A system of in class marking only which better suits the needs of pupils in a SEND provision

Alison Cole
Robert Manhire

The Beacon Folkestone

LONDON SOUTH TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Our research focused on the use of a new marking strategy. Prior to the study, staff felt that our marking policy did not necessarily suit our learners' needs. Our learners' cognitive ability is such that they do not usually take books home to reflect on and do corrections as they would in a mainstream school. The nature of the corrections should depend very much on the ability level and need type of the pupil.

We felt that our marking was procedural rather than informative and we wanted the work in books to be a reflection of an ongoing dialogue about progress between teacher and learner.
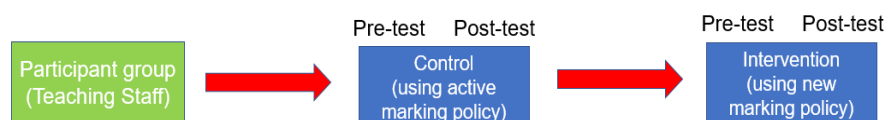
THE RESEARCH DESIGN

An uncontrolled cohort study was used. The independent variable was phase of workload reduction for the same teachers and learners:

• Phase 1 (IV Level 1 - Control) – pre-workload reduction period during which teachers were using the school's active marking policy.

• Phase 2 (IV Level 2 - Intervention) – workload reduction period during which teachers used a revised marking policy.

Phases 1 to 2 took place over 3 academic terms.

Figure 1: Research design

Participant group (Teaching Staff) → Pre-test / Post-test Control (using active marking policy) → Pre-test / Post-test Intervention (using new marking policy)

Dependent variables

The following measures were used:

• DV1 (progress) – In year progress.

• DV2 (teacher time) – Time spent marking per week.

METHODS

Participants and sample size

The participants for the research were four teachers teaching an age range of 9-16 years old in two different subjects, English and History. The impact was measured against the results of the 36 students in their respective classes. Participants were chosen through convenient, selective sampling to ensure a spread of different ages and subjects. All pupils were from tier 1 classes which meant they were the most able cohort at the school.

Procedures

Teacher participants were surveyed prior to the start of the research to find out how much time was spent on marking in either English or History. Participants were then trained in how to use the new marking policy. Following the training, participants followed the new policy in their respective subjects whilst making note of the time spent marking the subject each week. Data was then collected at dates in line with the school's collective data drop for student attainment.

Materials (and apparatus)

• New marking policy.

• Time taken to train key staff (one hour at the end of term).

• Pupil assessment to measure the number of pupils making expected or above expected progress.

• Teacher timing questionnaire.

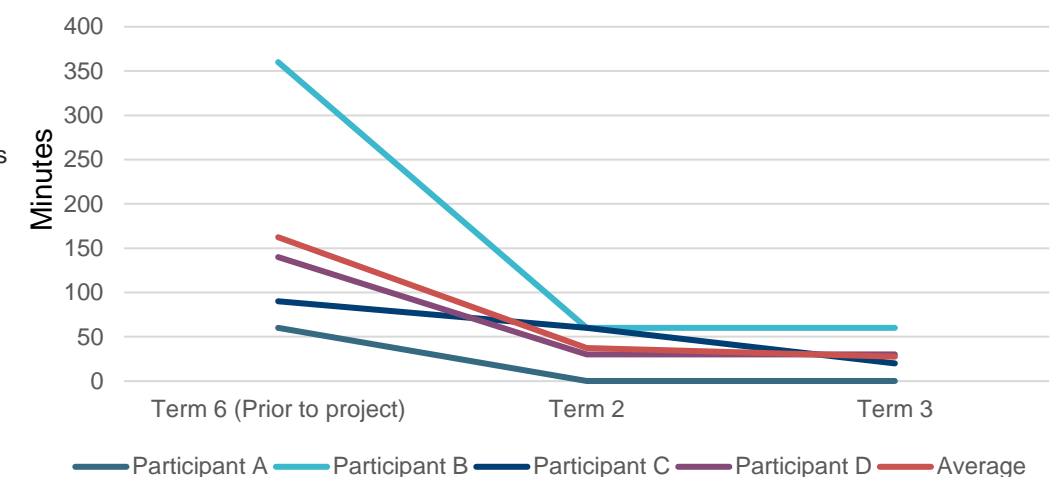• Teacher and pupil voice survey.

RESULTS

Results indicate that there was a clear reduction in the number of hours teachers spent marking outside class time. Qualitative pupil voice data suggests that pupils prefer this method of marking as it helps them understand what they have done 'wrong' and what they need to do to make improvements in their work. For example, one pupil succinctly described the process as allowing him to go 'ah ha!'. Another said that it gave him time to think and ask questions of the teacher as 'you can't talk to a page of marking.'

Figure 2: Pupil progress data

Separate Wilcoxon signed-ranked tests (one-tailed) were used to compare the steps of progress for pupils impacted by the study. These steps of progress are tracked in the schools assessment system Pupil Asset. This shows a non-significant positive effect in pupil progress compared to the control. See table below:

	Effect size, r	CI (95%)	p value	Equivalent Cohen's d	N (Sample Size)
English	0.024	-0.085 – 0.037	0.395	0.048	29
History	0.035	-0.215 – 0.253	0.343	0.068	7

Figure 3: Graph of teacher time spent marking

Participant A — Participant B — Participant C — Participant D — Average (Minutes vs Term 6 (Prior to project), Term 2, Term 3)

LIMITATIONS

There was a relatively small sample size and the study was conducted with the most able (tier 1) group of learners. The school has a wide range of abilities and 'need types' amongst its learners and they are not all represented within the sample.
Not all subjects were represented.
We believe that the marking policy could be adapted for different subject specialisms, abilities and need types.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The graph clearly shows that the number of hours spent marking outside the class decreased substantially. Pupil progress data indicates that there was no negative impact on in year progress. Pupil voice data suggests that pupils prefer this way of obtaining feedback on their written work. Teachers prefer this method of feedback as it enables them to explain concepts and facilitate consolidation of knowledge. This method of marking and giving feedback suits the needs of pupils in this school, as pupils are able to process the information given to them better when it is given in a way that suits their need type. The fact that there are small class sizes in a SEND provision and a high number of support assistants meant that this was relatively simple to achieve. Success of the project would depend on a lesson or part of a lesson being given over to individual feedback. This of course has implications for short and medium term planning.

Education Development Trust