

Written and Oral Feedback

Policy document

September 2013

HEATHCOAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY ON WRITTEN AND ORAL FEEDBACK

1. Rationale

The purpose of this document is to outline the principles and protocols for the feedback we give to pupils as part of their learning. It is part of a wider approach to Assessment for Learning, and replaces the former Marking policy. It is intended that through the implementation of this policy, all pupils will consistently be given the best possible feedback as part of their learning.

2. Policy formation and consultation process

- This policy was written by SLT and is based on the research of Shirley Clarke and others.
- This policy relates to the school's main action plan and specific subject action plans across the curriculum.
- The policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

3. Aims

The purpose of all feedback is two-fold:

- To inform learners about their achievement, and
- To inform learners about how to move forward with their learning.

Other benefits from good quality feedback include a rich evidence base for use in later assessment, a positive classroom climate in which pupils' feel their work has a purpose and is valued, and a shared understanding of what has been (and is being) learned.

This policy recognises that feedback in all its forms plays a vital role in assessment and learning, and especially in engaging the pupils with their own progress. It also recognises that poor quality feedback can have a detrimental effect on progress and esteem, and that the needs of the child are paramount in how we manage our feedback.

Other school policies which have relevance to this policy are:

- All curriculum policies
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment for Learning
- Assessment of Learning

- Homework Policy
- SEN Disability and Inclusion Policy
- Equal Opportunities

4. How this policy sits within the vision and values of the school

Within the positive and inclusive environment of our Community school, the following overarching statements will be integral in the process of feeding back to pupils about their learning:

- We will expect everyone in the school community to value achievement and to use their talents to the full.
- We place great emphasis on the personal and social development of our children through adult role models.
- We will provide a safe, caring environment which values the feelings and beliefs of others within the school and wider community.

5. Equal opportunities statement

Heathcoat Community Primary School is committed towards equal opportunities in all aspects of school life. All resources used in teaching and learning will support this commitment.

6. Content

Key definitions

For the rest of this document, the key terms are:

- **Feedback** – how we make sense of ourselves in relation to the information we receive (and give to) others within all our interactions with them. It is not just a matter of saying what was right or wrong, but extends to all our conversations about learning. We recognise feedback to be a two way process, and may involve any combination of teachers and pupils feeding back to each other, including peer and self assessment.
- **Oral Feedback** – feedback which is not recorded but communicated purposefully through words and gestures, etc. This takes place as part of normal daily interactions, and could be defined as talking about learning.
- **Learning Conference** – formalised oral feedback, where teacher and pupil spend allotted time in dialogue about the pupil's learning, as distinct from brief ongoing conversations about learning.

- **Written Feedback** – whereby this is formalised and recorded, often in relation to a child’s piece of work. Acknowledgement / code-based marking is a small part of this process, and has its place within a wider framework shared below.
- **Classroom Climate** – the general working atmosphere in which all the feedback takes place. Good feedback contributes to a positive climate, and vice versa.

Principles

We believe all feedback should be:

- **Child-centred** – as recipient or agent of the feedback. Feedback is unlikely to be effective if it doesn’t involve the pupil, and isn’t made explicitly with the pupil in mind.
- **Formative** – that is, leading to future learning. Feedback should move pupils forward, not leave them where they are, and should necessarily reflect the past, present and future. In other words, within feedback there should be room for feed-forward.
- **Constructive** – so that when mistakes have been made, pupils are shown what was wrong and how improvements can be achieved.
- **Sensitive** – remembering the feelings and vulnerabilities of learners, and the implicit trust placed by them in adults reading and marking their work, or fielding their answers to questions.
- **Challenging** – without being critical and demeaning. Written and oral comments have huge impact on how pupils see themselves.
- **Differentiated** – reflecting the diverse needs within our school. While all pupils need feedback on a daily basis, not all need to receive it in the same way.
- **Consistent** – so that children receive good quality feedback from *all* the adults they meet, and that progress is not interrupted, say, by lack of feedback in one year group, or during one term within a year group.
- **Time-effective** –in terms of making the process of feeding back manageable for staff, and allowing time for pupils to respond appropriately, while ensuring no time is wasted.
- **Proportional** – both to the extent of the work being marked, and to the potential impact of the feedback. In other words, a short task might need less feedback than a long task, and work which lays the foundation for subsequent learning will need more detailed feedback than discrete tasks.
- **Specific** – that is, not resorting to meaningless platitudes, and focussing wherever possible on the learning that has taken (or is taking, or will take) place. Feedback means more if it relates to a specific achievement (e.g. ‘I like the way you have used that connective to extend your sentence’) rather than broad considerations (e.g. ‘That’s a good sentence’).
- **Fresh** – taking place as soon as possible after learning has taken place (or even during the learning itself).

Nothing in this policy assumes that all feedback will be positive, other than to strive for positive benefits stemming from the process of feeding back.

Protocols

There now follows guidance for staff on each of the aspects of feedback, with reference to the key principles outlined above.

Unintentional Feedback

All staff are advised to monitor and carefully manage their unintentional feedback, to ensure that pupils receive positive messages about themselves and their learning, and to ensure that message we mean to get across is not distorted because of these other considerations.

Staff should recognise and especially look out for these key areas, which are potentially harmful to the classroom climate and to pupil esteem:

- Humour and sarcasm (common sense dictates that humour has its place in the classroom, but its potential for unintentional feedback cannot be overstated).
- Eye contact
- Body posture and body language
- Interrupting children or finishing their sentences
- Tone of voice (e.g. patronising, aggressive, irritated, etc.)
- Choice of vocabulary (e.g. "You always..." or "You never...")
- Not choosing certain pupils to answer
- Not acknowledging pupil responses
- Not allowing thinking time, especially for those who find speaking aloud difficult
- Not listening to pupils' responses
- Not demonstrating that we are listening
- Giving answers a flat 'no' without explaining why
- Poor manners

When monitoring ourselves in relation to these things, it is important to remember that young children will not always feedback to us about their feelings in relation to these things, but they could still be having an impact. A positive, safe classroom climate is vital and is cultivated primarily by the adult and his/her manner with the children.

Oral Feedback

Our ongoing classroom dialogue should be learning focused and purposeful. Feedback should ideally take place during learning, or as soon as possible afterwards, within the normal classroom setting. Where more time is required, such as for learning conferences,

the timetable should be adjusted to make room for this so that the conversation is not interrupted. Such adjustments could include giving feedback for one Curriculum area during the children's independent work in another curriculum area. For example, during independent art activities the teacher could work with individuals or small group looking at work produced previously during a writing task.

It is good practice to check that pupils have understood their feedback, or, when pupils are giving feedback to the adult, that you have correctly understood what they wanted to say. This keeps it a two-way process and is more likely to lead to an embedding of both the learning and the feedback.

Where a record of the oral feedback provides helpful assessment evidence for use at a later date, it should be recorded, for example "We talked about the importance of using connectives." Such recordings also help teachers to make APP judgements as they specify the level of support a child has required in order to have produced that quality of work. Oral feedback does not always need to be recorded, but we do need to record that it has taken place, using the code OFG.

Where children have commented on your oral feedback, it is preferable to record verbatim (where possible) what has been said, rather than to paraphrase, as this also forms useful assessment evidence.

Learning conferences should take place half termly, as part of the assessment cycle, with the purpose of engaging pupils with their own tracking and ensuring they 'own' their targets. Pupils will be given at least 10 minutes each to talk about their attainment and progress, and discuss their next steps with their teacher. This should take place within curriculum time. Clear but brief records will be kept in SPTO (in each child's Skills Diary) of what has been discussed at these meetings.

When peer assessment takes place orally, children should be taught to respect the feelings of both the one feeding back and the one receiving feedback, and to focus on the learning with specific comments. Where practice is good this is a powerful feedback tool.

Self Assessment

Pupils' self assessment should follow all the principles noted earlier. At its best, self assessment can be very motivational and lead to good future learning, as some learners respond best to the feedback they give themselves.

The ability to reflect accurately is a skill which must be taught, and the pupils tend to be overgenerous or overcritical, depending on their personality. Where necessary, prompt questions should be provided, and, as with other forms of feedback, there should be an element of action as a result of this form of assessment.

Ways of supporting self assessment include:

- Use of smiles, ticks or 'marks out of ten' next to a learning intention
- Using success criteria as a checklist
- Self-levelling against of the some APP criteria
- Thumbs up and down during a plenary

Peer Assessment

Though this has been mentioned in relation to oral feedback, it is important to emphasise both the importance and sensitivity of peer-to-peer feedback. Pupils of all ages enjoy this activity, and as part of a strong and positive classroom climate it can be very effective.

Children must be trained to act as coaches rather than critics, as modelled by the adults coaching and supporting them. Peer feedback may involve mark-making or commenting in relation to a pupils' work, though it is preferable if the learner annotates his/her own work while working with an assessment partner.

Peer feedback should always focus on established and objective success criteria, thus being evaluative not comparative. In other words, pupils are to compare each others' work to the neutral standard, not to their own.

Where peer feedback has taken place, it should be dated and initialled, so that others reviewing the book know who has provided the feedback.

Acknowledgement Marking

We recognise that code-based acknowledgement marking has its place, and, where appropriate, we will use the codes below:

✓	correct answer
•	incorrect answer – try again
Sp	spelling error – please correct (unless the correct answer is supplied by the teacher in the margin)
Gr	grammatical error – please correct (unless the correct answer is supplied by the teacher in the margin)
^	word left out – please insert
//	new paragraph needed
O	circled punctuation missing / incorrect – please correct
?	I don't understand this – please explain it to me.
OFG	Oral feedback given (i.e. during the lesson)

Appropriate situations for acknowledgement marking include:

- Practice-type questions, e.g. lists of simple recall calculations, spelling activities
- Work that is self or peer marked, including some homework
- Work resulting in a score, such as a times tables test

However, it should be noted that even here, the emphasis is on pupil response, and pupils should be given the opportunity to make the appropriate changes and have them rechecked. As a general rule, marks should only be made which relate to the purpose of the task, so spelling would not be marked for a punctuation exercise, and vice-versa.

There is a place for a minimal amount of acknowledgement marking to support written feedback, but only where this supports the main thrust of the written feedback. In any case, no more than half a dozen acknowledgement marks should be used with any one piece of written work.

Annotations

As well as feeding back to the pupil, teachers have a duty to annotate work as part of preparing a body of assessment evidence for later use.

A key strand of this is recording the circumstances in which the work was completed, so that when reviewing books it is clear what level of support was available during the completion of the task. The following codes will be used throughout the school, as appropriate, in the top right-hand corner of the page:

1:1	Individual support necessary to complete task
GG	Guided group work
SG	Supported group work
IG	Independent group work
IND	Child worked independently
CDA	Child-directed activity
TDA	Teacher-directed activity

Other annotations (appropriate to the task) may include:

- References to APP criteria met
- Highlighted examples of strong features within the work, e.g. 'ambitious vocabulary' or 'variety of connectives'
- Verbatim statements made by pupils in response to oral feedback, or to explain their work
- A summary of the activity (i.e. for guided work), which may be stuck in, rather than annotated

Ways of annotating include:

- Circling
- Highlighting
- Underlining
- Square-brackets
- Arrows

As with acknowledgement marking, it is important to keep annotations succinct and to avoid defacing pupils' work unnecessarily.

Written Feedback

It is expected that all pupils will have access to written and oral feedback, and we believe that the best approach to feeding back to pupils is to maintain a healthy balance. It is also expected that the ratio of oral to written feedback will change as pupils move through the school, in keeping with their ability to read and respond to written comments.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, written feedback should be brief, and ideally make use of vocabulary within pupils' range. However, as with the sharing of learning intentions, we do not believe pupils should be shielded from ambitious vocabulary, so long as it is read and explained to them. Consequently, written feedback at this stage will take the form of short written statements or codes, such as a smiley face to comment on attitude/effort, and a star (or number of stars) to show achievement against the learning intention. For example:



You engaged with the task and worked hard, with a confident attitude.



You understood what you had to do, and met your learning intention.

As children progress through the school, written comments will play a greater part in this process. All comments should be in keeping with the key principles outlined earlier, and, like the EYFS, feedback should take account of pupils' levels of vocabulary and understanding.

The process for all subjects is as follows:

1. Read the work carefully, noting evidence that the Learning Intention has been met, and building up a picture of what needs clarifying or improving.
2. The first part of the written feedback should briefly emphasise what has been achieved, in relation to the success criteria, e.g. 'I liked the way you described the character – it really helped me 'see' him.' or 'You were right to choose the grid method strategy for this word problem.' However low the achievement, the achievement should be celebrated. This feedback should be written in purple.
3. The second part of the written feedback is the priority and must give the pupil something to do, in relation to the Learning Intention. This should be written on a separate line and indicated by the underlined words 'Now' or 'Next' and a colon. This feedback should be written in green.
4. Pupils have time to read the written feedback and act upon it.
5. Pupils' further action is marked, with acknowledgement marking or written feedback as appropriate.

This further action should be achievable for the pupil without further explanation, and within a short amount of time (e.g. 5 or 10 minutes). You might, for example:

- ask for a sentence to be re-written, e.g. 'Re-write this sentence to make the room sound more creepy.'

- ask for a method or word-choice to be explained, e.g. ‘Can you show me how you worked this out.’
- ask for vocabulary choice to be improved, e.g. ‘Can you think of five other adjectives to describe the sea?’
- ask for an unfinished sentence or calculation to be concluded, e.g. ‘Make your ending as powerful as your opening.’
- ask a supplementary question to extend learning, e.g. ‘Which other animals have a similar life cycle?’
- check work has been really understood, e.g. ‘Can you show me another way of doing this or draw me an image?’

For some pupils, additional support will be required, either in reading the comments or acting upon them. In some cases you might provide word choices to be used, or give other forms of scaffolding for the pupil to use in their response.

We recognise that written feedback is a necessarily lengthy process, but assert that its impact outweighs its downfalls. Our expectation is that this will be a regular part of pupils’ learning.

Therefore, written feedback should always be used when:

- No oral feedback has been given
- Oral feedback did not lead to further action
- Acknowledgement marking is insufficient in itself to move the learning forward

Other procedural matters

Here is a checklist of other items which fall under the remit of this policy:

<i>Pens</i>	All written feedback and annotations should be carried out using purple and green pens, in order to differentiate feedback from the pupils’ own mark-making/writing. Purple pens are used where marking reflects upon what the child has done. Green pens are used to explicitly state what needs to be done next.
<i>Initials</i>	All written comments should be initialled, so that it is clear who has written them.
<i>TA’s</i>	TA’s have a vital role to play with regards to feedback as part of the general classroom climate. Teachers have responsibility for feedback given by TAs and they need to work closely with and monitor the quality and quantity of feedback being given.
<i>Presentation</i>	Written comments should only be used about presentation, handwriting or layout when this was the focus of the activity. If there are ongoing concerns about this they should be addressed to the child orally.

<i>Handwriting</i>	Teachers' writing, not pupils' – it is vital that pupils can read teachers' comments and also see a style of joined up handwriting to which they can aspire. Comments should, where possible, be written on the line and with respect to margins (as we would expect from the pupils).
<i>Pronouns</i>	It is preferable to use 'I' and 'You' within written feedback to maintain the appropriate conversational tone. Children's names are better used in oral feedback, as these seem more formal when written down.
<i>Vocabulary</i>	Written feedback should be written using a vocabulary which is accessible to the children, but also demonstrates a standard of writing to which the children can aspire. If this means some children need their feedback read to them, provision should be made for this.
<i>Rewards</i>	Use of stickers and house points in relation to pupils' work should be done at the teachers' discretion in consideration of what will best motivate pupils in their learning. These can be given literally (in the case of a sticker), orally or in writing.
<i>Supply teachers</i>	In order to maintain a consistently high standard of feedback, supply teachers will be requested to use a mixture of oral feedback and acknowledgement marking only, unless they have read and agreed to abide by the principles and protocols described above.

7. Organisation

This policy will be shared with and adhered to by all staff, including those covering PPA and regular supply teachers. A copy of the Marking Code will be displayed in Key Stage 2 classrooms for the children's reference, and will be explained at the beginning of each academic year.

8. Dissemination of the policy

All staff members and governors will have access to a copy of this policy.
 A hard copy will be available in the staff room.
 Electronic copies will be available on the school's IT systems.
 Copies will be available to view at the secretary's office upon request by parents and carers.

9. Monitoring and evaluation of the policy

All feedback will be monitored by SLT through Performance Management lesson observations and work scrutinies on a regular basis. Results of this will be reported to governors through the Headteacher's report.

Pupils will have opportunities to comment on the quality of feedback they receive as part of their regular pupil consultation activities.

10. Date for review of the policy

The policy will be reviewed bi-annually, using a consultative process which identifies teacher and whole staff; pupil and governor feedback.

Signed:

Head teacher

Date

Chair of Governors

Date