Developing written feedback in art and design

Following the training in the generic unit Written feedback, it is important to consider how the key messages of the training apply to art and design. 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 art and design.

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.

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<th>Focusing</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Establishing</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The departmental policy for providing written feedback does not relate to whole-school policy.</td>
<td>The departmental policy for providing written feedback relates to whole-school policy.</td>
<td>Whole-school and departmental policies emphasise the importance of referencing learning objectives in written feedback.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The subject leader has identified:</td>
<td>There is a consistency of approach to written feedback developing across the department.</td>
<td>The department has identified learning milestones and key tasks that will be marked in detail.</td>
<td>Departments across the school have a coherent and consistent approach to identifying learning milestones and key tasks to be marked in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a variety of disparate approaches to written feedback, e.g. a mixture of comments and different gradings within the department</td>
<td>Written feedback often directly relates to the learning objectives and outcomes but this is not consistent across the department and/or key stages.</td>
<td>Written feedback helps all pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve.</td>
<td>Written feedback informs pupil target setting in the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• that written feedback often does not relate directly to the learning objectives and outcomes for the lesson in which the work was carried out</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Teachers routinely provide time for pupils to reflect on, and respond to, written feedback.</td>
<td>Written feedback clearly identifies next steps for learning and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to consider and act on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• that some teachers do not provide opportunities for pupils to act on their feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pupils</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The subject leader has identified that:</td>
<td>Most pupils understand that written feedback is related to the learning objectives and outcomes of the lesson.</td>
<td>All pupils know that action is expected in relation to feedback.</td>
<td>Pupils routinely use written feedback to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their work and to identify ways in which they can improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pupils cannot connect the written feedback to the learning objectives for the lesson</td>
<td>Most pupils in lessons can explain what the written feedback means and can act upon it.</td>
<td>All pupils routinely use written feedback to improve their work.</td>
<td>Pupils understand how feedback relates to their longer-term goals and can set their own targets for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pupils typically do not understand the feedback given</td>
<td>Pupil work shows evidence of a response to written feedback.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils are clear where in their work they have improved it in response to feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pupils tend not to act upon written feedback.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start with Task 4.2A</td>
<td>Start with Task 4.2A or 4.2B</td>
<td>Start with Task 4.2C</td>
<td>Start with Task 4.2C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 art and design and provide guidance on how to embed this into regular practice in art and design 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 art and design. 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

Members of the art and design team, as part of their departmental review, looked at examples of feedback comments they had written for Year 7 pupils, based on the QCA unit of work, Self-image.

Process

Each teacher brought an example of written feedback for a pupil of above, below or average attainment in art, together with the piece of homework or classwork to which it related.

They noted that much of teachers’ assessment in art lessons is determined through discussion and questioning with individuals and groups of pupils. They used written comments to further enable pupils to reflect independently on their progress, both during lessons and in their own time. The comments also served to model writing, thus contributing to pupils’ skills and confidence in literacy. Written comments accumulated to provide a record of progress and form a basis for discussion at key points in the school year, not only between teachers and their pupils but also between pupils and their parents and parents.

About the unit Self-image

The unit the department chose and adapted for this work was about exploring personal identity through visual means and the pupils had been gathering visual images and making notes to support their work on a self-portrait. The main classroom activity involved a two-dimensional composition in mixed media, including a montage of digital imagery.
The unit's focus is the expressive use of colour and tone, and the way scale, proportion and viewpoint in pictorial composition can be used to tell a personal story. The pupils were introduced to Holbein’s The Ambassadors, Gainsborough’s Mr and Mrs Andrews and the self-portraits of Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Warhol. These portraits of known individuals were contrasted with the schematic portraits found in ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures.

Through this process, the pupils developed a pictorial composition that applied what they had been taught about colour and composition from looking at the work of these artists. They were taught to avoid copying the style of any one artist and directed instead to incorporate the visual principles of this stimulus material into their own work. The pupils were encouraged to explain their choices in terms of their own intentions.

Pupils were guided to explore and use a range of means of developing their composition through montage and collage. They used a digital camera and scanned their own photographs for further digital manipulation using image manipulation software.

Individual achievement in this unit was supported by evidence of:

- informed exploration of and risk taking with ideas and media
- skills in recording and organising visual and tactile qualities to communicate ideas and feeling according to principles of colour and two-dimensional composition
- the ability to compare and comment on their own and others’ ideas and to refine them in the light of developing knowledge and understanding
- to annotate their worksheets and sketchbooks to explain why they have used a specific technique or media and to reflect on the evolution of ideas.

The teachers discussed the following examples of written feedback with reference to the learning objectives and intended outcomes they had shared with their pupils. The comments set out in the table below relate to the pupils’ rough drafts of their work and their sketchbooks. The department considered the appropriateness of the language for different pupils and the clarity of recommended actions in relation to the objectives of the unit.
Learning objective | Learning outcome | Examples of written feedback (NB Text in italics is related to the attainment level of the pupil)
---|---|---
We will be learning about selecting images that show how colour and composition help to tell stories about people in pictures. | We will be able to explain in pictures and words, spoken and written, why we think self-portrait paintings look the way they do. | **Above average pupil**
You have chosen an exciting selection of contrasting artists’ portraits and have explained your thoughts about them well. You have arranged the shapes in your self-portrait studies to create strong patterns and rhythms. The bright complementary colours work well with this. The ancient Egyptian look to your ideas suggests that you might refine your work even more in this style.‘

We will learn how to combine different coloured and textured materials and images to communicate particular ideas and feelings in our pictures. | We will produce a pictorial composition that uses colour, pattern and shape to tell a story about our own lives. | **Average pupil**
Lots of ideas in your sketchbook – good! Your notes show that you have thought carefully about the different artists’ work. You have skilfully used scanned photographs of your favourite things in a montage. Well done! Which idea tells us most about you? Do you need to add or take away anything from the background for your self-portrait? What sort of colours work best? Dark/light? Dull/bright? Primary or tertiary? Use these questions to help you choose your main idea.’

We will learn about the questions to ask in finding out about art from different cultures and periods of history. | We will understand that portraits can have different purposes and meanings and be able to explain this to others. | **Below average pupil**
‘You have found one portrait of an important person and have told us what makes them look important; good. You need more artists’ pictures to choose from, so that you can compare them. You have included a lot of detail in your drawing and have been very careful, but the lines are heavy and hard to change. Try lots of quick sketches using your pencil more lightly, so that things can be changed more easily; just get those ideas down!}

**Evaluation**

The department focused their review on looking at the relationship between the learning objectives that they had shared with pupils plus the written comments. They recognised that, when identifying pupils’ achievements, it is important that comments reflect all four strands of the art programme of study. For example, they became aware that they should not place a disproportionate emphasis on pupils’ skills in making and that they should also recognise pupils’ capacity for exploration, analysis and evaluation of their artwork.
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

At a recent parents’ meeting, several parents said that the teachers’ written feedback had helped them to understand and support their child’s progress in art. This was because the comments made it clear what the child needed to do to improve.

Process

Members of the art department decided to check on the impact that written feedback had on the standard of pupils’ artwork over time. In a department meeting they focused on pupils’ work from the completed Year 7 Unit, Self-image, from the QCA scheme of work.

They chose three sets of work from across the ability range: above, below and average as represented in each of their groups. Within the sample they aimed for a balance of boys’ and girls’ work, which also reflected the ethnic diversity of the school.
Each pupil’s sample included a sketchbook and drafts, as well as the finished piece. The work was set out so that work done before and after written feedback could be clearly identified. Before looking at the sample, the teachers revisited the learning objectives and intended outcomes for the unit. They considered these in the light of the National Curriculum attainment target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning objective</th>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>How these contribute to the National Curriculum attainment target for art and design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will be learning about selecting images that show how colour and composition help to tell stories about people in pictures.</td>
<td>We will be able to explain in pictures and words why we think self-portrait paintings look the way they do.</td>
<td>Developing strategies for gathering visual information through: • drawing from observation, memory and imagination • selecting and manipulating imagery from secondary sources • gathering, assembling, collating visual information and notes to support emerging ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will learn how to combine different coloured and textures materials to create particular effects in our pictures.</td>
<td>We will produce a pictorial composition that uses colour and composition to tell a story about our own lives.</td>
<td>Developing skills in making through: • mark making • coordinating and assembling materials and images • using tools and techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will learn about the questions to ask in finding out about art from different cultures and periods of history.</td>
<td>We will understand that portraits can have different purposes and meanings and be able to explain this.</td>
<td>Developing strategies for refining artwork through: • critical skills • contextual knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation**

Teachers shared their views on the impact of written feedback on pupils’ work and explained their reasons. The following are examples from their discussions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of effective written feedback</th>
<th>What the pupil did in response</th>
<th>Teachers’ evaluation of the impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Good choice of artists and explanation. Your quick and light touch drawing style has helped you to try lots of ideas. Now jot down your thoughts about your different sketches to help you find the one that you want to use.’</td>
<td>The pupil has added further notes to their preliminary sketches, revealing increasing clarity about what they want their self-portrait to say.</td>
<td>The comments support the pupil’s understanding of the art process and the importance of thinking about how different ideas work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Your drawing is expressive and full of character because you have included a full range of different mark-making techniques. You have used carefully painted harmonious colours in your studies for the main piece. Now try some combinations of contrasting colours to compare the effects.’</td>
<td>The pupil has produced a series of lively colour studies and has referred back to the bright colours of Van Gogh and the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt, exploring the different atmospheric possibilities of both.</td>
<td>The advice is specific, manageable and clearly explained. It balances praise with practical advice. It leaves the initiative with the pupil but offers useful advice on the process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of ineffective written feedback</th>
<th>What the pupil did in response</th>
<th>Teachers’ evaluation of the impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘You need to collect more pictures to support your ideas …’</td>
<td>The pupil has collected more pictures. Their collection is quite random and images are of poor quality, based more on what they can find than on an informed notion of research.</td>
<td>Pupils’ responses to written feedback may be more quantitative than qualitative, simply because they don’t understand the qualitative dimension of the task. Even if the notion of research has been taught, does this pupil understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘You need to work harder at this …’</td>
<td>These comments have made no discernible difference to the pupil’s work. The pupil has not returned to the homework.</td>
<td>These comments fail to explain the underlying reasons for the suggested actions. This takes the control away from the pupil placing instead the emphasis on the teacher’s preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘You need to do more research …’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘I would like to have seen more colour in this …’</td>
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<td>‘The colours in this picture are too bright …’</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Take more care in your drawing …’</td>
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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

The art department team wanted to identify ‘milestones’ in pupils’ learning over the coming term, e.g. the giving of feedback in relation to the development of key techniques, such as the use of tone to define form and the expressive use of colour in painting.

Process

The department decided that key aspects of the work in the chosen unit would become the focus for detailed written feedback to pupils. The purpose of this written feedback was to help pupils understand their achievement, progress and opportunities for improvement in relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment in art and design over the whole key stage. The written feedback was intended to relate to the skills, knowledge and understanding that underpinned all activities in the subject, as well as those that related specifically to the chosen unit.

Given the significance of these milestones, it was agreed that the process of written assessment should be carefully managed to allow teachers time to make meaningful written responses to the work in as much detail as necessary. This involved spreading the process of writing feedback for individual pupils over several weeks during the unit and limiting the feedback to, for example, five pupils’ work per week. Opportunities were also provided for pupils to respond to the feedback, thus reinforcing the need for the individual tutorial approach, which was felt to be good practice in art and design teaching, to be formalised in a way that maximised impact and minimised workload.

The milestones were shared with the pupils, and teachers explained to them how the marking policy would be applied and on what evidence it would be based.

About the unit Animating art

The teachers chose to focus their work on milestones with Year 8. The pupils followed Unit 8B, Animating art, from the QCA scheme of work. The department’s interpretation of this unit was concerned with the use of narrative in art from different periods and cultures. They explored this theme through still and moving images, and used traditional and new media. They used the juxtaposition of imagery from the fine art tradition with imagery from modern popular culture to show pupils how the human fascination with visual stories has remained unchanged across the ages although the medium has changed along with changes in cultures. For example, they compared narrative paintings on early Florentine renaissance wedding chests with Marvel comics. The unit lasted 10 weeks.
The marking criteria

The teachers’ written feedback directed pupils’ attention to the things they know, understand and could do at that point in their art education – the ‘milestones’ in their learning.

It also indicated the things they needed to do to improve. Comments focused on the pupils’ complete body of work at that point in time, including the sketchbook and drafts of the main piece.

The teachers identified the key strengths and opportunities for development in their pupils’ work and related these to previous achievements and future possibilities.

The marking criteria related to the different strands of the National Curriculum programme of study for art and design with the ‘Knowledge and understanding’ strand underpinning the whole process.
The following examples are from the school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning objective</th>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will be learning about the way artists have used new tools and processes to organise ideas into sequences.</td>
<td>We will be able to make connections between new and traditional art techniques.</td>
<td><strong>Exploring and developing ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;Working beyond the expectation&lt;br&gt;Pupils’ drawings/plans/diagrams/studies/notes are freely and confidently executed. They are informed by a strong sense of personal direction, and are enhanced by the use of a range of media and sources.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working at the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils’ drawings/plans/diagrams/studies/notes use observation, memory and imagination effectively to explore the visual possibilities of their chosen story.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working towards the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils’ drawings/plans/diagrams/studies/notes are limited in their development of observation, memory or imagination. This is because they have not used an approach to drawing that allows them to work quickly and freely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will learn how to combine and sequence still and moving images in telling a visual story, using traditional and digital media.</td>
<td>We will produce a short animated film together with sketches and storyboards to be shown to an audience.</td>
<td><strong>Investigating and making art, craft and design</strong>&lt;br&gt;Working beyond the expectation&lt;br&gt;Pupils understand media and techniques and use them with skill and confidence to express their personal interpretation of the theme.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working at the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils use media and techniques effectively to interpret the theme. Their work shows an effective understanding of the way drawing, composition and colour can be combined to communicate meaning in their work.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working towards the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils’ difficulties with media and techniques mean that their ideas are not effectively communicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will learn about the way our work needs to be adapted to a particular audience.</td>
<td>We will be able to change and develop our work according to our intended audience.</td>
<td><strong>Evaluating and developing work</strong>&lt;br&gt;Working beyond the expectation&lt;br&gt;A high level of knowledge and understanding of the broad sweep of art history supports pupils’ reflection on and development of their work. They use this knowledge and understanding to enhance the personal dimension of their work.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working at the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils reflect on their work and make changes, adapting and refining their ideas and imagery to match their intentions and the demands of their audience. A good understanding of historical and cultural contexts supports this.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Working towards the level expected&lt;br&gt;Pupils’ work shows little evidence of reflection or adaptation, instead keeping rigidly to entrenched patterns. They have not shown an understanding of the wider context for their work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

At the end of this process, the department used one of their scheduled meetings to evaluate and review the progress they had made. They confirmed their earlier ideas about the process and suggested the following guidelines for their future work using milestones:

- carefully manage the process of written assessment to allow teachers time to make meaningful written responses to the work
- spread the process of writing feedback for individual pupils over several weeks during the unit
- limit the feedback to a manageable number of pupils’ work per week
- provide opportunities for pupils to respond to the feedback
- recognise the importance of the individual tutorial approach, but ensure that it was used in a way that maximised impact and minimised workload.