To what extent do students' and teachers' perspectives demonstrate that dialogic marking is an effective approach to feedback in a UK secondary school?

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To what extent do students' and teachers' perspectives demonstrate that dialogic marking is an effective approach to feedback in a UK secondary school?

Abstract

Feedback is one of the most powerful tools in a teacher's repertoire; when utilised effectively it is a catalyst for student progress. Written feedback, however, has recently become the catalyst for union action and government workload reviews but, surprisingly, a 2016 meta-review on written marking suggested that only a few robust studies into its impact have taken place. This highly contextualised study contributes to this gap in literature. Focusing on a secondary school English Department's strategy to provide 'dialogic' feedback, with students responding to teachers' marking, this small-scale piece of practitioner research investigates the teachers' and students' perceptions of the consequent learning. The investigation compares the impacts of and perceptions towards the departmental marking strategy with an alternative approach designed through collaboration with some of the department's teachers. This marking intervention was designed to reduce teachers' workload whilst maintaining or improving the effects of dialogic marking. The investigation attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of 'dialogic' marking in the schools' English Department?
- What are teachers' incentives for investing substantial time into dialogic marking?
- How do students perceive teachers' marking, in particular dialogic marking, in relation to their learning?

A qualitative approach to research included an artefact analysis applying a coding scheme and semi-structured interviews of a sample of the students and teachers involved. Close collaboration with the department and its teachers throughout the study resulted in an additional cycle of research, applying the newly-designed marking intervention to a second class. Findings suggested that dialogic feedback was taking place, when particular definitions were applied, and was largely perceived by students and teachers to contribute usefully to the learning process. However, some evidence suggested that this positive impact came at the expense of teachers' workload; a potentially unsustainable situation. Indications that the marking intervention maintained and even enhanced the perceived learning experience resulted from the analyses. Whilst further research is called for, both in and out of this school's setting, and refinements have already begun with the department's approaches to marking, the marking intervention should certainly be utilised by the department and the wider school community as a strategy to provide effective feedback in a manageable fashion.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Taking educational thinking all the way back to Vygotsky (1962), it is widely acknowledged that learning occurs collaboratively through interactions with others (Hattie et al., 2016); Bruner's neo-Vygotskian view is that students should work with a more-learned other to establish the zone of proximal development (Bruner 1960), accessing concepts that they cannot otherwise without support. Feedback provides a mechanism for teachers to be that more-learned other through a personal dialogue and, consequently, it is an imperative that teachers ensure that this feedback is as effective as it can be. The last thirty years, like the fifty before them, have witnessed tremendous volumes of educational research into what makes feedback effective (Natriello, 1987; Crooks, 1988; Perrenoud, 1998; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007) with evidence from meta-analyses demonstrating that the average effects of feedback rival any other intervention or approach in classrooms (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Surprisingly, Elliott et al. (2016), in their meta-review of the research on written marking, concluded that very few robust studies have taken place and that the quality of the research evidence is low. This study will be located in the theoretical framework of feedback and its relation to learning, intending to learn from and build upon some of the key literature identified in this opening paragraph. The aim is to contribute to the gap in literature Elliot et al. (2016) identified in a small scale, contextualised study.

Recognising that feedback, whether written or verbal is likely to be important for learning, Ward (2016) highlights a growing issue for the modern teacher in her article in the Times Educational Supplement, stating that 17% of UK teachers spend more

than eleven hours per week marking, whilst 68% of those surveyed felt that the amount of time they spent marking had a detrimental impact on their classroom teaching of those students. It is the emerging impact of marking on teachers' practices that prompted then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan (2015) to commission a teachers workload review, including a focus on marking. The outcomes of the subsequent review have motivated me to investigate this issue further in my own school's context.

The first two paragraphs of the report produced by the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group (ITWRG) (2016) neatly summarise the entire issue; firstly, effective marking is essential in education; secondly, the practice has become disproportionately valued by schools and, as a result, unnecessarily burdensome for teachers. Working as a school leader in a small-sized, 11-16 secondary school in southeast England, I have perceived a cultural shift in the expectations of teachers' marking over the last decade whereby the expectations for the regularity and depth of marking have increased dramatically in conjunction with increased scrutiny from school leaders. At times, it has been argued by educational commentators that the catalyst for this cultural change has been Ofsted, the independent schools inspectorate in the UK. Lee (2013), whilst writing about practices in Hong Kong, suggests that many teachers mark excessively due to pressure from either the inspectorate, appraisal systems making teachers accountable for their marking or for cultural reasons. She argues that teachers can make themselves feel effective and useful by providing very detailed marking, even if the feedback becomes so excessive that it mitigates its usefulness to the recipient. It will be interesting to explore the extent to which teachers at my school agree with this as my research develops.

However, returning to the inspectorate, their handbook for inspectors (Ofsted, 2016; p10) suggests that schools, in fact, have a high degree of autonomy over their approach to marking.

> "Ofsted **does not** expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback; these are for the school to decide through its assessment policy. Marking and feedback should be consistent with that policy, which may cater for different subjects and different age groups of pupils in different ways, in order to be effective and efficient in promoting learning."

This view is beginning to be popularised in the educational press, for example with the Times Educational Supplements first front cover of 2017 being entitled "Why Ofsted is no longer teaching's bogeyman."

That freedom from Ofsted's regulation means that schools have many options over their approach to marking. Figure 1 shows the comparison between the responses to an NFER-conducted marking survey by teachers in my school and teachers nationally. The table is important as it outlines the wide range of pedagogical approaches available to teachers, many of which will be explored further in the literature review. Furthermore, it also demonstrates that, to a large extent, the practices of teachers in my school are typical of those of teachers across the UK.

Figure 1: Comparison between the responses to an NFER-conducted marking survey by teachers in my school (26 responses) and teachers nationally (1 382 responses)

How much, if at all, do you use the following marking practices? (All pieces of work I mark/most/some/few/none)	% of teacher responses									
	All		Most		Some		Few		None	
	School	National	School	National	School	National	School	National	School	National
Correcting mistakes in pupils' work.	26	22	30	30	30	29	15	12	0	5
Indicating mistakes in pupils' work, but not correcting them.	7	27	59	33	26	24	7	8	0	6
Putting a mark on work (e.g. 7/10).	4	7	4	11	26	22	33	26	33	32
Writing a qualitative/descriptive comment about the work.	22	20	48	35	26	29	4	10	0	5
Giving pupils time in class to write a response to previous marking comments.	30	25	37	32	26	26	7	9	0	8
Writing a response to pupils' response on teacher feedback (i.e. Triple Impact Marking).	7	8	7	15	44	26	41	22	0	28
Writing praise on pupils' work (e.g. 'What Went Well').	41	36	52	42	7	16	0	4	0	2
Writing targets for future work (e.g. 'Even Better If').	26	31	52	41	19	19	4	3	0	4
Referring to success or assessment criteria in your written comments.	11	21	30	41	48	26	11	6	0	4
Referring to the way the work was planned and completed (as opposed to the end product) in your written comments.	0	7	22	19	48	40	15	20	15	13

Source: Elliott et al. 2016

Within this national context, my school has looked to adapt its marking and feedback policy recently (Appendix 1). Across the 2016-17 academic year, departments were encouraged to take a research approach to their practices so that they can evaluate their methods and create informed policies for 2017 onwards. My specific area of interest in this investigation results from the juxtaposition of the majority of the English department, whereby the teachers regularly apply the principles of dialogic marking in their normal practice, compared with one teacher in the department with whom I worked with an alternative approach to marking. This pedagogical approach will be defined in detail in the literature review but, in short, it is where teachers provide initial feedback that receives a written response from the student and a subsequent response from the teacher. It is important to note that the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) , the largest

teaching union in the UK, felt that the impact of dialogic marking on teachers' workload was so excessive that it was necessary to publish a specific position statement for their members in 2015 requesting action short of strike action where teachers are asked to use dialogic marking approaches on all written work or where the majority of teachers' marking is completed outside of designated planning, preparation and assessment time (NASUWT, 2015). Given the additional time required to maintain a dialogic approach to marking, this motivates me to research teachers' and students' perspectives on it.

This investigation will review the literature into what effective feedback and, more specifically, effective dialogic marking looks like, taking into account the perceptions of both teachers and students. It is a piece of practitioner research in that I work in the school in which the research is set and, through collaboration with the teachers in one department, aim to improve practice (Menter, 2011). It will report the empirical, practitioner research in the English department of a school investigating the effectiveness of the written feedback through: an analysis of the dialogic feedback itself through a systematic, written review of a sample of students' work; an analysis of feedback using a co-constructed marking proforma intervention; interviews with four teachers to gather their perspective on the effectiveness of the feedback; interviews with eight students to gather their perspective on the effectiveness of the feedback.

The findings of this research will ultimately inform the English department, as well as the school as a whole, with the evaluation of its approach to marking and feedback. Furthermore, it is hoped this will contribute, albeit through a small-scale and highly-contextualised piece of practitioner research, to a field of educational research that is

currently significantly lacking in literature (Elliott et al, 2016), taking on the challenge provided by those authors to test the impacts of dialogic marking to establish whether the time invested has an impact on student learning.

Consequently, the main research question is to ask ‘to what extent do students' and teachers' perspectives demonstrate that dialogic marking is an effective approach to feedback in a UK secondary school?’ To achieve this I will attempt to answer the following sub-questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?

RQ2: What are teachers’ incentives for investing substantial time into dialogic marking?

RQ3: How do students perceive that teachers marking, and in particular dialogic marking, affects their learning?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this review of the literature the intention is to establish what previous educational research suggests effective feedback is by answering a series of questions regarding feedback and, in particular, dialogic feedback. After defining the key terms, there will be a consideration of why feedback is so important and what makes it effective. Following this, and in light of Elliot et al.'s (2016) review, key aspects such as the volume and timeliness of the feedback will be considered as well as a brief review of students' perceptions of feedback and the impact of marking on students' motivation, an issue referred to in a lot of the literature.

2.1 What is feedback?

My starting point is to define the two key terms in my research question, the first of which is feedback. In their meta-review of feedback interventions, Kluger and DeNisi (1996; p.255) defined feedback as

> "actions taken by (an) external agent (s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one's task performance."

Whilst its accuracy would not be challenged here, Hattie et al. (2016; par 25.78), the former widely regarded as a global expert on the subject of feedback, took this further, defining feedback as information received

> "from an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, and self/experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding that reduces the discrepancy between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood."

It is noteworthy that the authors have refined this definition from an earlier version (Hattie and Timperley 2007) in which feedback was described as information provided by an agent; this is symptomatic of recent changes in the focus of research into feedback with much greater interest in when and how feedback is received than

when and how it is provided, a point that will be explored in greater detail later in this review. This definition also accounts for goal-setting theory and much of the research into formative assessment in recognising that feedback must relate to learning intentions.

Accepting this latter definition, it becomes clear that feedback encapsulates a wide-range of sources and interactions and cannot possibly be investigated in full in this dissertation.

2.2 What is dialogic marking?

Narrowing the focus, dialogic marking comes under the umbrella of teacher marking; that is teachers providing written feedback to students' work. Dialogic marking, also known as 'triple-impact marking' and 'deep marking', is neatly defined by the ITWRG (2016; p.6).

> "(It) is a generic term used to describe a process whereby teachers provide written feedback to pupils offering guidance with a view to improving or enhancing the future performance of pupils. Pupils are then expected to respond in writing to the guidance which in turn is verified by the teacher."

The idea is that, over time, a dialogue is created between the teacher and the student (Elliott et al. 2016). The ITWRG (2016) concluded that, from their review of the literature, that there is absence of any theoretical underpinning of its educational worth. In this review, there will be an attempt to further evaluate that assertion.

Part of the challenge in studying the literature on dialogic marking is that it is a relatively new concept in the educational lexicon and is yet to receive much attention in published academic literature. Consequently, it has been incumbent upon me to look into grey literature to research this question. With regards to its origin, practising dialogic marking in a systematic way appears to be a relatively recent

phenomenon in education with Marwood (2016), an educational blogger or commentator writing in an unpublished online article, suggesting it originated in 2011 following influential documents from the Sutton Trust, a UK educational think-tank formed in 1997, and Ofsted. This view is supported by the ITWRB (2016) who felt that Ofsted's praising of certain marking approaches in individual school inspection reports led to the widespread growth of this pedagogy. It may also have some grounding in Robin Alexander's concept of 'dialogic teaching,' first outlined in his 2004 book of that name.

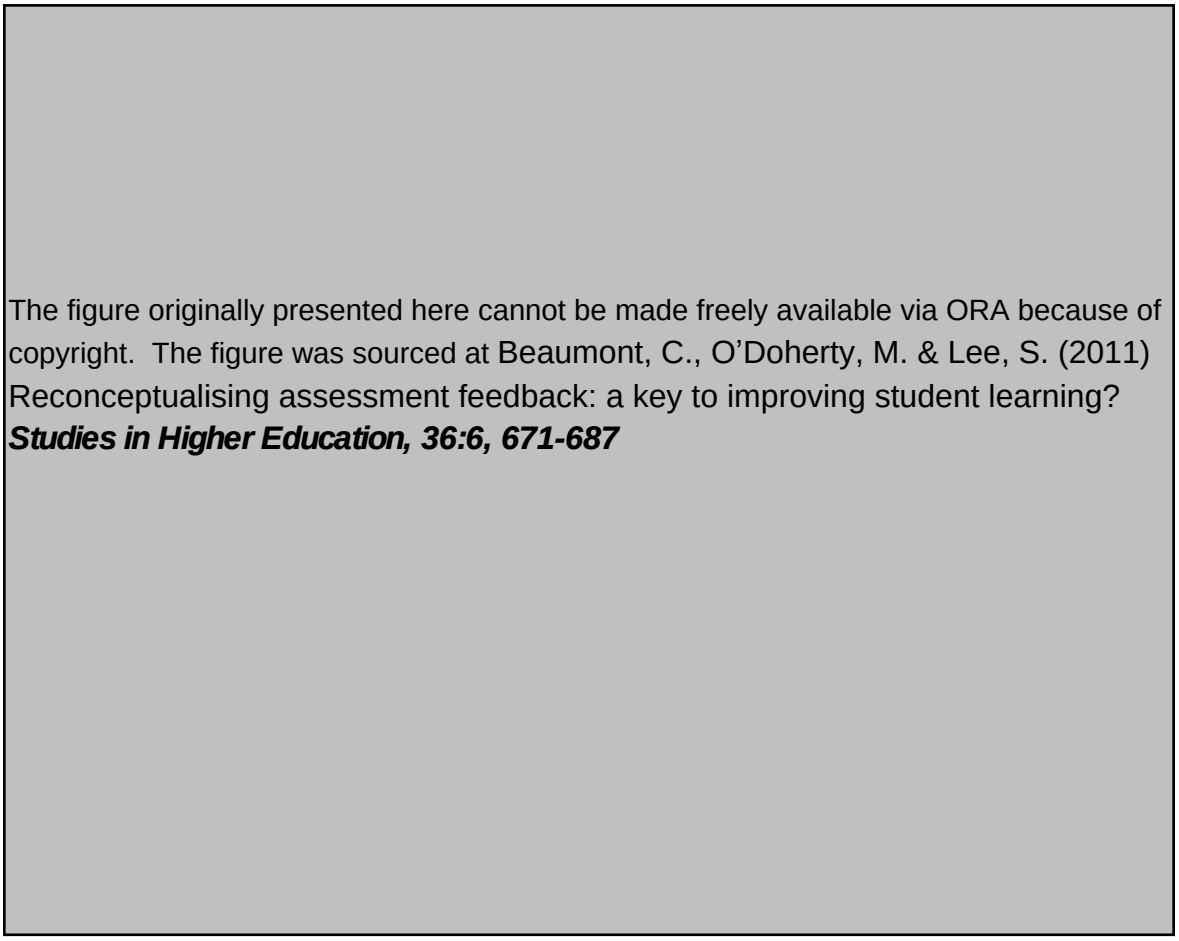
Alexander (2008) looked to build upon seminal studies in to classroom discourse, for example Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), as well as work from Mercer (1995) around exploratory talk to redefine the ideas of what constitutes effective dialogue between teachers and students in the classroom. For Alexander (2004), this meant that questions moved beyond knowledge recall and answers that were developed, justified and linked in a coherent chain of enquiry. Whilst it is not practicable in this review to investigate the research into classroom discourse, it will be interesting to see whether the 'dialogue' seen in students' books matches these characteristics.

2.3 Beaumont's Cycle

Beaumont et al. (2011) created a model to describe the cycle of dialogic feedback, shown in Figure 2, following a qualitative study interviewing college students about their experiences in school and college. In their model, dialogic feedback moves beyond a written dialogue in response to students' work and draws on other aspects of formative assessment described by Black & Wiliam (1998). They argue that the dialogue includes three phases: (1) preparatory work such as setting up success criteria and providing models: (2) in-task feedback such as peer assessment: (3)

generic feedback and a written discussion following the completed work. As one of very few references to dialogic marking in the academic literature, it will be important in Chapter 4 to assess the extent to which the practice observed in the research matches the characteristics described in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Dialogic feedback cycle in schools (Beaumont et al. 2011)



There is some evidence that, even if research was able to demonstrate that one particular method of written feedback was more effective than all others, it still might not lead to any change. In a study of teachers of English as a foreign language in Hong Kong, Lee (2013), argues that many teachers she has worked with know that their written feedback practices are not cost-effective and that students do not take-up the feedback, yet they persist with them anyway. Wiliam (2012) concurred with

these findings, believing that the biggest challenge for the profession is not getting teachers to take on new ideas but, instead, getting them to desist bad habits in any aspect of their pedagogy. Whatever the outcome of my findings in the school I work on, it is likely that a significant volume of coaching will be required to achieve long-term change to practices. The school improvement group system, described in Chapter 3 (p36), has been one vehicle by which our school has tried to achieve this.

Whilst there has been much said and written about the impact of marking on teachers' workload, it is important to note that the profession is not trying to argue that marking should not happen. Petty (2017), a UK educational columnist in the TES, likens the argument that marking is a waste of time to the notion that teaching is too, a stark warning to those trying to reduce teachers' workload and a reminder from a fellow professional that it is important that we mark conscientiously. Marwood (2016), whilst strongly challenging the validity of Hattie's effect sizes and the government's perceived drive for marking, also acknowledges that it is a crucial tool in a teacher's repertoire. However, he concludes that the move to dialogic marking is a step too far and one that will drive teachers out of the profession. It is because of commentaries such as his, a duty of care for the students and teachers that work at my school and a call for more school-based practitioner research specifically in this field (Elliott et al. 2016) that there is an imperative to carry out this empirical research to help to establish whether dialogic marking provides value for money.

Having defined the key terms, the next stage is to investigate how previous educational research has described effective feedback in order to go on and place dialogic marking within this field.

2.4 Why is effective feedback, in any form, considered to be so important?

Much has been written about feedback in educational literature, and it is far too broad a topic to be explored in great detail here. However, it is important to identify some key thinkers that have influenced this area of research and my study in particular.

Whilst they were by no means the first to arrive with the ideas, Black & Wiliam (1998) did much to advocate the concept of formative assessment which, through government intervention in the UK, provided the theoretical framework that underpinned Assessment for Learning in British schools. This was very important with regards to feedback as the authors strongly advocated the idea that the feedback needed to be given during the learning cycle (formatively) as opposed to once the learning has been completed and the students have moved on to something new (summatively). It is the view of the ITWRG (2016) that the growth of dialogic marking may have resulted from a misinterpretation and distortion of the main principles of assessment for learning. Another central strand of Black and Wiliam's (1998) findings, which has been reciprocated in much recent research into feedback (Hargreaves 2012), is that feedback has to be given in the context of learning goals and intentions. Whilst the empirical research in this investigation will primarily focus on the impact of dialogic marking, it will be of interest to explore the extent to which the feedback relates to previously shared learning objectives.

It would not be possible to review research into feedback in the last decade without reviewing the ideas of John Hattie. Through collaboration with a range of other educational intellectuals he has influenced teachers' practices throughout the world. Hattie and Timperley (2007), in a large-scale meta-analysis, found that feedback as

a pedagogical approach can be hugely powerful with an effect size of 0.79. Cohen (2011) explains that an effect size is generated by comparing the results of intervention and control groups to create a statistical measure of the impact of the intervention. Whilst Cohen (2011) identifies an ongoing debate regarding how such data should be interpreted, an effect size of 0.79 is ordinarily defined as a strong effect, thus making Hattie and Timperley's (2007) findings of significance. However, Hattie and Timperley (2007) also note that the individual studies' results within their meta-analyses varied and it is not safe to assume that if feedback is happening that it will be effective; for example, they found very different effect sizes for feedbacks specifically related to improving a task to those for praise, rewards and punishment. They go on to identify that whilst research has demonstrated that feedback is a very powerful tool, they acknowledge that much more research is needed to truly know how to harness that power. This research attempts to explore the effectiveness of feedback and provide empirical evidence regarding a dialogic approach to marking.

On the wider subject of feedback, Hattie and Gan (2016) argue that most feedback in classrooms is presented to whole groups and so students do not always believe it is meant for them; therefore, written marking mitigates this problem by providing personalised feedback for each student.

The Educational Endowment Foundation's teacher toolkit[1], an easily-palatable summary of the findings of educational research widely accessed by working teachers, identifies that feedback (in all forms) is the most impactful intervention available to teachers when done well. This organisation argues that feedback is a

[1] www.educationalendowmentfoundation.org.uk 2017

very low-cost intervention. However, when we consider feedback in its written format, it is harder to justify this low-cost claim. If a full time classroom teacher spends two hours per day marking books, an assertion that is probably well below the mark for many in the profession, then this work might in fact be valued at approximately one fifth of their salary. Secondary schools normally invest approximately 60% of their budget on teaching staff which, by my calculations, would mean that around 12% of a school's budget might be spent on written feedback; a contribution so large that it is essential we get right.

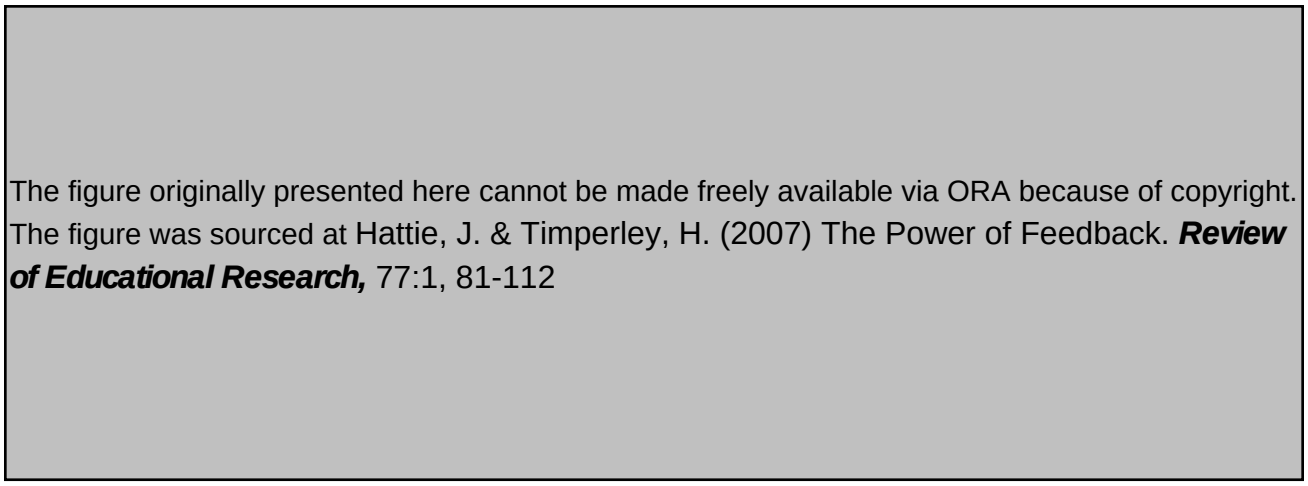
2.5 What makes feedback effective?

Some researchers suggest that feedback is most useful when it helps to tackle misconceptions in students' work (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Higgins et al., 2002; Carless, 2006). Whilst it appears logical that this would lead to improvement, the research into feedback is vast and so absolute conclusions are difficult to make. Higgins et al. (2002) established that 86% of higher education students involved in a study rated critical feedback as important; drawing comparisons between different studies in this field is made harder by assumptions that researchers make when defining the terms in their studies. Tackling misconceptions and providing critical feedback are both likely to be important when giving effective feedback, but to know exactly what they meant by these terms and whether they are vastly different is difficult to assess. Whilst critical feedback might have a focus on correcting or improving work that had previously been completed, Carless (2006) discussed the idea of "*feedforward" (p225),* indicating that feedback is most powerful when it supports future work and is directed to what comes next. This will also have a large influence on the effectiveness of feedback as it needs to allow the student to improve

their future work and should, alongside correcting misconceptions and providing critical feedback, be accepted as conditions of effective feedback.

Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels of feedback neatly develops the notion of feedforward (Figure 3). They describe the different foci teachers can use; task level, process level, self-regulation level and self-level. In task level feedback, feedback would be given about the content produced, such as whether it is correct or fully complete. Suggestions may include, for example, to include more detailed content in some sections of the work. Process level feedback would focus more on the approach to the work; the means of completing it. Feedback could include, for example, to return to the editing phase of the work taking the success criteria in to account. This would very likely mean students would be given feedback that supports the improvement of their future work. Self-regulation feedback would try to engage the recipient in greater self-evaluation, for example by asking them to reflect on the structure of their conclusion. Finally, self-level feedback is directed to the person and often entirely distinct from the task. An example of this might be for the teacher to simply say 'well done'. They argue that teachers should move from task to process to self-regulation as students become more skilful. Combining this with Carless' (2006) concept of 'feedforward,' it could be suggested that process and self-regulation level feedback provide more explicit guidance on how to improve work in future than the other two approaches. As part of my empirical research, teachers' and students' perspectives on Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels will be explored.

Figure 3: Four levels of feedback (Hattie and Timperley 2007)



It is also important to consider exactly what the focus of teachers' feedback should be. Like many researchers before her, Lee (2013) makes the important distinction between mistakes and errors; mistakes are performance-related in that the rule is known but has been applied inaccurately whilst an error results from a lack of knowledge or understanding. Lee suggests that the former should simply be identified for self-correction whilst the latter may need corrective feedback. Whilst her research was in the narrow context of written foreign language marking, applying it to a more generalised approach to marking it is possible to see that Hattie and Timperley's (2007) levels approach could be applied differently to errors and mistakes. Identifying an error in the work could be seen as task-level feedback, whilst mistakes could be tackled with process of self-regulation level feedback.

Taking this idea further, Van der Schaaf et al (2013) argue that written feedback should be differentiated to match students' needs, using the terms didactical explanations, corrective feedback and suggestive feedback. In didactical explanations the teacher gives more explanation and guidance, telling the students what to do next. Corrective feedback, in a similar vein to Lee's (2013) definition of

mistakes, simply corrects students' work as well as confirming what has been done well. Finally, suggestive feedback is more akin to Hattie and Timperley's self-regulation level, whereby students are supported by prompts, questions and by the problem being deepened by the teacher. Whilst the research into these ideas of differentiated feedback is far vaster than can be considered in this review, these studies confirm that effective written feedback must be tailored towards the recipient. In my empirical research, it will be important to investigate the nature of teachers' developmental comments and the perspectives that both students and teachers have on these.

The ITWRG (2016) described ineffective marking as being disjointed from the learning process, unmanageable for teachers, failing to encourage and engender motivation and often as overly-reliant on the labour intensive deep-marking. Looking back at Figure 1 (p9), describing teachers' feedback practices, 78% of teachers nationally and all of those surveyed in my school indicated that they use deep marking practices which suggests, if their description of ineffective marking is accurate, that there is a significant disparity between research findings and practice in the UK. It also suggests that the idea of dialogic marking, being investigated in this study, needs a thorough evaluation of its impact both in this study and in others that should follow.

The ITWRG (2016) went on to describe three principles of effective marking; it should be meaningful, manageable and motivating. By meaningful, they argue it should be differentiated for the students' needs and be solely focused on student progress, not the marking expectations of school leaders, supporting the ideas proposed by Van der Schaaf (2013) and Lee (2013). By manageable they suggest

that it is merely one of many tools to provide feedback to students. Supporting Black & Wiliam's (1998) of effective formative assessment, they argue that self and peer-assessment should also play significant roles in feedback. Whilst this gains significant support from other researchers, it is important to note that students are not always happy with and motivated by these approaches, with Beaumont et al. (2011) stating that the majority of students they interviewed about their school experiences reported negative experiences, often relating to the trust they have in the feedback. Finally, by motivating, they argue that effective marking should motivate students to progress. Issues of motivation will be examined later in this review (Section 2.9).

Summarising this section, effective feedback would help students to progress, identifying misconceptions, mistakes and errors. It should ensure that students have to self-regulate, prompting their reflection in a manner that motivates them.

Further to the focus of teachers' feedback, there are still more factors to consider for effective dialogic marking.

2.6 What volume of written feedback should take place?

Elliott et al. (2016) argue that when questions arise about the workload implications of teachers' marking, the thoroughness and regularity of marking should be considered. Whilst once again acknowledging huge gaps in quality research in this field, they point out that it is likely that there have been no studies into simple 'acknowledgement marking', that is simply putting ticks on a page to demonstrate that the book has been seen, because there are no obvious gains in doing this. In fact, they suggest that where this practice still goes on it could likely be eradicated without any negative effects on learning and that teachers should potentially focus

on marking less work in greater detail. This could be argued to be akin to the self-level feedback described by Hattie and Timperley (2007), which may have similarly small effects on learning. The ITWRG (2016) commented that ineffective marking was often overly labour-intensive, a likely characteristic of this process. Again, teachers' and students' perspectives on this will be explored in the empirical research if evidence of this practice is observed.

A question more pertinent for my research is whether the marking of a piece of work should be related to generic subject themes or selectively focused on specific shortcomings in the students' work. Whilst, once again, Elliott et al. (2016) point to an absence of quality research on this in schools, it might be sensible to return to Black and Wiliam's (1998) notion of feedback being related to specific success criteria and learning goals. If teachers and students are explicit in negotiating and understanding their learning intentions then feedback related specifically to these intentions should help them to narrow any gaps between those intentions and their actual performance. This investigation will look closely at where each stakeholder perceives the feedback sits on a spectrum from generic to specific.

The danger in the discussion above is that it is more focused upon teachers' actions and not learners' reception of the feedback. After all, Hattie et al. (2016) encouraged us to focus on how feedback is received as opposed to how it is delivered. Several studies argue that too much feedback on a piece of work can be both confusing and discouraging (Lee, 2013; ITWRG, 2016). In their study into the education of nurses in universities Parboteeah and Anwar (2009) contradicted Lee's findings, concluding that the students' motivation resulting from feedback was directly proportionate to the volume and quality of the feedback, and far more significant than the type or form in

which the feedback was received, implying that a greater volume of feedback is better with the significant caveat that the context of feedback in higher education may be very different. The important question to consider in the study is, therefore, whether there is an optimum amount of feedback that a student can receive in order to learn. Is there a law of diminishing returns relating to feedback, where it becomes so excessive that extra feedback in fact reduces the learning that takes place? Whilst this question is very interesting, there isn't the scope to fully answer it in this study, but it would certainly be worth of future study.

2.7 How regular and timely is effective marking?

When the optimum amount of time between the work being completed and the feedback being provided is considered, Hattie et al. (2016) feel that the findings from research are contradictory. Unfortunately, when we focus attention specifically on written feedback, Elliott et al. (2016) highlight that there is no high-quality research evidence from schools on the effect of the speed with which feedback is given on learning, calling for researchers to fill this gap in the literature. Hartley and Chesworth's (2000) findings, albeit from a study of students in higher education, were that over half of the students they asked reported that feedback was too late to be useful. Supporting this, Higgins et al. (2002) concluded from their study that the timeliness of the feedback was the most vital factor on the impact of feedback. Elliott et al. (2016) point to evidence from the teaching of English as a foreign language, reporting that feedback that comes in the next lesson has a greater impact than that which is more delayed (Kulik & Kulik, 1988), the date of this reference highlighting the paucity of evidence in this field. That said, given Elliott et al.'s (2016) assertion that the quality of written feedback is of greater importance than its volume for it to

be perceived as useful, suggests that teachers must guard against stealth at the expense of quality, something that should be explored in the context of dialogic marking in my research. Certainly, with the ITWRG (2016) view that false timetables are often created for written feedback that are based on marking policies as opposed to students' needs, the evidence is pointing to a need to explore students' and teachers' perceptions on the speed with which written feedback is delivered.

A further issue, often debated in my own school, is how often students work should be marked in order to be effective. Often the most controversial part of any school's marking policy is the part that relates to this issue, as shown by the findings of the DfE's Workload Challenge document (DfE 2015) reporting on the review of teachers' workload. Unfortunately, again there is no empirical research on this question from within schools to be commented on here. Clearly, teachers' time places a huge limitation on the regularity with which written feedback can be given but, when other views cited in this research are considered, it is likely that the more often written feedback can be given to students, the more likely they are to benefit from it (Elliott et al., 2016; Parboteeah and Anwar, 2009). This notion gives school leaders an imperative to try to support teachers through providing time within normal practices to allow for this to happen. In evaluating teachers' and students' perspectives of dialogic marking, the speed and regularity of marking will be a large part of the consideration in an attempt to fill this apparent void in the literature.

2.8 What does research evidence tell us about students' perceptions of marking?

Whilst students' perspectives have already infiltrated my presentation of the literature so far, it is worthwhile including a section specifically focused on research in this field

as it is central to one of the research questions. Weaver (2006), writing primarily about higher education, describes how little research has been carried out in to students' perceptions of written feedback. There is even less written about students' perceptions of feedback in schools. A crucial point identified by Carless (2006), also from working with university students, is that teachers often perceive their feedback to be more useful than their students do, an issue that needs greater exploration if it were to be useful to teachers giving written feedback, including those teaching in my school. One possible explanation highlighted by Higgins et al. (2002) is that the language used by the teachers may render lots of the feedback inaccessible; a clear possibility but probably only a part of the picture. This certainly requires exploration in my study, especially given Hattie et al.'s (2016) distinction between receiving and providing feedback.

A key factor in the way students use and perceive feedback is whether any qualitative feedback is accompanied by a quantitative value or grade (Black & Wiliam, 1998). They argued that, traditionally, a reason for students to not engage with and value their feedback was the fact that once they had been awarded grades they put a value judgement on their work and no longer wanted to know any more about it. Higgins et al. (2002) challenge this assertion, arguing that the university students they worked with are intrinsically motivated and very keen on receiving feedback. Acknowledging this division, even if Black and Wiliam (1998) were right, a legacy of the subsequent bastardisation of their work by the UK government has been that UK teachers give much more qualitative feedback and are far more reticent to give grades, at least until after feedback has been received. Figure 1 (p9) demonstrates that teachers in my school rarely give grades on students' work, evidencing this point. Therefore, is the nature of the feedback given the reason it is

felt that students do not always engage with feedback? This question will certainly require further exploration in the research.

Hattie et al. (2016) report that cultural factors could be at play in what students perceive their feedback to do. In Eastern cultures, they argue, critical feedback is perceived as something that will help students to improve whilst in western cultures this is often taken personally by the students and therefore not welcomed. Do students in my school conform to their view of western cultures? Furthermore, Hattie et al. (2016) comment that many students perceive that their teachers are judging their work as opposed to being interested readers. Taking this point on, Wiliam (2012), in a training seminar for secondary school teachers, said students want to know how they can improve on weaker areas and the focus of feedback should be on this. Hattie et al. (2016) identify that students want feedback that provides strategies rather than just pointing out where their work is wrong, a point supported by Higgins et al. (2002) who added that when students make mistakes it is important to explain clearly to students why they are wrong. That said, a balance has to be struck as there is always a danger that feedback that is too detailed and prescriptive in how to improve may disempower the students and remove the important stage in which they think for themselves (ITWRG, 2016).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) stress that students also prefer process oriented feedback as opposed to task level feedback. When written feedback is given, teachers have to strike the balance between giving holistic comments that serve to support students in their future learning and providing comments that specifically relate to the work that has just been completed. Nazif et al. (2004), in a study of

university students that was on such a small scale (four students) that generalisations are not really applicable, found that students preferred marginalia to summative comments on a piece of work on the basis that they could see precisely which extract of work the comments related to. Whilst it was very difficult to find literature that was able to test this concept further, it will be interesting to test students' and teachers' perceptions of this question in my own empirical research. Do students' or teachers have preferences over whether feedback is given as marginalia or summative comments?

2.9 What impact does marking have on students' motivation?

It is hard to consider students' perceptions of written feedback without considering the impact that teachers' marking can have on students' motivation. After all, one of the key conclusions from the ITWRG (2016) report was that teachers' marking should be motivating. Motivation is another extensive area of academic research that is far too large to tackle in this review, but to not consider that marking would affect it would be remiss. Deci et al. (1999) argue that when tangible rewards are given as a form of feedback that intrinsic motivation is undermined; students would take less responsibility for motivating and regulating themselves and would subsequently be more reliant on teacher feedback for future learning. Given that an objective of education is to create independent learners, such tangible rewards would work against this. However, it could be argued that Dweck (2009) counters this when she asserts that teachers should acknowledge and reward students' efforts, arguing that this leads to students understanding that hard work, as opposed to natural intelligence, leads to future learning. Arguably this would support Hattie and Timperley's (2007) assertion that feedback should not be given that pertains to

self, providing that feedback on the effort in completing the work is kept entirely separate from feedback on the work itself. Developing this further, Hattie et al. (2016) state that recent developments in neuroscience indicate that when students receive greater reward than they expect to, their levels of dopamine increase which can trigger greater future effort and learning, however Lee (2012) warned educationalists to be very wary making large assumptions about neuroscience as this field of educational research is very much in its infancy. It will be interesting to explore teachers' and students' perspectives on praise and rewards in this research,

It may be important to question how influential positive feedback is on students' motivation. In a study looking at the views of university students, Weaver (2006) found that these students were disparaging of their feedback as it was too focused on the weaknesses in their work and the areas in which it could be improved. She argues that (2006; p389)

> "there is nothing wrong with critical evaluation, but students do need positive feedback on where they have done well to give them confidence."

However, we must retain Black & Wiliam's (1998) warnings that if the positive feedback is directed about the person, Hattie and Timperley's (2007) self level feedback, then there is a risk that students will not want to attempt more challenging tasks as it could lead to them not receiving such positive affirmations about themselves. The balance between positive and negative feedback has sparked debate amongst different departments in my school in recent years as we have debated policy, and a question that should be explored with the students in this research as the impact of marking is assessed. Carless (2006) suggests, from a study in higher education, that teachers often perceive their feedback contains more positive feedback than it actually does which may confuse the issue even further and

requires more unpacking in the empirical research. Whatever the case, it seems likely to me that the views are likely to be highly contextualised, hence the different approaches taken by departments in my school. After all, as Gamlem & Smith (2013) were keen to assert, education is highly contextualised; a point they believe all educational researchers should keep in mind and will certainly be a limitation on the practical use of any findings from this research.

2.10 Summary of the literature review

This review of the literature has shown that, whilst there is considerable academic research into feedback, there are large gaps in the area of marking in schools and, particularly, the notion of dialogic marking. It has proven achievable to identify key characteristics of effective feedback, for example that it is focused on learning intentions and provides opportunities for the students to reflect on their own work, but there is much debate over factors such as how often work should be marked and the volume of feedback that should be provided. These factors appear to have been pushed to the forefront of the discussion by recent reviews carried out from within the profession, such as the ITWRG (2016), calling all stakeholders in education to evaluate their current approaches.

Responding to that call from the literature, it is incumbent on this study to describe the characteristics of effective dialogic marking in the English department in my school, gathering the students' and teachers' perspectives on its impact as well as factors such as volume and timeliness so that practice within the department, as well as the whole school, can be evaluated and, if needed, changed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology chapter will be separated into several sections. First, the approach taken to this research will be introduced and justified, followed by a description of the context of the school and department that has been used. The instruments of research that have been used in the empirical study will then be introduced and justified, the processes of data collection described and the approach to data analysis explained. Finally, the ethical considerations and limitations of the method will be discussed.

3.1 Research approach

This is a piece of practitioner research. Menter (2011) explores the complexity of research in general, and particularly within the field of education. He defines it as:

> "practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners." (Menter, 2011:p3)

I hope to demonstrate throughout the remainder of this dissertation that my approach to this investigation is systematic. The structure will follow the well-trodden path of identifying an issue, reading the relevant literature to identify research questions, planning and carrying out data collection before reporting and analysing the findings to answer the research questions set at the beginning of the investigation. Additionally, I will demonstrate that the research is carried out within my school's setting and has been used collaboratively to inform future practice in my school and beyond.

Practitioner research offers many benefits to participants and their colleagues, with Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2014, p122) arguing:

> "the engagement of teachers in research can serve many purposes: teacher development, practice transformation, social change, staff development, school improvement, generation of local (i.e. practical) but also general knowledge of learning and teaching, and knowledge dissemination."

It is hoped that, through effective collaboration, this investigation will be a vehicle to initiate positive change in one department of my school, as will be outlined in Section 3.2.

Sections 3.2 and 3.9 will also describe how the investigation involved the introduction and subsequent evaluation of a marking proforma intervention. In planning and then introducing an intervention, observing its impact, reflecting on its application and subsequently re-planning an approach, this investigation is also completing one complete cycle of an action research approach (Cohen et al. 2011). An advantage of an action research approach is the amalgamation of different forms of expertise through collaboration I order to learn; I was able to merge my knowledge of the enquiry process, gained through participation in a masters-level course, with the contextual knowledge of the department provided by the teachers (Herbert & Rainford, 2014). This approach to research is an effective way of exacting change at the local level (Cohen et al. 2011), an outcome that could be desirable at the conclusion of this study. Through the development of the marking proforma intervention I collaborated closely with two members of the English Department in firstly creating the resources and, following the collection of data, through evaluating its use.

Given that the research sought to identify the characteristics of dialogic marking it was necessary to study artefacts, namely examples of students' work, and interview teachers and students; this lent itself to a qualitative approach to research.

3.2 The school's context

The empirical research was carried out in a small, 11-16, comprehensive secondary school in rural Oxfordshire with approximately 600 students. Its rural setting means students attend from a wide catchment. Year groups vary in size but have broadly similar attainment on entry to the school, though outcomes at Key Stage 4 have been improving across the last four years. During this time, the school has moved from an Ofsted judgement of 'requiring improvement' in November 2013 to the 'good' category in May 2015. Throughout this period, school leadership has transformed from a more 'top-down' approach, deemed to be required to raise standards and ensure greater consistency, to a more collegiate approach where leaders and teachers work more collaboratively to evaluate and create policy and systems. This is highlighted by the use of school improvement groups, with participation from all teaching staff, to collaboratively research and reflect on key pedagogical approaches such as marking and feedback.

The English department comprises of five full-time teachers, with two part-time members that also teach in other departments in the school. The department has enjoyed three years of highly successful outcomes at Key Stage 4, outperforming most other departments in the school and, indeed, the county, for their outcomes in English Language at Key Stage 4. Summer 2016 saw a significant transition within the department with three full-time teachers leaving the school being replaced by two Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and one more experienced teacher. However, the

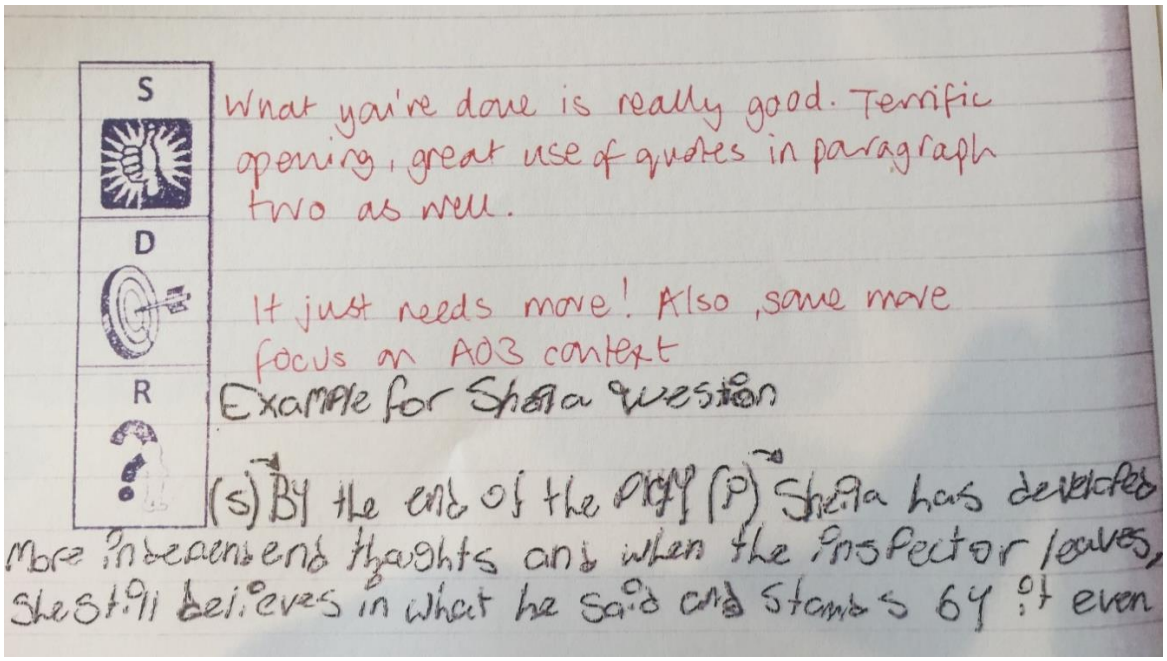
two departmental leaders, the subject leader and second in department, remained in place to induct the new team.

Year 10, the year group that is the focus of the empirical research, is the smallest year group in the school with only 98 students on roll. Consequently, there are only four teaching groups in this year group. The classes are arranged by academic outcomes, with a large set of high-attaining students, two equal middle-attaining sets and one smaller set for the lowest attaining students. Accordingly, only four teachers are required for these classes, with one of the NQTs not involved.

Year 10 students in the Department complete the first year of their AQA GCSE courses in English Language and English Literature; the second cohort to follow this specification. The curriculum is designed in a cyclical manner, merging the content of both GCSE courses in three units taught throughout the year. Assessments are set and marked every two weeks, as per the departmental policy (Appendix 1, point 6.55), with a consistent approach across each of the three units allowing students and teachers to assess their progress and performance against the assessment objectives throughout the year (see course map – Appendix 2).

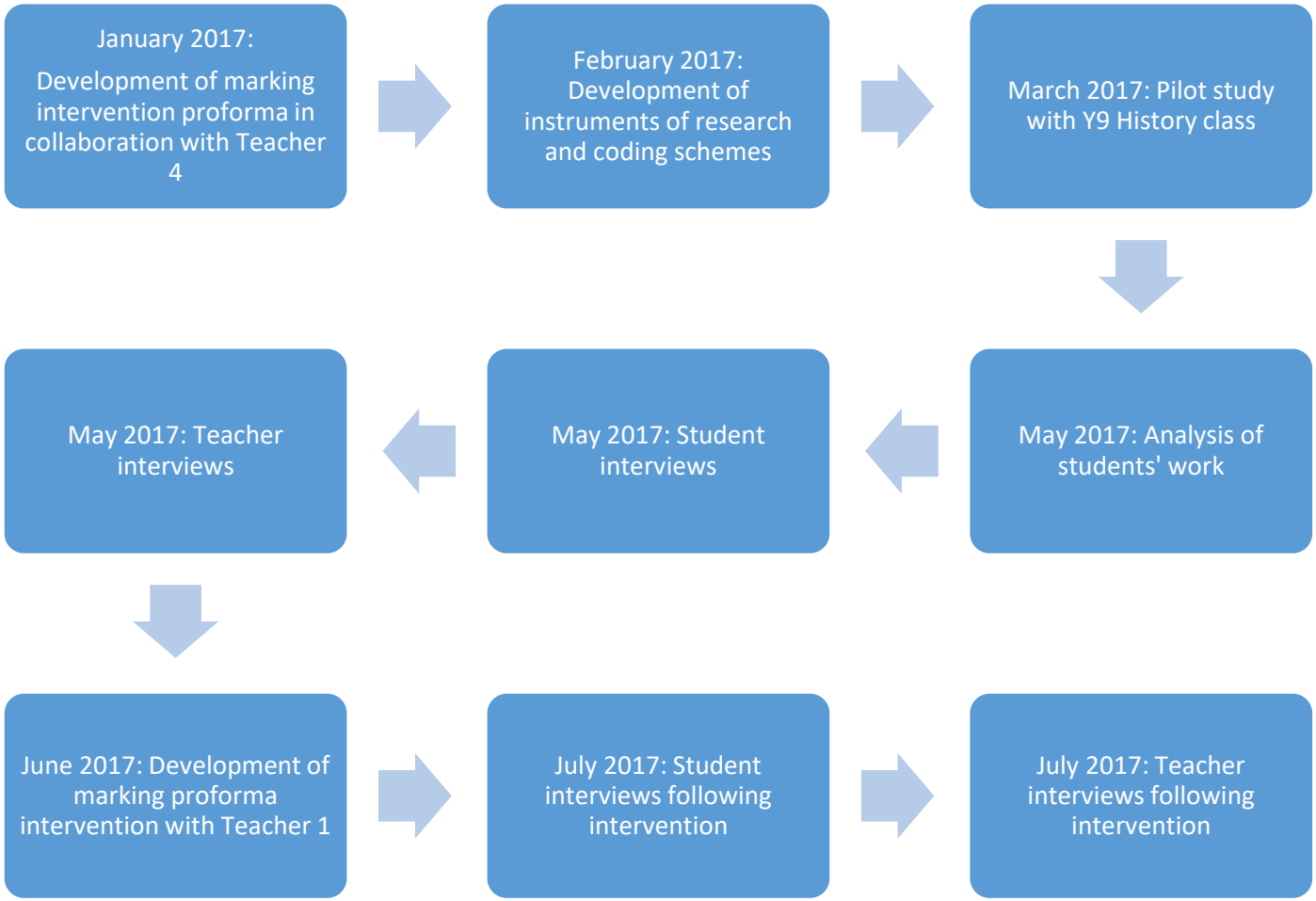
As can be seen in Appendix 1, this departmental nuance fits within a whole school marking and assessment policy whereby the expectation is that teachers identify the strengths and developments within students' work and, where appropriate, the students respond to that feedback. In English, the expectation is that all students' assessed pieces are marked summatively, using a stamp for the teacher to record the strengths of the work and some developmental points to help the student to improve (Figure 4).

Figure 4: an example of the SDR stamp used for feedback in the English department



It is expected that students will respond to this feedback. As Deputy Headteacher at the school, I have authored the policy through collaborative work with teachers and leaders over time. Following Ofsted's lead (Ofsted 2016), the school recognises that there is a need for departments to differentiate their own approach to meet the needs of their subjects and their students. Part of the process of developing the policy was to create a school improvement group throughout 2015-17 looking at effective feedback to students. This involved working with several teachers across the school, including one member of the English department, with the outcome that this teacher and I collaborated to create alternative approaches to feedback from the department's normal strength, development and response stamp, which will be shown later in the chapter. The outcomes from this piece of practitioner research will be shared with school leaders across the school to review, and potentially develop further, the school's marking and assessment policy.

3.3 Timeline


January 2017:
Development of marking intervention proforma in collaboration with Teacher 4
February 2017: Development of instruments of research and coding schemes
March 2017: Pilot study with Y9 History class
May 2017: Analysis of students' work
May 2017: Student interviews
May 2017: Teacher interviews
June 2017: Development of marking proforma intervention with Teacher 1
July 2017: Student interviews following intervention
July 2017: Teacher interviews following intervention

3.4 Participants

The participants in this study were the English Department teachers, their Year 10 students and myself. I had multiple roles within this research as: the school leader responsible for marking and feedback; the line manager to the leader in the English department; the researcher within this piece of practitioner research. Consequently, collaboration with the English teachers and other subject leaders across the school was a necessary and inevitable part of this study.

3.5 Sampling

With 98 students in the year group, analysing all student work was not realistic so 20 students were selected as a sample; five from each class. Taking students from each class already gave me a stratified sample based upon prior attainment, so I simply selected five students' work from within each class ensuring a mix of gender and selecting students that I felt would be confident to discuss the issues with me if they were selected for an interview. Menter (2011), declared that given that the information from interviews is not generalizable anyway, sampling techniques need not be systematic. Rather, it is more valuable to target those people who will provide the information needed to improve understanding of the issue. The next stage was to identify which students, from the five work samples in each class, would be selected for interview. However, this again presented a dilemma; by what means could a decision be made regarding who would provide the greatest insight into students' perceptions? Ultimately, any of the students could have provided this, so

the decision was taken to select a student of each gender that was most likely to articulate their views confidently, based upon my knowledge of the students' personalities. As there were only four English classes in this year group, all were interviewed.

3.6 Methods

3.6.1 Collection of artefacts

Students' work was collected showing two consecutive extended pieces of writing, the subsequent feedback from their teacher and any further written interactions between the teacher and the student. The purpose of this approach was to: identify the characteristics of dialogic marking in the department; to provide an artefact to stimulate a discussion in the interview (Lyle, 2003); to inform and personalise the questions in the interviews. The coding schemes designed to analyse these artefacts are described and justified in Section 3.10.1 (p45).

3.6.2 Interviews with students and teachers

As with other studies examining subjects' perspectives, interviews seemed to be an appropriate research method (Beaumont et al., 2011; Higgins et al., 2002; Gamlem & Smith, 2013). Interviews provide greater flexibility than, for example, questionnaires allowing the gathering of information that is illuminative and goes beyond the descriptive in order to understand someone's reasons for their thinking or actions (Menter 2011); as this study was trying to understand students' perceptions, an interview would enable this to happen (Menter 2011). The interactive nature of an interview would enable the opportunity to adapt questions in order to elicit relevant information (Higgins et al. 2002) and give the interviewee the opportunity to

use their own language and, therefore, articulate their own ideas without the limitation of fixed questionnaire responses (Menter 2011).

When considering the format of the interviews, Menter (2011) states that most interviews in educational settings are semi-structured, the option selected here, as it enables the interviewer to plan the direction of the interview but to be afforded the flexibility to make changes as necessary.

The decision was taken to interview all participants individually. This was because I wanted to explore the student's own work with them in the interview setting, something that through the use of an artefact, should increase the quality of their responses (Cohen et al. 2011). Whilst group interviews sometimes enable students to challenge each other and, therefore, develop their arguments (Cohen et al. 2011), I felt that there could be some sensitivity through viewing their own written work and did not want the students to close down,

3.7 Data collection instruments

3.7.1 Student interview schedule

To utilise this instrument, interview questions were planned that mapped against the research questions set in the introduction (see Appendix 4). Of particular relevance were the following research questions:

RQ1 What are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?

RQ3 How do students perceive that teachers marking, and in particular dialogic marking, affects their learning?

All of the questions in the interview contributed to RQ3, whilst the first three questions also assisted with answering RQ1. By ensuring that the interviews took place after the students' work had been analysed, these artefacts were able to be shown to the students ensuring that their answers to interview questions 1-6 referred to tangible feedback as opposed to recollections; this is known as stimulated recall (Lyle 2003). For example, if the student answered question 1 by identifying that the feedback had been very useful because it precisely told them how to improve their use of quotations, this would inform me that they perceived the feedback to be helpful and would identify that a characteristic of the feedback was giving precise developmental feedback on how to improve. The third interview question was included to specifically address the question over what makes effective feedback in light of Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels of feedback, although the language chosen was selected to ensure the question was accessible to the students without needing to explain the theory. In light of the debate over the balance between identifying strengths and weaknesses in students' work (Weaver, 2006; Lee, 2012; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie et al., 2016; Dweck, 2009; Deci et al., 1999), interview question eight was introduced to enlighten my understanding of students' perceptions. As final preparation, Kvale's (1996) tips for interviewing in educational research were consulted; these included: the interviewer is knowledgeable on the subject; the questions avoid jargon; the interviewer is gentle and allows people to talk; the interviewer responds to the comments of the interviewee and allows them to take some direction; the interviewer knows what he wants to find out and is prepared to challenge inconsistencies.

The interviews were audio recorded and, simultaneously, notes were taken of the responses. Walford (2001) suggests that it would take five hours to transcribe one

hour of interview so, as the objective was to understand perspectives as opposed to understanding the social interactions within the interview, it was decided to not transcribe each interview. Instead, the recordings were used to clarify any aspect of the interviews in which the notes were deemed inadequate.

3.7.2 Teacher interview schedule

As with the student interviews, to understand the teachers' perceptions of the impact of feedback, a set of interview questions needed to be created. When generating these questions, which can be viewed in Appendix 5, they needed to be pertinent to the two following research questions:

RQ1 What are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?

RQ3 What are teachers' incentives for investing substantial time into dialogic marking?

All of the questions contributed to my understanding of RQ3. Questions 1-6 also contribute to my understanding of RQ1. Once more, to ensure that the discussion remained focused on tangible evidence, all of their students' work from the sample was presented to them in the interview. The first of these questions, again enquired into the teacher's perception of the purpose of their marking taking into consideration Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels of feedback. From their answers to the questions set I would then be able to identify the characteristics of the marking and be able to understand their reasons and incentives for the approach they take.

3.8 Pilot Study

Before any of the research took place, a small pilot study with two Year 9 History students and one History teacher allowed the instruments to be tested, modifying the language of the interview questions. The pilot interview with the History teacher identified that sharing Hattie and Timperley's (2007) theory and the student work that was to be discussed at the beginning of the interview made the interviewee uncomfortable, not knowing what would come next; to mitigate this feeling, both were given to the teachers before the interviews in the main research.

3.9 Marking proforma intervention

As described in Section 3.2, teachers marked using the SDR stamp (Figure 4). The 'S' stands for strengths, the 'D' for developments and the 'R' for responses. The students are used to working with this format, having received feedback in this way for three years. This was also, always accompanied by the assessment success criteria which was shared with the students in advance of the task (Appendix 6).

Teacher 4 and I worked collaboratively to create a series of interventions to this approach, two of which were included in the empirical research (Appendices 7 and 8). This collaborative planning is important to develop sophisticated teaching and learning tools, identifying and eradicating potential weaknesses through discussion. A limitation of the collaborative work, in this case, was that the planning did not involve all members of the English department from the outset due to the diverse priorities at play for the teachers. Subsequent planning, at the conclusion of this investigation, should address this limitation. Alongside the success criteria shown in Appendix 6, students were given their feedback using the 'marking proforma' in Appendix 7 instead of the SDR stamp.

There were several rationale behind this approach. Firstly, given the concerns about the impact of the time being spent marking on teacher workload (DfE, 2015), it was felt that this approach would reduce the time needed to give feedback. Having read a few pieces of work to identify pertinent strengths and developments, the marking proforma could be designed and individual feedback given by simply identifying two strengths and developments through ticking the sheet. This also freed up more time for the teacher to add comments in the margins; an addition that some students favour (Nazif et al. 2004). Secondly, the intervention still maintained the strengths, developments and responses approach that is required by the departmental policy (Appendix 1). Thirdly, by providing some exemplar writing for the students, there is an opportunity for them to self-assess their own writing against this model (Black & Wiliam, 1998). It will be interesting to discover whether students' perceive this to be helpful to their own development. Returning to Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels of feedback, the provision of a model should help the students to both understand the process of writing moving forwards, and to self-regulate by comparing their work to the model.

A second, alternative approach can be seen in Appendix 8. Here, the teacher identified four key aspects of the students' writing, 3.1 to 3.4, and using the colours seen in Appendix 8, highlighted the students work in that colour where these aspects were seen. Strengths and areas to improve were then highlighted at the bottom of the page. The rationale behind this approach was to signpost to students where each of the success criteria were being met in their work. However, it must be noted

that this particular intervention did not necessarily save any time in the marking process.

3.10 Data analysis

3.10.1 Students' work

In order to answer the first research question, what are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?, a coding scheme had to be applied to the artefacts, the students' work. The starting point needed to be a typology to identify significant patterns across the work samples. Tunstall and Gipps (1996) created a typology with four main types, A to D, that could be used to categorise the nature of feedback on a spectrum from evaluative to descriptive comments. Gamlem and Smith (2013) argued that their methodology had not been replicated elsewhere so it was not known how it would function in a different context. Tunstall and Gipps (1996) study aimed to produce a typology and was far more focused on classifying types of feedback whereas this study was focused far more on the subjects' perceptions. Furthermore, because of the absence of academic research in to dialogic marking highlighted in the literature review, it was quickly apparent that an original typology was required.

Given my assertion in Chapter 2 that the effectiveness of feedback could be linked to the four levels of feedback described by Hattie and Timperley (2007), it was decided to incorporate these levels into the following typology:

T=teacher	S=student	P= praise	Q=question
A=answer	K=acknowledgement	C=comment	G=grade
t=task level	p=process level	sr=self-regulation level	
s=self level			

Looking at the work in the sample, a code was added to any writing deemed to be added by the teacher or the student after the initial work was completed. For example, if a teacher wrote “great start” following an introductory paragraph this would be deemed as ‘praise’ and ‘task level’ feedback as it simply referred to the work that had been completed. However, if a teacher wrote “great simile” next to a student’s writing this would again be identified as ‘praise,’ but this time would be at ‘task level’ and ‘process level’ because this feedback not only pertains to the work being completed, but also to applying this literary device in future writing. If the comment “good girl” was written against the work, this would be ‘praise’ but would be at ‘self-level’ as it does not directly relate to the work, but rather to the person. Finally, if a teacher were to write “how could you have introduced more literary devices in to your second paragraph?” this would have been judged a ‘question’ at ‘self-regulation level’ as it would support the student to self-assess their work and be more independent in future writing.

Further to the four levels of feedback, there was also an attempt to classify whether the writing was praise, a question, an answer, an acknowledgement such as a tick, a comment or a grade. The comments would often be developmental, for example “you must discuss the writer’s methods.” This typology lacked the complexity of Tunstall and Gipp’s (1996) work but it provided an instrument to enable an analysis of the characteristics of the dialogue.

My analysis of students’ work needed to move beyond a typology to directly answer the research questions. Appendix 3 contains the questions I used to analyse each of the students’ work. The purpose of each question was to help to answer the first of my research questions; what are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in

the English department at my school? To achieve this I needed to identify the extent to which dialogue was taking place, namely how many distinct contributions were made by teacher and student, as well as questions about the nature of the feedback such as whether comments were summative or marginalia and whether the student ever asked questions of the teacher; a clear sign of dialogue. The ITWRG (2016) argued that dialogic marking would involve the teacher providing written feedback on the students' responses to the teacher's initial marking; therefore, to meet these criteria, four distinct contributions were needed. Combining this with the typology it was possible, for example, to evaluate whether the marginalia were praise or developmental comments and compare the amount of each that were present. To do this, a consistent approach was required in determining the category of each comment. Praise comments were those deemed to be positive about the work, for example "good contextual comment" whilst developmental comments were those that were identifying something that students could improve, for example "ensure you use quotations."

Judgements were also made about whether there was evidence of student learning from the responses or subsequent work and whether sufficient feedback was given. To achieve this, I would look at the teachers' comments throughout the students' initial work and judge whether their response to the feedback appeared to apply that feedback. For example, if a student was told by the teacher to make more explicit links to the context of a play I would look in the response paragraph for references to the situation or time-period in which the play is set. A recognised limitation was that such judgements are highly subjective with it being exceptionally difficult to infer whether learning has taken place when students have only added two or three

sentences. However, in this case, the technique was simply used to support a comparison rather than generate quantitative data.

My literature review highlighted that there was debate about whether students seek positive or developmental feedback (Carless, 2006; Wiliam, 2012; ITWRG, 2016; Deci et al., 1999; Dweck, 2009). To support the description of the characteristics of dialogic feedback in the Department, the number of words were counted in the strength and development comments recorded by teachers so that they could be compared. Whilst, in such a small-scale study, the validity of this data could be questioned, it provided an indicator of the pattern.

As described in this section above, judgements were made whether teacher comments were at task level, process level, self-regulation level or self-level (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Once these judgements had been made, it was then possible to count and compare the frequency of comments at these different levels in order to describe the characteristics of the feedback in the Department.

Crucially, this analysis all took place prior to the student and teacher interviews so that follow-up and prompt questions to explore students' and teachers' perceptions could be prepared.

3.10.2 Student and teacher interviews

Once the interviews were completed, the notes were read and themes were identified that pertained to the three initial research questions. Cohen (2011) argues that this approach is very useful as it can help the researcher remain on the key concerns of the research. Any common language was identified and noted. After that initial sieving of the information, the notes were further reviewed against the

analysis of the students' work in an attempt to deepen the description of the characteristics of the marking as well as to understand the subjects' perspectives of it. This was an important part of the process as it enabled the three instruments of research to be triangulated.

As question 9 in the student interview schedule and question 7 on the teacher interview schedule were the same and involved subjects ranking four characteristics of marking practices, the responses to these questions were able to be compared to establish whether any similarities or differences existed between teachers' and students' perspectives.

3.10.3 Marking proforma intervention

The effectiveness of the marking intervention was measured twice. Firstly, those students in Teacher 4's class used the two different interventions, seen in Appendices 7 and 8, in their work sample and so the interview with them and Teacher 4 reflected the effectiveness of the system. Teacher 4 and the students involved had all been at the school for three years using the SDR stamp so were all able to compare this intervention to the normal way of working for the department.

The first round of interviews brought positive feedback about the marking proforma in Appendix 7 from both the students and the teacher. With the flexibility of practitioner research allowing for reflections and changes from the participants, it was decided that Teacher 1 would subsequently apply the same approach to some feedback with his class. This new piece of work was analysed for the same five students as in the first round of research using the same coding system. The students and teacher were then interviewed again with the same questions and approach as before.

3.11 Ethical considerations

It is important to consider the consent given to carry out this research. As the deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning in the school, much of this research was a part of my typical, daily job; but is quite normal for me to covet student opinion about pedagogical interventions and scrutinise work. However, it was also important that permissions were sought from both the headteacher (Appendix 9) and the individual students to take part in the research. Appendices 4 and 5 show that in the preambles, following ethical guidance of the University of Oxford, students and teachers were made aware of the purpose of the interview, the anonymity and security of all data and were reminded of their right to withdraw at any point.

It was also important to consider the power dynamics involved when interviewing both students and teachers. These could be mitigated by using strategies to put the students at ease such as by allowing them to decide the time for the interview (Menter 2011). In my role leading on teaching and learning in the school it is typical for me to talk to both students and teachers about student learning; therefore, the normality of the subject matter in the interviews further mitigated any power dynamics.

As with all empirical research, it was essential that ethical considerations were made in advance of and during the research. Firstly, as with any educational intervention, there is the issue that it was not accessible to all students. This can be justified by the need to trial and pilot any pedagogical approach. At the culmination of this research, the approaches will be evaluated with the entire English team and a plan

for future marking and feedback will be made. This will most likely involve a differentiated approach to meet different learners' needs anyway.

3.12 Limitations

The key limitation of this research is that, as with any small-scale qualitative studies, the findings are not generalizable. However, as a practitioner researcher working within the school, the findings are highly valuable in the context they are set in and will be used to inform policy and practice in the future.

The analysis of the artefacts, the students' work, was limited by the fact that many of the judgements were highly subjective. Decisions about whether comments could be counted as praise, or whether feedback fitted in to any of Hattie and Timperley's (2007) four levels could easily be contested. These limitations were mitigated by the fact that I was the only person making the judgements, preventing the need for any moderation. Furthermore, the absence of quantitative analysis of the findings meant that conclusions weren't being drawn based upon any single judgement or decision.

The power dynamic between the teachers, students and I, with my role as deputy headteacher, is a possible limitation of this method, although this risk is mitigated by the collegiate approach that the senior leaders at the school take to school improvement. The danger that students would simply say what they thought I would want to hear (Cohen et al. 2011) was partly mitigated by students at the school being used to participating in students voice activities with me in my role at school.

A limitation of the interviews are that they involve a lot of self-report (Fan et al. 2006) from the students and teachers who could describe a reality that simply is not true as they have to rely on memory that is often selective. The likelihood of this was

mitigated by the use of artefacts in the interviews to encourage subjects to focus on tangible marking.

There are a wide range of limitations linked to interviewing students, for example that they can be inarticulate, hesitant or nervous. This danger was mitigated by allowing the students to negotiate the time and location of interviews so that they exercised some ownership of the interview.

Finally, as the only coder I did not have another coder to check inter-rater reliability. However, this limitation was mitigated by trying coding scheme in the pilot study. I could not ask the teachers being interviewed to do this as they were part of the study. As coding is a painstaking task requiring a significant time investment, I was concerned it would be a very big ask given the tight window I had for data coding before interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

In the remaining chapters, I will explore the extent to which students' and teachers' perspectives demonstrate that dialogic marking is an effective approach to feedback? Specifically, I will try to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?

RQ2: What are teachers' incentives for investing substantial time into dialogic marking?

RQ3: How do students perceive that teachers marking, and in particular dialogic marking, affects their learning?

This chapter will firstly aim to identify the characteristics of dialogic marking seen before considering the effectiveness of the approaches taken. However, before this, it is important to describe the participants involved.

4.1 Participants

The study of artefacts, described in Chapter 3, involved work completed by 20 Year 10 students in the English department. They were a mix of gender and ability, with five students being selected from each of four classes that were organised by prior attainment. The student interviews involved a boy and girl from each of these four classes. The interview lengths ranged from 25 minutes 13 seconds to 15 minutes 59 seconds, with a mean average of 18 minutes 17 seconds. Most students were confident and articulate in the interviews although there was one case, from Teacher 1's class, where a student was evidently nervous and reluctant to expand on her ideas. All 4 teachers were interviewed, with times ranging from 33 minutes 25 seconds to 48 minutes 46 seconds; a mean of 39 minutes 48 seconds. The

increased length of the teachers' interviews resulted from the selection of different questions and the teachers' tendency to justify their answers in greater depth.

4.2 What are the characteristics of effective dialogic marking in the English Department?

4.2.1 Was a dialogue present?

Part of the remit of this investigation was to examine students' and teachers' perceptions of dialogic marking. In keeping with ITWRG's (2016) definition in the literature review, that dialogic marking involves the teacher verifying the students' responses to the feedback given, for only four of the twenty students studied was there any evidence of the teacher marking their written response. Two of those were simply an acknowledgement, in the form of a tick, and the other two used the phrases "good response" and "super response."

The interviews identified a juxtaposition between students and teachers on written dialogue. All eight of the students felt that the teacher should read and respond to their response to the initial marking, with half arguing that just an acknowledgement tick would confirm that the work is appropriate. Two students felt that this happened orally, to an extent, but all felt that further written comments would be desirable. Two of the four staff stated that they read and acknowledged the student responses, supporting the analysis of the artefacts, although for Teacher 2 there was only minimal evidence of this. Teacher 1, who wrote the summative comments to the responses, felt that this was not really guidance being given but a motivational tool, acknowledging the effort that had gone into completing the work. This view conflicts with Elliott et al.'s (2016) assertion that there is no value in acknowledgement

marking but, lends itself more to Dweck's (2009) view that teachers should acknowledge students' efforts. Given that all of the students and two members of the team felt acknowledgements were required, moving forward the department may benefit from an open discussion of this issue with the students.

Two teachers did not mark the students' responses to their marking and both cited the same reason; a lack of time. That an absence of time to provide written dialogue was identified by three out of four teachers should be expected given the report from the ITWRG (2016). Teacher 4 felt that a more dialogic approach could be hugely impactful if it could be achieved but, in its absence, attempted to provide verbal feedback about the responses targeting those students who had the greatest need in the first instance. This marries with view of the ITWRG (2016, p9):

> "Feedback can take the form of spoken or written marking, peer marking and self-assessment. If the hours spent do not have a commensurate impact on pupil progress: stop it."

The question remains whether the value of additional written feedback impacts significantly on pupils' progress and, additionally, would an increase in the use of verbal feedback at this stage by all teachers improve outcomes? The differentiation described in Teacher 4's approach, targeting those students with the greatest need, certainly marries with of the view from the literature that effective feedback is differentiated (Van de Schaaf et al, 2013; ITWRG, 2016).

Beaumont et al. (2011) encouraged a wider definition of dialogic feedback, suggesting that a written dialogue only provides the final stage of a bigger cycle (Figure 2, p15). Even if an extended written dialogue was not taking place in this investigation it perhaps suggests that only one of the three parts of Beaumont et al.'s (2011) cycle have not been fully met. Appendix 6 showed success criteria that are

shared with the students before the assessment is completed, ensuring that the learning intentions are very clear. Students were given target grades for the course and furthermore, as a result of the cyclical nature of the assessments in the syllabus, students had also received marks on similar tasks with the same assessment objectives in previous units that they should try to improve upon. This suggests that the characteristics of preparatory guidance in Beaumont et al.'s (2011) model have been met.

With regards to in-task guidance, the second cycle in Beaumont et al.'s (2011) model, the issue of 'modelling' provided some interesting findings. From the student interviews, four of the eight students spoke specifically about how the provision of model answers within the feedback were very useful and desirable, with one arguing it was the most useful. Looking through the work reviews, model answers were clearly present in two of the teachers' feedback but not the other two, perhaps explaining why the students' advocacy was not more unanimous. From the teacher interviews, it became apparent that model answers were provided as feedback after the work was completed, as opposed to being available beforehand as suggested by Beaumont et al. (2016). Teacher 4 stated that the students often want them to be provided beforehand but, in agreement with the ITWRG (2016), she felt that students needed the challenge of initially creating their own writing without the additional support of a model. With both Teacher 1 and Teacher 4, students and teachers stated that these model answers are co-constructed in feedback lessons, and were positive about doing so. When Teacher 1 applied the marking intervention, providing the model to the students without a process of co-construction, one of the students commented that they felt they gained much less from the feedback as they had lost the ownership of the writing.

From the triangulation of all of the evidence, including the literature, it is clear that the department should ensure that model answers are being used with students. Equally, there is a mandate for further exploration into the balance of teacher and student constructed model answers. Summarising this section, whilst there is only limited evidence of a written dialogue taking place between the teachers and the students, in accordance with Beaumont et al.'s (2016) broader model of dialogic feedback, most aspects of this were witnessed and so the department's approach to marking could be described as dialogic.

4.2.2 What were the characteristics of teachers' comments?

Nazif et al. (2004) argued that students preferred marginalia to summative comments as these signpost explicitly where work is needed. 17 of the 20 students' work received marginalia comments, with all teachers used this strategy at some point, whilst Figure 5 demonstrates that there was inconsistency across the four.

Figure 5: The number of marginalia comments on students' work

Teacher	1	2	3	4
Number of marginalia comments	22	2	11	30

Three of the eight students commented specifically that the marginalia was very useful, applying Nazif et al.'s (2004) reasoning that it identified specifically where their attention was required. Teacher 4, who applied the marking proforma intervention felt that this approach enabled more time for her to add marginalia which, from her own student voice activities, had been well received. However, when Teacher 1 applied the marking proforma intervention, he averaged two marginalia comments per student, maintaining broadly the same number of

marginalia comments as when he used the SDR stamp feedback approach. Given that the literature points to the benefits of adding marginalia as a characteristic of effective feedback, it would seem that applying the marking intervention holistically across the department might make feedback more effective.

The marking and feedback policy in the school requires teachers to identify strengths and areas for development in students' work (Appendix 1). Weaver (2006) argued that students did not like feedback that was overly critical whilst Wiliam (2012) countered this assertion.

Figure 6: The number of words used in teachers' summative comments

	Number of words written in summative strength comments	Number of words written in summative development comments
Teacher 1	191	134
Teacher 2	88	107
Teacher 3	86	156
Teacher 4	83	170

Figure 7: Marginalia comments: were they praise or developmental?

	Praise	Developmental
Teacher 1	18	4
Teacher 2	1	1
Teacher 3	2	9
Teacher 4	15	15

Figure 6 shows that three of the four teachers wrote lengthier comments for the development points than the strengths in the summative comments and that, similarly, in Figure 7 only Teacher 1 provided more positive comments in the marginalia than areas for development. Whilst this simple word count does not include an analysis of the nature of the comments, the pattern that there is more developmental feedback emerges. A possible explanation for Teacher 1's more

positive feedback could be that they worked with the lowest attaining students and, when discussing it in the interview, felt that there was a greater need for positive affirmations to increase motivation, especially when quantitative marks for these students were not that high. Similarly, Teacher 3 works with the highest attaining students which may explain the greater shift towards developmental comments. All eight of the students felt that the balance between praise and development points were right. When pressed further, however there were mixed views as exemplified in Figure 8. Some of the views in the table are clearly juxtaposed, highlighting the difficulty for teachers to ensure their feedback meets students' demands.

Figure 8: Student comments on the balance between praise and development points

Praise is more important	Developments are more important
Praise makes me feel better about my work	I want a bit more 'development' – it tells me what to do
It is important for my motivation that strengths are shared	I find developments more useful, although some students will need the praise
You shouldn't have too many development points as it overloads you; I need time to think about them	I would rather all of my development points were listed and risk being demoralized. I assume that if nothing is said that the work is good.

Whilst the balance between praise and critique may be broadly appropriate, Figure 8 provides compelling evidence that feedback needs to be differentiated; the job of the teacher must be to get to know their student's motivations and tailor the feedback to support this.

4.2.3 How did the characteristics of the marking relate to the four levels of feedback?

Figure 9: Analysis of summative strength comments										
	Related to the task?		Related to process?		Self regulating?		Related to self?		Holistic?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teacher 1	10	0	9	1	0	10	5	5	10	0
Teacher 2	10	0	8	2	0	10	0	10	7	3
Teacher 3	10	0	10	0	0	10	0	10	10	0
Teacher 4	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	5	5	0

Figure 10: Analysis of summative development comments										
	Related to the task?		Related to process?		Self regulating?		Related to self?		Holistic?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teacher 1	10	0	9	1	0	10	1	9	9	1
Teacher 2	10	0	6	4	0	10	0	10	7	3
Teacher 3	10	0	10	0	2	8	0	10	10	0
Teacher 4	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	5	4	1

Hattie and Timperley (2007) described four levels of feedback, arguing that students benefit most when feedback is self-regulating. Figure 9 and Figure 10 show the findings from the review of students' work, analysing the strength and development comments for the two pieces of work analysed for each student. From 70 pieces of written feedback, only two were seen as being self-regulating demonstrating that, according to theory, the nature of these comments will need reviewing. An example of a comment that engendered self-regulation was:

> "Focus on specific detail – see asterisk – what could you infer from that comment"

This form of commentary, through asking questions that the students should reflect on, would be easily added to the approaches of all teachers. That said, it is important to acknowledge the limitation that the research is only focused upon

written feedback; it is possible that similar self-regulating feedback is being offered by all teachers verbally on a regular basis.

This verbal self-regulation level feedback was described in greater detail in the interviews. Teacher 3 described how she would regularly highlight words to students and get them to reflect on its merits or, similarly, ask students to review their own work with a highlighter to pick out certain aspects. Both of these activities were witnessed in the review of students' work. Interestingly, Teacher 3 also made a link between students' self-regulation and their motivation, asserting that girls were often more likely to respond to this form of activity than boys. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate this issue further, it would be a useful direction for future research and an important issue to be considered by the teachers in the department. If true, strategies could be developed to improve outcomes for a large number of students. Teacher 4 concurred with the verbal approach to self-regulation, stating that many self-assessment activities are set up, especially using modelled text. However, she contested the view on motivation, arguing that setting up self-regulating activities should be used as a catalyst to engage demotivated students who would, otherwise, be more passive in the classroom; the department would benefit from exploring the juxtaposition between Teacher 3 and Teacher 4's views further. The use of model answers has already been discussed and, through a wider application of these in lessons, students would be required to carry out more self-regulatory learning.

Overall, the teachers were in agreement that the dominant level of their written feedback was posed at task-level because their feedback is aligned so closely to the

assessment objectives set by the exam board. Lots of the feedback given was judged to be at both task and process level, viewed in the examples below.

> "Always extend your points. Evaluate and discuss your final paragraphs."

> "Good effort, especially at the start. You do well when you include a few, short quotes."

In both of these cases, the feedback is specifically written about the work that has been completed, task level feedback, but also provides guidance for students about the process of writing in the future, more akin to the idea of feedforward (Carless, 2006). The students commented that they found the feedback particularly useful for their future work and were more focused on improving future work than that which had already been completed. Teacher 1 felt that, whilst it was pleasing that students were using their feedback formatively to reflect on their future work, there is danger in applying task-level feedback from one task into another because of the different success criteria set in different tasks. The students commented that the feedback was very useful for tackling future tasks that apply the same assessment objectives but that, unless they were specifically prompted by their teacher, they did not routinely look back to previous similar tasks. With a cyclical curriculum so effectively designed to enable progress over time, this study shows that it is incumbent on the teachers to ensure the students develop those habits of looking back at past feedback.

Self level feedback, which Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue is less effective than their other three levels (Figure 3, p21), was only seen to be used in the artefact analysis by Teacher 1. This was, again, attributed to the fact that these were the lowest attaining students and it was crucial to acknowledge and praise their efforts. An example of this being

> "Fantastic piece of writing – so well structured. You have really tried to vary the sentence starters and your vocabulary. Super stuff, well done."

Teacher 3, who teaches the highest attaining students also commented that self-level feedback is more valuable for lower attaining students as it helps to build their stamina and resilience. However she, alongside the two other teachers, felt that this is and should be administered verbally in lessons. Whilst there may be value in this link to attainment, the department should take account of Dweck's (2009) view that it is important to praise effort in order to develop a growth mindset.

Figures 9 and 10 also include a column stating whether the summative feedback was deemed to be holistic, that is commenting on the piece of work as a whole, or specific to just one part of the work. It can be seen that in 67 out of the 75 pieces of work this feedback was holistic. Given that the students commented that they like it where the feedback explicitly identifies the area that needs their attention, it is important that this summative feedback is accompanied by marginalia.

4.2.4 Other characteristics of the dialogic marking

In the following three sections there will be an exploration of other characteristics that were identified in the literature to impact the effectiveness of marking.

4.2.4.1 Ticks

Elliot et al. (2016) stated that there have been no studies of the impact of acknowledgement marking, arguing it was unlikely to be impactful. Alongside the marginalia and summative comments, Teachers 2 and 3 also included a large number of ticks, often around 5 or more across a page of writing. When the students

were questioned, one thought the ticks were an acknowledgement of where they had produced good work whilst the others thought they had no significance at all. The teachers confirmed the latter was more the case, merely using the ticks as a reading aid across the page, although they wouldn't use them if students' work was not appropriate. However, if this is the case, given that one student was reading more into them than was intended, it shows the importance of clear communication to promote understanding and a need for greater clarity from the English teachers.

4.2.4.2 Mistakes and errors

Lee (2013) identified that mistakes and errors should be treated differently. The work samples demonstrated that whenever spelling or grammar was used inaccurately, it was mostly identified using a coded system by all teachers: 's' for spelling inaccuracies; 'p' for punctuation inaccuracies; 'e' for inaccuracy with expression; 'c' for inaccuracy with capital letters. In every case, this was treated in the way that Lee (2013) suggested that mistakes should be; the inaccuracy was identified using the code and the students were expected to correct them. With the students all studying for their GCSE English, this would be appropriate as most rules of spelling and grammar will have been taught to the students previously and they should be able to correct such mistakes. However, it would be an important and interesting reflection activity for the department to consider whether the approach is differentiated at all, particularly when teaching younger students or those with significantly lower prior attainment.

4.2.4.3 Expedience

Higgins et al. (2002) had identified that the expedience of feedback was the most vital factor in its effectiveness. The interviews corroborated the findings from the review of the work that written feedback was normally given within three days of the work being completed, contributing to an effective system. Figure 11 shows the outcomes from the teacher and student interviews for TQ7 and SQ9 (see Appendices 4 & 5). Interviewees were asked to rank the four factors in the table in order of importance for student learning.

Figure 11: Mean rankings for factors influencing the quality of feedback		
	Teachers	Students
Written dialogue	3.5	3.43
Time delay	1.5	2.5
Clarity	1.5	1.81
Volume	3.5	2.25

Whist the sample sizes are too small to consider significance, it is interesting that the teachers thought the time delay was the most important factor whist the students thought it was the third most important factor. It is possible that the students ranked this so lowly because they were given their feedback so expediently in the English Department and, therefore, did not experience the frustration of long delays, particularly as several students commented that it would be demoralising if the feedback was not received quickly. An undoubted outcome of a short time delay is an impact on workload. Teacher 3 commented that, in order to meet these expectations she has to work every evening and one full day per weekend which has led her to question how long she can maintain the approach. Whilst, clearly, the provision with the department is delivered with huge commitment from the teachers,

is it that the costs are too great? This evidence on expedience contributes to the conclusion that the feedback is effective.

Figure 11 also shows that the teachers thought that the volume of feedback was a less important factor of students learning whilst the students themselves ranked it as the second most important. Whilst Parboteeah and Anwar (2009) found that students' motivation was directly proportionate to the volume of feedback they were given, almost all of the student commentary in their interviews related to the concern of receiving too much rather than too little feedback, generally reporting that the volume of their feedback was appropriate. Again, this view could arise because the students get sufficient written feedback so would not consider raising it as an issue.

4.3 Is the marking effective?

Having described and analysed the characteristics of the marking in the English department, the question of its effectiveness needs to be addressed. In their review of marking practices across the UK the ITWRG (2016, p8) stated that

> "marking should serve a single purpose – to advance pupil progress and outcomes."

Accepting this as an appropriate objective, the task remains to establish whether the marking had this effect, starting by looking at how the students responded to the feedback given.

Firstly, in 40 of the 50 marked examples of work the students responded in some way to the feedback that they were given. Returning to Hattie et al.'s (2016) definition of feedback, this would indicate that the feedback has been 'received' by the students in at least 80% of the cases. In the cases that there wasn't a student response to the marking, the reasons given were that there was insufficient time to

respond or that they were absent from class when the books were returned. Clearly it is essential that teachers provide their students with the time and opportunity to wrestle with their feedback and, in most cases, this is happening in the English Department.

The nature of the student responses were markedly different for the lowest attaining set than each of the other groups, with the majority of the students in the lower group producing the same response to the marking. The students explained that this happened because they all collaborated to produce a model paragraph in the feedback lesson. Teacher 1 stated that ideas were provided by the students and that, together, they were moulded into an effective paragraph. A student from this class perceived that this was very helpful because he felt he had ownership of the ideas but was being shown how to articulate those ideas effectively. This same student also demonstrated that he would sometimes respond to the marking in a personal way, sometimes making notes about key words or techniques and also correcting spelling and grammatical errors. This alternative approach with the lowest attaining class is an example of the differentiated approach to marking needed to be effective, and why it is important that flexibility exists in schools' marking policies.

In all of the other classes, students' responses to the marking were completed independently. The students' responses to Teacher 2's feedback were mixed and, in general, shorter than those for the other teachers. In part, this could be explained by an occasional lack of clarity in the development comments made by the teacher. An example of this was

> "develop your evaluation and discussion."

It is likely that, should the student have known how to do this in the first place, they would have. In this case, the issue was treated more as a mistake, simply being identified, rather than as an error that needed further guidance (Lee 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the response to this feedback did not really happen with the student choosing to focus their response more on some marginalia comments that were provided. On other occasions Teacher 2 provided much more specific development comments such as

> "which do you think is the most powerful event? Comment on the effect on the audience?"

This feedback led to a far more detailed response from this student that clearly showed an improved understanding of the work. Figure 11 showed that both the students and the teachers felt that the clarity of the feedback was the most important factor for student learning; the two examples below illustrate why that is so.

Students in the classes of Teachers 3 and 4 responded to their feedback in a way that demonstrated some progress had been made, a typical example being where a student was asked to apply more subject terminology and pick out individual words, explaining their connotations. She responded by writing

> "the use of the emotive language 'desperately' shows that all she wants is for them to forgive her."

The student went on to write much more, but this sentence shows that the feedback prompted the student to tackle a deficit area from their initial written work. Another example demonstrated that feedback after one task led to improvements in a further task. After the first task, several students in Teacher 3's class had highlighted some discourse markers in their writing which, as confirmed in the teacher interview, had occurred following verbal feedback. In the subsequent task, two weeks later, one of the students then began a sentence with the word 'notwithstanding' which was

identified and praised by the teacher in the written marking. This delayed response to feedback highlights a significant limitation in my methodology as well as in the notion that students should produce an immediate written response to feedback in order to progress; progress could be shown by students acting on feedback in subsequent work that takes place weeks or months after the feedback was given. Such progression is much more difficult to monitor than from an immediate written response which, in a teaching profession that has seen an increase in accountability since Ofsted's creation in 1992, could be an inconvenient truth.

Teacher 3 cited the student using an improved discourse marker as an example that the feedback being given led to learning. Teachers 1 and 2 felt that they knew feedback was impactful because the students' marks improved when they tackled the same success criteria in different units. This latter argument could be challenged. The students could have progressed because of greater experience, a growth in confidence or a different pedagogical approach during lessons; it is an assumption to say the feedback was the cause. However, cross-referencing the student interviews, seven of the eight students appeared positive about the feedback they received, particularly stating that through showing how they needed to improve the feedback enabled them to produce better work in the future. As might be expected, comments were not unanimously positive. One student felt that the feedback tended to look for extension from the students rather than tackling errors or weaknesses in what has been produced. This view was not shared elsewhere but is likely to be feedback that would be valuable to the teacher for further exploration. In general, though, the students and teachers perceived that the feedback led to learning.

4.4 What was the impact on teachers' workload?

If there is satisfaction that the dialogic approach to marking is impactful and leads to learning, it is essential that its sustainability is also considered. All four of the teachers conceded that adopting a dialogic approach to marking increases workload but had different views on the value it brings. Teacher 1 felt that the students are motivated by marking, which makes the extra workload worthwhile. Teachers 2 and 3 offered opposing views to this. They argued that it is definitely worthwhile if feedback is used by the students effectively and, whilst this is the case with self-motivated students, the reluctance of others to engage with it makes the whole process seem burdensome. Teacher 3 went on to say that the whole process is motivating when it makes a difference but a quite miserable experience when a significant minority are ungrateful. These comments show that, for at least half of the teachers surveyed, the feedback is coming at the cost of some discontent. Teacher 4 shared the view that the process is worthwhile but that it was overly time-consuming, recounting that her Year 11 class reported that one-to-one verbal feedback is the most transformative approach. After all, as she outlined, much more feedback can be provided as talking is much faster than writing. Whilst students' and teachers' perceptions, as well as some of the artefacts seem to suggest that the English Department's approach leads to progression, it also appears that developing systems that limit the time needed to provide written feedback is essential, with an increase in verbal feedback an easy starting point.

4.5 How did the marking intervention compare to stamp marking?

Another potential modification was the marking intervention developed with Teacher 4 and subsequently trialled with her students as well as Teacher 1's class, but did it still provide high quality feedback and reduce teacher workload?

As described in Section 3.9, Teacher 4 devised two different interventions. The second of these, shown in Appendix 8, proved relatively unpopular with the students who felt that it was confusing to work with. In this approach, Teacher 4 highlighted the students' work in four different colours based upon four different areas for development related to the assessment objective. One student commented that they appreciated the teacher's efforts, as it looked as though lots of time was invested, but that they did not think they learned as much from it as it was quite confusing and required them to continually look between the key and their work to discern the colour coding. To some extent, this approach is referred to by the ITWRG (2016, p7) when they describe ineffective marking as involving

> "an excessive reliance on the labour intensive practices under our definition of deep marking, such as extensive written comments in different colour pens…"

Teacher 4 explained that the reason she had tried this approach was to help the students to visualise which specific aspect of the success criteria they needed to focus upon; if one colour dominated their work it showed that it required their attention. However, on reflection, she felt that this particular approach to written feedback had not worked and, as suspected by the students, had not saved any time from the SDR stamp approach.

The first marking intervention, shown in Appendix 7, was used with students from Teacher 4's classes and the work review suggested that the feedback initiated

learning for these students. Consequently, following collaboration with members of the English team, the approach was applied to some feedback with Teacher 1's students initiating a second wave of artefact analyses and interviews. Its effectiveness was apparent in the artefact analysis from Teacher 4's students. For example, where a student was given the two development points to pick out the connotations of the use of specific words and to make clear, explicit links to context they responded to the feedback by writing

> "The use of the personal pronoun 'I' suggests that she feels fully responsible for the death of Eva. During the early 1920s, the higher classes would have had nothing to do with the classes lower than themselves, so it is odd that she is taking responsibility for something other than herself."

This writing shows that the feedback has been received and used to tackle the deficient areas of their original piece. The student that produced this work argued that the marking intervention is a far more effectives system than the SDR stamp approach because it provides a model paragraph, which can later be used by the students as a reference tool, and also provides additional detail and volume to that received through the SDR stamp. Furthermore, Teacher 4 argued, it also provides a reminder to all students of the characteristics of effective writing, a digest of the success criteria for the activity. Given Hattie et al.'s (2016) definition of feedback referring to reducing the discrepancy between what is understood and what is intended to be understood, the marking intervention should succeed in achieving this.

An advantage the students highlighted in this approach was the provision of a model answer; this is something that Teacher 4 agrees with strongly. She feels that, in many ways, the personalised written feedback is only a small part of the overall learning that takes place. In the lesson in which written feedback is received she

explained that the students will often annotate that model answer, discussing it and their own feedback with their peers as they look to improve their work. She uses her time to join in these discussions and feels that this collaborative work, sometimes including whole-class collaborative writing, is where the main learning takes place. This marries closely with the description of the third cycle of Beaumont et al.'s (2011) model (Figure 2, p15) and demonstrates that the teacher perceives that it is effective.

The investigation of this approach with Teacher 1 was less effective because he was not able to give the students much time to use and understand the feedback in the follow-up lesson and so students were not able to respond in detail to it. Consequently, an analysis of the students' responses provides little clarity on its impact. However, the interviews with the students were able to elicit the fact that, other than the absence of co-constructed model discussed earlier in this chapter, it was felt that the feedback was a little more prescriptive which, in the view of one student, was a good thing and more useful than the SDR stamp. Teacher 1 was surprised by this feedback, having feared that the typed feedback sheet would be perceived as less personalised and was, therefore, less differentiated. Whilst he was pleased that this was not reported by the students, he felt that this approach would need further testing and trialling in future. Whilst Teacher 4 reported that the approach led to considerable time saving, Teacher 1 thought it took the same amount of time as using the SDR stamp. This, he supposed, resulted from his class being much smaller meaning that the initial time invested in reading a sample of students' work and creating the feedback sheet could not be clawed back through the time saved providing feedback on each student's work. However, with a larger class he recognised that this would save time and, providing the students still found

the approach motivating, it could be an approach that maintains the quality of dialogic feedback in a more sustainable timeframe.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications for practice

This study set out to use a qualitative approach to explore whether teachers and students felt that the English department's approach to dialogic mark was effective. Using an analysis of artefacts, as well as four teacher and eight student interviews, the following research questions were examined:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of effective 'dialogic' marking in the English department at my school?

RQ2: What are teachers' incentives for investing substantial time into dialogic marking?

RQ3: How do students perceive that teachers marking, and in particular dialogic marking, affects their learning?

In response to RQ1, the investigation suggested that dialogic marking, of some form, took place in the English Department. Students were given written feedback to which they routinely responded, having been allocated time in class to do so. To meet the ITWRG (2016) definition of dialogic marking, these responses would then need to be marked again by the teacher; this happened on some occasions but more often the teachers discussed the responses with their students orally or left them unmarked. Both the students and teachers could see the value of more attention being given to these responses but, as described as being a problem by the ITWRG (2016), the teacher did not have the time to do so. When Beaumont et al.'s (2011) broader definition of dialogic feedback is applied, the department seem to meet the characteristics of this dialogic approach, suggesting that to do so has a lesser workload implication. This definition involves many characteristics of good assessment for learning leaning on the ideas of formative assessment (Black &

Wiliam, 1998). That said, the approach to marking still led to significant concerns over workload being raised by three of the four teachers involved; an internal review of marking practice is a necessary outcome and, following some immediate collaboration with the Head of Department, has already been planned. The Head of Department is very interested in the findings of the investigation and keen to work alongside the department and I to explore the outcomes and recommendations.

Evidence from the triangulation of information from the investigation suggests that this dialogic approach to feedback leads to students writing short paragraphs of writing that addresses deficit areas in their initial work; some might argue that this demonstrates learning taking place. Students and staff alike were positive about the effects of the written marking, helping to answer RQ3. The evidence indicated that the approach is differentiated across and within classes; this is important and should be encouraged as strategies are developed. Considering the work of Hattie and Timperley (2007), there was only limited evidence of written feedback at self-regulation level, although the interviews suggest rather more of this happens verbally. Whether this happens in written or verbal feedback, it is something the Department should consider in their training and development plans and ensure it plays a larger role in future.

Looking specifically at RQ2, whilst the department approach to marking, which uses a stamp to highlight strengths and developments, seems to be effective strategies need to be put in place to reduce teacher workload as the evidence from the interviews suggests elements of discontent. One such strategy should be a greater reliance on verbal feedback, particularly to feed back to students when they are responding to marking. It was also evident that the students perceived model writing

to be very useful, particularly when it had been co-constructed by the teacher and the students. In this case, there are implications for the department to review the way that model answers are used but also for the school leaders to ensure that similar reviews are taking place across the school and, if necessary, training is provided to ensure the teachers are skilled in co-constructing models. In the introduction it was noted that Elliott et al. (2016) called upon researchers to test whether the impacts of dialogic marking were sufficient to justify the extra time spent. Whilst I would conclude that further research is still required, the evidence here suggests that dialogic feedback should only be pursued using strategies that enable teachers to ensure their workload is manageable, thus supporting the arguments of the ITWRG (2016).

The marking intervention that was carried out by two of the four teachers in the investigation was perceived to be effective by students and teachers alike, with three of the four students interviewed stating that they preferred it to the stamp approach. It provided the model answers that are demanded by the pupils and, potentially, allowed more time for the teachers to provide marginalia which was also perceived to be useful by the students. At the very least, this approach needs further investigation and piloting by the department but it should also be shared with other departments across the school to see whether it can maintain the benefits of dialogic feedback whilst reducing workload.

5.1 Recommendations for practice

As the study was a highly contextualised piece of practitioner research, the implications for practitioners lies within that school context. The following recommendations will be discussed with the English teachers:

- the department should collectively review their policy of marking or acknowledging students' responses, inviting students into the discussion so they understand the teachers' approach
- the department should increase the consistency and regularity with which model answers are used, exploring with students the balance between class co-construction and teacher-provided models
- the department should apply a differentiated approach to their use of praise and developmental comments based upon their knowledge of the students' needs and preferences
- the department should use the approach exemplified in the marking proforma intervention (Appendix 7) as a means to maintain or enhance a dialogic approach whilst reducing workload. This should, in addition, enable the teachers to increase the volume of marginalia comments to support student learning
- the department should increase the amount of feedback provided at self-regulating level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), most likely through increased use of peer and self-assessment
- the department should use more verbal feedback to support other written feedback tools as a means of managing workload
- the findings of this investigation should be reported to leaders across the school in Autumn 2017 so that:
    - similar, small-scale investigations can be carried out in other departments that rely heavily on written feedback across the school
    - the school's Marking and Feedback Policy can be reviewed to take account of these findings

5.2 Recommendations for further research

- There should be further research into the approach to and effects of dialogic marking across the school
    - This should include the impacts on different groups of students, for example different genders
    - This should include investigating students' perceptions of marking intervention proformas such as the one used in Appendix 7 both in the English department and across the school
    - There should be more enquiry into the role of marginalia in providing students with feedback
- the investigation provides a further call for researchers beyond this context to continue to fill the void in the literature in the area of dialogic marking (Elliott et al. 2016), particularly in the context of reducing teachers' workload.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: My school's marking and feedback policy

Marking & Feedback Policy:

Aims

1.1 We feed back to students what they are doing well.
1.2 We feed back to students what they need to improve, learn or consolidate.
1.3 The feedback enables the students to understand and be able to articulate their strengths and areas for improvement/consolidation.
1.4 Feedback is differentiated so that the first three aims are met.
1.5 The ultimate goal is that students can accurately self-assess their own learning and performance; a skill that is essential for their future studies and life beyond education.

Principles

2.1 Feedback should come in many different forms and be tailored to the message being given and the students receiving it.
2.2 Feedback should be provided in an engaging format which encourages students to improve their work.
2.3 For feedback to be purposeful, students need to know what they are working towards; learning outcomes and success criteria need to be shared with students.
2.4 To achieve the ultimate goal of accurate self-assessment, students should be given opportunities to participate with peer and self-assessment (PASA). This will require training from their teachers, with scaffolding and modelling put in place.
2.5 Students normally learn from high quality discourse, receiving feedback on their ideas and approaches. Teachers should train students how to talk effectively in their classrooms, modelling effective classroom talk.

2.6 For feedback to become transformative, students need time and opportunity to act upon it and respond to it. This response can be collective or independent, immediate or through future work, depending on the nature of the feedback.

Expectations

3.1 As part of the planning process the teacher will decide what is appropriate for students to record in their exercise books.

3.2 The success criteria for each task (with the exemption of tests/quizzes/mocks) will be made clear to students (to enable them to self-assess their work where appropriate).

3.3 In each lesson, students will receive feedback (written and/or verbal), whether this is by self-assessment, peer-assessment or teacher assessment.

3.4 Students will be encouraged to engage with the all feedback provided and use it to improve their work.

3.5 Students' work (including class work and homework) will be monitored by the teacher approximately every 6 lessons in order to inform their future planning and teaching as well as to provide feedback to students.

3.6 Feedback should clearly inform the students of the <u>strengths</u> of their work, and <u>the areas in which it can be developed</u>. Strengths will be identified with the letter **S** and areas in which the work can be developed with the letter **D**. The effectiveness of this feedback should be measured by whether the students can understand and demonstrate these and the extent to which their work improves. Where the impact of marking is minimal, a different approach should be planned.

3.7 Marking will take account of literacy. In the Professional Standards for Teachers, standard 3 requires all teachers to

> "demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject"

When the teacher is 'checking' student work, it may be that students' literacy is not closely inspected and highlighted. However, when student's work is being marked, errors in spelling, punctuation, expression and capital letters (SPEC) will be highlighted. This will be done by underlining or circling the error and putting either S (spelling), P (punctuation), E (expression) or C (capitalisation) in the margin.

3.8 When the teacher marks student work, they should sign and date it alongside the marking.

Types of feedback used at the school

4.1 Feedback between the teacher and student could include:

Type of Feedback	Description/example	Outcome
In class feedback	The teacher reads the student's work whilst they are completing it (or discusses their understanding with them) and gives feedback or prompts to support the student with improving their work or with how to approach the work in a different way. The teacher may approach the student or the student may approach the teacher.	Students receive immediate feedback to move them towards their learning goal.
SD (R)	The teacher identifies strengths (S) and developments (D) in the work; the student may be required to respond to it straight away in order to improve. The development may be phrased as a question to aid a response.	Students receive more detailed feedback tailored specifically to improving the work they have completed.
SPEC	Whilst the teacher monitors the books they will use the SPEC code in the margin to indicate a spelling, punctuation, expression or capital letter mistake. Students correct their SPEC mistakes.	Students are encouraged to reflect on and improve their literacy.
Whole class feedback	Following the teacher monitoring the class set of books, the teacher will feedback some general strengths and developments. The teacher will support the class with how to develop and then they will either improve their work or complete a new task to demonstrate how they have improved. For example: the teacher has noted that many students have spelt a word incorrectly in their work. The teacher feeds back to the class about the mistake and how to avoid this. Students correct their work and the teacher may set a spelling test at the end of the lesson.	The teacher can feedback to larger groups of students more efficiently based on the assessments they make from reading students' work.
Assessment & Feedback (A&F) sheets	At Key Stage 3, students will be given feedback at least three times per year per subject using the 'criteria ladders' on the A&F sheets. These provide summative feedback on work that has been completed. Students are encouraged to take these home and share them with their parents, perhaps by taking a photograph of the A&F sheet.	Whilst this feedback won't necessarily lead to students improving the work they have done, it should lead to reflection and self-assessment that will lead to improvements in future work.
Find and fix	Instead of marking answers as correct or incorrect, the students are told the number of mistakes in their work. They then have time in class to find and correct these mistakes.	The students are required to review their own work and

		focus more attention on their own improvement.

4.2 Feedback from student to teacher or from student to student could include:

Type of Feedback	Description/example	Outcome
In class feedback	The student reads their peers' work whilst they are completing it (or discusses their understanding with them) and gives feedback or prompts to support the student to support them with improving their work.	Students often learn more rapidly when effective conversations take place on the work they are doing, challenging each other's ideas.
Self-audits	Perhaps following a test, students might complete an audit sheet to analyse which topic areas they have a strong understanding of and which topic areas they need to develop a deeper understanding of. The student might then plan activities or some revision to help them improve their understanding of the topic area that they need to work on. Finally students might correct their work or complete a further task to show they have improved their understanding.	Students reflect on their own knowledge, skills and understanding to inform their own next steps. By sharing these with their teacher, the teacher is able to tailor future lessons to meet these learning needs.
SD (R)	Students use a mark-scheme or success criteria to identify strengths (S) and developments (D) for themselves or for a peer. The development may be phrased as a question. The recipient may then immediately complete their responses to the questions in order to improve.	Students will develop a greater understanding of the success criteria and/or markscheme so should be more able to produce improved work.
SPEC	The student marks their peer's book using the SPEC code in the margin to indicate a spelling, punctuation, expression or capital letter mistake. The student corrects their SPEC mistakes. Alternatively, the student pre-checks common spelling mistakes in their work and corrects them if necessary.	Students are encouraged to reflect on and improve their literacy by assessing the literacy of their peer.
Highlighting	Students highlight different aspects of elements of the work according to the requirements of the mark-scheme or success criteria. They can use this to identify strengths and developments.	This can help to focus students' attention on specific learning points.
Success criteria ladder	The student assesses work against a ladder of success criteria. The student might then improve their work to try to move up the ladder.	Students will develop a greater understanding of the success criteria and/or markscheme so should be more able to produce improved work.

Monitoring of marking and feedback

5.1 The most fundamental focus of monitoring marking and feedback is establishing whether it is having impact. It is part of the role of subject leaders and school leaders to monitor all aspects of this policy. This could be done by:

- Taking in students' books to investigate the impact of marking and feedback.
- Talking with students about the impact of marking and feedback.

- Observing parts of lessons to improve our understanding of the most effective ways of using marking and feedback to increase students' progress.

Appendix: Departmental nuances

6.1 Science

6.11 This table shows some typical examples of feedback in Science.

Task	Assessment using:	Feedback	Self/peer/teacher
Quiz	Mark scheme	Marks achieved and/or SDR.	Student/peer
End of topic test	Mark Scheme	Marks achieved. Feedback sheet including SDR. Corrections made.	Student/peer Student Student
Mock	Mark scheme	Marks achieved. Feedback sheet including SDR. Corrections made.	Teacher Student Student
Exam question	Mark scheme	Marks achieved and SDR.	Student/peer/teacher
Questions/textbook questions	Mark scheme	Marks achieved with corrections made.	Student/peer
Investigation write up	Success criteria	SDR.	Student/peer/teacher
Note making (e.g. diagram and description and/or explanation)	Success criteria	SDR with corrections made.	Student/peer/teacher
Written work	SPEC code written in margin.	SPEC corrections made.	Student/peer teacher
Mind-map	Success criteria	Additions made	

N.B. Generally, the revision materials that students make will not be assessed.

6.12 The regularity in which students should expect each different form of feedback is summarised in the following example, based on teaching a topic of 12 lessons:

- Tasks completed in the exercise books will be self-assessed and/or peer-assessed every 1 – 2 lessons.
- Mid-way through the topic (after a maximum of 6 lessons) the teacher will take in the books to be marked. They will be marked for SPEC and feedback will either be given by 'in class feedback' or SDR (see above for details).
- During lessons students will receive verbal feedback and prompts from the teacher and their peers to support them with their work. This may be

volunteered by the teacher or requested by the student. The frequency of this is not quantified.

- Towards the end of the topic or following the completion of an end of topic test (after a maximum 6 lesson) the teacher will take in the books to be marked. They will be marked for SPEC and feedback will either be given by 'in class feedback' or SDR (see above for details). At least one set of individual SDR comments will be give per 12 lessons.
- At the end of the topic a test will be set. This will be peer marked. The test/mock feedback system will be followed (see above).

6.13 In Year 7 & 8, three assessment and feedback tasks will be set per topic. One will assess the knowledge and understanding of an area of the topic, one will assess a working scientifically skill area and one will assess the students 'language for learning' skills in an investigation write-up. A task sheet will be provided for the knowledge and understanding and the working scientifically tasks. Students will receive a summary of their attainment when they have completed each topic in the form of an Assessment and Feedback sheet which will be stuck into their books.

6.14 In Key Stage 3, an end of year exam will be set which will be marked by the teacher. The test/mock feedback system will be followed (see above).

6.15 In Key Stage 4, two mocks will be set during the year (Dec and April for year 11 and Jan and June for year 10) which will be marked by the teacher. The test/mock feedback system will be followed (see above).

6.16 Homework will be acknowledged by the teacher and could be self/peer/teacher-assessed.

Drama

6.21 Most feedback from the teacher and from peers in Drama is verbal. This is rarely documented and will normally be acted upon immediately.

6.22 At Key Stage 4, there is an increase in written feedback and some videos are made of student work to aid feedback.

Music

6.23 The table below summarises typical feedback expectations in Music:

Key Stage 3

Type of Assessment	Frequency	Type of Feedback
Practical skills Evaluating skills Listening skills Composing skills	Within every 7 week topic	Verbal feedback, 'now tasks', skills ranking, peer-/self-assessment tasks, formal summative feedback.

Key Stage 4

Type of Assessment	Frequency	Type of Feedback
Practical skills – informal	Weekly as required	Verbal
Practical skills – formal	1 x half-term	Formally graded according to the exam mark scheme. Students also self-/peer-assess this component to develop their understanding of the requirements. Areas for development are verbally identified and discussed.
Composition – informal	Weekly as required	Verbal. 'Now tasks' during the development phase of composition.
Composition – formal	End of draft deadlines	Formal assessment at the end of project. Grade allocated according to exam board grade boundaries. Annotations on exam paper highlight areas for development.
Listening – formal	2 x exams in Y10 2 x exams in Y11	Marked according to school marking policy. Percentage is allocated according to mark scheme.
Listening tasks - informal	Monthly	

Art

6.31 The table below summarises typical feedback expectations in Art:

Key Stage	Feedback/Assessment Strategy	Frequency (Min)	Monitoring/Evaluation
3	Bookmarks	2 x 6 weeks	
	H/W Task Feedback Sheets	Fortnightly	

	Sketchbook Task Feedback Sheet	1 x 4 weeks or sooner if learning journey requires	
	Individual verbal feedback	Lesson as required	
	Peer assessment	1 x 6 weeks	
	Self-assessment audits	1 x 6 weeks	
			Dept. work scrutiny and standardisation
			Student Voice
4	Green Sheets of Progress	1 x 6 weeks or sooner if learning journey requires	
	GCSE Assessment Sheet	1 x 6 weeks or sooner if learning journey requires	
	Individual verbal feedback	Lesson as required	
	Peer assessment	1 x 4 weeks	
	Self-assessment audits	1 x 4 weeks	
			Individual flight path progress
			Student Voice

<u>Geography</u>

6.41 As a component of the marking, sometimes Ts and Qs might be used; 'T's offer a 'Tip' for how to further develop; 'Qs' will be used for a question that needs answering. Students are expected to respond to these and take on board questions and tips that are being offered to further develop their geographical knowledge and skills.

6.42 At GCSE, students are given a 'tracker' sheet in the front of their books to aid self-assessmnet of their learning. The expectation is for students to fill in what they have learnt during a lesson, what they need to go away and revise/recap and what feedback they have been given. This is very important for students to undertake as it builds into the cyclical learning model which will prepare them for revising for their GCSEs.

<u>English</u>

6.51 KS3 students will receive their extended writing assessments back with a judgement on their overall attainment and also with a Strength and Development target on a pre-printed front sheet.

6.52 KS3 students will use their *Progress Passports* where they first record their extended writing feedback and then respond to their teacher's feedback.

6.53 Teachers will monitor that KS3 homework projects are being completed by checking on a weekly basis. Students will receive summative feedback at the end of the project through a one-to-one appointment with their teacher.

6.54 KS4 students will receive an assessment booklet at the start of each of the four units. These booklets will be given out in the first week of terms one, three, five and one (of Year 11) and the date of each assessment will be specified in a calendar on the inside front cover (using a w/b:__ system). They will complete a RAG self-assessment (printed in assessment book) before each assessment.

6.55 KS4 students will receive written SDR feedback on each assessment (7 per unit) KS4 students will also receive feedback using exam board (adapted mark sheets, 7 per unit))

6.56 KS4 students will complete mock exams which will be assessed using question-by-question mark sheets to give them information on performance throughout the exam.

6.57 Teachers will record all of the above on internal mark sheets that are visible to the Head of Faculty and the school's senior leaders. Plans will be put in place to intervene if students appear to be underachieving.

6.58 Teachers will monitor that KS4 homework projects are being completed by checking on a weekly basis. Students will receive summative feedback at the end of the project through a one-to-one appointment with their teacher. These projects then act as Literature revision for the students.

<u>Design & Technology and Food & Nutrition</u>

6.61 This table shows some typical examples of feedback in these subjects:

The feedback given should match the task set:

Task	Assessment using:	Feedback	Self/peer/teacher
Quiz/tests	Mark scheme	Marks achieved and/or SDR. Corrections made.	Student/peer
Mock	Mark scheme	Marks achieved. Corrections made.	Teacher Student
Exam question	Mark scheme	Marks achieved and SDR.	Student/peer/teacher
Research	Mark scheme / Success criteria	Marks achieved and/or SDR.	Teacher Student
Design	Mark scheme / Success criteria	Marks achieved and/or SDR.	Teacher Student
Make	Mark scheme / Success criteria	Marks achieved and/or SDR.	Teacher Student
Investigation write up	Success criteria	SDR.	Student/peer/teacher
Note making (e.g. diagram and description and/or explanation)	Success criteria	Corrections / additions made.	Student/peer/teacher
Written work	SPEC code written in margin. Success criteria.	SDR. SPEC corrections made.	Student/peer teacher
Mind-map	Success criteria	Additions made	

N.B. Generally, the revision materials that students make will not be assessed.

6.62 The regularity in which students should expect each different form of feedback is summarised below:

- Self-assessed and or peer-assessment takes place at least once every term.
- Throughout design and making tasks work is reviewed by the teacher, using SDR marking every term.
- During lessons students will receive verbal feedback and prompts from the teacher to support them with their work. This may be volunteered by the teacher or requested by the student. The frequency of this is not quantified.
- During lessons students will ask their peers for feedback to support them with improving a piece of work. The frequency of this is not quantified.

6.63 For KS3 assessment and feedback sheets are provided three times per year.

In each of these, feedback will be given assessing the knowledge and understanding linked to the design process and the knowledge and understanding linked to making and evaluating.

6.64 In key stage 3 an end of year exam will be set which will be marked by the teacher. The test/mock feedback system will be followed (see above).

6.65 In key stage 4 two mocks will be set during the year (Dec and April for year 11 and June for year 10) which will be marked by the teacher . The test/mock feedback system will be followed (see above).

6.66 Homework will be acknowledged by the teacher and could be self/peer/teacher-assessed.

Appendix 2: English department course map for Year 10

Term	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
Unit Title	**Appearance and Reality** **Key Literature text: *'Jekyll and Hyde'* by Robert Louis Stevenson** **Or** **Class and Ambition** **Key Literature text: *'Great Expectations'*** **by Charles Dickens**		**Society and Responsibility** **Key Literature text: *'An Inspector Calls'* by JB Priestley**		**Love and Relationships** **Key Literature text: *'Romeo and Juliet'* by William Shakespeare**	
Key Concepts	This unit explores all of the key skills needed for both the Language and Literature GCSE exams by using a thematic approach. The Literature text is covered in full, and Language resources linked to the text by theme are used to introduce the key Language skills and concepts. This unit looks at: - Appearance and Reality or Class and Ambition and how they are presented in literature. - Contemporary issues relating to these issues. - The changing face the ways these issues are written about across time.		This unit explores all of the key skills needed for both the Language and Literature GCSE exams by using a thematic approach. The Literature text is covered in full, and Language resources linked to the text by theme are used to introduce the key Language skills and concepts. This unit looks at: - What literary texts have to say about how society should support those less fortunate members of a community. - Contemporary issues exploring the welfare state in particular. - How different eras have held different attitudes towards those more/less fortunate members of society.		This unit explores all of the key skills needed for both the Language and Literature GCSE exams by using a thematic approach. The Literature text is covered in full, and Language resources linked to the text by theme are used to introduce the key Language skills and concepts. This unit looks at: - Views on love and relationship across the ages. - How issues from a Shakespearian text still resonate today. - A range of contemporary texts concerning the themes of love and relationships.	
Teacher Assessment Type	Fortnightly assessments cover all parts of both Language and Literature exam papers. Over the course of unit therefore teachers will assess students multiple times across all of the assessment focuses of both courses.					
Percentage of GCSE	No formal assessment as all exams take place at end of Year 11. At that time there are two Language exams (both 50%) and two Literature exams (with a 60% / 40% split).					
GCSE Assessment	No formal assessment as all exams take place at end of Year 11. However, internal assessment takes place at fortnightly intervals.					
Time of Formal Assessment	Summer 2017					

Appendix 3: Questions used as part of the work sample to compare feedback across the sample.

Work Analysis

WA1	**Is there evidence of dialogue taking place (i.e. at least three distinct contributions from teachers and students)?** Number of contributions (including initial work) in the longest dialogue within that piece of work (circle one): Two Three Four More than four Comment:
WA2	**What are the characteristics of the teachers' and students' contributions to the dialogue?** Work itself to be annotated using this code: T=teacher S=Student P= praise Q=question A=Answer K=Acknowledgement C=comment G=grade t=task level p=process level sr=self-regulation level s=self level Comment on general pattern:

WA3	**Do the student responses appear to meet the intentions and expectations of the teacher (i.e. do they complete any given tasks or respond to questions fully)?** 1) Appear to fully meet expectations 2) Appear to partially meet expectations 3) Appear to not meet expectations Comment:
WA4	**Does the dialogue provide evidence of an improvement in the students' knowledge, skills or understanding (is there evidence through their responses of them having learned?)?** 1) Clearly 2) Partially 3) No evidence yet Comment:
WA5	**Does the student ever ask questions of the teacher in the dialogue?** 1) Yes 2) No Comment:

WA6	**Is the feedback at task, process, self-regulation or self level?** Coding to be applied to all teacher contributions 1) Task 2) Process 3) Self-regulation 4) Self Comment on general pattern:
WA7	**What is the balance between praise and criticism?** 1) 75-100% praise 2) 50-75% praise 3) 25-50% praise 4) 0-25% praise Comment:
WA8	**Is there evidence that the dialogue is expedient enough to be effective (if any of the contributions are dated, what is the delay?)?** 1) It appears to be expedient 2) It appears to lack expedience 3) There is no evidence either way Comment:

WA9	**Is the feedback summative or marginalia, or both? Does the answer to this seem to elicit different responses from the students?** 1) Only marginalia 2) Only summative comments 3) Both present Comment (including on whether either or both elicit student reponses):
WA10	Are the students given an appropriate amount of feedback to help them to learn? 1) Yes they are 2) No they are not Comment:

Appendix 4: Questions used for student interviews.

Student questionnaire

Thank you for coming along for this interview. In taking part, you are helping me to carry out some research about students' and teachers' perspectives on how we mark at this school so that we can evaluate our current approach and investigate ways to improve. Can you confirm you are happy to take part in the interview? I intend to audio-record the discussion, but your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and only listened back by me so I can check I captured everything. Your part in this is not compulsory so you can withdraw at any point with no consequences whatsoever. The interview is likely to take 25-30 minutes.

SQ1	Let's look at the example of feedback from your lesson. How useful did you find it? Why?
SQ2	Do you think that the development comments or questions made by your teacher helped you to learn? Why?

SQ3	Do you think the feedback was about how to improve the piece of work you had completed, or how to improve your approach to doing work in the future? Is this important?
SQ4	Do you think it is important that you responded to the feedback you were given from your teacher? Why? Should this be essential?
SQ5	Is it important to you that the teacher looks closely at your responses to their feedback and adds another comment or question? Why?

SQ6	Do you feel that you end up having a written dialogue (conversation) with your teacher? If so, is that a good thing that we should look to do?
SQ7	To what extent is it important to you that the teacher marks your book? Why?

SQ8	Does the balance between praise and development points affect your work and learning? Why?
SQ9	Rank these factors in order of importance for your learning: (put these on cards) • The teacher and I engaging in a written dialogue over a given task. The feedback dialogue that emerges between a teacher and I over a given task. • The time it takes the teacher to provide feedback after I have completed the task. • The clarity of the teacher's language/feedback. • The amount of feedback given to you.

	Justify the ordering.

Appendix 5: Questions used for teachers' interviews

Teacher questionnaire

Thank you for coming along for this interview. In taking part, you are helping me to carry out some research about students' and teachers' perspectives on how we mark at this school so that we can evaluate our current approach and investigate ways to improve. Can you confirm you are happy to take part in the interview? I intend to audio-record the discussion, but your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and only listened back by me so I can check I captured everything. Your part in this is not compulsory so you can withdraw at any point with no consequences whatsoever. The interview is likely to take 25-30 minutes.

TQ1	Let's look at some examples of written feedback you have provided for students. Look at these descriptions of four different levels of feedback (send these out to interviewees in advance). What level of feedback do you think you provided in these examples of marking? Do you think this has an important impact on the learning that takes place?

TQ2	To what extent do you perceive your strength and development helped the students to learn? How can you tell?
TQ3	Do you routinely read the students' responses to your initial written feedback? Do you add any further comments or questions? What effect do you think this has on the learners' engagement and learning?

TQ4	How do you ensure that students fully understand your written feedback? Do you think they normally do understand it?
TQ5	Which of these factors below have the biggest effects on the impact of dialogic marking? Why? a. Students' age/year level b. Students' academic attainment c. Students' attitudes to learning

TQ6	In your opinion, what characteristics distinguish good or bad written feedback? How do you mitigate against the risks of the bad characteristics?
TQ7	Rank these factors in order of importance for your learning: (put these on cards) • A written dialogue developing between teachers and students. • The time delay between work being completed and feedback being given. • How clear the teachers' language is. • The amount of feedback given to you. Why?

TQ8	What do you think are the biggest benefits of creating a written dialogue in students' books? Do you think these benefits are significant enough to justify the extra time required to generate this dialogue?
TQ9	Do you think a dialogic approach to marking increase your workload? Yes No What incentivises you to do this?

A written dialogue developing between teachers and students.	The time delay between work being completed and feedback being given.
How clear the teachers' language is.	The amount of feedback given to you.

Hattie and Timperley's (2007) Four Levels of Feedback

Task level

Feedback on how well the task is being accomplished or performed, such as identifying mistakes, acquiring more or different knowledge and building more surface knowledge.

Process level

Feedback about their approach and processes needed to perform tasks similar to this one.

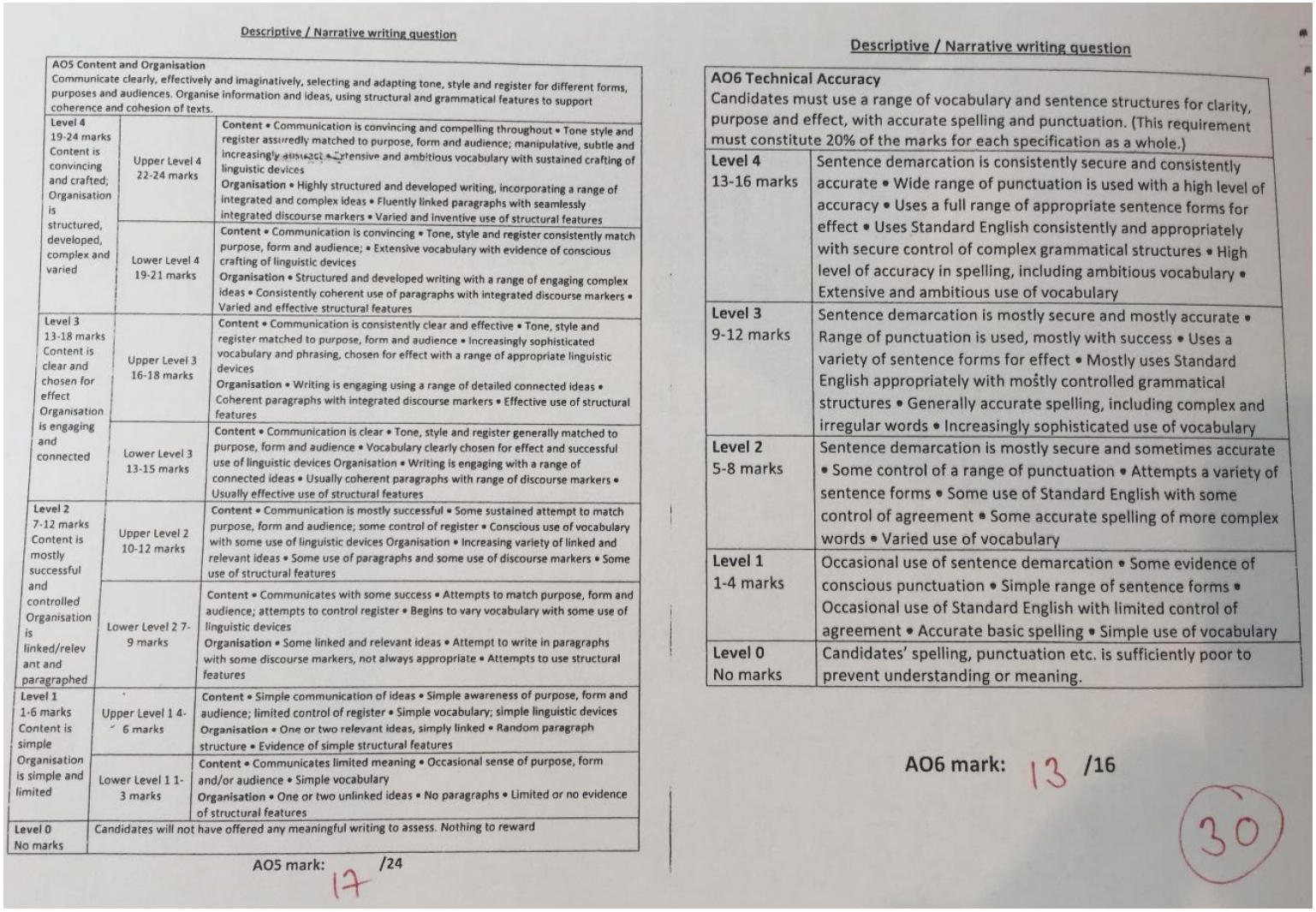
Self-regulation level

Feedback that helps students to self-regulate their work e.g. support and encouragement to reflect or self-assess on an aspect of their work so they can be more independent and effective in future, or to use their learning to set themselves goals.

Self level

Feedback about the person such as 'good girl' or 'great effort' rather than about the work.

Appendix 6: the success criteria for the assessment, shared with the students



Descriptive / Narrative writing question

AO5 Content and Organisation Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.		
Level 4 19-24 marks Content is convincing and crafted; Organisation is structured, developed, complex and varied	Upper Level 4 22-24 marks	**Content** • Communication is convincing and compelling throughout • Tone style and register assuredly matched to purpose, form and audience; manipulative, subtle and increasingly abstract • Extensive and ambitious vocabulary with sustained crafting of linguistic devices **Organisation** • Highly structured and developed writing, incorporating a range of integrated and complex ideas • Fluently linked paragraphs with seamlessly integrated discourse markers • Varied and inventive use of structural features
	Lower Level 4 19-21 marks	**Content** • Communication is convincing • Tone, style and register consistently match purpose, form and audience; • Extensive vocabulary with evidence of conscious crafting of linguistic devices **Organisation** • Structured and developed writing with a range of engaging complex ideas • Consistently coherent use of paragraphs with integrated discourse markers • Varied and effective structural features
Level 3 13-18 marks Content is clear and chosen for effect Organisation is engaging and connected	Upper Level 3 16-18 marks	**Content** • Communication is consistently clear and effective • Tone, style and register matched to purpose, form and audience • Increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and phrasing, chosen for effect with a range of appropriate linguistic devices **Organisation** • Writing is engaging using a range of detailed connected ideas • Coherent paragraphs with integrated discourse markers • Effective use of structural features
	Lower Level 3 13-15 marks	**Content** • Communication is clear • Tone, style and register generally matched to purpose, form and audience • Vocabulary clearly chosen for effect and successful use of linguistic devices Organisation • Writing is engaging with a range of connected ideas • Usually coherent paragraphs with range of discourse markers • Usually effective use of structural features
Level 2 7-12 marks Content is mostly successful and controlled Organisation is linked/relevant and paragraphed	Upper Level 2 10-12 marks	**Content** • Communication is mostly successful • Some sustained attempt to match purpose, form and audience; some control of register • Conscious use of vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices Organisation • Increasing variety of linked and relevant ideas • Some use of paragraphs and some use of discourse markers • Some use of structural features
	Lower Level 2 7-9 marks	**Content** • Communicates with some success • Attempts to match purpose, form and audience; attempts to control register • Begins to vary vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices **Organisation** • Some linked and relevant ideas • Attempt to write in paragraphs with some discourse markers, not always appropriate • Attempts to use structural features
Level 1 1-6 marks Content is simple Organisation is simple and limited	Upper Level 1 4-6 marks	**Content** • Simple communication of ideas • Simple awareness of purpose, form and audience; limited control of register • Simple vocabulary; simple linguistic devices **Organisation** • One or two relevant ideas, simply linked • Random paragraph structure • Evidence of simple structural features
	Lower Level 1 1-3 marks	**Content** • Communicates limited meaning • Occasional sense of purpose, form and/or audience • Simple vocabulary **Organisation** • One or two unlinked ideas • No paragraphs • Limited or no evidence of structural features
Level 0 No marks	Candidates will not have offered any meaningful writing to assess. Nothing to reward	

AO5 mark: 17 /24

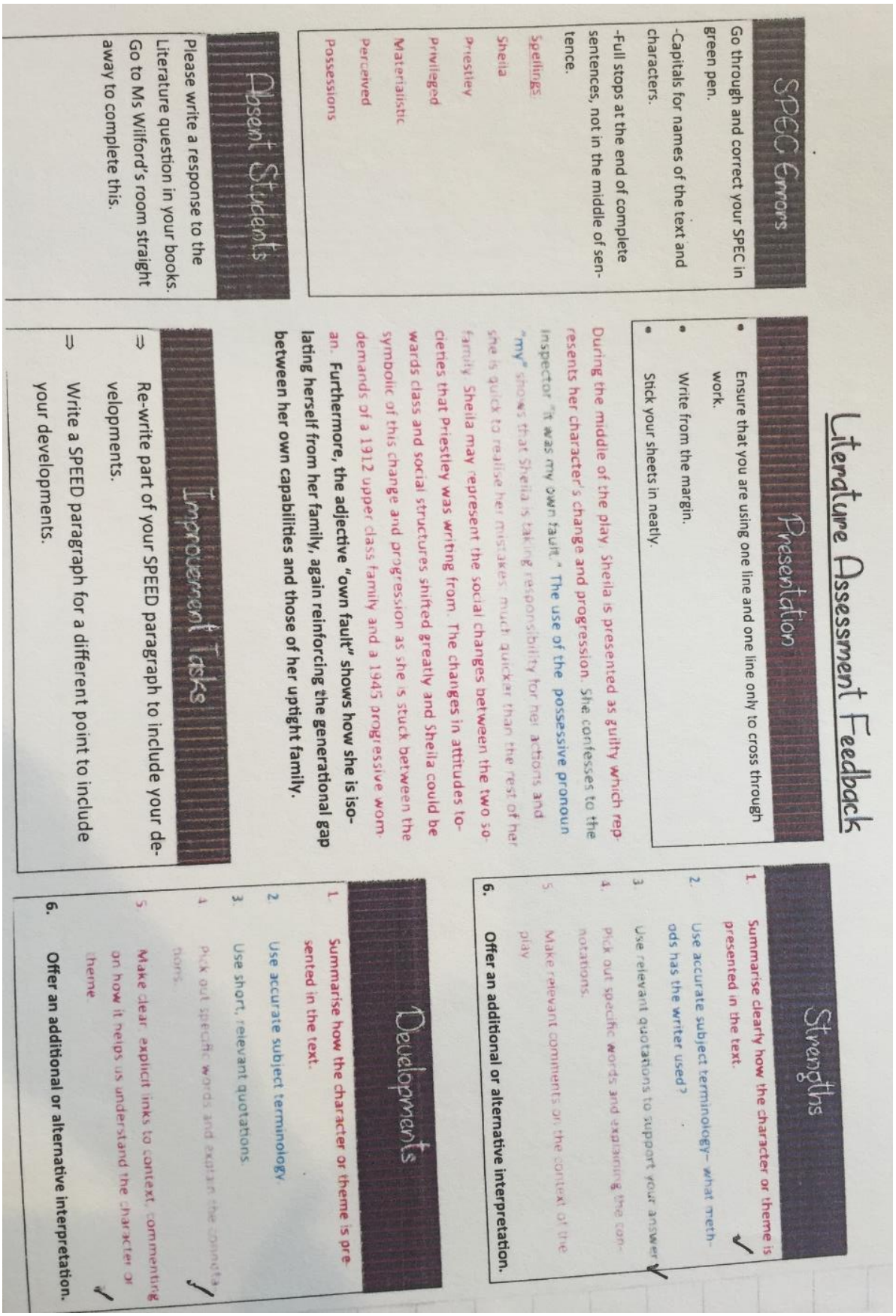
Descriptive / Narrative writing question

AO6 Technical Accuracy Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (This requirement must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole.)	
Level 4 13-16 marks	Sentence demarcation is consistently secure and consistently accurate • Wide range of punctuation is used with a high level of accuracy • Uses a full range of appropriate sentence forms for effect • Uses Standard English consistently and appropriately with secure control of complex grammatical structures • High level of accuracy in spelling, including ambitious vocabulary • Extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary
Level 3 9-12 marks	Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate • Range of punctuation is used, mostly with success • Uses a variety of sentence forms for effect • Mostly uses Standard English appropriately with mostly controlled grammatical structures • Generally accurate spelling, including complex and irregular words • Increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary
Level 2 5-8 marks	Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and sometimes accurate • Some control of a range of punctuation • Attempts a variety of sentence forms • Some use of Standard English with some control of agreement • Some accurate spelling of more complex words • Varied use of vocabulary
Level 1 1-4 marks	Occasional use of sentence demarcation • Some evidence of conscious punctuation • Simple range of sentence forms • Occasional use of Standard English with limited control of agreement • Accurate basic spelling • Simple use of vocabulary
Level 0 No marks	Candidates' spelling, punctuation etc. is sufficiently poor to prevent understanding or meaning.

AO6 mark: 13 /16

30

Appendix 7: the first intervention to the SDR approach, the ‘marking proforma’



Appendix 8: the second intervention to the SDR approach

AO3: How the writer presents

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts	
3.1	Identify and state the differences in the text.
3.2	Use discourse markers and topic sentences to compare the texts.
3.3	Explain how the writer has used language and structure techniques to convey ideas.
3.4	Select relevant quotations from the texts.

AO3 Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts	
Level 4 Detailed, perceptive 13-16 marks	Shows a detailed understanding of the differences between the ideas and perspectives • Compares ideas and perspectives in a perceptive way • Analyses how methods are used to convey ideas and perspectives • Selects range of judicious quotations from both texts
Level 3 Clear, relevant 9-12 marks	Shows a clear understanding of differences between the ideas and perspectives • Compares ideas and perspectives in a clear and relevant way • Explains clearly how methods are used to convey ideas and perspectives • Selects relevant quotations to support from both texts
Level 2 Some, attempts 5-8 marks	Identifies some differences between the ideas and perspectives • Attempts to compare ideas and perspectives • Some comment on how methods are used to convey ideas and perspectives • Selects some quotations/references, not always supporting (from one or both texts)
Level 1 Simple, limited 1-4 marks	Simple awareness of different ideas and/or perspectives • Simple cross reference of ideas and/or perspectives • Simple identification of how differences are conveyed • Simple references or textual details from one or both texts
Level 0 No marks	No ideas offered about the differences. Nothing to reward

AO3 mark: 8/16

I was awarded this level because... 	You have stated clearly the similarities + differences :)
To reach the level above, I need to... 	Ensure you stick to the PEE structure as this will ensure you hit the green section. Is the writer warned, misdirected, surprised and why is that?

Appendix 9: Letter to the Headteacher seeking consent to carry out the research

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird

Mat XXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXX

Dear Mat,

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by Dr. Yasmine El Masri. In my final research project "To what extent do students' and teachers' perspectives demonstrate that dialogic marking is an effective approach to feedback in a UK secondary school?" I will explore the views of KS4 students and their teachers about the written feedback they receive.

The research will take place with four Year 10 English classes working towards GCSE. My research focus is on learning from teachers and students to ensure that we maximise the impact of marking in our school. Teachers in the English department have agreed to collaborate with me on this.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will [deepen our understanding of how written feedback effectively contributes to learning. Given the school's commitment to reducing less impactful work, the aim is to contribute to greater efficiency with marking.

I hope to conduct this research between February and September 2017. I would interview and audio-record students engaged in small-group discussions, observe the teachers and students in lessons and take pictures of some students' written feedback.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. As practitioner research, the University recognises that schools have the highest ethical standards in any event. Therefore only <u>your</u> formal consent as headteacher is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teachers and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor (Dr. El Masri) and me, and only used for academic purposes. The data will be kept for as long as it has academic value and destroyed soon afterwards.

If you feel you would like to take part in the study, or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, through: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

James Barringer

James Barringer

University of Oxford, Department of Education]

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Mat XXXXXX

☐ We do not wish to participate in this project.

☐ We would like to find out more about this project.

☐ We would like to take part in this project.

_____

Head teacher's signature

Please return this form to me.

Thank you for your help.