.



Graph to show comparison between the average number of hours per week spent marking using both policies.

Conclusions

- **EOY data represents a similar trend in progress and attainment to previous year for the pilot group. This shows that reduced marking practices don't impact directly on pupil progress across school. The new Feedback Policy was finalized and is now in use across school.**

- **Use of the pre-teach hour and accurate prior knowledge assessment identified in new Feedback Policy also led to reduction in planning time.**

Reducing Teacher Workload- Making marking manageable, meaningful and motivating!

Orrell Holgate Academy in collaboration with WOWS schools: Westfield, Winstanley, St Paul's CE, Orrell Newfold, St Aidan's RC, Marus Bridge, Marsh Green Primary, Orrell St James' RC, Worsley Mesnes St James CE, St John's CE, Orrell Holgate, St Mark's CE, St Jude's RC.

Introduction

We wanted to participate in this project because teacher workload related to marking was a definite pressure on staff in our school and also across the WOWs consortium. Each school approached the project from a slightly different angle and fed back at various stages to the wider group. We wanted our approach to marking and feedback to be **manageable**, **meaningful** and to continue to **make a difference** and **motivate pupils.**

Research Approach

We evaluated the impact of the refinement of our marking and assessment policy at three stages by speaking to pupils and teaching staff and by looking at standards in lessons, pupil workbooks and responses to marking and feedback

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Method

Participants

All teachers across the school and pupils from KS2 participated in the project.

Procedure

We decided that a lot of marking and written feedback related to teachers writing comments that had already been given to pupils in the course of a lesson. We wanted to see if the impact of feedback continued to be highly effective if it predominantly took part within lessons.
During lessons we used coloured pens to work in a 'marking over the shoulder' method.
We wanted teachers and pupils to be highly reactive within the lesson.

Materials

We adapted the Assessment and Marking section of our Teaching and Learning Policy. We worked with Teaching Assistants to make sure that they felt confident enough to give quality immediate and responsive or proactive feedback. All classes displayed a non negotiable editing list for pupils to use and taught pupils how to work through it to reduce the need for 'editing marking.'

Results

- Lessons are more efficient because teachers are spotlighting needs incisively.
- The quality and quantity of teaching assistants involvement in lessons greatly improved.
- 100% of teachers reported that their workload had reduced.
- Voluntary teacher involvement in afterschool clubs/ sporting events and tournaments increased from 2/10 in July 2016 to 7/10 in July 2017.
- 100% of pupils in Y5 and Y6 said they thought immediate feedback and the refined marking policy was preferable to the old system. Reasons provided were linked to immediate change, being able to work in a sustained way, pace at the start of a lesson, working more with others to improve work.

Conclusion

This journey was primarily about reducing teacher workload and using time more valuably. A happy result of the process has been the positive impact it has also had on the quality of teaching and learning. We have lost nothing at all through reducing teacher workload, but have gained the goodwill of the staff and given them lighter loads (literally) to carry home each evening.

Marking Makeover!

Newfold Community Primary School

Introduction

Prior to May 2017, our Marking and Feedback system was a considerable burden to both staff and pupils. It had evolved in response to a number of Ofsted criticisms of practice which was, in their view, not robust enough to support future learning. Over the past 10 years, a number of adjustments were added to the system in response to Ofsted's comments, but none of the unnecessary processes were eliminated.

The system was characterised by extensive teacher comments to address misconceptions, guide pupils to future learning targets and encourage pupil responses. Often, teacher comments would be of greater length and complexity than the pupils' work. Pupils would write responses to the teacher comments and in some cases, teachers would further respond to the pupils' comments! In addition, a complex Marking Code had evolved which often confused pupils and added little to improve outcomes.

Following consultation with staff and pupils, all agreed that the Marking and Feedback system in place was not fit for purpose.

As one pupil accurately commented, "When a moderator looks at a piece of work, they need to know how good the child is, not how good the teacher is!"

Principles of the new model

There is a shared vision throughout the school community that all marking and feedback should be **meaningful**, **manageable** and **motivating**.

Leaders have the confidence in Newfold's staff to conduct a professional assessment of pupils' work; there is a real sense of trust and faith in their judgements.

Staff initial a piece of work to indicate that a professional analysis has been undertaken.

An arrow in the page margin, or underlining, indicates where staff want the child to review their work.

Staff may still write comments to support future learning if they feel it is appropriate.

More time is spent addressing misconceptions at source by discussing ways to improve outcomes with pupils.

Our new approach was implemented throughout school at the onset of the project to ensure consistency; this provided the opportunity for this new development to be embedded.

Outcomes

Staff have reported that they have developed a more open dialogue with their pupils about improvements that would be appropriate to their learning. Additionally, they feel they have a greater understanding of each child's ability and capacity for improvement.

Pupils have appreciated the discussions with staff at source to impact on outcomes. Pupils also say that they have developed a more personal relationship with staff and are therefore more confident to discuss learning developments. Pupils very much appreciate that staff are no longer over-marking and over-editing their hard work.

Staff have indicated that there has been a considerable improvement in pupils taking greater pride in the presentation of their work.

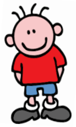
During the school's Local Authority Moderation visit in June 2017, the Moderator commented that the marking system was very clear and concise. It also allowed pupils to edit and self-correct without over-direction from the teacher.

Staff and pupils value being able to address misconceptions at source.

Staff report a reduction of between 50% and 70% in the time they spend marking pupils' work! There has been an astonishing reduction from **225 hours** to **73 hours** per week across school!

Staff also report that they no longer feel the undue pressure of a marking and feedback system that served little purpose for its intended audience.

Staff say that they now have more time to develop creative learning opportunities and enrich the experiences of the children at the school.



Research

We asked ourselves two key questions:

What is marking for? and **Who is marking for?**

Newfold's approach was not primarily focused on reducing teacher workload; although all staff agreed that this was a considerable barrier that needed to be addressed. A simple calculation indicated that staff at the school were spending 225 hours per week marking pupils' work!

We had a common belief that a system was required which engages pupils in the assessment process through greater depth and quality of verbal feedback. All stakeholders felt that this would have a far better impact on pupil outcomes rather than extensive written teacher comments, written pupil responses, often confusing marking codes and other secretarial features.

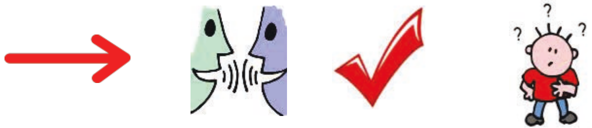
Challenges, issues and solutions

The onerous Marking and Feedback system we had in place for so long had become entrenched in our practice. Restraining ourselves from applying the burdensome processes of the previous system was quite a challenge!

The new system has already evolved, as we now use an arrow in the page margin or underlining where we want children to address inaccuracies depending on a pupil's individual needs.

Staff comments direct pupils to independently attempt to correct spellings.

All staff monitor and evaluate pupils' work regularly to ensure that progression is demonstrated in a pupil's learning journey. Time has been allocated for cohort, phase and whole staff monitoring.



Conclusions

The new system has had a powerful impact on both staff and children at our school. Evidence provided through a robust system of monitoring and evaluation indicates it has had a positive effect on outcomes for all.

Now in January 2018, our staff are applying our approach to marking and feedback consistently.

We have seen a decrease in the amount of unhelpful written teacher directions to support children's learning, as staff become more adept at applying the new marking process.

We no longer have a separate 'Marking Policy'. The principles of our marking and feedback are an integral part of our assessment processes.

We love it!

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Reducing Marking Workload without Reducing Learning

– A WOWS Action Research Project

Introduction

Prior to September 2016, a need for a change in policy was evident. Marking was often a barrier; repetitive of learning rather than taking learning on. Unnecessary inconsistencies within Key Stages, married to extensive teacher comments mainly in distant marking, complex symbols and in-depth 'next steps' within 'two stars and a wish' did not always improve outcomes.
By September 2016, the policy was reviewed by the staff, in consultation with children and parents. At the same time, schools within the WOWS Consortium were experiencing the same issues and a joint review session led to a highly effective research project, designed to develop and evaluate alternative ways of working that could be disseminated across all schools in the Consortium and beyond.

Principles of the New Model

MEANINGFUL, MANAGEABLE, MOTIVATING

The shared principles, through staff discussion and consultation with families, involved:

- Confidence, trust and reassurance.
- Clarity around ages and stages of the children, ensuring policy has value and is fit for purpose.
- Intrinsic to the development of the children at the age and stage of development.
- Complete removal of all aspects that staff deemed as having no value in children knowing how to take their learning forward.
- Positive comments remained.
- Less marking but more work in books.

Research

The ultimate aim of the Policy Review was to provide St. Aidan's pupils with increased opportunities to work with their teachers, challenging their learning. The reduction of unnecessary marking would be an additional gain.

The research would investigate the purpose of marking and who it was for.

Current practice evidenced during Work Reflections and staff discussions showed a substantial amount of deep marking and teacher comments with minimal impact on learning. The benefits of increasing verbal feedback would also be sought.

Challenges and Issues

The Marking and Feedback Policy was a well – established document. Removing the personal expectation that every evening, plus whole Sundays, should be spent marking was a challenge.

Having the concrete evidence that the new policy was having the desired and measured impact.

Clarity of Marking Symbols and when to have a whole school approach and when to be discretely age-specific.

Would children's work still be celebrated and praised. Giving the policy time to embed whilst monitoring the impact on learning and teaching.

Solution and Outcomes

- 100% increase in verbal feedback / over the shoulder marking evident in lesson observations and work reflections
- Use of Purple Pen for re-drafting, evidence of further challenge shows impact on learning
- Marking Symbols and processes reviewed and being used effectively – children know what they mean and how they embed their learning or challenge it further
- Absolute clarity around the Learning Objective by intrinsic highlighting
- !00% of staff feel the new policy is already having a tangible effect
- Feedback is genuine and valuable
- Evidence of increase in fluid groupings within lessons due to immediate, strategic feedback
- Measurable reduction in time spent marking…staff have got their Sundays back!

Conclusions and Celebrations

The policy now needs time to embed in order to fully judge the changes made. It is important to celebrate however, that verbal feedback and marking done 'over the shoulder' has had an instant impact on learning.

Children have told us that the highlighting of the learning objective tells them immediately that they have been successful in the lesson. They enjoy the increased 'talking' with their teacher but still enjoy seeing 'well done' or 'good work' in their books!

Staff have recognised a significant reduction in their distant marking, some stating a 50% reduction providing they stay within the parameters of the policy.

Children, from Year 1 to Year 6, feel that a symbol is easy to understand and they are given more time to address challenges.

The lesson structure is no longer the driver of the lesson; learning is flexible and challenge is increased.

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SAINT JAMES'
Church of England School

Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking - A WOWS research Project

Introduction

The project was originally started in response to the growing problem of the onerous task of marking and assessment.

Many professionals felt that the task of marking was becoming unnecessary and unhelpful both to the teacher and to the child, who was being inundated with written information that meant very little to the child.

The key to marking had to be viewed to be meaningful, motivating and manageable and at the start of our project this was not the case, across a large number of schools.

Research

We started the project by looking briefly at the practises in school. Below is a brief overview of the marking and assessment procedures that were in place:

- each piece of English and Mathematical work had a Can I, which was taken from the learning objectives and a Steps to Success sheet at the top of the piece of work.
- additionally, teachers had to use many different colored highlighters and symbols that were used to highlight different areas that the children needed to work on.
- child interviews and teacher questionnaires were undertaken with results from both cohorts clearly highlighting the fact that marking had become unmanageable, unmotivating and not always meaningful. A direct contrast to what marking and assessment should be.

One child stated "Why have you written a D on my work to explain you have discussed it with me? I know you have talked about it with me!"

- the teachers' feedback to the questionnaire suggested workload was impacting not on just work life balance, but on the quality of lessons being planned.

Method

To start the project we needed to gage an understanding of how staff felt about the current practise so we decided to send out an initial questionnaires gathering data linked to time spent on marking and overall effectiveness of marking in lessons.

After the initial questionnaires were collated we held a staff inset and discussed the project and the questionnaire findings.

We also spoke to the children and got them to talk about their own opinions of how their work was marked and what it meant to them.

As a school we decided:

- there were no requirements for teachers to write comments in the children's books unless the teacher felt it as necessary to improve the learning of the child. This was in direct response to OFSTED guidelines that clearly stated there was no expectation on teachers to produce masses of written feedback.
- *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015/ofsted-inspections-mythbusting*
- to no longer use the symbols D or I (Discussion/Independent) as the children and teachers felt they were unnecessary, the work in the book should be evidence alone that conversations had taken place.
- to replace the use of highlighters with the arrow symbol in the margin as this supported the editing process.
- we had to ensure time was given for verbal feedback relating to steps to success, as this had not always been the practise.
- after one term, we would repeat the staff and child questionnaires to monitor and compare results from previous feedback.

Results

A new questionnaire was sent out to staff. The results of the new questionnaire clearly showed an improvement to initial results:

- all teachers felt they were spending less time on their marking (The average time being between 2-3 hours per week as opposed to the 15 hours per week one teacher had stated they spent on marking in the initial questionnaire)
- all teachers felt the assessment that had the most impact on the children was the discussion and the over the shoulder marking
- the children themselves felt more able to talk about their own targets as the teacher had talked to them, explained and made them meaningful
- as teachers did not have to write comments on the work, they were able to spend more time creating well-planned steps to provide a scaffold for children to see where they needed to go next. They also had more time and energy to plan and gather exciting, motivating resources to bring their lessons to life
- the pupil voice interviews have highlighted the confidence children have in talking about their work and their targets.
- since implementing the new policies, progress in each class has been good to excellent and is clearly illustrated in school assessment data. For example – From Dec to July all children in year 6 made progress in reading, writing and maths.
- the SEN children in Year 6 seemed to have particularly thrived after implementation of the new feedback policy with an average of 4.25 steps of progress in writing, three steps in reading and three steps in maths

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Conclusions

Through our participation in this project St James' Primary School have made successful changes to the school marking policy and embedded a more secure understanding of what marking means both to the staff and to the children.

As results and outcomes clearly show, marking within our school is now more **meaningful**, **motivating** and **manageable.**

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Reducing the workload: live marking and self-assessment

– A WOWS research project

Author: Emma Burrows e.burrows@osjschool.uk

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Introduction

St.James' felt that the purpose of marking had been lost and we needed to focus not only on making feedback less time consuming but also more meaningful to support the children's progress.

We committed to reviewing the marking of Maths and English work which we felt took the majority of our time to mark.

"Feedback can take the form of spoken or written marking, peer marking and self-assessment. If the hours spent do not have the commensurate impact on pupil progress: **stop it." Marking Policy Review Group. DfE 2016.**

The use of 'live marking' and more informative self-assessment by the children was decided as the focus of the project.

'…pupils should be taught and encouraged to check their own work by understanding the success criteria, presented in an age appropriate way." **DfE 2016.**

Participants

Due to other internal projects, testing and class cohorts it was decided that the marking project would be run with the 4 lower junior classes and the 5 teachers who lead those classes. In total 61 Year 3 pupils and 57 Year 4 pupils took part. Of these children a random selection of 40 completed questionnaires at the end of the project.

Procedure

The teachers or pupils would mark the maths and English ('live marking') to enable pupils to have immediate feedback to highlight misconceptions and to enable them to write pertinent self- assessment statements. Where there is no 'right or wrong' such as in writing lessons, use of the success criteria and mini interventions (where the children look for evidence e.g. for modal verbs with a partner) were used.

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The teachers and children used a simplified code to focus on what had improved and what needed further consideration. Children were given support in applying and using the code. The content of the code was designed to be age appropriate and aligned with the expectations of the National curriculum. To ensure consistency, it was asked that copies be placed on tables and on class walls. The teachers read and verified the children's responses, adding additional responses as necessary.

Results

The results from the questionnaire showed the abbreviated code saved time and effort and led to improved progress. Teachers and pupils reported an increased confidence in the use of self- assessment. Teachers noted children had an improved knowledge of specific word classes and sentence structure. Data from the evaluation questionnaire showed confidence rising from 67% to 95% in self-assessing in writing and in maths from 50% to 87.5%. Furthermore, in writing 87.5% of children felt their work had improved and 75% reported the same in mathematics.

As a result of the project 4/ 5 teachers felt a reduction in marking time.

All teachers felt that the use of the marking code and self-assessment method aided pupil progress in both English and Maths.

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Conclusions

This project was effective as responses were positive from pupils and staff.
Evidence had been gathered via questionnaires, book monitoring and conversations with staff and children.
Inconsistencies in approach identified in the project, are being addressed through the development of further guidance. The approach has been adopted across the school in an age appropriate manner

Reducing the Marking Workload

Introduction

The focus of the project was on reducing workload and improving the quality of marking. Prior to the research project, **our Marking and Feedback was onerous.** Pieces of work were marked using two stars and a wish, numerous symbols and codes . Detailed next steps were written. Children were then expected to respond to the marking. This response was then acknowledged by a further marking. **Staff felt that marking was often a pointless** exercise for themselves and many children could not read the comments.

Principles of the new model

At St. John's we shared the vision that marking should be **meaningful**, **manageable** and **motivating**.

To do this we

- agreed any changes must not cause a negative impact on standards
- stopped the 2 stars and a wish marking process
- incorporated marking and feedback into lessons
- introduced 'over the shoulder' marking
- increased and developed self/peer assessment
- aimed to ensure staff no longer took marking home
- agreed that we should ***trust professional judgement*** and no longer require written proof or photographic evidence to support marking

Research approach

One of a collaborative group of 15 WOWS schools the initial aim of reducing workload and improving marking whilst maintaining the effectiveness of feedback across all schools. Concerns were discussed, changes were trialed, feedback was sought from all stakeholders and standards were monitored.

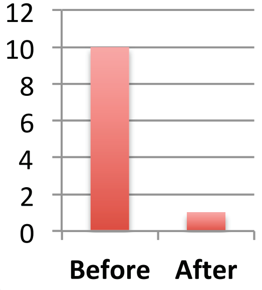
Outcomes

- Removing the need for 2 stars and a wish has made marking more ***manageable***
- Reducing marking codes made marking simpler and quicker
- Over the shoulder marking during lessons has resulted in faster recognition of misconceptions and enables children to respond promptly and more successfully. Staff and children find the new system ***motivating***
- Verbal marking and feedback is more ***meaningful*** particularly for KS1 and EYFS
- Developing success criteria has had a positive impact on several aspects of teaching and learning
- There has been an increase in ***confidence*** of self assessment
- The ***positive*** gains were felt by all stakeholders

Challenges, issues and concerns

All staff were concerned about the implications during Ofsted Inspections if marking was reduced. Being part of the project and discussing the details in the document ***Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking*** gave us the confidence t old.

Number of staff taking marking home



Conclusions

- Workload significantly reduced – 100% of staff took marking home each week, this rarely happens now.
- Greater understanding of the challenges and abilities of each child – for both teachers and children
- Self and peer assessment is more accurate and more frequent
- Formative assessment is even more frequent and accurate
- It quickly became apparent that the impact would also be evident in teaching and learning.
- ***Standards*** were ***maintained***

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ST JUDE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Headteacher: Mr Damian Wilson
www.saintjudes.wigan.sch.uk

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY WORKLOAD AROUND MARKING

WIGAN WOWS SCHOOLS
www.wiganwows.uk

INTRODUCTION

Prior to this project our marking and feedback system was a considerable burden to staff.

The system forced the staff to use numerous colours and annotations and was heavily weighed towards the children responding to marking the following day.

Staff felt that asking children to improve or correct work that they hadn't completed at the time of the lesson -correcting some 24 hours later after an evening of television, Ipads, dinner, chocolate, football and gymnastics- was **Madness!**

It was a system that the staff felt appeased the SLT and the dreaded **THEY** (Ofsted). As one teacher so eloquently stated to the head, *"Look just tell me what you want to see and I'll mark that way."*

It made teacher's  and made the children 

RESEARCH DESIGN

A group of 15 schools (all part of the WOWS consortium) came together to discuss and evaluate the outcomes of the Marking Policy Review Group Report. All schools decided to change their marking systems in light of the findings.

Key to the new systems was to be the 3 M's of marking.

Meaningful *for the children and staff.*
Manageable *for the children and staff.*
Motivational *for the children and staff.*

It was agreed that children's learning must not suffer, staff workload should decrease and staff job satisfaction should increase.

Two questions we were always mindful of:

WHAT IS MARKING FOR? WHO IS MARKING FOR?

METHOD

- Staff meetings on current system and what changes needed to be made.
- Pupil meetings on current system and what changes needed to be made.
- Marking policy thrown out!
- Feedback policy created, shared, discussed and agreed by **ALL!**

Key to the creation of the new policy was a clear set of principles:

1. Teachers spend less time marking, more time planning next steps- if it didn't work today how can I make it work tomorrow?
2. Marking is marking not a re-run of the lesson-why rewrite the entire lesson in a child's book? If they didn't get it today plan different for tomorrow!
3. Increased use of 'over the shoulder marking' the here and now. Here's a crazy idea lets talk to our children!
4. Increased trust from the SLT- this will lead to increased satisfaction, which leads to increased productivity- Win, Win!
5. Is it MMM for the children – if it isn't then don't do it!
6. Does it have a positive effect on children's learning- if yes do it, if not then don't!
7. Don't worry about what you have heard **THEY (Ofsted)** want to see. If children are progressing then **THEY** will be happy.

The new system:

- Teacher and support staff talk to the children and indicate changes and improvements needed (green pen)
- Teachers and support staff highlight positives in pink.
- Children make changes and improvements there and then- not tomorrow.
- The amount of additional written marking after a lesson is at the **discretion of the professional teacher!**
- **SLT must TRUST the Teacher!**

Results and Findings

Teacher survey post changes universally showed:

- A marked decrease in time spent marking.
- More time to plan next steps and therefore improve pupil outcomes.
- An increase in job satisfaction. Teachers were talking and teaching- what they do the job for.
- Teachers felt respected by the SLT : There was an evidence shift- SLT don't need to see pages of marking, if a child can't do it on Monday but can do it on Tuesday- then feedback was good whether there were pages of marking or not!
- A better work/life balance- having more family time.

Pupil survey post changes universally showed:

- All children enjoyed talking to the teacher more.
- All enjoyed the pink highlighter.
- Most were happy the 'next day' wishes had been removed.

SOoooooooo-

Children are happier! Staff are happier! SLT are happier!

Soooooooooo-

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

REDUCING TEACHER WORKLOAD: MARKING

Contact: Rachael Coulthard
Website: http://www.saintmarks.wigan.sch.uk

1. Purpose of the research

This project was created in response to the government's commitment to reducing teacher workload, especially through reviewing the marking and feedback processes. Working together as part of a group of 15 Wigan schools from the WOWS consortia, we designed a research project with the aims of:

- ☐ Ensuring all marking and feedback is purposeful and impacts on pupil learning
- ☐ Reducing teacher workload
- ☐ Increasing teacher retention

Establish Baseline: where are we now? → Research: what does great feedback look like? → Co-construct with staff → Staff Training → Implement → Measure impact → Evaluate

2. The research design

The project was based on a review and evaluation of current practices across all WOWS schools, in terms of marking being meaningful, manageable and motivating. Alternative marking practices were identified, evaluated and then implemented to maintain the effectiveness of feedback to pupils across all of the schools.

3. Method

In order to ensure engagement from staff, a pilot group of volunteers was consulted and the new approach was co-constructed. Key elements included:

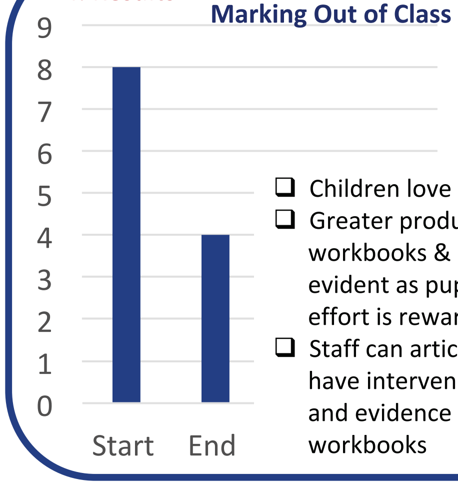
- ☐ Stop using RRR (Read, Reflect, Respond)
- ☐ Stop Marking at home & start investing time in assessing & planning
- ☐ Introduce marking which:
  - a) Scores effort/attitude
  - b) Assesses if a child has 'got it', needs an opportunity to work at a 'greater depth' or with 'further support'
- ☐ Continue to intervene in lessons using pink pen
- ☐ Being aware of 'redundant wordage'

The approach was evaluated through pupil interviews, book monitoring alongside teachers and further discussions with staff.

Principles underpinning the new model:

- ☐ Recognition of the need to shift pupil mind set of 'getting it right'= hard work/good work
- ☐ Commitment to reduce time spent on marking and channel 'freed up time' to planning activities which embrace 'Assessment for Learning' principles
- ☐ Recognition of the need to shift staff mind set of good feedback = lots of marking & inevitable 'redundant wordage'
- ☐ Clarity for the workforce with regards to the core purpose of marking/ feedback
- ☐ Understanding that feedback should refer to a) attitude/effort and b) next steps

4. Results



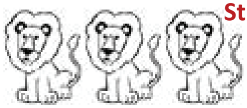
Average Teacher Hours Spent Marking Out of Class Per Week

- ☐ Children love the new system
- ☐ Greater productivity in pupil workbooks & 'growth mind-set' evident as pupils know that effort is rewarded
- ☐ Staff can articulate how they have intervened within lessons and evidence impact within pupil workbooks

5. Limitations

Limitation	Solution
Varying terminology became confusing	Terminology agreed
Shallow intervention following marking	Staff training on purposeful intervention
Timetable restrictions	Freedom given to staff to adapt timetables to allow interventions to take place when needed
Running out of stickers	Stamps designed and ordered for every staff member

Sticker placed in pupil books each lesson & highlighted during teaching time



★ ✓ →

Key:  = pupil effort ★ = Stretch It ✓ = Got It → = Fix It

6. Conclusions

Ensuring that the majority of marking and feedback takes place within lessons has led to a significantly positive impact on both teaching and learning and the reduction of teacher workload.

Reducing Marking Workload

Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking

St. Paul's C.E. Primary School
Headteacher – Alison Jackson

Katherine Fletcher
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Introduction

- St. Paul's Primary School, Wigan, took part in a research project regarding unnecessary marking workload.
- Along with local cluster schools, we focused on the ways in which we could reduce marking workload for teachers.
- Teachers felt that their workload was extending beyond typical working hours. Many teachers felt that their work/life balance was suffering.
- Most staff indicated that too much of their time was spent marking/correcting pupils' and this was beginning to impact on lesson quality.
- In some cases "marking for marking's sake" was being done.

Method

- Marking workload was discussed at a staff meeting followed by completion of an anonymous workload questionnaire. The results from the meeting differed from responses to the questionnaire and indicated that changes needed to be made.
- Key principles were discussed with reference to clarity of purpose and sustainability of the current practice.
- Concerns were addressed and changes were made to the marking policy to reflect the current methods that are now used in school.

Results

- **An acknowledgement that deep marking is based on quality NOT quantity.**
- More focus is placed on self and peer assessment with increased staff confidence in applying this approach.
- The importance of verbal feedback has been clearly communicated and is noted by marking children's work with V.F. when required.
- Marking symbols have been introduced and displayed on walls to lessen lengthy comments and a key to understanding marking is displayed classes for children to check.
- Teaching assistants have been trained to be involved in assessment within class.
- The impact of the changes based on staff feedback is positive but with recognition that we are still developing our approach.
- The reduction teacher workload has not made a negative impact on children's progress.
- The project is by no means finished for our school and we want to use this as a starting point for development

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Conclusions

- A noteworthy gain is that teachers feel more involved in the process of developing the marking policy.
- Our key focus is to build staff confidence in their marking and ensure that we are offering support to those who are making these necessary changes.
- Moving forward, we will now explore marking expectations within foundation subjects to ensure that the principles of this project are embedded.

Reduce marking – increase impact!

Author: Tim Sherriff
Headteacher: Westfield Community School, Wigan.

Introduction

The impetus for the project was The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group Report, Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking. This report challenged many of the assumptions held about marking.

Prior to the project writing was marked extensively. Teacher comments focused on the learning objective often with a supplementary question. The questions and prompts were written in terms of next steps and designed to 'move the learning on'. Children were given time to reflect on the teacher's comment and respond in writing if appropriate.

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[redacted]

Research design

The project was trialled in Years 1,3,4 & 5. By introducing a key system to be used for self-assessment it was hoped that time spent marking time would be reduced alongside maintaining or possibly improved outcomes.

Method

Participants

The project was completed at Westfield Community School by pupils and staff in years 1,3,4 and 5. Westfield is a two-form primary school. A total of 240 pupils participated in the project. Classes are mixed ability and mixed gender groups. Eight class teachers participated in the project.

Procedure

The project was designed to include a pre- and post project pupil and teacher survey. The survey was used to assess the impact of the project on teacher workload and writing standards.

- An exemplar model of the desired writing outcome would be shared with the pupils. Specific criteria for the writing were established.
- A whole school self-assessment key was established.
- All pupils self-assessed against the criteria. In KS2 the pupils identified the elements required in the text and used the key in the margin to highlight were the criteria had been applied. The teacher checked the pupils' self-assessment and would use 'two ticks' to acknowledge correct usage.
- In KS1 the pupils ticked against criteria and the teacher checked this. Pupils then self-assessed against 3 'Can I' boxes.
- Making an overall comment was left to the discretion of the teacher.
- The members of the senior leadership team monitored quality through work scrutinies.

Materials

Teaching staff collaborated to produce a code for self-assessment of grammar and punctuation writing. The code was used when the teachers felt it was appropriate.

A teacher survey to determine time and impact of marking on writing, consisting of three questions.

A Pupil survey related to self-assessment, consisting of four questions.

Results

Time spent marking writing prior to and post project reduced on average by:

The requirement for the teacher to write extended comments significantly reduced. A Year 5 teacher commented:

"It drastically reduced marking time and highlighted the children's understanding of grammatical terms."

Pupils were actively involved in the learning process via a formal self-assessment system. (Responses to the pupil survey confirmed more students checked their work post-intervention).

Conclusion

Through participating in this project the marking of extended writing was made more meaningful, manageable and motivating.

✓ ✓

REDUCING THE BURDEN OF MARKING.... IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

KAREN THOMPSON
WINSTANLEY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, WIGAN

Introduction

The Better Mathematics Conference (2015) led by Jane Jones HMI, gave us the impetus to look critically at the way staff gave feedback to children in maths, particularly with respect to written marking.

By the time the 'Three' DfE reports were published in 2016, we were well on our way towards improving the quality of feedback to children in mathematics. The reports gave us the stimulus to expand our critical review to a consideration of effective marking practices in the wider curriculum and the issues of reduction of teacher workload.

The WOWS research project "Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking" introduced to us in October 2016 provided an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and to consider the impact of our work in this area, together with next steps planning.

Initial Research into existing practices

A whole school scrutiny of marking revealed that very often, teachers were wasting their time marking as there was little or no impact.
For example:

- Unhelpful, vague comments e.g. "watch your spellings" and "improve your handwriting"
- Comments at the end of work repeat the learning objective and add a comment such as "yes you can!"
- Some teachers wrote extensive comments of two or three paragraphs suggesting ways of improving work – but child was not able to understand the points being made as too young or ability level too low. Questions the audience for these comments!
- Next steps learning comments were often simply the learning objective for the next lesson.
- The complex marking code was used inconsistently across school.

Principles underpinning our new approach to feedback

- All teaching staff agreed that that the following were our guiding principles:
- Reduction in time spent marking
- Marking to have impact or not worth doing.
- Feedback mechanisms to include more oral feedback for immediate impact.
- Consistent practice across school from EYFS to Y6
- Increased expectation that the child takes more responsibility for checking own work – age appropriate support from teacher.

Challenges, issues and solutions!

- Staff were entrenched in the notion that the more they were writing, the more highly they would be thought of as teachers. We gave them permission to write less and abandon 3 stars and a wish and it was liberating!
- Teachers were concerned that children were wasting time if they allowed them to respond to marking at the start of the next lesson. Again, 'permission' was given.
- Knock-on requirement for improved questioning skills and subject knowledge meant that INSET became quite intensive.
- Subject leaders were asked to monitor quality of feedback in terms of impact on learning – INSET needed.
- New staff needed to be brought into line with our new policy – could be difficult as these staff had not gone on the same 'journey' over time as existing staff. Also time demand on SLT to coach these staff. File of exemplars helped to set the standard for new staff.

How has practice changed?

- Child is the audience for written comments, not Ofsted / member of SLT monitoring the books!
- Oral feedback is given greater significance: focus on checking and probing understanding during the lesson and adapting teaching accordingly. Quick identification of misconceptions / poorer work and promptly putting child back on right track.
- Comments are brief, specific, accurate and clear re praise and advice for improvement (scaffolding for learning).
- Effort and perseverance are recognised.
- Greater value put on self and peer assessment.

Gains for staff and children!

- Teachers now see their books as their 'badge of honour'
- Feedback seen to lead to clear progression and prompt correction of misconceptions/ errors and / or improvement / extension of work.
- Minimum 'wordage' for maximum impact – reducing the time teachers spend on marking work out of lesson time
- Assessment data shows that more focused feedback has positive impact on outcomes – day to day improvements add up to improved test results / teacher assessment at end of year. We believe this has to do with the need for improved subject knowledge and questioning skills if teachers are going to be more reactive within lessons; our inset programme reflects this.
- Children say that now feedback helps them learn and motivates them (children's questionnaires)

Ofsted report : The Quality of teachers' questioning is very good… supplementary questions are used very well to help pupils identify and correctmisconceptions or to extend their ideas. The school's marking policy is applied consistently. Teachers' feedback is highly effective and leads pupils to revise and improve their work. (November 2016)

Worsley Mesnes Community Primary School

Eliminating Unnecessary Workload Around Marking

All staff at Worsley Mesnes Community Primary School with colleagues in schools from the WOWS consortium.

The eliminating unnecessary workload around marking project is a WOWS consortium initiative which was proposed at the 2016 Consortium Conference and was researched and developed in the 17 schools.
This is the Worsley Mesnes journey.

What we did.

Before the project there was awareness and attempts to reduce unnecessary workload.
When the project began this was delivered with a more strategic and coordinated approach.

An initial Inset encouraged staff ownership of the initiative
Why is marking in our school the way it is?
How do we want it to be?

Principles underpinning the new model.

Reduce the workload
Maintain the standard
→ Improve the standard!

Take away the "guilt" about marking

"Permission" given to minimise the written marking but not to lose the quality of feedback

The challenge – initially that written feedback could be less prevalent and progress would remain at least at the standard of previous learning.

Moving forward the improvement in the quality of all feedback – e.g. verbal, peer, written etc. will lead to improved progress and mastery and greater depth throughout the learning in school.

MARKING → IMPROVED FEEDBACK
↗ REDUCE TEACHER WORKLOAD
↘ GROW THE IMPACT FOR CHILDREN

Everybody was included through consultation and conversation – Children, Parents, Governors and Staff.
The expectations were set!

The New Approach – how practice has changed

- Reiteration of the school's approach to written feedback– value all types of feedback- Verbal feedback and response encouraged - child /adult child/child.
- Redesign of the codes for written feedback involving all staff and children to ensure a consistent approach appropriate to the ages of the children.
- Update of the Assessment Policy to clarify that marking is one of a number of ways to feedback with examples.
- An explicit link to the Growth Mindset strategies adopted throughout school.

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Improved Feedback Strategies Inset

- Within lesson marking - Over the shoulder/ Total Pupil involvement – Self marking and pupil voice
- Timely and opportune comments to individuals or groups to reinforce or extend learning
- Mini-plenaries / on-going sharing of good practice
- Group Feedback to cascade to others – strengths and development points
- Assessment for learning – Feedback explicitly planned for in daily/ weekly planning
- Use of consistent school marking codes
- Quality questioning which addresses misconceptions immediately
- Peer work and written comments
- Emergency Targets to address previous year targets
- Daily/ weekly planning highlights feedback opportunities in learning

Results

- Monitoring - Effective feedback evidenced by the response and progress in children's learning – in book scrutiny/ lesson observations/ children interviews.
- Internal Data indicates increase in children working at age related expectation and above in writing in all year groups.
- Increased staff clarity about "Eliminating unnecessary workload around marking" findings and E.E.F. "Quality of feedback" research.

Teacher Questionnaire - Has this initiative made a difference to workload?

No difference Enormous

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	57%	14%	29%

- Development of consistency in marking throughout school that is age appropriate.
- Building a clear and explicit link between the school existing assessments for learning, on-going planning that is reactive and the feedback given in lessons through verbal and written response.
- A portfolio of quality examples collected where effective feedback has improved children's work (be it verbal, peer, written, target cards, etc.).
- Use of staff groups to develop and celebrate approaches to feedback.
- The School's **coaching** expertise focussed on workload.

Teachers and Children say how the marking initiative changed feedback

More focussed verbal feedback having immediate impact to move children on.
Quicker response evidenced by immediate changes during the learning.
Development of scaffolded peer responses.

Teachers say how the marking initiative has changed their practice

Some work marked during lesson as part of the learning process.
No requirement to add written comment unless it adds value.
Mark books quicker and more effectively so marking workload reduced.

Conclusions

The concerns about teachers' workload were the starting point.

The removal of the need for extensive written marking is creating a valuable conversation with research and development in school, leading to increased confidence amongst staff.

This has become a catalyst for more effective feedback that is supporting teachers' workload concerns as well as driving improvement in standards across the curriculum.

Planning

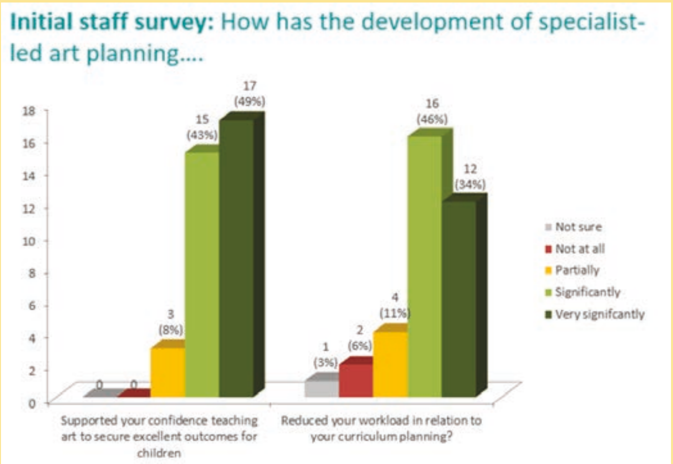
Three research projects investigated approaches to planning. These approaches included collaborative planning, shared planning and making use of specialist teachers or Specialist Leaders of Education to plan a series of lessons in a specific subject area.

THE MEAD TEACHING SCHOOL

How can we develop appropriate planning to increase confidence in teaching and reduce workload?

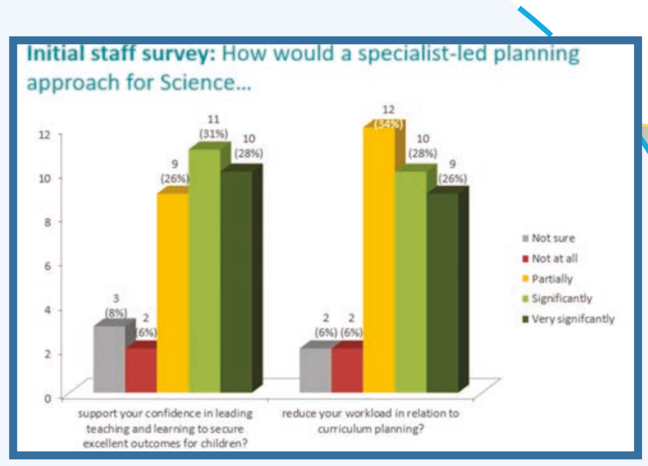
Driver

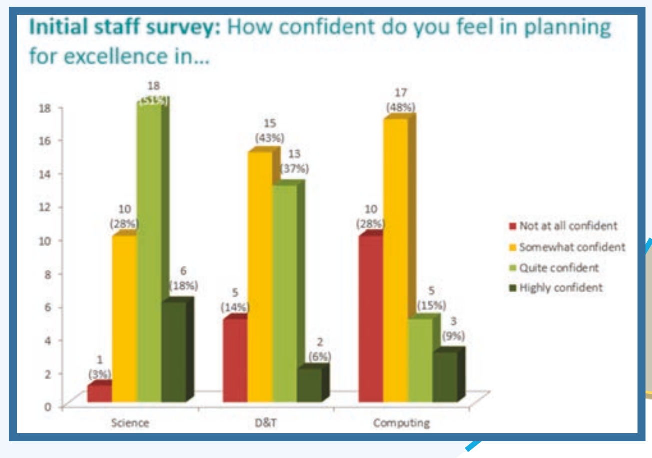
- Art subject lead had produced planning for each year group. We noticed it had a quick impact on teacher confidence - this was reported by the Teachers.
- We wondered if this model could be replicated in other subjects to reduce teacher workload.
- We would consider what light this would shed on the role of the subject leader.
- We considered if this model would reduce workload and have a positive effect on teacher morale.


Initial staff survey: How has the development of specialist-led art planning....

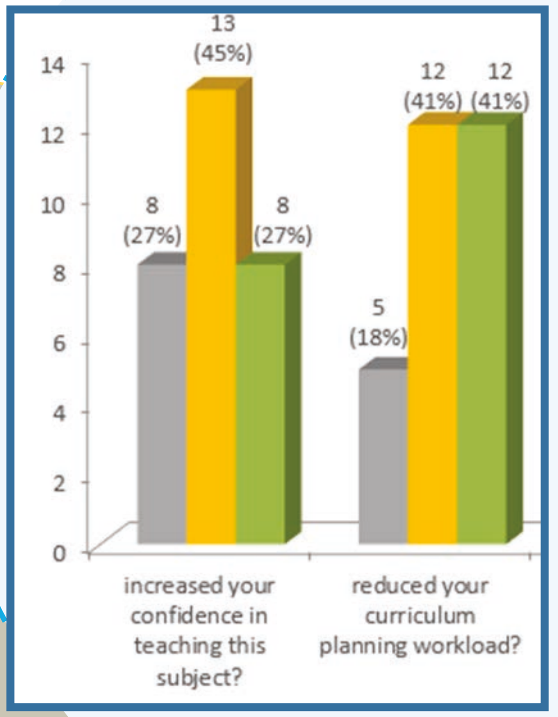
Gathering Data

- We designed a survey to find out which subjects this would work most effectively for. We asked how confident teachers felt planning for excellence in different subjects.
- During this time the Science and Technology lead started to develop planning grids for the subjects that followed a similar model to the art – there was a set structure of lessons that would make planning easier as it always followed the same process. These were shared and critiqued by the team.
- The survey showed that Science DT and particularly Computing were the subjects staff were less confident with.
- We developed our research questions and started to produce planning for the three subjects. We produced specialist planning working alongside teachers to implement.


Initial staff survey: How would a specialist-led planning approach for Science...


Initial staff survey: How confident do you feel in planning for excellence in...

Innovation & Change



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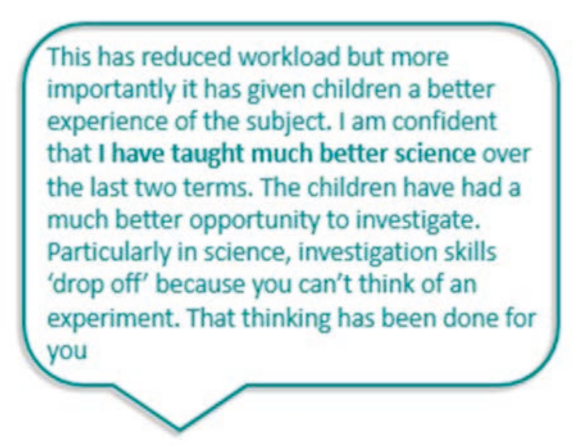
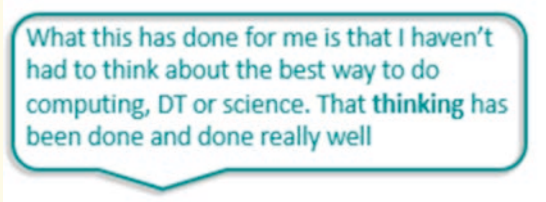
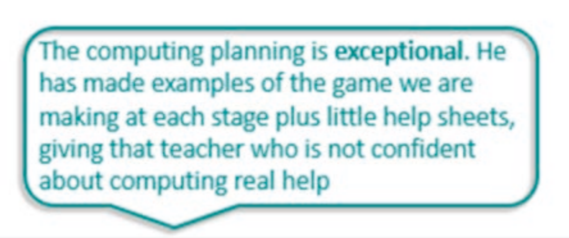
- The survey showed that Science DT and particularly Computing were the subjects staff were less confident with.
- We developed our research questions and started to produce planning for the three subjects. We produced specialist planning working alongside teachers to implement.

Reflection

- Results showed plans were having an impact on teacher confidence mostly but also on workload.
- The role of the subject leader was key – teachers talked about the value of having the "specialist" to support the adaptation of the plans. Especially where teachers were less experienced or less confident in that subject.


This has reduced workload but more importantly it has given children a better experience of the subject. I am confident that **I have taught much better science** over the last two terms. The children have had a much better opportunity to investigate. Particularly in science, investigation skills 'drop off' because you can't think of an experiment. That thinking has been done for you


What this has done for me is that I haven't had to think about the best way to do computing, DT or science. That **thinking** has been done and done really well


The computing planning is **exceptional**. He has made examples of the game we are making at each stage plus little help sheets, giving that teacher who is not confident about computing real help

Refining Focus

- The team continue to plan for their subjects refining planning.
- In doing so we continue to follow a research testing cycle revisiting it a number of times.
- Following our findings, we have teased out key recommendations for colleagues when implementing this project.

Key recommendations

Teacher confidence

- Subject leaders need to know which staff will require additional support and target them through the year.

Reduced workload

- Developing this approach requires significant time investment at the beginning of the project, to ensure planning is right.
- The role of the subject leader is key in supporting the right staff at the right time.

Role of the subject leader

- Critical that the subject leader has a clear timeline of rolling out the planning and support teaching staff.

Effective planning

- Develop teams of specialists, within and across schools, to produce subject specific planning or adapt planning developed by this project.

Good Practise Guide

- Ensure your staff know the plans may need adapting; they are not always "off the shelf" they cover the key skills that can be adapted to meet the needs and topic of a class.
- The role of the subject leader is key. The "Job specification" clearly lays out the ways a leader can support teachers especially where they are less experienced or confident.
- Collaborative working of a team of senior and subject leaders across a group of schools, improves approaches to curriculum planning. This is key to the sustainability of this approach.
- Selecting the most critical subject areas first will enable resources to be used most effectively.

TheMead ACADEMY TRUST
Shaping Inspirational Learning

REDUCING TEACHERS' UNNECESSARY WORKLOAD: THE PROMISE OF COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Qing Gu
(University of Nottingham)

Rebecca Williamson and Sarah Heesom
(Transform Trust and Teaching School Alliance)

Introduction and rationale

The aim of this research was to investigate how Collaborative Planning Year Group Networks may help to improve the quality of planning and reduce teachers' unnecessary workload. The project had 3 purposes:

- To investigate whether and how existing year group networks within Transform may be used as a platform to help teachers plan collaboratively.
- To assess teachers' planning experience of working in year group networks and its perceived impact on quality of teaching.
- To identify whether and how such collaborative planning has enabled teachers to manage their workload around planning and resources more effectively.

Review group recommendations

Our research used recommendations from 'Eliminating unnecessary workload around planning and teaching resources':

SLT SHOULD:

- ensure that the highest quality resources are available, valuing professionally produced resources as much as those created in-house.
- consider aggregating PPA into units of time which allow for substantial planning.

TEACHERS SHOULD:

- Engage in collaborative planning to develop skills and knowledge, to share their expertise, and to benefit from the expertise of their peers.
- Consider the use of externally produced and quality assured resources.

Approaches to reducing workload

Developed based on the recommendations in the review group report:

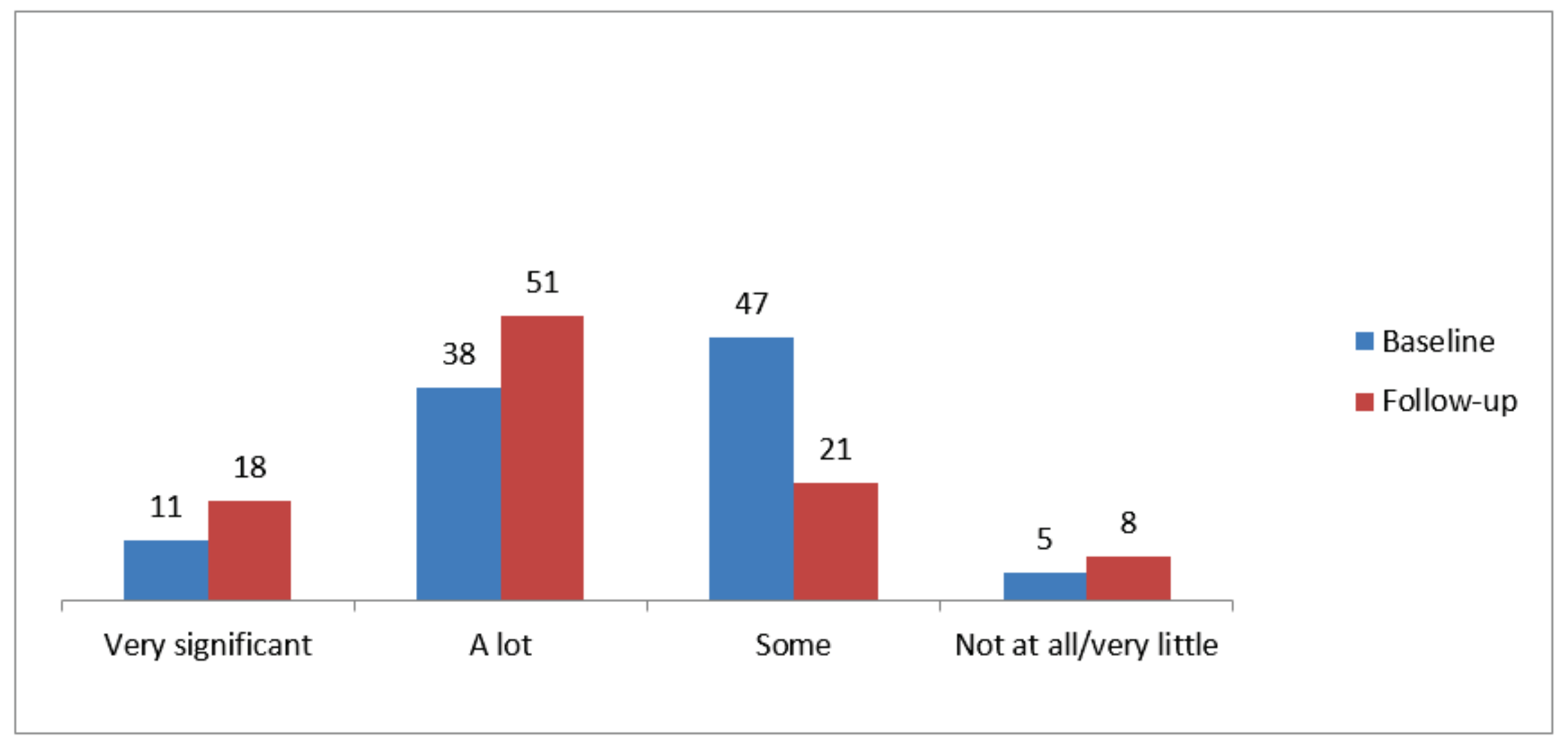
A. **Using SLEs** – Our collaborative planning days built in expertise from Subject Leaders of Education (SLEs) to quality assure the discussion, plans and resources.

B. **Working together** – We used existing Trust year group networks promoting good practice and pedagogy as a basis for bringing staff together to plan.

C. **Allocating time** – We extended network time from a half, to a whole day to maximize time spent collaborating on planning and resources.

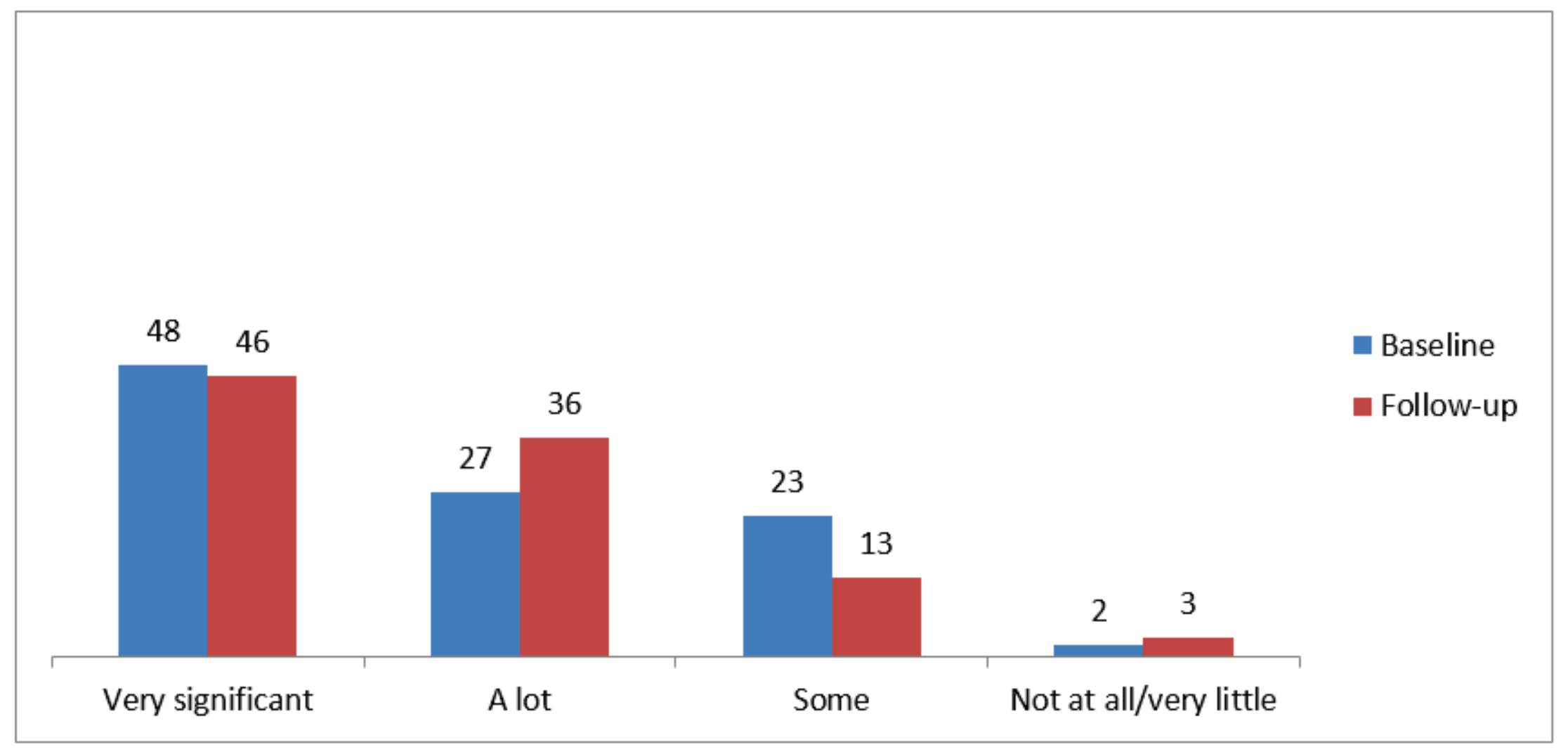
Findings

Figure 1: % of teachers at baseline and follow-up – *"Meeting the particular demands of the learning needs of my pupils"*



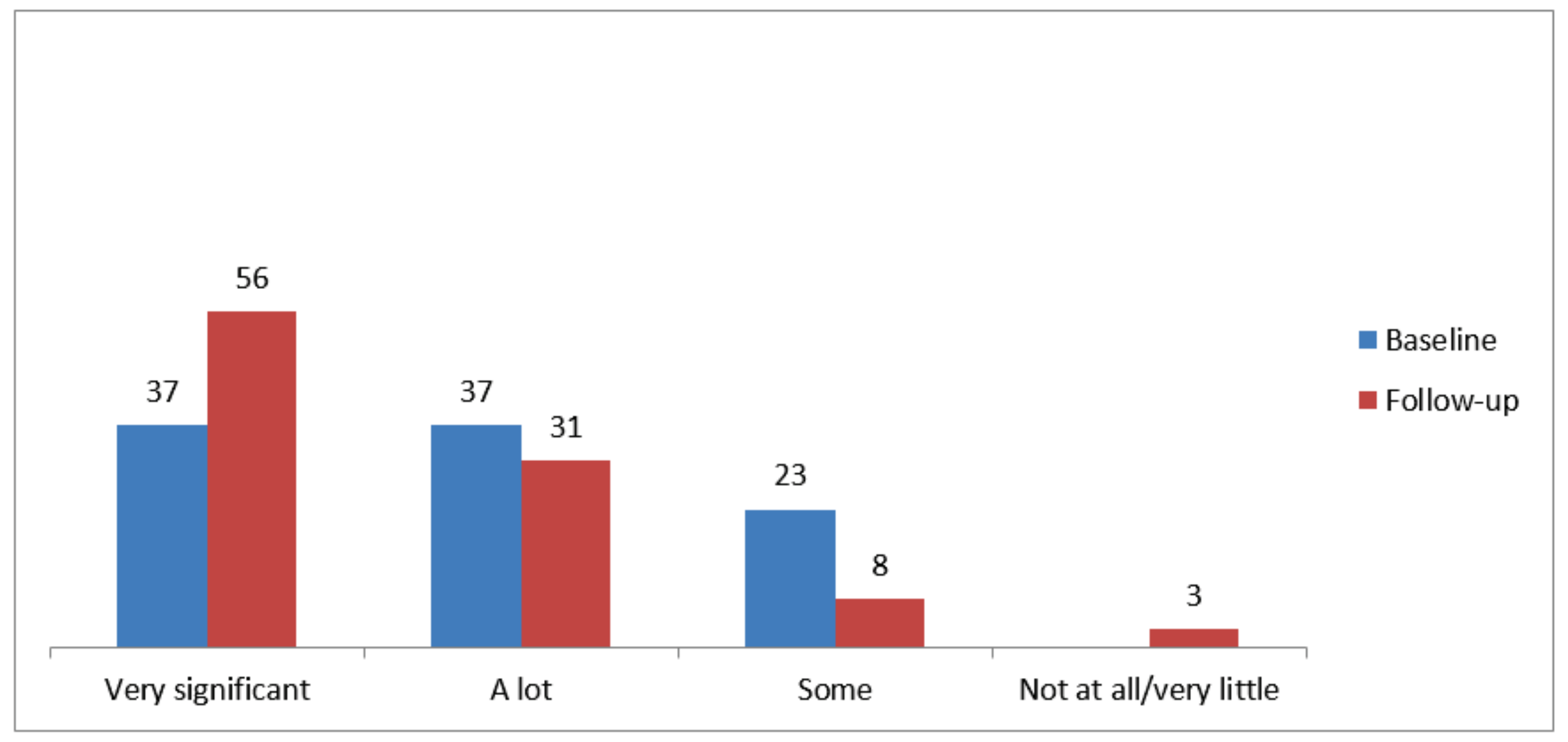
Teacher survey: To what extent do you feel that your planning experience in the Year Group Networks has led to positive changes in the following? Baseline=66 teachers; Follow-up=39 teachers

Figure 2: % of teachers at baseline and follow-up – *"Making the workload around planning more manageable"*



Teacher survey: To what extent do you feel that your planning experience in the Year Group Networks has led to positive changes in the following? Baseline=66 teachers; Follow-up=39 teachers

Figure 3: % of teachers at baseline and follow-up – *"Enabling me to have time to think more about how to improve the quality of teaching"*



Teacher survey: To what extent do you feel that your planning experience in the Year Group Networks has led to positive changes in the following? Baseline=66 teachers; Follow-up=39 teachers

Conclusion

Results show that our approaches to planning were highly effective in a number of areas. Teachers valued the access to expertise, ideas and resources, and the time and opportunity to be engaged in **professional dialogue** with colleagues which enabled them to think more reflectively about *how* children learn. They also valued the investment at Trust and school level to reducing their workload.

Teachers valued the dedicated time given to planning and felt that they produced more high quality planning as a result. We conclude that allocating whole and specific days to partake in collaborative planning has a positive impact on both **teacher workload** and **quality of teaching**.

From pupil surveys we can conclude that teachers are planning engaging and exciting learning as pupil interest in learning was high and the majority of pupils felt they were learning at school. Nearly all pupils reported learning a lot at school and near 9/10s reported being interested in learning.

In order for our collaborative approach to be effective, it has required a financial investment in terms of SLEs, shared quality text and staff release.

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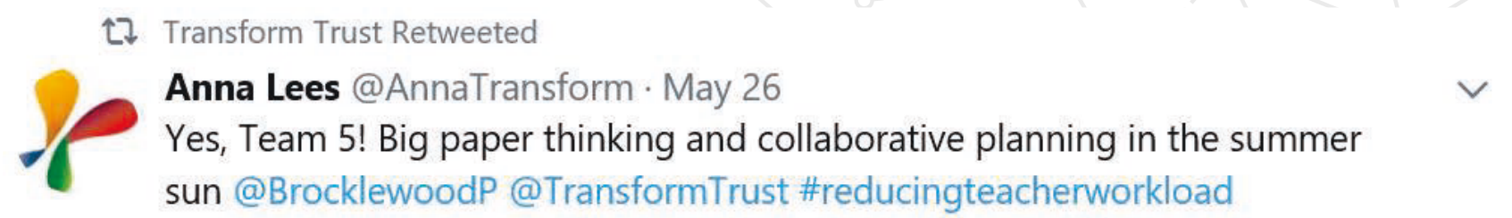
Recommendations

What recommendations would you make to other schools hoping to reduce staff workload in this area.

- ✓ **Use existing partnerships within MATs and TSAs** to facilitate planning and working together.
- ✓ **Invest in, or create,** high quality schemes of work that can then be personalized for individual contexts.
- ✓ **Use experts** to facilitate and quality assure the content of high quality materials and schemes of work.
- ✓ **Provide staff with dedicated time** to collaborate with other colleagues.
- ✓ **Invest in high quality texts** to drive your English curriculum.
- ✓ **Enhance any commercial schemes** with time to discuss and personalise these to meet school needs.

Teachers said



Transform Trust Retweeted
Anna Lees @AnnaTransform · May 26
Yes, Team 5! Big paper thinking and collaborative planning in the summer sun @BrocklewoodP @TransformTrust #reducingteacherworkload

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Read the full report at:
www.transformtrust.co.uk

Department for Education

TRANSFORM TRUST

WHITLEY BAY HIGH SCHOOL: To what extent and in what ways do shared planning practices reduce teacher workload?

WBHS | National College for Teaching & Leadership | Department for Education

INTRODUCTION

Whitley Bay High School and associated research partners, have set out to explore the research question 'To what extent and in what ways do shared planning practices reduce teacher workload?'

Shared planning is:

Delegated planning that is carried out by groups, taking into account the context of a scheme of work/syllabus. Planning is stored and shared digitally and made available to all relevant teachers.

Shared planning should:

- Involve equal accountability from all contributors, achieve an agreed teaching and learning quality and maintain or improve student outcomes whilst saving teachers' time

Our aims were:

- To investigate time teachers spend planning
- Explore strategies to ensure high standards of planning and teaching and learning are maintained, whilst reducing unnecessary workload
- To facilitate, in project teams, the development of initatives intended to reduce workload
- Identify pedagogical ways the projects have been successful
- Create a set of specific recommendations on how planning time can be reduced without impacting on the quality of student learning

38 minutes
on average spent planning each one hour lesson

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RESEARCH

A hybrid research design, involving the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods, was employed after a 'situational' stance had been adopted. As Rossman and Wilson (1985) explain, this perspective recognises the value of approaches associated with either two of the research paradigms and allows for their use in different situations within the same inquiry. In this study, so as to satisfy separate research aims, quantitative methods were employed to facilitate measurement, whilst qualitative methods allowed open-ended exploration of the particular circumstances of individual and groups of teachers. In terms of data collection tools, the study incorporated the use of such well established methods as participant diaries, questionnaires and focus groups pertaining to the initial diary analysis.

METHOD

PROCEDURE

Element of Action Research	Evidence of Element within Study
Work is commissioned	School secured funding from the NCTL to conduct research after a successful bid
Recruited external researchers are associated with academic institutions	Externals have strong links with universities of Durham and Northumbria
Study examines a specific problem within the organisation	Problem was that of teacher workload, especially in relation to planning and the preparation of resources
A solution is formulated and implemented	Overall solution was shared planning; subject teams developed and put into practice their own forms of shared planning
The strategy adopted is evaluated for effectiveness	Analysis was conducted by one of the external specialists and formed the subject of an initial 8,000-word report for the Senior Leadership Team
New organisational policies are put into effect on the basis of what has been learnt	New practice becomes departmental policy and is shared in training with the whole staff within school and across the North East at a variety of conferences.

PARTICIPANTS

Three schools were involved in the initial gathering of baseline data (via a 'planning diary') pertaining to the amount of time staff spent planning: Whitley Bay High School, South Wellfield Middle School and Spring Gardens Primary School, all in North Tyneside. Follow up research was carried out with respondents in Whitley Bay High School through work/life balance surveys, post-project questionnaires exploring any effects of the shared planning initiatives, and focus groups of staff from 'information-rich' cases.

MATERIALS

Whitley Bay High School designed the questionnaires that were used throughout the project, with external input from our research consultant, and the Centre of Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) at the University of Durham. Further resources were created to assist departments with a planning audit.

RESULTS

Our baseline data showed that time spent by teachers on planning varies depending on experience and stage in career, but overall outweighs time spent on marking, within our school's and our collaborating schools' context:

- The data we collected show that the most planning is completed by teachers with 3 – 5 years experience
- The least planning is completed by teachers in the UPS3 category
- On average a teacher spends nearly 38 minutes planning each one hour lesson
- Teachers do the majority of their planning on a Sunday and Monday, with day-to-day planning declining in allocated time as the week progresses
- For a teacher in the first three years of their career, 602 minutes per week are spent on planning (10+ hours), equating to a daily average of 86 minutes
- The difference between time spent planning and time spent marking increases as the Key Stage progresses, with planning time at KS5 almost twice as high as marking time
- Time spent on research and revision of subject knowledge increases at A Level which is particularly relevant in relation to the burden of learning new and more challenging subject knowledge for new curriculums

602 minutes
per week are spent on planning by less experienced teachers

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set time aside for shared planning
- Divide the work in such a way as to exploit teachers' specialisms
- Agree from the outset on the fundamentals, whilst remaining flexible to individual predispositions
- Encourage continuity and progression in the students' experiences
- Be prepared to make significant investment of time in the early stages
- Build on the existing team spirit within subject departments
- Make sure that everyone is on board
- Accept that shared planned is no panacea
- Ensure that the ICT infrastructure can support the demands that will be made of it
- Make provision for staff in one-person departments to plan with colleagues elsewhere

Further research may want to explore the options for smaller or 'one person' departments and to extend the analysis of outcomes over a full year.

Those wishing to find out about the research in more detail may wish to attend:

Whitley Bay High School's one-day conference
'Reducing Teacher Workload Whilst Planning Outstanding Lessons'
on Friday 17th November 2017.

Further details available from sharon.armstrong@whitleybayhighschool.org

94.5%
said the project improved the quality of planning

84.5%
said the project saved planning time

96%
said the project encouraged departmental teamwork

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Data management

Four research projects investigated approaches to the collection and use of data in schools. These approaches included the use of bespoke or ‘off the shelf’ educational technology solutions and the development of data strategies involving all staff, such as developing key performance indicators for different year groups.

National College for
Teaching & Leadership

ASHFORD TEACHING ALLIANCE

Reducing Teacher Workload: Data Use Research Project

How do teachers and leaders perceive the data management element of their role? How can teacher workload be improved without negatively impacting upon pupil outcomes?

Ben White, Tanya Barwick, Esther Cook, Lesley Donald, Sarah Forde, Stephen King.
Research Consultants: Ruth Dann, Sam Sims

Introduction

'No-one sets out to create burdensome data management systems. Decisions about the purpose and process for data management…are made to respond to real and perceived demands, many of which are positive and necessary. Yet the unintended consequences of these decisions often cause unnecessary workload for teachers and school leaders.' ***(Workload Challenge, 2015)***

This research project sought to examine the relationship between data management processes and teacher and leader workload.

Research design

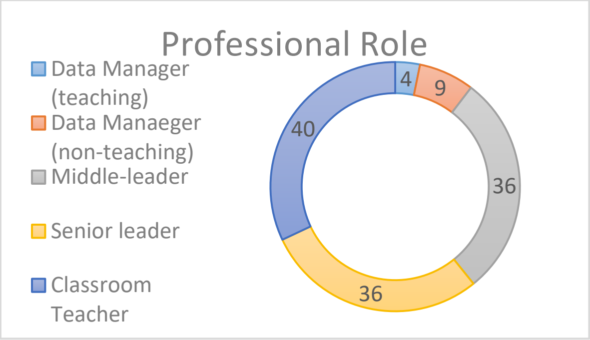
This collaborative research project explored teacher workload issues relating to data management across the Kent and Medway Teaching Schools' Network. The process was supported by **NCTL** and our university partner, University College London (**UCL**).

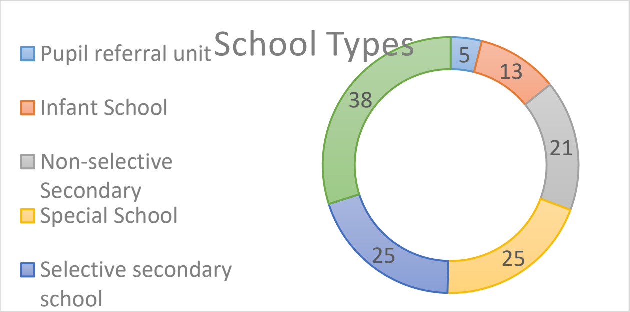
The research process included a **questionnaire** (questions available on request) and **follow-up interviews**. These were designed to gain insight into data related workload in order to help to identify specific recommendations in relation to the data management aspect of the workload challenge.

Materials: The questionnaire and interview schedule are available as appendices in the main report. Digital copies are also available on request.

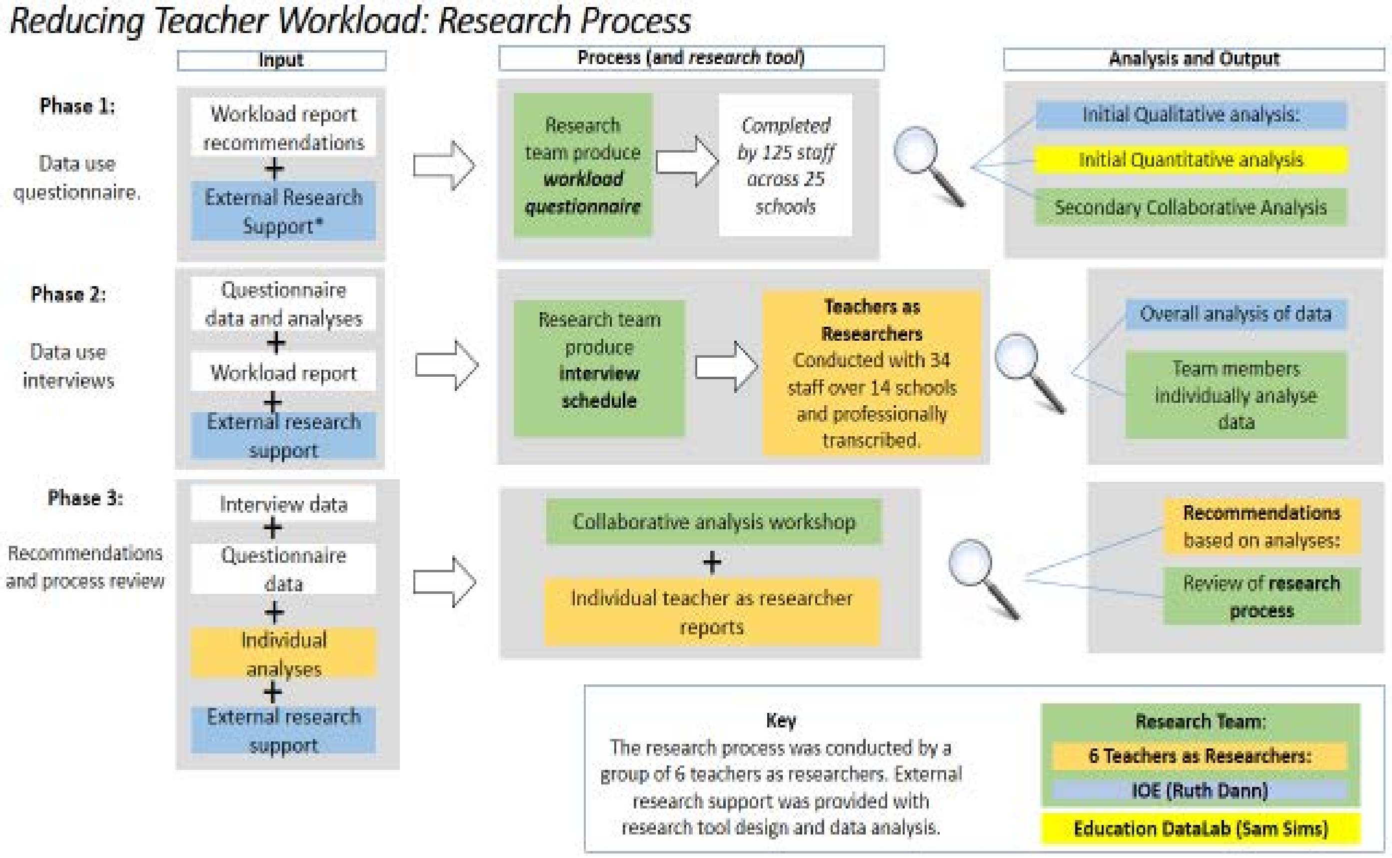
Method

Participants:





Procedure


Reducing Teacher Workload: Research Process

Input

Process (and *research tool*)

Analysis and Output

Phase 1:

Data use questionnaire.

Workload report recommendations
+
External Research Support*

Research team produce ***workload questionnaire***

Completed by 125 staff across 25 schools

Initial Qualitative analysis:

Initial Quantitative analysis

Secondary Collaborative Analysis

Phase 2:

Data use interviews

Questionnaire data and analyses
+
Workload report
+
External research support

Research team produce **interview schedule**

Teachers as Researchers Conducted with 34 staff over 14 schools and professionally transcribed.

Overall analysis of data

Team members individually analyse data

Phase 3:

Recommendations and process review

Interview data
+
Questionnaire data
+
Individual analyses
+
External research support

Collaborative analysis workshop
+
Individual teacher as researcher reports

Recommendations based on analyses:

Review of **research process**

Key

The research process was conducted by a group of 6 teachers as researchers. External research support was provided with research tool design and data analysis.

Research Team:

6 Teachers as Researchers:

IOE (Ruth Dann)

Education DataLab (Sam Sims)

Contact email: b.white@highworth.kent.sch.uk

School practice in relation to tasks and frequency varied considerably in this area. Future research which seeks to explore the relationship between pupil attainment and variations in data management practices.

Results

1. Data management punched above its weight in relation to workload – i.e. lower time demands but higher impact upon how teachers perceive their jobs. Some expressed worry relating to data use and the culture around it.

From when I *first started as an NQT to where I am now, the angst around data has become phenomenal. That's how I feel - it has just become really phenomenal.* ***(Teacher, Secondary School)***

2.Data management was spoken of positively where
- It gave teachers insight into their classes
- Teachers had been involved in designing the recording and assessment system
- Support was provided in providing data analyses to teachers**.**

Without collecting that data and analysing it in the way that I did those girls maybe would have slipped through the net. ***(Middle leader, primary school)***

3 .Data management demands were seen as unhelpful where
- Frequency of demands limited capacity to respond to the data.
- Data demands prevented staff from carrying our other work.
- Data demands related to evidencing rather than enacting good practice.

'I could be supporting teaching and learning but instead I am…..not looking at what makes teaches better but I'm trying to draw a graph to prove that we're a good school.' **(Senior Leader, Primary School)**

Conclusions:

Expanded version is available in the full report. In short, the teacher research team would recommend REAL data use.

- **Reduce**: Where possible reduce data demands. Designated data managers and reduced reporting frequency can help. Aim to free up teachers to respond to rather than merely process the data.
- **Evaluate**: Ensure that the workload implications of data management processes are considered in relation to their impact on pupil attainment.
- **Analyse Appropriately**: Support staff in developing appropriate statistical literacy, Are they aware of inherent limitations of the data produced in your school.
- **Listen**: Is there a gap between official practice and teacher perception. If so do staff need further training or can the system be improved?

Workload Challenge
KS5 Data

Kafilat Agboola, Mary King
Hatcham College, Haberdashers' Aske's Federation

Dr. Tom Perry, Megan Bradbury
Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE)

Introduction

The Hatcham College Workload Challenge project is focused on data management for post-16 students, through exploring the existing beliefs and expectations of different stakeholders (students, parents, teachers and school leaders) around the collection, sharing and analysis of data to support student learning. In doing so, Hatcham College are investigating inefficiencies in the creation, input, analysis, sharing and communication of student assessment and progress data; evaluating the current workload demands linked to these activities; and exploring how workload can be reduced and better redeployed, whilst meeting the needs of all stakeholders, and maintaining and improving student outcomes.

Research Design

PHASE 1: Needs analysis, problem identification & baseline data collection (Aug-Oct 2017)

- Initial conversations between CUREE & Hatcham College colleagues to establish approach
- CUREE conduct interviews with key Hatcham colleagues
- CUREE conduct baseline student survey

PHASE 2: Policy and process review (Sept-Nov 2017)

- CUREE feed back on findings from needs analysis
- Hatcham College map data collection process at KS5 and collect feedback
- Refinements to/development of school assessment & data policies

PHASE 3: Training and development (Nov 2017-Feb 2018)

- Skills sharing workshop at Hatcham College focused on methods for tracking data
- Data collection about time spent on tasks associated with data workload
- Hatcham College trial Turnitin software for essay hand-in with Y12 classes

PHASE 4: Evaluation (March 2018)

- Data collection following March 'data drop' to track any changes in time spent on tasks associated with data workload, following the Turnitin trial (comparing control and trial groups) - interviews & a staff survey

PHASE 5: Ongoing development

- Hatcham College develop an IT solution to improve communication of attendance data

Procedure

Needs analysis, problem identification & baseline data collection (through interviews & informal conversations)

Identifying more/less educationally valuable practices (through a student survey)

Policy & process review (through mapping of data management processes at KS5)

Training and development (through a skills share workshop)

IT solutions to improve data management systems (including Turnitin trial; ongoing area of development)

Materials

Staff and student surveys and a staff interview schedule, designed by CUREE, to capture staff and student perspectives on data workload

Process maps for assessment and quality of teaching data management

A tool for KS5 to track time spent on tasks associated with data management

Participants

Staff including HoY, data managers and form tutors were interviewed by CUREE during Aug-Sept 2017

KS5 students at Hatcham College took part in an electronic baseline survey in Sept 2017

HoDs and KS5 leads took part in a skills sharing workshop in Nov 2017

KS5 staff tracked the time spent on data management tasks in Jan 2018

Year 12 classes took part in a trial of Turnitin software

Key Findings

Needs analysis, problem identification & baseline data collection

Staff in interviews reported a lack of confidence, familiarity and efficiency with the programmes used to process attainment data. There were a number of issues raised around data usage, including the time-consuming nature of analysing and communicating data collected.

Identifying more/less educationally valuable practices

In the baseline survey, students identified the most frequently used and most useful school information channel as being their daily tutor time. 35% said they knew where to get information about their grades if they needed it; 50% knew where to get information about their attendance.

Policy & process review

Staff identified the intervention process as more time-consuming than data entry itself, and the importance of the process giving time for them to decide on the most important and valuable intervention approaches.

Training and development

Staff raised the importance of having a unified approach to tracking data across the different subjects. Members of staff with expertise in data collection software were identified to act as 'buddies' for other teachers.

IT solutions to improve data management systems

Ongoing approach to be assessed at the end of March.

Recommendations

Middle leaders should be encouraged to delegate administrative tasks to admin teams

Staff across departments should be involved in discussions what data is most useful to them and how it can be most usefully tracked

Schools should provide the necessary training to middle leaders for effective and efficient data management e.g. in Excel

Schools need to ensure that adequate time is allocated to skills-sharing and discussion about how to track and use data more effectively and efficiently

There is a need to assess the impact of technological solutions, and to choose carefully those which will best meet the needs of the staff

JURASSIC COAST
TEACHING SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE

Teachers, doctors and data – learning with, from and about each other

Laura Webb, JCTSA
All Saints School, Colyton Grammar School, Gillingham School, Holyrood Academy, Honiton Community College, King's School, South Dartmoor Academy, St Mary's Primary School, The University of Exeter, The Woodroffe School

Introduction

Our small-scale research project focused on one of the Workload Review Group's two key recommendations: the importance of clarity around the purpose of data collection. Recently there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of inter-professional learning where members of different professions learn with, from and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care and services (CAIPE, 2016). Many teachers experience the collection of data as an end in itself and without clarity of purpose they can lack confidence in dealing with data which in turn increases their workload. Doctors are often more confident in their use of data and we wanted to see whether some of the principles which underpin the medical profession's approach (e.g. Atul Gawande's work as a key ambassador in using data to initiate cycles of change) could be helpfully applied to schools.

Research design

Our four-stage research design was underpinned by the principles of change management models. The primary goal was for the participant teachers to identify what they would 'stop, start, continue doing' in relation to data.

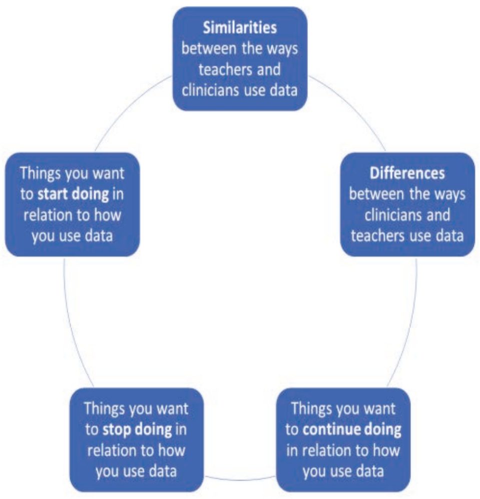
Stage 1: Identify teacher participants

Stage 2: Focus group with teacher participants

Stage 3: Interdisciplinary event with teacher participants and clinicians

Stage 4: Focus group with teacher participants and creation of action plans

Stage 3: Research design



Similarities between the ways teachers and clinicians use data

Differences between the ways clinicians and teachers use data

Things you want to **continue doing** in relation to how you use data

Things you want to **stop doing** in relation to how you use data

Things you want to **start doing** in relation to how you use data

Method

Participants

10 participant teachers were chosen from our JCTSA schools (8 women and 2 men).9 of the teachers worked in secondary schools and 1 was a teacher in a primary school. We deliberately selected participants with a range of experience, from recently qualified teachers to Deputy Headteachers. Our academic partner from The University of Exeter Medical School (Karen Mattick) secured the support and commitment of 4 clinicians (3 GPs and one consultant surgeon) for the interdisciplinary event (Stage 3 of the research design).

Procedure

The first focus group (Stage 2) was used to investigate the current attitudes of the participant teachers towards the purpose of data in their school settings. Each clinician gave a 10-minute presentation at the interdisciplinary event (Stage 3) in which they focused on a different aspect of data in their professional roles (e.g. population data; data for improvement; practice level data; data for appraisal). The participant teachers then discussed the approaches taken with the four clinicians individually. The primary purpose of the second focus group (Stage 4) was to identify findings from the interdisciplinary event and to use these to inform individual action planning.

Materials

Individual questionnaires were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data from the participant teachers at the first focus group. During the interdisciplinary event, the participant teachers were asked to take notes on any similarities and differences that they noticed between the ways teachers and clinicians use data. Each participant teacher created an individual action plan at the second focus group about what they would 'stop, start, continue doing' in relation to data.

Results

Analysis of the questionnaire data confirmed two of the key findings from the Review Group – there was a lack of clarity around the purpose of data collection and approaches taken to data collection and analysis can impact negatively on teacher workload. E.g. -

Q21 In what ways does data impact on your workload?

'It is my workload – along with marking'.

'It puts an enormous amount of stress to get data collected and to make sure that the data doesn't reveal any inadequacies in my teaching'.

The interdisciplinary event revealed some similarities and many differences between the approaches taken in teaching and medicine. These included –

- *Both feed the beast!*
- *Both collect data with the intention of using it*
- *Clinicians have more control over what they are tracking and why*
- *Clinicians are not judged on results year on year as in teaching (more room in clinicians' use of data for natural fluctuations)*

The participant teachers' individual action plans from the second focus group were used to disseminate their findings in their schools. Their identified 'immediate next steps' included –

- *'Ask for additional training in the interpretation of data'*
- *'Look at more longitudinal data'*
- *'Reinstate the need to talk about class data'*
- *'Ask Leadership Team about why we collect data'*

Conclusions

The project was very effective in terms of highlighting current practice and suggesting alternative approaches and ways of thinking in relation to data. The method and findings have been shared widely, both within the TSA and across the region at conferences. Although it is unlikely that other schools would be able to replicate the interdisciplinary nature of the research design, it has shown how important it is to have open and honest conversations around the purpose of data collection in schools. The change management model ('stop, start, continue doing') could be used as a starting point for any school wishing to analyse their current practice.

The teachers and the clinicians really valued the opportunity to learn with, from and about each other. Useful links have now been forged and there is very much a shared appetite for seeking out future interdisciplinary research collaborations.

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Unlocking Excellence

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DfE Workload Challenge Research

Data and Assessment : Increasing clarity, reducing workload.

Janine Ashman, St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Professor Gordon Stobbart, UCL Insituute of Education.
Participant Schools: High Down Infants, Highdown Juniors, Gordano Secondary, Portishead Primary, St Mary's C of E Primary.

Introduction

Our research project focused on investigating if creating a common school-based summative assessment and data management system across a recently formed Multi Academy Trust, the Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP), would reduce teacher workload.

Data and assessment is an area that many teachers identify as taking up a substantial amount of their time – 56% of respondents to the 2015 DfE Workload Challenge consultation identified this as an area that caused unnecessary workload. A lack of clarity around the purpose of collecting data was identified as the cause of this, alongside the process of collecting the data being seen as inefficient, with duplication seen as a common problem.

Research design

Our research project investigated if establishing a school-based summative assessment system with the following would reduce teacher workload:

- Increasing teacher clarity over the key aspects of the curriculum that they need to assess in reading, writing and maths for children in Years 1 – 6;
- Increasing teachers' understanding of what depth looks like in reading, writing and maths in years 1 – 6;
- Using a simple tracking system to both enter and extract data.

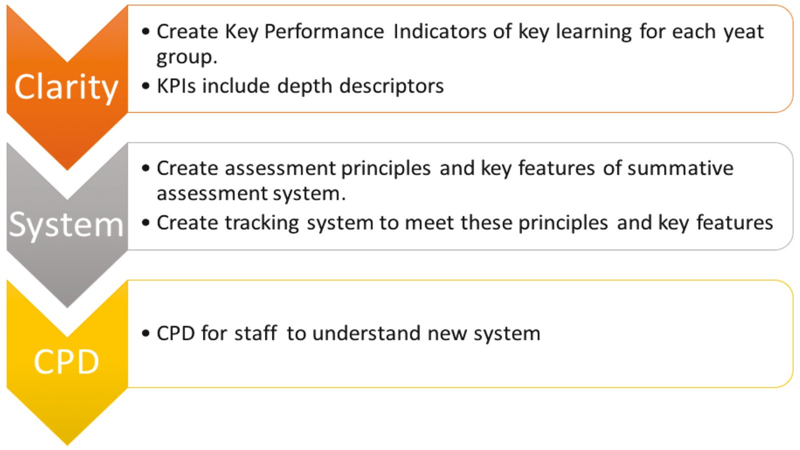
The combination of clear KPIs, an effective annual summative assessment model and an easy and efficient tracking system should, we proposed, result in a clear and simple summative assessment system that all teachers understand and can use. This meets key recommendation of the Commission on Assessment without Levels that 'schools ask themselves what uses the assessments are intended to support, what the quality of the assessment information will be, how much time it would take teachers to record the information, and how frequently it is appropriate to collect and report it (p.7)

Method

Participants:

- 55 teachers took part in in the initial online survey to gain an understanding of teacher attitutudes and workload around summative assessment and data.
- 25 teachers from all primary schools and KS3 maths and English leaders took part in the writing of our KPIs.
- Headteachers, Deputy Heads and Assessment Leads and our multi academy trust CEo led the creation of of assessment principles, key priorities and selection and creation on our tracking system.
- We were supported by James Pembroke as an independent school data advisor and Professor Gordon Stobart as our researcher.
- 24 teachers completed our online survey once the new summative assessment system had been established.

Process:



Clarity
- Create Key Performance Indicators of key learning for each yeat group.
- KPIs include depth descriptors

System
- Create assessment principles and key features of summative assessment system.
- Create tracking system to meet these principles and key features

CPD
- CPD for staff to understand new system

Results

Our initial staff survey showed that, since the removal of levels, teachers were increasingly uncertain about their summative assessments. This had resulted in an increase in workload.

After the creation of clear KPIs and depth descriptors teacher confidence in summative assessment had increased to at least as high as it was when we used levels.

The use a a flexible and realtively simple tracking simple tracking system also reduced teacher workload.

Overall, 73% of teachers reported that, after one round of summative assessment using our new system, that their workload has been reduced.

Conclusions

Our research shows that the following reduce teacher workload:

- Improving the clarity of teacher understanding of summative assessment KPIs.
- Ensuring each objective also has a depth descriptor saves staff time by giving them clarity over what they assessing.
- Teachers should not be assessing every national curriculum objective – they should derive key performance indicators from each year group's curriculum so that every child has achieved the key learning that they need to continue into their next year group.
- A clear and proportionate annual assessment cycle based on appropriate principles.
- Any assessment data is entered onto a tracking system just once and that it can be used many times by many different people within a school system.
- Point in time assessment adds to the accuracy and reliability of teacher assessment.
- Workload can be maximised by comprehensive CPD to support teachers in using a summative assessment system.

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