Saffron Walden County High School

Assessment and Feedback Policy

Our Rationale

"Providing high-quality feedback to pupils is integral to effective teaching. Equally, gathering feedback on how well pupils have learned a topic is important in enabling teachers to address any misunderstanding and provide the right level of challenge in future lessons."

EEF (2018) Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress

Effective assessment and quality feedback are an essential part of high-quality teaching. Assessment takes many forms and serves many purposes. At Saffron Walden County High School, we recognise that effective assessment and feedback practice should not just rely on evidence of feedback in books but aspire for high quality assessment in all its forms, including effective formative feedback in lessons.

The guiding principles that underpin our approach to assessment are:

- Our starting point is **high-quality teaching and instruction** based on a **well-designed curriculum**. High-quality teaching includes effective formative assessment strategies.
- Assessment and feedback should be **timed appropriately**, **move learning forward** and **target specific gaps** in understanding.
- Teachers should plan for how students will **receive and use feedback**, including planning time for students to act on marking and feedback, often called 'close the gap' in SWCHS.
- Written marking **should be manageable** not impact negatively on workload.

Based on: Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning, EEF (2021)

The Role of the Subject Leader

Subject leaders play a key role in deciding what assessment practice is most effective in their subject. Subject leaders and collegiate teams will decide the tasks that should be used to assess progress in any given curriculum plan with an understanding of the overall assessment cycles in school to avoid pinch points. Subject leaders will work with teams to develop effective forms of feedback that help move students forward.

To ensure that summative assessment activities are efficient and effective the subject lead should consider the following:

- Does the assessment measure the important parts of the curriculum? Do the outcomes help us measure how well students have understood the curriculum?
- What is the purpose of the assessment and is it the right assessment to achieve that purpose? How does the assessment fit in with other assessments over time to give a picture of student performance?
- Does the assessment improve learning as well as measure progress?
- How will the student interact with the assessment to make further progress?

Subject leads will also consider how the use of centrally planned marking sheets can be used to speed up marking time without impacting on the principles above.

In the Lesson

High-quality teaching makes effective use of formative assessment practice as a feedback loop to improve teaching and learning.

'It's vital that, as teachers, we are getting as much feedback from our pupils as we can. … We should be constantly wondering, "How's it going? How well have I explained this? Are they making sense of it?" and then soliciting information to allow us to answer those questions.'

Tom Sherrington (2019) Rosenshine's Principles in Action

Effective Questioning

Teachers should use effective questions and best evidence questioning practice as part of high-quality teaching. This includes:

- The climate for learning through lesson routines ensure that all students are thinking and engaged. Teachers should seek to ensure that 'no hands up' is the norm.
- Teachers should pose questions and then give thinking time or use practices such as 'think, pair, share' to give all students time to consider their answer and think more deeply.
- Teachers should seek to elicit a range of answers from many students. Teachers could consider the use of 'show me boards' to get feedback from the whole class.
- Further strategies for questioning and response practice are in the Teaching and Learning Handbook.

Verbal Feedback

"Spoken feedback is valued by teachers because it is consistent with their views of good feedback, namely that it … is possible to tune spoken feedback to the student based on their understanding in the moment, that it focuses on next steps, and that it avoids some of the problems associated with written marking in terms of communication … It is further valued because of its connection to the personal relationship between student and teacher."

(Velda Elliott, et al., 2020).

Verbal feedback is most effective when it is:

- Appropriately timed
- Focussed on moving learning forward
- The teacher ensures that the feedback is actioned

In the classroom verbal feedback can be used to feedback at a whole class level, or at an individual level if the principles above are adhered to. There is no need to record that verbal feedback has taken place in books or folders.

Peer and Self-Assessment

Peer and self-assessment activities can be efficient, meaningful, and motivating if planned appropriately. Teachers will need to ensure that they effectively model and scaffold these activities for the assessment to have impact.

Live Marking

Live marking (marking books/on screen in the classroom) is a useful strategy to provide feedback if it is thoughtful and purposeful feedback that moves a learner forward. This strategy should only be used if it does not impact on the class environment.

Written Marking and Feedback

When undertaking written marking it is important to consider the evidence that underpins effective practice to ensure that it is a worthwhile investment of time and has the greatest impact on student outcomes. Written feedback is one form of assessment but may not always be the most effective form of feedback and can have the greatest impact on workload.

For these practices to be effective and impact on pupil progress, whilst not negatively impacting on workload, we will ensure that all our written assessment activities are measured against the 'Four Pillars of Assessment' (Evidence Based Education, 2018):

1. What is the **purpose** of the assessment and what will we do with the information?
2. How **reliable** is the assessment? Is it giving us a true picture of pupil's understanding?
3. How **valid** is the assessment? How much can we trust the conclusions we make following the assessment?
4. How much **value** does the assessment provide? What is the impact of the chosen assessment on pupil learning and staff workload?

To maximise the impact of written marking, the following principles should be followed:

- Before writing feedback on a student's work, the teacher should **plan in time for that work to be self-evaluated** and revised, using scaffolds and prompts where appropriate.
- Written comments are most useful when they are **focussed on misconceptions rather than mistakes.**
- Coded marking may be the most appropriate form of written feedback if there is a s**hared understanding of the encoding,** that is **explicitly taught by the teacher**. Teachers may ask students to transcribe the coded mark into a full sentence if appropriate for future clarity.

Evidence suggests that some written feedback practices have little/ no impact on student outcomes and should be avoided to make marking time count:

- Acknowledgement marking, though the use of stamps for this purpose to acknowledge some homework tasks is encouraged over written comments.
- Targets that are not specific and actionable.
- Praise that is not precise.
- Careless mistakes should be identified but not corrected.
- Giving grades on work should be avoided as this can distract from formative comments. However, in KS3 band descriptions may be appropriate.

Whole Class Feedback

There may be some assessments that lend themselves to whole class feedback. This strategy reduces time spent away from the lesson on written marking. This could involve making a summary sheet for the teacher to make notes. These form part of planning future teaching to allow teachers to re-teach, address specific misconceptions, or provide further support or challenge as appropriate.

Exam Papers

Communicating grades on individual papers should be avoided. Basing performance on a single grade can be misleading for students and parents. Teachers should frontload the return of papers by helping students to understand what a given percentage means in terms of performance for their subject. For example, a 50% score in history may be good but in other subjects indicate a much poorer performance. Teachers should communicate over time what performance in each grade looks like in a subject to support a student's understanding of their progress.

Presentation and Literacy

All students should have a sticker on their books with the expectations for presentation of work. Teachers should use the follow up 'book warning' sticker if presentation is not to the standard expected, rather than spend time writing about presentation in books.

To reduce workload, students should be encouraged to proofread work to correct literacy mistakes. To aid consistency, teachers could use the SPACE model to support students complete this process (see the Teaching and Learning Handbook for more information). English and Humanities should use the SPACE codes when marking to indicate the first 5 literacy errors and then time should be provided to CTG and act on these mistakes.

Frequency of Written Marking

There is no expectation that every piece of written work will be marked. Subject leaders will outline in department handbooks the frequency of marking and identify in the curriculum planning where specific assessment tasks fall and how these will be recorded. Subject leads will use the guiding principles as outlined above to decide which tasks will serve the most purpose and have the most impact. Mock and exam papers count toward this marking load.

Quality Assurance and Professional Development

The quality of assessment will be captured through many mechanisms of area and whole school evaluation activities. These are not limited to, but could include:

- Book scrutiny at department, year, or whole school level
- External eyes such as the Fresh eye review, PPG SEND deep dives or SAT curriculum reviews
- Teaching and learning walks by area collegiate or SLT (Senior Leadership Team)
- A pupil voice activity using books/folders
- Lesson observations