

MARKING POLICY

All current members of staff have the experience and expertise to recognise an acceptable standard of work based on the ability of the children in their class. We must ensure that expectations and that the quality, quantity and presentation of work meets these expectations, which should be matched to the individual child, and realistic in terms of that child's abilities.

Why mark?

- to find out what children can do;
- to see if children have understood work;
- to ascertain standards;

By marking, teachers demonstrate to the children that their efforts are valued - this gives additional purpose to their work. If work is left unmarked, the child will not know whether the work is good, bad or indifferent and may lose interest or not produce work of such quality in future. Parents may also assume that unmarked work has not been looked at.

When to Mark?

- at least at the completion of a piece of work;
- ideally, as the work is in progress.

It is not good practice always for teachers to sit at the desk marking piles of books much better, if not actually teaching, to move around the room marking and commenting whilst the children are still busy. In this way, the time the children spend on task is maximised, and the need for queuing at the desk is minimised. With thoughtful planning, all children should have something else to do without having to demand the teacher's attention then and there. No child should ever have "nothing to do". If the children are working in groups, the teacher should aim for a position that enables supervision of the rest of the class while attending to one group.

How to Mark

There are times when a piece of work is such that a tick to show that it has been seen is sufficient. Usually however, each piece of work should be thoughtfully assessed, discussed with the child if present, and appropriate encouraging comments written to reinforce what has been said to the child. Obviously, scathing or "facetious" comments should not be written.

Teachers should know what they are marking for - accuracy, neatness, creativity, a specific grammatical point, etc. If the teacher has been encouraging the use of descriptive language, then those words and phrases thought to have been well used could be highlighted, perhaps with a tick and a comment at the end of the work.

Spellings and how/when to mark them can create difficulties. As a general rule, teachers should underline the incorrect spelling and write the correct version so the child can see it. In work where there are many incorrect spellings, careful professional judgement is required in determining how many to correct so as not to demotivate the child. It is counterproductive to obliterate a piece of work with red pen.

Some mistakes may require written correction or relearning, but this should not be a long repetitive process, and the need for correction should be balanced by positive statements about the child's efforts wherever possible.

Drafting of work in jotters etc. is useful and to be encouraged. Children may realise their own mistakes when reading over their work either to themselves, to the teacher or to other children, and in the final draft the child may produce work of a much improved standard. Encouraging children to read aloud a piece of work can be beneficial to other children in the group who may hear good phrases

and sentence construction that they may choose to adopt. Discussion by children of each other's work on a topic can be a valuable exercise in assisting language development, as well as increasing learning of the particular curriculum area. The danger with drafting is that it becomes such a chore that children no longer wish to write. The use of a word processor can help this, but that too can become painstakingly slow if children lack the required keyboarding skills. The school possesses computer programs to develop these skills, as well as a variety of word processing software. Children's ability in this area will increase as the school acquires further computers.

From time to time especially with older children in Mathematics where there is an answer book, children may be allowed to mark their own work. Trust and self-esteem are thereby enhanced, building on the good relationships that exist in the school community. Undoubtedly some children will attempt to "cheat", but if the child is aware that the teacher will see the work, this is less likely. Peer group pressure would also be applied to those caught out. Teachers should see work that has been self-marked.

Some work will be verbally assessed, e. g. Art, Music, etc. Teachers should ensure that comments are constructive, aimed at helping the child attain a higher level and emphasising the good work already being achieved. Negative comments should be kept to the minimum, and not of a destructive nature.

Marking is aimed at what is right as much as what is wrong. Children, like all of us, respond better to praise for their achievements rather than criticism of their shortcomings.