



Marking update - November 2016

Staff meeting item 30/11/16

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.”

In search of evidence

Teacher and author Sue Cowley says the problem began with the requirement to produce evidence. “I think this happened when Ofsted said they would no longer specify the teaching methods that had to be used, or grade teaching, but that they wanted to see evidence of **‘progress’**.”

“The teachers I work with worry most about this – how do they provide evidence of progress in a way that Ofsted will find acceptable? This then seems to get translated into ‘Write a lot in the children’s books to show it.’”

So just what can be done now to produce what The Workload Review deemed a **“meaningful, manageable and motivating”** approach to marking?

“We still need to show children that we look at their individual work, but we need a balance of ‘tick-and-flick’ and marking for specific errors,” Cowley continues. *“You can’t close mark everything, and you don’t need to mark everything. But we still need to make marks on children’s writing, not least because it’s an acknowledgement of their effort.”*

Matt Pinkett, a head of English at a school in Surrey, says a smarter way of marking is essential. “Rather than scrawling endless comments over 30 books, I now write

down things the class do well – or not so well – on a crib sheet of A3 paper and feed this back verbally to the class. This means I only need to write one target per student. And this I'll only do once a half term. Students still improve.”

In a recent report on the topic, the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) says **school leadership teams must recognise that it's unfeasible to “deep mark” every piece of work, or to correct every accuracy mistake. Likewise, grading every piece of work is seen as excessive and even counterproductive, as students can end up concentrating on the grade rather than formative comments.**

The report also advocates marking only the final draft of work, after students have attempted to correct their own accuracy errors through more **purposeful self and peer assessment.**

Their views are echoed by leading researchers on learning such as [John Hattie](#) and [Robert Bjork](#), who have written extensively about making feedback more purposeful. But it seems some senior leadership teams haven't got the message.

Pinkett agrees: “Ofsted have been trying to bust myths for years, but is isn't getting through. [Schools](#) need to actively engage with the new inspection guidance and relay the information to staff on the ground.”

Our response at All Saints Upton :

- Endeavour to make all marking meaningful , manageable and motivating
- Progress to be celebrated and evidenced in 'well-managed' books
- Purposeful self and peer assessment periods need to be encouraged and increased
- A balance of tick and flick and marking for specific errors
- Everything does not have to be marked but there does need to be a certain 'teacher presence' in the children's books
- Creativity in marking needs to be enabled - class targets example and A3 feedback sheet

There is a book scrutiny next week to monitor the current standard of our books and for the SLT to discuss best next steps.

Chris McConnell