

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

Feedback has the power to impact both positively and negatively on student performance. Effective marking allows the teachers to show the students who they teach that the students efforts are valued. It allows the teachers to make strategic decisions about the next steps students have to make in order to be successful. In order to be positively effective, feedback must answer three major questions by a teacher and/or by a student:

Planning & Organisation of Learning

Learning happens best when there is Quality First Teaching in conjunction with careful planning in the short, medium and long term.

- Good teaching may mean altering a plan in response to learners, but there needs to be a plan to alter. Every teacher and each subject has a different style, but common formats help to ensure consistency.
- Formulaic teaching will not promote good learning, but all lessons need a shape and structure. The Lesson Plan template is recommended as a format for recording lesson planning, and could be used for all formally observed lessons.
- “Schemes of Learning” provide a clear summary of a unit of work especially for newcomers and those outside the department (e.g. staff with cross-curricular or leadership responsibilities, etc).

Differentiation

SMMIS is committed to personalising learning so as to meet the needs of all students. In all lessons, whether settled or not, teachers will plan differentiated activities to ensure that all students are challenged and supported. Even in a group with a narrow range of ability, a range of learning and teaching styles are to be expected over the course of a series of lessons, as well as within an individual lesson.

The following should be noted:

- Differentiation is not restricted to providing tasks of varying difficulty: it includes awareness of learning styles, attention spans, and the full range of Individual Needs and Disabilities
- Differentiation is not restricted to catering for less high-achieving students: it includes provision for the able and ambitious.
- Differentiation is not restricted to the quantity of work expected: the less able need help accessing concepts and problems, not just fewer of them; the more able need broader and deeper learning tasks, not just more of the same ones.

The teachers do need to be aware of individual learning preferences, but they should beware of pandering to students wanting things presented exactly as they prefer. Our role is to build independence in students so that they can learn effectively in any situation: for example, visual learners need to be equipped to cope in situations where there are no visual stimuli.

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

Use of other Adults in the Classroom

Human resources are the most expensive and valuable at the school's disposal, and careful thought and planning needs to be devoted to the best use of other adults in the classroom, whether they be Learning

Support Assistants, or other teachers. The management of those other adults is a key responsibility of a class teacher, and adequate time should be planned and set aside to ensure all are clear as to the objectives of the lesson and their role in supporting students' learning.

Home Work

Home work, as its name suggests, continues the learning done in class at home and beyond. It should be planned as an integral part of lessons, with the same eye for variety of task, promoting independent learning power, instilling good learning habits and dispositions, and stimulating students to be engaged, curious, resourceful and thoughtful learners.

Departments have freedom to devise the range of tasks that will best support and extend students' learning in their subject area. They should be mindful of teachers' workload: some of the best Home Learning tasks involve more thinking than writing. The following should be noted:

- There is a place for routine tasks, especially for consolidating new learning, but something is wrong if all home learning is of that kind.
- There is a place for extended tasks, especially to allow scope for the more able, but the longer the task the more clarity is needed with instructions, expectations, scheme of assessment etc.
- Home learning is an excellent opportunity to engage parents with what students are doing at school: we expect lively interest and can count on significant support from parents in this respect.
- Teachers can capitalise on this best by setting clear tasks, including clear deadlines and ensuring students make careful note of the instructions.
- Asking students to involve parents and other family members e.g. in surveying opinion or bouncing.

Assessment and Feedback for Learning

The primary purpose of all assessment is to enable students to make progress. They need:

- To know what standard, they have attained
- To feel supported and affirmed for what they have achieved, and challenged to go further
- To understand what they can do to move forwards.

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

These messages need to be given in a way that is clear for students, consistent between teachers and – crucially – intelligible to parents so that they can be effective partners in their child’s learning.

“No surprises”

- SMMIS is committed to openness, inclusion and excellence. In the context of assessment this means:
- We aim to be open with our assessment data, not guarding it as a professional secret.
- Our presentation of assessment judgments and targets is tailored to the audience, not shrouded in jargon and not assuming prior knowledge.
- We are guided at all times by the need for students to make progress towards excellence.

Written reports to parents should not contain surprises, especially unpleasant ones.

- Significant concerns about a student’s learning or behaviour must be raised early so that the right intervention and support can be put in place: the report must never be the first a parent (or student, or form tutor) knows about it.
- The grades and levels given on reports should be in line with what students have been given in work over the period.
- It is part of every teacher’s role to ensure all students know how they will be assessed, what the grading/levelling system means and what is required to move up to the next level.
- It is part of the school’s role to ensure parents understand the meaning, status and source of assessment judgments made on their children. Parents’ meetings, written information and Google Classroom will all be used to explain this issue.

For that reason, what follows will start with the processes which occur on a daily, weekly, termly and yearly basis finishing with what is formally sent to parents.

Regular marking and feedback

In between these key assessment tasks, teachers regularly monitor and provide feedback on students’ work in a variety of ways to suit their subject area. The following principles apply

- Teachers will give written feedback at least every 6 lessons at Grades 6, 7 and 8. This will be recorded on ‘green’ feedback sheets, in purple pen (staff):
- The marking schedule should be manageable
- The ‘Reflect & Perfect’ strategy should be implemented as appropriate to encourage students to take ownership of their progress. DIRT (Dedicated improvement and reflection time) time should be used for this.
- Not all work requires a grade
- Where monitoring has been done by oral feedback, teachers should indicate this has happened

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

- Peer assessment is a valuable learning experience
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors should be noted in accordance with agreed guidance, as set out below.

Prompts for Spelling, Punctuation & Grammar

Following the Policy for Literacy Across the Curriculum, agreed standards of presentation should be followed in all subjects.

In turn, teachers should use the following common prompts when giving written feedback:

+	A good piece of work, well done!	?	Clarify your point
=	This piece of work meets your usual standard	E	Use evidence to back up your points/ arguments
-	Below your usual standards	T	Target – what to work on in your next piece. A particularly outstanding paragraph
Ex	Use an example to illustrate your point		
LINK	Link back to the question you have been asked	Sp	Spelling mistake
M	Missing word	O	indicates incorrect or missing punctuation

Levelled and Graded Assessments

To inform the levels / grades given to students and parents, departments carry out regular summative assessment tasks against explicit assessment criteria; the frequency of these tasks depends on the subject.

For these tasks (though not exclusively for them):

- the assessments are moderated within departments to ensure consistency, and parity with curriculum standards set
- students are informed that this is a levelled assessment and given clear assessment criteria, instructions and deadlines.
- departments ensure as far as possible the same conditions and preparation across a cohort.
- students receive detailed written feedback of their level and what they can do to move forwards.
- students record their progress on a subject tracker (found on the back page of all exercise books)

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

Reporting to parents

Parents are sent a report once a semester. Grades are provided under the following headings:

On Target to achieve Target grade (depending on year group):

The key for on Target is:

- + Exceeds expectation – likely to gain a grade higher than the SMMIS target grade
- = Meets expectation – likely to achieve their SMMIS target grade
- Below expectation – currently unlikely to achieve their SMMIS target grade

The 'on Target' is how we think your child is performing in each subject at present. This is based on a combination of test results, regular class work and home learning.

Target for End of Year

- The Target for the End of Year is the grade we expect your child to reach by the end of the academic year.
- If your child is already meeting or exceeding their targets, subject teachers may agree new individual targets so that they are always challenged to aim higher. However, the school targets shown here stay as they are for the year so that we can track progress consistently.

Other Headings

These grades are based on teacher observations, with a key at the foot of the report.

- Attitude & Behaviour – i.e. how far these have supported learning (inc that of other students!)
- Home Learning – i.e. the completion, quality, presentation and punctuality of home learning
- The "for Learning" are on a 4-point scale: 1 = Outstanding, 2= Good, 3= Needs improvement and * = significant concern

Grade is purely academic.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning and Teaching

Classroom practice is at the heart of the success of SMMIS: the teaching and support staff are our most precious resource. A variety of ways are used to support the learning and teaching that goes on in the School, to ensure consistency, share good practice and identify opportunities to make things better.

Ongoing CPD and Professional Development programs are designed to match colleague's needs and aspirations.

Our aim is that a culture of openness and support permeates the work of subject teams. Curriculum leaders need to keep a finger on the pulse, but the emphasis should be on using informal methods to do this, whilst ensuring rigour and professionalism are maintained.

SMMIS Effective Marking and Feedback Policy - Middle School

- Departments are encouraged to have an 'open-door' ethos so that teachers and students are unfazed by visits from other adults (though it should be noted that the design of the building makes it easy to know how the team is operating without the need to go into classrooms)
- The relationship between teacher and students is crucial to learning, however, and there must be space and time for it to grow and flourish in peace.
- We put a high value on risk-taking, and recognise failure as a necessary and useful part of learning and teaching. The pattern of monitoring must not by its frequency or style stifle the Innovation and professional daring that marks out outstanding teachers.

A range of strategies help meet the need for monitoring. Heads of Department and Faculty monitor the work of their teams, and the impact of cross-curricular strands, by means of:

- Lesson observations
- Learning walks with a particular focus
- Work sampling (approx half-termly) in department/faculty meetings
- Informal 'student snapshots' including work sampling and interviews
- Professional Development conversations, including analysis of data (Student Achievement SA)
- Regular departmental meetings

Lesson observations

Teachers will usually be formally observed no more than 3 times per year:

- Once a term (20 minutes) as part of the pattern of Professional Development
- Once as part of the Subject or Area Review process
- Once by the Line Manager as part of the appraisal process

Notice (48 hours) will always be given for these formal observations. Time will be set aside for feedback dialogue as soon after the lesson as possible and a written record will be given to the teacher within 48 hours.

Informal observations are of great value, whether within or across departments. Teachers with different styles, subject or pedagogical expertise, length of service, age or personality can give different perspectives that greatly enrich professional learning.

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