



Plymouth High School for Girls

“For life, not school, we learn”

Ambition, Confidence, Enthusiasm: Student Progress

Over the last two years we have been looking at what we think would further improve performance and confidence amongst our students, and you will have noticed some changes, in particular our focus on the students adopting a growth mind set to improve their resilience. In this academic year, we are focussing on the way we assess and report on their progress and attainment.

Three research reports have recently been published on the strategies which have the greatest impact upon the progress of students. The first is the research of John Hattie, a well-known Australian educational researcher, who has spent many years looking at the *impact on progress* of a huge number of factors in schools; things such as the impact of class size, instructional teaching, homework, marking etc. He has consistently shown that *the factor which makes the most impact on the progress of young people is the quality of the ‘feedback’ from teachers on how to improve* – that is formative feedback or help as they are working on an area rather than just a summative comment at the end of the year. This research is also backed up by the Educational Endowment Foundation, and the Sutton Trust’s report which looked at progress factors. They too have highlighted ‘feedback’ on specific pieces of work during a school year as the key driver of success.

One of the first ever in-depth analysis of the impact of marking on student performance by Oxford University made the following main points:

‘The use of specific targets to make marking as specific and actionable as possible is likely to increase pupil progress’;

‘Pupils are unlikely to benefit from marking, unless some time is set aside to enable pupils to consider and respond to marking’;

‘Some forms of marking, including acknowledgement marking, are unlikely to enhance pupil progress. A mantra should be that schools should mark less in terms of the number of pieces marked, but mark better’.

As a result of these reports and through looking at which of our teachers and departments attain particularly well, we are prioritising detailed ‘feedback’ on key assessments in each year group. Work in class and homework will be preparation up to these key points, the majority of which will happen once a half-term, but at least four times a year; more at A Level. These key assessments are usually designed around the knowledge and skills required to answer exam style questions effectively. Year 7-8 progress will be tracked by awarding them one of the key attainment words, *beginning, emerging, securing or mastering* for each key assessment, while GCSE and AL key assessments will have a grade or numerical score according to the mark scheme. Attitude to learning grades are also given when data goes home to parents, 3 times a year. Students will therefore receive the grade at which they are currently working and will have to be resilient, using this assessment of their work together with the teacher’s feedback to improve next time. The focus being, next steps to make progress.



Staff will be asked to give detailed feedback on each key assessment usually in the form of WWW (what went well) and EBI (even better if) to ensure that the students know precisely how to improve when they face similar work in the future. Students may be asked to do some parts of the work again having taken on advice given.

Work which leads up to the key assessments may be self or peer assessed. This is a valuable way of helping them understand, and apply, the requirements of the success criteria or mark scheme for that work and is always fully explained and supported by the teacher during the lesson. It is also evident from the recent research, and our experience, that tokenistic marking is far less effective than detailed, specific feedback. As a result, students' exercise books or folders will only be looked at by teachers to ensure that students are: i) making accurate notes ii) taking notes in a manner which will support effective revision iii) up to date and iv) completing homework to a satisfactory standard. The students' note-books are what they say – notebooks to aid performance in the Key Assessments. The main focus, and the key to improvement, will be through feedback given by teachers on the 'Key Assessments'. Therefore, students' books will be checked, but not necessarily commented upon, at least once a half term.

A fuller version of this guidance on Feedback and Assessment at PHSG is available in the policies section of our website.

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