

ASSESSMENT, MARKING & FEEDBACK POLICY

Date	Review Date	Contact
01.02.19	01.02.20	Head of School & Education

Aims

This policy is underpinned by our core values as stated in our aims & ethos.

Assessment, marking and feedback (AM&F) informs students how to improve, and teachers how to intervene. Good AM&F improves the impact of teaching on students' learning.

The key aims of this AM&F policy are:

- to ensure students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing, where they should be aiming, and how they can achieve it;
- to establish a broad, consistent approach to AM&F across the school whilst respecting the fact that different students and subjects will have different needs;
- to underline the school's expectations that teachers give students appropriate and timely feedback on performance during lessons using a range of correction techniques to support them and help them improve;
- to release teachers from the extraneous burden of superfluous written marking;
- to ensure that feedback given is positive and constructive;
- to ensure lessons include activities to evaluate whether learning is taking place.

Our aim is to continually improve assessment, marking & feedback, which is also described in procedural document 'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Systems' to coordinate various other elements of our provision with elements of AM&F, and which is under annual review.

The effectiveness of our AM&F Policy may be seen in students' progress and in their ability to articulate where they are, where they are going, and how to get there whenever asked.

Rationale

Rod Ellis': "Teachers should be prepared to vary who, when and how they correct in accordance with the cognitive and affective needs of the individual learner. In effect this means they do not need to follow a consistent set of procedures for all students." Far more important than the formulaic application of technique is that each teacher reflect on the values they consider important when providing feedback: To what end? Is the student motivated by accuracy, communicative competence, meeting exam criteria, etc? Do we aim to correct the student's behaviour/performance in the individual piece of work or their attitude to learning and their work ethic generally? Is there more to 'correct' beyond technical errors; for example, the ethical premises of a student's output?

Newbury Hall has very small classes of non-native speakers. Our AM&F practices are therefore often more naturally a development of EFL models in preference to what may be assumed best for native speakers or mixed groups. They are equally intended to reap the greatest benefits from our small classes: AM&F that adheres to large-group or large-school principles would undermine the very raison d'être of our small classes; namely, the opportunities small classes provide for far more immediate, spoken, spontaneous and discursive AM&F. Given that teaching and learning at Newbury Hall does not happen en masse, there is little reason for AM&F to follow suit.

¹ Rod Ellis (2009), Principles of Instructed Language Learning, http://asian-efl-journal.com/sept_05_re.pdf

Under no circumstances should teachers substitute good preparation beforehand for more time on AM&F post hoc, especially if it is motivated by the desire to create evidence rather than help students. AM&F does not need to be evidenced in writing; no teacher should waste time writing down AM&F they have provided orally, nor make students write it down unless they consider it wise in the individual instance, for example by correcting their own spelling. However, the SLT expects to see evidence of students receiving AM&F during formal and informal observations and in day-to-day discussions with students.

Assessment

Induction

At induction, students take entry tests following the New Student Inductions Workflow.

Pupils on an Intensive Academic Literacy programme are placed by age, the cultural mix of the class and language level, with consideration also given to academic backgrounds and ambitions, etc. The rationale for considering all these factors relates to the maturity of students playing a role in the nature of the topics discussed, our aim of encouraging intercultural mixing and use of English between different L2 speakers, and the format of lessons playing relatively easily to personalisation and differentiation. Where the language-level split in a class organised by age and nationality mix would be too great, students are moved and classes thereby adjusted.

Intensive Exam Skills classes typically follow a high-low split at approximately CEFR B2 depending on the exam and the students in school.

In the case of unusual, ill-fitting, etc induction test results for the programme requested, meetings may be held with students, parents, etc to determine suitable interventions or alternative provision.

Monitoring

Following induction, students typically take weekly English proficiency C-tests, the results of which are recorded publicly on the Progress Board. The Progress Board is also used to record and share any other tests done in class, and is monitored weekly on the SLT standing agenda.

Teachers may record other marks and grades they award as they see fit; half-termly reports or certificates of attendance should provide a summary grade for parents, however. AM&F that teachers deem worthy of sharing throughout the school can be added to the Progress Board and points be given on ClassDojo. It can then be followed up by all staff in a more motivating manner.

For short-stay students formative assessment and minor interventions are made largely by individual teachers within classes and may be shared when teachers feel it is necessary to support students.

Half-termly reports collate students' test results from across their programme so that interventions can be made (monitored in half-termly academic reviews on the SLT standing agenda). Progress or lack thereof is thus communicated to parents at least half-termly and interventions made that may include behaviour and attitude as well as academic issues.

Public exam results are analysed on the Annual Schedule in comparison to the same students' progress within the preceding year, their predicted grades and to our cohorts of recent years, and changes made - often at the curriculum level. As per good practice guidelines and statutory requirements for very small groups and non-typical student populations, we do not normally assess our results against the big data of national norms, which would be largely irrelevant and inconsequential; however, we monitor language proficiency closely, which permits us a relatively holistic overview of expected progress and likely interventions.

Interventions

Two key documents inform more significant interventions: [Learning Support](#) for general academic issues and [Literacy Support](#) for issues relating more directly to language. Interventions may include, for example, extra phonics or other lessons, a change of resources, teaching style, or programme.

Practice

Attainment - It is important for teachers, parents and students to know periodically how well learning is going and what still needs to be done. Students need to be clear about what to do to progress from one level/grade to the next and equally should be clear about the expected progress they should be making through the key stage or our equivalent (CEFR level, Exam Skills class, etc).

Recording of marks – Recent grades and predicted grades form part of half-termly reports, and tick boxes are used to highlight the student’s commitment and effort in various areas.

A key result of good AM&F is that students know where they are and what they need to do to improve. Questioning students on this also takes place on an ongoing, informal basis.

Grading and grade-based target-setting will only constitute a very small part of good AM&F, which should also include study skills, motivation, etc. Grading and grade-based target-setting need only be a part of curriculum-level AM&F to allow teachers to concentrate on the more qualitative aspects of AM&F in classes.

Since the primary focus for most Newbury Hall students in most subjects is terminology to support language acquisition to then support achievement, AM&F should focus largely on this, especially towards the start of courses.

Feedback

Lourdes Ortega summarises the (lack of consistent) research findings on the positive impacts of feedback at Notre Dame University, 2012: <https://vimeo.com/30780402>.

There is a largely unquestioned belief that feedback is highly effective at raising attainment. It is not at all true. The evidence on the effectiveness of feedback is highly variable across the board and teachers should never assume that giving feedback - especially technical feedback - is de facto desirable. It may be, however, that ‘emotional’ feedback (encouragement, disappointment, high expectations, the metaphorical kick up the backside, etc) can have more substantial effects. In terms of motivation, it is worth remembering that feedback is always useless if a student does not properly care about reaching the goal the feedback is intended to help them towards. This is largely a soft skill and probably comes with experience: the right words at the right time.

Teachers should be wary of giving feedback that improves immediate performance but may negatively affect long-term learning: students may not have to think about how to make improvements because the teacher is bridging the learning gap by making the next step too easy; students may become overly reliant on the teacher for concept-checking without learning to quiz themselves; feedback may interrupt learn-forget-recall cycles, etc. This latter is important: to remember something well, it must be recalled, which means it must be first forgotten and too much feedback can interrupt this. Similarly, long-term learning depends upon thinking effortfully and feedback that aims to scaffold and simplify things may remove this opportunity. If anything, feedback should provoke more and deeper thinking, quite possibly making things harder. No struggle (because of lots of ‘useful’ feedback) might mean no learning. Go wisely!

A teacher’s job is not to make work easy. It is to make it difficult. If you are not challenged, you do not make mistakes. If you do not make mistakes, feedback is useless.” John Hattie

Different students and subjects may of course have different needs regarding AM&F, and teachers may be expected to cater for this. For example, less advanced students may need simpler feedback focusing on spelling or other basic elements of language; maths students may need more graded work returned to them; A-level students may need more discursive comments on the argument structure of essays, etc. There is no requirement for any of it to be written at Newbury Hall.

On Mondays and Fridays students have weekly Progress Testing (C-tests). These are summative and indicate the overall language proficiency level of each student and the progress they have made. Throughout the week, however, teachers should do smaller formative tasks in class to check students’ understanding of specific items, to provide a basis for feedback, to motivate students, to give them exam practice, etc. For long-stay students both in-class formative assessment and summative weekly test results are included in reports.

Whenever asked, it is important that students can clearly answer the questions:

- **Where are you now?** / What level are you at? / What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- **Where are you going?** / Targets? / What results do you need for your next school, etc?
- **How can you get there?** / How to improve? / What areas should you focus on?

but not necessarily because the teacher has told them directly. Teachers may provide opportunities for students to work out their own answers to these questions; but it must be actively done.

Similarly, for teachers, it is important that they can answer: What impact do you have on your students? / What do you do that works best in terms of students' learning? How do you know they are acting on your feedback to improve (not ignoring it)?

Effective reasons and ways to give feedback include instructional clarity if a student has misunderstood exactly what they should be doing or how they should be doing it; motivation to increase effort; aspiration to aim higher than they think they are capable.

Feedback should be specific to the task:

- “If you tried adding these two numbers first...” or “You need a subject in that sentence...”

not global:

- “Try harder!” “Focus!” “Be better at maths!”

Feedback should convince students they can change. Give feedback that encourages them to attribute progress to factors they can control, e.g., “You’ve got a grade higher because you proofread your work,” or, “You’ve improved your spelling test result because I saw you revising at breakfast.”

Have students highlight their own errors (proofreading) or areas they have taken risks to push their understanding and then give targeted feedback on those areas where they are ready to learn. This may be in writing, but also in speech when students try a new word with a questioning, unsure tone.

Where students have made a mistake unwittingly, instead of correcting, ask probing questions to get them to think and reconsider things themselves; very small scale, focused Socratic questioning. Some students, of course, will respond more readily to a direct question - teachers must judge.

The main reasons students will increase their effort are:

- Hopeful competition - to do better than others
- Fearful competition - to avoid doing worse than others
- Intrinsic interest in the task

so any feedback which either convinces them to invest extra effort to improve their performance to pursue the first two or allows them to deepen their interest will be effective.

Good signs that teaching is directly impacting learning and that appropriate AM&F is taking place are long-term progress and students' ability to articulate how well they are doing, where they should be aiming, and how they can achieve it.

If you can demonstrate durable, flexible, long-term learning in your students, feedback is irrelevant.

Signed:

Alex McNish
Head of School & Education
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