

How effective is our use of whole-class feedback in English at raising writing standards?

ELP case study at Greenwood Primary School

Spirals of Enquiry: How effective is our use of whole-class feedback in English at raising writing standards?

School/Context

Three-form entry primary school in Ealing, successful Ofsted, external reviews and outcomes-combined with an outward-facing approach. 69% EAL, 32% FSM and mobility. We feel that we are in a strong position; however, we are keen to develop pupil and teacher agency- as well as the use of research to further strengthen our practice. The whole school is a learning community- adults included! ?

Key points

- We have recently introduced a new method of whole-class feedback (no written marking). This has been positive in terms of reducing teacher workload.
- However, after a year or so, we were keen to actually measure the impact that it is having on the children and their progress. Is the new approach effective in improving outcomes?
- Bottom 20%/borderline children were selected to be spoken to by class teachers/SLT members/support staff. As writing is on our school improvement plan, we decided to shape the questions around feedback in writing.
- After the interviews, we then presented our findings and, alongside Clare, found research that could be used to inform our practice (mainly around adaptive teaching and metacognition).
- Using the research, teachers decided the focus and trialled research-based ideas to develop their practice and support these children (for half a term)
- During a staff meeting, phases worked together to discuss the impact of their research and how this has developed practice in the classroom. They created a presentation to share with the rest of the school.
- Finally, teachers will work together to look at research from the Education Endowment Foundation regarding feedback. Using the recommendations, staff will focus on how to support borderline writers by refining the feedback procedures in place. Using the outcomes of this research, adaptations to our feedback policy will be trialled in the next academic year. After that, the feedback policy will be reviewed and refined.

Purpose

The school recognises the significance of adaptive teaching and feedback in securing the very best outcomes. We recognise the value of less written marking and how whole-class feedback can address misconceptions and enhance learning 'in the moment'. However, in our quest to raise outcomes and give our pupils the best chances, we recognise that borderline children are a priority as there is more of a risk for them not to achieve based on different contextual issues. As the feedback process is still relatively new, the school sought to obtain evidence of its impact. Based on the feedback, we would then use research to inform best practice- empowered teacher agency and staff being facilitators of change.

What were your reasons for doing this work?

- Recently introduced whole-class feedback
- Develop pupil, and teacher, agency
- Developing teachers as adaptive practitioners and solution seekers within their classrooms
- Involvement of support staff to value the contributions they make
- We wanted an evidence-based approach that would allow for multiple stakeholders to support school improvement

Who were you targeting?

Borderline writers/bottom 20% children

What were your success criteria?

- Children would be able to name adults who believed in them
- Children would be able to talk about the different types of feedback they receive
- Children would be aware of how to improve in their written work
- Teachers will be empowered as solution seekers and agents of change
- Strategic direction would be further informed by staff and pupil agency
- Feedback will ultimately impact on standards

What did you do? (Detail- if you used Spirals explain the process here from scanning onwards)

We co-constructed 2 half day inset with Clare Rees and planned follow up sessions to support the process, including staff presentations.

Scanning

All teachers, support staff and senior leaders completed a questionnaire with targeted children- using the same questions. Specific children were targeted- bottom 20% and borderline WTS/EXS writers. Staff were given time to complete questionnaires to ensure evidence was ready to share.

In EYFS, staff were given the Leuven Scale to make observations during continuous provision. The questionnaire showed us that the children spoke positively about feedback (highlighting, purple pen, oracy etc) and adults who believed in them. However, children were less clear discussing the actual skills that they have used well and what they need to improve on.

Focusing

Based on the scanning, we identified that adaptive teaching and metacognition were key themes that emerged as a priority. Our findings led us to use Alex Quigley's research on the '4S's- scaffold, scale, structure, style'. Teachers then worked in phases to review this research and use the next half term to trial adaptive teaching strategies within their classrooms.

Developing a hunch

Teachers felt happy with the whole-class feedback method; they discussed adaptive teaching and reviewed what they believe is working well and how practice can be refined to make feedback in English even stronger. For example, teachers felt that perhaps there was too much scaffolding in place for these borderline writers and that, as a collective, they needed to adapt practice to ensure the highest expectations for all groups of learners. Furthermore, in EYFS, staff felt that flexible grouping needed to be used more to ensure stronger progress in writing- which they have already seen.

Developing new learning

After six weeks of trialling different adaptive teaching strategies within the classroom, staff were asked to work in phases and present their findings. Positives that staff shared included: use of flexible grouping, peer mentoring to support borderline writers, removal of excessive scaffolding during lessons, pre-teaching of subject-specific vocabulary, and use of support staff, to allow access for all learners. Overall, staff felt that these strategies were working well and applicable across the entire curriculum.

Taking action

Based on the trial period, teachers will then spend an INSET day researching effective feedback from the Education Endowment Foundation. Phases will look at the key recommendations in the guidance report and explore how to refine feedback even further to support the progress of all learners. Staff will implement new feedback initiatives in the new academic year- with view to reviewing and updating feedback as and where necessary.

Checking

As the approaches embed, staff will go back to the pupils and review the impact of any new feedback strategies. Additionally, they will share good practice with the all staff and identify common trends.

What has been the impact on pupils?

- Less scaffolding in place has led to even higher expectations in the classroom
- Children feel encouraged and motivated by working with a range of peers
- Peer editing has supported children in understanding feedback and how to improve

What has been the impact on teaching/ leadership? Can you capture a few quotes?

- Teachers taking more ownership over what works in their classroom
- Even more sharing of good practice within, and across, phases
- All staff are motivated to use research to inform next year's practice and the drive for high-quality feedback- ultimately leading to better outcomes

Y5 teacher: 'It has been very good because I have removed some of the resources I was using before, which meant that there were higher expectations for certain groups of children.'

YR Teacher: 'By refining adaptive teaching and flexible grouping, we have seen higher expectations in writing and it has given lower-attaining children a hunger to write more.'

KS1 Teaching Assistant: 'Pre-teaching, and small group work, has created an atmosphere where high expectations for subject-specific vocabulary permeates the classroom. They are expected to use it- and they CAN use it!'

How have you shared your learning with others?

AHTs/DHT presented our research project to different Ealing forums to demonstrate the success. Our phases all presented about the process and research-informed practice that is working in their classrooms. We hope that these can be shared through middle leader networks to encourage and motivate other teachers.

Useful resources, websites, PowerPoints

- [Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/teacher-feedback-to-improve-pupil-learning/)
- [Adaptive Teaching: Scaffolds, Scale, Structure and Style \(alexquigley.co.uk\)](https://www.alexquigley.co.uk/adaptive-teaching-scaffolds-scale-structure-and-style/)
- [What Is the Leuven Scale and How to Use it \(learningjournals.co.uk\)](https://www.learningjournals.co.uk/what-is-the-leuven-scale-and-how-to-use-it/)

Each phase also produced PowerPoint presentations to show the impact of the project and the next steps (can be sent upon request).

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