Implementing strategies for efficient and impactful peer feedback and improvement in Year 1

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Key Points

- Develop peer assessment and specific feedback in young children

- Improve communication skills

- Develop time efficient, impactful feedback sessions for a range of attainment levels

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Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

Although peer and self assessment is in use across the school I felt that it could be used more effectively in KS1, particularly in Year 1. The developmental stage of these children means that written feedback is often inaccessible to the vast majority of the class. Written next steps marking can be impactful but is often very slow and labour intensive (often requiring 1:1 sessions with each child) and the learning opportunity in the feedback process was almost entirely limited to receiving feedback (from an adult) and making appropriate improvements. What about learning through giving feedback too? Improvement of oral communication skills and our continued work on the growth mindset formed a key part of the school development plan and it seemed to me that the development of verbal peer and self assessment in KS1 would work towards these whole school aims.

Who were the identified target learners?

KS1 pupils, primarily Year 1

What specific curriculum area did you intend to have impact on?

- Writing

- Building confidence, self esteem and understanding that feedback is to help, not criticise

- Possibility of findings being used across the curriculum

How were you intending to improve pupil learning?

- The first intention was to develop children's understanding of the feedback process and (linked with work on growth mindset) see feedback as an opportunity to improve in a supportive, safe environment. This understanding and attitude would be key to the success of the project.

- I also needed to give children a structure through which they could communicate their ideas. The language of feedback seemed to be lacking and consequently held many children back from giving feedback even when they could identify a positive/need to improve in a piece of work.

- Once children's understanding of feedback had improved and they had the language to communicate their ideas, I needed to teach them to give specific feedback on writing.

What were your success criteria?

- All Year 1 children able to receive verbal feedback and act on it without getting upset or feeling criticised.

- Children to be able to give specific feedback on their own writing and that of a peer.

- Children to be able to articulate (in their own way) what feedback is and its purpose.

Methodology

What did you do - what teaching approaches did you use?

At the very early stages of Year 1 (when extended writing was not yet the focus for many of the class) I decided to focus my attention on building the children's knowledge of 'feedback' as a concept. This began with me asking the children what feedback is and why we use it. Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of my 31 children were able to in any way answer these questions. Having already seen that a core group of children (across the attainment range) were averse to receiving feedback on their written work (seemingly taking improvement points as a criticism) I decided to firstly use PE lessons as a platform for introducing informal verbal feedback. This worked very well in making children more comfortable with giving and receiving feedback, immediately improving on points for development and receiving positive feedback for success.

At this point I chose to move the process into the classroom, making it a little more formal. As a class we undertook a self portrait drawing task (although the aim of the session was not for the children to produce their own self portraits – this was a lead in to what was to follow). Before we started I showed the children my intentionally flawed model (see attachment – 'Teacher self portrait'). Initially many of the children laughed, followed by many suggestions of what I had done 'wrong' e.g. 'the hair is green',' the ears are not straight', 'it has a square mouth' etc. None of the laughs or comments were intended to cause offence but I used this as an opportunity for us to discuss the important responsibility of giving feedback to someone, ensuring that our feedback is helpful and supportive.

We then watched 'Critique and feedback – the story of Austin's butterfly' on Youtube and I

told the children it might help them to give me better feedback. The results were instant. Just as Ron Berger encouraged the children to split their feedback into comments on 1) colour and 2) pattern, we decided to split ours into comments on 1) colour and 2) shape. Children's feedback was immediately more focused and specific e.g. 'the mouth should be curved and thin at the ends', 'the hair should be brown', 'both eyes should be blue' etc.

Over the course of a few days I showed children new drafts of my self portrait, modelling explicitly how to receive their comments and use them to improve. The children were very proud of my efforts! I made it clear that my drawing improved because of their feedback.

At this point it was clear that the children's understanding of, and attitude to, feedback had improved vastly but we had not yet used a structure or applied it to writing. Also, when giving feedback, we were focusing only on what needed to improve and not acknowledging success. These were the next steps.

Taking Ron Berger's idea of dividing feedback into categories, I created a feedback prompt sheet (see attachment – 'Year 1 verbal feedback framework'). The chosen categories were 1) presentation and 2) content of writing and the sheet gave a sentence prompt for both successes and areas that needed to be improved ('tickled pink' and 'green for growth' linking in to the whole school next steps marking process). This sheet was used in writing sessions when children showed their writing to the whole class under the visualiser and in more focused discussions between learning partners at tables (often facilitated by me). We used learning partners to discuss the writing, finding a success (tickled pink) and area for improvement (green for growth) in both the presentation and content of writing. Children were encouraged to use the full sentences when giving their feedback. The author would then have the opportunity to immediately improve their writing with the help of their classmate(s).

What specific teaching resources did you use?

- Critique and feedback – The Story of Austin's Butterfly – Ron Berger

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqh1MRWZjms

- Speaking frames

- Visualiser for showing work to class

What CPD experiences, materials, research and expertise have you drawn on?

- Shirley Clarke – assessment CPD day, various texts

- John Hattie – 'Visible learning' (2009) and 'Visible learning for teachers' (2012)

- Ron Berger – 'Leaders of their own learning: Transforming schools through student-engaged assessment' (2014)

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning?

- Children's attitude to feedback is greatly improved

- All Year 1 children are now able to receive and act on verbal feedback without feeling undermined or upset

- All but 2 children can give specific verbal feedback across a variety of curriculum areas

- All children now understand the purpose of feedback and all but 2 can explain what it is and why we use it

Evidence of impact on pupil learning

Learning behaviours exhibited in class are consistently very good and the children are much more resilient and open to feedback than before. The number of children familiar with the term 'feedback' and able to articulate its meaning and purpose has gone from 0 to 29 (out of 31) over the course of the project.

Feedback comments from children are now much more specific and helpful (when using feedback prompt sheet and, perhaps more importantly, when not using it). They now also acknowledge success as well as areas for development (see attachment – 'Example comments using prompt sheet').

Comments from peers are being used and remembered by children, proving longer term impact of peer feedback with children of this age. The attachment 'Child's report comment sheet' shows that child has remembered some feedback that was given by a peer in a previous English lesson.

This cohort are now much more assessment literate than previous Year 1 groups.

What has been the impact on teaching?

- Use of the visualiser to peer assess children's writing has been enhanced and is now more impactful.

- Enabling children to take greater ownership of their learning and improvements has been great.

- Next year I will be able to introduce the concept of feedback and improvement at an earlier stage.

- Year 2 teacher will be able to pick up on peer/self assessment much more quickly than in previous years.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Cohort moving into Year 2 are much more assessment literate than previous groups. This will benefit their Year 2 teacher.

- Feedback and improvement is much more evident in books than in previous years.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Project has contributed to whole school targets of improving verbal communication skills and further embedding the growth mindset.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Use of speaking frames will be used next year across school in science lessons.

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Developing a class environment in which the children feel safe and supported when making mistakes. Teacher modelling how to appropriately give and receive feedback, using it to repeatedly improve learning over a series of drafts. The principles of growth mindset are key.

What would your next steps be?

Explore use of feedback speaking frames in the context of independent/learning partner work, not led by class teacher. Also work with colleagues across KS1 (and possibly EYFS/KS2) to ensure consistency and progression.

Sharing Practice

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where should they start?

Think about the ethos of your class and the children's attitudes to feedback. Establish safe boundaries within which feedback can be given without judgement and model use of feedback.

What would be the essential elements to include?

- 'team' ethos

- principles of growth mindset

- mixed attainment groups

- focus for feedback (e.g. presentation or content)

- extensive modelling of learning behaviours

- some sort of speaking frame/model