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# VERBAL FEEDBACK: THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' VERBAL FEEDBACK ON STUDENT PROGRESS IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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## Introduction

One of the aspects of teaching with the highest impact is the cycle of feedback, during which teachers give information to students about their performance, relative to defined targets and learning outcomes. Within this aspect, it has been found that all methods of feedback delivery are highly effective (Educational Endowment Fund, 2021), however it is important that feedback is “timely, specific and actionable” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

With not only the students’ progress as a priority, it is also essential to take into consideration that within our school, as well as the culture of schools in general, it is often fed back that teachers feel overwhelmed by the marking that is required in terms of written feedback; therefore, influenced by prior research and inspired by other schools within our community, it was decided as a school that, in order to have a higher impact on both the improving pupils’ progress and reducing teachers’ workload, it would be beneficial to begin to implement verbal feedback in our school.

### Background of the Problem

A forward-thinking school in the United Arab Emirates that is a pioneer of developing pedagogical practice, Deira International School prides itself on being open to adapting traditional teaching ‘norms’ to suit the needs of both teachers and students. Historically, teachers within the school have found it difficult to meet the expectations of written feedback and have questioned its value when there is often limited time within the curriculum for next steps to be completed.

With the successful implementation of a marking policy centred around verbal feedback, both the children and teaching staff will benefit, the intention being that teachers providing support and challenge in the moment will allow children to make more rapid progress towards and beyond Age Related Expectations; additionally, we would see a positive impact on teachers’ well-being once the policy has been successfully implemented across the school.

## Methods

Identified as the most suitable method in this study, action research allowed us to hone in on the specific issue, investigating and trialling ways to address and solve the problem, and subsequently acting on this for timely impact.

Subsequently, the specific research questions were:

- What is the impact of verbal feedback on children’s progress in Reading, Writing and Maths?
- How can verbal feedback be integrated in a way to have the most impact on pupil progress?

### Methodology

Following the initial introduction, the working party then met on a three-week cycle to review strategies and discuss and adapt practice based on which were the most impactful, would be adapted, modifying the Marking and Feedback Policy on a continual basis.

### Participants

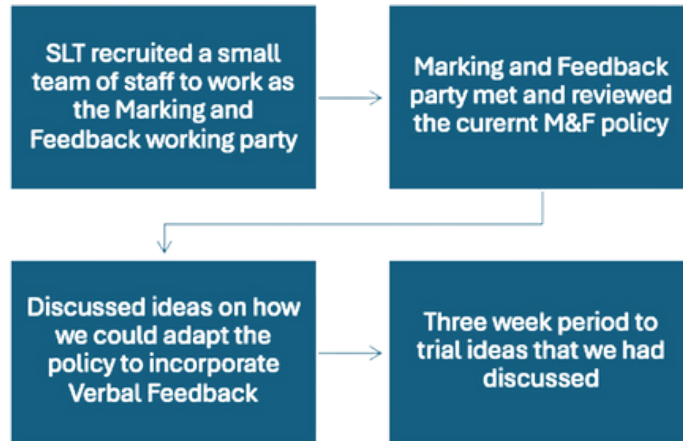
Each member of the Marking and Feedback party took a sample with which they trialed methods of verbal feedback, consisting of two Year 5 classes of 26/27 children and 10 children within the Islamic department of the school.

### Data Collection

The methodology of this research incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data, in the form of online forms for both staff and students to

complete and analysis of summative data.

**Figure 1: Methodology**



### Data Collection

The methodology of this research incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data, in the form of online forms for both staff and students to complete and analysis of summative data. This was used to not only to assess the impact on children’s progress, but also to gain deeper insight into how the new strategies had impacted staff and students’ perceptions.

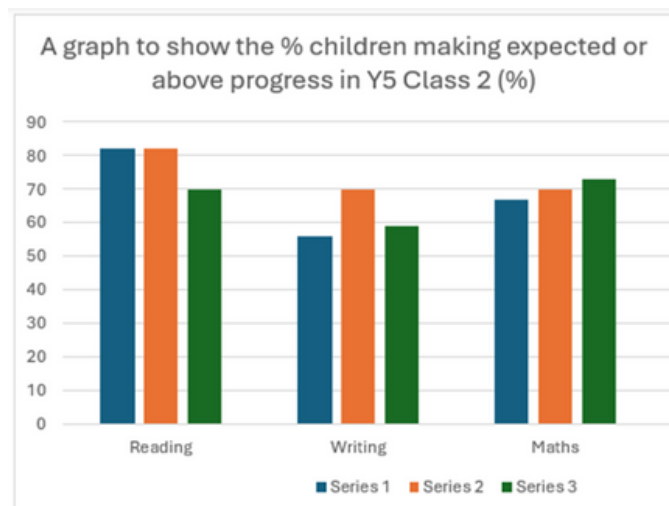
### Data Analysis

The data was then analysed by comparing the progress data of the two Year 5 classes at two points throughout the year, before and after the research project, subsequently reflecting on in which areas the implementation of verbal feedback had been most impactful and how other areas could be adapted. Additionally, children’s response with regards to receiving verbal over written feedback were positive:

*“I like the verbal feedback system because I get to do it in time unlike the next step I usually don’t find it”.*

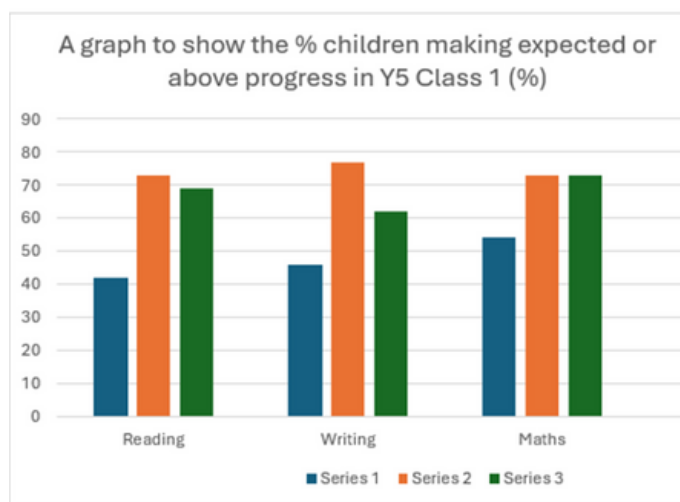
## Results

**Figure 2: The % of children making expected or above expected progress throughout the academic year in class 2**



The impact of verbal feedback on children’s progress across the year was overall positive but inconclusive between Term 2 and Term 3, which was the point at which verbal feedback was introduced. However, 100% of the children who responded to the survey responded to the question “Do you think that receiving verbal feedback helps you to learn and make progress?” with yes or sometimes, which demonstrates the positive impact it has had on children’s attitude to feedback.

**Figure 3: The % of children making expected or above expected progress throughout the academic year in class I**



## Conclusion and Reflections

Within the sample groups, children responded positively to verbal feedback, and in-class observations have shown that feedback is more timely and personalised, with children making better progress within each lesson. As is the case in many aspects of learning, there is natural fluctuation within children’s progress across the year, which may explain why the results do not show significant positive impact on children’s progress. The time constraints of the study may also have limited the results; over a longer period, we would hope to see children making above expected progress.

Staff have also reacted positively to the impact verbal feedback is having on their workload, and next academic year, it may be beneficial to increase the number of staff members in the working party to further refine practise and discuss impact.

In terms of my own practice, feedback is much more personalised and my focus has shifted from making sure feedback is evidenced to ensuring that it is meaningful. With further refinement, others within the school will be able to draw on our knowledge and implement a more meaningful approach to feedback, as well as beginning to introduce coaching methods to support.

## References

Education Endowment Foundation. (2021). *Feedback*. Retrieved from <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/feedback>

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81–112.