

Reducing teacher workload improves teacher wellbeing (particularly 'Love of Learning') and has no negative effects on pupil attainment

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PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) (Ofsted, 2019) requirements state that, 'leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload'. The aim of this research project, using the Teacher Workload Reduction Toolkit (2019), was to establish if reducing the amount of time spent on written marking, outside of the lesson, had a negative impact on 'off-track' or 'on-track' cohort data in Writing and Maths. Following frequent staff absence and a high turnover of staff across the Ashlands and Misterton Federation, reducing time spent on written marking would also enable teachers to have a better work-life balance and use their non-contact time more effectively, to plan further high-quality lessons and interventions as appropriate.

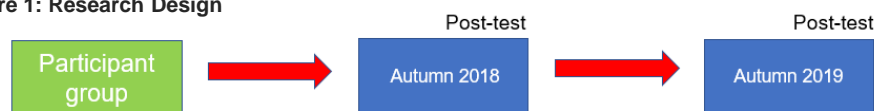
THE RESEARCH DESIGN

An uncontrolled within-participant retrospective cohort study was used.

To define the independent variable (marking), the effects of two conditions were analysed:

- detailed written marking as was school policy in Autumn Term 2018
- reduced written marking with the intervention cohort in Autumn Term 2019

Figure 1: Research Design



Dependent variables

The following measures were used:

DV1 (attainment) – pre- and post-test existing school data

DV2 (teacher wellbeing) – questions taken from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006) (pre- and post-test) [Working too hard (Simms, et al., 2011); Optimism; Enthusiasm; Love of Learning (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); Self-efficacy (Costa & McCrae, 1992)]

DV3 (teacher time) – time spent on marking and planning outside of lessons

The design allowed for the testing of the following hypotheses:

H1 – Pupil attainment as measured by cohort 'off-track' or 'on-track' data will not be negatively affected by reducing written marking and feedback

H2 – Teacher's perceptions of mental health and wellbeing will improve as a result of reduced written marking and feedback

H3 – Teachers will spend less time doing written feedback and marking outside the classroom therefore using non-contact time more effectively to plan interventions and next steps

LIMITATIONS

Due to a high turnover of staff within the Federation, the sample participant group and teaching staff available for the research was limited to Year 4. IPIP scale results are self-reported.

METHODS

Participants and sample size

32 Year 4 pupils from a rural English First School Federation took part in the study (18 Boys and 14 girls). Staff wellbeing and timing data were collated from the Year 4 teaching staff.

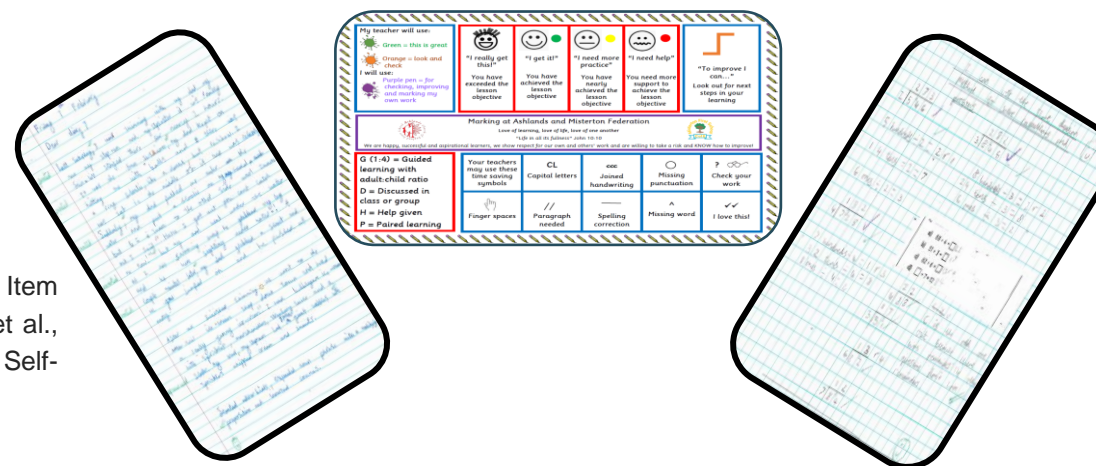
Procedures

Following consultation with all staff, in Summer 2019 a new federation marking and feedback policy was written, with the expectation that all staff would be using it from Autumn 2019.

In September 2019, the participant group of children were introduced to the new policy and posters of agreed marking symbols were displayed in all classrooms. The policy was used across the curriculum for all marking and feedback. At the end of the ten-week test period, Year 4 cohort data for Autumn 2019 was compared with Year 3 cohort data from Autumn 2018.

Staff wellbeing both pre- and post-test was collated using the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) test.

During 4 weeks of the ten-week test period, Year 4 teachers kept a record of time spent on marking and planning outside of lessons. A pre-test for timings whilst following the previous federation marking policy was also collated. Both pre and post-test results were averaged for analysis.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Reducing written marking had no negative effects on pupil attainment, indeed small positive effects were associated with the intervention. In addition, teachers who experienced the intervention had higher wellbeing scores across all five of the international personality item pool areas, in particular wellbeing was improved in relation to 'Love of Learning' (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Assessment of teachers' time on task also showed that the intervention had reduced teacher time both planning and marking.

RESULTS

Separate 2x2 Chi-squared tests of independence were conducted on the number of pupils who were off-track or on-track across the control and intervention periods (see Tables 1 to 2).

Table 1. Writing

	Effect size d	CI (95%)	p-value	[W]
All	0.127	- 0.35 – 0.60	0.611	0.064

Table 2. Maths

	Effect size d	CI (95%)	p-value	[W]
All	0.064	-0.40 – 0.53	0.798	0.032

Figure 2: Averaged Year 4 Teacher IPIP scale results.

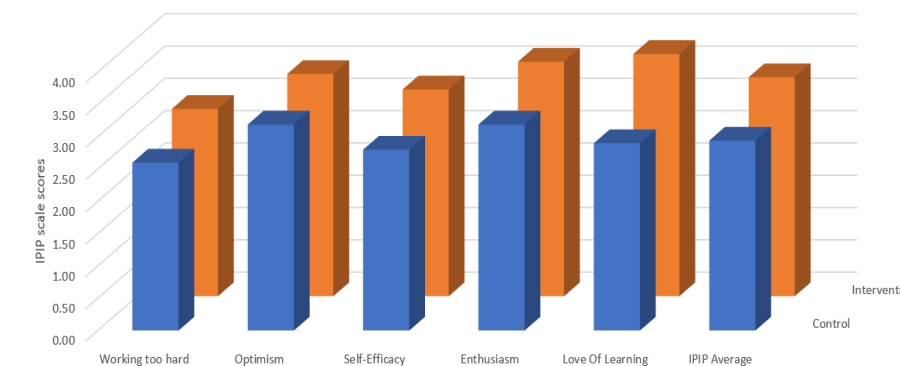
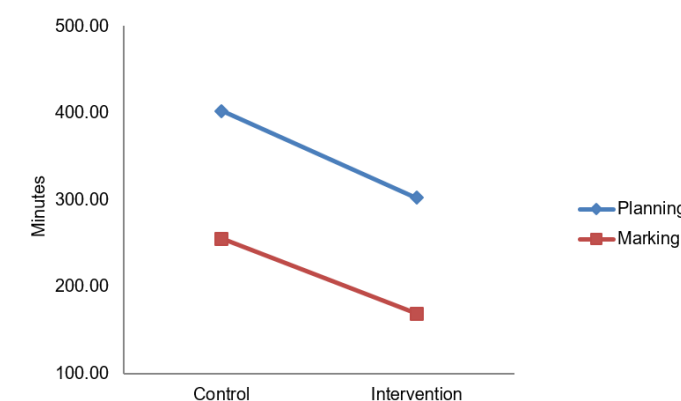


Figure 3: Average time spent planning and marking pre- and post-test by Year 4 teachers



This research was carried out with funding and support from the Department for Education and Education Development Trust.

