

Developing written feedback in history

Following the training in the generic unit *Written feedback*, it is important to consider how the key messages of the training apply to history. As part of the whole-school focus on this, the following subject development material is intended to help you consider the key messages of the training unit and identify any areas requiring development in your department.

The following is a brief summary of the training unit.

Objectives

- To recognise the types of written feedback that help pupils to improve.
- To focus written feedback on the learning objectives and planned learning outcomes of lessons so that pupils can see the immediate relevance of comments.
- To develop a strategy to provide written feedback that helps pupils to improve.
- To contribute to developing a whole-school policy clarifying the relationship between oral and written feedback.

Key messages

- The learning objectives and learning outcomes need to be the reference point for a teacher's written feedback. These need to be shared and made clear to pupils in advance of attempting the task.
- Effective feedback depends on the pupils being clear about what is expected of them. Pupils should have an expectation that the feedback they receive will explain what they have done well, with reasons, and where and how they can improve.
- Pupils should be given written feedback that provides clear evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, prompts further thought and reasoning and identifies the next steps in their learning.
- To be able to identify the next steps in pupils' learning, a teacher needs to have a secure understanding of progression in the subject and be able to recognise pupils' misconceptions and challenges in the context of the subject.

The following material builds on the tasks outlined in the 'Ready for more?' section of the *Written feedback* training unit and it is intended for all those that teach history.

To help you identify the appropriate starting point, the next section outlines a self-review that directs you to the material that will best support your departmental development.

Reviewing existing practice in written feedback

The table below provides a tool for a department to self-review current practice and to help identify an appropriate starting point.

As a department, agree and highlight the statements below that best reflect the practice of the whole department. At the bottom of each column is a reference to the tasks that will support your current practice and provide the appropriate material to develop from this point.

Having completed this review you should read 'Making effective use of the subject development material' on the next page.

	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Teachers	<p>The departmental policy for providing written feedback does not relate to whole-school policy.</p> <p>The subject leader has identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a variety of disparate approaches to written feedback, e.g. a mixture of comments and different gradings within the department that written feedback often does not relate directly to the learning objectives and learning outcomes for the lesson in which the work was carried out that some teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to act on their feedback. 	<p>The departmental policy for providing written feedback relates to whole-school policy.</p> <p>There is a consistency of approach to written feedback developing across the department.</p> <p>Written feedback often directly relates to the learning objectives and outcomes but this is not consistent across the department and/or key stages.</p> <p>Written feedback increasingly clarifies for pupils precisely what they need to do to improve. Opportunities for pupils to act on teacher feedback are usually provided.</p>	<p>Whole-school and departmental policies emphasise the importance of referencing learning objectives in written feedback.</p> <p>The department has identified learning milestones and key tasks that will be marked in detail.</p> <p>Written feedback helps all pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve.</p> <p>Teachers routinely provide time for pupils to reflect on, and respond to, written feedback.</p>	<p>Departmental policy and practice is consistent with whole-school policy in ensuring that written feedback is based on learning objectives and outcomes and focuses on improving standards in the subject.</p> <p>Departments across the school have a coherent and consistent approach to identifying learning milestones and key tasks to be marked in detail.</p> <p>Written feedback informs pupil target setting in the subject.</p> <p>Written feedback clearly identifies next steps for learning and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to consider and act on it.</p>
Pupils	<p>The subject leader has identified that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pupils cannot connect the written feedback to the learning objectives for the lesson pupils typically do not understand the feedback given pupils tend not to act upon written feedback. 	<p>Most pupils understand that written feedback is related to the learning objectives and outcomes of the lesson.</p> <p>Most pupils in lessons can explain what the written feedback means and can act upon it.</p>	<p>All pupils know that action is expected in relation to feedback.</p> <p>All pupils routinely use written feedback to improve their work.</p> <p>Pupil work shows evidence of a response to written feedback.</p>	<p>Pupils routinely use written feedback to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to identify ways in which they can improve.</p> <p>Pupils understand how feedback relates to their longer-term goals and can set their own targets for improvement.</p> <p>Pupils are clear where in their work they have improved it in response to feedback.</p>
	Start with Task 4.2A	Start with Task 4.2A or 4.2B	Start with Task 4.2C	Start with Task 4.2C

Making effective use of the subject development material

The tasks you have been referred to are intended to support the development or extension of written feedback in history and provide guidance on how to embed this into regular practice in history lessons.

The results of the self-review will have suggested the appropriate task(s) that will support your department's development needs.

To make best use of the supporting material the following sequence will be helpful.

1 Read the task and the supporting exemplification.

This describes how a department has approached the task and worked through each of its stages. It is given as an *example* of how the task might be addressed. It is not intended that you follow this approach, which is given as a guide to the process that will support improvements in your subject.

2 Identify what the department did and the impact it had on pupils.

Discuss as a team the example provided and establish the key areas that helped to develop this practice and the impact it had on pupils. It will be helpful to identify the changes in teachers' practice and how these impacted on pupils' learning.

3 Agree and plan the actions that will develop your practice.

As a department, agree how you intend to approach this task. Clarify what you are focusing on and why. The example given will act as a guide, but be specific about which classes, which lessons and which aspects of the curriculum will be your points of focus.

4 Identify when and how you will evaluate its impact on pupils.

The purpose of focusing on this is to improve pupils' achievement and attainment in history. You will need to be clear on what has helped pupils to learn more effectively in your subject. Part of this will be how your practice has adapted to allow this. You should jointly identify what has worked well and which areas require further attention.

5 Having evaluated these strategies, consider what steps are required to embed this practice.

You will need to undertake an honest evaluation of what you have tried and the impact it has had on your teaching and on pupils' learning. One outcome might be that you need to spend longer on improving this area or you may be in a position to consider the next task.

Other departments in the school will have been focusing on this area and you should find out about the progress they have made.

You may find that some teachers in the department will require further time to develop and consolidate new practice, while others will be ready to progress further through the tasks in this area (while continuing to support their colleagues). Practice across a department will need to be consolidated before focusing on a new area of Assessment for learning.

The subject development tasks

Task 4.2A

In a department meeting, look at a sample of pupils' work from a year group alongside the relevant part of the scheme of work. How well does the observed work relate to the planned learning objectives? How effectively is the written feedback focused on the learning objectives?

Depending on the outcome of the sample, you may need to consider the following steps.

- 1 Select a series of lessons that you will be teaching in the near future.
- 2 Check and, where necessary, sharpen the learning objectives in your planning.
- 3 Share these objectives with pupils in accessible language.
- 4 Inform the pupils that written feedback will relate directly to the learning objectives.
- 5 Focus your written feedback on the objectives.

Further guidance is given in Unit 3, *Objective led lessons* and the related subject development materials.

Task 4.2B

Sample pupils' work in a year group or class to establish whether there is evidence that objective-based written comments are being acted on and that there are opportunities given for pupils to address the comments. (The pupils could usefully be the same as those in Task 4.2A.)

Over the next month, plan time in lessons for pupils to respond and act on their written comments.

As a department, or in pairs, look at the pupils' work and evaluate the impact of focusing on objectives.

Suggested steps:

- 1 Identify evidence of improved pupils' response to these comments.
- 2 Identify comments that prompt further thinking and indicate clearly the pupils' next steps.
- 3 Identify examples of good practice and agree to trial these over half a term in relation to one or more key units.
- 4 Ensure time in a department meeting to evaluate the impact on pupils.

Task 4.2C

In your department, agree key pieces of work for the next term that represent milestones in pupils' learning.

Establish the marking criteria and share them with pupils with explicit reference to standards in the subject.

Focus your feedback on these criteria and guide pupils on how they could improve.

The following pages provide exemplification of each task.

Task 4.2A

In a department meeting, look at a sample of pupils' work from a year group alongside the relevant part of the scheme of work. How well does the observed work relate to the planned learning objectives? How effectively is the written feedback focused on the learning objectives?

Depending on the outcome of the sample, you may need to consider the following steps.

- 1 Select a series of lessons that you will be teaching in the near future.**
- 2 Check and, where necessary, sharpen the learning objectives in your planning.**
- 3 Share these objectives with pupils in accessible language.**
- 4 Inform the pupils that written feedback will relate directly to the learning objectives.**
- 5 Focus your written feedback on the objectives.**

Further guidance is given in Unit 3, *Objective led lessons* and the related subject development materials.

Context

Following their whole-school training on written feedback, the history department decided they would focus Task 4.2A on the concept of causation. This was an area in which they felt pupils had had real difficulties in the past, and it had been highlighted as an area for development in the Key Stage 3 strategy subject audit. They decided to use only a few pieces of pupils' work in their scrutiny.

Process

The subject leader collected a sample of marked pupils' work that demonstrated the concept of causation from Year 7 groups, together with the relevant part of the scheme of work. She selected pupils' work from across the attainment range and from different teaching groups within the year. The subject leader chose work at different levels of attainment to help the department consider whether there were any inconsistencies in the feedback to specific groups of pupils. The subject leader then collated the work sample, ensuring there was enough for teachers to work in pairs.

At a departmental meeting, the subject leader took the department through the sampling process using an example from Year 7, 'What was the role of the parish priest?' First, she asked teachers to consider how well the observed work related to the planned learning objective, which was: 'To select relevant information from a range of sources and to combine and summarise the information.' The two outcomes were a piece of descriptive writing on the role of the parish priest or a presentation using ICT on the role of the parish priest. This was drawn from QCA Unit 4 *How did the medieval church affect people's lives?*

They then looked at the piece of work in **appendix 1** of the QCA unit (see **appendix 4.2A.1**) to see how far the teacher comments were based on the objectives.

The subject leader led a discussion and the following points were made.

Some of the written comments were felt to show good practice. For example, the teacher opened with a positive statement about the first paragraph. The next two remarks were phrased as questions that required a response and encouraged the pupil to think. The final two comments about source 6 and a conclusion were felt to be less constructive. Teachers felt they could easily be ignored or misunderstood by the pupil. The teachers agreed that the overall comment started by focusing on the learning objective but did not give a specific point for moving forward related to progression. The teacher whose marking was being used suggested that a more helpful comment would have been: 'In future, quote from sources to back up what you are saying and to show you are finding information that is most relevant to the question.'

One teacher noted that no literacy errors had been corrected. The subject leader knew that there was a module called *Marking for literacy* in the *Language across the curriculum* folder, and the department decided this would be worth pursuing in a future departmental meeting, as many teachers were not really sure whether they should be marking such errors.

The department then worked in pairs and looked at a different sample of work. At the end of the session, the subject leader took some feedback and they all agreed an action plan.

Each member of staff would select a series of lessons that they would be teaching in the next five weeks. They would check and, if necessary, sharpen the learning objectives in their planning. They would ensure that they shared these objectives with pupils in accessible language and would then make sure their written feedback was based directly on the learning objectives.

Evaluation

The department agreed that they would bring a sample of their own work to a department meeting in six weeks' time. They would then repeat the task above to judge how successful they had been at basing their feedback on their objectives.

Task 4.2B

Sample pupils' work in a year group or class to establish whether there is evidence that objective-based written comments are being acted on and that there are opportunities given for pupils to address the comments. (The pupils could usefully be the same as those in Task 4.2A.)

Over the next month, plan time in lessons for pupils to respond and act on their written comments.

As a department, or in pairs, look at the pupils' work and evaluate the impact of focusing on objectives.

Suggested steps:

- 1 Identify evidence of improved pupils' response to these comments.**
- 2 Identify comments that prompt further thinking and indicate clearly the pupils' next steps.**
- 3 Identify examples of good practice and agree to trial these over half a term in relation to one or more key units.**
- 4 Ensure time in a department meeting to evaluate the impact on pupils.**

Context

After the initial work sampling exercise outlined in Task 4.2A, the history teachers wanted to see whether the comments they were giving were making a difference. The subject leader therefore suggested that teachers might like to try Task 4.2B.

Process

A group of five teachers working in Year 7 identified opportunities where pupils had practised the same skill (causation) in the unit of work the teachers had just taught. They then selected some key pieces of work that had been marked in detail. They chose the work of three pupils who represented a broad spread of attainment in the school. They considered whether there was any evidence in the later pieces of work that pupils were acting on the teacher's previous written comments.

The pieces they chose came from a lengthy unit on Britain 1066–1500. The learning objectives and outcomes for the selected samples were as follows.

- To understand how and why King John argued with his barons (QCA Unit 2). One outcome was a summary explanation on why John lost the support of the barons.
- To understand that men and women became monks and nuns for a variety of reasons (QCA Unit 4). The outcome was that pupils demonstrated understanding of why people became monks and nuns through either an annotated picture or a mind-map.

- To understand about the causes of the Peasants' Revolt and to start to make links between causes. The outcome was that pupils identified causes and made links and connections between them in an extended piece of writing.

The teachers felt that these objectives showed progression in causation across Year 7, with the final piece of work possibly enabling pupils to attain level 5 and above.

When the teachers looked at the pupils' work, they found clear evidence that they had been able to build on the comments teachers had given. However, they also noticed that the most effective comments were those that required the pupil to actually use the information given in the next lesson or when teachers had allowed time in the lesson for homework to be revised. For example, a comment such as 'I like the way you gave an example to support the point about why money was so important in causing unrest. This means you are beginning to explain the causes instead of just describing them. Can you find another reason where you could have given an example but didn't?' was only effective where pupils had been given a chance to complete the task.

As a result, the pupils who had fewer comments relating to learning objectives in history were making slower progress than other pupils. However, both teachers felt they could plan different ways of helping pupils to act on comments in order to raise attainment. Over the following month, they planned time for pupils to respond and act on written comments. They also trialled the following two strategies.

- 1 Pupils numbered the pages in their exercise books. At the back of their book they created a 'comment log' where they summarised the teacher's comment in their own words as a target. Periodically they were given time in the plenary to look through their books to find examples in subsequent work where they had addressed the comment or target. They wrote down the number of the page where they had evidence of achieving the target so that the teacher could monitor progress.
- 2 One teacher identified at random two pupils in every lesson to whom she would speak individually about their progress in history. The brief discussion focused on what the pupils were pleased with about their work in history and what they thought they could do better, using the written feedback as a starting point. Over half a term, the teacher managed to have individual discussions with every pupil in the class.

This group of teachers then reported their progress with Task 4.2B back to the full department.

Evaluation

After discussing the group's findings, other teachers decided they would also like to look for evidence of pupils using feedback in their own work. They agreed that they would all bring samples of work that identified evidence of improved pupil response to a teacher comment to the departmental meeting in one month's time, and they identified comments that prompted further thinking and indicated clearly the next steps in pupils' learning.

Task 4.2C

In your department, agree key pieces of work for the next term that represent milestones in pupils' learning.

Establish the marking criteria and share them with pupils with explicit reference to standards in the subject.

Focus your feedback on these criteria and guide pupils on how they could improve.

Context

By the summer term, the history teachers in School M were well advanced in the development of assessment for learning. They had already completed Tasks 4.2A and 4.2B, and they wanted to extend their work on marking further. They decided to tackle Task 4.2C.

Process

The department defined a milestone as 'a key piece of work that represents an important opportunity for pupils to demonstrate progression and which is marked and assessed in detail'.

A group of five teachers continued to work on the idea of causation. They started by identifying milestones in causation for the last term in Year 7 from a unit of work on Elizabeth I. They chose to examine an enquiry task on 'Why was Mary, Queen of Scots, executed?', because it provided a good opportunity to investigate short-term and long-term causes and took into account the skills acquired in the last piece of causation work on the Peasants' Revolt.

Another small group of teachers identified milestones for the last term of Year 8 in a unit of work on industrial change in the local area. They identified the final piece of work in this unit as a milestone, because it gave some pupils the opportunity to analyse causes for the growth and decline of coal mining and therefore enabled some of the pupils to produce work at level 7.

The teachers met up to discuss their thoughts and to ensure that the milestones identified for both Year 7 and Year 8 represented appropriate progression in causation. They then used the National Curriculum level descriptions from the history attainment target, together with the QCA scheme of work, with particular reference to the *Expectations* section at the beginning of each unit to agree appropriate marking criteria. They found they also wanted to include a literacy objective from the framework for teaching history in their marking criteria.

They agreed that the criteria for the local history task in Year 8 should be as follows:

- Describe more than one cause of an event.
- Explain more than one cause of an event.
- Show how the causes can be sorted into different categories.
- Show how causes are connected to each other.
- Reach a conclusion that explains whether you think some causes are more important than others.
- Each paragraph to start with a topic sentence.

Evaluation

The teachers shared their work at a departmental meeting and agreed they would teach the unit using the agreed marking criteria. After the unit was over they brought their findings back to another department meeting. They all felt they had learned from the experience but that they had not been clear enough about the link between the learning objectives and the criteria they were using. They therefore decided that in the next term's work they would plan to make this link more explicit.

What was the role of the parish priest?

Some interesting general points to start off with - good

The parish priest had a very busy life in the medieval times. He wasn't allowed to have a wife or children because he was supposed to look after all the people in the village instead.

Source 1 shows me that the priest had to look after the sick people. It also says that in source 3 he had to call on the sick. He also had to visit old people and make sure they had enough food.

Could you find a quote from the source to back this up please?

I like the way you started this paragraph with a topic sentence. Where else could you have done this?

Most of the things the priest had to do were in the church. He had to do weddings and funerals and take the mass. Source 2 shows me a priest brying somebody and in souce 4 I can see the priest marrying a couple. Source 5 says that the preist rang the bell so people knew what time it was.

Some priests were good and some were bad. The bad ones used to go out hunting instead of helping people. In source 5 it says that the priest couldn't read the Bible properly or sing the Mass. So the people in the village wouldn't really know what was going on.

What about source 6?

You have attempted a conclusion here.

I feel a bit sorry for the priest because he didn't have much money and it must of been a lonely life so I'm not surprised some of them weren't very good.

Overall Comments

A good effort overall. I think your best bit was the second paragraph where you combined information from two picture sources and one written one to say what the priest did in church.

You missed out the information on collecting the tithe and farming the glebe.

Listen out in class for the sorts of things we need to say in a conclusion.