

Marking and Evidence Guidance for Primary Mathematics Teaching

Introduction

This document offers guidance about marking and evidence-recording within the context of primary mathematics. In this document, 'marking' is taken to mean the process whereby a teacher looks at pupils' written work, examines it for errors, misconceptions and/or conceptual and procedural fluency, and then responds in some way, either in writing, speech or action. 'Evidence-recording' is taken to mean the keeping of written or other records to show evidence of pupils' progress in their learning of mathematics.

Research (Black et al 2003) shows that the most effective and beneficial forms of assessment are ones which support learning (i.e. are formative) and are built-in to lesson design. In primary mathematics they require:

- well-structured classroom activities (involving conceptual and procedural variation and intelligent practice);
- regular opportunities for discussion of answers and strategies to support pupils' reasoning skills and check and deepen their understanding;
- interaction and dialogue (between teacher and pupils, and between pupils themselves), focusing in particular on key ideas and concepts (including misconceptions and difficult points) and effective, efficient strategies of working mathematically.

Research also shows that pupils benefit from undertaking appropriate written work outside of lessons. Teachers' marking of this work can provide extra feedback to support pupils' learning. However, **the most important activity for teachers is the teaching itself, supported by the design and preparation of lessons.** Guidelines for efficient marking and evidence recording are offered below.

Marking and evidence-recording strategies should be efficient, so that they do not steal time that would be better spent on lesson design and preparation. Neither should they result in an excessive workload for teachers.

Ofsted has confirmed that no aspect of these guidelines is in conflict with the contents of the School Inspection Handbook¹ and 'myth-busting' information.

¹ These guidelines are consistent with the advice in the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook, August 2015. See the section on '*Pupils' work*', paragraph 28, pages 11-13 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

The guidelines

Marking

- It is important for teachers to distinguish between a pupil's simple slip and an error that reflects a lack of understanding:
 - For slips, it is often enough to simply indicate where each slip occurs, particularly when the teacher's/school's approach is to encourage pupils to correct them;
 - If errors demonstrate lack of understanding, the teacher may decide to take alternative courses of action. For instance, with a small number of pupils, the teacher may arrange same-day intervention while for a large number of pupils, the errors will be addressed in the next lesson.
- Evidence shows (Black and Wiliam 1998) that pupils benefit from marking their own work. Part of this responsibility is to identify for themselves the facts, strategies and concepts they know well and those which they find harder and need to continue to work on.

Evidence-recording

- If interaction between teacher and pupils is good, then efficient marking strategies can be deployed.
- Suitable summative assessment will enable a teacher to monitor pupils' progress. Where progress is secure, no further evidence is necessary. Where an individual pupil's progress is a concern, then more detailed monitoring and recording may be justified.
- It should not be a routine expectation that next-steps or targets be written into pupils' books. The next lesson should be designed to take account of the next steps.

The NCETM's [*Teaching for Mastery \(questions, tasks and activities to support assessment\)*](#) materials, for pupils in year 1 to year 6, aim to assess how well the pupils understand concepts. These questions, tasks and activities, used well, can provide pupils with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate a depth of understanding and proficiency which will ensure that learning is likely to be both sustained over time and built upon in the future.

References

Black, P., Harrison, C., & Lee, C. (2003). *Assessment for learning: Putting it into practice*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Black, P., Wiliam D., (1998). *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*. Kings College, London.