

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Recent findings from internal Quality Assurance procedures indicated that there was a disparity between the amount of time spent producing written feedback by teachers and the time spent by students improving work in class. Recent EEF research (Robinson and Coleman, 2016) highlighted a number of findings that were applicable to the college's setting. The focus of the study was to reduce the frequency of written marking but increase the thoroughness of feedback, moving away from acknowledgement marking.

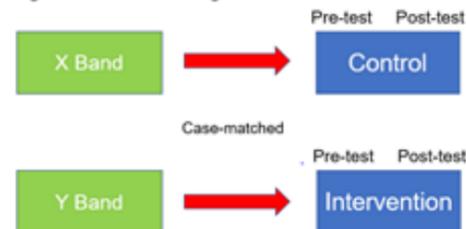
The Department for Education Workload survey was carried out at the college in 2018. 73% of the teaching staff consider 'marking/correcting pupils' work as occupying an excessive amount of their work time.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A pre-and post-test non-randomised matched-pairs design was used. To define the independent variable (extended learning), two existing groups of participants were case-matched across two conditions (Figure 1):

- **Control condition (IV Level 1)** – acknowledgement marking and deep marking of all pieces of work.
- **Intervention (IV Level 2)** – feedback given in depth on specially designed work.

Figure 1: Research design



Dependent variables

The following measures were used:

- **DV1 (attainment)** – maths attainment pre- and post-test.
- **DV2 (teacher perception)** – DfE Workload questionnaire pre- and post-test.
- **DV3 (teacher time)** – number of hours of marking outside of class pre- and post-test.

The design allowed for the testing of the following hypotheses:

- **H1** – Pupil attainment as measured by the maths attainment data will not be negatively affected by reducing the amount of time spent by teachers marking out of class time.
- **H2** – Teacher's perceptions of wellbeing will improve as a result of the intervention.
- **H3** – Teachers will spend less time giving written feedback on students' work.

LIMITATIONS

The research was limited by the relatively small sample size. As we were not able to randomly allocate the groups, there is a risk of bias in the results.

METHODS

Participants and sample size

St John Bosco Arts College is a girls school with a high proportion of Pupil Premium students. Year 8 is organised into two halves (X band and Y band) with 180 pupils in total over four sets from a total sample size of 181, 168 were case-matched using pre-test attainment data.

Procedures

Control: existing practice. 8X teachers continued to follow the current college marking policy. They taught the scheme of work in the same way and the same order. They distributed and marked homework in line with the current policy.

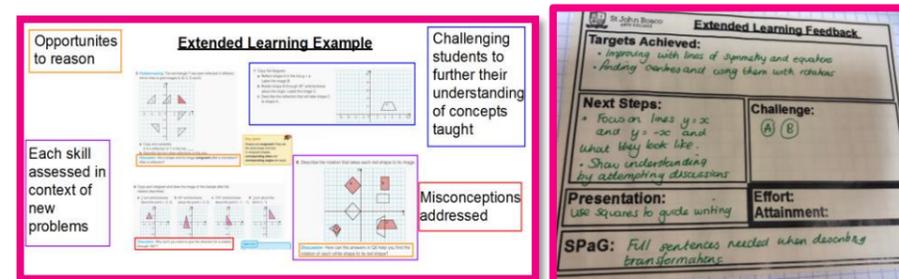
Intervention: Students were taught the scheme of work in the same order. Every three to four weeks the teachers gave an Extended Learning Task to students which was deep-marked and Directed Improvement and Reflection Time given to students in lessons to make improvements.

Randomisation was not possible in order to ensure intervention fidelity (the teacher leading the study was a member of the Y teacher group). However, all participants in the X group were kept blind to the purpose and implementation of the study.

Materials (and apparatus)

The material were designed collaboratively with the intervention teachers including:

- Extended Learning tasks based on the students' knowledge and skills gained up to the learning occurrence.
- Feedback template for teachers.
- Directed Improvement and Reflection Time – slides and activities for post-feedback lessons created collaboratively.



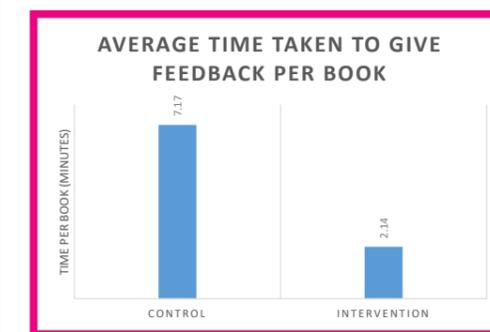
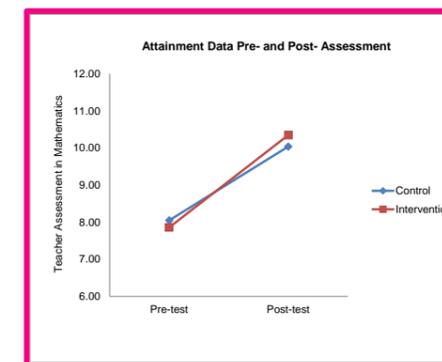
Example of Extended Learning Task and feedback to student.

RESULTS

Teacher assessment grades were converted to a continuous scale to allow for numerical analysis.

Gain scores were first calculated from pre- and post-test results.

A two-tailed Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated that the intervention had a **significant** ($p = 0.001$) **positive** effect compared to the control condition. ($r = 0.227$, $CI(95\%) = 0.156 - 0.298$) [$d = 0.467$]



Teachers recorded the time it took them to mark a batch of books. Using the mean time per book the data indicated that there was a reduction in time spent giving feedback to students. On average 5 minutes per student was saved. Teachers were also asked to include the time it took them to plan for Directed Improvement and Reflection Time in the intervention group as this formed part of the new feedback policy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Marking less, marking better not only had a significant positive effect on pupil progress for the intervention group but also indicated a reduction in teacher time spent giving written feedback.

Future research may look at the effect of moving away from acknowledgement marking to more thorough, less frequent written feedback and how this impacts on progress and workload reduction in other subject areas; and over different groups of students.

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