



Marking and Feedback Policy

The Willows Catholic Primary School

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With Christ at our heart, we are a loving, caring family where each individual is nurtured in mind and spirit to fully become the person God created. In learning together, we support each other to reach our full potential in a safe and stimulating environment where all are valued and respected.

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1. Rationale

At The Willows, the purpose of marking and feedback is simple:

to help pupils learn, improve and become increasingly independent.

Feedback is an important part of effective teaching. Evidence suggests that feedback can have a substantial positive impact on pupil learning when it is based on accurate assessment, focuses on what pupils need to improve and gives pupils an opportunity to act upon it (*Education Endowment Foundation, 2021a; Education Endowment Foundation, 2021b*).

However, feedback and written marking are not the same thing.

The evidence supporting feedback is considerably stronger than the evidence supporting extensive written marking. The Department for Education has also warned against marking practices where the time required is not matched by an impact on pupil progress (*Department for Education, 2016*).

This policy therefore moves the school's emphasis away from marking work after learning has taken place and towards checking, responding and giving feedback as part of the teaching and learning process.

Our approach is based on the principles that feedback should be:

- purposeful
- timely
- responsive to pupils' learning
- understood by the pupil
- followed by action where appropriate
- proportionate to the task
- manageable for staff.

The method used should serve the learning. No single form of feedback will be appropriate in every subject, lesson or situation.

2. Evidence Base

This policy draws particularly on the Education Endowment Foundation's guidance on teacher feedback.

The EEF recommends three broad principles:

1. provide high-quality initial teaching, including careful formative assessment
2. deliver appropriately timed feedback that focuses on moving learning forward
3. plan how pupils will receive and use feedback

The EEF advises schools to focus on these principles rather than becoming overly concerned with whether feedback is written or verbal. Both can be effective depending on the context (*Education Endowment Foundation, 2021b*).

The Department for Education's review of marking recommends that marking practices should be meaningful, manageable and motivating and should not create unnecessary teacher workload (*Department for Education, 2016*).

Current Ofsted guidance states that inspectors do not use work scrutiny to evaluate teachers' marking and do not prescribe the frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback. Schools are also not required to provide written evidence that oral feedback has taken place (*Ofsted, 2026*).

Our approach is therefore based on evidence of learning and improvement, rather than evidence that marking has taken place.

3. Our Approach

Feedback at The Willows should form part of a continuous teaching cycle:

Teach → Check → Respond → Pupil acts → Check again

Teachers and teaching assistants should seek to identify pupils' understanding during learning wherever practicable, rather than relying primarily on marking completed work afterwards.

This reflects the increasing emphasis within our teaching on modelling, guided practice, checking for understanding, adaptive teaching and ensuring pupils are supported before misconceptions become embedded.

Teachers may use approaches such as:

- questioning
- observation
- mini-whiteboards
- discussion
- reviewing work while circulating
- asking pupils to explain their thinking
- checking examples during guided practice
- retrieval activities
- reviewing completed work
- working with individuals or groups.

The information gained should inform what happens next.

The appropriate response might be:

- confirmation that the pupil is successful
- a prompt
- a question
- correction of an error
- further explanation
- modelling
- additional practice
- use of a resource or scaffold
- pupil correction
- small-group support
- whole-class reteaching
- adaptation of subsequent teaching
- written feedback.

The important question is not: "How has this been marked?" It is: "What does the pupil need next and how will we respond?"

4. In-the-moment feedback

Where appropriate, staff should prioritise feedback during learning. This allows misconceptions to be identified before pupils repeatedly practise an incorrect method and enables pupils to act upon feedback while the learning is still active.

In-the-moment feedback may involve:

- discussion with the pupil
- asking the pupil to identify an error
- directing the pupil back to a model
- giving a clue or prompt
- modelling another example
- asking a further question
- correcting something together
- providing further practice
- bringing several pupils together for additional teaching.

Feedback should not automatically provide pupils with the answer. Where appropriate, adults should use prompts and questions that encourage pupils to think, identify errors and become increasingly independent.

5. Verbal Feedback

Verbal feedback is an important part of teaching and will often be the most efficient and effective form of feedback. There is no requirement to record that verbal feedback has taken place.

Staff should therefore not routinely write: VF, verbal feedback given, discussed with pupil, or another code simply to provide evidence that a conversation occurred.

Ofsted explicitly states that schools are not required to provide written evidence of oral feedback (*Ofsted, 2026*).

The evidence of effective verbal feedback should be found primarily in:

- the pupil's subsequent thinking
- corrections or improvements where appropriate
- improved understanding
- later work
- the teacher's subsequent teaching.

6. Written feedback

Written feedback remains one of the tools available to teachers. It should be used where writing something is likely to add value to the pupil's learning.

Written feedback might be appropriate when:

- a pupil needs a short prompt that they can act upon independently
- the teacher needs to draw attention to a particular misconception
- a question will encourage further thinking
- the pupil needs to return to a specific part of their work
- feedback cannot reasonably be given during the lesson
- the nature of the work makes delayed feedback more appropriate.

Written feedback should normally be brief, specific and actionable. For example: *Where did the exchange go?* may be more useful than: *"You have worked really hard today. Most of your answers are correct but remember to check your exchanging carefully next time."*

Staff are not expected to write lengthy comments where a shorter response would achieve the same learning purpose.

7. Pupil Response

Effective feedback should, where appropriate, require pupils to think and act. The EEF recommends planning how pupils will receive and use feedback rather than assuming that providing feedback alone will lead to improvement (*Education Endowment Foundation, 2021b*).

Depending on the task, pupils may:

- correct an error
- improve a sentence or section of work
- complete another example
- explain what went wrong
- redraft part of their work
- respond to a question
- discuss their thinking
- revisit previous learning
- apply the feedback in subsequent work.

Not every piece of feedback requires a written pupil response. The purpose is learning, not creating visible evidence of a feedback exchange.

8. Errors and misconceptions

Staff should distinguish, as far as possible, between an error and a misconception. A pupil may simply make a slip despite understanding the concept. In this case, identifying the error and allowing the pupil to correct it may be sufficient.

Where a pupil has misunderstood the underlying concept, marking an answer wrong is unlikely to be enough. The adult may need to:

- question
- explain
- model
- return to manipulatives or other resources
- provide additional examples
- teach a small group
- reteach the concept.

Sometimes the best response to pupils' work is further teaching rather than further marking.

9. Adult and pupil pen colours

To provide a simple and consistent visual distinction within pupils' books teachers and teaching assistants will use green pen when they write directly in pupils' books. This enables adult input to be easily distinguished from pupils' work.

There is no expectation that every page or piece of work contains green pen. The absence of green pen does not mean that feedback has not taken place.

Pupils will normally use purple pen when:

- correcting work
- improving work following feedback
- self-marking
- responding to feedback
- undertaking appropriate peer assessment.

The purpose of purple pen is simply to make pupil review and improvement easy to identify. There is no requirement for pupils to make a purple-pen response to every piece of work.

The colours are an organisational convention. They are not, in themselves, a teaching strategy.

10. Self-marking and self-assessment

Where pupils have the knowledge and maturity to do so accurately, self-marking can provide immediate feedback and encourage pupils to identify and correct errors.

Self-marking should involve more than pupils simply putting ticks and crosses beside answers. Where appropriate, pupils should be encouraged to:

Check → Notice → Understand → Correct

For example, following an arithmetic activity, pupils might:

1. check their answers
2. identify any that differ
3. locate the point at which an error occurred
4. correct the calculation
5. complete another similar example if required.

Teachers should use information from this process to identify pupils who require further support.

11. Peer feedback

Peer feedback may be used where it has a clear learning purpose. It is most likely to be useful when:

- pupils understand the learning well enough to evaluate the work
- expectations are clear
- pupils have appropriate models
- the focus is specific
- pupils have been taught how to give useful feedback
- the recipient has an opportunity to respond.

Peer assessment should not be used simply to demonstrate that peer assessment has taken place. The teacher retains responsibility for assessing pupils' learning.

12. Religious Education

Feedback in Religious Education should reflect the same principles used across the school: it should be purposeful, proportionate and focused on helping pupils improve their understanding.

Teachers should not feel required to write a comment on every piece of RE work. The response should depend on what the pupil has demonstrated and what will help them move forward.

Where possible, misconceptions and gaps in understanding should be addressed during the lesson through questioning, discussion, modelling or further explanation.

Written feedback should be used where it adds value.

Understand

Work linked to **Understand** should demonstrate what pupils know and understand about the content they have been taught. Feedback should focus on:

- accuracy of religious knowledge
- correct use of religious vocabulary
- understanding of scripture
- understanding of Catholic beliefs, practices and traditions
- making appropriate links between ideas
- correcting significant misconceptions.

Where a pupil has made a simple error, a short correction or prompt may be sufficient.

Where a pupil demonstrates a deeper misconception, the teacher should consider whether further teaching is needed rather than simply writing a correction in the book.

Where several pupils share the same misconception, this should usually be addressed through further teaching rather than through repeated individual written comments.

Discern

Work linked to **Discern** should increasingly require pupils to think, interpret, compare and justify.

Feedback should help pupils move beyond simple statements or unsupported opinions. Teachers may prompt pupils to:

- explain their reasoning
- use evidence from scripture or Catholic teaching
- consider another perspective
- compare ideas
- make links with previous learning
- justify a conclusion.

Where appropriate, pupils should respond by developing or improving their original answer.

Respond

Work linked to **Respond** should enable pupils to consider the meaning and significance of what they have learned. Feedback should focus on the quality of the pupil's thinking and how well they draw on their RE learning. Teachers may encourage pupils to:

- make connections with what they have learned
- explain the significance of an idea
- consider how beliefs might influence actions
- reflect on a question in greater depth
- justify a response using knowledge from the lesson.

Where pupils give a personal response, teachers should not judge or mark the strength of the pupil's personal faith. The focus should remain on the quality of the pupil's reasoning, understanding and use of what has been taught.

Scripture and religious vocabulary

Where pupils use scripture or key religious vocabulary, significant inaccuracies should be addressed. Teachers should help pupils to:

- use key vocabulary accurately
- refer to scripture appropriately
- understand the meaning of the scripture being studied
- use scripture or religious teaching as evidence where appropriate.

Not every minor error needs an individual written correction. Teachers should prioritise errors that affect religious understanding.

Pupil response

Where feedback requires action, pupils should be given time to respond. This may involve:

- correcting an error
- improving an explanation
- adding evidence
- developing a response
- revisiting a misconception
- answering a further question.

Pupils will normally use purple pen when making corrections or improvements. There is no requirement for every piece of RE work to contain a written teacher comment or a purple-pen response.

What effective feedback in RE should achieve

Feedback in RE should help pupils to produce work which, over time, shows that they can:

- **Understand** with increasing accuracy and depth
- **Discern** by explaining, interpreting and justifying
- **Respond** thoughtfully using what they have learned.

The quality of feedback should therefore be judged by the development in pupils' work and understanding, not by the quantity of written marking in their books.

13. Mathematics

Feedback in mathematics should place particular emphasis on identifying understanding and misconceptions during the lesson. Teachers and teaching assistants should:

- check examples while pupils work
- ask pupils to explain their methods

- intervene when a misconception becomes apparent
- encourage pupils to identify and correct errors
- use self-marking where this provides useful immediate feedback
- provide further examples where pupils need to demonstrate that they can apply feedback
- adapt teaching where several pupils share the same misconception.

Pupils should not routinely be allowed to complete large amounts of work using an incorrect method simply because marking will take place later.

Where answers can be checked efficiently and accurately by pupils, teacher time should not routinely be spent marking every answer afterwards unless reviewing the work provides information needed for future teaching.

14. Writing

Feedback in writing should support pupils to become increasingly effective and independent writers. Feedback may take place:

- during planning
- during composition
- through teacher-pupil discussion
- during editing
- after the teacher has reviewed completed writing
- through subsequent whole-class or group teaching.

Adults should avoid overwhelming pupils by identifying every possible weakness in a piece of writing. Feedback should normally prioritise the aspects most important to the pupil's development and the intended learning. Not every spelling, punctuation or grammatical error needs to be individually corrected by the teacher. Repeated or significant errors should inform future teaching.

Where several pupils demonstrate the same need, it may be more effective to address this through whole-class or group teaching than to write the same comment repeatedly.

Extended writing may sometimes benefit from delayed feedback because frequent interruption during composition can distract pupils from generating and organising ideas.

15. Wider curriculum

There is no requirement for marking to look identical across subjects. The appropriate approach should reflect:

- the purpose of the task
- the knowledge or skill being assessed
- the age of the pupils
- the way pupils can most effectively demonstrate understanding.

In subjects such as RE, science, history, and geography, verbal questioning, discussion and retrieval may sometimes provide more useful information about pupils' understanding than extensive written marking.

Where written work reveals misconceptions, teachers should address them through appropriate feedback or subsequent teaching.

Practical subjects may generate little or no written marking. This does not imply that assessment or feedback has not occurred.

16. Early Years Foundation Stage

In EYFS, feedback will predominantly take place through responsive interaction with children.

Adults will:

- observe
- question
- model
- comment
- prompt
- extend language
- demonstrate
- scaffold learning
- respond to children's ideas and misconceptions.

There is no expectation for formal written marking of children's work. The principles of immediate, responsive feedback should be applied in ways appropriate to young children's development.

17. Pupils with SEND

Feedback should be adapted to pupils' individual needs. This may include:

- shorter verbal instructions
- visual prompts
- modelling
- additional processing time
- targeted questions
- reduced written feedback
- practical resources
- additional repetition
- breaking feedback into manageable steps.

Feedback should promote independence rather than create unnecessary reliance on an adult.

The EEF's guidance on teaching assistants emphasises the use of scaffolding strategies such as prompting, clueing, modelling and correcting while gradually supporting pupils towards greater independence (*Education Endowment Foundation, 2025*).

Pupils who need the greatest support should not routinely receive less access to high-quality teacher interaction because a teaching assistant is available.

18. The role of teaching assistants

Teaching assistants are an important part of the school's feedback approach. They should be included in professional development so that teachers and teaching assistants share a common understanding of effective feedback.

Teaching assistants may:

- check pupils' understanding
- question pupils
- prompt and scaffold
- provide verbal feedback
- identify errors or misconceptions
- support pupil correction
- provide additional practice
- contribute observations to the teacher.

Teaching assistants should communicate significant misconceptions or difficulties to the teacher so these can inform subsequent teaching. Their role is not simply to correct pupils' work or complete marking on behalf of the teacher.

Feedback should support pupils to think and work increasingly independently. The teacher retains overall responsibility for pupils' learning and assessment.

19. Whole-class and group feedback

Where a number of pupils share the same misconception or area for development, teachers may choose to provide feedback to a group or the whole class. This might involve:

- sharing anonymised examples
- modelling
- reteaching
- comparing examples
- correcting misconceptions
- guided editing
- further practice.

Teachers are not required to complete a whole-class feedback form.

Whole-class feedback is an approach that teachers may use when it is the most effective and efficient response to pupils' learning. It should not become a replacement compliance exercise for written marking.

20. What this policy does not require

Teachers and teaching assistants are not expected to:

- write a comment on every piece of work
- mark every question themselves
- provide a written next step after every lesson
- write evidence that verbal feedback has occurred
- use 'VF' or similar codes
- ensure green pen appears on every page
- require purple-pen responses after every lesson
- complete whole-class feedback forms after every lesson
- correct every spelling, punctuation or grammatical error
- create additional written feedback solely for book scrutiny
- mark work simply to show another adult that it has been marked.

These practices should only be used when they serve a clear educational purpose.

21. Staff workload

Teacher and teaching assistant time should be used where it has the greatest impact on pupils.

The Department for Education describes effective marking as meaningful, manageable and motivating and cautions against marking practices where workload is disproportionate to their impact on pupils (*Department for Education, 2016*).

Staff should therefore consider:

Does this improve pupils' learning enough to justify the time it takes?

If an activity exists primarily to demonstrate compliance rather than improve learning, it should not form part of routine school practice.

22. Monitoring

Leaders will not evaluate the quality of feedback by counting:

- teacher comments
- ticks
- green pen
- purple pen
- written targets
- marking codes.

Monitoring should instead consider the impact of feedback and responsive teaching on learning.

Leaders and subject leaders may consider:

- whether pupils understand what they are learning
- whether errors and misconceptions are identified
- whether pupils are given appropriate opportunities to correct and improve
- whether later work demonstrates learning and improvement
- whether pupils can explain their thinking
- whether teachers know which pupils require further teaching
- whether teaching adapts in response to assessment
- whether pupils are developing independence
- whether feedback practices are manageable for staff
- whether pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Evidence may be gathered through:

- lesson visits
- discussions with pupils
- professional dialogue with staff
- looking at pupils' work over time
- subject monitoring
- assessment information where appropriate.

Work scrutiny will focus primarily on learning over time, rather than compliance with a marking system. Current Ofsted guidance similarly states that inspectors do not use work scrutiny to evaluate teachers' marking and do not prescribe the frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback (*Ofsted, 2026*).

23. Professional development

Moving towards greater in-the-moment feedback requires more than changing a written policy.

Staff will receive professional development to develop a shared understanding of:

- checking for understanding
- identifying misconceptions
- effective questioning
- knowing when to intervene
- using prompts rather than simply giving answers
- modelling
- scaffolding
- supporting pupils to correct their own work
- developing pupil independence
- deciding when immediate or delayed feedback is most appropriate.

This professional development will include teachers and teaching assistants. The aim is not simply to reduce written marking. It is to replace lower-impact practices with higher-quality interaction, assessment and responsive teaching.

24. Professional judgement

This policy intentionally does not prescribe a single feedback method for every lesson. Effective feedback depends on:

- the pupil
- the subject
- the task
- the learning intention
- what the teacher discovers about pupils' understanding.

The EEF advises schools to prioritise the principles of effective feedback over particular methods of delivery (*Education Endowment Foundation, 2021b*). Teachers are therefore expected to exercise professional judgement within the principles established by this policy. Consistency at The Willows means consistency of purpose and expectations for learning, not identical marking in every book.

25. Summary

Our approach can be summarised as:

- Teach well.
- Check what pupils understand.
- Respond while learning is happening wherever possible.
- Give feedback that pupils can understand and use.
- Expect pupils to think and act.
- Reteach when feedback alone is not enough.
- Write in books when writing adds value.
- Do not create evidence of feedback simply to prove that feedback happened.

The measure of effective feedback is not the amount of teacher pen in a book. It is what pupils learn as a result.

