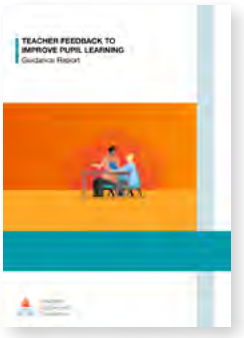
TEACHER FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE PUPIL LEARNING

Feedback Vignettes

Education Endowment Foundation

Preamble

This Feedback Vignettes tool accompanies the Education Endowment Foundation's *'Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning'* guidance report, which sets out six recommendations for teachers and school leaders to support them to deliver effective feedback to pupils.



Each recommendation begins with a reflective vignette—an illustrative scenario that outlines common challenges faced by teachers—before posing questions that the recommendation attempts to answer or clarify. Recommendations also include case studies of current feedback practice in schools.

The vignettes and case studies seek to represent current practice in schools and contextualise the evidence.

The Feedback Vignettes can be used to support teacher continuous professional development in a variety of ways. For example, in a teacher training session, a senior leader may wish to begin a session by reading and discussing one of the vignettes, before asking colleagues to read and discuss some findings from the relevant recommendation. Alternatively, other school leaders, such as subject leaders, may wish to share a vignette with their department, or phase team, to explore the principles of effective feedback, thereby prompting discussion regarding existing practice.

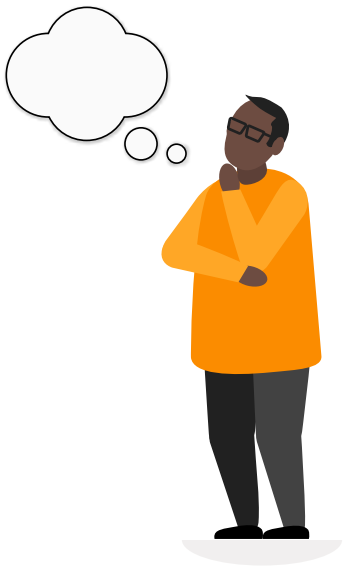
1 Lay the foundations for effective feedback

Saïd is a Year 6 teacher in a primary school in the North West. He's received regular CPD throughout the year, which has explained the positive impact that feedback may have on pupil attainment. Saïd has also observed the feedback that experienced teachers in his school offer, reviewed what he did last year, and tried out a range of new written and verbal feedback techniques (such as coded marking, one-to-one conversations, and whole-class feedback discussions).

Saïd reflects that he is disappointed in the progress made by his class in response to these new feedback methods. Despite all his hard work, he is unsure if it really paid off. In particular, pupils' writing attainment, and their ability to write short stories, had shown little improvement despite his focus on multiple new feedback strategies targeted at writing development.

Saïd asks himself two questions:

- ***Did my pupils have a strong enough understanding of the knowledge, skills, and concepts to begin with, before I offered them feedback?*** *They may not have initially understood how to structure a story, design a sentence structure, or how to use punctuation effectively. If so, the feedback may have had too much work to do.*
- ***Did I effectively assess my pupils' understanding to target my feedback at their specific learning gaps?*** *Much of the feedback offered was the same to all pupils, encouraging them to offer more description of their settings and characters along with proof-reading for spelling errors. These may not have been what all pupils were missing.*



Saïd realises that to give effective feedback he must first lay the foundations.

2 Deliver appropriately timed feedback that focuses on moving learning forward

Lucy is year 2 teacher in a primary school in the Midlands. She has been told that feedback can be impactful, but also recognises the importance of high-quality instruction and effective formative assessment before providing feedback to children. She commits time to ensuring she delivers well planned, effective lessons, and carefully crafts her tasks and questioning to elicit a better understanding of where pupils' learning gaps are for a given task.

However, despite having a good sense of what pupils' weaknesses are, Lucy is unconvinced that her feedback is moving pupil learning forward. She is currently providing very regular feedback to pupils (so much so that it sometimes becomes a burden), and her feedback focuses on praising pupils and their talents. She regularly tells a pupil, for instance, that she is 'a natural mathematician', but this doesn't seem to be improving the pupil's performance.

Lucy wonders:

- ***When exactly should I be providing feedback to pupils?*** *Do I have to provide really regular, immediate feedback?*
- ***What should my feedback focus on?*** *Should I comment on particular aspects of the work or the abilities of the pupil?*

Lucy realises that she needs to offer more appropriately timed feedback, which provides specific information that can move learning forward.

3 Plan for how pupils will receive and use feedback

Amelia is a high attaining Year 10 pupil in a school in the South West who is very confident in history. She was delighted with the essay she submitted on the strengths and weaknesses of the Weimar constitution. Having spent a long time planning and writing her response, she was convinced she would receive very positive feedback.

Amelia's teacher provided useful and purposeful feedback, focusing on the task (pointing out that Amelia could have explained more about the impact of proportional representation on the German parliament), subject (providing tips on how to construct an argument), and self-regulation (suggesting that Amelia could read back over her essay at the end to monitor and correct errors). The teacher pointed to specific high quality elements of Amelia's essay, while also giving suggestions for improvement.

Amelia is disheartened by the feedback and it knocks her confidence. She had expected that her essay would be perfect and, therefore, wouldn't need any further changes. The next lesson then focuses on a different topic so she has no opportunity to act on the feedback and improve her work.

Amelia's teacher wonders:

- ***How can I ensure I provide feedback while considering Amelia's response to it?*** *I want to give constructive and useful information, but don't want to knock her confidence and reduce her motivation.*
- ***How can I ensure that Amelia has the time and opportunity to use the feedback offered?***

The teacher realises that she needs to pay careful attention to how Amelia receives feedback while also ensuring that students are given the opportunity to act on the feedback provided.

4 Carefully consider how to use purposeful, and time-efficient, written feedback

Elena is a secondary school geography teacher at a school in the South East who teaches several classes totalling around 180 pupils. Outside of teaching her lessons, she spends at least six hours a week providing written feedback—usually completed in her evenings and weekends. Elena isn't convinced that the hours she is putting in are resulting in pupil progress and the heavy feedback workload is affecting her wellbeing.

Elena's school feedback policy stipulates that there should be 'teacher marking, in green pen, on a frequent basis (after every other lesson)', which provides a brief comment about the work. However, given the time constraints, Elena rarely has time to fully engage with pupil work. While she has managed to get some 'green pen' into her books after every other lesson, these are usually vague comments such as 'Brilliant work!', that Elena recognises aren't likely to have much impact on her pupils' learning.

Elena wishes that she had more time for planning lessons and making careful adaptations to the curriculum so that she can capitalise on her pupils' strengths as geographers and to identify areas for improvement. She would also like to spend less time on light-touch, general written feedback and instead provide purposeful written feedback, which addresses specific learning gaps and aims to move learning forward.

Elena wonders:

- ***How can I offer purposeful written feedback?***
- ***What alternative approaches—such as 'live marking' or the use of 'marking codes'—could be more time efficient?***

Elena realises that she has to balance the opportunity cost of written feedback, deploying a broader repertoire of approaches, whilst ensuring that any feedback she does give reflects the principles of effective feedback. Additionally, she hopes her school feedback policy could be amended to reflect this.

5 Design a school feedback policy that prioritises and exemplifies the principles of effective feedback

Declan is a Year 4 teacher at a primary school in Yorkshire. His school has recently transitioned from a feedback policy which mandated mainly written methods of feedback to one where teaching staff are encouraged to use more verbal feedback, including whole-class verbal feedback.

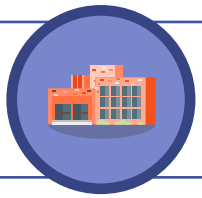
Declan is delighted. The burden of written feedback caused by the previous feedback policy was sizable, thereby preventing him from providing thoughtful and purposeful feedback to all pupils. However, having tried whole-class feedback a few times, he is concerned that his feedback may be too generic and that pupils may not be using it.

Declan wonders:

- ***Is my whole-class feedback moving learning forward?*** *Is it targeted enough at the learning gaps my pupils have?*
- ***How could I improve my whole-class feedback to have a better chance of my pupils making progress?*** *Is this adequately serving the needs of struggling pupils?*

Declan recognises that even though he is now giving more verbal feedback, this still requires effective initial formative assessment (to identify which gaps need filling) and then focused feedback which addresses the task, subject and pupils' self-regulation strategies. Verbal feedback may take less time but it should still be as pedagogically rich.

6 Design a school feedback policy that prioritises and exemplifies the principles of effective feedback

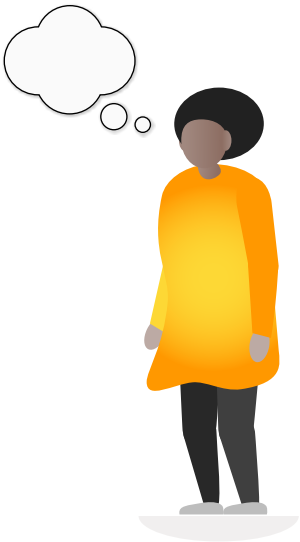


Antonia is the headteacher of an all-through school in the North East of England. Addressing feedback has been a long-term challenge for teachers in the school, with colleagues looking to be more effective and efficient with their feedback, so she reads the new guidance report, Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning, with great interest.

Teachers have made some positive changes to a varied diet of feedback in the last school year. However, some approaches to feedback—such as always offering extensive written feedback once a week for all pupils in Key Stage 2—still appear a somewhat arbitrary legacy of practices associated with a previous leadership regime.

Antonia wants to ensure the feedback policy of the school is rooted in evidence-informed principles. She wonders:

- ***What changes should we make to the feedback policy?***
- ***How can we embed effective practice across the whole school and all key stages?***
- ***How can we ensure pupils, parents, and teachers understand the changes and understand their value for pupils' learning?***



Antonia recognises the crucial importance of implementation along with the need for close attention to supporting teachers with professional development and wrap-around support so that they can make sustained habit changes.