

TEACHER FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE PUPIL LEARNING

Senior leader implementation pack



This 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 looking to maximise the impact of teacher feedback in the classroom. It is not a standalone tool and should be used alongside the full report. We hope that these resources will support you in ensuring that your school's feedback policy aligns with the best available evidence.

The report prompts us to consider three fundamental principles of effective feedback:

1. ensuring teaching is high-quality, laying the foundations for effective feedback;
2. providing appropriately timed feedback (judged by the teacher) with a clear focus on moving learning forward; and
3. considering how pupils will receive and act upon the feedback given.



“It is our hope that this guidance will refocus feedback practice on the principles of effective feedback and away from the ‘see-saw of methods.’”

Becky Francis,
Guidance Report Foreword, 2021

Feedback is one area of classroom practice where teachers can feel that their school policy overrides their professional judgement. Teacher Tapp surveys suggest that most teachers work with feedback policies that specify methods of delivery, covering everything from the frequency of book marking to the colour of pen used. Most would mark less frequently if their policy allowed it (<https://teachertapp.co.uk/markings-matters-or-does-it/>).

A key message of this report is that the principles of effective feedback likely matter more than the methods through which it is delivered. This implementation guide is designed to support your team to make evidence-informed decisions when designing your school's feedback policy, to ensure that it prioritises and exemplifies the principles of effective feedback and considers opportunity costs such as teacher time and workload.

This tool is for: school leaders and governors

This tool can be used: in an SLT meeting or planning session, a peer review with external colleagues, in conversations between senior leaders and, for example, the chair of governors, a school improvement partner or MAT colleagues



The following insights can guide school leaders to work with colleagues to make constructive changes to feedback policies to support changes in practice. More details can be found in **Recommendation 6** of the ‘Teacher feedback to improve pupil learning’ guidance report.

A Avoid the over-specification of the wrong things

*You will want to balance what you need to specify (the principles of effective feedback covered in **Recommendations 1 to 3**) with what you do not need to specify (the timing and method of feedback delivery). You will want consistent application of the principles, while providing space and autonomy for teacher judgement where necessary. (See ‘**Considering what to specify in your feedback policy**’ in this pack for more information)*

B Be clear on your purpose

Feedback should be provided to move learning forward. It should not be deployed to please senior leaders, parents, or other external parties. Its primary purpose is encouraging pupil progress, rather than being used for accountability or for monitoring purposes.

C Costs associated with feedback practices need to be carefully considered

The opportunity costs that attend feedback, particularly written feedback, should be recognised. Where possible, time-efficient methods should be suggested—to mitigate teacher workload—as long as these are not detrimental to pupils’ learning. The exact methods used should be decided by the teacher, but a policy could offer suggestions for how to make methods more manageable.

D Demonstrate helpful worked examples of effective feedback practices

*Ensuring teacher autonomy to exercise their evidence-informed professional judgment is likely to prove valuable, alongside providing examples of what effective practice looks like. These can be found in the Guidance Report (see, for example, **Recommendation 2**).*

E Expectation management of pupils, parents, and teachers matters

If you are making changes to how feedback is delivered in your school, you need to take pupils, parents, and teaching staff with you. Pupils value feedback, so communicate the changes to them so that they will continue to welcome and use it. Parents also put value on feedback for their child’s learning. If you are amending your approach, communicate this to parents and explain why. Many teachers also align their feedback practices with the very ideals of their professionalism—they may prefer a particular approach and may have used it for a long time. When embedding effective principles, provide practical support and reassurance, while emphasising the importance of teacher professional judgement.

F Focus on the foundations of learning

*Feedback does not exist in isolation; it must be rooted in the firm foundations of effective instruction. Any school feedback policy should therefore be sensitive to the characteristics of effective instruction and how they may vary by phase and subject (see **Recommendation 1**).*

Things your feedback policy could specify

Effective feedback policies encourage teachers to consider the foundations for the feedback they provide—highlighting the importance of delivering high-quality instruction, which includes making purposeful use of formative assessment strategies, beforehand. This will vary by phase and subject, but there are common components such as:

- setting learning intentions (which feedback will aim towards)
- assessing learning gaps (which feedback will aim to fill)

See **Recommendation 1** of the guidance report for more detail.

Successful feedback policies encourage teachers to focus on moving learning forward, and can focus on three specific areas: the task, subject, and self-regulation. Feedback focused on a pupil's personal characteristics, or which provides vague and general comments, is unlikely to be as effective.

Effective feedback may be:

- telling pupils during an ordering task in mathematics that two items are the wrong way around and they should revisit the order and try again (task-focused feedback);
- explaining the need for more quotations to be used during practice of GCSE English questions and providing opportunity for pupils to try this (subject-focused feedback); and
- prompting a pupil to consider why their performance in a recent cricket game was less successful than a previous performance before asking them to use the feedback when practicing (self-regulation-focused feedback).

Less effective feedback may be:

- “I am surprised you made this mistake – you are usually so good at maths!” (Person-focused feedback)

Examples covering key stages 1-5, across a range of subjects, are included in **Recommendation 2** of the guidance.

Effective feedback policies prompt teachers to consider how feedback will be received and subsequently used by their pupils.

Strategies for ensuring pupils act on the feedback they receive could include:

- discussing the purpose of feedback. The key is to emphasise that feedback is provided because the teacher has high standards and fully believes pupils can meet them, rather than to be critical;
- modelling the use of feedback;
- providing clear, concise, and focused feedback (sometimes less is more!); and
- ensuring pupils understand the feedback given.

Pupils should then be provided with opportunities to use feedback, and **Recommendation 3** of the guidance report suggests activities that could facilitate this. Ensuring pupils do something with the feedback, whether through editing or redrafting work, finding and correcting errors, discussing the feedback as a class, or other activities, will help to close the ‘feedback loop’.

Time-efficient approaches to feedback which manage teacher workload and fulfil the principles of effective feedback may be helpful in minimising the opportunity cost of feedback.

The key principles underlying feedback are likely more important than the method through which it is delivered. The method is best left for the teacher to decide. However, your policy could suggest ways in which the ‘opportunity cost’ and workload associated with certain methods may be reduced. Such as:

- coded marking;
- live marking;
- ‘thinking like the teacher’ (where pupils correct mistakes before handing work in); and
- verbal feedback delivered during the lesson.

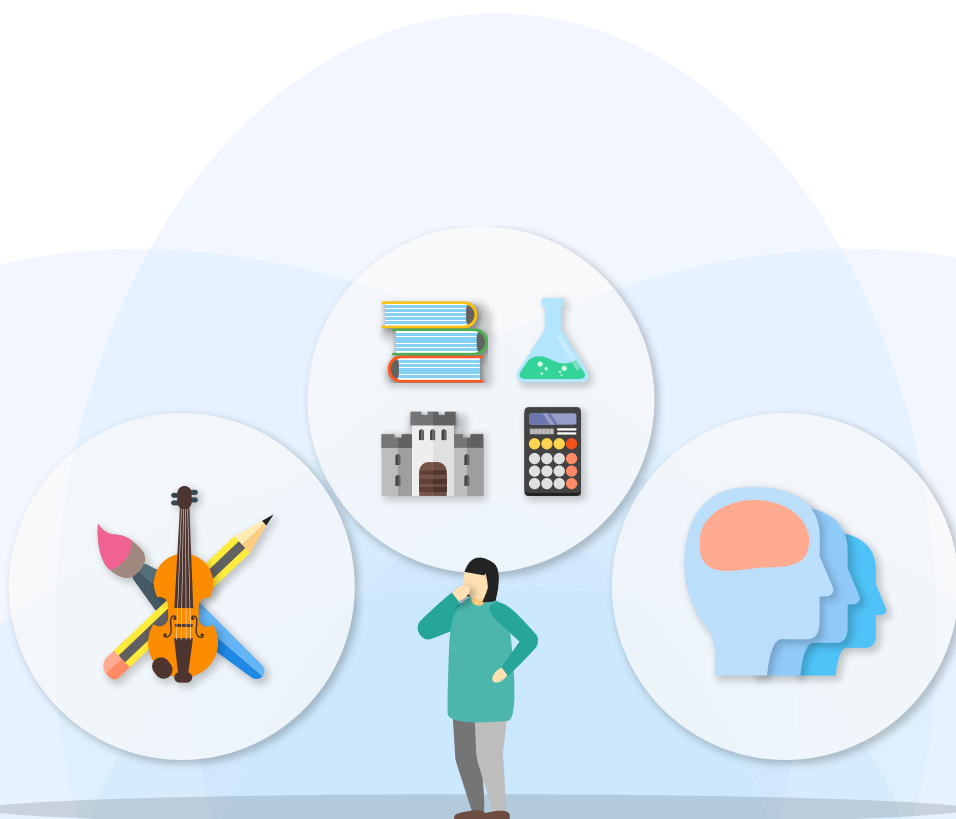
See **Recommendations 4 and 5** of the guidance report for more information.

Things you may wish to avoid specifying in your feedback policy

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in terms of choosing the appropriate method or time for delivering feedback. These decisions are best made by teachers in the classroom in response to specific circumstances as they arise.

Successful feedback policies focus on the principles which underpin effective feedback (**Recommendations 1 to 3**, and discussed above), rather than being prescriptive about the method through which feedback is delivered—written, verbal etc.—or the exact frequency and timing. For instance, stating '*written feedback must be delivered, in green pen, after every other lesson*' is unlikely to be necessary.

See **Recommendation 2** of the guidance for more information on feedback timing, and **Recommendation 6** for a more detailed discussion of feedback policies.



The questions below aim to provide useful starting points for discussions to help you to establish where your school is on the path to providing all your pupils with meaningful feedback. The aim is to get you talking about your practice in ways that genuinely support you to understand what you are doing that is working, as well as promoting some new thinking and ideas.



- 1. Are you clear on the purpose of your feedback policy and is it designed with pupil learning in mind, rather than teacher observation or parental expectations?**
- 2. Is your feedback policy designed to promote and exemplify the principles of effective feedback? (see recommendations 1–3)**
- 3. Is your policy overly specific about features such as the frequency or method of feedback?**
- 4. Have you considered the ‘opportunity cost’ of your feedback policy? Will teachers spend excessive time delivering feedback (which may prevent them from improving other areas of practice, such as planning)?**
- 5. How can you effectively manage the expectations of pupils and parents in terms of the frequency and quantity of written marking?**
- 6. Are teachers clear on the principles of effective feedback, and on how your policy aligns with these? Will training be needed to support this understanding?**