

Marking Policy Review Group: Terms of Reference

Context

1. The analysis of the Workload Challenge survey responses showed that the most frequently mentioned tasks contributing to unnecessary and unproductive workload fitted within the category of lesson planning and policies, assessment and reporting administration (82% of respondents). 53% of sample respondents thought that the excessive depth, level of detail and frequency of marking were burdensome.
2. Many respondents noted that the tasks they undertook were not ‘unnecessary’ or ‘unproductive’, rather they recognised that they were essential parts of teaching. However, it was the level of detail (63% of respondents); duplication (41%) and bureaucracy (41%) that occurred during these tasks that they felt were the ‘unnecessary’ or ‘unproductive’ aspects of them.¹
3. Ofsted’s ‘clarification for schools’ document now includes additional points about making sure marking policies are sustainable for teachers. These are also contained in the School Inspection Handbook (September 2015, paragraph 28)². They have stated that they do not expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback during inspections.

Purpose of the Group

4. The group will consider effective and efficient practice on marking in schools which raises standards for pupils without creating unnecessary workload. The group will also look at the workload implications of certain practices, with a specific focus on ‘deep marking’. The group will meet over a period of up to 6 months, and will be asked to make specific recommendations for action at the end of this period, with a core aim of reducing the overall workload burden on teachers and improving efficiency.
5. In relation to marking in schools the group will:
 - agree a statement of intent to guide their work, drawing on the terms of reference;
 - review current practices, specifically the role marking plays in providing effective feedback to pupils while at the same time ensuring the burden of marking is not an impediment to setting pupils work;
 - review the available research in this area, including any international evidence from a range of high-performing jurisdictions;
 - identify effective practice of ‘what works’ in marking and its potential impact on workload;
 - identify what supports the development of successful practice in the state and independent sectors;

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-analysis-of-teacher-responses>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

- consider approaches which could reduce the overall workload burden on teachers whilst supporting teacher professionalism and judgement; and
- consider ways in which the outputs of the group can be disseminated, and the role for government and its agencies in doing this.

Scope

6. The group will look at practice in schools in England, drawing on evidence from the workload challenge survey results and the knowledge of the members of the group. They will consider any relevant research evidence and examples of successful practice which helps to maximise the impact of time spent marking while minimising the effects on teacher workload.

7. The group will make links to the two review groups looking at lesson planning and data management in schools, and to developments which might impact on schools' approaches to marking and feedback. The group will also, through the Secretariat and the Chair, link to other relevant groups convened by the Department, for example the expert group on teachers' professional development.

8. The group will report regularly to Ministers and to the Department's teacher and head teacher union roundtable.

Meetings

9. It is expected that the group will be in place for up to six months. Participation will take the form of face-to-face meetings. These meetings will usually take place in London and be hosted by the Department. All correspondence for meetings will be sent via email. The Secretariat will circulate an agenda and papers before each meeting.

10. Discussion at the meetings will be confidential. No public statements on the content of the meeting which could be attributable to an individual member should be made, through any medium, by any member of the group.

Outputs

11. The group will report on progress during the course of their work, and will aim to present a report to the Secretary of State and Ministers in Spring 2016. These should include:

- a set of principles for marking in schools to ensure effective and efficient practice, raise standards for pupils and remove unnecessary workload; and
- recommendations about effective marking policies and practice and consider whether guidance about effective practice and/or case studies about what works in schools might be necessary.

12. The recommendations must be approved by Ministers before publication.