



Feedback Policy

Introduction: What is Feedback?

Feedback is a core part of the learning process. It is the information given to students about their work that helps them understand where they are in their learning, where they need to go next, and how best to get there (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Effective feedback goes beyond marking or correction; it is a dialogue between teacher and learner that supports progress, builds confidence, and fosters independence (William, 2011).

At The Spires College, feedback is understood as any information—verbal, written, peer, or self-reflective—that moves learning forward (Shute, 2008). It may confirm what has been done well, identify specific areas for improvement, and provide clear, actionable steps to help students improve. High-quality feedback is timely, focused, and meaningful, enabling students to take ownership of their learning by responding, revising, and reflecting (EEF, 2021). In essence, feedback should help students understand themselves and their performance in relation to three key questions:

- ▲ Where am I going?
- ▲ Where am I now?
- ▲ What is my next step?

Principles of Effective Feedback

The College supports teachers to exercise professional autonomy and to take a disciplinary approach to classroom practice that meets the needs of their students. Therefore, this policy does not set out specific requirements for the frequency, regularity or type of feedback students receive. Instead, teachers are asked to exercise their professional judgement to provide feedback in a manner that best supports progress for that student, at that time and in that subject. Heads of Department will provide guidance on this within subject areas, and this will recognise that there is no silver bullet or 'one size fits all' approach. However, research shows that effective feedback does have a number of similar characteristics. When considering how to give feedback, teachers should reflect upon these core principles:

1. **Developmental: This is the primary consideration. All feedback should contribute to the student making progress in their knowledge and understanding, but also in their ability to do something with these competencies.** If feedback is unlikely to lead to progress, it is meaningless (and potentially harmful if it distracts students from what they *should* be attending to).
2. **Challenging:** Feedback must be pitched appropriately to have impact. It should focus on the aspect(s) of learning that students can improve in response to the guidance given, providing challenges that are achievable yet stretch their current abilities. By addressing tasks within each student's "zone of proximal development,"

feedback promotes progress without causing frustration, ensuring that every comment or prompt moves learning forward effectively.

3. **Timely:** Often, feedback is most effective when it is provided promptly (including live feedback), while the learning is still fresh in the student's mind. This can allow students to act on guidance immediately, reinforcing correct understanding and addressing misconceptions before they become ingrained. However, there are circumstances when a short delay can enhance learning. Strategically delaying feedback can enable students to reflect on their work, engage in self-assessment, and develop independent problem-solving skills. It can also give teachers time to prepare richer, more constructive guidance or to integrate whole class learning points. By balancing immediacy with purposeful delay, feedback can support both immediate improvements and long-term retention.
4. **Actionable:** Feedback is most effective when students are given clear opportunities to act upon it. Asking students to respond directly helps them consolidate understanding, correct misconceptions, and practise new skills, turning guidance into tangible improvement. By embedding structured response time into lessons or homework, teachers ensure that feedback is not just received, but actively applied, fostering deeper learning and greater student ownership of progress. It communicates that progression is a shared responsibility between the teacher and student. However, the impact of responding to feedback can be lost if the response itself is perfunctory and isolated from wider learning. Feedback has the greatest impact when students return to and apply it multiple times, beyond their initial response. Revisiting feedback allows learners to consolidate understanding and make deeper improvements over time. By embedding opportunities to review and act on feedback across lessons or tasks, teachers help ensure that guidance supports sustained learning and long-term progress, rather than a one-off correction.
5. **Precise:** Feedback is most effective when it is focused on particular aspects of learning rather than being general or vague. Targeted feedback that focuses on specific knowledge or skills, helps students understand exactly what they are doing well and what they need to improve, allowing them to take precise, actionable steps. By concentrating on clear, manageable areas for development, teachers ensure that feedback is meaningful, efficient, and directly linked to learning objectives.
6. **Modal:** The way feedback is delivered—its modality—plays a crucial role in how effectively students can use it. Whether verbal, written, peer-mediated, individualised or whole class, feedback should be presented in a format that is clear, accessible, and suited to the task and the student's needs. The modality should also take account of the efficiency of the feedback in terms of the impact on both the teacher's workload and student progress. In addition, teachers may consider the intention of the feedback and what they wish to emphasise in their communication of it:
 - ▲ **Feed-forward** – This provides an explanation of the intended (or goal) performance based on a student's current performance. This focuses the student's attention on the question, 'where am I going?' For example, "A perfect response to this question would include more than one example and

each would be supported by evidence from the case study. At present, your answer only contains one idea."

- ▲ **Feedback** – This provides feedback on a student's current performance compared to their previous performance. This focuses the student's attention on the question, 'where am I now?' For example, "Your last essay had a weak conclusion, but this one is much stronger because you summarised your main points effectively."
- ▲ **Feed-up** – This provides feedback on a student's current performance compared to the intended (or goal) performance. This focuses the student's attention on the question, 'what is my next step?' For example, "Your lab report presents data in a well-organised manner, but your results are not linked to your original hypothesis so are not being used to prove a scientific idea."

Responsibility for the 'basics'

Each subject will have minimum expectations of students' work. For example, in a secondary school, *all* teachers should expect *all* students to be attempting to use basic punctuation (capital letters and full stops as a minimum) accurately in every piece of work. However, departments may also have other more subject-specific expectations. Teachers of mathematics may have specific expectations of how students present their workings out or that students use units where required. These 'basics' should, of course, be taught to students, as should the expectation that *students* are responsible for demonstrating these at all times.

Regularly giving feedback on these basics in subsequent pieces of work (e.g. by circling missed capital letters or adding missed units of measurement) shifts the responsibility for thinking about these characteristics back to the teacher. Instead, students should be expected to proof-read their work, including checking whether it meets the subject's minimum expectations, before submission. Didau argues that when students '[neglect] to do what they know how to do', they should receive a consequence. This ensures that, in time, students will attend to the basics as the norm and that teacher-issued feedback can focus on key learning points, supporting students to make progress.

A Guide to Effective and Ineffective Feedback

	is effective when	is ineffective when
Written comments/ book marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Precise instructions are given, showing students exactly what needs to be improved and how to do this ▲ Marginal comments are used to direct student focus precisely ▲ Clear annotation is used to show where there are particular areas of strength (for future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Vague or generalised statements are given, referencing whole responses rather than specific parts of it ▲ It takes the form of end-of-work comments that require further verbal explanation in order for students to use them ▲ Tokenistic 'WWW/EBI comments' are used to generate improvement

	<p>reference) or areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It is used to effectively support progress beyond a brief improvement task ▲ The impact on student outcomes justifies the teacher input and does not create unnecessary workload. 	<p>tasks but have little impact beyond this task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It creates an unjustifiable amount of work for teachers as the time spent writing comments does not lead to any real progress for students.
Highlighted/ticked cover sheets or success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It is used to document outcomes in summative assessments to provide an overview of what students can and can't do ▲ It is used in combination with more precise feedback that identifies areas for improvement and instructs students how to make this progress more explicitly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It is used at the end of work but highlighted/ticked sections do not clearly identify where and how work needs to be improved ▲ It offers generic improvement tasks that may not be the most appropriate for that student at that time but instead offers a 'ballpark' approach.
Verbal feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It enables students to improve their work 'live' ▲ It gives precise instructions showing students exactly what needs to be improved and how to do this ▲ It is used as part of a physical explanation such as modelling or demonstration to 'walk and talk' students through strengths and areas for improvement ▲ It is differentiated for both individuals and groups of students ▲ It is used as an integral part of teaching and learning, responding to needs as they arise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ There is a tokenistic recording of feedback using stamps or written record that serves no purpose other than to evidence that feedback has been given ▲ In the form of imprecise comments or vague instructions that elicit responses showing little, if any, progress ▲ It is used as a time-saving process rather than the most effective form of feedback for students; quality of education must be the priority.
Whole class feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ The assessment of students' work is used to inform precise, focused planning that best supports student progress ▲ Opportunities are taken to model the improvements students need to make in a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It is used to replace individual, generalised 'summary' comments with the same quality of comments but on a bigger scale therefore becoming even more generalised ▲ Excessive documentation is completed to evidence

	<p>collaborative and supported way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Students are supported in effectively self-identifying areas for improvement ▲ Feedback is as useful and effective as it would be if given on an individual basis. 	<p>feedback; the evidence should be visible in students' work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Students require individual input in order to use the whole-class feedback well, therefore creating unnecessary duplication of workload.
Self or peer feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Learning goals are clear and students understand the metrics against which they are being assessed ▲ Students have been trained in how to evaluate work critically and constructively, often through extensive modelling and guided practice ▲ The feedback is also actionable and requires students to reflect and respond to their own evaluation or that of their peers ▲ Students value this type of feedback. This relies on the classroom culture and students being trained to provide feedback that has impact ▲ Integrated with teacher-feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Students are not clear about what to give feedback on, making it vague or focused on student attributes rather than learning (e.g. nice handwriting). This is most common where the task they are evaluating is new or complex ▲ Students are not expected to respond to the feedback ▲ Students are not trained in how to provide purposeful feedback and it is therefore not respected or considered valid by students themselves ▲ It is used too frequently without input from the expert teacher.
Number/grade marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ It is used in summative assessments to gauge an accurate understanding of student performance ▲ It is used in the context of a KS4 or KS5 mark scheme so that students can be precisely directed in order to improve the awarded grade or number ▲ It is used to inform precise planning that supports students in making progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Students do not understand how to move forward from the number given ▲ Numbers are used out of context and scale, and so cannot be understood as a step in a journey.

The College's approach to feedback is grounded in educational research and our shared belief that all pupils can improve through purposeful guidance and effort. This policy reflects principles drawn from key evidence reviews, including the Education Endowment Foundation's *Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning* guidance report (EEF, 2021), which highlights that feedback should be designed to improve learning rather than simply judge performance.

By embedding these research-informed principles into everyday practice, we aim to ensure that feedback in our school is consistent, effective, and central to the process of helping every student make sustained progress.

Each subject has different demands that will mean certain types of feedback, delivered in specific ways, might be more impactful than others. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to determine the most effective feedback strategies for their subject(s) and to describe these in departmental planning. It is also their responsibility, alongside any assigned Lead Practitioners, to evaluate the impact of feedback given to students within their subject(s) and to develop the team to ensure it is of a consistently high standard. However, as the EEF remind us, 'high quality initial instruction will reduce the work that feedback needs to do; formative assessment strategies are required to set learning intentions (which feedback will aim towards) and to assess learning gaps (which feedback will address).'

Therefore, it is vital that teachers, Heads of Department and Lead Practitioners evaluate the role and quality of feedback within the wider practice of teaching and learning.

Some important questions for teachers to consider:

1. At what stages in the process of learning do I need to give feedback?
2. Which modes of feedback will be most effective in ensuring students make good progress? Is this different at different stages of learning?
3. Do I plan opportunities for students to improve work for themselves, before it is completed and/or after it has been assessed?
4. Do I provide clear 'success criteria', in all key stages, against which students' work is assessed and feedback given? Do I model the process of thinking, planning and writing to ensure students are able to meet these criteria?
5. Is feedback precise and useful? Do students' responses to feedback evidence genuine improvement with regard to the learning objective/assessment criteria?
6. Do students' books evidence progress over time? How?

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Policy, particularly the sections on assessment and feedback, as well as the College's Principles of Teaching.

References

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