

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Marking

*This policy should be read in conjunction with related policy documents; **curriculum, work at home and recording, reporting and assessment.***

Introduction

With small class sizes at The New School at West Heath students have the opportunity to receive a great deal of informal feedback. Not all needs to be written down. Teachers should be generous with their praise and encouragement. We all hear and retain negative comments more than positive ones and as Kelmer Pringle has said children need to hear “three positive words for every negative one” (Valerie May thinks it should be at least six!)

However, in addition to verbal feedback, students do need written feedback for their own reference and so that their parents can see their progress.

Aims & Objectives

There are three aims, for the benefit of students, that should be born in mind when marking work. The first is to **celebrate achievement**. The second is to **encourage further success** and the third is to demonstrate and inform the students how their work can be **improved**.

We aim to encourage students to achieve the best possible academic outcome through feedback on their work. An outcome of good marking is that it should inform teachers and assist in **future planning**.

As all our students have negative attitudes to schooling when they first join our school, work set and positive marking should aim to help to rekindle the love of learning. Therefore it is very important that work should be differentiated (see policy on differentiation) and marked so that all students can experience **success** and it should aim to **demonstrate achievement** rather than expose weakness.

Strategies

The School does not impose a uniform style of marking (A to E or 1 to 10). Teachers should use their own professional judgement to find what works best for them. Whatever style is chosen, it should be criterion referenced and demonstrate progress. In the case of externally accredited examinations teachers are expected to follow the board's mark scheme and wherever possible, explain this to the students.

Marking should be:

Regular and within a **reasonable time scale** to sustain enthusiasm and morale.

Consistent: Staff are expected to compile National Curriculum Portfolios to ensure consistency. There is usually only one member of staff in each department but where two teachers are involved liaison is expected.

Supportive: Looking for and building on the positive. Negative comments must be qualified in order to make clear how improvement can be achieved.

Impartial: Some of our students challenge us but we mark their learning not their behaviour, (which may, of course, be commented on separately.)

We recognise the importance of **Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar** in all areas of the curriculum. However, it can be very discouraging for those students with specific learning difficulties to have their work “swiped across with red ink”. It prevents them from experiencing the thrill of their ideas being praised. Sometimes we should listen to *what* they say rather than *how* they say it. In such cases staff are encouraged not to focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar. A helpful approach is to point out a few representative spellings. Liaison with the English department is important where there are difficulties in this area. Some students have specific targets in relation to their literacy needs.

Teachers should always bear in mind the enormous emotional power that marking possesses. For example, if teachers feel strongly about marking in red, they should bear in mind that it can be very off-putting for the student and therefore should use it sensitively.

In addition to the regular marking of current work, staffs are expected to regularly review progress over a period of time by looking back through students’ work.

It is, for many children, a real risk to expose themselves to critical comment. Indeed some will not produce work to protect themselves for fear of failure. Can you remember the sting of words spoken to you as a child or indeed words of encouragement?

Students should know that staff will praise improvements brought about in response to comments made through marking. They should also be left in no doubt as to the certainty of follow-up and monitoring of their response to marking suggestions.

Special Circumstances

In the case of a student with specific learning difficulties it may not be appropriate to mark the work in the normal manner. In such circumstances verbal feedback will be appropriate and liaison with those providing extra specialist help will be necessary.

Staffing & Resources

For teachers, preparation and marking and keeping appropriate records are part of the terms and conditions of employment. It is not counted as part of directed non-contact time. All members of The New School at West Heath teaching staff are specialist teachers, many with many years' experience of teaching in mainstream schools. They are expected to be thorough and informed in their practice of marking.

External Links

Parents should be kept informed of significant outcomes of marking; good or bad. Work should also be on display at parents' evenings with informative comments.

Monitoring & Review

All teachers at the School have the responsibility to monitor their own marking procedures and to ensure that they are in line with this policy. Monitoring of the application of this policy is part of the daily responsibilities of the Head of Education.

Marking	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Assessment, Recording & Reporting, Curriculum, Work at Home	
Appendices:	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
Lead responsibility:	Vice Principal - Education
Relevant Legislation:	To be detailed in the next release
Annual Policy Review Required:	Yes / No
Approved by: S.S. Committee	Date approved:
Ratified by: Trustees	Date ratified: 10/2003
Reviewed – no changes	Date:
Reviewed – with revisions	Date:
Revision No.	1.0