



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

Research report

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Research topic

This report 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 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 trial was designed to ascertain the impact of an innovation designed to reduce marking on two outcomes: teacher workload (the primary outcome) and student outcomes (one of the secondary outcomes). Below is a brief description of the trial conditions:

- Teachers who were randomised to the intervention group replaced the provision of written formative feedback - through the marking of students' work - with a set of alternative feedback approaches delivered in class (detailed later in this report).
- Teachers in the control group continued with business as usual (marking work as per school policy, and detailed later in this report).

The trial finds a positive effect on the reduction of teacher workload, a positive affective effect on teachers' perceptions of their work, a sense of frustration amongst students, and no detectable impact (positive or negative) on student outcomes (although there are limitations to these findings, which are detailed towards the end of the report).

Review Group Recommendations

Below are the recommendations used to inform the research detailed in this document.

Teachers

- Seek to develop a range of assessment techniques to support their pedagogy.
- Actively review current practice to ensure marking adheres to the three principles in this report.

Researchers

- Research current marking methods deployed in schools.
- Work with schools to evaluate current marking and assessment practices in schools to promote good practice.

These recommendations were selected because they enabled a strong functional relationship between the researcher and teachers to develop. This relationship was initiated and led by the teachers, with the researcher acting in service of their needs and interests; this relationship is unusual in school-based research and, as such, warranted attention. Furthermore, only teachers are able truly to clarify what the three principles of marking outlined in the Review Group Recommendations – meaningful, manageable and motivating – mean in operation.

Approaches to reducing workload

The following approaches were developed by the team at Tarporley High School based on the recommendations in the review group report:

- Front end feedback – subject expertise was used to identify and anticipate student misconceptions or pitfalls associated with learning in advance of teaching; these are then addressed explicitly in class;
- Register feedback – at the start of the lesson (as the register is taken), individual students verbally share with the class a small section of work (as directed by the teacher); immediate feedback is given by the teacher (who also has a piece of information to shape next steps in the lesson or sequence of lessons);
- Strategic Sampling
 - Live Sampling: the teacher selects students' work at random and 'live marks' in front of the class (using a visualiser, or similar);
 - Sampling for Planning: the teacher selects three - five books and uses a five-minute 'flick' review (no marking) to inform next steps in the next sequence of teaching and learning.

How were these strategies developed?

These approaches were developed by teaching staff at Tarporley High School in light of a combination of research evidence and professional experience.

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. The authors' argument that written feedback can be effective is highly encouraging; it echoes what Steve Higgins at Durham University calls the 'Bananarama Principle': that 'it ain't what you do; it's the way that you do it.' Marking – as a form of feedback – could be effective under certain circumstances, so keeping this in mind is important.

Theory of change

The theory of change adopted in this project is presented graphically below:

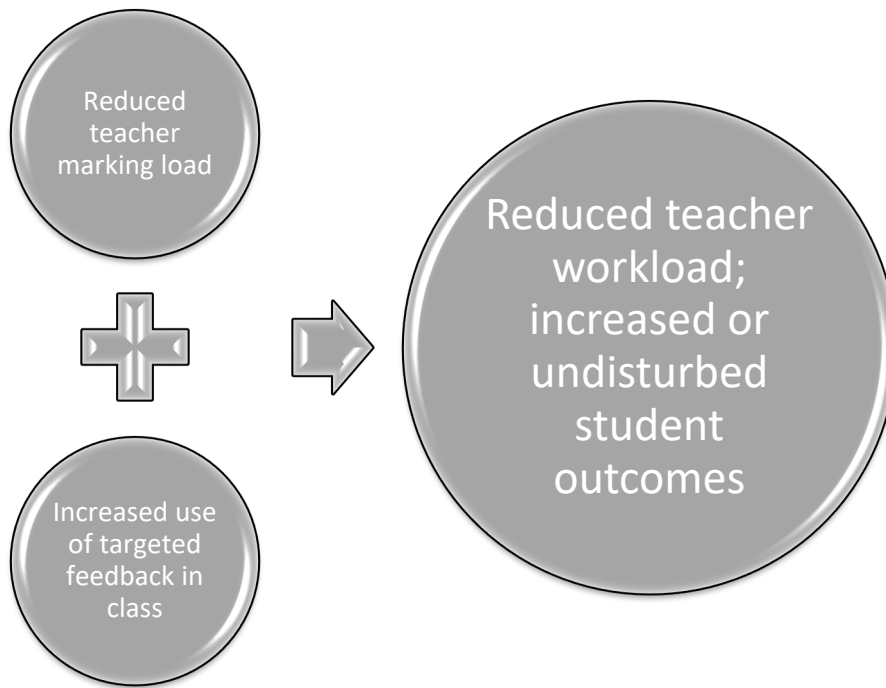


Figure 1: Theory of change

Investigating effectiveness of the intervention

The intervention under consideration in this project was considered to be a single entity: the combination of reducing marking and increasing verbal feedback in class (using the strategies designed by staff at Tarporley High School).

In order to investigate the effectiveness of the approach, a randomised controlled trial design was used. The following measures were used to understand more about the impact of the intervention:

Teacher-level

- Self-reported hours worked in a week (using the DfE Teacher Workload Survey as a template and comparator)
- Self-reported teacher self-efficacy (using the Ohio State Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001))
- Semi-structured interviews (convenience sample)

Student-level

- Achievement scores on common English assignments (examination-style questions)
- Semi-structured interviews (convenience sample)

Re-balancing feedback: overview

This section of the report begins by describing the composition of and chosen GCSE / A Level specifications for each English Department involved in the trial. Thereafter, details pertaining to the design of the trial are presented.

Helsby High School

At Helsby High School, there were twelve members of staff in the English Department at the time of the trial. Three were part time, one a year leader, two were RQTs and one a NQT.

Year 10 English was split into Language and Literature with classes taught in mixed ability groups; at the time of the trial, there were ten Year 10 classes working towards the AQA GCSEs in English Language and English Literature.

In Year 12, there were two Literature groups and one Language group; six teachers taught Year 12 classes in English. Students worked towards the Edexcel qualification for English Language A Level and AQA B for English Literature A Level.

Queen's Park High School (QPHS)

At QPHS there were five teachers in the English Department at the time of the trial: two Assistant Headteachers, one Curriculum Leader (on maternity leave during the trial) and two main scale teachers.

There were three English groups in Year 10: one more able set and two parallel mixed sets, all of which follow the AQA specification. In Year 12 there is one group of English Literature, and one English Language group, the former following AQA (A), and the latter following AQA.

Tarporley High School

There were twelve teachers in the English Department at the time of the trial; Year 10 classes were taught by nine teachers, and Year 12 classes by five teachers.

Year 10 were taught across two parallel bands – x and y. Students were set into four ability groups in each band: Set 1a (highest ability, targeted at Grades 6-9), Set 1b (high mid ability, targeted at Grades 5-7), Set 2a (Mid ability, targeted at Grades 3-6), Set 2b (low ability, targeted at Grades 2-4). Students worked towards the AQA GCSE in English Literature and English Language (all students are entered for both GCSE qualifications).

Year 12 was taught in mixed ability groups, with minimum GCSE achievement at C grade, but with students working across the whole ability range. Prior GCSE attainment ranged from A* GCSE to C grade GCSE. Students worked towards the AQA A English Literature and English Language A Level qualifications.

The intervention being trialled

The intervention trialled can be described in two parts:

1. 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.
2. 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).

The control condition

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 (detailed below in the Appendix 3 onward):

Tarporley High School

"The subject teacher is responsible for setting appropriate homework and for marking it regularly.

Curriculum Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all teachers in their Faculty are setting appropriate homework regularly and marking it. This should be checked as part of the Faculty self-evaluation process."¹

Helsby High School

KS3 / KS4 "All work will be looked at in exercise books by the teacher. This will be indicated by a tick to show that the page has been seen. SPaG will be highlighted using the correction code."

Some pieces will be peer assessed. This will be completed in green pen and signed by the student assessing the work. Teachers will initial when they have checked it.

Some pieces will be self-assessed. This will also be completed in green pen, and initialled by the student and by the teacher when they have checked it.

Some pieces will be marked by the teacher for a specific assessment objective. If this is the case, it will be indicated on the piece of work.

¹ Tarporley High School Homework Policy 2017 (see Appendix 3)

If verbal feedback is given on a piece, this will be indicated by either a stamp or VF.

Pre writing checklists may be given and will link to WWW and EBI.

When giving detailed written feedback each piece will have a WWW, EBI and MNS. This will either be written or a code may be given. If a code is given, the student will write the target down. The EBI and MNS should be clearly linked. (Detailed written feedback will be given at least once every two weeks.)

KS5: "Detailed written feedback will be given every two weeks. (Once a month per teacher.) This will include a summative comment and will identify targets. Comments and targets will be linked to the AOs and marks will be given based on the Examination Board marking grids. Students will have copies of the marking grids."²

Queen's Park High School

"The teacher will then, only once the student has completed their self-assessment, over-mark the work in red pen. The teacher is looking to validate the students' own judgements about their work and to correct any misconceptions about how they have performed against the success criteria for the task.

The teacher will then provide a brief written comment about the student's performance against the success criteria, the length and nature of which will be informed by the student's own perception of their performance.

The teacher will then set a success criteria linked target, this will take the form of an improvement task that the student can action.

Students must be afforded time to complete the improvement task immediately after the work has been returned, and this must be evidenced in their exercise book.

The teacher must then briefly acknowledge the completion of the improvement task, indicating how far this has led to improvement.

All subjects have integrated the SPAG strand into their KS3 Age Related Milestones, and so students and teachers need to ensure explicit reference is made to this element, by identifying where age-related spellings are incorrect. Teachers will identify the spelling; students will correct it as part of their response to feedback.

Timeframe:

In core subjects, students will receive this level of feedback twice per half-term.

In non-core subject, students will receive this level of feedback once per half-term.

² Helsby High School Feedback Policy 2017 (see Appendix 4)

Sixth Form:

Students in the Sixth Form will receive this level of feedback twice per half-term across all subjects who assess in this way.”³

Methods

Randomised controlled trial design

To ascertain the impact of the ‘Rebalancing feedback’ intervention on both teacher workload and student attainment, a randomised controlled trial design was used.

Recruitment

A convenience sample of three, geographically proximal secondary schools was created by staff from Tarporley High School making contact with colleagues. Schools and teachers within them volunteered for the trial, and were recruited before randomisation took place.

Randomisation

Randomisation was undertaken by Stuart Kime. 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.

To achieve a balance of intervention and control classes in each school, randomisation of classes was done within each of the three schools.

Pre-testing

No pre-test was given due to the time constraints imposed by the project’s schedule

Compliance

On-site visits were conducted (including interviews with convenience samples of students and teachers) in order to ascertain an impression of compliance with the intervention’s conditions. No evidence of non-compliance (as indicated by the marking of books) was found.

Post-testing

³ Queen’s Park High School Feedback Policy 2017 (see Appendix 5)

All groups in this trial were post-tested at (approximately) the same time and under exam conditions. Markers were blind to the group membership of each student, and:

All classes (in control and intervention groups) completed a 1-hour assessment.

It was agreed that students would be prepared consistently by having some class time annotating the given extract (approx. 1 lesson) but the final question would not be shared in advance of the assessment.

All students put their school centre number and candidate number on their response, and did not put their names on (to blind the assessment process). An assessment cover sheet was used to standardise the process.

The post-tests were blind marked (i.e. mixed up and distributed between teachers equally within each school, so no one marked post-tests from their own class).

Post-test marking was moderated within English departments, and then sent to Tarporley High School by 19th June 2017.

A process of verification (teachers not involved in the trial reviewing samples of marking) took place in the week beginning 20th June.

Due to the different year groups involved in this trial (Year 10 and Year 12), different post-test tasks had to be issued. Despite this difference, standardisation of task, task conditions and task assessment enable meaningful data to be derived from the post-test process. These differences and similarities will be reflected in the analysis of trial data, which uses intention to treat analysis initially, then looks at sub-group analysis thereafter.

All Literature assessments were so-called '**extract only**', removing the requirement for students to learn quotes for this assessment; this created parity with GCSE Language examination tasks where an extract is also studied.

Subject and Year	Question	Mark scheme
<p>Year 12 Literature Assessment: Week beginning 8th May</p>	<p>Helsby: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present the character of Iago (Act 3 scene 1)</p> <p>Tarporley: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present ideas about love?</p> <p>QPHS: How does Shakespeare use language to present the character of Iago in Act x, Scene y?</p>	<p>Paper 1 Specimen Mark Scheme LIT – Section A – use generic skills mark scheme (pages 7-10)</p> <p>Students receive a mark out of 25</p>
<p>Year 12 Language Assessment: Week beginning 8th May</p>	<p>Helsby: Year 12 Lang: How does the writer use language in text A to create meanings and representations?</p> <p>Tarporley: How does the writer use language in text A to create meanings and representations?</p>	<p>Use the Mark Scheme ‘MS Paper 1 A Level Language’</p> <p>Students receive a mark out of 25</p>
<p>Year 10 Literature Assessment: Week beginning 22nd May</p>	<p>QPHS: How does Shakespeare use language to present the character of Macbeth in Act V Scene V of the play?</p> <p>Tarporley: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present ideas about love in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>?</p> <p>Helsby: How does Shakespeare use language to present Macbeth’s character in this extract?</p>	<p>Use the ‘Mark Scheme GCSE Lang Lit’ which has been tailored for both subjects. Students receive a mark out of 30</p>
<p>Year 10 Language Assessment Week beginning 22nd May:</p> <p>(Use the same Section A extract from ‘AQA Reading Resource Booklet’ which has been pre-studied/annotated previously)</p>	<p>Helsby: How does the writer use language in this extract to engage the reader?</p> <p><u>This applies to Helsby only who have Language only classes</u></p>	<p>Use the ‘Mark Scheme GCSE Lang Lit’ which has been tailored for both subjects. Students receive a mark out of 30</p>

Figure 2: Post-test tasks by year group and subject

Tests were administered under exam-like conditions so that students could not be helped; they were marked by someone who was 'blind' to the group allocation, reducing the possibility of the marker consciously or unconsciously awarding higher scores to one group compared with the other. While it was not possible to ensure that students were blind to the nature of the intervention that they are receiving, it was possible to ensure that those responsible for marking the post-tests were blind to group allocation.

Primary outcome measure

The primary outcome measure was teachers' self-reported hours spent marking. Baseline data were collected at the start of the trial; data from the DfE Workload Survey (2016)⁴ were also used as a comparator.

Secondary outcome measures

One of the secondary outcomes was student attainment on GCSE and A Level English Language and English Literature questions. A second outcome was teachers' self-reported self-efficacy.

Outcome analysis

Analysis of trial data by comparing mean scores adjusted for baseline variables using regression-based methods offers one of the most efficient approaches in this instance. Where baseline covariates are available, these are used.

The analytic plan for this study calls for the following analyses to be done:

Intention to treat (ITT) analysis: this provides an indication of the effect of offering the intervention to teachers. Data are 'analysed as they were randomised' (class was the unit of randomisation, so this becomes the unit of analysis, i.e. the observation of interest in one of the secondary outcomes is class-level average attainment scores)

Sub-group analyses (impact evaluation) of by:

Year group;

Subject.

Textual analysis of focus group data (process evaluation).

A trial checklist is provided overleaf.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-survey-2016>

Trial Checklist

- 1. Has a sample size calculation been undertaken (to ensure trial is not too small)?**

No sample size calculation was conducted for this trial as it was deemed unnecessary for the purpose of this evaluation.

- 2. Has a primary outcome variable been specified (to avoid data driven outcome selection)?**

Yes. The primary outcome is teacher workload as measured by hours worked, and also explored in narrative data from focus groups.

- 3. Has trial been registered (to avoid publication bias)?**

No. Trial registration was considered early on, but the cost and time for this process were deemed prohibitive and the registration process unnecessary in this instance.

- 4. Have eligible individuals been identified within the school before randomisation (to avoid recruitment bias)?**

Yes.

- 5. Has pre-test been performed before randomisation (to avoid biased pre-test results)?**

No. A pre-test was not given due to time constraints at the beginning of the trial.

- 6. Has randomisation been done by an independent third party (concealed allocation to avoid allocation mishaps/subversion)?**

Yes. Randomisation was done by Stuart Kime, the evaluator.

- 7. Have post-tests/outcomes been undertaken independently and marked blindly (to avoid ascertainment bias)?**

Yes.

- 8. Has intention to treat analysis been done? To avoid selection bias being introduced.**

Yes.

- 9. Have the trial results been published (to avoid publication bias)?**

Yes.

Analysis

Primary outcome analysis

The primary outcome analysis focuses on teacher workload. It does this by means of analysis of self-reported hours spent marking per week during the trial period, as well as narrative data from teacher focus group discussions.

The chart showing impact on hours spent marking is shown below. 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. On the outcome measure, the intervention group reported substantially more hours spent marking than the control group (an average of 4.3 hours more). This difference, however, is too small to be statistically significant. In other words, it is very likely to have arisen by pure chance in a sample of this size.

Hours spent marking during the period of the trial (self-reported)

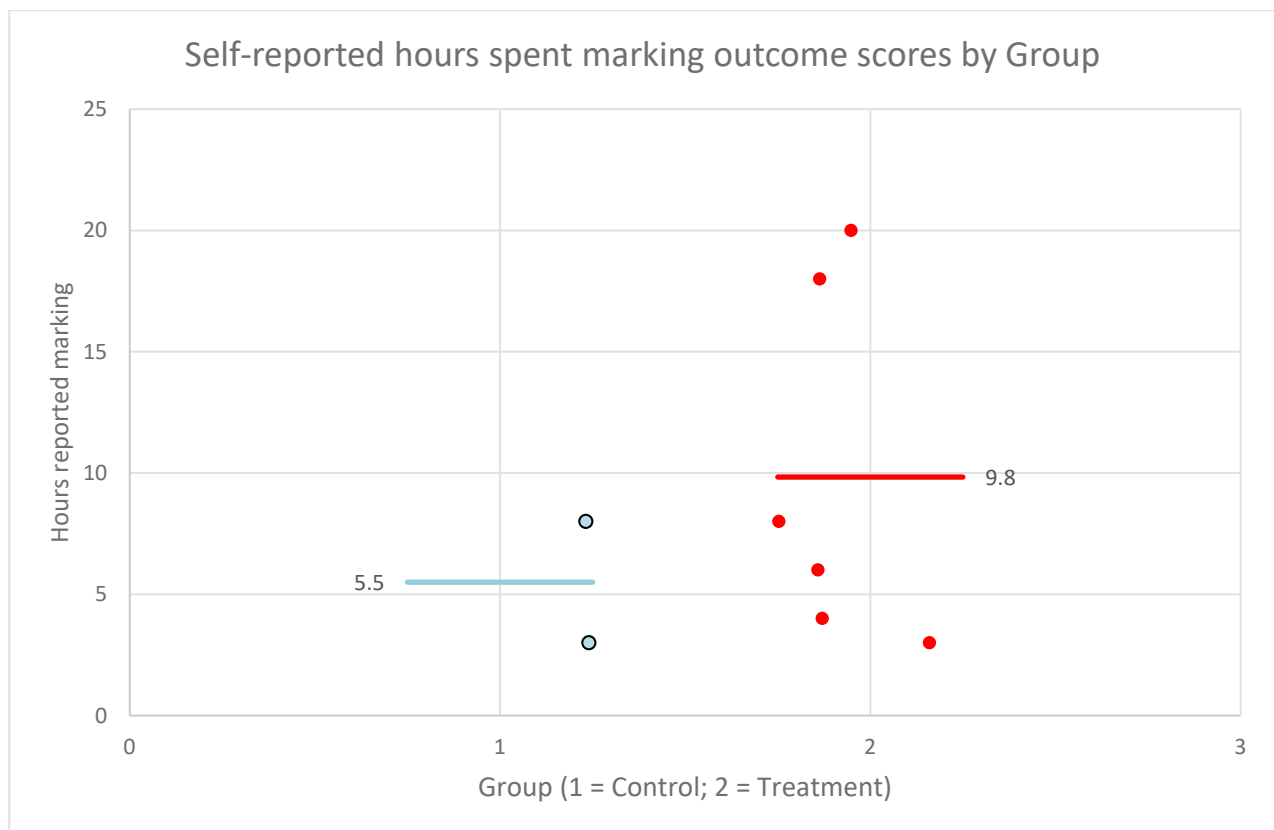


Figure 3: Hours spent marking by group

Statistics

	Number Allocated	Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	5	2	5.5	2.5
Group 2	9	6	9.833	6.694

	Outcome			p-value
	Diff.	Lower	Upper	
Mean difference in scores	4.33	-8.04	16.71	0.425
Standardised Mean Difference	0.70	-1.02	2.24	

When, however, one includes the narrative data from teacher focus groups conducted during the trial, the picture becomes clearer.

Analysis of teacher workload by means of focus group data

What did teachers in the intervention group do with the time they would have spent marking?

There was an indication from teachers involved in the intervention group that the ‘rebalancing feedback’ trial process had changed their perception of aspects of their work. As one teacher put it:

“I think I have found that the time I have worked has been out of a kind of want...it is more of ‘oh that would be really interesting’ or you stumble across something while you are doing something else. So 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, so I sit down and do a couple more hours planning or do a couple more hours researching around...makes it more pleasurable, definitely do.”

A teacher from a different school echoed this sentiment, saying:

“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. They have always been really good and will act on that feedback but I was not sure how much was working whereas now they are kind of thinking. In fact today, they have just done a midterm assessment and someone put a word in that was a bit and pupil was in the room and said, cos one of the words was vamoose, Miss we did a whole semantic field around that and we could have used a load of other words. The fact that he could remember semantic field was and the word we had used, it was nice. It is really going in.”

One teacher noted that “the positives have been everything has been so much quicker, students getting feedback so much quicker, instantly in the lesson or the next lesson. So basically everything is very much instant.”

The ‘rebalancing feedback’ strategies in action were highlighted by one teacher who was at pains to point out both the efficiency and effectiveness of the approaches:

“For example my Year 12, they did some work on Monday, I have dip sampled it, I have photographed a couple of them, I am going to the lesson after lunch, I will show them the work that I have dip sampled, photographed, put it on to a power point and we are going to mark it together as a class, I have read them but I have not marked them, they will get feedback, the rest of the class will have to do self-assessment of their own work using the mark scheme and they are then going to rewrite a section of it. That is the lesson after they have done the work. They can still see that I have read their work, I have looked at it and they acknowledge the fact that I am keeping my end of the bargain, but they are getting, I think, much better feedback, and it is making them much more reflective so when I have done that with my Year 10 language class it had made them think about what they are doing, rather than me think about what they are doing, they are thinking about it more. I find it more positive for me. In terms of my workload I have a Year 10 trawl next week and I am fantastic can we have a look at all this wonderful work that we have been doing in our new books. I am really proud of the work that we have been doing. I spoke to someone from the control group, Year 10 work trawl, all weekend marking, she is going to spend the whole weekend working.”

Equally, a colleague pointed out the very simple time-saving aspect of the intervention:

“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.”

One PGCE trainee was also keen to point out the perception of efficiency associated with the intervention:

“I am very conscious as a trainee that’s already a labour-intensive process and developing subject knowledge at the same time and thinking about how exactly to interact with those students and that time [spent not marking] immediately goes back into that.”

Guilt associated with not marking, a common theme in discussions with participating teachers, was something mentioned by the PGCE trainee:

“I have a sense of guilt about this. I think it is part because it is my PGCE year so I am surrounded by people who are up to their ears in marking, I do have that feeling of what am I missing, what might be slipping through the cracks, is there anything slipping the cracks, I am still reading their books and try to if I notice for example a misconception or someone has done something well I would try and weave that into subtly into whatever is being covered in subsequent lessons but there is that sense of anxiety am I short-changing them in some way by not putting a note or not putting a question or writing a comment because it is ingrained but at the same time there is that sense of you do free

up so much time how else could you be using that and how much more productively could you be using that and actually knowing what we do about whether students read marking and when they are responding to it how effective that response is would it be more useful to use that time to put something into place that could happen in a lesson or thinking about am I actually delivering the information that is going in for example.”

- **Timeliness of feedback to students**

As well as the timesaving that was seen by teachers, comments were also made about the effect of this on the timeliness of feedback to students. One teacher noted that under the ‘business as usual’ approach, the delays associated with marking every book (particularly in large classes) was problematic for students:

“I think that delay in time they kind of lost some of the information a bit somewhere.”

This was complimented by the same teacher stating that where student misconceptions occur, the speed with which these are addressed increased dramatically:

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

- **In-school accountability**

One of the threads of the focus group discussions with teachers that created animated responses was about the purpose of marking, and specifically, the end-user of the feedback given on the page. Some teachers talked about the motivational role of marking, while, inevitably, the role of in-school accountability came up as a topic, with teachers often mentioning that their marking was, in essence, a proxy for their own professionalism: if the book has been marked, there is evidence of the job of a teacher being done.

Guilt, again, came up as a theme, this time in association with student motivation, with one teacher saying:

“I feel guilty; they don’t know I have looked at their books because I have not put a mark on the work. I have looked at their work, I know how they are doing, so I am going to tailor their learning for it but I have not recorded that on a page, so how do they know I have done that? Will they still have faith in me? Will they put as much effort in? So I make that explicit to them.”

Adding to this, the teacher turned their attention to the perception of those scrutinising students’ books:

“The other thing - and this is my own issue - we give verbal feedback as we go around the class, I sit with a student and say ‘Right let’s look at the first paragraph, you need to do this, this and this. Do you understand what you need to do? Right, have another go but this in it.’ I come back 5 minutes later, they have done it and their second paragraph is so much better but I know when we have the dreaded work trawl, there is no way the person doing the work trawl is going to sit read those two paragraphs, see the improvement in the second one and think ah Teacher X has made an intervention here.

Before I could have written in there ‘verbal feedback given’ and they would open the book and think ‘Ah! I can see what he has done there’. The students got what they needed out of that process, I have got what I needed out of that process, leadership haven’t and so much of our job is justifying ourselves to leadership and it makes it harder then to justify the work you have done with a student, it is so much harder to explain it to them. I am anti-stamp, but I have just done something fantastic there, a great bit of teaching nobody witnessed, no one show it, no one knows I have done it. If only I had a stamp.”

- **Guilt**

As has already been mentioned, the subject of guilt came up a lot in the focus group discussions. Below, one teacher describes the feelings associated with falling behind with marking.

“I teach every single year group, I teach from Year 7 – Year 13, how can I possibly mark every single class within 3-4 days of them producing the work so inevitably somebody is going to be at the bottom of the priority list and inevitably there is going to be a 2-week delay, and they don’t value it when they get it back. You have that panic for 2 weeks, it gnaws away at the back of your head and it keeps going on and on and there’s a feeling of guilt you have as well. Something I don’t do anymore but I used to sometimes is apologise to a class for not marking their books, because I felt guilty about it. They might not have even noticed or expected it but that is how I felt but then as soon as you start apologising for it and highlighting it, then they are like ‘well actually, yeah I should have my books marked every two days’ and that expectation starts to build.”

What did teachers in the control group say about their condition (business as usual)?

Understanding more about the effects of the ‘business as usual’ condition of the control group (as defined by the marking policies – replicated in the Appendices - to which each teacher adhered) is important in gaining perspective over precisely what counterfactual condition existed during the period of the trial.

One teacher described the normal marking practice (triple impact marking) in school as:

“quite time consuming so you can’t do that all the time, and there is the fear that without giving that time that sometimes your targets that you have dutifully written are not acted upon which can be frustrating so it is getting that balance with good feedback but then giving them the time to purposefully act on what you are asking them to do.”

Such frustrations were commonly-reported by teachers in the control condition; there was a strong sense of a will to provide effective feedback, but one which was paralleled by a loss of control over this process caused by high workload and the need to ‘get through’ the curriculum.

Teachers were asked about their perceptions of the impact their written feedback had on students, with one pointing out clearly the importance of increasing the germane cognitive load on students, as opposed to the teacher taking on the lion’s share of this:

“I think when it works best it’s the students doing more work than the teacher in terms of the triple impact approach but the issue with the triple impact is that it can’t be done all the time in terms of workload so you have to be judicious and pick the right pieces of work you are going to do that with and ask yourself the question, ‘Is this worth this amount of time or can I use that time in a different way to drive progress?’ and that is a professional judgment. There other things about marking as well such as obviously you know where they are with their learning, what they know, what they don’t know, what skills they have and don’t have and need improving so that feeds into your planning for your next sequence of learning so in that regard it is important that you look at the books but it doesn’t mean necessarily that you spend three hours looking at their books and there are other ways of ascertaining where they are up to and what they know and what they don’t know.”

One of the themes that emerged during this discussion (and others) was that of the professional ability of the teacher to decide on the most appropriate means by which to give feedback to individuals and groups of students. Such an approach would put greater emphasis on the teacher to be responsible for efficient and effective practices, something that may lead to written marking being used, but only at a time and in such a way as an individual teacher decided. The implications for school policy and accountability are legion, but are equally worth exploring.

- **Changing times?**

Teachers noted that, since such initiatives as the DfE Workload Challenge (2015) had taken place, there was a perception of positive change afoot in the profession. One teacher surmised this by saying:

“I would hope that we are now either in or towards a moment when professionals are trusted to make those decisions [about how they use their time to mark or not], asking themselves the question, what is the best use of time and what will be needed to make progress.”

When asked whether they would choose to provide written feedback on students' work, teachers' responses did not err on the side of work-shyness; rather they saw a certain fitness for purpose of it. As one put it:

“I think I would [use written marking] on selected pieces, particularly where you are developing particular skills like creative writing or analytical writing I think that can be really useful but if you do it in bespoke circumstances in a very structured way I think it can work really well. How long you spend on that is something that should be considered really carefully.

“There is also that aspect that there is a transactional contract with your students. It is not the only way of fostering that positive relationship and those expectations but it is probably the way that has been used in the past. Probably in the future written feedback will be looked at like silent classrooms use to be look at. He or she is a great teacher because the room was silent, but we have moved on from that. It could have been an awful teacher and awful lessons, but they always marked the books thoroughly, they must be great. Not necessarily. Probably we will look at it like ‘Wow!’.”

Discussions with all teacher focus groups (in both the intervention and control groups) ranged over this territory: teachers should be equipped with a range of approaches, and use these judiciously to make decisions that are both efficient and effective for learning.

- **Unmanageable workload?**

Put simply, there was evidence that the expected load of marking for some teachers was unfeasible. The result of this in some instances was that certain classes in the control condition went without written feedback, as others were prioritised:

“I can't do [marking] all in School, not at peak times. I have 4 A level classes, 2 GCSE classes so I only have exam classes so consequently at this time of year, even if you use a variety of methods at some point I want to see what they are doing in mock exams etc. Year 10 and 12, they have to take a backseat, in terms of marking. I have to prioritise Year 13. They will be my priority very shortly and they understand that.”

Another teacher added to this:

“Most of us were marking this weekend, English teachers who have Year 11s because we were finalising the English Lit mocks and obviously there are new specs, new mark schemes. The old specifications we knew like the back of our hands so familiarising yourself with new mark schemes, new criteria, that also makes it a slow process to begin with until you have got your eye in but lots of us were working this weekend.”

- **Mixed purposes of assessments?**

Finally, one teacher pointed out a rather concerning practice, one associated with robust assessment practices:

“It could take me sometimes 6-8 hours to mark a GCSE mock, a long, long time; nothing like that for set books, a couple of pieces of work. And the issue is that it can end up as a summative because it is such a huge piece you can’t use it formatively. Students are less inclined to use it formatively because they have been given a grade. It is a huge amount of time.”

Clearly, the focus of a teacher is on activities that have so-called ‘formative purposes’. Put simply, their focus is on learning. In light of this, the use of summative assessments (as described by the teacher above) becomes highly problematic from an assessment practice perspective, as well as being very time consuming.

Students' views

Focus groups were also set up to ascertain students' perceptions of the 'rebalancing feedback' trial.

Timeliness and responsiveness to feedback

As for teachers, time and timeliness of feedback were sources of discussions with the student focus groups.

The presence of the subjunctive in the following sentence (from a Year 12 student) seems to indicate that not always is time provided to read and respond to written feedback given: "If they [the teachers] have marked it previously and it is a new lesson, they might give us time at the start of that lesson so that everyone can go over it and do what they need to do. Most of the time they give us time at the start of the lesson but I guess sometimes it doesn't happen if there is a lot that you need to do, so they will just give you a short amount of time."

One student interjected something which will, unfortunately, be familiar to many teachers of English, and which echoes comments made in the teacher focus groups about the prioritisation of marking at certain times (and the consequences this can have):

"I have a teacher that I did an essay before Christmas and it still hasn't been marked [this interview was conducted in April]. Which is annoying cos it was 4 pages of my life, I don't know if they have even looked at it or whatever. That is the most annoying and you go back to your book and you see all this work and you think I could have just been sat in the common room and they wouldn't have known any different."

Grades

Naturally, the topic of grades - as a component of written feedback – was highlighted in the focus group discussions. Students showed a preference for grades, with one commenting:

"Yes I prefer grades, adds more to add a grade, that's what we look for, what you need to improve to get higher grades."

While another student echoed this sentiment, saying:

"I like getting grades, if it is a good piece it's an A. I like having that to go by and I think lessons where you are just copying off the board, they are your notes, if they give you a question I would like that to be marked, acknowledged and know that I am on the right track doing it."

Ostensibly, these students are talking about a form of extrinsic motivation, an object which represents their achievements and which, at least on the surface, is a transferable currency (assuming an A in English means the same thing as an A in, say Geography).

As Deci and Ryan (2000), however, have pointed out, it is movement toward a greater sense of self-motivation and self-efficacy which leads to greater intrinsic motivation and this, in turn leads to greater interest, enjoyment and a sense of inherent satisfaction.

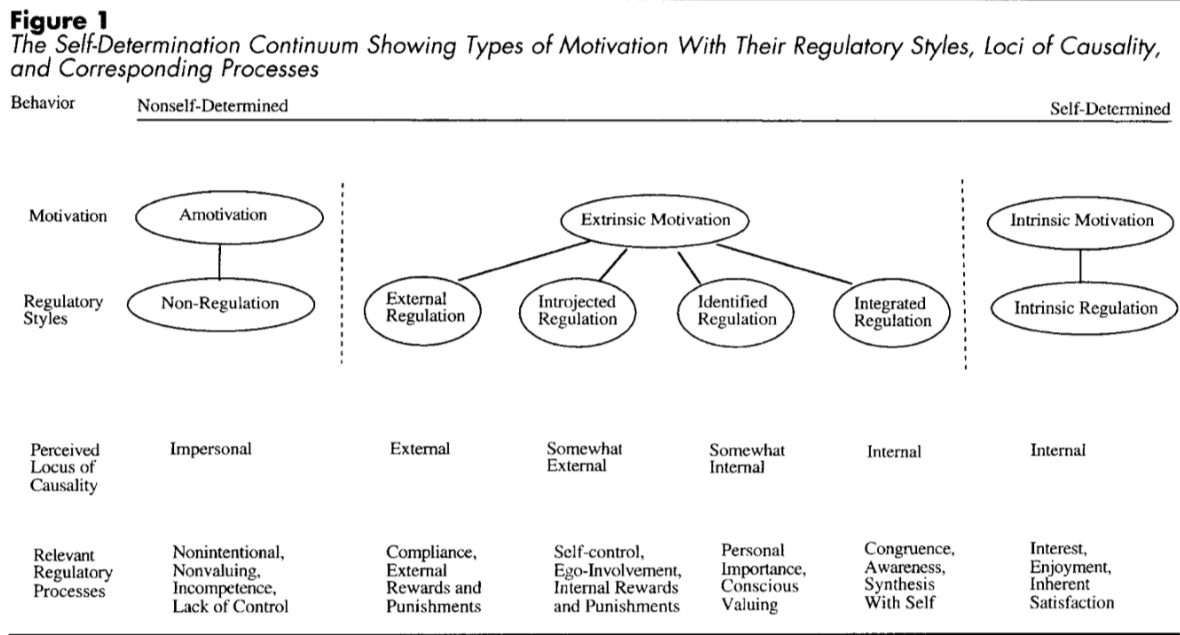


Figure 4: The self-determination continuum

From Deci, R.M. and Ryan, E.I. (2000)

Finally, on the point of motivation, one student summed things up neatly:

“It depends, if I have put a lot of effort into it I want them to mark it but if I don’t then that is fine.”

Believability

The American psychologist Jerome Bruner said in 1979 that children should be able to “experience success and failure not as reward and punishment but as information” (Bruner, 1979). The implication for teachers, therefore, is that the feedback they provide on a student’s work should be of a high informational quality, not a reward or punishment. Just as grades can be perceived not as information, but as reward or punishment, so the believability of the comments written must be addressed. As one student put it:

“With the marking that they do, they have to say one thing you have done well, they have to say one thing you have done well and one thing you have done bad, so generally it balances each other out, so you think you are doing good and that you are at level but really they could just be saying you have done this well, just because they have to write you have done well.”

Student perceptions of the ‘rebalancing feedback’ approach

There were significant and reinforced negative perceptions of the ‘rebalancing feedback’ intervention. One student was at pains to point out that:

“I get well annoyed when they haven’t marked it, especially when you have spent a long time on a specific piece of writing and they haven’t even marked it. They take your book from you and ‘I am going to mark this’ and you come back after the weekend and so you marked it and they are ‘No’. I just want to know.”

Another student echoed this by saying:

“There is no point them taking the books in we could just take it back and add on.”

While another student commented on the strangeness of not having the conventional feedback to which they were used:

It is strange because we went from having it most times so you knew how you were doing but now they speak to you about how you are doing instead of writing it down so you have it.”

Perception of teacher workload

Despite a sense of unease and dissatisfaction with the new form of feedback, there was also a sense from some students of understanding. One commented that:

“Teachers have got loads of different classes and then there is twenty or so in each class and they have to mark each set of books, and they don’t have time to mark every single book. And that is in their own time that is not when they are in School; it is when they are at home, that’s quite sad.”

She continued, saying:

“I mean it is not going to be the same because like you said there is twenty kids in each class, but if they give us work and they say do this for next lesson we do it for next lesson but then they just don’t have the time to do it.”

While this sense of understanding was present, it was by no means as strong as the degree of frustration associated with the absence of written comments in their books.

Evidence of rebalancing feedback strategies in action: process evaluation

As well as creating insight into the perceptions of both students and teachers, the focus group data are useful for the purpose of process evaluation. Fidelity checks in this trial were limited, but one method that proved effective was asking questions of both students and teachers about the specific activities (e.g. register feedback) that were to be used in class.

Such checks indicated that the intervention was being carried out as planned, although this is a statement that can only be made with a moderate degree of confidence.

One student spoke up in the focus group to say that:

“In the absence of marking we are all helping each other, we have discussions as a class, to critique each other on what we are doing and like we have been marking each other’s assessments with a camera. We are marking it on the board and going through it.”

A Year 10 student interjected that:

“We did do an essay and we did have a section of someone’s essay on the board, because they had written it really well and the points they had made were good, so we could take stuff from.”

With some evidence to indicate that the intervention was being delivered

Students’ affective responses to specific aspects of ‘rebalancing feedback’

- **Register feedback**

There were mixed feelings about the register feedback approach, specifically due to the perception of it taking a long time, as well as the fact that the student responding last has either an easier or harder time than the rest of the group (depending on the task at hand). One student commented thus:

“Yes takes up a lot of time for each person, 34 in class. Going through the register always in the same order and answer a question in a different way, you are all trying to think of a different answer. She gives us a question, gets us to write it down, then does the register, and if someone says something you haven’t put then write it down.”

- **Use of visualisers**

The use of visualisers to show work for marking was a contentious one. One student acknowledged that “It could be beneficial in some ways, obviously they are getting ideas from them, but obviously there is not one person in that class happy about their work being put on, it’s like being exposed.”

Another added that “I just wanted it off because I don’t like the criticism from how to improve it, just move on. I would rather, like, the teacher says it to me than others, they know what’s right, it’s like more privacy. I don’t like others reading my work.”

The sense of exposure as being negative was not unanimous, however, especially when skilfully handled by the teacher. One student said:

“I think it is good because she took pictures of them and put them on randomly that was a much better system than picking someone’s work, we didn’t know whose work it was.”

Furthermore, there seemed to be a perceived shift from a teacher-centred approach to learning, to a more collaborative one. One Year 12 student indicated that:

“It is sort of creating an independent sort of idea of how you are doing it. If we have the criteria we can mark it ourselves, and just criticise what we have done by ourselves and then know how to do it and then like in an exam we can read through it and we will know what to do to improve if you think you have not done enough of that or that.”

Students felt that there was an increased sense of collaboration in the classroom since the start of the ‘rebalancing feedback’ trial, saying “It is more between us rather than our teacher has got us doing it more individually, and in partners and then we will go into the whole class discussion about where the different points are, cos we are doing Jekyll and Hyde at the minute and we will annotate that a chapter at the start of the lesson so we will go over it ourselves and she might go through part of it with us and then other people will put ideas as to where the different parts are important.”

One student noted that she felt “It is okay once we get into the swing of how of how we are doing it because at the start we needed Miss to tell us what we are looking for, just to pick out the key points but now it is more we know what we are doing and it has got easier.”

Interestingly, one student commented on the sense of vulnerability that was created by the absence of written feedback, saying:

“Not sure how everyone else feels but when you are not getting that feedback you feel more vulnerable to mistakes cos you are not getting told this is what you need to do better so you just keep doing it over and over again and you get into a pattern and then when you get into an exam being not told to write a certain way or use them certain words, you will go into the exam, write down and it is too late and you have done it wrong.”

Secondary outcome analysis

Additionally, the following analyses are offered to compliment the primary outcome analysis:

- Analysis of self-reported hours worked per week during the trial period;
- Analysis of self-reported teacher self-efficacy;
- Analysis of impact on student attainment.

Teacher hours worked per week (self-report during the period March 7 – May 26, 2017)

Using the template from the DfE Workload Challenge Survey (2015) (Appendix 6), self-reported data regarding the number of hours worked per week were collected. Below, the table shows the impact of the ‘rebalancing feedback’ intervention on this variable of interest.

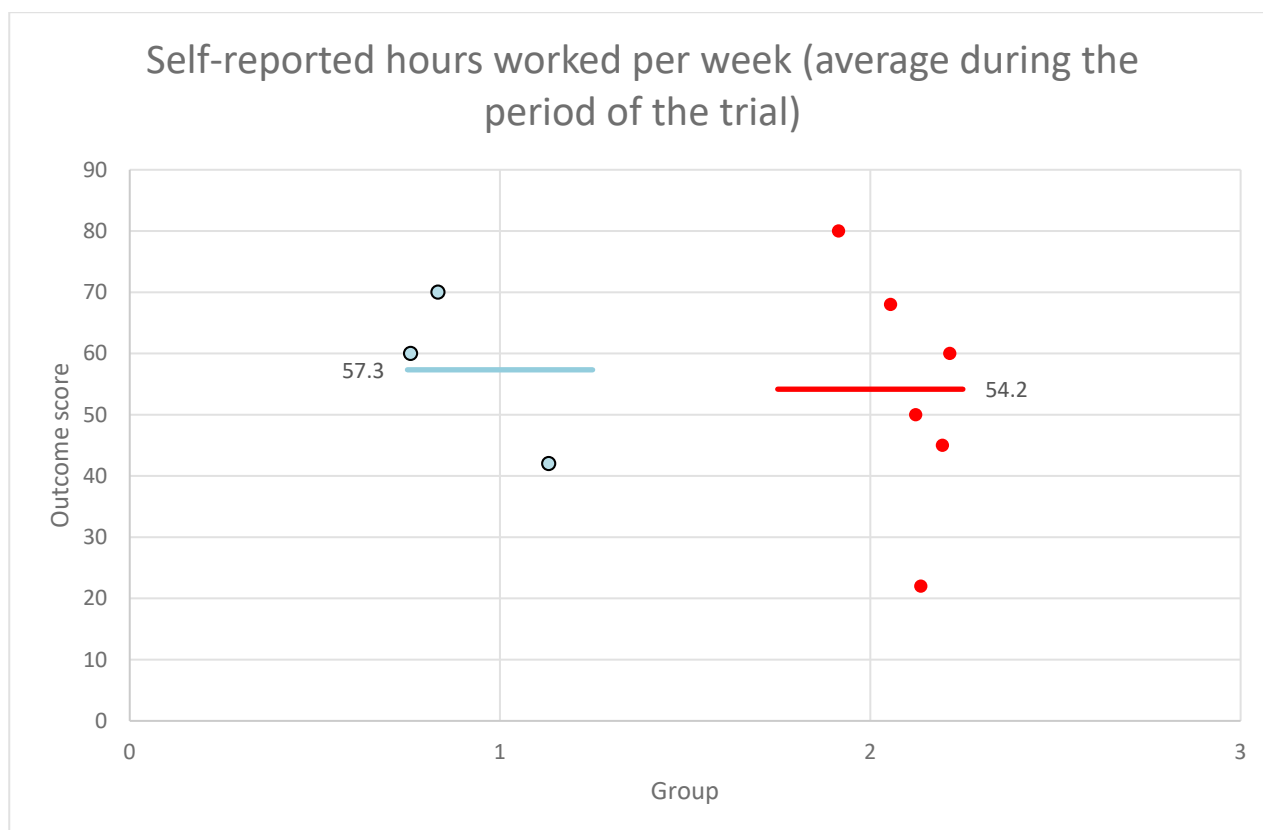


Figure 5: Hours worked per week by group

On the outcome measure (hours worked), the control group reported slightly higher working hours per week than the intervention group, by 3.2 hours. This difference, however, is too small to be statistically significant; in other words, it is very likely to have arisen by pure chance in a sample of this size.

Statistics

	Number Allocated	Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	5	3	57.33	11.59
Group 2	9	6	54.17	18.39

	Outcome			p-value
	Diff.	95% Confidence Interval		
		Lower	Upper	
Mean difference in scores	-3.17	31.14	24.81	0.797
Standardised Mean Difference	-0.19	-1.56	1.22	

It is not possible, with a sample of this size, to discern whether or not the ‘rebalancing feedback’ intervention had an effect on teacher workload, although the focus group data from teacher interviews suggests otherwise.

Teacher self-efficacy

To measure teacher self-efficacy, the Teacher's Sense of Self-efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) (sometimes known as the Ohio Teacher Self-efficacy Scale) was used.

Directions were given to participating teachers as follows:

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

And the items (listed below) were responded to on a nine-point Likert scale where 1 = Nothing, 3 = Very Little, 5 = Some Influence, 7 = Quite A Bit, and 9 = A Great Deal

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom?
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behaviour?
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

21. How well can you respond to defiant students?
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?

Reliability of the TSES instrument

The reliability of the instrument in its original context (it was designed for use at Ohio State University) is as follows:

TSES Long Form reported reliability (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001)

Mean	SD	alpha
7.1	.94	.94

As is seen below (in the two tables referring to the TSES used for baseline and follow-up purposes), the internal consistency of the scale is replicated. Interestingly, there is a small increase in the mean score at follow-up for teachers in the 'rebalancing feedback' trial, although this is too small to be significant.

TSES Long Form reliability (Rebalancing Feedback baseline)

Mean	SD	alpha
7.1	.83	.94

TSES Long Form reliability (Rebalancing Feedback post-test)

Mean	SD	alpha
7.3	.76	.93

The largest shifts in mean ratings from the intervention group came in the following items:

- How much can you do to help your students think critically?
- How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?

While only small shifts, the mean increase of one point on the TSES suggests that there may be some teacher-level effects worthy of further exploration.

All other data from the TSES indicated no meaningful change from baseline to follow-up measurements.

Impact on student attainment

Common approaches to statistical analysis of trial data assume independence of each observation, yet when classes are randomised children's outcomes no longer retain their independence; they correlate.

In the initial secondary outcome analysis of student outcome data, each class is treated as a single observation. As such, for a class of 30 children, a class mean score (the 30 scores of all the children divided by 30 to calculate the mean) is calculated. Failure to take into account clustering leads to a biased statistical significance test because it assumes independence of each observation. Although the estimate of effectiveness is usually similar (although not always) the statistical significance value will be too small and may lead us to conclude, incorrectly, that an intervention is effective (or ineffective) when this is not the case.

Effect sizes and confidence intervals

The effect sizes calculated in this report – using Hedges' g (Hedges, 2007) - are representations of the standardised mean difference between the outcomes (standardised value-added residuals) for students in the intervention and control condition groups (Coe, 2002), as indicated in Equation 1, below:

$$\text{Effect size} = \frac{[\text{Mean of the intervention condition}] - [\text{Mean of the control condition}]}{\text{Standard deviation}}$$

Equation 1: calculation of standardised effect size using Hedges' g .

As with so many aspects of research, there are highly contrasting views put forth by academics regarding the use of confidence intervals (CIs) in the reporting of effect sizes. The argument that confidence intervals enable the reader to understand what a plausible range of values for an effect size would look like (with a defined level of confidence which, in the social sciences, is most often 95%) is one commonly propounded. Those who support the use of CIs suggest that where two or more interventions produce positive effect sizes, CIs enable comparisons that are more meaningful and refined than those simply based on a point estimate. Two effect sizes of, for instance, 0.3 appear to be identical without CIs, but one may appear far more attractive than the other when an understanding of the plausible range of values is generated. The argument for the use of CIs is, therefore, a pragmatic one, and one that seeks to engender a deeper understanding than that achieved simply by reporting the effect size estimate alone.

Opponents of the inclusion of confidence intervals in effect size reporting (of whom Gorard (2013) is one whose argument is powerful and persuasive) claim that they do not perform the function intended (Carver, 1978) and can lead to mistakes of interpretation (Falk & Greenbaum, 1995); indeed, Watts (1991) claims that confidence intervals are almost universally misinterpreted.

Accounting for all of the above, the decision was taken to report effect sizes with confidence intervals in this report.

Intention to treat analysis

In this initial analysis (intention to treat analysis), all data were analysed as randomised, thus providing data pertaining to the effect of the offer of the intervention to teachers.

The ITT estimate (see below) demonstrates that these trial data show no detectable impact of offering the intervention under investigation on student attainment (in English Language and English Literature at both GCSE and A Level combined).

ITT effect size calculation			
95% Confidence Interval			
ES	Lower	Upper	p-value
0.11	-0.03	0.25	0.13

Table 1: ITT standardised effect size calculation (all data)

Sub-group analyses

The ITT estimand is, however, a rather limited measure when it comes to understanding more about the impact of the intervention under investigation. As such, the following sub-group analyses were undertaken to ascertain the effect of the intervention in the four slightly different contexts in the trial.

Figure 5 below is a chart showing effect sizes (with confidence intervals) for each of the following groups:

- Year 10 English Language
- Year 10 English Literature
- Year 12 English Language
- Year 12 English Literature

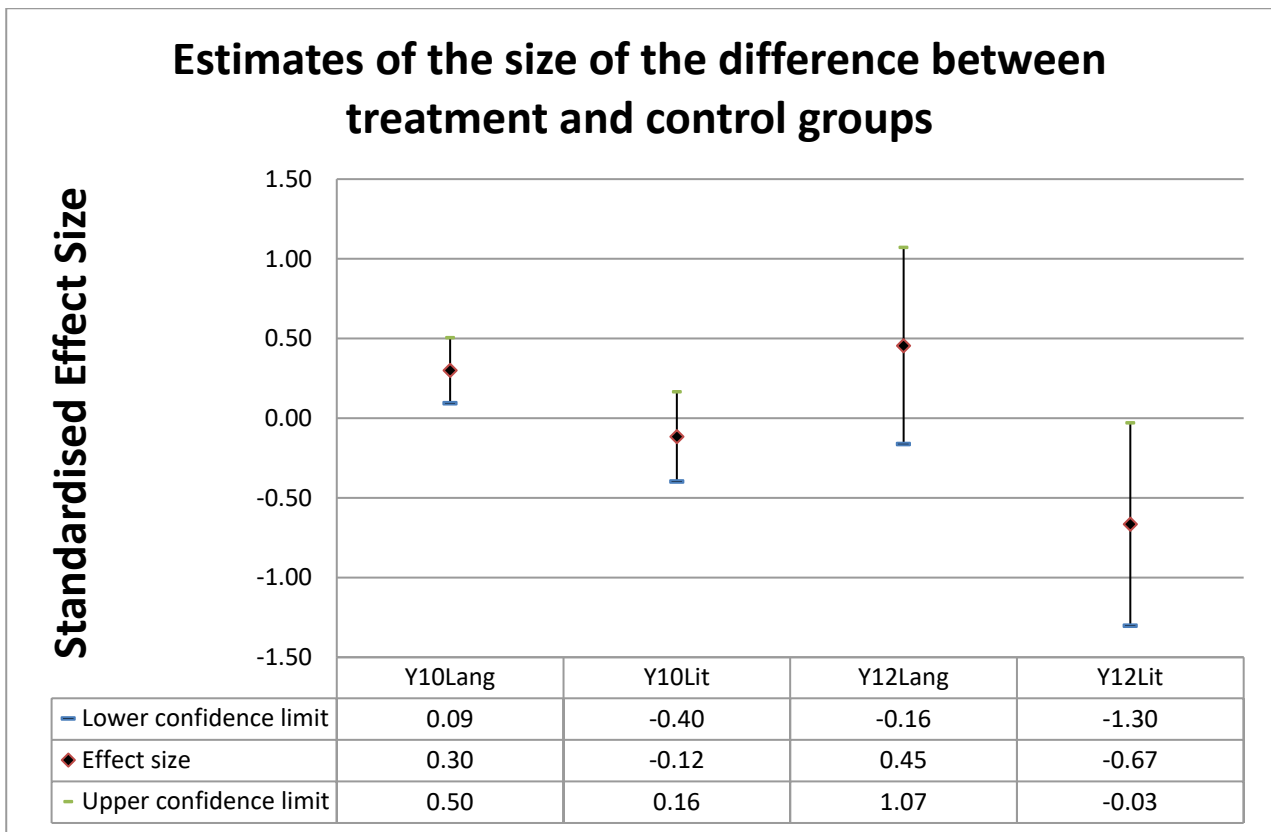


Figure 6: Standardised effect sizes with confidence intervals

The table above provides an insight into the mean differences between control and intervention groups (in the form of effect sizes), as well as their associated confidence intervals.

From these data, it is possible to intimate that there are between-subject differences (i.e. there may be a substantive difference of the intervention’s effect in different subjects), so this is worth exploring before further conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention may be made.

Moreover – and as will be said in the section on limitations later – the small sample sizes in Year 12, especially, lead to very large confidence intervals, and the absence of baseline data makes interpretation less straightforward than were they in place. Nonetheless, all subsets of data seem to indicate little or no effect of the intervention on student attainment.

In order to glean a better understanding of the spread of the data, visual representations of each of the four data sets (in the form of student-level charts) are provided below.

Year 10 English Language

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.

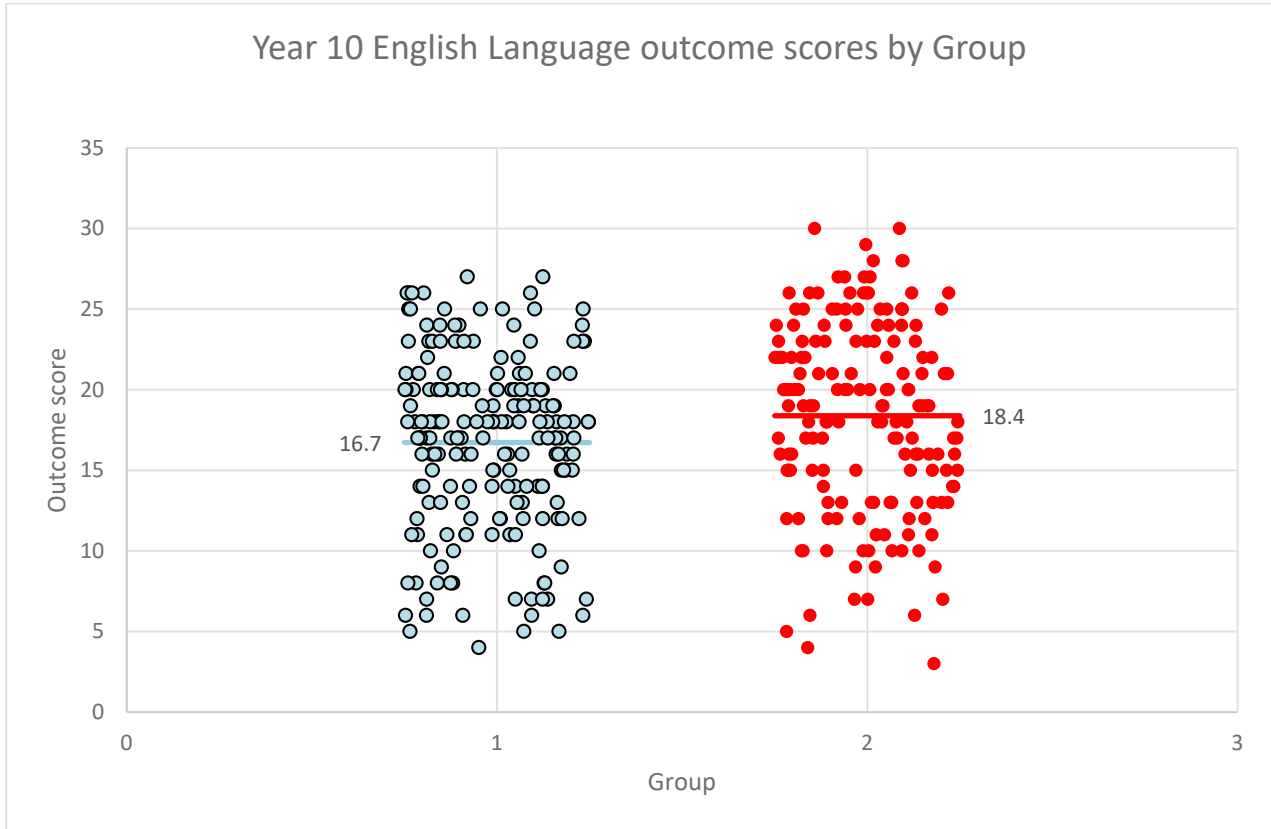


Figure 7: Year 10 English Language outcome scores by group

Statistics

Number Allocated		Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	199	199	16.72	5.308
Group 2	172	171	18.39	5.86

Outcome				
95% Confidence Interval				
	Diff.	Lower	Upper	p-value
Mean difference in scores	1.66	0.52	2.80	0.004
Standardised Mean Difference	0.30	0.09	0.50	

Year 10 English Literature

On the outcome measure, the control slightly outperformed the intervention group, by 0.7 marks. This difference is too small to be statistically significant; in other words, it is very likely to have arisen by pure chance in a sample of this size.

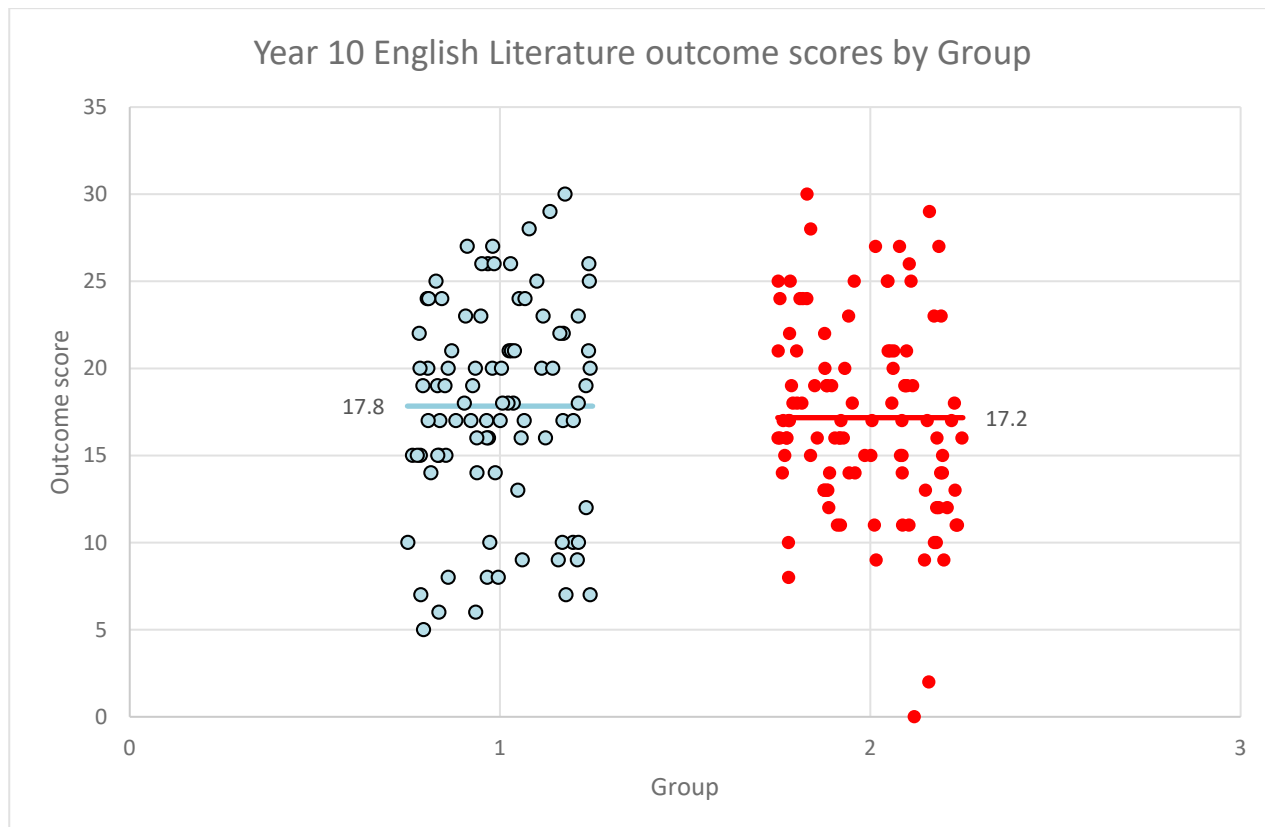


Figure 8: Year 10 English Literature outcome scores by group

Statistics

Number Allocated		Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	91	91	17.84	6.004
Group 2	105	105	17.17	5.52

Outcome				
95% Confidence Interval				
	Diff.	Lower	Upper	p-value
Mean difference in scores	-0.66	-2.29	0.96	0.421
Standardised Mean Difference	-0.12	-0.40	0.16	

Year 12 English Language

On the outcome measure, the intervention group moderately outperformed control, by 2.0 marks. This difference is too small to be statistically significant; in other words, it is very likely to have arisen by pure chance in a sample of this size.

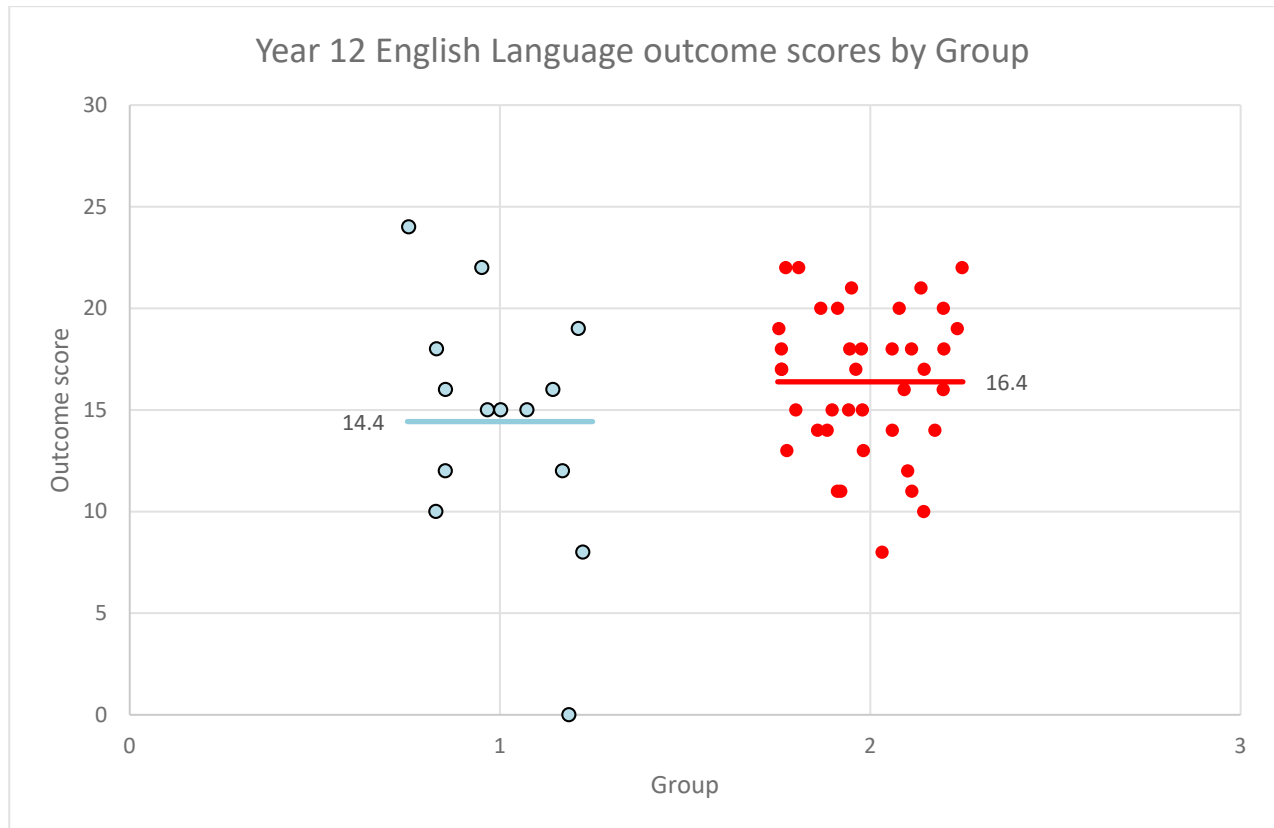


Figure 9: Year 12 English Language outcome scores by group

Statistics

Number Allocated		Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	14	14	14.43	5.791
Group 2	39	39	16.38	3.549

	Outcome			
	Diff.	95% Confidence Interval		p-value
		Lower	Upper	
Mean difference in scores	1.96	-0.69	4.60	0.144
Standardised Mean Difference	0.45	-0.16	1.07	

Year 12 English Literature

On the outcome measure, the control group substantially outperformed the intervention group, by 2.1 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.

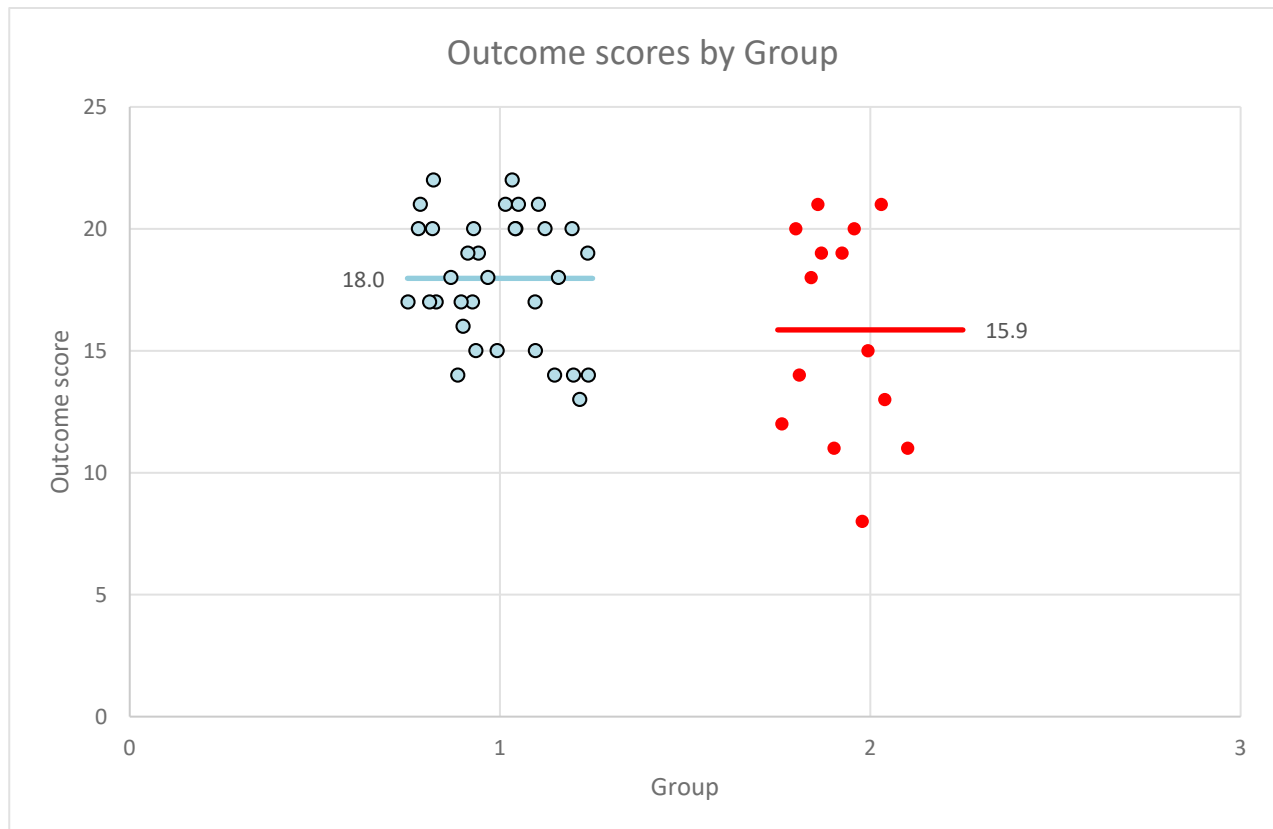


Figure 10: Year 12 English Literature outcome score by group

Statistics

		Outcome score		
		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	34	34	17.97	2.572
Group 2	14	14	15.86	4.206

Outcome				
95% Confidence Interval				
	Diff.	Lower	Upper	p-value
Mean difference in scores	-2.11	-4.11	-0.12	0.038
Standardised Mean Difference	-0.68	-1.30	-0.03	

Limitations

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 than 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.

School Culture

What cultural barriers may exist to prevent take up of new initiatives to reduce workload?

There are many cultural barriers that exist; the first is the entrenched expectation that marking is fundamental to teachers' professionalism and effectiveness. So entrenched are both the beliefs about workload equating to effectiveness, and teacher guilt about saving time, that it has become a cultural norm that teachers work in their free time. There is also the pressure of accountability and the so-called 'evidence trail': senior leaders in difficult situations needing to hold teachers to account or to provide evidence of their actions and behaviours. There is a pervasive misinterpretation of what constitutes good, useful evidence, and also a fear about the consequences of changing practices.

What specific issues may reduce the effectiveness of the approaches you have developed?

The chief issues identified in the Re-balancing Feedback trial were the potential lack of rigour and fidelity with which teachers undertook the intervention, thus possibly leading to a diminution of the hypothesised effect. If any intervention is rushed in implementation, and not given appropriate time in lessons (i.e. not built into planning as a significant and essential part of the lesson).

If a teacher does not have a secure understanding of student misconceptions or common errors in the first place, effectiveness of Front End Feedback may be reduced unless, for instance, it is devised by students and teachers during the lesson. Moreover, if the teachers' knowledge of students' strengths and areas for development in aspects of work/exam units is weak, the effectiveness of the approach may be compromised.

Finally, Register Feedback is, again, reliant on a supportive climate (Morin, Marsh, Nagengast, & Scalas, 2014) for learning in which students actively engage with what they hear and listen well to others, something that could become very difficult to manage if behaviour management is not effective.

What steps could be taken to reduce these cultural barriers?

Work undertaken to develop a shared understanding of how workload impacts on teachers and more specifically, work around the ineffectiveness of physical marking in comparison to well-planned feedback.

Work with parents, students and teachers is needed so that perceptions are changed as to the value of marking and ineffectiveness of this as evidence of great teaching.

Work around what constitutes a 'book scrutiny' or 'work trawl' so that middle and senior leaders are using these to assess the quality of teaching and student engagement with this rather than looking for adherence to marking codes and extensive written comments as evidence of teacher effectiveness.

For implementation of the intervention across a whole school, training with clear examples that is re-visited over time, would be necessary along with subject-specific work so that the Rebalancing Feedback methods can be appropriately adapted for each subject.

The other piece of work that may need to be done is generic work around workload and consideration of how workload is generated and perceptions around what teachers are actually expected to do (this can become distorted in a school). In addition, an evaluation from a senior leadership about the ethos around workload in the school and steps that can be taken to reduce this and to promote the reduction of it so as to assuage teacher guilt.

Conclusion

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.

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 that work on the assumption that to do more is to do better. Trials that assess the impact of not doing something are to be welcomed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: student outcome assessment tasks

Subject and Year	Question	Mark scheme
<p>Year 12 Literature Assessment: Week beginning 8th May</p>	<p>Helsby: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present the character of Iago (Act 3 scene 1)</p> <p>Tarporley: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present ideas about love?</p> <p>QPHS: How does Shakespeare use language to present the character of Iago in [scene to be confirmed]</p>	<p>Paper 1 Specimen Mark Scheme LIT – Section A – use generic skills mark scheme (pages 7-10)</p> <p>Students receive a mark out of 25</p>
<p>Year 12 Language Assessment: Week beginning 8th May – Use any data set</p>	<p>Helsby: Year 12 Lang: How does the writer use language in text A to create meanings and representations?</p> <p>Tarporley: How does the writer use language in text A to create meanings and representations?</p>	<p>Use the Mark Scheme ‘MS Paper 1 A Level Language’</p> <p>Students receive a mark out of 25</p>
<p>Year 10 Literature Assessment: Week beginning 22nd May</p>	<p>QPHS: How does Shakespeare use language to present the character of Macbeth in Act V Scene V of the play? Shane – can you choose an extract from this scene?</p> <p>Tarporley: How does Shakespeare use language in this extract to present ideas about love in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>?</p> <p>Helsby: How does Shakespeare use language to present Macbeth’s character in this extract?</p>	<p>Use the ‘Mark Scheme GCSE Lang Lit’ which has been tailored for both subjects. Students receive a mark out of 30</p>
<p>Year 10 Language Assessment Week beginning 22nd May:</p>	<p>Helsby: How does the writer use language in this extract to engage the reader?</p>	<p>Use the ‘Mark Scheme GCSE Lang Lit’ which has been tailored for both subjects. Students</p>

Subject and Year	Question	Mark scheme
(Use the same Section A extract from 'AQA Reading Resource Booklet' which has been pre-studied/annotated previously)		receive a mark out of 30
	<i>All Lit assessments are extract only removing the requirement for students to learn quotes for this assessment. This creates parity with GCSE Language where an extract is also studied.</i>	

Appendix 2: letter to parents

Dear Parent/Carer

We are delighted to have been offered the opportunity to work in conjunction with the Cheshire Vale Teaching School Alliance and Stuart Kime, Director of Education, Evidence Based Education on an exciting study which has been funded by the National College of Teaching and Learning. Almost 200 schools nationally applied to conduct this work which is focussed on determining the most effective methods of feedback which have an impact on students' progress in English. The study will be a collaboration between Tarporley High School, Helsby High School and Queen's Park High School. The opportunity to work with these colleagues will also provide a beneficial professional development opportunity for our teachers.

Who is involved in the study?

Year 10 and Year 12 English students.

What does the study involve?

Feedback is fundamental to help students make progress. However, it is recognised that written feedback does not always improve learning as it is not always processed effectively by students in order to support their progress. Some previous studies have shown that other methods of feedback can be more effective, such as prior to starting a piece of work, the class teacher identifying and explaining to students the potential misconceptions or typical errors which students have made. Another technique is, following the completion of a task, the class teacher samples a select number of students' exercise books and provides whole class feedback. Studies have shown that adopting different feedback techniques can improve students' progress by up to 8 months.

We are going to see how much impact this will have on our students. There will be a change in the frequency of written feedback in English exercise books for some students in randomised classes. These students will have two exercise books; one book will be used for class notes and practice pieces of work; the second will be used for formal, assessed pieces which will occur approximately once per half term; all work in the second book will receive written feedback.

How long will the study last?

The study will start from Monday 6th March and end on Friday 26th May.

What will happen at the end of the study?

The data from the study will be anonymised and shared for research purposes. The report will be published by the National College of Teaching and Learning (NCTL). Headteachers may then review the findings to inform decisions about assessment in their school.

If you are happy for your child's data to be included in the study, you do not need to do anything. If you do not want your child's data to be included, please complete the 'opt out' form and return it to your child's English teacher.

We are looking forward to working on this; it is an exciting opportunity and one which, we hope, will lead to us to improve our students' progress even further.

Regards



Mr J Lowe
Cheshire Vale Teaching School Alliance Lead

Only complete if you do not want your child's results to be included in the study.

Child's name:

I do not want my child's anonymous data to be used in the study on assessment.

Signed:

Relationship to child:

Date:

Appendix 3 Tarporley High School Homework Policy

RATIONALE

Homework is work that is set to be done outside the timetabled curriculum and forms an integral part to a student's education at Tarporley High School & 6th Form College. It serves to enhance the skills, knowledge and understanding which are essential for intellectual development. For the policy to be successful there must be simple but precise procedures, which are understood, appreciated and adhered to by students, teachers and parents.

PURPOSES

Homework enables students to:

- Show progress and understanding
- Develop research skills
- Have an opportunity for independent work
- Enhance their study skills e.g. planning, time management and self-discipline
- Take ownership and responsibility for their learning
- Engage parental co-operation and support
- Create channels for home school dialogue

EXPECTATIONS

When will homework be set?

For each Year Group, homework will be set according to a homework timetable which students receive at the start of the year. A copy is also made available on the 'Learning Gateway'. This timetable is for guidance only and some variation may occur with regards to the day when homework is set in order to maximise learning.

As a guide, students should be set on average two or three homework tasks each day.

The time that should be spent on these tasks varies according to Year Group as follows:

Year Group Maximum time per task

7 Approximately 45 minutes

8 Approximately 45 minutes

9 Approximately 60 minutes

10 Approximately 90 minutes

11 Approximately 90 minutes

12/13 Up to 5 extra hours per subject per week

HOMEWORK TASKS

Homework can be:

- Independent learning
- Consolidation of work in class
- Practise – learning by doing
- Completion of coursework assignments
- Research
- Reading
- Interviews
- Drawing
- Using ICT
- Recording

It is important that students should have frequent and increasing opportunities to develop and consolidate their competencies as independent learners.

ORGANISATION OF HOMEWORK

All students have a School Planner which they should carry with them at all times to record their homework. Tutors and parents/carers are asked to check and sign these on a weekly basis. Homework tasks should be written in to the planner as they are set, with a clear indication of the deadline for handing it in. If no homework is set by a teacher then this should also be recorded in the planner for monitoring purposes.

NON-COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

When homework has not been done, appropriate action will be taken by the Faculty. This could include a breaktime, lunchtime or after-school detention. Parents/carers will be notified in advance of an after-school detention so they can make arrangements for their child to be collected safely from school. The after-school detention will last no longer than one hour.

SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES WITH REGARDS TO HOMEWORK

The subject teacher is responsible for setting appropriate homework and for marking it regularly. S/he should check that students are recording details of homework set in their planners.

Curriculum Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all teachers in their Faculty are setting appropriate homework regularly and marking it. This should be checked as part of the Faculty self-evaluation process.

PARENTS'/CARERS' ROLE IN HOMEWORK

- Parents/carers should support students with their homework, but accept that their role will become less and less important as students become more responsible and independent
- Parents/carers should try to provide a reasonable place where students can work or encourage them to use the school facilities
- Parents/carers should encourage students to meet homework deadlines
- If parents/carers feel that insufficient or too much homework is being set, they should contact their child's form tutor in the first instance, who will investigate the situation
- Parents/carers should make it clear to students that they value homework and support the school in explaining how it can help them progress
- Parents/carers should encourage students and praise them when work is completed

STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- Students should always carry their planners with them
- Students should record the homework set even if they have written it in detail in their exercise book
- Students need to meet deadlines
- If students are absent, they need to find out what work they have missed and catch up on it. **Being away on a day that homework is set is not an excuse for not doing it**
- Problems with homework should be resolved before the deadline. If necessary, students should see the member of staff concerned for help
- Students should take pride in doing their best

Policy Written: September 2010

To be reviewed annually

Appendix 4: Helsby High School Feedback Policy

Key stages 3 and 4	Key Stage 5
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All work will be looked at in exercise books by the teacher. This will be indicated by a tick to show that the page has been seen. 2. SPaG will be highlighted using the correction code. 3. Some pieces will be peer assessed and this will be completed in green pen and signed by the student assessing the work and teachers will initial when they have checked it. 4. Some pieces will be self-assessed and this will also be completed in green pen and initialled by the student and by the teacher when they have checked it. 5. Some pieces will be marked by the teacher for a specific assessment objective. If this is the case it will be indicated on the piece of work. 6. If verbal feedback is given on a piece this will be indicated by either a stamp or VF. 7. Pre writing checklists may be given and will link to WWW and EBI. 8. When giving detailed written feedback each piece will have a WWW, EBI and MNS. This will either be written or a code may be given. If a code is given the student will write the target down. The EBI and MNS should be clearly linked. (Detailed written feedback will be given at least once every two weeks.) 9. DIRT/Response tasks will be embedded into lessons and given as homework tasks to allow students time to respond to the feedback in their books and undertake MNS. 10. At KS4 marking grids will be used to show students where they are and will be linked to WWW, EBI and MNS. 11. At KS4 language and structure responses will be annotated using LQE and SQE. 12. At KS4 students will reflect on their feedback and complete/revise their PLC every half term. 13. Pre writing checklists may be given and will link to WWW and EBI. 14. Some feedback may take the form of Dialogue Marking to support students in understanding their target areas and generating questions and discussions about their work. 15. Marks will be given on assessment pieces at KS3 and in Year 10. In Year 11 marks will be given more frequently. All marks will be numerical and based on the GCSE grading system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Folders will be looked at once every half term to check over note taking, organisation and wide reading. 2. Detailed written feedback will be given every two weeks. (Once a month per teacher.) This will include a summative comment and will identify targets. Comments and targets will be linked to the AOs and marks will be given based on the Examination Board marking grids. Students will have copies of the marking grids. 3. Some feedback may take the form of Dialogue Marking to support students in understanding their target areas and generating questions and discussions about their work. 4. Verbal feedback is given through questioning methods and through extended one to one conversations. These conversations will take place after key assessments and PPEs. 5. Students will engage in both peer and self assessment activities. These will be initialled and will be checked by the teacher. 6. Students will pre-mark some pieces before handing them in. 7. Students will be given copies of examination success criteria, marking grids and assessment objectives.

Appendix 5: Queen's Park High School Feedback Policy 2017

RATIONALE

Evidence from a range of sources clearly shows that effective feedback is the key driver of improved student progress and attainment. We are clear that feedback is only effective when it leads to gains in learning, continued progress, and improved attainment. This policy identifies the approach to feedback that all teachers at Queen's Park High School will follow in order to ensure that all students receive effective guidance that drives progress and improves attainment.

The policy applies to all teachers at Queen's Park High School.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is absolutely clear: the Senior Leadership Team, working with the Curriculum Leaders, have determined a clear strategy for giving feedback to students. We believe that the approach we have determined will be an essential driver in improving student performance and the outcomes that the school achieves. The purpose of the policy, therefore, is to provide teachers with absolute clarity around what is expected of them in terms of providing effective feedback to students.

Subject Approaches to Assessment

We are clear that assessment looks different across subjects; this is inevitable given that to make accurate assessments and give purposeful feedback, different subjects need to adopt the approach that is most apposite.

To that end, this policy has been constructed, in consultation with Curriculum Leaders, in order to come to a position about the most effective ways to assess and provide feedback in all subjects, noting their uniqueness and idiosyncrasies.

PRINCIPLES

While we acknowledge that different subjects will assess differently, we are also clear that there are a set of common principles that will be consistent across the curriculum.

Those principles are:

- Assessment and feedback drive progress.
- Students must be able to identify their effectiveness against success criteria.
- Feedback is only purposeful when it is explicitly linked to success criteria.
- Feedback must clearly identify actions to ensure students make progress against success criteria.
- Students must act on feedback, and this must be evidenced in their books.

Irrespective of differences of approach across subject areas, these principles are the drivers of assessment and feedback across the school.

GUIDELINES

The Assessment and Feedback Process in Subjects Assessing Written Work

When students are being assessed through written work, the following process will be evident:

- The Learning Intentions Template will be in their books clearly identifying the success criteria for the task.
- When students have completed the assessed task, they will self-assess by highlighting and annotating, in green pen, evidence to show where they have met the success criteria.
- Students will then, in green pen, write a summative comment explaining how they have met the success criteria. At KS3 this will require them to identify where they think they have 'Met' or 'Exceeded' the Age Related Milestone for their year group.
- The teacher will then, only once the student has completed their self-assessment, over-mark the work in red pen. The teacher is looking to validate the students' own judgements about their work and to correct any misconceptions about how they have performed against the success criteria for the task.
- The teacher will then provide a brief written comment about the student's performance against the success criteria, the length and nature of which will be informed by the student's own perception of their performance.
- The teacher will then set a success criterion linked target, this will take the form of an improvement task that the student can action.
- Students must be afforded time to complete the improvement task immediately after the work has been returned, and this must be evidenced in their exercise book.
- The teacher must then briefly acknowledge the completion of the improvement task, indicating how far this has led to improvement.
- All subjects have integrated the SPAG strand into their KS3 Age Related Milestones, and so students and teachers need to ensure explicit reference is made to this element, by identifying where age-related spellings are incorrect. Teachers will identify the spelling; students will correct it as part of their response to feedback.

Timeframe:

- In core subjects students will receive this level of feedback twice per half-term.
- In non-core subject students will receive this level of feedback once per half-term.

Sixth Form:

- Students in the Sixth Form will receive this level of feedback twice per half-term across all subjects who assess in this way.

The Assessment Process in Mathematics

The process in mathematics will be consistent with the process outlined above for written subjects.

Additionally, the Maths Department will use the MATHS acronym to support the development of key concepts.

The Assessment Process in Music, Drama and PE (Physical and Performing Arts)

When students are being assessed in subjects with a predominantly practical element, the following process will be evident:

Physical Education

- The success criteria for the task will be shared with students through the Learning Intentions Template, which will be placed in the P.E Self-Assessment Booklet.
- Students will self-assess their work, using the P.E Self-Assessment Booklet, with explicit reference to the success criteria in the form of an extended piece of writing.
- Students will set their own target for improvement.
- The teachers will over-mark the work, validating students' responses about their performance against the success criteria.
- The teacher will then set a success criteria linked target, this will take the form of an improvement task the student can action.
- Students must be afforded time to complete the improvement task immediately after the work has been returned, and this must be evidenced in their P.E Self-Assessment Booklet.
- When students undertake the next assessment task they reflect on the target from their last assessed piece to inform the progress they need to make.

Music and Drama

- The success criteria for the task will be shared with students through the Learning Intentions Template, which will be available in student books
- Students will self-assess their work, with explicit reference to the success criteria either during the rehearsal period or after the final performance (as appropriate).
- Students will set their own target for improvement.
- The teachers will over-mark the work, validating students' responses about their performance against the success criteria.
- The teacher will then set a success criteria linked target, this will take the form of an improvement task the student can action.
- Students will be afforded time to complete the improvement task immediately after the feedback has been given where this has taken place during the rehearsal period.
- When feedback is given as a result of a final performance, students must use this feedback to reflect and set a starting challenge for their next piece of assessed work under the same criteria and must be afforded time to do so.

Timeframe:

- In Music, Drama and PE this cycle will take place over the course of a half-term, for all year groups including the Sixth Form.

The Assessment Process in Visual Arts and Design

When students are being assessed in the Visual Arts and Design Curriculum Area, the following process will be evident:

- Work will be assessed over time, using multiple pieces of evidence to inform assessment.
- At the end of a unit of work, students will write a summative self-assessment statement against the success criteria for that unit of work.

- Teachers will then make a comment, validating students' responses about their performance against the success criteria.
- The teacher will then agree a success criteria linked target, this will take the form of an improvement task that the student can action.
- Students must be afforded time to complete the improvement task immediately after the work has been returned, and this must be evidenced in their sketch book.
- The teacher must then briefly acknowledge the completion of the improvement task, indicating how far this has led to improvement.

Timeframe:

- In Visual Arts and Design this process will take place over the course of a half-term for all year groups including the Sixth Form.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

We recognise that being able to write coherently and accurately is an essential skill for all students. Equally, this element of students' work is rewarded more significantly in the reformed GCSEs.

In turn, the position as regards to the correcting of spelling is as follows:

- Each subject will agree age-related spellings for their area.
- These will be identified for students at the beginning of the unit.
- In addition there will be a whole-school list of age-related spellings that all students should know.
- The requirement for students to meet these standards is levered through its inclusion as a strand on all of the KS3 Age Related Milestone criteria.
- As part of the assessment process we expect teachers to identify where they have misspelt any of the age-related spellings.
- As part of their response to feedback, we expect students to correct any spellings identified.
- In the interests of perspective, this should not exceed three words in any one task.

The position with regard to punctuation and sentence structure:

The Role of the English Department

- The English department will, as a matter of course, deliver the knowledge and understanding required to punctuate work accurately, and to compose cohesive sentences.
- As part of the English curriculum – specifically explicit writing tasks – students' skills in these areas will be assessed.
- Equally, areas for improvement will be identified by English teachers and students will be supported to improve through English.

The Role of Other Subjects

- Subjects will be expected to model styles of writing to students
- When a student completes a piece of written work, we expect that they will be able to comment on their performance against the criteria for that style of writing.
- Therefore, where there are errors in punctuation and sentencing, we expect that the subject teacher will identify them, and ask that they are corrected.

Indicating Attainment

The essential component of an effective policy is the emphasis on the quality of feedback given to students. However, we also recognise that levelling and grading work is important to students in terms of understanding their progress over time.

Therefore, assessed work will be graded in the following ways:

KS3

Students' performance against specific strands from the Age Related Milestones will be indicated on their work by a number showing their year group, a letter indicating the strand being assessed, and a further letter showing the level of performance against the strand.

So for example, if a student was being assessed in English, in Year 7 for the coherence of their writing, and they were meeting the A.R.M the summative annotation would read: **7CM**. Where '7' represents the year group of the student, 'C' is the first letter of the strand and 'M' indicates they are meeting the age-related standard.

The annotations for standards of performance are as follows:

Standard	Annotation
Working Towards	WT
Meeting	M
Exceeding	E

KS4

Students' attainment will be indicated by a GCSE grade which, until all subjects have moved to reformed GCSEs, will be a combination of letters and numbers. Where subjects are BTECs, a Pass, Merit or Distinction will be awarded.

KS5

Students' attainment will be indicated by an A Level grade in those subjects and a BTEC equivalent grade where appropriate.

The Role of Curriculum Leaders in Ensuring Effective Implementation and Accuracy of Assessment

All Curriculum Leaders will provide their teams with a model example of assessed work. This will form the standard against which all work should be marked in the subject area.

Accuracy of assessment is fundamentally the responsibility of the Curriculum Leader. The established quality assurance procedures around accuracy of assessment will provide

Curriculum Leaders the opportunity to continually monitor the accuracy of their teams' assessments

The Sixth Form

In addition to the provisions outlined above, the following additional provision shall apply:

- Sixth Form students will be expected to present their notes/files/folders to their teacher once per half-term.
- The teacher will inspect the folder to ensure that students' notes are up-to-date and complete.
- The teacher will then sign-off the notes confirming that this is the case.
- If it is not, the teacher will be expected to give students a deadline to make sure that notes are complete and up-to-date.

BTEC Exemptions

Where students are undertaking BTEC courses, we have to recognise that there are mandatory provisions in the code of practice that do not permit the application of this policy. In turn, we expect that the mandatory provisions of the code of practice should take precedence. It will, therefore, place emphasis on teachers of BTEC subjects, to be able to show the impact of their feedback during the teaching phase.

Monitoring

The implementation and application of this policy will be monitored robustly as a constituent of the school's established quality assurance procedures. The Senior Leadership Team, Curriculum Leaders and Achievement Leaders – in the core – carry the responsibility for making sure that the policy is fully enacted and that assessment and feedback is entirely consistent with the provisions of the policy.

A half-termly cycle of work scrutiny has been calendared involving SLT, Curriculum Leaders and Achievement Leaders. Furthermore, feedback in students' workbooks is a vital part of evidence gathered during lesson observations and learning walks. We will therefore use these activities as a vehicle for ensuring that the policy is implemented as devised.

Where routine monitoring suggests that this policy is not being enforced as written, it will be for the Curriculum Leader, with the support of their SLT Line Manager, to enact the necessary support to make sure that this is rapidly addressed.

CONCLUSION

We, as a Senior Leadership Team, and Curriculum Leaders, are clear that feedback is a key driver of improved student performance. Further, that improved student performance increases students' opportunities moving into the next phase of their lives, education and training. We therefore expect that all teachers at Queen's Park High School will execute the provisions of the policy, with the clear understanding and knowledge that in doing so, they are giving all of our students – irrespective of starting point, background or other

attendant challenges – the very best opportunities to make rapid gains in their learning and to make progress that compares with the very best students nationally.

Appendix 6: Baseline workload survey

- Name:
- School:
- Leadership responsibility: class teacher / middle leader / senior leader
- Full time / part time?
- How many classes do you currently teach?
- If you are in the intervention group, which of your classes is / are involved in this workload research study?

Questions

1. On average, how many hours do you spend working each week?
2. On average, how many hours do you spend teaching each week?
3. On average, how many hours do you spend on each of the following non-teaching tasks:

- Individual planning or preparation of lessons either at school or out-of-school
- Team work and dialogue with colleagues within this school
- Marking / correcting pupils' work
- Pupil counselling
- Pupil supervision and tuition
- Pupil discipline including detentions
- Participation in school management
- General administrative work
- Communication and co-operation with parents or guardians
- Engaging in extra-curricular activities

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