

# **RAISING ACHIEVEMENT Pocketbook**

**By Caroline  
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## Myths and Reality



## What Raising Achievement Looks Like



## Climate for Achievement



## Feedback Matters



## Metacognition and Motivation



## Testing Times



## Pupils, Parents and Partners



## CPD and Self-Audit

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# Research for school-wide improvements



Research figures and statistics are thought-provoking and it is wise to learn from the successes of others. However, schools, classes and individuals all have different contexts and needs. Best practice from research is an interesting starting point, but we need to be careful to respond to the specific needs and contexts of our individual pupils rather than just changing things as a knee jerk reaction to the latest research.

However much we exercise caution, we can't ignore a potential progress leap of eight months attributed to giving effective feedback to our students. It's one of the most powerful strategies in a teacher's toolkit.

We need to be sure that the feedback we give is clear, precise and useful. It needs to be positive and to signpost the way forward. It should be given promptly, require action on behalf of the pupils and should lead to input from them which can be used to plan subsequent lessons. Read on!

# Is feedback clear, precise and useful?



Some schools have multiple methods of scoring pupils' work. Students might receive up to eight different variations and marks from different teachers, which can be really confusing. The research on feedback shows that it is the written **comment** that helps pupils improve, not the **alpha or numeric mark**. But students always look for the mark or grade first. They are either so happy or deflated by it they often don't go on to the really helpful comment.

**Tip:** Withhold the grade when you first return marked work. Give a comment – and return the score the following lesson. This way students read and engage with the feedback. (Some teachers even write their final comment sideways on the page, building in a visual check that pupils are turning the books to read them.)



# Check feedback is understood



Do pupils really understand the comments they receive? Clarity in teaching and in feedback are cited as top factors in raising achievement by several researchers (0.75 effect size according to Hattie).

To test out whether your feedback is useful:

- Have regular one-to-one discussions with pupils. Ask them to talk about their work and the comments you have made. Can they read them? Do they understand them?
- Give out a sticky note at the start of the lesson. Ask pupils to jot down their top areas of improvement. Later compare this to the comments in their books. Is it the same?
- When giving verbal feedback ask pupils to jot down the main points raised – check they accord with what you said



# Great feedback has clear focus



## 2 P's and 2 T's

Good feedback is more than just a pat on the back. To drive improvements it needs to be:

**P** Positive

**T** Thought-provoking

**P** Precise

**T** Tackled by pupils

## 2 P's

**Positive** – Students are much more likely do something with your feedback if it is phrased constructively, eg *'Ben your explanation of the after-effects of the earthquake is strong. You included good detail when you discussed the effect on sanitation.'*

**Precise** – Be crystal clear about what is effective and specific about what could be better. This often means focusing on one area, eg:

*'You have explained the experiment clearly using effective scientific vocabulary... Highlight where you have used key terms in your conclusion. There are two places where they could be improved.'*

# Great feedback has clear focus



## 2 T's

**Thought provoking** – the feedback comment should make the pupil think about their work. *'I liked the way you used two different sources to justify your ideas. Why did you think the secondary source provided the best argument?'*

**Tackled** – Good feedback requires action by the pupil. As teachers we often spend lots of time correcting the same errors. Asking a question, giving students a choice of response or getting them to make a specific improvement is crucial for them to really progress.



## ‘Medals and missions’ motivate



Motivated pupils work harder. Great teachers know that using positive terminology helps motivate pupils to want to improve and act on feedback.

Geoff Petty, in his book *Evidence Based Teaching*, likens effective feedback to giving pupils ‘medals and missions’. As he explains it, ‘medals’ are *‘information about what exactly was done well’* ie they recognise and celebrate achievement so far. But to secure improvements, pupils also need ‘missions’: *‘This is information about what the student needs to improve, correct, or work on. It is best when it is forward-looking and positive.’*

Petty also reminds us that having clear goals is essential for success: *‘the medals and missions need to be given in relation to clear goals, usually best given in advance.’*





# Three steps for effective feedback



**1. Make it prompt.**



**2. Make it require action.**



**3. Use feedback loops to influence the next lessons.**

# About the author

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Caroline is an Oxford graduate who started teaching in the mid-1990s. She has been a middle leader in three schools, an Education Adviser for a Local Authority and an educational consultant across the UK and overseas.

Over an eight-year period she has run demonstration lessons in over 100 schools. Caroline runs training sessions for teachers focusing on the skills of an outstanding teacher, assessment for learning strategies, motivating, and improving pupil behaviour. Her reputation means that she has been invited to speak in schools from Dubai to Denmark and has trained teachers from the United States to Russia.

For information about her training, pupil revision workshops and other books please see Caroline's website: [www.bentley-davies.co.uk](http://www.bentley-davies.co.uk) or follow her on twitter @Real CBD.

Caroline runs a range of training courses hosted by Teachology ([www.teachology-education.co.uk](http://www.teachology-education.co.uk)) as well as training days directly with individual schools.