Feedback for learning: exploring the views of secondary school students about feedback and how they can shape classroom practice

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Acknowledgements

Someone once told me that doing a PhD part-time can become a family project as close friends and family often become important support networks for the researcher. This could not be truer for my studies. Enormous thanks go to my sister who has spent countless hours listening to me discussing my research and data, encouraging me through the challenges and, along with my father, has read every word of my thesis. I would also like to thank my son who has similarly listened patiently and encouraged me throughout this journey. Colleagues and friends have also been supportive and helpful, and I am very grateful. I would also like to thank my supervisors for their advice and guidance.

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I would like to thank you for reading this thesis. I hope you find my story interesting.

Contents

List of Tables, Figures and Charts

Glossary of Terms Used

AfL	Assessment for Learning
AiFL	Assessment Is for Learning
Annie	The Deputy Head Teacher
ARG	Assessment Reform Group: a voluntary group of researchers brought together as the Policy Task Group on Assessment by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in 1989 *Also*: Assessment Review Group: established in 2017 to review assessment practices in England
BERA	British Educational Research Association
Charlie	Science teacher promoted to Senior Leadership role in 2018
DfE	Department for Education
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher (Annie)
EBI	Even Better If…
INSET	In-Service Training (for teachers)
GCSE	General Certificate in Secondary Education
Learning Outcome	Goal which it is intended a student will achieve
Katie	Art teacher
Kirstie	English/Law teacher
KMOFAP	King's Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project
KOSAP	King's Oxfordshire Summative Assessment Project
KS	Key Stage
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
NRC	National Research Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Responsible for inspecting a range of educational institutions, including state schools and some independent schools.
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences: a data analysis software package
Success criteria	Identifies progress towards a goal (learning outcome)
TEAN	Teacher Education Advancement Network
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WWW	What Went Well

Abstract

Whilst previous research on assessment for learning has explored the pivotal role feedback has in supporting and enhancing learning, there have been limited studies undertaken from the perspective of the student. As a longitudinal study in one secondary school, this thesis presents the views of students which have been obtained over an eighteen-month period. Using questionnaires and interviews and including a small-scale action research approach, student views have been gained about how they valued and used feedback they received on their learning from teachers and their peers as they progressed through their secondary education.

These views have been valuable in providing an insight into student learning and have been influential in shaping policy and classroom practice in this school. The data in this case study has indicated student views did not change considerably as they moved from year 8 to year 10, and higher attaining students did not regard feedback differently than their peers. The findings demonstrate the importance of the way feedback is communicated, the content of it and whether it generates subsequent action. It highlights that feedback should be framed within a holistic approach to support teaching and learning. In addition, the thesis explores the contribution that gaining student perceptions can have on teacher awareness of learning and developing confidence in their practice. The thesis concludes with a model that demonstrates the range of factors that can influence the construction, receipt and interpretation of feedback, which would be valuable for practitioners and managers in education considering the development or review of feedback processes.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of:

- The role of feedback within Assessment for Learning approaches;
- How students engage with feedback;
- The value of student voice in the development of education policy and practice.

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis explores how feedback, provided as part of a learning process, is valued and used by learners. The research was undertaken in a single school, which formed a case study. An action research approach was adopted as the intention was to use emerging data to enable the teachers to use the information to enhance their practice in the classroom.

1.1 Background

Hattie and Timperley (2007) provided a conceptual analysis of feedback exploring its impact on learning and achievement in which they explained how feedback can build confidence, self-efficacy and encourage student thinking. However, they also identified it can negatively influence student self-belief and self-esteem, adding to Kluger and DeNisi's (1996) view that feedback can detract from student performance. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED) inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people and provide education and skills for learners of all ages. OfSTED (2018) recognised that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment which, therefore forms a key part of the inspection process.

The participating school was a local authority secondary school (for ages 11-16) in a semi-rural location in the East Midlands. Following inspection by OfSTED in April 2014, the school was placed in Special Measures. This means OfSTED judged this school to be failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors had not demonstrated they had capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. As a result of being placed in Special Measures, the school was subjected to increased scrutiny of its performance by the Inspectorate with expectations for improvement identified and monitored. In relation to classroom practice on feedback, OfSTED (2014 pg. 4) stated '*teachers do not check students' understanding of their learning regularly enough or adapt their teaching to reflect students' progress. Teachers do not correct students' spelling, punctuation or grammar sufficiently. Teachers do not consistently use their marking to give students guidance on how to improve or check that students act on this advice*.' Feedback became a priority and thus provided an opportunity to undertake research with the intention of providing information for the school to inform the development of this aspect of teaching and learning.

I had an existing connection with the school as a parent of a former pupil and was a Co-opted Governor when the project commenced. This enabled me to approach the school to discuss the potential research and agree a suitable focus and strategy. My position

provided me with an insider perspective, rather than from a purely objective stance. However, new staff and practices developed in the school under new leadership from April 2014 enabled me to take a more objective approach than would have been possible under the previous leadership with whom I was familiar.

After the OfSTED inspection in April 2014, a new Head Teacher was appointed who was enthusiastic to use a research-informed approach to develop practice. It was decided to explore the role of feedback from a student perspective. Literature exploring the student view of feedback is limited (Harks *et al* 2014, Hattie 2012) and is necessary to understand how they value and interpret feedback (Peterson and Irving 2008). Student voice can provide valuable information on what helps learning (McIntyre *et al* 2005) and can have transformational experiences for teachers and students (Morgan 2011, Flutter 2007). Whilst much has been researched and written about feedback from a teacher, an educational practitioner or researcher's viewpoint, there have been few previous studies which have explored this pivotal aspect of assessment from the view of the student (Harlen 2007, Dann 2018). This project has addressed a lack of knowledge in this area by exploring how students in the research school regarded, valued and used feedback as they progressed in their secondary education. It also identifies the impact that gaining student perceptions had on the participating teachers and on classroom practice.

It was initially planned to ascertain the views of year 8 students (ages 12-13 years) only. The Head Teacher felt this was a valuable year group to include in the study as they had often been regarded as the 'wasted years' with progress in this stage often being slow and teachers inconsistent on the building of pupils' prior understanding (BBC News 2015). However, as the research evolved, it included a wider range of students, in total 393 student questionnaires were completed, explained in Chapter Four, section 4.5.2. A longitudinal study enabled the views of the original cohort of students (year 8) to be obtained again when they were in year 10 (ages 14 to 15 years). This approach has not been undertaken in previous studies of feedback. The views of three key staff members were also captured to establish the value of using student voice to develop practice. This was an Art teacher (Katie), English/Law teacher (Kirstie) and a Deputy Head Teacher (Annie). Other staff views were also obtained during the course of the research to explore the topic in more depth and to validate the data.

Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, the research gathered the views of 287 individual students, and members of teaching staff over an eighteen-month period. It achieved this through the following aim and objectives:

1.2 Research Aim: The aim of this research was to investigate how students valued and used feedback they received on their learning. It focused on written and verbal feedback

both from teachers and peers. The purpose was to use the student views to increase teacher understanding of learning and to improve practice in the classroom.

1.3 Research Objectives:

The following five objectives were established for this research:

1. Identify the range of feedback given to students;
2. Explore student perceptions of feedback they received;
3. Using student voice, investigate how current teacher feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning;
4. Present the data to the teachers so student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience;
5. Establish the impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning.

This research explored students' views regarding feedback they received on their learning, identifying how it has been used to shape practice. It establishes how student views can be used improve learning experiences in general, it does not make recommendations for practice in specific subjects.

1.4 Contextualising the research in the wider context

Existing theories about communication were examined to identify a suitable framework on which to explore the process of feedback in learning. The concept of Habermas and his Theory of Communicative Action (1984) has provided a valuable framework on which to explore and analyse this topic. Published research has been used to shape the direction of the enquiry, such as the principles of the Assessment Reform Group, a review of research presented by Black and Wiliam (1998a) and research by Black *et al* (2003) on assessment for learning. It also draws on literature about teacher understanding of learning, such as Torrance and Pryor (2001) and Harlen (2007) and the influence this has on the process of providing feedback. Research into the of role the student when receiving feedback (Dann 2018, Williams 2010) has been built on within this study to deepen understanding about how students' value and respond to feedback.

This thesis examines the relationship between the way feedback was presented to and used by students and the value they placed on it. It investigates factors that influence how students valued feedback and identifies how classroom practice can be developed from listening to their views. It also discusses why students have different perceptions of feedback, and challenges previous assumptions about the way learners engage with it.

1.5 Research Approach

This research takes the form of a case study to investigate students' perceptions as they progressed from year 8 to year 10. In this regard, it has been exploratory and interpretive in order to understand their views over eighteen months. In addition, action research has also been undertaken with two teachers to use the emerging data to make specific changes to their practice. During the period of the research, data has also been used to amend and shape school policy on assessment and feedback. The research has evolved over time and been responsive to needs of the school, whilst maintaining its original aim of investigating how students valued feedback they received on their learning.

1.6 Format of the Thesis

Chapter Two explains why theories of communication were considered to be a suitable approach to exploring feedback in a learning situation, and in particular Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action. The theoretical framework is developed further in Chapter Three where previous research is discussed and debated. In this chapter the wider context of assessment as well as the role of feedback within this is critiqued. The importance of feedback is explored, highlighting how it can enhance and impede learning. The specific research approach for this project is explained and justified in Chapter Four, which as well as describing the methods used, it also considers limitations, challenges and alternative approaches. An explanation of the approach taken to analyse the data is also provided in Chapter Four. A preliminary analysis of the data is presented in Chapter Five. This includes an initial thematic analysis of the emerging data. This is developed in further detail in Chapter Six, where the themes are drawn out and discussed in more depth, exploring them within context of the research presented previously in Chapter Three. A reflection is undertaken in Chapter Seven, identifying what has been learned from the process of research and the implications this might have in future. Based on the outcomes of this research and the reflections in Chapter Seven, a final conclusion is provided in Chapter 8. My contributions to new knowledge are explained in Chapter Nine and further research and developments are discussed in Chapter Ten. The Appendices provide additional information to support the research process and the data analysis. A diagrammatic representation of the thesis structure is provided overleaf. A similar diagram explaining the format is provided at the beginning of each chapter.

The Thesis Structure:

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduces the research context, aim and objectives

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Explains the chosen theoretical framework to explore the process of communication

Chapter Three: Research Field: A Literature Review

Presents a critical debate about literature and research on assessment, learning and feedback

Chapter Four: The Research Approach: Methods and Methodology

Establishes the research paradigm, explains and justifies the research process and data collected. Explains how the data was analysed

Chapter Five: Research Findings: Data and Preliminary Analysis

Presents the data in a graphical format from questionnaires and outlines outcomes from the interviews. Explains how initial data informed subsequent research

Chapter Six: Detailed Data Analysis

Building on preliminary data analysis, develops the arguments in greater depth, placing the data in the wider context of previous research discussed in Chapter Three

Chapter Seven: Reflections of the Research

A reflection on the process of the research undertaken in this project, including the impact on the school and factors affecting the success of the research

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Concluding the arguments made in this thesis based on the data generated from this research.

Chapter Nine: Contributions to New Knowledge

Explanation of the new knowledge generated from this research

Chapter Ten: Taking the Research Further

Identifying the implications for practice and how the research can be developed further

References:

List of all sources cited in the thesis, using Harvard referencing system

Appendices:

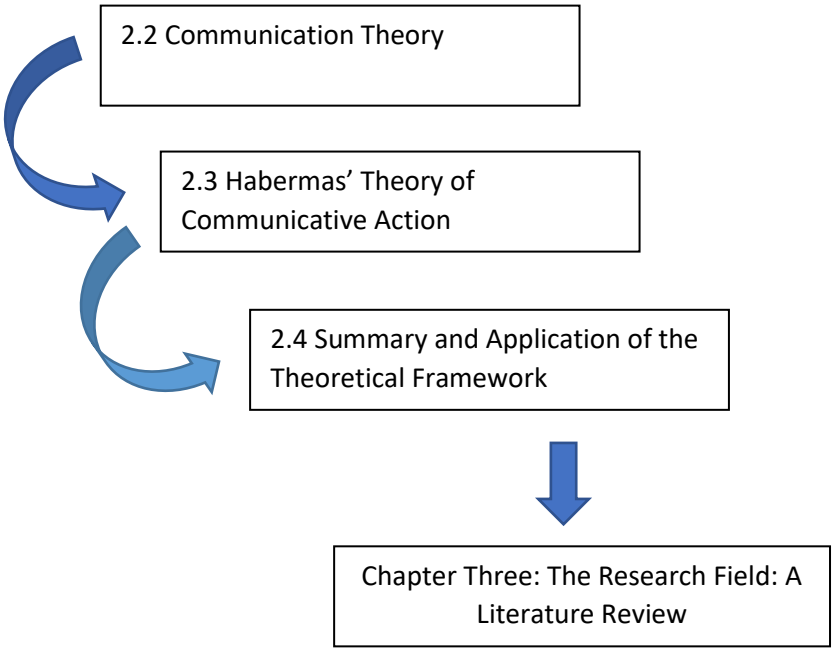
Documentation and additional data referred to within the thesis to supplement the discussion

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework on which this research has been developed. This is expanded in the literature review in Chapter Three and is threaded through the remainder of the thesis.

Format of the chapter:



2.2 Communication theory

A theory can offer an explanation or develop understanding of a phenomenon by identifying relationships between concepts or constructs associated with the phenomena (Cobley and Schulz 2013). By doing this, they enable behaviours or outcomes to be predicted if they fit with the perception or experience of the phenomenon. Cobley and Schulz argued communication theory provides information about the world in which we live and helps us to understand what might happen in the future. A model of communication was considered to be appropriate to provide the basis of this research.

Shannon and Weaver developed the transmission model of communication in 1949, which mainly focused on the transmission and receiving of messages and how external 'noise' can affect this process. The model is based on a Source, Transmitter and Receiver. The decision-maker is the *source* who decides which message to send. This message is changed by a *transmitter* into a signal, which is sent in some format to the *receiver*. Shannon and Weaver included a consideration of how the signal could be distorted and affected by noise. It can be argued this model over-simplifies the process

of communication and does not consider the influence of dialogue and relationships. Weiner (1948) introduced a concept of Cybernetics (the science of communication and automatic control systems). In this he included the process of feedback in communication, however this focused on feedback within the nervous systems of mammals and explored how messages through this system resulted in different courses of action. He drew parallels between this process and with engineering and computing. Whilst Weiner did consider feedback in communication, he applied it to electrical processes rather than the nature of discourse. These two theories focus on the transmission of messages, whilst subsequent models of communication have recognised the production and exchange of meanings. Fiske (2011) discusses other models, such as Newcomb (1953), where it is identified people need information to know how to react and Westley and MacLean's model (1957) that built on Newcomb's ideas and adds an editorial function enabling the source to decide what and how to communicate. The individual aspect within communication was being developed in these later models, however, they still had a linear approach to the process.

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action was selected as the theoretical framework for this thesis. In his theory, Habermas focused on the process of communication and factors influencing it. This was selected because it does not adopt a linear model, but instead considers the dialogic exchange between two parties and what can determine the success of, or interfere with, such an interaction. As this research has focused on student perceptions of feedback, it was important to use a theory that could be applied to the process of receiving feedback.

The theoretical framework is further developed through the literature review, which refers to theory on assessment and learning, in particular Stiggins' (2006) view of the multi-faceted role of assessment. A range of empirical research exploring the principles of assessment, learning and feedback adds to the framework, notably the work of Black and Wiliam (1998a), which has influenced education practice both nationally and internationally. The research undertaken in this thesis adds to that discussed in the literature review, and applies Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action to examine, explore and understand the role feedback can have in supporting student learning. This builds on the theoretical discussion presented by Dann (2016) where she suggested Habermas' theory can provide a particular dimension in exploring feedback in the classroom. This research does so, whilst presenting a new dimension and understanding of students' experiences of the feedback they received from teachers.

2.3 Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

2.3.1 Background

Habermas was a German philosopher born in 1929. He was a critical and social theorist whose aims were to bring about social change (Finlayson 2005, Erikson and Weigard 2003). Habermas' interest in communication focused on the theory of meaning, particularly analysing what language *says* rather than *does*. Finlayson (2005) described this as a theory of language use. Habermas claimed people are born into a social environment and become influenced through their social exchanges and experiences. As a critical and social theorist, he was interested in promoting change through a greater understanding of the process of communication. Critical theory has the aim to achieve a society that is based on equality and democracy. It goes beyond understanding situations and phenomena and strives to influence change (Cohen *et al* 2018).

A main principle of Habermas' theory was that the relationship between the speaker and hearer should be considered when exploring communication as it can determine the outcome of the interaction (Finlayson 2005, Erikson and Weigard 2003). He believed a mutual understanding of the specific action and situation must be achieved so the participants can co-ordinate their own actions and hence achieve the desired outcome (Erikson and Weigard 2003). This would involve an agreement of the starting point, the goal and action required. Habermas emphasised the importance of this in the process of communication, referred to as linguistic communication (*ibid*), and recognised that without it, the communication may be unsuccessful. However, Van den Berg (1990) criticised this notion, claiming a disagreement may not be the result of distorted communication, but due to differing beliefs. He went on to argue that genuine agreement may be difficult to distinguish from '*pseudo-consensus'* (pg. 186).

Habermas believed that by understanding the process of communication and applying his principles, a mutual agreement is achieved rather than an instrumental or strategic one in which one person manipulates the other and referred to this as a free-speech situation (Habermas 1984). His critical theory, however, has been subject to criticism that it should be subjected to empirical testing rather than relying on hypothetical views due to its potential power to influence change. However, Dryzek (1995) argues Habermas' ideas can be useful in the evaluation of social practice.

Prior to publishing his Theory of Communicative Action, in 1961 Habermas presented his ideas on the Public Sphere, reflecting on and critiquing the 18th century ideology that people had opportunities for open speech and could participate as equals in the pursuit of common good (Finlayson 2005). He claimed the subsequent role and growth of the

media led to the management and manipulation of public dialogue and resulting in the decline of the public sphere (*ibid*). This lay the foreground of Habermas' views about external factors influencing communication.

2.3.2 Theory of Communicative Action

The Theory of Communicative Action was published in two volumes, in 1984 and 1987. It is a complex theory focussing on the process of speech, how messages are understood and influenced by external factors. Habermas was particularly interested in how '*subjects acquire and use knowledge*' (Habermas 1984 pg. 8) rather than the knowledge itself. The principles that will be discussed in this section are Habermas' ideas about speech acts, validity claims and external environments that affect communication, which he explained were part of a social system (Habermas 1987).

2.3.2 (i) Speech Acts

The main focus of Communicative Action is the process of communication through linguistic utterances, referred to as speech acts (Habermas 1984). Habermas built on Austin and Searle's 1969 Speech Act Theory by using their definition of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. Thomassen (2010) explained: locutionary is the process of an utterance or the expression of a state of affairs, for example 'I am a..'. An illocutionary speech act is one in which the speaker identifies an action, for example 'I will do..' or 'I require you to…'. A perlocutionary speech act is one which produces an effect on the hearer, which may be an action undertaken by the hearer, for example 'you must do this because…'. Warnke (1995) explained the difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts as the former involving understanding and, possibly, accepting a message, whilst the latter is the hearer reacting to the message, which was the intention of the speaker.

Habermas (1984) showed a particular interest in illocutionary speech acts. He believed the aim of these was for the hearer to understand what was said. This requires the speaker to express the message as clearly as possible using appropriate and established conventions of language (Erikson and Weigard 2003) suitable to the participants involved in the exchange. Habermas believed perlocutionary speech acts are success-orientated, resulting in action by threats and sanctions to enable the strategic objectives of the speaker to be met (*ibid*). This is in contrast to the illocutionary speech act, which involves interpersonal engagement, through which the participants come to an understanding with one another (Habermas 1984). However, this could only be achieved if the hearer is able to seek reasons or explanations for the utterance thereby entering

into a dialogue. It is the dialogic process of illocutionary speech acts on which Habermas built his theory of Communicative Action, which he defines as:

> '*the concept of communicative action refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech acts and action who establish their interpersonal relations [whether by verbal or extra-verbal means]. The actors seek to reach understanding about the action situation and their plans for action in order to co-ordinate actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation, which admit of consensus'* (Habermas 1984 pg.86).

There are a number of stipulations in Habermas' definition above. To ensure successful interaction, it presumes both participants have an active role and are able to reach an understanding through negotiation. It also assumes genuine agreement, rather than '*pseudo-consensus'* as argued by Van den Berg (1990 pg. 186).

Thomassen (2010) explains the illocutionary speech act must be transparent and only works if the hearer understands the intention, so without mutual understanding, communication can break down. Habermas' theory is based on the analysis of serious speech acts, which Thomassen (*ibid*) argues is a limitation as it excludes the use of humorous and aesthetic language. Thomassen adds the theory focuses on the problem-solving function of language and overlooks its wider use.

2.3.2 (ii) Validity Claims

As a social theorist, Habermas viewed humans as communicative beings (Edgar 2006). Through the process of making utterances (statements, questions or accusations), Habermas argued the speaker raises three validity claims. These are:

- The claim to truth
- The claim to rightness
- The claim to truthfulness or authenticity

The claim to truth is a claim that an utterance by the speaker is true, genuine and has credibility. The claim to rightness refers to the speaker's legitimate right to make this utterance. The claim to truthfulness/authenticity is the purpose of making the utterance (Thomassen 2010, Eriksen and Weigard 2003). Habermas argued the utterance can be rejected when any one of the validity claims are not satisfied (Habermas 1984). This may be influenced by the experience, knowledge or the intention of the person making the claim and whether this is recognised and accepted by the hearer. The hearer may accept the claim if they make the same judgement themselves. Applying these validity

claims to the function of teachers providing feedback to students, it can be demonstrated:

- The claim to truth: the teacher makes a comment to the student. The student may reject the comment if they believe the teacher has no authority or credibility to make it;
- The claim to rightness: the teacher makes a comment to the student. The student may reject the comment if they believe the teacher's intentions are not genuinely focused on helping the student;
- The claim to truthfulness/authenticity: the teacher makes a comment. The student may reject the comment because they have decided it is not in their own best interest to accept it.

It could be assumed as the teacher's role is to support student learning, they can claim their desire to help the student is genuine, they have credibility and the right to make the comments. However, the student's perception of the teacher and their comment can be rejected based on any of the three validity claims.

Habermas (1984) argued it is this through the challenge of validity claims that a shared understanding is achieved between the two subjects. He refers to this as a process of argumentation in which validity claims can be contested, criticised or vindicated. He explained '*argumentation has its aim to produce cogent arguments that are convincing in virtue of their intrinsic properties and with which validity claims can be redeemed or rejected'* (Habermas 1984 pg. 25). It is through argumentation, that Habermas believed a mutual understanding between the speaker and hearer could be achieved which the process of Communicative Action and provides a mechanism for correcting misunderstandings, negotiating and agreeing resultant actions. He referred to this as formal pragmatics. It assumes both parties can enter into such a dialogue and have equal power and linguistic capital to be able to do so. Although Habermas claimed argumentation plays an important part of the learning process, in an education context, teachers and pupils are unlikely to have equal power and few opportunities to engage in such an open dialogic exchange. However, Dann (2016) provides a compelling argument that such a process would be very helpful in enabling the pupil to explain their views and priorities with regards to their learning and for the teacher to gain a useful insight into the pupil's perspective and adjust their approach accordingly.

Habermas' process of argumentation also assumes that language and meanings are transparent, but Thomassen (2010) highlighted critique by Derrida who argued language is inherently opaque. Coles (1995) also argued understanding can become skewed or limited by the pressure of everyday communication and speech, as well as by a power

imbalance between the participants. Moreover, the hearer may not have language skills or vocabulary sufficient to engage in such a dialogue (Arnot and Reay 2007). Erikson and Weigard (2003) explained another weakness in Habermas' assumption is that a shared understanding can be achieved. If the recipient does not challenge the message it may be assumed by the hearer that they are in agreement. Despite these criticisms of Habermas' theory, Dryzek (1995) claims Habermas' ideas can be used to reveal the influence of power on dialogue and outcomes.

2.3.2 (iii) Lifeworld

In his second volume on the Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas reflected on factors that influence the communication process. He referred to these as the lifeworld which is a sub-system of a wider social system. The lifeworld is the framework of individuals' lives. Habermas (1987) claimed when people interpret the world they do so on the basis of pre-conceived convictions which are supplied by the lifeworld (their previous experiences and contexts). He identifies the lifeworld as a set of interpretive patterns that are culturally transmitted and linguistically organised. This can be interpreted as the lifeworld being influenced by the individuals' cultural capital and verbalised in a way that represents this. The experience and language the individual is exposed to can determine how they interpret information and communicate with others. Thus, the lifeworld, formed by cultural capital, can influence the individual's perception of the situation, and can cause other people's actions to either make sense, or not (Edgar 2006).

The lifeworld is formed from different structural components: culture, society and personality and is reproduced through the process of communication and language (Habermas 1987). In an education context, the students' lifeworld can be influenced by previous experiences of learning, assessment and feedback, both positive and negative (Dann 2016). The cultural capital formed by experiences, aspirations and backgrounds of the students can determine how they value learning and regard the feedback they receive from teachers. The lifeworld of the teacher will also affect their interpretation of the situation and dialogue they have with the student. Stereotypes and pre-conceived perceptions of students could influence the way teachers communicate. In the communicative process of feedback, the learner's lifeworld would be formed from their own priorities in learning, which will be influenced by family expectations, aspirations and background. It will also be formed by their previous or current experiences in education, which may be positive or negative. They may also be influenced by their peers' behaviour and attitudes towards education. Thus, they can be influenced by their culture, their personality and learning society which form the lifeworld of the learner and can in turn influence how they regard and respond to feedback. The teacher's lifeworld

will be influenced by their own experiences of learning, their perception of the learner formed form prior encounters with them, which may be positive or negative, and the expectation they have of the learner. They will also be influenced by objective factors, which will be external frameworks such as the national curriculum and internal targets. These aspects will all influence the way the teacher constructs feedback and the manner in which they communicate with the learner. This can further influence the learner's lifeworld and shape the way they engage with feedback. A process of argumentation and negotiation could explore existing assumptions and behaviours and achieve a better understanding of learner needs and teacher's intentions.

Habermas refers to 'a system' as external drivers, which steer communication through threat, punishment or goals. This can be financial or power goals which dominate the discourse due to the overriding dominance they have. The system can colonise a lifeworld when mutual understanding is substituted by instrumental and strategic orientation towards externally driven success (Thomassen 2010). In education, external drivers from national targets for progress and attainment and evidence for an inspection body can dominate the lifeworld of teachers by shaping the practice of learning in the classroom (Dann 2016). The pressure of schools to achieve certain targets to avoid threat of inspection or repercussions of a low position on a league table can lead to a target-driven culture, which dominates the lifeworld of the teacher or organisation. This can influence the language used and nature of communication. However, Habermas (1987) argues it is not the driver that leads to colonisation but the application of it to the lifeworld. In this context, he would argue the teacher, whilst acknowledging the external drivers, should not let these dominate the dialogue which should focus on student learning rather than the achievement of external goals. With this focus, learning is the centre of the communication, but as a consequence the external targets may be achieved. This would recognise and acknowledge the system, but not in a way that it colonises the lifeworld.

2.4 Summary and Application of the Theoretical Framework

Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action is complex and contained in two large volumes. Some of the key aspects have been captured here and been applied to the process of learning, assessment and feedback. Habermas' aim for communication to lead to a mutual understanding, rather than a strategic one will be used in the analysis of the feedback process explored in this research. His ideas about the individual's lifeworld and its influence provides a framework for reflecting on students' experiences, the central aim of this research. Dann (2016) provided a theoretical approach to the application of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action in understanding pupil feedback. This research builds on Dann's ideas by using Habermas' theory along with further empirical

research to analyse data to achieve a detailed understanding of communication in the process of providing, receiving and using feedback.

Chapter Three: Research Field: A Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This literature review discusses the role of assessment in education and examines how it can influence learning, assessment and feedback in the classroom. The review predominantly draws on literature published since the Education Reform Act in 1988, which introduced changes to the UK education system by revising the school structure, curriculum and accountability of assessment. Whilst the research undertaken in countries other than the UK is included, their cultural context has been considered. Although literature on primary, further and higher education has been included, the predominant focus is on secondary education (ages eleven to sixteen).

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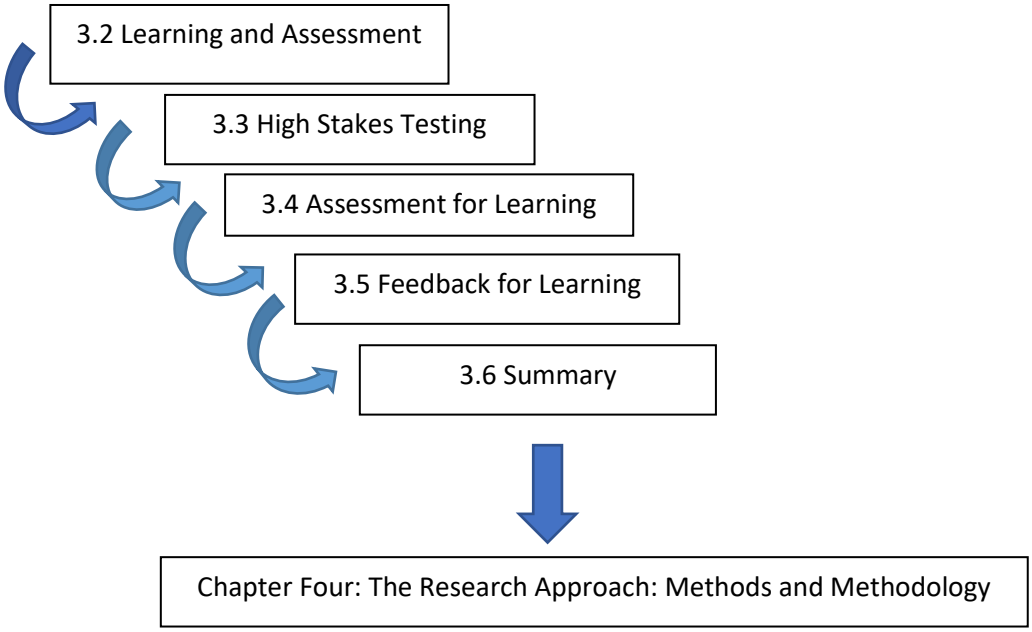

The review explores how success has been measured from the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1988 to the Progress 8 measure implemented in secondary schools in England in 2016. It examines current debates on formative assessment and assessment for learning, investigating the impact of such approaches in the classroom. It critically reviews a range of UK and international research to explore assessment and resultant strategies introduced with the aim of improving student learning. The review draws on the research of Black *et al* (2003) in the King's Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP), which was influential in changing dialogue and interactions in classrooms across the UK. It explores the importance of feedback in closing the gap on student learning (Sadler 1989) and debates why it does not always result in improving learning; moreover, can have a harmful effect (Gamlem and Smith 2013, Torrance 2012, Kluger and DeNisi 1996). The

review expounds research which has claimed effective feedback practice and concludes with an exploration of factors affecting the process of providing and receiving feedback. Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action is used to explore and discuss the findings presented in the literature.

3.2 Learning and Assessment

This section presents and debates the current views about the way assessment fits within or dominates a learning culture. It explores the role of learning and assessment, examining conflict and tension between the two.

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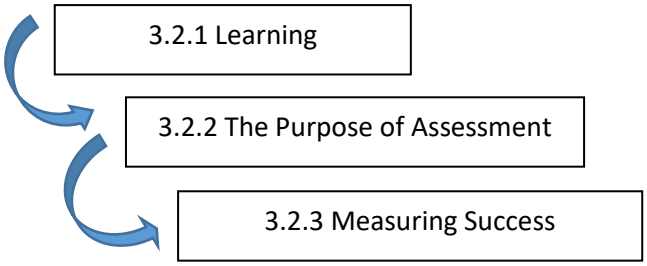


3.2.1 Learning

Learning has been described as a process that involves the active intellectual engagement of a person, through the construction of meaning by linking new knowledge with previous understanding (Hall and Burke 2003, Shephard 2000,). This builds on the ideas of Vygostsky (1978) who proposed a socio-constructivist approach to learning, occurring as an interaction with the social environment. His theory has been well documented and continues to form the basis of many pedagogical approaches, so it was considered to be a suitable concept of learning for this project. Bruner (1996) developed Vygotsky's theory further by considering the impact culture has on learning, explaining how this is formed by people's history and experiences which shapes their perceptions and efforts. He concluded that learning is not located in a vacuum or independent of the environment but is a result *of* the environment. Bruner's ideas demonstrate the impact of a lifeworld which Habermas (1987) argued influences how people perceive things. Clarke (2011) applied Bruner's ideas by explaining students need to have opportunities to learn through discussion and co-operation. This allows learners to make sense of situations themselves, guided by the teacher to organise their knowledge (Hall and Burke 2003). This guidance can take the form of feedback to learners. Clarke (2011) claimed it is through assessment that learners receive feedback to build their skills and knowledge. Furthermore, Ellison (2017) stated, when assessment is placed at the heart of teaching and learning it enables students and teachers to identify strengths and next steps in the development of learning. He suggested that assessment should be part of,

and contribute to, a learning process. The next section of this review will explore this position by examining how policy makers perceive the role of assessment and can influence classroom practice.

3.2.2 The Purpose of Assessment

Assessment is the measurement of a learner's potential for, or their actual attainment (Wallace 2015). The Assessment Reform Group[1] (ARG), initially established by the British Educational Research Association in 1988 aimed to improve assessment practices in the classroom by ensuring assessment policy took research evidence into account. It worked with teachers, organisations and local education authorities to improve the understanding of the purpose and impact of assessment in practice and sought to influence policy-makers in government (Nuffield Foundation 2017). The belief of the ARG was that learning should be the focus of education, with assessment a part of it, rather than driving it: '*assessment is our focus, but learning is the goal*' (Gardner 2006 pg.2). However, it can be argued that through successive government policies, the role of assessment has moved to a focus on performance measurement that is not in alignment with the aims of the ARG. A particularly contested area is the influence of national testing on school practice. The first statutory National Curriculum[2] was introduced in England and Wales in 1988 through the Education Reform Act, along with a system of national assessments which measured pupils' attainment of National Curriculum objectives against 10 prescribed levels at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. The first three were known as Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), the final one being the General Certificate of Secondary Education[3] (GCSE). National testing was introduced to directly control what was taught in the classroom, how it was taught and to measure whether it was taught effectively (Torrance 2011). The results of national tests and progress made by pupils in state-funded secondary schools were first published by the national press in league tables in 1992. The espoused purpose of the league tables was to provide information for parents on the performance of schools to support decision-making and choice in the education of their child, however, it led to the image of 'good' and 'bad' schools in the national press (Ball 2013).

Currently, pupils are formally assessed by the ages of 5, 6, 7, 11 and 16. This is through a combination of teacher assessment and national tests (Gov.UK 2017). The government claim the tests are to measure pupil progress and help teachers to identify where additional support is required, as well as measuring school performance and providing

1 Assessment Reform Group was dissolved in 2010
2 The National Curriculum is a set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools, so children learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught and the standards children should reach in each subject
3 General Certificate of Secondary Education are tests taken by pupils at the end of their compulsory education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, usually at age 16

national data in this respect (Gov.UK 2018). Goldstein (2017) described the use of league tables as a form of social control, which, he claimed was detrimental to educational processes.

The importance and public facing data on assessment can lead schools to adopt a measurement/outcomes focused strategy, which can drive teacher and student behaviour (Baird *et al* 2017). As the outcomes of national tests will determine the position of the school on a league table and influence opinions made about the quality of the education provision, teachers may focus on assessment outcomes, and subsequently drive a similar focus in students. This is an example of a system colonising the lifeworld, as it could influence the dialogic exchange and practice in a classroom, with a focus on performance in assessment rather than learning (Habermas 1987, Dann 2016). This was illustrated in research undertaken by Hargreaves in 2005 when she surveyed 83 teachers and head teachers to explore their perceptions of 'assessment for learning', of 'assessment'; and of 'learning'. Hargreaves classified the responses into six themes and summarised them in two models of assessment:

- a measurement/objectives model which focused on learning as attaining objectives; and
- a constructivist or co-constructivist model where learning focuses on pupils building on their own experience either individually or as part of a group or community.

Teacher view of assessment	Assessment model
monitoring pupils' performance against targets or objectives	measurement/objectives
using assessment to inform next steps in teaching and learning	measurement/objectives
teachers giving feedback for improvement	measurement/objectives
teachers learning about children's learning	constructivist or co-constructivist
children taking some control of their own learning and assessment	measurement/objectives
turning assessment into a learning event	constructivist or co-constructivist

Table 1: Hargreaves' classification of teachers' view of assessment (2005)

Hargreaves claimed a constructivist/co-constructivist model required a teacher to use assessment to find out about students' understanding, although it could be argued this is also achieved through some of the approaches she classified as a measurement/objectives model. Elwood and Murphy (2015) agreed with Hargreaves'

view, adding a constructivist approach enabled the learning to belong to the individual with assessment tasks seeking to clarify understanding and allowed students to acquire new knowledge. Hargreaves (2005) found teachers believed the measurement/objectives model was dominant in the schools, regardless of whether it was the best for pupils. However, teachers' views of assessment could be classified in another way than those given by Hargreaves in Table 1 and such the outcomes would be different. Hargreaves also questioned the terminology used by teachers which implied 'steps' in learning, which she suggested implied a linear, step-by-step process. The similarity to the National Curriculum and assessments in England, which are presented in ascending levels, was noted. She concluded the National Curriculum and assessments, as a system, have influenced the teachers' use of terminology. This could be considered to be clear example of an assessment system influencing the communication and language of teachers (Habermas 1987).

Black (1993) reviewed literature on assessment in schools and claimed he found evidence via a telephone survey of 91 participants, that teachers believed focusing on the national science assessment test for 14-year olds prepared pupils and enhanced their success. This survey was undertaken shortly after the introduction of national testing and highlights the impact of national assessments in shaping teacher behaviour. These concerns have since been expressed in 2011 by Bennett and in 2017 by Baird *et al* and are discussed in more depth in section 3.3. Black's (1993) findings indicate the presence of the national tests, although changed over time, have played an influential role in the education of young people. Black (1993) referred to Crooks' (1988 in Black 1993) research in which he contrasted the positive effects of good assessment with the way it could lead to rote and superficial learning, placing an emphasis on grades. Black argued this focus could lead some pupils to believe they are of low ability and reduce their confidence and motivation.

As well as national testing in England, there are also a number of international assessments. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is undertaken every three years by surveying 15-year olds in participating countries, testing their skills in mathematics, science and reading literacy. The last cycle of testing was undertaken in 2018, which was the seventh cycle. Seventy-nine countries and economies participated in the internationally agreed test. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), administer the test which compares how different countries' school systems prepare young people for life (OECD 2018). They advocate that countries and economies can compare the results to inform and assess the impact of education policy decisions (OECD 2017). Goldstein (2017) disputed the use of PISA in forming national policy as he claimed it is cross-sectional and therefore

unsuitable for drawing causal conclusions. Wiliam (2017) agreed, adding that some jurisdictions which partake in PISA do not score well in it, but do get higher scores in other international assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). These two studies collect data about contextual factors that affect learning (TIMSS & PIRLS 2016) which PISA does not. Wiliam claimed the variance in performance in jurisdictions makes it difficult to draw conclusions about their significance and warns against using such data to inform education policy. He agreed with Baird *et al's* (2017) comments that policy-makers rarely understand the context of the tests from whose data they use to make decisions, and do not appreciate the effects on learning that changing a policy will have. Hopfenbeck (2016) also warned data has the potential for misuse and the limitations must be made clear to policy-makers and the public.

Elwood and Murphy (2015) argued assessment scores should not be considered without reference to the assessment, the way in which it was designed, or how learners are prepared for it. Assessment scores, they claimed, are subjective, and a result of the social, cultural and historical experiences of the teachers and students, so should not be treated as objective data. This brings into question the value of using abstract data from national assessments and international tests, such as PISA, to shape education policy.

Stiggins (2006 pg.4) argued assessment must go beyond '*merely providing scores and corresponding judgements about learning*' It should provide information about achievement and inform students how to improve. Single scores or grades, or an assessment that has a negative impact on students, Stiggins argued, does not have value. He stated, through their design, assessment practices that '*permit, even encourage, some students to give up on learning must be replaced by those that engender hope and sustained effort for all students'* (pg.14). The challenge with assessment that Stiggins identified is it needs to serve a number of purposes by providing information to the student, the teacher, the parent, the leadership team of the school, the local community and to policy-makers (the government or inspection bodies). He argued no single assessment is capable of meeting the needs of all these users. Similarly, Wright (2017) described the role of assessment as providing information to the students, to correct errors, to celebrate talent and success, to gather information about the student which may be shared with others, and to improve learning. The multi-faceted purpose of assessment is again reflected in these arguments, which supports Goldstein (2017) and Baird *et al* (2017)'s position about how assessment data is used.

Elwood (2013) examined a case study in Northern Ireland where assessments were used as a process of academic selection at age 11 to determine school placement. Two different assessment papers were available, depending on whether the school was

Catholic or Protestant. The Catholic school test was pre-dominantly multiple-choice, whilst the Protestant school test required longer answers. Elwood's data indicated boys were more likely to perform better in the multiple-choice test and girls better in the other paper. She, therefore, concluded that a student may be disadvantaged in an assessment due to their preferred way of undertaking tests. Elwood goes further than Stiggins' (2006) claim of a low-quality assessment and questioned the ethics and whether the rights of a child are met when there are inequalities in assessment systems, which can determine academic direction.

Black *et al* (2011) researched how effective national assessments were when used to support learning in the classroom. This was undertaken in a longitudinal study over 2½ years involving 18 teachers in three secondary schools in Oxfordshire. The project, King's Oxfordshire Summative Assessment Project (KOSAP) found a focus by school management and parents on external testing resulted in teachers prioritising these even if they believed it lowered their teaching quality. Teachers who used standard tests, such as past GCSE papers, rather than developing their own assessments did not use a constructive approach to learning. A number of tasks were beyond the reach of some students, who were, consequently, unable to produce work of any merit, whilst the ceiling was too low for others, and their learning was not stretched. Black *et al* (2011) concluded an over-reliance of summative assessments could lead to a focus on performance rather than learning. In this case, they believed, the use of ready-made assessment tasks and mark schemes separated curriculum understanding from assessment and did not guide student learning or encourage teachers to develop skills in designing their own tests.

DeLisle (2015) evaluated the effect of formative assessment on a continuous assessment programme in Trinidad and Tobago. The continuous assessment programme is an externally driven curriculum-based assessment scheme used for both formative and summative assessment purposes. It is national policy in several former colonial countries, established at a national level but implemented locally. This scheme was evaluated to explore how continuous assessment supported teachers in ensuring learning deficits were recognised and addressed. Similar to Black *et al* (2011), DeLisle found teachers focused on summative assessment to the detriment of formative. Overall there was sporadic use of formative assessment, with the best examples seen in high achieving schools with strong management and leadership. Teachers reported a lack of understanding of the continuous assessment scheme, which DeLisle suggested was because they had trained after the launch of the scheme and it had not been adequately included in teacher development programmes. Most of the teachers who contributed to the evaluation adopted an assessor role by recording performance rather than a

facilitator role, which would have used the data on performance to improve learning and teaching. These findings suggest these teachers did not understand the role of assessment and opportunities to use the outcomes to improve learning were not realised. The Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago have an assessment framework for a Secondary Entrance Exam to prepare pupils transitioning from primary to secondary education (The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2017). This approach could have influenced the culture of learning in the country and affect teacher attitudes both in primary and secondary education.

Baird *et al* (2017 pg.328) expressed a concern that '*assessment and learning theories are fields apart*'. They claimed theories of assessment are not aligned with theories of learning so there needs to be a better understanding of the relationship between the two. Goldstein (2017) agreed an assessment tool should reflect what is intended to be measured and what has been learned, but disputes assessment needs its own theories, instead assessment measures should be based on current learning theory. This concurs with Black's (2015) view that assessment should sit within an overall framework of pedagogy.

The purpose of assessment has been difficult to specifically define due to the variety of ways assessment and data are utilised both locally and nationally. However, for the purpose of this research, I use the definition of assessment provided by Harlen (2007 pg. 12) '*the process of collecting evidence and making judgements relating to outcomes, such as students' achievements of particular goals of learning'*. The next section will discuss the ways national assessment policy is implemented in schools.

3.2.3 Measuring 'success'

School assessment processes are determined by external bodies and implemented through school policy. Whilst teachers may have control of how assessments are administered in their classroom, these are shaped by national requirements, measures and expectations and hence influence teaching and learning (Hallam and Ireson 1999). Torrance (2011) claimed a variety of assessment types from traditional exams to practical work, coursework and projects are needed as a range of skills are required in the workplace. Assessment systems are also influenced by the political and economic context in which they are located, which in turn are influenced by the social and cultural beliefs of the policy makers (Elwood and Murphy 2015, Torrance 2011). This has led to assessment providers regularly interpreting Government assessment policy with teachers and students navigating the changing demands (Elwood 2013).

Student performance at GCSE in secondary schools has floor targets against which a school is judged. Since 1992, this focused on the benchmark of students achieving five

GCSEs at grade C or above, and since 2006, included English and Maths. If a school fell below the floor target, it triggered investigation and scrutiny by the school inspectorate, OfSTED[4]. The importance of achieving this target could lead schools to focus on improving performance of students who were just below the benchmark, potentially at the detriment to other students (Leckie and Goldstein 2017). The pressure for a school to maintain its performance and position within a league table could perpetuate this strategy. In 2016, a new measure of assessing school performance in English secondary education was implemented. This is the Progress 8 (P8) and Attainment 8 (A8) measure. Referred to as Progress 8, the aim is to capture progress that a pupil makes from the end of primary school in key stage[5] 2 (KS2) to the end of key stage 4 (KS4) in English, Maths and six further approved subjects. The P8 score is calculated through a number of stages:

- Pupils are initially grouped based on their prior attainment at KS2 (determined by outcomes of the SATs at age 11) to indicate similar starting points.
- The attainment (A8) is then measured by scoring achievement in GCSEs and compared with the national average result of those in a similar attainment group. English and maths have double-weighting in the calculation.
- A P8 score is established for each pupil. This is the difference between their A8 score and the average result of those in their prior attainment grouping.
- The school P8 score is calculated by adding together all the P8 scores of the pupils in year 11 divided by the number of pupils in the school.

A score of 0 indicates the pupils in KS4 in the school perform, on average, as well as those with similar prior attainment nationally. A positive score indicates pupils at the school do better at KS4 than those with similar attainment nationally, and a negative P8 score means pupils do worse.

(Department for Education 2016a)

This enables students' progress (or value added) to be measured, rather than just their performance at GSCE. The Department for Education (DfE) (2017 pg.5) stated '*every increase in every grade a pupil achieves will attract additional points in the performance tables*'. Whilst the emphasis on progress might be seen as a positive focus on learning rather than performance, this statement reinforces the focus of league tables, appearing to place the importance of assessment on measurement and objectives. Leckie and Goldstein (2017) argued as the P8 measurement focuses just on academic progress from

[4] OfSTED is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

[5] Key stage 1 and 2 are the primary years of schooling. Key stage 3 is the first three years of secondary school: years 7, 8 and 9. Key stage 4 is the final two years of secondary school: years 10 and 11, which incorporates GCSEs

the end of KS2 to the end of KS4, it does not take into account the possible impact of the socioeconomic background of the pupils and demographic characteristics of the school. Consequently, the P8 could penalise schools in disadvantaged communities and reward those in advantaged areas. In 2010, the DfE stated to adjust for such characteristics would be to expect different levels of progress from pupils based on their background or family circumstances, which they believed to be '*morally wrong*' (Department for Education 2010 pg. 68). The DfE argued a previous measure of school performance, contextual value added, used from 2006 to 2010 made adjustments for school and pupil circumstances. This led to an acceptance that economically disadvantaged pupils made less progress than their more advantaged peers, rather than '*expecting every child to succeed and measure schools on how much value they add for all pupils*' (Department for Education 2010 pg. 68). The complexity and debate about the use of student progress and attainment in national tests highlights Elwood and Murphy's (2015) position that the use of assessment scores for a purpose for which the assessment was not designed, is at odds with the initial intention of that assessment. Wiliam (2013) captured this tension as he explained that by the time assessments have been graded, discussed and analysed, they do not reflect the current picture as teaching will have moved on. He makes the point like Goldstein (2017), Baird *et al* (2017) and Hopfenbeck (2016) that data-driven decisions are not always helpful.

3.3 Assessment and the tension with high stakes testing

This section will discuss the relationship between assessment and learning and the impact on classroom practice.

Format of section:

Assessment and high stakes testing

Over 30 years of education policy reform there has been a shift in assessment as a mechanism which identified individual achievement leading to selection and certification, towards one where the ambition is education for all (Torrance 2012). The role of schools to enable all students to become successful, competent learners has changed from a previous acceptance of high and low achievers (Stiggins 2006). The driver to improve education was a loss of unskilled production in the UK and the need for better skilled people to support the economy (Torrance 2012). The introduction of testing regimes and league tables placed assessment at the heart of the curriculum rather than sitting beside it (Swaffield 2011) with student performance on tests being used a measure of school quality (Popham 2014). Ball (2016 pg. 299) described the impact of this quantitative

measure '*Numbers define our worth, measure our effectiveness and, in a myriad of other ways, work to inform or construct what we are today*'. Harlen (2007) argued the creation of national curriculum sub-levels in 1988 resulted in a move away from what was known about how students learn and their development of skills and ideas, to a system that involved frequent checks on their progress. In 2014, the DfE removed the requirement for schools to use national curriculum levels to '*allow teachers greater flexibility in the way that they plan and assess pupils' learning*' (Department for Education 2014 pg 2). This may have been a response to claims that assigning a grade or level of performance can be restrictive in supporting student learning (Black *et al* 2003, Black and Wiliam 1998a) and to give teachers greater autonomy. The Commission on Assessment without Levels was set up to provide support and advice to schools in the development of their own in-school assessment processes. In a report, the Commission claimed national assessment levels, which were only intended to be used for national statutory tests were being used too frequently for in-school assessment, distorting the purpose of daily formative assessment (McIntosh 2015). McIntosh claimed the levels had been used in the past as a best fit model, meaning that the level in which a student was placed did not necessarily represent their attainment and could mask gaps in their knowledge, having a negative impact on learning. A report in 2018 based on qualitative research in 42 primary and secondary schools claimed the removal of National Curriculum levels has resulted in an increase in formative assessment, which has enabled teachers to review planning, differentiate activities and provide more effective support to students. However, it was noted the lack of national assessments undermined teachers' confidence (Poet *et al* 2018).

James (2006) claimed teachers' assessment practice was influenced by external assessment due to the power it had on school performance measurement. Classroom instruction and formative assessment can become aligned to external testing, limiting the opportunity for deeper engagement (Bennett 2011). This is described as the backwash of high-stakes testing, where the assessment drives teaching and learning, leading to superficial learning of disconnected knowledge rather than a broad and deep understanding (Baird *et al* 2017). It is not only teachers whose behaviour and priorities can be affected by high-stakes testing. Through interviewing 81 students on their preparation for the Irish Leaving Certificate, Elwood *et al* (2017) found students took a strategic approach to their learning and test preparation, narrowing the curriculum themselves due to the high stakes involved in the exams. Students claimed the predictability of the tests were helpful in enabling them to develop confidence and skills through regular practice of past papers. They disputed the predictability lessened the validity of the tests, but it was recognised it did influence student learning and behaviour.

The perceived importance of national tests for the institution and individual life chances as well as the transparency of criterion-referenced assessment allows more opportunity for practice, coaching and targeted feedback and can result in rising performance (Torrance 2011). Shephard (2000) explains high-stakes testing can result in student scores increasing without a corresponding improvement in their learning. Torrance (2011) and Sloane and Kelly (2003) believed teaching to the test was the most likely reason for this but highlight the increase can tail off as teachers and students become effective in performing in the assessment.

High-stakes testing in the Republic of Korea leads families to spend vast amount of money on additional private education and tutoring (Kwon *et al* 2017). They suggested the reliance on high-stakes testing should be reduced in favour of an assessment system that supports students in developing their talents. Similarly, a study in the US of 1947 students preparing for a college entry test revealed that the more affluent the student, the more expensive forms of test preparation could be used (Appelrouth *et al* 2017). Although not UK studies and the outcomes could be subject to cultural differences, this research demonstrates how high stakes testing can lead to a financial investment in learners enabling them to increase their chances of success. This can lead to a disadvantage for learners who do not have such a financial capital.

League tables were abolished in Wales in 2001, along with testing in KS2 and KS3. When examining performance at GCSE for the period 2007-2011, Welsh students compared less favourably than English students where the league tables had remained (Goldstein and Leckie 2016). Goldstein and Leckie concluded it was not the abolition of league tables that caused this decline in the performance of students in Wales, but the lack of preparation for assessments due to the removal of national testing earlier in the students' education. In England, the league tables may have acted as an incentive to undertake earlier testing, but did not, in itself, improve student attainment. Similar to the findings of Elwood *et al* (2017) on student approaches to assessment, Goldstein and Leckie concluded testing can build students skills and confidence in preparation for assessments which can determine their future career or education pathway. However, the impact of high-stakes testing on student well-being and the shaping of classroom practice needs to be considered.

This section highlights the public facing aspect of assessment, how the data is used to measure attainment, to monitor and regulate learning through the setting of standards and targets in education policy. There remains tension between the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning and to make a judgement on performance against a set of standards. In the public domain, the purpose of assessment is to measure learning at both local and international levels. Popham (2014) and Harrison (2011) argued teachers

should never assess their students without knowing the purpose of the assessment and how the results will inform the decisions they make about their pupils' learning, however as discussed, government policy drives the assessment practice in schools. This was reflected in the Report of the Assessment Review Group[6] that stated '*somehow, this core purpose* [of assessment] *has become distorted*' (Ellison 2017 pg. 2). The Assessment Review Group was established in May 2016 with an aim to review the current system of assessment in England and identify a better alternative. They set out six guiding principles:

- Assessment is at the heart of good teaching and learning;
- Statutory assessment should be separated from ongoing assessment that happens in the classroom;
- Data from statutory assessment will never tell you the whole story of school effectiveness;
- The statutory assessment system should be accessible to pupils of all abilities and recognise their progress;
- Progress should be valued over attainment in statutory assessment;
- The number of statutory assessments in the primary phase should be minimised.

(Assessment Review Group 2017)

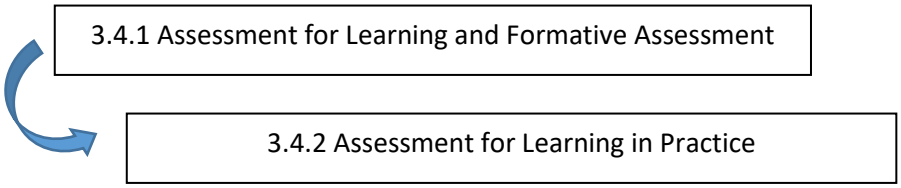
The report identified a number of strategies that could move the focus of assessment from a measure of performance to one that supports learning. These include using data to develop an understanding of what lies behind performance, to reduce formal assessment, particularly in the early years, and to re-design assessment so it explores pupils' progress rather than demonstrating test technique. These views echo those of Popham (2014) who argued the main function of assessment should be to improve the quality of educational decision-making and information on student performance used to improve learning in the classroom. This process is known as *assessment for learning*, which has been defined as an assessment which promotes students' learning as its main purpose, rather than as accountability, ranking or certification of competence (Black *et al* 2004).

[6] The Assessment Review Group was an independent group established in 2016 by the National Association of Head Teachers. It consulted experienced practitioners, leading academics and experts on assessment.

3.4 Assessment for Learning

This section will examine assessment for learning and formative assessment and will critically discuss the impact of these approaches.

Format of Section



A distinction between formative and summative processes was first made by Scriven in 1967 (Black 2006). He identified a summative process as one which would take place at the end of learning to serve as a test of student knowledge. It is followed by the award of a nationally recognised certificate and, more recently, the outcomes used to position an educational institute on a league table. Irons (2008) described this as a judgement of learning. A formative process occurs when the learning is forming (Bloom 1984) and can be used to determine how effectively learning is taking place, allowing adjustments to be made for improvement (Black 2006). This is in contrast to summing up (summative) student learning at the end of the process (Wallace 2015). Formative assessment is also referred to as *Assessment of Learning*. Popham (2014), pointed out Scriven's distinction between formative and summative was in relation to evaluation rather than assessment. Evaluation involves using evidence to measure the effectiveness of a lesson, course or programme of study rather than just learning or attainment (Wallace 2015). However, this distinction between formative and summative assessment still remains and continues to be used in current educational terminology.

Black and Wiliam (1998a) explained formative assessment does not have a precise definition but a widely accepted meaning. Irons (2008) argued the benefits of formative assessment is that it can enable students to think about their learning, try things out, learn from mistakes and discuss aspects they do not understand. Harlen and James (1997) argued although formative assessment should be criterion referenced to the learning goal, it should also be student referenced to take into account the individual's learning and context. Formative assessment can also comprise formal assessments over time, contributing to a final assessment, although Gardner (2006) disputed this approach supported the student learning process.

3.4.1 The relationship between formative assessment and assessment for learning

The term *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) came into use in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gardner 2006). It was considered to be a new concept which could be used to help students take the next steps in their learning, and was described as:

> *'The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'*. (ARG 2002 [np])

Torrance (2012) criticised this definition, claiming it was too focused on tests and not sufficiently on classroom practice. He refered to a definition given by Klenoswski as

> '*assessment for learning is part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning*' (Klenowski 2009 pg.264).

The ARG summarised ten principles that characterise AfL. They stated it should:

- form part of the planning;
- focus on how students learn;
- be central to classroom practice;
- be a key professional skill;
- be sensitive and constructive;
- foster motivation;
- promote understanding of goals and criteria;
- help learners know how to improve;
- develop the capacity for self-assessment;
- recognise all educational achievement

(Gardner 2006).

If the principles of AfL identified by the ARG are used, then formative assessment that is used by the teacher alone, cannot be considered to be AfL because it fails to place learners at the centre of the process, preventing them from deciding how to improve their own learning. Frey and Schmitt (2007) claimed the purpose of formative assessment identified in textbooks for education practitioners is focused on a process which informs the teacher about student learning but overlooks the role of the teacher in providing feedback to the student. They differentiated between performance assessment, authentic assessment, formative assessment and AfL as shown in the table below:

Purpose	Assessment Type
To measure a skill or ability	Performance assessment
To measure ability of tasks which represent real world problems	Authentic assessment
To provide feedback to the teacher to assess the quality of instruction or to improve teaching behaviours, or to provide feedback to the student to assess the quality of learning and to improve learning behaviours	Formative assessment
To provide feedback to students to assess the quality of learning and to improve learning behaviours	Assessment for Learning

Table 2: Defining Assessment Types Based on Purpose (Frey and Schmitt 2007 pg. 417)

From this representation, it can be seen that Frey and Schmitt identified AfL should be solely for the benefit of the student. Blanchard (2009) argued this is important as it enables students to become part of the assessment process. In this distinction between assessment type, Frey and Schmitt also identify the role feedback has in improving student learning.

Like Frey and Smitt (2007), Swaffield (2011) made clear distinctions between formative assessment and AfL. However, the distinction she placed is on the immediacy of benefit. She explained AfL is both a learning and teaching process which can impact on immediate and near future student learning. She argued it benefits teachers and enables students to exercise autonomy and agency of their own learning. It helps students to learn how to learn as well as identifying the intended goals. Formative assessment, on the other hand, can have a long-time span. It benefits teachers and students in the future rather than in the present. Through formative assessment, students can become passive recipients of teachers' decisions and it can influence curriculum objectives. Swaffield distinguished between the involvement of students in the process and creating student autonomy, which she argued occurs through AfL not formative assessment. Swaffield explained it is important to understand the difference between AfL and formative assessment to avoid the misuse of AfL. This, she claimed, was done in the creation of the English National Assessment for Learning Strategy in 2008, which linked AfL to testing and performance.

To gain a greater understanding of AfL in the classroom, Marshall and Drummond (2006) analysed 27 video recordings of lessons and subsequently undertook interviews with secondary school teachers. They identified when teachers incorporated AfL into their classroom, and also spoke about student autonomy and their responsibility to help and motivate them to learn. Teachers who did not incorporate the principles of AfL to the same extent appeared to have less belief they could change the classroom environment and placed the onus of readiness to learn on the student rather than recognising

teachers had any agency in this. Marshall and Drummond concluded way teachers organised their classroom environment was influenced by their understanding about learning and could be difficult to change. Furthermore, Hallam and Ireson (1999) suggested the self-efficacy of a teacher could have an effect on student performance. A teacher who feels positive about themselves and their ability will transfer this belief and confidence to their students. To help teachers become effective in supporting student learning may require a change in assessment practice and beliefs that learning is a fixed entity to an '*untapped potential*' (Black and Wiliam 1998b pg.8). This would entail teachers having a critical awareness of effective learning and their role in supporting students to develop (James 2006).

Harlen (2007) described formative assessment as feedback that indicates to students how to improve without comparison to their peers. She explained an effective model of formative feedback enables students to identify their learning goals and recognise good quality work. It also develops students to become effective in self-assessing their own performance and communicating their skills. Harlen claimed students should learn from a dialogue which can encourage student reflection of their learning. Habermas (1984) would describe this as the process of Communicative Action and would require the three validity claims (claim to truth, rightness and to authenticity) to be established for this dialogue to achieve mutual understanding and agreement. If the dialogue was strategic on the part of the teacher to persuade the student to perform in a certain way to meet their objectives, Habermas' theory would suggest it would be unlikely to be effective. However, Harlen (2007) claimed teachers valued open questioning and assessment practices which provided opportunities for students to assess their own learning and develop independence, suggesting the teachers would have a claim to authenticity rather than a strategic imperative. Harlen believed formative assessment should be close to the learning with evidence gathered during the learning process used to determine progress made towards learning goals and to regulate teaching. She did emphasise, however, that students can participate in and should be central to this process. This contrasts with other explanations of formative assessment, most recently by Baird *et al* (2017) who proposed AfL focuses on student regulation and autonomy, whereas formative assessment involves using a product, often test data, to inform practice.

Despite these claimed differences between formative assessment and AfL, the two terms are used interchangeably (Popham 2014). Bennett's (2011) view that AfL should be regarded as an approach rather than a framework, is a useful interpretation.

During the time the ARG was active, there was a range of research published in the practice of assessment, some of which is discussed below.

3.4.2 Assessment for Learning in practice

Black and Wiliam undertook an extensive literature review of 250 different publications on formative assessment. From this they identified 20 studies which showed substantial learning gains had been achieved when a variety of innovations involving formative assessment were incorporated, compared with control groups where such approaches were not used (Black and Wiliam 1998a). Black and Wiliam's review covered age groups from five-year olds to university students across several subjects and skills, such as mathematics, basic skills in the early years, science, language and involved a number of countries, including Portugal, USA, and Israel. Black and Wiliam concluded that formative assessment provided ways to enhance feedback between the teacher and learner, which required the implementation of new approaches and practice in the classroom. They also concluded that students must be actively involved in the process; the results of formative assessment should be used to adjust teaching and learning; and can affect the motivation and self-esteem of students. However, Dunn and Mulvenon (2009) argued these claims were based on a lack of empirical evidence that indicated marked changes in the classroom were a result of formative assessment and, moreover, there was insufficient evidence identifying best practice in these studies. Dwyer (1998) identified a limitation in Black and Wiliam's conclusions as they had not considered the same increase could have occurred through summative assessment. Hongli (2016) examined data in the US from the 2009 PISA and collected views from over 5000 students. It was concluded that formative assessment improved student learning in relation to reading achievement, possibly providing empirical evidence of Black and Wiliam's claims in 1998.

Black and Wiliam's work led to the publishing of an article 'Inside the Black Box' (1998b) and then a widely distributed pamphlet (Black and Wiliam 1998c) which clarified their position that formative assessment in the classroom could raise standards. It emphasised the importance of embedding formative assessment into the policy and practice of schools. They argued policy makers should recognise and value the importance of formative assessment in learning if they were committed to raising standards. It also made recommendations to school leaders, teacher-training providers and the school inspectorate, OfSTED. However, Black and Wiliam acknowledged changes to practice would be a slow process during which teachers would need time and support to plan, implement and reflect on new initiatives they introduced.

To explore the impact of formative assessment on student achievement in English, Maths and Science, Black *et al* (2003) carried out an empirical study involving six secondary schools in the Oxfordshire and Medway region. This formed a project called King's-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP). Teachers were supported

in the development of new strategies to facilitate AfL and created action plans in which they identified how they would embed AfL into their practice. The common themes incorporated were: questioning, comment-only marking, self-assessment, sharing objectives with students, and helping students understand marking criteria. During and after the project, Black *et al* (2003) interviewed the participating teachers, observed lessons, reviewed documentation of teacher development sessions and teachers' action plans. They obtained a statement from the participating schools reflecting their position regarding AfL, reviewed journals kept by the participating teachers, undertook a final reflective review with teachers involved in the project and carried out interviews with their students. Quantitative data on national tests (year 9 SATs and GCSEs) as well as school assessments were also used. The performance of pupils in these assessments were compared with a control group, such as a parallel group taught by the same teacher where these AfL strategies were not embedded. As a result of this research, Black *et al* (2003) observed a change of behaviour of the teachers who had revised their views on learning. Students also changed their perceptions of learning, leading to a transformation in classroom culture. In terms of tangible benefits, Black *et al* concluded when formative assessment and feedback mechanisms were used in the secondary school classroom, an increase in performance of students in year 9 SATs and GCSEs were achieved. They claimed these improvements were equivalent to one-quarter to one-half of a GSCE grade per student per subject.

Bennett (2011) questioned the reliability of these claims due to the way that differing student cohorts' performance was compared, which did not take into account other factors influencing the effectiveness of formative assessment. These include how students respond to feedback, the skills and knowledge of the teacher, and the complexities of measuring impact. In measuring effect sizes, Black *et al* (2003) considered the differing levels of expertise of the teachers but did not appear to acknowledge the possible intrinsic bias they might have had. The teachers may have expected a higher level of engagement and performance from a student cohort with whom AfL strategies had been used, compared with a parallel group in which these measures were not implemented. Other design weaknesses include the selection of the experimental group, which was not explained. A cohort who were considered to respond more favourably to new strategies may have been chosen in preference to another group. The current ability level was not discussed, it is not clear if the learning gains were obtained with all students involved or those who were performing at a higher, or lower level prior to the intervention. Moreover, Torrance (2012) argued the success of formative assessment cannot be determined by external measurements of achievement. Furthermore, he warned small successes cannot be easily scaled up, making the success of formative assessment difficult to measure. Taras (2009) claimed Black *et al's*

distinction between formative and summative assessment is confused in their report of the research impact. Nevertheless, the qualitative data that Black *et al* obtained provides a useful insight into the role of formative assessment strategies, how they have been used in the classroom and their possible ability to improve student performance (Hanover Research 2014).

One of the strategies introduced in KMOFAP, was comment only marking. This involved the teacher giving feedback comments to a student on their work, identifying how to improve it and providing an opportunity to create a dialogue. A numerical mark or grade was not given, as it was believed it did not provide information to improve the work and students focused on the grade alone without considering the comments. Black *et al* (2003) claimed this strategy supported student attainment, but when adopting this approach with year 7 students, Smith and Gorard (2005) reported where comment only marking was used, students performed worse than the groups where grades were provided. They concluded that comment only marking, in this case, had no positive impact and may have actually been harmful. The students in Smith and Gorard's study expressed concern about not getting grades and felt the comments were insufficient to provide them with information on how to improve. In Black *et al's* (2003) study, teachers using this approach found they had to reassess the work they had set the students and find an appropriate activity on which they could give useful comments. Further exploration into student views about grades and comments was undertaken by Peterson and Irving (2008) by interviewing secondary school children in New Zealand. They found students had a preference for receiving grades; comments only were considered to be unfair and even irrelevant feedback. Thus, it can be concluded the withdrawal of grades in favour of comments alone is insufficient to enhance learning if the comments are not reframed to provide meaningful and useful feedback to students.

Crossouard (2011) undertook research in two primary schools in Scotland to explore the impact of formative assessment task designs and teachers' skill in using them. Through the analysis of school policy and documentation, video analysis of teaching, and interviews with teachers and pupils, she concluded the design of the task and teachers' skill in using it had a powerful effect in the classroom. She also noted teachers' understanding of the assessment, the way criteria were discussed, and the comments provided by the teachers had an influence on learning behaviour. She concluded if the terminology used by teachers was authoritarian, it could result in *convergent assessment*, based on a judgement of performance against objectives. Crossouard identified this as a behaviourist model of learning. Conversely, if the terminology used encouraged a more equal engagement between teacher and student, this could lead to *divergent assessment*, which focuses more on an open and exploratory approach.

Crossouard argued teachers need to have an awareness of the power of the language they use and how it can shape student learning and behaviour.

Research has been undertaken to explore how AfL can be successfully embedded into practice. AfL was implemented on a wide scale across many of Sweden's municipalities in 2008. An evaluation in 2011/12, which included five upper secondary schools, was undertaken to report on the impact of AfL in practice (Jonsson *et al* 2015). It was found that teacher learning communities, which consisted of 8-12 teachers of the same subject, was used as a vehicle to bring about change in AfL practices. Jonsson *et al* reported these communities provided an increase in pedagogical discussion between the teachers, with the focus of these discussions changing from lesson content to student activity. There was also an increase in the conversations about the quality of student performance rather than output. Teachers reported they provided less feedback as a result of AfL, but of a higher quality that focused on feeding forward rather than looking back. There was also greater alignment between teaching, assessment and criteria, suggesting teachers' views of the purpose of assessment had altered as a result of introducing AfL. Jonsson *et al* concluded the adoption of AfL brought about a change in practice, which was shared through these communities. The students concurred that AfL practices focused on the strength and weaknesses of learning, however there was little integration of peer assessment. Jonsson *et al* noted teachers reported an increase in their workload due to AfL, which they concluded was due to a dominance of teacher-centred practices. This could have been due to students' reluctance or reticence to undertake peer and self-assessment. Jonsson *et al* suggested teachers needed to further develop strategies where students could take more responsibility for their learning, such as peer and self-assessment. In comparison to DeLisle's (2015) research on the continuous assessment system in Trinidad and Tobago, Jonsson *et al* reported that AfL could change teachers' perceptions of assessment and learning, but it needed a framework for this to happen. Teacher learning communities had been successful in achieving this in one area in Sweden. The UK and Sweden had similar performances of students in the 2015 PISA survey (PISA 2015), suggesting approaches used in Sweden could be valuable for the UK. However, Jonsson *et al's* research included just five schools out of 40 in the municipality so it cannot be argued that this was representative on a wider scale.

An 'assessment is for learning' (AiFL) strategy was introduced in Scotland in 2001, with the original aims to focus on assessment in three main areas: professional practice in the classroom; the quality assurance of assessment information; and monitoring and evaluating student performance using assessment data. Since the publication of KMOFAP in 2003, AiFL became more aligned with formative strategies emerging from Black *et al's*

research, namely questioning, feedback through marking, peer and self-assessment and the formative use of summative assessment (Priestley and Sime 2005).

Reflecting on factors that enabled successful implementation of such AiFL strategies in a large primary school in Scotland, Priestley and Sime (*ibid*) identified when changes were congruent with the teachers' values they were easier to implement. An approach that commenced with small changes that built interest and lead to further experimentation were observed to be successful. Two other factors also important in the success of driving change in this case study, were proactive and strong leadership with an ongoing dialogue with staff; and professional trust in teachers to enact change. Priestley and Sime concluded that a culture of trust and empowerment needed to exist to support change alongside a small step approach to build confidence and interest in new initiatives, rather than whole scale change. They argued a policy implemented from 'top down' could account for difficulties in establishing successful AfL practices on a local level.

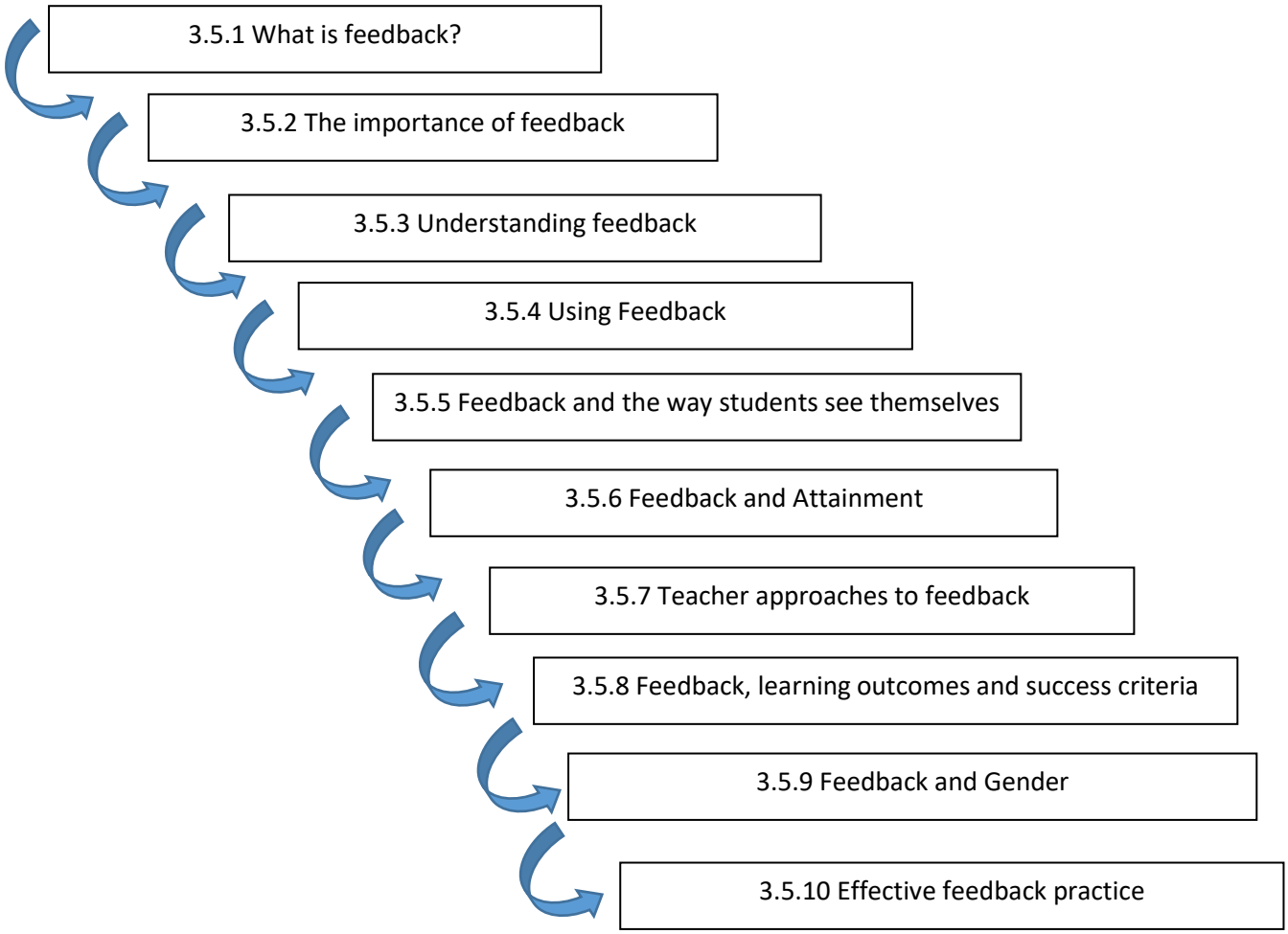
Evidence has been discussed suggesting an AfL approach can result in a change in practice and lead to a greater understanding of the formative role of assessment by teachers, however there are many variable factors that can impact on the success of such strategies. Any positive aspects of AfL or formative assessment cannot be attributed to teaching and learning strategies alone but must also consider the impact of the social aspect in the classroom. Social rules and the pupils' attitude towards their goals affects the success of any strategy (Torrance and Pryor 2001).

Some of the research discussed has been undertaken in primary schools, Priestley and Sime's (2005 pg.489) warnings that successful implementation in primary schools cannot necessarily be applied to the '*rigidly timetabled and exam-focused environment of the secondary school'* should be noted. As discussed in section 3.3, external testing and accountability can determine the activities and focus of classroom practice. However, the KMOFAP (Black *et al* 2003) was undertaken in secondary schools. A strategy explored in this project was the role of feedback, which was considered alongside comment-only marking, influenced by the work of Butler (1988) who was interested in the types of feedback students were given on their written work: grades, comments and a combination of both. Black *et al* (2003) explained feedback is an essential aspect of AfL and Black and Wiliam (2018) added that it provides a mechanism to move learners towards achieving the learning goals. Feedback forms the main focus of this thesis and will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

3.5 Feedback for Learning

This section explores, and critiques research undertaken into the provision and use of feedback to learners. It examines the importance of feedback and presents debates regarding how it can influence learning. It concludes with a presentation of theories of effective feedback practice to support student learning.

Format of section:



3.5.1 What is feedback?

Ramaprasad (1983) defined feedback as information between an actual and desired level of performance, which the recipient subsequently uses. He argued if the information was not used, it cannot be regarded as feedback. Gamlem and Smith (2014 pg. 76) developed the definition further by stating '*Feedback is defined as information provided by a teacher, peer (or one-self), regarding quality aspects of one's performance or understanding (retrospective) and what could be done to improve learning (prospective*). This definition was adopted for the purposes of my research. Gamlem and Smith placed feedback as a key component of AfL, which can modify student thinking and behaviour

(Wright 2017, Fluckiger *et al* 2010, Black and William 1998a). Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018) agreed feedback is a critical component of AfL, even though, they argued, it can often be overlooked in discussions about assessment. They claimed it is characterised by who provides feedback (teacher, peer, self or technology), how and where it is presented, the role of the recipient, the type and focus of the feedback, the artefact used, and opportunities presented to enable its use.

Gipps and Tunstall (1998) identified feedback as one of the structuring conditions for learning, along with task presentation, sequencing, level, pace and teacher expectations. This gives the role of feedback a greater emphasis as part of the learning process than had previously been suggested. Previous views, such as Harlen (1996) referred to the role of formative assessment as providing feedback to the teacher about pupil understanding in order to inform the next steps in teaching. Little emphasis at this point was made about the role of feedback on student performance and behaviour. However, since the research and focus on feedback by the ARG, its power to influence student learning has received greater recognition by a number of authors which are explored in this chapter.

Irons (2008) described feedback as a powerful, constructive learning tool that can help students to learn from formative activities. He claimed formative feedback can create a positive learning culture leading to opportunities for dialogue, increasing student motivation and engagement in their learning. This moves the role of feedback away from testing and judgement. It concurs with Hattie and Timperley (2007)'s view of the power of feedback which can motivate or reinforce views about student deficiencies.

The research undertaken by Black *et al* (2003) in the KMOFAP revealed, as a part of formative assessment, feedback could be used to identify the current level of performance and the action required to achieve the learning aim. Irons (2008) concurred, claiming formative feedback can be a powerful constructive learning tool. Hattie and Timperley (2007) described it as a consequence of performance, providing information relating to the task undertaken which fills the gap between what has been learned and the learning goal. They argued that although feedback can shape student behaviour and understanding, it does not form a behaviourist model of learning as the feedback can be accepted, modified, or rejected by the recipient. This was evident in Dann's (2015) research involving the perceptions of nine to ten-year-old pupils about their learning gap. The pupils in this study had been identified as having made inadequate progress in their learning. The research revealed that the pupils identified different targets for themselves and had differing priorities to their teacher. The pupils' priorities were not ambitious and were at a low level, however, the teacher continued to assign targets related to the curriculum without recognising the children's priorities.

Dann suggested a more dialogic approach was needed when setting targets to close learning gaps. This would enable the teacher to have a greater understanding of the pupils' starting points and enable them to support the child in engaging with the criteria and targets. Lam (2017) agreed that instead of a behaviourist approach, feedback should be a socio-constructivist process enabling students to become agents in closing their learning gaps. Like Dann (2015), Lam (2017) stressed many factors, including their own beliefs, affected how students engaged with feedback but the impact of these can be reduced through dialogue. Habermas' (1984) Theory of Communicative Action is reflected here, as such a dialogue would enable a mutual understanding to be achieved, enabling the communication to be successful with a higher possibility of accomplishing the desired outcomes.

Through their research on AfL, Black *et al* (2003) identified feedback as taking the form of questioning, through marking, peer and self-assessment and through the formative use of summative tests. Feedback through marking could be in the form of grades (or levels), comments – or a combination of both. Following detailed analysis of research, Shute (2008) defined formative feedback as information presented to a learner in response to some action on their part. She identified it took a number of forms, such as confirmation of the accuracy of the response, hints or worked examples and could be administered at various times during the learning process: immediately following an answer, or after some time has elapsed. Hattie (2012) agreed, stating feedback should always follow instruction and has limited value if provided in a vacuum. However, Hattie claimed the purpose of feedback is centred on detecting and correcting errors. This takes a deficit view, rather than one which recognises achievement and provides information for students to build on skills and knowledge (Briggs and Ellis 2004). Hattie's (2012) argument is that feedback is most effective when students do not have proficiency or mastery, so a lack of full knowledge or understanding provides opportunities for feedback, which do not occur when the student has mastered the content. Hattie believed '*disconfirmation can be more powerful than confirmation*' (pg. 123). This does not represent a developmental view of feedback that builds on success (Irons 2008) and encourages students take control of their learning (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006).

The main aim of feedback is to '*increase student knowledge, skills and understanding in some content area or skill*' (Shute 2008 pg. 156), which can be achieved through a number of mechanisms. Black and Wiliam (1998a) categorised feedback in two ways. *Directive feedback* informs the student what to do to correct or revise their understanding. *Facilitative feedback* provides comments and suggestions to guide students in revising their understanding and conceptualisation. When applying Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984), feedback that is directive may be

seen to have a purpose of fulfilling the teacher's aims and therefore could result in an unsuccessful communication. A facilitative feedback approach would be more likely to be successful as it would enable an opportunity for a dialogic exchange to occur and mutual understanding to be achieved.

This section has initially established a range of views about feedback. The next section will explore why feedback is important and how it can influence learning. It will examine research about the power of feedback and why it needs to be understood better to enhance learning experiences.

3.5.2 The importance of feedback

Feedback, it has been claimed, helps build student confidence, self-efficacy and encourages thinking (Harks *et al* 2014, Hattie and Timperley 2007, Gardner 2006, Stipek 2002, Fisher 2001). It helps students to make connections and explore understandings (Askew 2004) and enables them to improve skills for learning through collaboration and peer work (Harrison 2011, OfSTED 2008, Frey and Schmitt 2007, Stiggins 2006). Feedback can lift student morale by reinforcing what they do well in addition to correcting performance (Irons 2008). However, feedback can also negatively influence student self-belief and self-esteem (Harks *et al* 2014, Hattie and Timperley 2007, Weeden *et al* 2002). It can affirm a low attaining student's belief in their ability, whilst higher attaining students see positive outcomes as a sign of their achievement (Harlen 2007). Feedback given at the end of a task and therefore with no time to use it can be viewed negatively by students and make them feel useless (Gamlem and Smith 2013).

Feedback is one of the five key strategies of formative assessment (Popham 2014) and can be a pivotal enabler (Dann 2018). Sadler (1989) explained how it can help a student to understand their learning goal; their own achievement in relation to the goal; and the ways in which they can fulfil that goal. However, he noted that '*the common but puzzling observation that even when teachers provide students with valid and reliable judgements about the quality of their work, improvement does not necessarily follow'* (pg. 119). Sadler identified here that even when feedback is provided to a student, it cannot ensure the enhancement of learning. He recognised the receiver has a role in engaging with the feedback in order for it to have impact.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018) emphasised feedback is crucial to student's self-regulation by helping them to monitor their own strengths and weaknesses in their performance. In their review of research into the role of feedback on self-regulated learning, Butler and Winne (1995) emphasised the importance of internal feedback which, they claimed, is generated by the students themselves to regulate their own learning. They explained this is supported by external

feedback from peers, teachers or text books (or computers) which are sought out when there is a discrepancy between the actual and the desired performance. They suggested students will take an active role in recognising such a discrepancy and are proactive in seeking to resolve it. Butler and Winne described such students as self-regulated, who they claimed, are the most effective learners. However, Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Harks *et al* (2014), believed many learners would view a discrepancy between actual and desired performance as an inability to achieve the goal, rather than motivation to seek further feedback to close it. Butler and Winne (1995) also concluded external feedback could have a number of outcomes. It could confirm students' understanding and beliefs are consistent with the learning objectives; replace or over-write misunderstandings or misconceptions; add or enrich prior knowledge; or replace previous understanding. They argued students contextualise feedback according to their prior beliefs or knowledge and use this information to monitor their progress towards achieving their goal. Thus, the students' interpretation of feedback may be influenced by previous experiences and background, which Habermas (1987) referred to as a 'lifeworld'.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argued good feedback which delivers high quality information to students, clarifies learning objectives identifies good performance and encourages positive motivational beliefs, can strengthen a students' capacity to self-regulate their performance. However, Irons (2008) warned feedback could be demotivating if students considered it to be unfair, unclear, did not understand it or it did not relate to the work they have done. It is important to note that Nicol and Macfarlane Dick (2006) and Irons (2008) were discussing feedback in the context of higher education, whose students are further along in their education than those in secondary school and may have developed learning strategies of their own. However, the principles of the effect of feedback on self-regulation and motivation can be applied to younger students still in their compulsory education.

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) undertook a review of studies that looked at the effect of feedback. Of the 3000 studies found, they used 131, which they felt were rigorous and reliable because they had a control group, so the effects could be attributed to feedback. There was also sufficient detail to quantify the impact of feedback. Their analysis of the 131 studies showed that whilst on average feedback did improve learning, in 50 of these (38%) feedback made the performance worse. Kluger and DeNisi identified there were two types of feedback: those that indicated the current performance fell short of the goal and those in which it indicated the performance exceeded the current goal. They concluded there were a number of responses a recipient can make: to change behaviour to reach the goal; to modify the goal; to abandon the goal; or to reject the feedback. The way feedback was presented and positioned could have a powerful effect on how the

recipient responded and behaved and could, thus lead to a negative impact on learning. Shute (2008) provided a further explanation on the negative effect of feedback. She explained feedback which is critical or controlling, focuses on grades, compares student performance with others or lacks specificity can impede or lower learning. She also identified when feedback interrupts students' concentration on a task in which they are actively engaged, it impedes learning and therefore cannot be considered effective formative feedback. Black and Wiliam (2018) explained that as part of an assessment strategy, feedback should focus on improving student performance in the future, rather than providing a judgement of previous performance. They argued that feedback, in the form of comments which focus on improvement is more likely to imply to students that ability can be improved, which reflects Frey and Schmitt's (2007) definition of the purpose of feedback discussed in section 3.4.1. As previously noted, Black *et al* (2003) and Smith and Gorard (2005) concluded the effect of this depends on the way feedback is constructed and whether it enables students to make use of it in the future.

Fisher (2001) explained feedback can be powerful in helping children to learn to change the way they think through the construction and reconstruction of ideas. However, in a study of 146 students aged between 14-17 years, Harks *et al* (2014) identified whilst feedback can have a positive effect on changes in maths achievement, the mediating aspect of feedback was overlooked. They claimed teachers and other designers of feedback assumed students perceived it in the way the donor intended, but little was known about how students actually perceived feedback. Carnell (2004) reported that teacher to student feedback could clarify goals, give direction and purpose, identify mistakes and provide guidance. However, if the views of the recipient were not considered, the message could become distorted, thus affecting the success of the communication (Habermas 1984).

Feedback that is intended to be positive, may not be received this way by students (Torrance and Pryor 2002). There is evidence to suggest that formative assessment and feedback *can* improve learning (Irons 2008, Black *et al* 2004 and Black and Wiliam 1998a) but not that it *will* do this (Gamlem and Smith 2013, Torrance 2012 and Shute 2008). The design of feedback, how it is positioned, received and used, are important determiners of whether it can enhance learning.

3.5.3 Understanding Feedback

Feedback that is not understood by learners, is too complex or contradictory, or is only provided to justify a grade will not contribute to student learning (Irons 2008). Jonsson (2012) identified a number of factors that affected the way that higher education students engaged with feedback. He stated feedback received at the end of a topic or

unit is too late for it to be used by the recipient. If it is too task specific, students cannot transfer the feedback to subsequent work. Jonsson concluded students needed opportunities to use feedback so they could actively engage with it. Wiliam (2011) explained feedback needs to be located within a system that affects learners' future performance and leads to action. Otherwise, similar to Ramaprasad (1983) he claimed it is just information and should not be regarded as feedback. This is because an action can force a student to engage with feedback, so the comments are not ignored (Ruez-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Elliott *et al* 2016, Blanchard 2009). Chappuis (2012) added by explaining that feedback needs to occur during learning so there are opportunities to act on it. This enables students to remember, translate and apply feedback. However, Chappuis cautioned that higher attaining students are able to do this more easily than lower attaining ones.

3.5.4 Using Feedback

Jonsson (2012) claimed that higher education students valued feedback but the practise of using and incorporating it into their work was not common. Havnes *et al* (2012) undertook a two-year study in six Norwegian upper secondary schools (ages 16-19) to explore how information on assessment is received by students. They found the practice and approach of giving feedback varied across subjects and was not necessarily consistent within a school. Students reported the practice adopted by the teacher depended on their beliefs about students and learning. The language used by teachers in feedback, the way it was given, and the class atmosphere influenced how students perceived and received it. The teachers believed that it was the responsibility of the students to use feedback and observed that weak students took a passive approach. Chappuis (2012) and Jonsson (2012) concurred that the way students receive and act on feedback depends on the skills they have in translating and applying it and this depends on the students' confidence in doing so (Bennett 2011). Havnes *et al* (2012) concluded that the schools in their research had not adopted a culture of AfL, despite the students showing a desire to receive clear, critical and constructive feedback.

In undertaking research with 56 students from two intermediate schools (age 12-13 years) in New Zealand, Williams (2010) also concluded students liked to receive feedback as they recognised that it could improve their learning. The students said written comments were most helpful but the perception of what 'helpful' was, varied amongst the individuals. They said it was important to know what they had achieved, but also what they could improve. For this to happen, the students liked to receive feedback in the early or middle stages of their work, so they could act on it. However, Williams did not take into account the two cohorts were from groups of students who were already attaining at a high level, described as three years above their chronological

age. If higher attaining students are more likely to actively engage with and gain from feedback than lower attaining students who can have a more passive or even negative response (Dann 2016, Chappuis 2012, Havnes *et al* 2012, Hattie and Timperley 2007), the participant choice would have affected the outcomes of this research. If a wider range of students had been included in the study, the findings may have been different. Moreover, Weeden *et al* (2002), similar to Williams, found students recognised the importance of feedback but they claimed the students preferred verbal feedback, as it enabled them to ask questions from which they felt they learned more. The value students placed on verbal feedback would depend on the quality. In a study in four lower secondary schools (ages 13 to 16) in Norway, Gamlem and Munthe (2014) found verbal dialogue in the classroom was mainly of low quality, focusing on encouragement rather than learning. Gamlem and Munthe claimed the findings were comparable to British classrooms where they argued '*classroom talk is described as mainly social and affective*' (pg 89). The various claims by authors regarding students' preference for verbal or written feedback can be determined by the quality of verbal feedback provided, rather than the process.

Peterson and Irving (2008) also found students accepted feedback could improve their learning, but similar to Jonsson (2012), found little evidence that they acted on it. Peterson and Irving commented that when feedback identified what students needed to improve but not how to, they were unable use it. Jonsson (2012) concurred that students preferred specific, detailed and individualised feedback identifying exactly what to do, but he believed this level of detail might not lead to improvement, as students may only make superficial changes rather than engage with the feedback in detail. This approach would not develop students' own learning skills. Jonsson identified students did not use feedback because they did not have the strategies to do so or did not understand the language or jargon used by the teacher. Students without strategies for constructively engaging with feedback would take a passive approach. Similarly, Dann (2018) explained pupils needed to have the ability to connect with feedback. Her studies have focused on primary age children, some of whom, she argued, may not have reached the developmental stages required to engage conceptually with feedback. Older students may have more advanced skills, but they would not be as developed as the teacher, so feedback could be presented in a way that is hard to access by the students.

3.5.5 Feedback and the way students see themselves as learners

The National Research Council (NRC) (2000) identified the way students view themselves as a learner can have an impact on how they approach challenges. Low expectations of the student by their teacher can influence both the pupil's behaviour, outcomes and how the teacher provides feedback (Stipek 2002, Weeden *et al* 2002). If

feedback is presented in a way that leads students to believe they are of low ability or cannot learn, they will disengage to avoid further failure and a reinforcement of their ability (Wiliam 2013). Feedback can, therefore, affect how students see themselves as learners. If it does not recognise what they have achieved, but only focuses on what they have not, it will not motivate students to try harder (Weeden *et al* 2002).

Dweck (1999) distinguished between learning and performance goals. Learning goals focus on the process of learning, whilst performance goals focus on the output. This can lead to students showing different characteristics as shown in the table below.

Learning Goals	**Performance Goals**
Choose challenging tasks regardless of concept of ability	Avoid the challenge if the pupil doubts their ability
Develop strategies to master the task	Will have an excuse for any failure
Plans own success	Will ascertain the difficulty of the task and calculate their chance of success
Attribute any difficulty to effort rather than ability	Attribute any difficulty to low ability
Self-esteem is not affected by failure	Becomes upset when faced with difficulty or failure
Demonstrates persistence	
Has an incremental view of intelligence	

Table 3: Characteristics of students depending on goal type

(from Torrance and Pryor 2002)

The different characteristics shown above highlight that the presence of a goal is not sufficient, but how the goal is presented can determine the students' response to it. Torrance and Pryor (2002) argued feedback should, therefore, focus on learning goals, not performance ones.

The NRC (2000) argued children who believe intelligence is fixed (entity theorists) will show little persistence in the face of failure and avoid challenges that reflect them in a negative way. They will focus on performance goals. Children who believe intelligence is malleable (incremental theorists) will show higher persistence in increasing their competence and focus on learning goals, rather than performance. Feedback that focuses on the person rather than the outcome will encourage students to believe intelligence is fixed and not in their control (Ruez-Primo and Brookhart 2018). The self-perception of students is, therefore, important (Black and Wiliam (1998a) and will be formed from previous experiences, privileges and dispositions (Dann 2018).

Through research which gained secondary school pupils' views, Cowie (2005) identified that pupils who focus on learning goals viewed AfL as a joint responsibility between the pupil and teacher, preferring feedback to be in the form of suggestion as it allowed them

to maintain an active role in making sense of the ideas. However, pupils who focused on performance goals viewed assessment as the teachers' responsibility and preferred feedback to explain how to complete tasks. It can be concluded the learning priorities students have is influenced by the way they see themselves and their aspirations which, in turn, affects how they engage with feedback (Dann 2018).

Students with low self-efficacy are more likely to react negatively to negative feedback and show less motivation (Hattie and Timperley 2007). Such students, Hattie and Timperley argued need positive feedback about initial successes followed by confirmation they have deficiencies that can be remedied. However, Hattie and Timperley pointed out students may avoid subsequent tasks because they do not want information that identifies they are no longer achieving the outcome. Wiliam (2011a pg. 12) explained '*thoughtful feedback given to students who see themselves with low, or no, ability is likely to be ignored or rejected, or appropriated in some other way to allow the learner to preserve a sense of well-being*'. Thus, even carefully constructed feedback may be ineffective depending on how the students see themselves (Black and Wiliam 2009).

Understanding how students interpret feedback is key to developing positive self-efficacy and better learners (Hattie and Timperley 2007). In line with Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984), Askew (2004) pointed out the relationship between the giver and receiver of feedback is important. A feedback model based on transmission-reception is judgemental. It assumes feedback will lead to learning but Askew argues *how* feedback can lead to learning is rarely considered. Bennett (2011), Black *et al* (2003) and Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018) asserted too little attention is given to the interpretation of the evidence from formative assessment. Bennett (2011) argued teachers do not explore why students performed in the way they did but tend to respond to the output not the process, which could limit opportunities for constructive feedback. An assumption that students will perceive feedback in the way it is intended is problematic and often overlooked (Harks *et al* 2014). Stiggins (2006) argued educators should use information from assessment to inform teaching and encourage students to learn. He added they should manage the emotional dynamics of the assessment experience from the learners' viewpoint. Torrance and Pryor (2001) referred to this as divergent assessment which explores student understanding and uses a constructivist approach to learning. However, when feedback does not use a constructivist model, it focuses on reporting what is right and wrong and seeks to correct errors (Shephard 2000). This is a convergent approach to assessment (Crossouard 2011) and assumes a behaviourist way of learning that does not take into account how students receive and value feedback.

Carnell (2004) explored the views of 14 students aged 7-11 years. They were asked to describe recent occasions when someone helped them. Through the resultant discussions, it became clear the students identified there was no dialogue in the classroom between them and teacher. This was because they considered dialogue to require equity, sharing, spontaneity, collaboration and reciprocity, which they felt were not present in exchanges with their teacher. The students identified that informal settings can be more engaging and lead to greater self-assessment than a classroom. Carnell concluded the student perception was that a hierarchy existed so co-construction and responsibilities could not be shared within this. Habermas (1984) would argue this relationship would inhibit the communication as the participants would be unlikely to come to a mutual understanding and genuine agreement because the students may not feel empowered to seek reasons or clarifications about the teacher's comments. Although students from a range of ages were involved in the study, Carnell (2004) failed to give sufficient acknowledgement that the research was conducted in a single school, which may have had a particular ethos, so the results cannot be generalised. However, it does suggest it is not just the teachers' perception of learning that influences the dynamics and engagement in the classroom but also the students' perceptions. James and Pedder (2006 pg.39) explained '*there needs to be a change in teacher and learner roles and practices on interaction between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy*', indicating that assessment, and corresponding feedback practice, needed to change and develop to create opportunities for shared learning. Hallam and Ireson (1999) highlighted this by explaining deficiencies in learning conversations will block the student voice with respect to their learning. Teachers needed to understand how students may interpret feedback and recognise they may not have acknowledged what the student wanted them to hear (Dann 2014, Black and Wiliam 2009).

When exploring the views of 49 year one and year two pupils (ages 6 and 7) on success and failure, Gipps and Tunstall (1998) discovered that effort was the most commonly cited reason for both success and failure. Failure was considered to be due to a lack of effort, rather than skill. Gipps and Tunstall identified that students who had a higher perception of their ability will persist for longer when faced with challenges than those who feel less able. However, Gipps and Tunstall identified concern this view could result in increasing effort, but with no gain if the skills to achieve are not developed. Ultimately, students would reduce the effort when no gain is achieved. Feedback therefore, should focus on skill and knowledge development rather than effort.

Harlen (2007) identified that student views on assessment were limited as most research is focused on the curriculum and conditions of learning. As a consequence, she undertook research to explore secondary school students' views. She found towards the

end of their schooling, students valued assessments as they gave a clear indication of their progress enabling them to see their strengths and weaknesses and were good practice for exams. Harlen found that students in Northern Ireland, where exams have dominated the curriculum since 1947, were more focused on what is needed to pass, than students in Scotland where there was less focus on exams on a daily basis. The Scottish students showed a greater concern about variety in their learning. This supports Hargreaves (2005) findings that a measurement/objectives model has a dominant influence in schools.

3.5.6 Feedback and Attainment

In 38% of the studies of the effects of feedback on learning that Kluger and DeNisi (1996) reviewed, feedback had a detrimental impact. Despite the aims of the ARG in 2002 that AfL should be at the heart of learning, there are still significant areas across the UK where students are receiving a poor education (Department for Education 2016b). One out of five children did not achieve the expected standards at primary school and two out of five left secondary school without the benchmark five GCSEs grade C, including English and maths. This interpretation by the DfE that the quality of education is measured by student performance in national assessment tests and OfSTED inspections, reflect Stiggins' (2006) concern about the use of assessments for multiple purposes. The labelling of students by their progress or achievement can influence their further success. The Assessment Review Group (2017) warned overarching categories, such as '*working below expected level'* (pg.8), can label children, which, they state can send the wrong message to pupils and their families, have an adverse effect on motivation and result in any progress the pupils make, being overlooked. Nevertheless, the report by the DfE (Department for Education 2016b) highlights there were regions across England where students received a lower quality of education than in others.

Receiving low grades can affect how a student feels (Peterson and Irving 2008). Students attaining lower grades can perceive test results as an indicator of their ability, whereas higher attaining students saw them as confirmation of their ability (Harlen 2007). Black *et al* (2003) argued that removing grades can avoid this self-affirming belief in students. Higher attaining students do what they need to maintain their position, whilst lower achievers have their belief in themselves confirmed by receiving low grades. Thus, using grades as a mechanism of feedback could have negative effects on achievement. Stiggins (2006) recognised that grades can affect a students' confidence if they do not perform well but argued they could create self-belief when they do score well. Where grades, along with constructive feedback is given, they could be powerful in building a lower attaining students' confidence if a grading system was designed with small incremental steps rather than large jumps.

Harks *et al* (2014) examined the impact of feedback on 146 students from 23 German secondary schools who had an average age of 15 years. In the research, students had been given either grade orientated or process orientated feedback after taking a Maths test. The process-orientated feedback focused on general performance, reflected on the students' confidence in solving mathematical problems and identified six strengths and six weaknesses. Grade orientated feedback focused on performance with a grade being provided to the student based on their answers. The students undertook a pre-feedback test and a post-feedback test using mathematical problems from the German National Standards to measure achievement change. The students' perception of their interest and confidence were also measured pre and post-test. The students who received the process-orientated feedback found it more useful than the students receiving grade-orientated feedback and Harks *et al* claimed it had a positive effect on these students' maths achievement. The students felt the elaborated feedback was useful, increased their feeling of competence and promoted a positive change in their interest in the subject. A grade-orientated approach did not form effective feedback and resulted in negative effects on achievement and motivation. This research supports Black *et al* (2003) who claimed the positive effect of comment only marking over grades. However, it is not clear in Harks *et al* (2014) study whether this outcome was achieved from a one-off change in the process, meaning the results could be due to novel approach, or whether this was sustained. It does also not consider the level at which the students were currently attaining and if there was a difference in views between students who were used to gaining high scores with those used to receiving low scores.

Elliott *et al* (2016) explained grades alone do not provide information about learning. Learning gains can only be achieved when there is guidance (Gamlem and Smith 2013). Students do not always understand grading systems and can be confused by them, particularly when a variety are used (Weeden *et al* 2002). The removal of the National Curriculum assessment levels (Department for Education 2014) empowered schools to create their own grading system. An opportunity to incorporate smaller incremental increases to recognise and celebrate small steps in student progress was provided. This approach could create a powerful booster in motivation and confidence (Stiggins 2006), but Lawson (2013) advised schools should adopt consistent conventions to acknowledge success and identify targets for improvement.

Reward systems, such as praise, can undermine interest and motivation in learning (Cowie 2005, Black and Wiliam 1998a). Hattie and Timperley (2007) explained this is because rewards do not contain information for learning. Praise for performance on an easy task can be interpreted by a student as evidence of perception of a lower ability (Stipek 2002) and can direct attention away from the task, process or self-regulation

(Hattie 2012). Hattie and Timperley (2007) claimed the feedback teachers give is influenced by their perception of students' needs, stating teachers give lower performing students more praise than instruction although it has been shown to have low or a negative impact on enhancing student learning (Shute 2008, Torrance and Pryor 2002). This approach would result in such students becoming trapped in a cycle of low performance and low expectations. Stipek (2002) argued teacher behaviour can influence students' own beliefs about their abilities, expectations and the effort they put in. He claimed teachers exhibited more negative emotions to lower achieving students and invested greater time and attention with them, which the students interpreted as evidence of their low competence and reduced their own expectations and effort. The tone and approach taken by the teacher can also affect the way it is received by the student. Stipek (*ibid*) reported teachers may develop closer relationships with students who are achieving higher than their peers as they can be easier to teach, are confident in class and present less behavioural issues. The student may be more likely to take on challenges even if they receive more criticism than praise, as it is interpreted as high expectations. Stipek claimed students who are helped too much by the teacher do not experience positive achievement on their own and thus do not develop emotions related to success.

Feedback that emphasises grades can affect how students feel. Students receiving a low grade may blame the teacher, whilst those receiving a higher grade will feel good (Peterson and Irving 2008). Feedback, which a student feels is not attainable or useful, can cause them to abandon or lower their learning goal (Hattie and Timperley 2007, Kluger and DeNisi 1996). The belief students have in their own ability can influence how feedback is provided, received and utilised.

3.5.7 Teacher approaches to feedback

James (2006) questioned the content of teacher training which, she claimed, has been reduced to a series of technical competencies not allowing for development of a synoptic and synthetic approach enabling teachers to construct teaching and assessment in line with their understanding of learning. She added the assessment of teachers' practice was limited by external assessment determined by teacher standards. Bennett (2011) agreed that teacher training outputs or standards can constrain the development of skills in formative assessment. When teachers do not have a sufficient understanding of AfL, achievement targets are not written at individual student level, the inaccuracies of assessment can be high, feedback is not developmental, and students are not involved in the process (Stiggins 2006). A teacher with a weak understanding of the topic or learning, may not know how to evaluate performance, what questions to ask, what inferences they should make from student performance and appropriate actions to take

(Bennett 2011). Coe *et al* (2014) claimed there was strong evidence that pedagogical content knowledge had an impact on student outcomes. Therefore, teachers needed deep knowledge about formative assessment to implement it effectively.

Stiggins (2006) claimed teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about AfL practice. As a result, they are unable to differentiate the needs of assessment users (students, teachers, senior management and policy makers) so achievement targets are not written at a classroom level. This can lead to inaccuracy of assessment, evaluative rather than descriptive feedback and students rarely being involved in self-assessment or tracking their own progress. This ties in with Bennetts' (2011) view that teachers' depth of understanding of learning can affect practice and adds to Dwyer's (1998) claim that teachers need to have a commitment to understand students, learning and the curricula. It also reflects Harlen and James' (1997) view that teachers need skills and support in providing feedback to students to help them with their next steps in learning.

A three-year project in a New Zealand primary school investigated the development of formative interactions and summative assessment practices. Eighteen teachers were involved across five schools. The research, undertaken by Jones and Moreland (2005) involved the investigation, development and enhancement of the teaching, learning and assessment of technology education over three years. In year one of the project they found the teachers' lack of pedagogical content knowledge about technology prevented them from identifying key ideas for the subject. Teachers were unable to plan effectively or engage in conversations with students to move their learning forward. The formative assessment strategies did not provide sufficient feedback to identify development in learning. In the subsequent two years, the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge was developed so they could provide more descriptive and effective feedback. Terminology they used changed, they were able to articulate learning outcomes, identify specific learning goals for students and utilise knowledge requirements for teaching technology. Students were more aware of their learning and sought advice on what they did not know. This change could be because students accepted the teachers' claim to truth or authenticity by acknowledging their credibility as the teachers had demonstrated knowledge of the subject (Habermas 1984). Following an increase in the use of technical language by the teachers, students also began using it. Jones and Moreland concluded the development of pedagogical content knowledge was very important in enabling effective learning to be planned, undertaken, supported and reported. Similarly, in a case study in Scotland, Crossouard (2011) identified the importance of the skilfulness of teachers to design tasks to enable students to engage and be challenged. She also raised concern that teachers were not well supported in considering power relations in an

assessment process. Croussard concluded a better understanding of student learning and external pressures could improve teaching, learning and assessment.

Feedback, as part of an assessment process, can be driven by external testing regimes which determine practice in the classroom. This can lead to a lack of alignment between formative feedback and summative assessment, with teachers focusing on the latter to evidence accountability. A lack of understanding about student learning can affect how the teacher manages assessment and feedback processes, affecting the experience for their pupils. Torrance (2011) argued that assessment can drive the curriculum. He explained an increase in performance at GCSE may be due to an improvement in teaching quality, better socio-economic conditions, higher expectations by teachers, students and parents, but it could also be down to a focus on passing exams and teaching to the test. He added that changing the focus to learning from criteria compliance, requires an investment in more creative forms of curriculum and professional development to increase understanding of assessment in the classroom. Teachers need to be able to develop critical awareness of what effective learning and feedback is and apply it to their role (Brown *et al* 2012, James 2006). When the culture within which teachers operate, limits their opportunities to learn about and implement good AfL practice, the resultant feedback can be evaluative (making judgements) rather than descriptive (describing and explaining), rarely involving students in self-assessment and tracking their own progress (Stiggins 2006).

Hargreaves *et al* (2004) found teachers believed an expression of approval showed students they were valued which would encourage them to keep working. These teachers believed it was important to use negative feedback as well as positive, to reduce the recurrence of undesired performance. These views were collated from a series of interviews and observations involving 23 teachers across 20 primary schools (year groups 2 and 6, ages 7 and 11 respectively) from two local education authorities in 1997 and 1998. From this research, Hargreaves *et al* identified one feedback approach whereby a child was given a judgement about their skills or attainment in relation to a goal. This judgement included information about the teacher's view. This approach is similar to the transmission-reception model discussed by Askew (2004) which may have little impact on learning as it does not acknowledge the individual students' understanding in the process. Hargreaves *et al* (2004) explained, however, that other teachers in the study believed that children learned through construction and discovery by building on what they already knew. Hargreaves *et al* then categorised two approaches of giving feedback as:

- *Evaluative: giving rewards and punishments; expressing approval and disapproval*

- *Descriptive: telling children they are right or wrong; describing why an answer is correct; telling children what they have and have not achieved; specifying or implying a better way of doing something; and getting children to suggest ways they can improve.* (Hargreaves *et al* 2004 pg. 23)

They concluded the way the teacher believed children learn (through transmission or construction) would lead to them choosing assessment and feedback approaches that supported this belief. Teacher understanding of the purpose of learning and the role of the learner can determine their approach undertaken in the classroom, which itself can be influenced by policy and targets (Willis 2011).

Teachers' confidence of the subject matter can influence the quality of the judgements and feedback they give (Torrance and Pryor 2001). Convergent teaching and assessment limits opportunities for learning, whereas divergent approaches enable teachers to understand students through questioning and observation, which leads to more carefully, judged feedback and deeper learning (Torrance and Pryor *ibid*). Teachers need deep knowledge of the subject and about learning to take a divergent approach.

Research has been discussed in this section which suggests that staff development, subsequent to initial teacher training, can help teachers to develop a greater understanding of the role and impact of feedback on student learning. This can take the form of a professional discussions and sharing practice (Jonsson *et al* 2015, Wiliam *et al* 2010, Priestley and Sime 2005,) but Wiliam *et al* (2010) cautioned that high stakes assessment can make this difficult. A report by the National Foundation for Educational Research on developing the education workforce agreed that collaboration between teachers from different schools or with researchers, or teachers' own self-reflection, can be effective in supporting the development of their practice in the classroom (Maughan *et al* 2012).

So far, the thesis has examined a range of views about what feedback is, and its function. These are summarised in the table below.

Form	Function
Information without action	Provides information
Provide information or error detection	Identifies deficit in performance
Part of formative assessment (or AfL)	Modifies thinking and behaviour Identifies action required to reach learning goal
Socio-constructivist	Enables students to be involved by using feedback to close learning gaps
Structuring conditions for learning	Feedback has a central role in learning
Clarity of learning outcomes, identification of high-quality performance, integration of development of self-assessment	Develops self-regulation by the student, enhancing learning and fosters motivation
Directive	Informs the student what to do to correct or revise their understanding
Facilitative	Guides students in developing their understanding
Convergent	Feedback that is based on a judgement of performance against objectives
Divergent	Feedback that focuses on an open and exploratory approach
Evaluative	Giving rewards and punishments; expressing approval and disapproval
Descriptive	Tell learners they are right or wrong; describing why an answer is correct; telling learners what they have and have not achieved; specifying or implying a better way of doing something; and getting learners to suggest ways they can improve.

Table 4: Summary of Feedback

3.5.8 Feedback, learning outcomes and success criteria

Learning outcomes are goals that it is intended students will achieve, whilst success criteria defines the qualities that ascertain progress towards the goal (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018). Two of the principles of AfL identified by the ARG are: '*promote understanding of goals and criteria*' and '*help develop the learners' capacity to improve*' (ARG 2002 [n.p]). One of the strategies used in the KMOFAP to embed an AfL approach in the classroom was to share success criteria with students. In doing this, the students examined success criteria and simplified them or created their own marking scheme, which they used in peer and self-assessment. As a result, it was reported that students became more aware of when they were learning and how to learn (Black *et al* 2003). Understanding and engaging with success criteria can help to address the stages of feedback identified by Hattie and Timperley (2007): feed up, feedback and feed forward. However, the effectiveness of this depends on the feedback provided and whether it is targeted at the right level (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Hattie and Timperley 2007). Understanding their goals and recognising what good quality work looks like is important

to support student learning (Harlen 2007). Without a clarity of learning outcome, teacher marking, and feedback can be unfocused (Weeden *et al* 2002).

When designing learning experiences, Chappius (2012) explained that students need to know where they are going, otherwise feedback becomes a series of instructions disconnected from the learning destination. She added that without a target, students believe the activity is the goal and the destination becomes the completion of the activity rather than any learning that has taken place. This concurs with Swaffield (2011), who argued that sharing criteria with students enables them to understand what they are aiming for, the quality required and enables the development of metacognition, so they become more aware of their own learning. This was also noted by Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018), Hall and Burke (2003) and Weeden *et al* (2002). For feedback to be effective, students need to know the learning intentions of a task, what they could have achieved and where to go next (Clarke 2004, Hall and Burke 2003). However, Clarke (2004) identified that instead of giving specific strategies, teachers sometimes reiterated the learning goal that did not help students to close the gap. She defined effective feedback as '*feedback against the focused learning outcomes of the task (whatever the child was asked to pay attention to), highlighting where success occurred and suggesting where improvement might have taken place against those two objectives*' (pg. 37).

In an aim to improve AfL strategies in the classroom, subject-based performance standards were introduced into the national curriculum in the Northern Territory in Australia. This did not have the desired effect as, whilst they were used in some cases in the planning of a lesson and in the feedback after the completion of a task, they were not used to engage with students in the learning process by shaping feedback towards achieving the standards (Fenwick 2017). It was concluded that the introduction of these standards did not influence AfL but it did affect assessment of learning (summative assessment). However, the data was only included from three schools and included teacher reflections rather than lesson observations which, if used, would have enabled the researchers to collect first hand data about the strategies used in the classroom.

An Education Endowment Foundation project reviewed written marking practices by surveying over 1000 primary and secondary school teachers in the UK (Elliot *et al* 2017). This was a response to the Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review (2016). Elliott *et al* (2016) reported that feedback related to targets had a benefit for learning, but short-term targets were better than long-term ones. However, feedback that was very closely aligned with learning outcomes could restrict the transferability of it to other situations. Through a Learning and Skills Research Council funded project to investigate the impact of modes and methods of assessment in post-secondary education, Torrance (2007) concluded clarity in assessment and criteria along with the use of coaching

encouraged instrumentalism. He expressed concern that an attainment-orientated culture has led to *assessment as learning* where criteria compliance dominated learning, weakened learner autonomy and narrowed the learning experience. This was supported by Sadler (2007) who added that fragmentation of learning into separate outcomes does not focus on the learning that should be taking place, and only identifies a student is capable of achieving something when operating under specific conditions. In two case studies in New Zealand, Hume and Coll (2009) observed how secondary school students' learning in Science was driven by a national standards-based qualification. This was noted in the way science investigations were carried out under close direction to meet the required curriculum standard. Hume and Coll described it as assessment *as* learning, aligning it with an instrumental approach, similar to Torrance (2007) due to the way it restricted practice.

Hargreaves (2001) identified when children were aware of learning outcomes they could take responsibility for their own learning, allowing the teacher to take a facilitator role, shifting the power for learning from the teacher to the pupil. Successful achievement of this depends on the skill of the teacher in writing the outcomes and in the students understanding them. In addition to establishing learning outcomes, teachers need to identify success criteria used to evaluate the learning (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018). Through research exploring teacher and learner views on the use of learning intentions and success criteria, Crichton and McDaid (2016) revealed that whilst teachers believed they were following school policy by sharing the learning intentions with students, they were insecure in their understanding of the concepts behind their use along with the principles of AfL so their practice was ineffective. Crichton and McDaid concluded that both teachers and students agreed learning intentions and success criteria were useful, but the teacher understanding varied and students felt they were implemented in a tokenistic, rather than useful way. Crichton and McDaid specified that learning intentions and success criteria should focus on learning, not activity and should be short, achievable and measurable.

Hermansen (2014) argued success criteria should be relevant to the subject specific tasks, the curricula and student groups. In a study of three lower secondary schools (ages 13 -16) in a Norwegian city over 18 months, Hermansen explored how teachers worked collaboratively with professional knowledge when new assessment resources were introduced. She found teacher dialogue about success criteria was helpful in discussing ambiguity and clarifying understanding. Willis and Adie (2014) explored primary teachers' experience of annotating student work with seven teachers in two schools in Australia. Through the process of annotating work, teachers noticed assessment criteria were not fully aligned with the task. Initially, the annotations were

provided as a justification, but following greater reflection, the teachers in this study began to think about the purpose of annotations and what effective feedback would look like. They identified a high-quality piece of work by mapping it back from the assessment. Willis and Adie claimed students are more likely to understand their feedback and grades better when the teachers are consistent with how it is marked. The findings from these two studies, although from different countries, support Wiliam *et al's* (2010) claim that dialogue can led to professional development.

Feedback should link to assessment criteria (Jonsson 2012, Wiliam 2011a), but teachers need to use terminology that students understand, otherwise they will be unable to use it (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Lawson 2013, Jonsson 2012). Hall and Burke (2003) suggested peer and whole class discussions can help students understand assessment criteria on which their work is judged. They warned children can be bombarded with a range of assessment schemes – including grades, marks, stars and often do not know the basis on which their work is assessed. Lawson (2013) agreed schools needed to adopt a consistent approach.

The emotional engagement and reaction of students to assessment criteria needs to be considered when reviewing its role. Students must believe that they can meet the assessment criteria and have sufficient confidence to try (Stiggins 2006). Black (1993) stressed the aims of assessment must be well defined and related to student learning. He added learning tasks must be constructed so pupils can demonstrate the relevant skills or thinking abilities. When students believe they cannot learn they see a challenging task as another opportunity to fail so they disengage, which could be interpreted by the teacher as lazy (Wiliam 2013). Well-defined learning goals and assessment criteria enable expectations to be shared with students and can create belief in a student that they can achieve, which can lead to increased effort (*ibid*). However, if they dominate the learning too much, it leads to criteria compliance and creates students who become too dependent on their teachers and not themselves (Willis 2011). Establishing learning outcomes and success/assessment criteria can lead to a behaviourist model of learning where it is assumed that a student will respond to teacher instruction or feedback to meet the objective (Torrance 2012). This does not allow for student interpretation, an emotional response or recognise the students' decision how to respond (Torrance and Pryor 2002). Shephard (2000) argues learning is an active process that requires thinking, understanding and applying skills and cannot be reduced to a list of outcomes. The KOSAP, which explored the use of summative assessments in the classroom, concluded that when ready-made assessments and mark schemes were used, they did not guide pupil learning because they did not challenge students achieving at a higher level and could become demotivating for others (Black *et al* 2011).

Learning outcomes and associated success criteria is important in helping a student understand where they are going in their work and what high quality work looks like (Chappius 2012, Swaffield 2011, Wiliam 2011b, Harlen 2007, Clarke 2004). However, they can create a culture where teacher success is measured by student attainment against these outcomes (Dann 2018). Students and teachers need to understand and recognise the outcomes and success criteria and have a belief they can be achieved. Elliott *et al* (2016) recommended pupils are involved in writing targets for their learning as they suggest teachers over-estimate the extent to which students understand targets or success criteria. This requires an understanding of the student and their needs by the teacher (Dann 2018, Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018).

3.5.9 Feedback and Gender

There has been little research into the way males and females engage with, and respond to, feedback. Gipps and Tunstall (1998) refer to Dweck's work in 1978 which identified different types of feedback given to boys and girls. Boys were told to improve and to apply more effort, whilst for girls a lack of attainment was felt to be due to lower ability. However, there have been significant changes in the education landscape since then, with the introduction of the National Curriculum and testing which set the same level of expected engagement and attainment for both boys and girls.

In a study of underperforming boys, Younger *et al* (2005) found that some boys adopted a laissez-faire approach to their learning, believing it would all work out well and they would meet the demands of their GCSEs in year 11. They showed a greater level of confidence than girls and had a commitment but not the sense of urgency or determination. The boys in this study showed a defensive approach which blamed external factors for their failure but saw themselves as accountable for their success. Whilst this project, which extended over four years, focused on underperforming boys it did not examine how boys view or engage with feedback. However, understanding the nature of boys' attitudes can help to understand how feedback may be targeted differently to foster action and develop learning. On researching gender attitudes in pre-school ages, Murphy and Elwood (1998) observed that boys showed more confidence than girls even though the perceived ability was the same. However, their lower inclination for drawing, and using pens meant these skills were underdeveloped compared with girls and the boys were therefore less prepared for starting formal school. Stromquist (2014) claimed the habits of boys and girls can affect their academic development. She specifically referred to the better performance of girls in reading compared to boys and attributed this to girls preferring sedentary tasks, such as reading whilst boys preferring active ones. However, this may not be a child-led choice, but one imposed by adults who have perceptions of male/female activities. Stromquist argued

the everyday practices of children have a greater influence on their academic development than cognitive development or curriculum content.

During observations of behaviour in the classroom of secondary school pupils in three schools in 1998-9, Francis (2000) found boys to be more active in the classroom than girls and created more noise. The boys felt picked on by teachers more, which could be because the greater activity and noise they created meant they were noticed more. Whilst boys asked questions in class, girls were observed to ask the teacher more constructive questions, thereby using the teacher as a resource. Like Younger *et al* (2005) and Murphy and Elwood (1998), Francis believed boys showed more confidence than girls. Francis claimed laddish behaviour of boys in the classroom influenced the teachers' perception, which affected how they interacted with them. Therefore, gender could influence how teachers provided feedback and supported learning. Bartlett and Burton (2011) concurred, reporting that stereotyping boys as loud and boisterous with a lack of interest in learning but girls as conscientious and hardworking are unhelpful. They claimed there is no evidence of neurological difference between boys and girls, which could lead them to have differing cognitive abilities or learning styles, but teachers' beliefs about gender attainment can lead to varying expectations. Frawley (2005) claimed boys tended to receive more academically specific feedback as well as praise and criticism, whilst girls tended to receive more superficial feedback. In 2002, Torrance and Pryor reported that teachers often see girls as lacking in flair and rewarded them for effort although this is not an effective form of feedback (Gipps and Tunstall 1998) and could reinforce performance orientated behaviour (NRC 2000).

Pettigrew (2014) agreed with Bartlett and Burton (2011) that there is no neurological evidence that boys and girls are different and no evidence to link underachievement of males to a feminised curriculum. Pettigrew suggested boys may behave differently to females due to a socially constructed masculine self-image. This was also reported by Lander (2011), who undertook research in two high schools in the United States of America. Boys acted by asserting power and superiority of masculinity which was at a cost to their learning. Lander, similar to Pettigrew (2014) concluded that it was gender that influenced boys' behaviour, not the environment. Long *et al* (2011) claimed boys' attitudes to authority and academic work could be different to girls. They argued girls have a more mature approach to learning strategies with an emphasis on sharing and collaboration. Boys, however, were less likely to use collaborative approaches and more focused on competition.

Similar to students who have low attainment, teacher and society perceptions and stereotypes of gender and performance can affect the learning experience of boys, which can influence how they engage with feedback and develop as learners (Lander 2011).

Williams (2010) suggested boys indicated a weaker relationship between the helpfulness of feedback and frequency whilst girls preferred to receive feedback more frequently. Dweck (1999) suggested students can give three main responses to feedback and explored gender differences between these. The first was that success or failure was a result of individual or external factors. Secondly, success was due to stable or unstable factors (a stable factor being ability and unstable factor as effort); and finally, where the students used the feedback to affirm their general ability as a learner. Dweck claimed a slight tendency for boys to attribute success to stable causes (ability) and failure to unstable one (effort), whilst girls were more likely to attribute success to effort and failure to ability.

Whilst there are claims that stereotypical views of boys and girls as learners can influence teachers' perceptions about gender (Lander 2011, Archer, 2011, Long *et al* 2011, Bartlett and Burton 2011), Archer (2011) and Lander (2011) warned polarised views of boys' and girls' attainment should be avoided as not all boys underachieve in relation to girls and it varies within subjects. In schools where boys perform well, there is a strong ethos of high expectations, clear boundaries and learning and teaching approaches structured to benefit all students (Lander 2011).

Data from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ 2017) regarding GSCE attainment in the UK in August 2017 shows females achieved higher grades in all subjects, with the exception of Mathematics where performance is similar for both males and females. Based on this measure, the data shows an overall trend that females are performing better than males across most subjects, but when looking at the UK as a whole, individual variations in student attainment can be masked. Archer (2011) warns against using large scale statistics about achievement as the intersectionality of gender, social class and ethnicity need to be considered, not gender alone. Moreover, focusing on gender differences can perpetuate gender binary (Francis and Paechter 2015), which could exacerbate expectations. Although it has been suggested in the literature that boys' achievement may be influenced by teacher stereotypes and expectations, the process of how feedback is regarded by boys and girls has received little attention in the wider research on AfL and feedback.

3.5.10 Effective Feedback Practice

Dunn and Mulvernon (2009) undertook a review of literature on formative assessment and revealed there was little empirical evidence to demonstrate that formative assessment in the classroom could result in marked changes in learning. Bennett (2011), who stated published research does not, unequivocally, support the success of formative assessment practices, agreed. This could be due to the complexities discussed in

learning, assessment and feedback practices and the culture within which it is located. The individual, as central to the feedback should not be overlooked, as it can impact on the learning process (Dann 2018) and the teachers' understanding of learning can determine how they design and provide feedback (Hargreaves *et al* 2004). Teachers who view the students as passive recipients of feedback will not recognise their role in the process (Williams 2010). Feedback that focuses on effort rather than skill (Gipps and Tunstall 1998) and reinforces ability (Peterson and Irving 2008, Harlen 2007, Black *et al* 2004) can be detrimental to student learning, self-esteem and motivation.

Hattie and Timperley explained feedback must answer three questions of the student – 'where am I going?': a confirmation of the goals; 'how am I doing?': the progress that is being made; and 'where to next?': what needs to be done to make better progress. Hattie and Timperley also refer to this as 'feed up, feedback and feed forward'. Wiliam (2011b) adds that any process of learning requires a goal, which may be a single destination or a broad horizon of learning goals. Learning then needs to be directed, or re-directed, toward the intended goal. Dann (2016, 2018) warned students may have a different understanding of their learning gap than the teacher, which can influence how they regard feedback. There are three sets of participants involved in the process of feedback: the teacher, the student and peers (Wiliam 2013). Fluckiger *et al* (2010) recognised the importance of peer and self-assessment as effective feedback. They explained participating in peer feedback enables students to evaluate their own performance and recognise their contribution but emphasised the importance of using specific criteria in the process, whether the feedback comes from a teacher, peer or self.

3.5.10 (i) Peer feedback and Self-Assessment

Through a study of secondary level students, where peer review was introduced as part of the teaching of English as a foreign language in two Swedish classrooms, Berggren (2014) concluded that peer review could increase student awareness of the topic and inspired them to make changes to their own work following a review of their peers'. Berggren adds that students needed training to help them give constructive feedback, which, in this case, focused on structure, organisation, vocabulary and grammar. Peer review resulted in an enhancement in the students' ability to construct their writing but did not have much impact on spelling and grammar. Similar to this Swedish study, in the UK, Hargreaves (2001) also emphasised students needed to be trained to be able to critically look at their peers' work and make suitable judgements that are linked to the learning outcomes and success criteria. Willis (2011) claimed students develop autonomy by engaging in peer and self-assessment as they learn to reflect on and evaluate their own learning. Effective peer feedback can result in improvements to learning for both the assessor and assessed, however students need to be educated in

its benefits and guided in its application (Hattie 2012, Topping 2009, Black *et al* 2004) and link the feedback to specific criteria (Fluckiger *et al* 2010). As part of KMOFAP, a strategy for using summative assessment as a formative tool was used. Students were involved in preparing tests themselves and marking their peers' work. This resulted in greater engagement with the assessment, enabling students to reflect on their own work and plan revision (Black *et al* 2003). From research undertaken on student perspectives of AfL in elementary and secondary schools in Ontario, Canada, DeLuca *et al* (2018) found peer feedback was the least valued aspect. They concluded this, along with all AfL approaches, required students to be taught about the concepts and how to use them. They emphasised it required a sustained focus to fully benefit from such approaches.

Topping (2009) explained that as peer assessment and feedback requires practice, it should be viewed as a developmental process that can provide a wealth of valuable feedback for students. However, Hattie (2012) warned peer feedback can have negative consequences by providing inaccurate comments and affect the reputation of the learner. Lawson (2013) and Boud *et al* (1999) argued participating in effective peer assessment can equip students with the skills to engage in self-assessment.

Self-assessment enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and helps to build collaborative relationships between them and the teacher (Shephard 2000) as well as recognising their own areas for improvement (Harlen 2007, Briggs and Ellis 2004). It enables students to develop self-regulation by promoting a deep awareness of learning goals and review the progress towards achieving them (Andrade and Valtcheva 2009, Briggs and Ellis 2004,). Munns and Woodward (2006) argued there are critical connections between self-assessment and student engagement. However, students, particularly lower attaining ones, need to be helped to develop the necessary skills (Black *et al* 2004, Weeden *et al* 2002). Participating in self-assessment can lead to new student learning that would not have occurred if there had a passive response (Weeden *et al* 2002). However, Taras (2009) stated self-assessment can only be regarded as effective formative assessment if the students subsequently use the feedback they identify for themselves.

3.5.10 (ii) Teacher Written Feedback

When exploring written annotations on student work, Willis and Adie (2014) found teachers' reflections of the value of comments they provided were important. Through this process, teachers changed their practice from giving feedback to justify a grade to providing more effective feedback. Similarly, Irons (2008) explained the importance of teachers understanding the purpose of the feedback, and whether students will benefit from it. As previously discussed, the KMOFOP introduced the strategy of comment-only

marking. Black *et al* (2003, 2004) argued that improvements in student learning were achieved when the teachers changed from providing grades to making comments on student work, which enabled a dialogue to take place between the teacher and the student. It forced teachers to reconsider the value of feedback and to identify a suitable follow-on activity to enable students to engage with it. Comments such as 'good' 'well done' or 'use a ruler' did not identify what has been achieved or what the next steps are to improve. Elliott *et al* (2016) referred to such feedback, along with ticks, as acknowledgement marking, which does not lead to progress. Comments are needed to provide a greater evaluation of the work and a defined action to improve (Lee 2006, Watkins 2005, Black *et al* 2004). Although Smith and Gorard (2005) were unable to identify a replication of learning gains when this strategy was introduced in a secondary school, they recognised the quality of the comments and commitment of the teachers was crucial to advance learning. Weeden *et al* (2002) and Lee (2006) identified one of the key principles of marking and feedback should be that it is planned for and is integral to teaching and learning. Jonsson (2012) and Irons (2008) have highlighted the importance of using suitable terminology and to ensure students have the skills to understand, decode and apply it.

The report by the Independent Teacher Workload Review (2016) described feedback as taking the form of spoken, written marking, peer marking and self-assessment, which continues the aspects of AfL explored through KMOFAP (Black *et al* 2003). The review refers to the Teacher Standards for England (Department for Education 2011) which state teachers should give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking. They should encourage pupils to respond to feedback, not necessarily a written response, but should be manifested in subsequent work. The review emphasises that deep marking, which it defined as '*a process whereby teachers provide written feedback to pupils offering guidance with a view to improving or enhancing future performance of pupils. Pupils are then expected to respond in writing to the guidance which in turn is verified by the teacher*' (Independent Teacher Workload Review 2016 pg.6) is not required by either OfSTED guidance or Government policy. It also stipulates that mechanisms in pupils' books that indicate verbal feedback has been provided are unnecessary as they are aimed at an audience other than the learner. The review emphasises that such approaches can become ineffective as they are labour intensive for teachers. Student progress can provide sufficient evidence of effective feedback. Other forms of ineffective feedback identified by the review occur when feedback is disjointed from the learning process because it does not respond to pupils' needs and becomes dispiriting for pupils and teachers. Feedback should be part of the learning process (Gamlem and Smith 2013) and allow co-construction (Askew and Lodge 2004) or socio-construction, enabling students to become agents of their own learning (Lam 2017).

3.5.10 (iii) Using Feedback

Assessment and feedback must involve students in the process (Frey and Schmitt 2007, Watkins 2005) so they have some control to improve their learning. Effective feedback does not do the thinking for the student but leads to them taking action (Elliott *et al* 2016, Chappuis 2012). Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018) explained if the teacher does the thinking for the student, they are depriving them of the opportunity to learn. Teacher feedback is powerful in demonstrating to students that they have been heard, as long as the teacher identifies what the student has achieved and what further help is needed (Chappuis 2012). The student is more likely to follow teacher advice if they believe they have engaged with their work. However, if students are not given time and opportunities to improve or extend their work, the comments will be ignored (Blanchard 2009).

Feedback should be part of a constructivist approach, building on previous learning and enabling students to acquire new knowledge (Elwood and Murphy 2015, Faultley and Savage 2007). However, where there has been no learning the feedback will not be useful '*if students don't understand the task but try it anyway, and then receive feedback they don't understand, they can come to believe they are incapable of learning*' (Chappuis 2012 pg. 38). Feedback has to have a context on which it is based, if there is no understanding there is nothing for it to relate to, so it is more powerful if it focuses on existing, rather than a lack of, understanding (Hattie and Timperley 2007). Askew and Lodge (2004) agreed that effective learning encompasses a co-constructivist model in which students take an active role in identifying their development needs and can bring about change. Feedback is constructed through activities, participatory learning, questioning, discussion and discovery learning. This would shift the balance of power from the teacher to the student, however a performance-orientated culture (Hargreaves 2005) may prevent this approach from being fully adopted.

Hargreaves (2001) also explained when children take responsibility, their learning can be enhanced. She suggested this can be done by ensuring students are aware of the learning outcomes, which allows the teacher to adopt more of a facilitator and initiator role while the student learns how to improve their own learning. Gamlem and Smith (2013) undertook research in four Norwegian schools to explore the views of 150 students aged 13 to 15 about the classroom feedback they received. They concluded when students were given opportunities to use the feedback, they were able to see how it could enhance their learning. The best type of feedback enabled students and the teacher to construct achievement through a dialogic process, which developed the way forward for learning. This would enable a successful communication to take place by establishing a mutual understanding (Habermas 1984). However, Gamlem and Smith

(2013) reported this was rarely seen, as the dominant process did not give students sufficient opportunities to use feedback or did not contain sufficient information to enable them to use it.

Clarke (2004) identified an approach which ensured feedback could help students to close the gap (Sadler 1989) in their learning. This required clarification and establishment of the learning objectives and explaining them to the students for each task. The feedback then focused on the learning intention of the task, identifying where it had been achieved and where improvements were needed. Clarke emphasised that only aspects which are part of the learning intentions should be commented on and any errors outside of this are to be ignored. However, Torrance (2007) warned this would narrow the learning experience. Blanchard (2009), Lee (2006) and Clarke (2004) stated it is important that students have time to make the identified improvements to their work in class.

3.6 Summary

Feedback can improve learning but if it lacks specificity it can be regarded as both useless and frustrating (Gamlem and Smith 2013, Shute 2008). Research has shown that formative assessment and feedback can improve learning, not that it will (Torrance 2012). From their meta-analysis of studies on the effect of feedback, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) identified three interventions that can reduce the effect of feedback: praise, threatening students' self-esteem and feedback delivered orally. Feedback is most effective when it focuses on a task and how to improve it, rather than relating to praise, rewards or punishment (Hattie and Timperley 2007, Gipps and Tunstall 1998). Rewards are an ineffective feedback strategy as they do not contain information relating to the task (Hattie and Timperley 2007), so feedback should focus on tactics and strategies that provide cognitive engagement (Butler and Winne 1995). The role of the learner, and how they see themselves as learners (Dann 2018, NRC 2000) should not be overlooked as this can determine how they engage with, and respond to, feedback. Judgements about student performance should consider the circumstances of the individual, their past learning and what they are able to do in relation to the learning intentions (Harlen 2007). This way the feedback can be personalised to the individual student, set achievable goals and can create a dialogue with the teacher (*ibid*).

The position the student has within their learning community can affect their engagement with feedback. Students who feel connected to their teachers and peers are more likely to perform better in assessments (Hopfenbeck 2017). It is evident from the literature discussed that teachers need to have an understanding of the principles of AfL

(Coe *et al* 2014, Stiggins 2006) and understand the power of feedback which can either enhance or negatively affect learning.

It has been shown in this review that empirical data supports the use of AfL strategies to improve student learning, but the reported gains have been criticised (Bennett 2011). The impact of feedback, which can be a crucial aspect of AfL, is subject to who provides it, how it is presented, the role of the student in the process and whether they have opportunities to use it (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Wiliam 2011a). It is also dependant on how the student sees themselves as a learner (Dann 2018, 2015, Havnes *et al* 2012) and whether the feedback is focused on performance or learning goals (Torrance 2002). If the feedback does not contain learning information, it will not advance student learning (Hattie and Timperley 2007) and if the teacher has low expectations of students, feedback may reinforce this (Long *et al* 2011, Stipek 2002, Weeden *et al* 2002). Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their depth of understanding of learning can influence their practice (Bennetts 2011, Jones and Moreland 2005). Despite the publication of research on assessment and feedback, the impact of interventions are difficult to quantify due to the lack of consistencies in the terms and approaches used. However, this could be argued as a strength of formative assessment, which cannot be defined by fixed parameters and can be applied in varying and variable contexts (Hanover Research 2014).

Students want to receive feedback that can help their learning (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Jonsson 2012), but the way in which they respond to it may depend on their cognitive development (Dann 2018). For feedback to be effective, students need to be involved in the process (Harlen and James 1997) and the teacher must understand their needs and how to position feedback to help them benefit from it (Dann 2018, Ruiz-Primio and Brookhart 2018). The role of feedback has not been sufficiently understood (Dann 2018) and Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2018) claim existing research has been undertaken in artificial environments so has led to limited application without long term effects being established.

To develop knowledge in this area further, my research sought to seek the views of students about the feedback they received on their learning as they progressed through their secondary education in one school. As a longitudinal study which involved action research this approach provided a longer-term view than has previously been achieved. The research approach is explained in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: The Research Approach: Methods and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

A case study methodology was adopted, with the data collected from a single school. Elements of action research were incorporated enabling data gained from the student views to provide new understandings to be reached about how feedback was valued and used by students. There has been limited previously published research using this viewpoint, and it enabled teachers to develop their practice, which is the aim of action research (McNiff 2017).

The research involved 152 students completing questionnaires to describe their perceptions of the feedback they received generally, and specifically in eight subjects: Maths, English, Science, Geography, History, French, Technology and Art. The students completed the questionnaires initially when they were in year 8 and again in year 10. In addition, 158 students across years 7 to 11 also participated by completing a questionnaire about their experiences of feedback with one teacher who taught both English and Law. Thirteen of these students also took part in interviews to explore their perceptions in more depth. Three members of teaching staff were interviewed to determine how the students' views could be utilised to develop practice. The data was shared with approximately 50 teachers, including the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to enhance their knowledge of the student experience and provide an opportunity for it to support their practice.

The data collected was qualitative as it focused on capturing students' views about the feedback they received and the teachers' views about student perceptions. Qualitative research focuses on understanding feelings, beliefs and opinions (Newby 2010) and shows an interest in the authenticity of the human experience (Silverman 2010). However, to enable the views of the large cohorts of students to be collected, questionnaires were used as they are the best method of collecting this data (Gillham 2007). Questionnaires are normally associated with quantitative research approaches, and the student views in this research were converted to numerical values for ease of analysis. However, this data represented student opinions, so the qualitative data was subjected to quantitative data handling. This enabled a large number of opinions to be obtained, whilst ensuring the data was manageable (Mujis 2011).

<u>Research Context</u>

The research was undertaken in one school, an 11-16 years secondary school in the East Midlands in a former mining community. This in-depth research in a single school formed a case study (Yin 2018). The school is average in comparison to other secondary schools

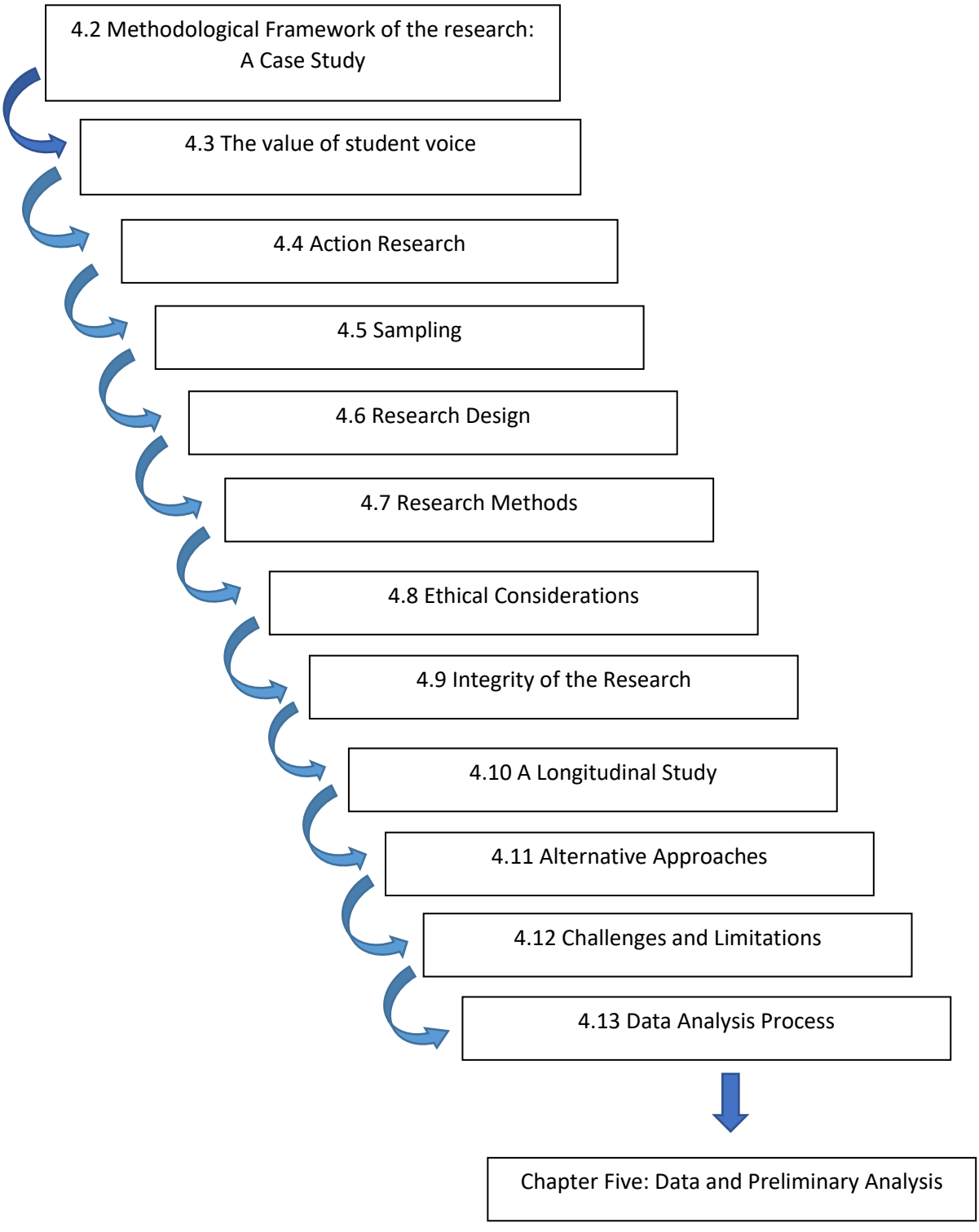
in terms of its size, number of students eligible for pupil premium funding[7], and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Most students were white British, with slightly more girls than boys in total.

Research Objectives

1. Identify the range of feedback given to students;
2. Explore student perceptions of feedback they received;
3. Using student voice, investigate how current teacher feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning;
4. Present the data to the teachers so student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience;
5. Establish the impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning.

[7] Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for certain students, including those from a low socio-economic background

Format of chapter:



4.2 Methodological Framework – A Case Study

Yin (2018) explained case studies are more explorative than other methods enabling an in-depth exploration of an issue and allowing the researcher to explore 'how' and 'why' of a particular contemporary issue. They focus on one or a few instances to provide a detailed account of the experiences or processes (Menter *et al* 2011). Case studies involve real people, often in situations familiar to the researcher (Opie 2004). My existing connection with the school enabled access and hospitality to undertake research at this location, a key feature when identifying a case (Stake 1995).

Case study research aims to '*provide a picture of a certain feature of … activity in a particular setting and the factors affecting this situation'* (Opie 2004 pg.74). Undertaking case study research provided a detailed picture of the student view of feedback and how it supports learning. Swanborn (2010) explained case study research is carried out within a boundary of a social system. The research for this project focused on one school, which was the social system. Another aspect of case studies, identified by Yin (2018), is that it enables a process to be followed over time. In total, this project was conducted over two years providing a depth of data enabling an exploration of student views of teacher and peer feedback as they progressed through their secondary education and their teachers' response to it. This case study methodology drew on elements of action research, which are explained in section 4.4 enabling action to be taken by the school in response to the data during the course of the project.

Swanborn (2010) explained case study research often does not have a precise focus at the outset and can even be broad or vague but becomes more focused as it evolves, and unexpected aspects emerge. In my research, initial data collected at the start influenced data that was collected later, as it revealed aspects of the issue that had not been considered at the outset (these are explained in section 4.13.3). Swanborn (2010) described this is an exploratory approach that enabled me to investigate students' values, opinions, beliefs, motivation, experiences and attitudes during the course of the research.

The research was autonomous as it was not part of a larger project or from prior research. It was applied research, as some of the findings have been useful to the school (Swanborn 2010) during the course of the study using on an action research approach. A criticism of case study research is its focus on a specific location or situation, meaning the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population (Cohen *et al* 2018, Wellington 2015). However, Yin (2018) argued case study research can expand and generalise theories rather than generalising to populations. The outcomes of my research can be used to improve the understanding of student learning, particularly in relation to

feedback. The research outcomes can lead to analytical generalisation by corroborating, modifying, rejecting or advancing existing theoretical concepts, or the identifying new concepts which have arisen from the study (*ibid*).

Swanborn (2010) argued if the issue is wider than the case from which the empirical data was obtained, there can be other situations or organisations that can benefit from the research. This is known as *pars pro toto*, or an instrumental case study (Silverman 2010, Stake 1995). A report by OfSTED on education provision in 2013/14 in the East Midlands identified the region as being '*plagued by mediocrity'* (pg. 3). OfSTED reported the proportion of East Midlands' students reaching the national benchmark of five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and Mathematics was the joint lowest of all regions in the country at 53.2%. More specifically, in Derbyshire (the county in which the school is located) 58% of pupils attended secondary schools that were less than good. The proportion of secondary schools that were not good enough increased from 50% to 62% between 2013 and 2014. This report highlighted there were a high number of schools in which the quality of provision was a concern at the time the case study school was placed in Special Measures. This identifies the issue was not unique to this school and represents a wider issue. The findings of this case study can therefore be considered *pars pro toto*.

The benefits of undertaking case study research can be found in data that is illustrative, illuminating and strong in reality (Cohen *et al* 2018). It enables research questions or design to be modified during the study (Stake 1995), allowing flexibility in approach. However, the data can be open to selection, bias (Cohen *et al* 2018) and the opinions of the participants can be influenced by their need to present themselves in a positive way and, therefore, do not reflect reality (Newby 2010). The approaches to ensuring validity of the research, discussed in section 4.9.1, address these concerns. An important advantage of case studies, which Wellington (2015) and Stake (1995) pointed out, is people reading them can often relate to the case, enabling them to draw on the raw material for their own generalising and interpretation.

4.3 Student voice

The case study approach I adopted gave an insight into student experiences and enabled the research to focus on learning, not the process of teaching. It provided a mechanism to enable teachers to reflect and take action, without feeling it was imposed on them through a hierarchy. It provided a different focus, rather than assessment data, as a way of examining learning and progression. Using student voice as a platform to gain a greater understanding about the way students interpreted and engaged with feedback,

which Peterson and Irving (2008), Bennett (2011) and Dann (2018) stated required further investigation, enabled Research Objectives two and three to be met:

2. *Explore student perceptions of feedback they received*
3. *Using student voice, investigate how current feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning*

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989 Article 12) states '*Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them*…'. This research sought to enable the students in this case study to exercise that right by seeking their views on the feedback they received on their learning. Flutter (2007) explained the process of listening and responding to pupils about their experience can help teachers improve their practice, even being a catalyst for change. Cowie (2005) undertook research with pupils in New Zealand to gain their views on AfL. She concluded the views from students about feedback identified a greater emphasis was needed concerning the role of language and respect. Through this approach, Cowie explained that pupil perspectives gave an opportunity to understand their experience of learning and subsequently review teaching practice. Similar to Cowie's research, my case study sought to understand the participating students' experiences about the feedback they received with the aim of improving opportunities for learning.

Morgan (2011) explored the process and impact of pupil consultation with year 8 pupils in a secondary school. She undertook a qualitative case-study examining the teacher /pupil consultation process undertaken by four teachers to determine how they approached it and the impact it had on classroom practice. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, pupils and school management. From her research Morgan concluded there were benefits to both pupils and teachers from consultation, but it needed strong support from senior management and policy makers to have maximum impact. Morgan's work supports Thompson's (2007) findings in which she concluded proactive approaches to pupil consultation had potential to change classroom activity, but when this was constrained by managerial approaches, the impact was reduced. Thompson emphasised that effective pupil consultation requires teachers to see pupils as responsible and capable of expressing their opinions. The key teachers in my research were involved in the process and, through this, were able to demonstrate to the students they valued their views. However, if there were teachers or senior management in the wider population of the school who did not value students' views, it would diminish the impact of the data obtained.

Similar to Morgan (2011) and Thompson (2007), McIntyre *et al* (2005) identified a positive impact from pupil consultation. They undertook research with year 8 pupils at three UK secondary schools to explore how teachers used the pupils' ideas following consultation. They found teachers' responses differed, some did not find incorporating their pupils' ideas difficult and took them up enthusiastically, being reassured by their insightfulness. However, other teachers felt a tension between professional compliance and the freedom to respond to pupils' ideas. It was also recognised it was only the most articulate pupils who were heard, and consultation would be improved by hearing from pupils who were less confident.

Arnot and Reay (2007) argued student consultation provides an opportunity for teachers to critically reflect on their teaching, but also concluded authenticity of the voice can be a problem if some voices are elicited and others are not. In addition, they explained voices are differentiated by time, relation and place. I undertook questionnaires with students who were in year 8, and further questionnaires when they were in year 10. Although they were the same cohort, their 'voice' could be influenced by the different circumstances and change over the time period. Although it was valuable to seek their views in both year 8 and year 10, any comparison must consider the changing circumstances, which could affect their voice. Arnot and Reay (*ibid*) also emphasised that social background can affect language used, which can determine how the pupils' voice is heard. Noyes (2006) explained pupils with cultural and linguistic capital to express themselves are more likely to have their voice heard. By undertaking questionnaires with the whole cohort of students, I ensured they all had the opportunity and the right to have their voice heard and to express their views. A process of designing and piloting the questionnaire (section 4.7.1 (i)) was undertaken to ensure the terminology used could be understood by the students allowing them to participate. When selecting students for interviews, the teachers invited a range to participate. However, not all students attended the interviews, those less confident in articulating their views, or who did not have a good relationship with the teacher may have chosen not to participate. It is also possible the teachers, as gatekeepers for the selection of the students, identified pupils for the interviews who they felt would be likely to participate and able to contribute (De Vaus 2001), thereby limiting the voices heard.

Thompson (2007) explained the process of consultation must be presented to the pupils as having a purpose. When pupils believe it is authentic, they value the consultation. She also reported where teachers were proactive in consulting with pupils, their relationship was positive, and teachers were more likely to have respect for them. In my research, it could be argued as the two class teachers who were involved were self-selecting, they already valued the idea of obtaining student views and were more likely

to be responsive to the students as a result. The return rate of the Year 10 questionnaires was lower than the Year 8 questionnaires as three of the form tutors did not return them from their students. This could have been because the form tutor did not value the purpose of obtaining student voice or felt threatened by it and failed to allow students to complete or return the questionnaire. If the form tutor, acting as gatekeeper for the children's voices (Thompson 2007), failed to provide them with the opportunity to express their voice, they will have denied them this right under the UN Conventions of the Right of the Child, Article 12 (Brooks *et al* 2014). However, the lower return rate may have been due to the students' decision not to participate in the research, rather than the gatekeepers'.

Despite the limitations of using student voice as a platform to understand their learning experiences, evidence does suggest it can be a valuable tool (Morgan 2011, Arnot and Reay 2007, Flutter 2007, Thompson 2007, Cowie 2005, McIntryre *et al* 2005). Lewis and Porter (2007) claimed research has greater meaning by involving students in the process. Peterson and Irving (2008) agreed by adding that student voice on assessment and feedback was needed to understand how to improve this aspect of learning.

4.3.1 The role of the gatekeeper:

Gatekeepers give access to the field of research (Homan 2002). There were a number of gatekeepers involved in this project. The Head Teacher gave permission for the research to be undertaken in the school and for the specific methods to be utilised. Parents were gatekeepers for the student interviews and subsequently had a choice whether their children participated. With the Year 8 survey, one teacher distributed the questionnaires to the students and was the gatekeeper at this stage. I met with this teacher prior to the distribution and explained the research purpose and questionnaire content. The English/Law teacher was the gatekeeper for the English/Law survey. As she had been involved in the planning of the research, she was familiar with its aims and purpose. The Year 10 questionnaires were administered during form time. This meant the individual form teacher was the gatekeeper. Three form teachers did not return the questionnaires, suggesting they may have chosen not to distribute the questionnaire to their form, or return completed questionnaires. The Art and English/Law teachers were gatekeepers for selecting children to be invited for interview. They may have chosen children likely to give particular responses in the interviews, but we had agreed the sampling strategy prior to selecting the students, it was unlikely they did so. However, they may have selected students who they believed were more likely to participate, preventing the voices of other students from being heard (Arnot and Reay 2007). Hence the role of the gatekeeper is important in considering the research design.

4.4 Action Research

Action research was incorporated into this Case Study, to provide opportunities for the school to reflect on the data as it emerged and take action to improve practice in relation to the way feedback was provided to students. McNiff (2017) described action research as a practical form of enquiry enabling anyone to investigate and evaluate their work. It can support practitioners' continual professional development by improving skills or developing new methods of teaching (Cohen *at al* 2018, Koshy 2010). Through an exploration of practice, action research generates new knowledge following a systematic monitoring process to elicit valid data (McNiff *et al* 2003). It can instigate improvement at a local level and through participatory research and has been claimed to break a culture of spectator research (Cohen *et al* 2018). Kemmis (2010) argued action research is a way to understand the world and use this understanding to become more experienced and act more wisely in future. The power of action research can go beyond achieving knowledge but can actually create a better world by avoiding irrational and false actions, harm, waste and excess, avoiding injustice and exclusion (*ibid*). Schwalbach (2003) differentiated between action research and research in teaching. The former, she claimed, is intended to improve practice in a local context, whilst the latter generates theory, which can filter down to improve practice later. The immediacy of the impact of action research is key.

Efrat Efron and David (2013) explained action research is different from other research approaches as it is constructive, situational, practical, systematic and cyclical. The cyclical process is often referred to as the '*action-reflection cycle*' (McNiff and Whitehead 2006 pg. 9). Action research can therefore develop educational practice in a planned and systematic way by evaluating the current situation and lead to identifying change. A planned and systematic approach enables the researcher to identify the issue to be explored and gather background information to broaden knowledge, which can be incorporated into the design of the research. The data is collected, analysed and interpreted to identify further action. This action is implemented, and the outcomes shared with others. McNiff *et al* (2003) described the sharing of the outcomes as the researcher evaluating their work, seeking ways to improve it and influence others. However, McNiff and Whitehead (2006) warned this type of research does not always go smoothly, often requiring re-planning and negotiated action. Efrat Efron and David (2013) proposed a cycle of action research, which can be seen in Figure 1. Action research normally takes the form of several cycles, with one feeding the next (McNiff *et al* 2003).

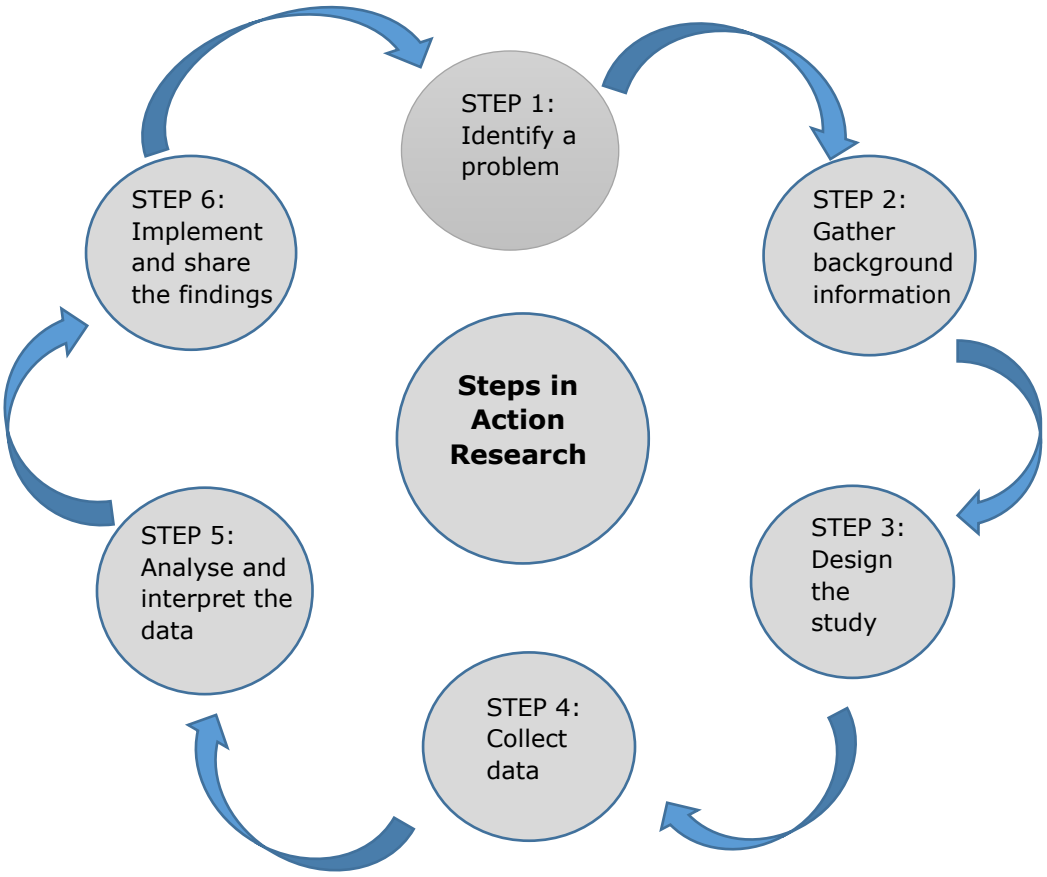


Figure 1: Cycle of Action Research (Efrat Efron and David, 2013 pg. 8)

Step One: The problem, or issue, was identified as a result of the OfSTED (2014) inspection that identified marking and feedback in the school needed to be improved.

Step Two: A literature review was undertaken to obtain a greater understanding of the topic and how it could be researched. Previous work on Assessment for Learning including the principles of the AfL defined by ARG (2002), Black *et al* (2003), Hattie and Timperley (2007), Peterson and Irving (2008) was consulted to identify a focus of the research. Cowie (2005) and Thompson (2007)'s research on student voice identified the value of obtaining student perceptions in the school.

Step Three: The research aim was established, and the objectives developed. The Head Teacher was consulted about the research design and she gave permission for it to proceed. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University. In consultation with doctoral supervisors and by consulting research theory, the research was designed as explained in section 4.7.

Step Four: The data was collected over a total period of two years following the approach explained in section 4.7.

Step Five: A preliminary analysis was undertaken by identifying themes and exploring the data. Further data was analysed as it was obtained. The process of data analysis is explained in section 4.13.

Step Six: The preliminary data analysis was shared with the school. Further areas for research were identified which informed the second research cycle. This was undertaken, and the data analysed which led to the third cycle of research. The cycles of research are explained in section 4.6 and can be seen in Figure 2. The data was analysed and shared with the school with the intention of providing a basis on which the teachers could reflect, identify actions to develop their practice and incorporate this into the classroom. Not all of the data obtained led to subsequent action during the project. Whole school response to the data and action was limited due to a range of factors, discussed in chapter Seven. Localised action and improvement in practice did result in response to the data, explained in chapter Five. The research can therefore be described as drawing on elements of action research, rather than in its entirety.

Approaches in action research can vary and incorporate qualitative or quantitative methods, or adopt mixed methods approaches (Efrat Efron and David 2013, Koshy 2010). Koshy (2010) suggested using questionnaires at the start of the research can be useful to collect a range of information quickly and can help to frame questions that can be asked in subsequent research. This approach was utilised in my research, as explained in section 4.7.

Action research can be used by a variety of individuals or groups, such as teachers or teachers working alongside a researcher. As it takes place *in situ* it can be used in numerous of ways (Cohen *et al* 2018). Koshy (2010) warned action research can be viewed as a soft approach to research as parameters are not clearly defined at the start, however, Cohen *et al* (2018) argued the flexibility which enables research to respond to the evaluation of data during the process is a distinguishing and positive feature. Torrance and Pryor (2001) undertook an action research project to explore formative assessment and observed that following reflection of their own teaching practice, teachers changed their approach when questioning students and when giving feedback. Torrance and Pryor concluded action research allowed teachers to become immersed in their own projects alongside experienced researchers, resulting in successful collaboration and a change of practice in the classroom. The aim of my research was to learn from student perceptions and use this to enable teachers to reflect on and improve practice, identified in Research Objective four (below). An action research approach which, similar to Torrance and Pryor (*ibid*), involved teachers in the reflection of their practice and generated knowledge which could result in change (Efrat Efron and David 2013) was considered suitable.

Research Objective four:

4 *Present the data to the teachers so the student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience*

However, McNiff *et al* (2003) explained new knowledge generated from the process of action research requires validation. This can take the form of self, peer, managers, client, academic or the public. It requires submitting the research for judgement so evidential claims can be agreed. Teachers contributed to the validation process by reviewing the data in context with their practice. Although none of the teachers rejected or contested the data shared with them, there were varied responses to embracing it as a mechanism to improve practice, discussed in chapters 5 and 6. However, sharing the data in this way enabled further knowledge to be gained which added to the understanding of the data from the students, as well as obtaining the views of the teachers. Cardinal *et al* (2004) called this empirical or *a prosteriori,* which allows the researcher to form a reasoned argument from the data, rather than making assumptions or predictions.

The specific action research approach including the validation and dissemination process is presented in Figure 2.

4.5 Sample selection

4.5.1 School

Case studies are not normally randomly selected (Silverman 2010) as the researcher identifies a case that will enable them to explore the area of interest (Newby 2010, Swanborn 2010). This approach can be described as purposive sampling, where the sample is selected because it meets certain criteria which ensures it is suitable to investigate the area of interest (Cohen *et al* 2018, Menter *et al* 2011, Silverman 2010). The criteria that made the school suitable to be a case study was the location in the East Midlands in which there are areas of low-quality education provision (OfSTED 2013/14), the requirement for this school to improve the process of marking and feedback (OfSTED 2014) and my access to it (Cohen *et al* 2018, Stake 1995). This approach to sample selection, whilst satisfying the needs of the research, was deliberately selective and did not represent the wider population (Cohen *et al* 2018); although it could be argued due to the issues of teaching quality reported by OfSTED (2013/14) in the area, this case could be representative of others (Stake 1995).

4.5.2 Participants

Questionnaires: Year 8 students were selected because of their pivotal location: no longer receiving transition support given to year 7 students and not yet studying formal

externally-set assessments of KS4. This year group has been identified as lacking a distinctive identity (Doddington *et al* 1999) and the 'wasted years' with progress in this stage often being slow and teachers inconsistent on the building of pupils' prior understanding (BBC News 2015). As the study involved action research, this cohort could be followed into later years, enabling further data to be collected when the students were in year 10. The target cohort of year 8 students completed the questionnaires during year 8 assemblies. 152 questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire was amended and re-issued to these students when they were in year 10. These were completed when the students were with their form tutors, 83 were returned.

Students completing the questionnaires for English and Law were selected by the teacher (Kirstie) as their views about her practice were required. She decided to involve all her students from years 7 to 11. These groups were also purposive samples (Cohen *et al* 2018, Menter *et al* 2011, Silverman 2010), as they were selected according to particular criteria (taught by this teacher). 158 questionnaires were returned from these students.

Interviews: Students invited to participate in the interviews were selected by the teachers to be representative of their cohort as those who were currently performing at a range of attainment levels so can therefore be described as 'handpicked' (O'Leary 2010). Twelve year 9 Art students were invited: six males and six females. These had participated in the Year 8 survey. Eight of them attended (four males, four females). They were invited back to the second interview nine months later, all eight attended the second interview.

Sixteen students were invited across the year groups to attend the English/Law interviews. An equal proportion of males and females were invited to enable any further differences in the views between sexes to be explored as this was an emerging theme from the Year 8 questionnaires. Seven students attended: two male year 10s, two female year 10s and three female year 7s. These interviews were conducted in the students' break time, on a sunny day which may have influenced their decision to attend. Boys and girls were interviewed separately, with the exception of the second Art interview, when both groups were brought together to form a mixed group of 8.

The participating teachers (Katie: Art and Kirstie: English/Law) were volunteers who had chosen to be involved in the project because they had a particular interest in the topic. They could therefore, be considered to be self-selecting (Newby 2010, O'Leary 2010). The Deputy Head Teacher (Annie) was interviewed to obtain her views about the student data and how it might shape practice wider in the school. She was interviewed because her role gave her specific responsibility for teaching and learning so was in a position to

provide the information desired. She was, therefore a participant selected for a particular purpose (Cohen *et al* 2018, Menter *et al* 2011, Silverman 2010).

Focus Group: The preliminary data was shared with the Senior Leadership team (SLT). SLT was made up of the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Assistant Head Teachers (2), Heads of each Department (5) and the Chair of Governors. SLT was responsible for establishing school policy and leading development, so they had a key role in influencing how the data could be utilised and could provide valuable background information about the school to validate and disseminate the data. They could provide explanations about the findings and identify further action. This group was, therefore, also a purposive sample (Cohen *et al* 2018, Menter *et al* 2011, Silverman 2010).

Discussions: Other class teachers were also an important group to whom the data was disseminated as it concerned their practice. At the SLT focus group, I was requested to share and discuss the data at an In-Service Training (INSET) event. At this event, the data was initially presented to all staff members in the school who were involved in teaching or supporting learning. This was followed with teacher workshops in smaller groups. The purpose of the workshops was to discuss the data and identify specific areas for development within the departments. It provided an opportunity to gain greater insights into the teachers' practice and contextualise the student perceptions.

A task group was established in April 2018 to create a school Assessment and Feedback policy. Dissemination to this group was important to ensure the student views were considered in the development of a new policy.

All the participants, students and teachers, were selected for a particular purpose because it was believed their contribution could add value to the ongoing research or support the research process. The participant details can be seen in Table 5 which also identifies the research cycles and the process of data collection.

4.6 Research Design

4.6.1 Cycles of research

This research was designed to capture and analyse data in a number of cycles, which is represented graphically in Figure 2. This section explains the cycles of the research, further details about the methods are explained in section 4.7.

Cycle one: The process began with exploratory questions to ascertain the students' beliefs about feedback they received from their teachers. This enabled Research Objective one to be met:

1. *Identify the range of feedback given to students*

And Research Objective two to be partly met:

2. *Explore student perceptions of feedback they received*

This cycle initially captured the views of 152 students in July 2015 by questionnaire. The students were then in year 8 (aged 12-13).

At the start of the research, an Art teacher (Katie) asked to be involved in the project as she was reviewing strategies she currently used and saw this as an opportunity to engage students in the process of developing her practice. Interviews with eight students from the target group (now year 9) were undertaken in October 2015 to explore their views on the feedback process in Art and how it could be improved. Katie used the data to reflect on her current approach and identified alterations to the design of her feedback. These students were re-interviewed nine months later to gain their views on the changes implemented (cycle two). This aligned with Research Objective three:

3. *Using student voice, investigate how current teacher feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning*

Swanborn (2010) advises case study researchers incorporate a process of member checking which involves presenting the preliminary results to the participants to gather information that may lead to corrections or additions. This was incorporated into the process of validation (section 4.9.1) to ensure the data collected aligned with the intentions of the research. The Year 8 questionnaire data was presented in graphs and shared with SLT in a focus group who discussed it, considered it in relation to their knowledge of practice within the school and decided on further action to take. This included disseminating the data to each Head of Department and presenting it to the teaching staff at the INSET event with the intention that teachers could use it to inform a reflection of their practice and to identify improvements. This event provided an opportunity to further disseminate the data to a wider audience, to reflect on whether the students' views aligned with the teachers, to use the data to influence changes to teachers' practice in providing feedback and gain further data about the teacher responses to the student views, addressing Research Objective four:

4. *Present the data to the teachers so the student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience*

An outcome from this process resulted in one teacher who taught English and Law (Kirstie) requesting to be involved in the research. She wanted to ascertain the views of all her students from years 7 to 11 regarding the feedback she provided so she could evaluate her practice. The sample participants therefore changed from the initial

research, which can be a common feature of a case study (Silverman 2010) and was incorporated into cycle two of the research process. The involvement of Kirstie enabled an exploration of student perceptions of feedback to be obtained where the teacher was a constant factor and it broadened the scope of views gained.

Cycle Two: The eight students interviewed in October 2015 (cycle one) were re-interviewed in July 2016 to obtain their views on the changes that had been made to the process of feedback in Art by Katie.

The Year 8 questionnaire was amended and references to other the other seven subjects were removed before it was completed by 111 English students and 47 Law students. The English students were from years 7-10, the Law students from years 10-11. Some of the year 10 students may have completed the questionnaire twice, once for English and again for Law. The year 9 English students (n=23) would have had the opportunity to participate in the Year 8 survey in 2015.

Four students from year 10 and three from year 7 were interviewed to explore their views in more depth about the feedback they received from Kirstie, how they valued it and factors that influenced how it was received.

Interviews were carried out with Katie and Kirstie to explore the impact the student views had on their practice. This also enabled validation by providing an opportunity to discuss the survey and interview data and explore the value it provided (McNiff *et al* 2003).

This cycle enabled further progress to be made on Research Objective two:

2. *Explore student perceptions of feedback they received*

And Research Objective five to be met:

5. *Establish the impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning*

Cycle Three: The views of the original target cohort were sought again. This was undertaken in December 2016 when the students were then in year 10. The questionnaires used in July 2015 were adapted to include aspects that had emerged from analysis of earlier data. This is explained in Table 7 and enabled further progress with Research Objective two:

2. *Explore student perceptions of feedback they received*

In July 2017, Annie, the DHT who had responsibility for teaching and learning in the school was interviewed to discuss the outcomes of the data and the school's policy and

practice in relation to assessment and feedback. This provided another opportunity to validate the data by exploring her view of current practice and determine whether there was alignment between this and the student perceptions.

In April 2018, a task group was set up to develop a new Assessment and Feedback Policy for the school. I met with this group on two occasions and shared the outcomes and recommendations of the research which were used to shape the new policy.

These processes enabled Research Objective four to be met:

4. *Present the data to the teachers so the student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience*

In July 2017, I re-interviewed Katie to gain any further reflections she had on being involved in the research. This enabled further data to be gained to progress Research Objective five:

5. *Establish the impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning*

The cycles of research can be seen in Figure 2. The stages of reflection (reflecting on data to inform action); action (implementing changes), dissemination (sharing the data with stakeholders for further reflection) and validation of data can be seen within the cycles. These are based on the process of action research from Efrat Efron and David (2013) and embeds validation into the process (McNiff *et al* 2003), which is described further in section 4.9.1.

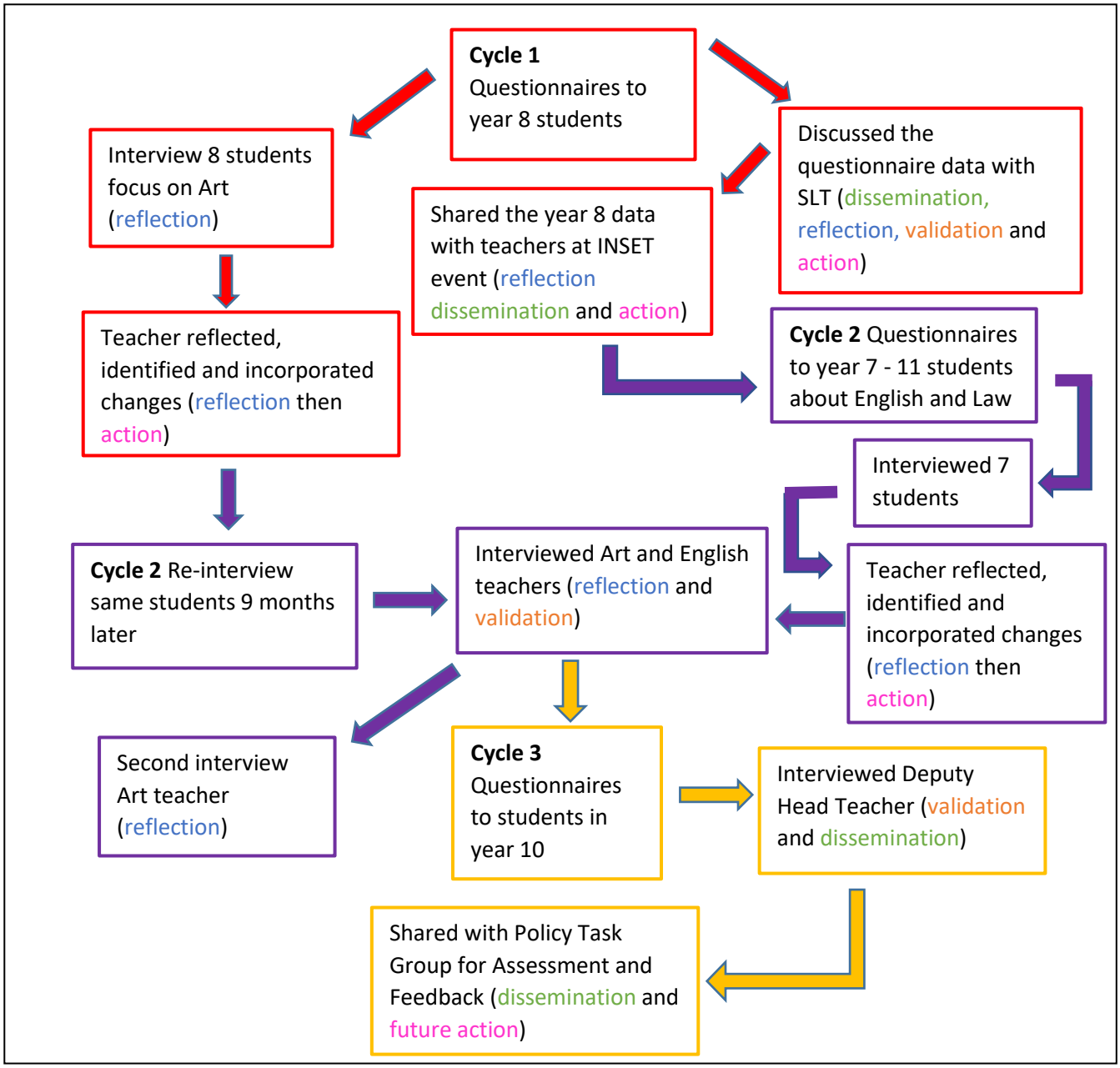


Figure 2: Data collection process

The participant and data collection details can be seen in Table 5.

Participants	Number of participants	Stage of research and data collection method	Date of data collection
Year 8 students	152 (target cohort)	Data collection: Questionnaire	July 2015
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	6	Validation, dissemination, reflection, action Data collection: Focus Group	November 2015
Year 9 students	8 (target cohort)	Data collection: Interview	October 2015 July 2016
Teachers (at INSET event)	30	Reflection, Dissemination and Action Data collection: via Discussion	January 2016
Year 7-11 students	111 English 47 Law (additional cohort)	Data collection: Questionnaire	March 2016
Year 7 and Year 10 English students	7 (additional cohort)	Data collection: Interview	April 2016
Teachers	2	Validation, Reflection Data collection: Interview: Art and English/Law teachers Second interview with Art teacher	 October 2016 July 2017
Year 10 students	83 (target cohort)	Data collection: Questionnaire	December 2016
Deputy Head Teacher	1	Validation, dissemination Data collection: Interview	July 2017
Policy Task Group	5	Dissemination	April, May 2018

Table 5: Participant and Data Collection Details

4.7 Research Methods

4.7.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a useful tool to obtain responses from a large sample (Cohen *et al* 2018, Newby 2010, Gillham 2007). Views were gathered from 287 students, so questionnaires were considered the most effective method for this sample size. Using a questionnaire enabled a large amount of data to be gathered quickly (Cohen *et al* 2018, Menter *et al* 2011) which could be analysed using statistical techniques. Opie (2004)

advised questionnaires must be designed carefully so their appearance is inviting, and the instructions clear to the engage the participants.

Year 8 questionnaire. A blank copy of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 1. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather the views of students in year 8 about the feedback they received from teachers and peers. Whilst interviews are usually an effective way of eliciting participant opinions and views, the large cohort size prevented this approach. Cohen *et al* (2018) and Newby (2010) warned limitations of questionnaires can lead to insufficient data collected due to unsuitable design, participants not completing them in full, no option for the respondent to ask for clarification about the questions and researcher bias in the design of the questionnaire. To minimise the possibility of these problems, the questionnaire was structured with closed questions, which did not allow the respondent leeway in personalising their input (Newby 2010) but did ensure that it was quick and easy to complete (Gillham 2007). The questions required students to choose and tick relevant responses, which avoided putting too much strain on the respondents as this can lead to poor quality responses (Cohen e*t al* 2018). Newby (2010) warned this approach can introduce bias as the categories are based on the researcher's perceptions, which may not be representative of the students' views. However, the questions were based on literature about assessment and feedback, particularly Black *et al* (2003)'s research and the Assessment Reform Group's principles of Assessment for Learning (ARG 2002). This ensured the question content was not based on my pre-conceptions, but on previous research. The questionnaire was structured to aid the analysis of large quantities of data (Cohen *et al* 2018, Newby 2010). Open response boxes were added where respondents could add their own views if they felt they were not adequately captured, although these were rarely used.

Planning and piloting the questionnaire helped to ensure it was designed to obtain the data required and was straightforward to complete. Section 4.7.1 (i) explains the process of piloting the questionnaire. The questionnaire was short, only two sides of paper forming two parts, one on each page. The paper was double-sided to prevent two pages becoming detached (Newby 2010). Cohen *et al* (2018) advised providing instructions for completion where they are needed rather than all at once, so information was given at the start of each part rather than all at the beginning. The first part of the questionnaire required participants to tick selected responses, the second part required students to rate the aspects of feedback they had received. These responses required a greater level of thought than the first part and was considered better to be placed second. Cohen *et al* (2018) and Newby (2010) advised that questionnaires should start with straightforward questions with more thought-provoking ones later as this engages

the respondents and encourages their commitment in completing the questionnaire. Only a few of the returned questionnaires were partially filled out, suggesting the participants found them simple to complete throughout.

The first part of the questionnaire sought to establish the form in which students believed feedback most commonly occurred (written in exercise books or worksheets, verbal through questions or as a grade or report), why teachers gave feedback; what was useful about feedback and what would make it more useful. The questions were designed with multiple choice responses with discrete categories (Cohen *et al* 2007), students were able to select more than one. By providing categories for students to select, I was imposing my view of the choices on the students, rather than leaving them free to provide their own response, thus it could be considered there was a bias in the selection of the response criteria. However, due to the large number of students participating, for ease of analysis and to ensure that the questionnaire was quick to complete, multiple choice questions were believed the best way to capture this data. Students were also asked if in general they liked to receive feedback, this question was dichotomous with only two options (yes/no). This was chosen to force students to make a choice to gauge their overall view (Cohen *et al* 2007). When the questionnaire was completed during the English/Law survey, a small proportion of students chose to add a category 'sometimes'.

The second part of the questionnaire sought to capture student views on written, verbal and peer feedback in eight of their subjects. These are the main areas of feedback determined by the Assessment Reform Group (Gardner 2006). Specifically, the questionnaire sought to gain student views on whether they received feedback on their achievement (known in the school as WWW: What Went Well); on development points (known as EBI: Even Better If); peer feedback; whether written and verbal feedback was explained, was easy to understand, was useful and if they had opportunities to use it. The subjects included in the survey were: Maths, English, Science, Geography, History, French, Technology and Art. Technology was comprised of: Graphics, Resistant Materials and Food Technology in which there were a range of different teachers. These subjects were all compulsory in KS3. They were chosen in agreement with the Head Teacher as she felt these subjects would represent a range of different pedagogical approaches across the school.

Students were asked to give a response to the questions, for each of the eight subjects, using a Likert scale. A four-point scale was used to avoid students selecting a middle option. The four points were: Always, Mostly, Sometimes, Never. This range was felt to be sufficient to capture the potential variations in views. A Likert scale was used as this is an existing robust method (Newby 2010). Normally five points are used in a Likert

scale, but I chose to use four so respondents were forced to have an opinion (Gillham 2007). Newby (2010) argued not having a mid-point does not affect the integrity of the measuring device, however, Cohen *et al* (2018) claimed forcing respondents to have an opinion may make them have a view on something they do not have, and they should be given the opportunity to be neutral. In this research, by seeking students' opinions of the feedback they received, I believed they would already have an opinion through their lived experience, so a four-point scale was suitable. Gillham (2007) argued there are weaknesses in using scaled responses as participants rarely use the whole scale, they tend to lean more towards the positive stance, even if this is not their true belief and the responses do not give reasoning behind their opinion. Despite these limitations, I believed a four-point scale with the chosen categories was sufficient to capture an overview of the students' views and kept the process of completing and analysing the questionnaire simple.

The ordering of the questions was important, so they were meaningful and easy to understand (Cohen *et al* 2018). The first questions focused on gaining the students' perceptions of what constituted feedback. This was intended to get them thinking about feedback and its purpose before moving onto evaluative questions. Similar questions were grouped together to avoid the questionnaire being confusing for respondents. Cohen *at el* (2018) advised researchers to ensure all questions are relevant to all participants, unless it is clear if they do not need to answer some. In the year 10 questionnaire, not all the subjects applied to all students as some were options in KS4 (Geography, History, Art, Technology, French). I chose to include these subjects in the questionnaire to maintain continuity from the Year 8 questionnaire, however some students commented on their irrelevance. It had not been made clear on the questionnaire to only answer applicable questions.

4.7.1. (i) Piloting: When preparing the questionnaire, a pre-pilot (Gillham 2007) was undertaken by having a discussion with two year 9 students to explore their views of feedback and determine how the data could be collected from a large cohort of year 8 students. Through the dialogue with these two students, I identified the types of words they used and clarified them to ensure my understanding was the same as theirs. This terminology was used in the questionnaires ensuring it was age appropriate for the target cohort (year 8). Words used on the questionnaire can affect the responses (Newby 2010), so it was important to use familiar words that the participants would understand (Cohen *et al* 2018). To achieve this, the potential questions were discussed with the two students to ensure they made sense and could capture the information intended. The questionnaire was then created and then piloted by four students from the

target cohort to check the clarity, validity and to gain views on the response system (Cohen *et al* 2007).

The purpose of piloting a questionnaire was to check on the instructions and layout, any ambiguity of wording, how well it could be understood by the participants, the types of questions and format, and particularly, the rating scale (Cohen *et al* 2018). There were two males and two females in the pilot. These students did not participate in the final survey. Piloting enabled me to ascertain the ease with which students could complete the questionnaires, the length of time it would take and the clarity of the instructions and questions. This was particularly important as I was not present when the questionnaires were distributed. As a result of this process, I established the questionnaire took between five and ten minutes to complete. The students said the instructions and questions were clear with the exception of one question which was ambiguous and one which was repetitive. I discussed suitable re-wording with the students and removed the repetitive question. They felt the questionnaire was simple to complete and looked appealing. Preparing and piloting the questionnaire in this way enable it to be refined and ensured it was an effective tool to collect the data required. This gave it construct validity as I had confidence it would measure what was intended (Yin 2018, McNiff 2017, Swanborn 2010).

The students who participated in the planning were willing to co-operate and unlikely to represent a full cohort. This potentially failed to ensure that the questions were worded so all students could understand them, thereby losing the voice of pupils without the linguistic capital to express their voice (Arnot and Reay 2007, Noyes 2006). To overcome this, the questionnaire was kept simple to complete (Gillham 2007). Out of all the questionnaires returned, only 3% were spoiled.

Table 6 explains the process of the questionnaire design. It details the stages, how it was undertaken and the timeframe.

Stage	Action	Time
Questionnaire Preparation	Research literature on the topic to develop understanding to establish the focus of the research and suitable lines of questioning	January – June 2015
	Familiarisation with research methods to determine the most suitable methods.	May – June 2015
Questionnaire Design	Consultation of literature on questionnaire design to ensure the tool was robust and effective	June 2015
Pre-pilot	Discussion with two year nine pupils about their views of feedback to determine appropriate question type and terminology	June 2015
Piloting	Four year 8 students piloted the questionnaire to determine the ease of completion and suitability	July 2015
	Amendments made to the questionnaire	July 2015
Distribution	Distributed blank copies of the questionnaire to the school for completion	July 2015
	Collected completed questionnaires for analysis	July 2015

Table 6: The process of questionnaire design

4.7.1 (ii) Year 8 Questionnaire distribution: Paper versions of the questionnaires were distributed to the students. These were administered by a gatekeeper, who was a teacher in the school, rather than the researcher. The attitude of the gatekeeper could have introduced a bias by influencing the student responses and therefore affecting the student view (Arnot and Reay 2007). However, having an unknown person administer the questionnaire may have been uncomfortable for the students, so a familiar member of staff managing this process was preferred. The absence of the researcher prevented an opportunity for any clarification regarding the tool to be made (Cohen *et al* 2018). To overcome this, clear instructions were given to the gatekeeper regarding the completion of the questionnaire to ensure that it gathered student views as accurately as possible, although her attitude could have determined the seriousness of its completion (Cohen *et al* 2007).

4.7.1(iii) English/Law Questionnaires: Following a request from Kirstie to be involved in the research, I provided her with a copy of the original Year 8 questionnaire to gain her views on the suitability of its use for her students. We agreed it would be appropriate to use the same questionnaire with the removal of the range of subjects in part 2. A copy of this amended questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 2. Kirstie distributed the questionnaires, which were completed during her lessons.

4.7.1 (iv) Year 10 questionnaires: The original Year 8 questionnaire was adapted to reflect changes in the school and issues emerging from earlier research which I wanted to capture when students were in year 10. However, it was important to keep some similarities with the original questionnaire to explore the views of students as they progressed through the school. To keep the questionnaire short and simple (Newby 2010, Wellington 2015) some original questions were omitted. Table 7 explains the changes made to this questionnaire. A copy of the Year 10 questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 3.

Table 7: Changes made from year 8 questionnaire to year 10 questionnaire

Year 8 questionnaire	Year 10 questionnaire	Reason for change
I think that feedback is: • Written in exercise books • Written on worksheets • A grade • Teachers asking questions • Teachers answering questions • Constant monitoring report	This question was removed	The question was removed as it was considered the students' views of what feedback was had been established in the original questionnaire. The removal enabled additional questions to be added.
Why do you think teachers give you feedback? • To give me a *working grade*	The terminology was changed from 'grade' to 'level': To show what *level* I am	This reflects the change in the terminology adopted by the school, which used the terms levels rather than grade by December 2016.
What do you find useful about feedback?	No change	This question was considered to be relevant to year 10
What would make your feedback more useful?	This question was removed	This question was removed as it had been established in the original questionnaire. The removal enabled additional questions to be added.
	What part of feedback do you value the most? • Being given a level • The teacher's comments • Neither • Both • Other (please state)	This question was added due to the change in Government policy in 2014 to drive schools away from focusing on grades and levels to more qualitative feedback (Department for Education 2014). The students' views regarding levels and comments were sought in this survey.
Generally, do you like to receive feedback on your work?	This question was removed	Question was removed as their views had been established in original questionnaire. The removal enabled additional questions to be added.
What types of feedback do you get in class on your learning? • WWW/EBI • Verbal feedback • Peer feedback	Feedback makes a positive difference to my learning: • Written feedback • Verbal feedback • Peer feedback	Question was changed due to a strong focus in the school about increasing the provision of feedback since 2015. The rewording of the question sought to establish if the feedback was having a positive difference in learning, rather than being just provided.

Is written feedback explained to you?	This question was removed	These questions were removed as they were addressed in the question below and their removal enabled additional questions to be added.
Is verbal feedback explained clearly to you?	This question was removed	
Is your feedback easy to understand?	Feedback is easy to understand	
Is the feedback that you get useful to you?	Feedback helps me to think about my own work	The students' views gained through the interviews referred to feedback being a mechanism to think about their work. This was important to capture from the year 10 students. In the preliminary analysis (Chapter 5), the term 'useful' was shown to be confusing and open to interpretation, so it was avoided in the Year 10 survey.
Do you have opportunities to use written feedback to improve your work?	These 2 questions were combined to: Feedback helps me to improve my work	It was considered this was a simpler way to collect this information and kept the number of questions to a minimum.
Do you have opportunities to use verbal feedback to improve your work?		
	I understand the success criteria in my subjects	Teacher and student interviews as well as published literature highlighted the importance of students understanding success criteria (Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart 2018, Swaffield 2011, Hattie and Timperley 2007, Harlen 2007 Black *et al* 2003), I wanted to ascertain the students' understanding of this across the eight subjects.
	I am confident in assessing my own work to identify strengths and areas for improvement	As peer assessment was not regarded as useful in the Year 8 questionnaires, this question was added to identify the students' confidence in self-assessment. Self-assessment is an important aspect of Assessment for Learning and can support peer assessment (Berggren 2014, Lawson 2013, Willis 2011, Black *et al* 2003). It was also raised by the students in the Art interviews.

4.7.2 Interviews

Interviews can provide the researcher with new knowledge about the respondents' experiences through an interaction between them and the interviewer (Kvale 2007). Interviews were chosen to elicit more information from a small sample of students with regards to aspects of teacher and peer feedback. Student interview data was intended to supplement the questionnaires by enhancing the understanding of the social actions and process (Menter *et al* 2011) regarding the issue explored. The interviews had two purposes: to gain student views specifically in one subject (Art) to help the teacher develop her practice; and to establish student views about the feedback provided by another teacher (English/Law) to review her practice and identify what could be learned from her approach. Kvale (2007 pg.11) explained interviews '*allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words*'. The perspective from every student could not be captured, so a sample of students were chosen. It is acknowledged these cannot be assumed to be representative of the whole student cohort.

In addition, interviews undertaken with teaching staff were designed to ascertain how the student perceptions had been used both at a local level (subject teachers) and at a school level (SLT and DHT). They also provided an opportunity for the respondents to discuss and reflect on the data and identify any further action to be taken. The interviews enabled aspects that emerged from the questionnaire data to be explored in depth and provided a greater understanding of the student experience (Kvale 2007).

4.7.2 (i) Planning the interviews

Prior to the student interviews, I met with the subject teacher and we planned the focus of the interviews. Initial analysis of the Year 8 questionnaires indicated there could be difference in opinions in male and female students, so it was decided to interview them separately to allow for a different line of discussion to emerge, if necessary. The focus of the interview depended on what the teacher wanted to achieve, but the purpose was to build on knowledge gained from the questionnaires. To obtain views from a range of students, the teachers identified individuals with varying attainment grades and invited them to attend. It was agreed parental permission would be sought for students to participate. The questions were finalised and sent to the teachers for agreement in advance of the interview.

When planning the teacher interviews, I established the greater knowledge that was sought. This differed with the interviewees as it was dependent on their role and why they were involved in the research.

4.7.2 (ii) Conducting the interviews

Student interviews: the student interviews were undertaken as a group as it was considered they would feel more at ease with their peers rather than being interviewed alone. It was also believed students would engage with each other and through this process developing a greater depth of discussion and analysis of their views. This approach can be described as a focus group (Wellington 2015, Efrat Efron and David 2013,). However, in the event, the students did not engage in this way and preferred to respond to questions individually, with little interaction between them. This may have been because students were unsure of the process and not familiar with discussion and interaction in this context or were reticent to speak up in front of their peers. The interviews became researcher-led which resulted in group interviews, rather than a focus group where the researcher facilitates a discussion between the participants (Thomas 2009). The interviews were carried out in the students' subject classroom with the class teacher present. The presence of the class teacher may have resulted in the students being cautious about giving any negative views, but it was considered important for the teacher to be present to put the students at ease and was in line with the ethical agreement. Students were informed of the purpose of the interviews, why their views were sought, how they could be used to understand their experience and inform practice (Yin 2018). Confirmation was then sought from the students that they were happy to participate.

Written notes were taken during the interview rather than audio recording, as it was considered the latter could inhibit students. They were informed the purpose of making notes was to ensure their views were recorded and were not for creating a report or passing to a third party. For ease of analysis, comments made by females and males were recorded in different colours. Abbreviations and codes were used to avoid taking extensive notes, which can disrupt the flow of conversation and lead to selective and biased note-taking (Kvale 2007).

As the student interviews were undertaken during their lunch break, it was important to keep them to the agreed length, so they did not lose too much of their free time. They lasted a maximum of 20 minutes each. At the end of the interviews, the key points were re-iterated and checked with the students to ensure they had been captured accurately. This is a process of member-checking (Swanborn 2010) ensuring the validity of the research while it is undertaken (O'Leary 2010, Kvale 2007). The questions were initially generated from literature on assessment and feedback, but it was important to frame them in language the students could understand (Kvale 2007). As the teachers were present, they could clarify any ambiguity arising from the questions or responses. This provided another opportunity to validate the data.

Art interviews: the purpose of these interviews was to ask students to evaluate the current process of providing feedback in this subject and to make suggestions as to how it could be improved. Katie, the Art teacher, had previously examined the Year 8 questionnaire data and recognised that 56% of students stated they could use written feedback and 53% could use verbal feedback 'all' or 'some' of the time which indicated there was a proportion of feedback provided which was not useful or used by students (Chapter 5, Section 4, Table 14). She was therefore keen to make changes to her approach. The research approach was structured, involving prior instrumentation (Miles *et al* 2014) as the purpose focused on achieving a specific outcome (gaining student views to inform changes to practice). Katie presented the existing Assessment Record and Success Criteria checklist (Chapter 5, Section 5, Figures 3 and 4) to the students and asked their views about it. In particular, this focused on their understanding of the success criteria and if it helped them to see how their work was marked. Students were asked about their views on the written comments they received which were identified as WWW and EBI. The existing school policy required teachers to pose a question about the student work after marking it, which the students were expected to answer. The students were asked about their views on this process. The responses students gave were built on through further questions by myself and Katie, which led to them making recommendations to improve the process.

Two groups of students were interviewed: one group of four females and one group of four males. As a result of the student perceptions, Katie made a series of changes to the feedback process during the year. The same eight students were re-interviewed nine months later to gain their views of the changes made. In this second interview, Katie presented the feedback from the students' last assessment piece they had undertaken. Specifically, they were asked if the feedback helped them to identify what they had done well, how to improve their work, and their views about the student response process. This line of questioning was consistent with the previous interviews and the questionnaires. Building on outcomes of the English/Law interviews which had been undertaken prior to this, students were also asked about factors that affected how they received feedback and what would make them engage with it more. The indications from the Year 8 questionnaires suggested students were not motivated by the feedback, so they were asked about their motivation following the changes Katie had implemented.

English/Law interviews: The interviews carried out with the English/Law students were designed to explore student views in greater depth regarding the feedback they received from Kirstie. Questionnaire data indicated students valued the feedback Kirstie provided (Chapter 5, Section 3, Chart 16) so the purpose of the interviews was to identify the practice she adopted and how this could be shared. Specifically, students were asked

about their preferences for verbal or written feedback, and the regularity of it. They were asked what they wanted feedback to focus on, the factors affecting how they received it and what they did when they did not understand it.

The interviews were undertaken in groups, which consisted of: two male year 10s, two female year 10s and three female year 7s.

Teacher interviews: the two teachers (Katie and Kirstie) were interviewed to ascertain how the outcomes of the research had influenced their practice. They were interviewed separately and were sent the questions in advance, so they could prepare. Interviews were carried out at mutually convenient times and conducted in the teachers' classrooms. Both teachers gave consent for the interview to be audio-recorded. This enabled me to focus on the content of the interview and avoid being distracted by taking notes (Kvale 2007). Similar to the student interviews, member checking took place at the end to ensure an accurate recording of the discussion (Swanborn 2010). These interviews required less prior instrumentation (Miles *et al* 2014) as they were intended to be more exploratory in nature than the student interviews. Kvale (2007), Silverman (2010) and Cohen *et al* (2018) described such an interview as semi-structured as it only had an outline of what needed to be covered and was able to be flexible to adapt to the teachers' responses.

The questions for Katie focused on the changes she made to her feedback practice and how they were developed. She was asked to what extent the student perceptions had influenced this and whether her understanding of feedback had changed as a result. As she had made changes to her approach, I enquired whether this required teaching the students to engage with feedback differently. She was also asked her opinion of the students' comments and what her next steps were. Katie left employment from the school in July 2017, so prior to her departure I undertook a final meeting with her to capture any further changes or any additional reflections.

Kirstie had a different reason for being involved in the project. She was asked whether she had made any changes to her practice as a result of the research, whether her view of feedback had altered and what she considered to be the main purpose of feedback. She was asked how the student views had influenced her practice and how she used the data from the questionnaire and interviews.

SLT Focus Group: I was invited to attend an existing Senior Leadership Team meeting to present the year 8 survey data. From this, SLT discussed the data and its possible implications. I instigated the discussion but did not lead its direction, which is characteristic of a focus group (Wellington 2015, Efron and David 2013, Thomas 2009). This also allowed validation of the data by establishing whether the views of the senior

managers, who had knowledge of the practice in the school, were in line with the students (O'Leary 2010).

Deputy Head Teacher interview: this interview was undertaken to discuss the strategies the school adopted to improve teaching quality. It focused on student progress and Assessment for Learning approaches across the school. A discussion took place about the Year 8 questionnaire data, student interviews and emerging themes from the Year 10 questionnaires. Written notes were used to record the discussion, as Annie felt uncomfortable about being recorded. Whilst this interview allowed Annie to gain an insight into the student views, she was also able to compare them with her knowledge of the teaching approaches in the departments, so it served as part of the validation process to confirm the interpretation of an insider (O'Leary 2010).

Discussions: Following the SLT focus group, I presented data to the teachers at the INSET event and subsequently engaged in discussions with them during the workshops. These were not focus groups or group interviews as the purpose of the workshops was for the teachers to reflect on the data and identify strategies for development within the departments. The discussions provided greater insights into the teacher perspective of the issue and allowed validation of the data by placing a context to the student views.

The outcomes of the Year 8, Year 10, English and Law questionnaire data and the interview data was presented to the Task Group for the Assessment and Feedback policy to enable them to utilise it to inform the new policy. These discussions enabled dissemination of the data to take place but did not form part of the primary data.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Researching with children can have ethical concerns that need to be considered prior to, during and after data has been collected (Brooks *et al* 2014). The research was designed to ensure ethical issues were minimised particularly with respect to access, consent and power. The approach to the research could be described as utilitarianism as it aimed to maximise benefit and minimise harm (*ibid*). This principle focuses on the wider benefit and can provide justification for the research (Bridges 2002). By applying Brooks' *et al* (2014) model of utilitarianism to this research, the benefits and harm are examined. The students' perceptions were gained from a large cohort of students, in total this was 287. The high participation number enabled the views of a wide range of students to be heard, giving a large quantity of data. In order to develop knowledge of the students' views in depth, 15 of these students participated in interviews. This combined approach of questionnaires and interviews enabled a breadth and depth of data to be obtained, reflected on, evaluated and used to shape practice. It can be argued this maximised the benefit. The questionnaires were quick to complete, and the interviews kept as short as

possible. This limited the intrusion into student and teacher time, so it can be argued they minimised harm.

Guidelines from the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) were followed, which clearly outlined a researchers' responsibility to participants. These are considered below.

4.8.1 Voluntary informed consent: As the questionnaires were administered by a gatekeeper, I prepared a briefing note to explain to the students the purpose of the research, and their right not to participate. I was reliant on the gatekeeper to explain this when administering the questionnaire to ensure they were fully aware of the research in which they were participating. As I was not present I was not able to answer any questions, so the briefing note needed to contain clear information. In addition, I spoke to the gatekeepers where possible. It was important to ensure the students understood what they were being asked to participate in, so their consent was informed and not assumed (Homan 2002). The students could have chosen not to return the questionnaire but as it was completed in class time, they may have felt an obligation to participate rather than refuse. A small percentage (3%) of questionnaires were returned spoiled, suggesting these individuals exercised their right not to participate by spoiling the questionnaire. It is not known how many students chose not to return anything.

Parental consent was required for students to participate in the interviews. This was requested because students were under the age of 18 and are considered vulnerable participants (Silverman 2010, Thomas 2009). It was also relevant as the students were attending during their break time, which had a potential harmful effect, although it was minimised as much as possible, as explained in 4.8.2. It was also felt as they were being selected from a larger cohort of their peers, it was reasonable to seek permission from parents. The Head Teacher also felt it was a good public relations exercise for parents to see that research was being undertaken in conjunction with a university with the aim of improving practice, so was keen to obtain consent to involve their children. The type of consent used was opt-in, rather than opt-out, so students had to return a signed consent form to enable them to attend the interview (the letter to parents can be seen in Appendix 4). Taking this approach gave parents the role of gatekeeper by making the decision whether their children could participate and have their voice heard. The majority of the children who were invited to attend the interviews did provide parental consent. Those that did not had forgotten to pass it onto their parents so could not participate.

Both the subject teachers and Annie gave their consent to be interviewed and as they were involved in the research to varying extents, were aware of the purpose. SLT and

the teachers in the INSET event were also aware their views were part of the research and it was explained they could request their contributions were not used.

At the start of all of the interviews, a briefing was given to the participants informing them of its purpose and how it contributed to the research overall. This would ensure the participants had given informed consent (Kvale 2007).

4.8.2 Detriment Arising from Participation in Research: the students completed the questionnaires in class time; however, from piloting it was established it took between five and ten minutes to complete, which minimised the time taken. The length of time to complete the questionnaire was explained to the gatekeepers. The student interviews were carried out during their break, which could have a negative impact on their time to have lunch and relax. To minimise this, they were given lunch passes by the teachers, which enabled them to go to the front of the lunch queue and have food before coming to the interview. The length of the interview was kept short, a maximum of 20 minutes. Although this limited the amount of data that could be collected, it did ensure the students still had part of their break.

The teacher and DHT interviews were undertaken at a pre-arranged time when they had a free period or at the end of school. This ensured they were not taken away from teaching time. The SLT focus group was undertaken during one of their scheduled weekly meetings, so did not require them to attend an extra meeting.

4.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity: Students were asked to put their names on the questionnaires so any later analysis of responses from students with special educational needs (SEN) could be extracted. However, due to the low proportion of SEN students in the school, it was later decided not to investigate this aspect. This may have skewed the student responses as they were not anonymous, however I was advised by the Deputy Head Teacher the students would be unlikely to be influenced in this way. No students' names have been used in the research or in any information provided to the school. Students and teachers were assured at the start of the interview their identities would not be revealed. All participants' details have been anonymised and the questionnaires and interview data stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and, more recently, the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

4.8.4 Power relationship: Student voice is the platform through which this research has taken place. The views of the child can sometimes be trivialised, sensationalised or mis-represented by an adult researcher (Brooks *et al* 2014). Throughout this research, the participants' views were treated with respect and every attempt was made to represent them as they were intended. At the end of the interviews, the content was confirmed to ensure participant views had been accurately recorded (O'Leary 2010, Kvale 2007).

Students were advised the views they expressed would only be used for the purpose of this research and would not be divulged to other parties or used in other ways.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child Article 36 specifically refers to children involved in research. It states they should not be exploited by researchers and should understand their rights as participants. The measures taken ensured this Right was maintained and the students were willing participants with an understanding of the research in which they were involved.

4.8.5 University process. Ethical approval for this research project was granted on 20 July 2015 by Nottingham Trent University in accordance with its requirements for research degrees. The Head Teacher gave consent for the research to be undertaken in the school. She was provided with a final draft of the questionnaire before the research proceeded to ensure she was comfortable with the approach. The application for ethical approval and outcome can be seen in Appendix 5.

4.9 Integrity of the research

Schwalback (2003) explained action research must have integrity. This section will clarify how the research was designed to demonstrate it had validity and was and reliable in its approach.

4.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to how effective a research tool was in measuring what it intended to measure (McNiff 2017, Wallace 2015). Habermas (1984) argued validity is important in communication as we need to ensure others believe in our claims and thus understand our message. It was therefore important the research was designed to ensure it was valid and the data collected enabled a greater understanding of the topic to meet the research objectives. Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984) states a mutual understanding can only be achieved through a dialogue. This was not possible in all aspects of this research, so the approaches used had to be carefully designed to achieve a mutual understanding as much as possible through piloting of methods and clear communication when they were implemented. Long (2017) argued Habermas' theory can be applied to demonstrate validity in mixed methods research via his three validity claims. The objective claim (claim to truth) is established by describing the setting, the participants and the process; the normative claim (claim to rightness) is established by explaining and justifying the methods to demonstrate their relevance; and the subjective claim (claim to authenticity is established by explaining what is generated from the data. Applying Habermas' theory and Long's (2017) views to support the validity claims for this research, the claim to truth is set out in section 4.2: A Case Study and in section

4.6: Research Design; the claim to rightness is explained in section 4.6: Research Design and the claim to authenticity is explained in Chapter Five.

The validity of research depends on the design and implementation of methods, and by ensuring approaches and tools chosen related to what was intended to be measured (Yin 2018, O'Leary 2010, Swanborn 2010, Schwalbach 2003). This gives them construct validity because they were constructed to elicit relevant data to meet the research objectives. The final design of the questionnaires and interviews were developed after piloting, as explained in section 4.7.1 The questionnaires and interviews were successful in capturing student views about the feedback they received from their teachers and peers, so they had construct validity. A member checking process at the end of the interviews ensured the participants' views had been recorded accurately.

Schwalbach (2003) explained validity in action research requires the soundness of the subject matter to be maintained throughout the research. Published research was used to identify themes of the questions asked in the questionnaire. The previous work of Black *et al* (2003) on assessment for learning: written feedback, success criteria, self and peer feedback formed the basis of the questions. The principles of the Assessment Reform Group (2002) were also drawn upon by exploring the motivational aspects of feedback and opportunities to use and engage with it. This literature was also used to establish the themes in the data analysis (Chapter Five).

Validity was also achieved by sharing and discussing the data as it emerged with colleagues and fellow researchers at doctoral conferences and to teacher educational professionals through the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN).

Internal validity can be influenced by the way the researcher interprets the data and the inferences made (Yin 2018). The approach to data analysis, explained in section 4.13, identifies how the data was themed and inferences drawn. As the school was in Special Measures at the time of the research, it was important not to assume any changes in student opinion were solely down to the research or subsequent practice of the teachers but could also be due to any other changes and initiatives taking place. This research sought to gather, explore, share and utilise students' views to shape teachers' understanding and practice rather than use any other form of data. As such, performance data from assessments was not used as a measure of learning enhancement in this research as it could be influenced by other factors and would affect the validity of the research claims (De Vaus 2001). The use of SPSS data analysis software enabled a statistical analysis of the differences in views between certain groups

of students. Whilst statistical analysis is rare in case study research (Yin 2018), the large sample in this situation enabled this to be possible and was useful to see if differences were due to randomness or were suggestive of another reason.

External validity refers to the relevance of the findings being useful beyond the immediate study (Yin 2018). The nature of action research, which occurs in the natural setting (Schwalbach 2003), gives it external validity as it is representative of real-world experiences (De Vaus 2001). OfSTED's East Midlands Regional Report (2014) identified concerns about the quality of education provision in the East Midlands, so the outcomes of this research may have wider relevance in that it can inform the development of practice beyond this single school case study. Sharing the research and acceptance by professional colleagues at seminars and conferences gives the data external validity (McNiff 2017). This was achieved during the course of the project.

4.9.2 Reliability

Swanborn (2010) and Cohen *et al* (2018) claim the question of reliability refers to whether the research results remain stable over time with no changes occurring if the research was repeated. In case study research, it is unusual for the research to be repeated as it is specific to the case, but the reliability can be achieved by documenting the procedure adopted (Yin 2018). Cohen *et al* (2018) claimed reliability in qualitative research can be achieved by identifying a fit between what the researcher records as data and what occurs in the natural setting. This research was designed to capture the experience of students and teachers in the setting, so the creation of the tools was important to ensure this was done as accurately as possible. Student views will not remain constant and can change, influenced by the factors previously discussed in the literature review (Chapter Three). Thus, the data could only capture their views at the time of the surveys. It cannot be assumed the information students gave at the time was fully representative of their views. They may have been influenced by the teachers who administered the questionnaires (the gatekeepers), by their peers or their attitude on the day.

To ensure the questionnaires were a reliable tool, they were designed in relation to published research, using age-appropriate terminology and were piloted to ensure they were simple to complete and effective in eliciting the data required. To achieve reliability through the interviews, I needed to avoid a bias in the questions and interpretation. The student interview questions were structured and shared with their teachers in advance. This approach was taken to check the suitability of the questions and enable the teachers to feel part of the research process. The teacher interviews were less structured but were also shared in advance to give them an opportunity to prepare so their

responses were more considered than they might have been if this had not been done. Structured interviews, Cohen *et al* (2018) argued, increase reliability as it ensures each participant is asked the same questions. However, the benefit of an interview is that it evolves, it can be flexible and dig deeper into the responses of the interviewees, providing rich data (Newby 2010). It was therefore important to maintain flexibility to explore the student and teachers' perceptions and enable the aspects they raised to be followed up, so a semi-structured approach was used. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (available in Appendices 6-14), providing documentary evidence of the conversations to increase reliability of the process (Silverman 2010).

By discussing the data with members of the SLT and the DHT, a comparison could be made between their knowledge of the current practices and student perceptions, which lead to subsequent action.

4.11 A Longitudinal Study

Longitudinal studies enable change to be measured over time by collecting data over at least two points in time (Thomas 2009, De Vaus 2001). This research is the first to capture students' views over a period of eighteen months enabling new information to be obtained about this issue. The views of the target cohort of students were obtained when they were in year 8 at the start of the study and again when they were in year 10 towards the end of the study. As the same student year group were involved at both points and were questioned further during the course of the research, it can be described as a *panel study* (Cohen *et al* 2018, Thomas 2009, De Vaus 2001) however it cannot be guaranteed all students participated at both points. There were fewer questionnaires completed in year 10 than in year 8, approximately 68 students did not complete them the second time. Students may have been absent from school at either data collection points, so their views only obtained once. Students leaving or joining the school between years 8 and year 10 would have not completed it at both points. Thomas (2009) identified this as a limitation of a longitudinal study. However, there was no suggestion from the school that the student cohort had changed considerably between the collection points.

Longitudinal studies enable an issue to be studied and to identify similarities, differences and changes over the time (Cohen *et al* 2018, Thomas 2009). The data at these two points was collected by questionnaire. Some of the questions were similar at both points, others were different. The justification of the changes has been explained in Table 7. The aim of the longitudinal study was not to see if any intervention arising from the initial research had changed student perceptions, as during the timescale of this research, other changes occurred in the school, so any difference in student perception could not

be considered accountable to this research alone. It did, however, enable an insight into the views of students about feedback they received from their teachers as they progressed through their school towards the national assessments at the end of KS4 (GCSEs). Any changes could have been due to a developmental or age effect (De Vaus 2001), but a combination of other effects, such as improved approaches to teaching and learning across the school, scrutiny of the Inspectorate and a changing teacher workforce could also be the cause.

4.11 Alternative approaches to data collection

This section discusses alternative approaches that could have been used to collect data and explains why they were not selected in my research.

4.11.1 Observation

Yin (2018) argued observations are valuable in case study research as they provide opportunities to see behaviours occurring in the natural setting. The data collected from an observation would be *in situ* (Cohen *et al* 2018), rather than based on recollection of previous events. Observations of a selection of lessons would have enabled me to record how a teacher provided feedback to a student in class and their response to it. However, this would have only given me a researcher's interpretation of the situation, not the student perception of the value of the feedback, which was the aim of the research. I could have observed some lessons when feedback was provided and followed this up with interviews with students to gain their views immediately after the event. However, a tight timetable with pressure to deliver the curriculum and the flexible nature of feedback made such an approach difficult. Moreover, the presence of a researcher in the classroom may have influenced the behaviour of the teacher and resulted in different behaviours to those they normally demonstrate (De Vaus 2001).

The school has a policy of lesson observations agreed with the teaching union. Any observations I undertook would have been outside this policy and could have caused difficulties in the school management process. Although observations could have provided an opportunity to access the social context (Cohen *et al* 2018), it was considered the limitations and potential impact on school management made such an approach unsuitable for this study.

4.11.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis involves the use of pre-existing documents as primary data to obtain further information on the subject (O'Leary 2010). The benefit of using documents in this way is it enables them to be viewed repeatedly, can be unobtrusive and available for long periods of time (Yin 2018). Documents that could have been used in this research

would be student workbooks and worksheets where feedback had been provided by a teacher. This would have enabled me to view how the teachers provide feedback to the students. However, these would have been viewed from my perspective as a researcher and thus had a bias based on my interpretation of effective feedback (O'Leary 2010) and would not have provided me with the viewpoint of the students. This form of primary data was, therefore, not considered to be useful in achieving the aims of the research. However, Katie and Kirstie were keen to show me their practice and provided samples of the range of feedback they gave to students. This was valuable in providing context for the topic and in understanding the student perceptions about the feedback they received, but it was not used as primary data.

4.12 Challenges and Limitations

There were a number of challenges faced during the research. Although I had access to the school to do the research, logistics and limitations of time affected how and when the research could be undertaken. It would have been useful to conduct more interviews with students to delve deeper into their perceptions and how these can be used to gain a better understanding of student learning. However, time constraints and pressures on teaching limited opportunities for undertaking more interviews. The School Council, which is a student committee, would have been a useful forum to obtain more views from students. Unfortunately, this committee was managed by Annie who was not keen to support this approach.

Although the Head Teacher was initially enthusiastic about the research, she had recently been appointed to lead a school that had been placed in Special Measures. There were many pressures to improve the leadership, management and teaching quality in the school. Aspects requiring improvement across the school, ranged from basic compliance with school policy to enhanced practice. Ongoing scrutiny by the Inspectorate of a school in Special Measures can lead to modification of behaviour and strategies in line with that observed and measured (Perryman 2006, Ball 2003). This could have affected the priority of the ongoing development of feedback due to a need to provide an improvement in assessment results through a more structured, coaching model. Two staffing re-structures were undertaken during this period and there was a high turnover of staff. Many lessons were taught by supply teachers until the staffing situation was resolved. As discussed earlier, I was not present when the questionnaires were distributed to the students. The student views may have been influenced by the gatekeepers, or there may have been insufficient clarity in the questions, both of which could have affected the quality of the data.

Upon analysis of the data, I felt some of the questions in the questionnaires were ambiguous, so an overview only of student responses could be achieved rather than a detailed analysis of specific questions, which could have resulted in mis-interpretation.

At the outset of the research in June 2015, it was my intention to involve approximately five teachers in the project, who could share the findings with others, however only two were willing to engage in full. If staff did not value student voice as a mechanism for improvement (Thompson 2007), they would be unlikely to value the research project which could have affected their engagement. From discussions with the Heads of Department during the SLT focus group and the teachers during the INSET event, it became apparent their understanding of the role of assessment and feedback was not as developed as the published research in this area. So, whilst the school provided a suitable location for this research due to its need to make improvements in marking and feedback, the timing and the culture prevented full engagement, limiting the potential outcomes. However, Katie and Kirstie were enthusiastic and in positions to disseminate the research outcomes further, so the impact was possibly wider than was initially apparent.

4.13 Data Analysis Process

This section explains the process adopted to analyse the data from the questionnaires and interviews. This analysis enabled a greater understanding of students' views about the feedback they received (Research Objectives one and two) and how this information was used to develop practice in the classroom (Research Objective three). A two-stage process was used, which involved preliminary analysis of data as it was obtained, allowing validation and dissemination to occur. It also enabled the data obtained in the early stages of the research to influence later data collection, which McNiff *et al* (2003) explained is the essence of action research.

Grbich (2007) warned that when undertaking data analysis, it is important to reflect participant contributions as closely as possible. Questionnaire data was analysed through graphical and statistical measures, where impartiality was achieved. The analysis of the interviews involved creating a full transcript of the conversations to ensure no aspects were omitted. The transcripts were then analysed using a thematic approach, linked to the themes of the research, informed by literature.

The data obtained in this research is qualitative survey data (from questionnaires) and interviews. Qualitative data analysis focuses on detailed, context specific, rich data, but it can be subjective (Cohen *et al* 2018). Wellington's (2015) seven stage approach to data analysis was adopted to make sense of the data as it was obtained:

4.13.1 Stage One: *Immersion in the data*.

In order to engage with the data, it needed to be organised for ease of management. The data from the questionnaires were transferred to Excel spreadsheets and graphs produced which could graphically show the student responses by percent and enabled initial comparisons to be made. Not all students answered every question on the questionnaire although the returned questionnaires were: 152 (Year 8), 158 (English/Law) and 83 (Year 10). The number of responses for each question varied which was taken into account when calculating the percentage responses. Interviews were transcribed so the themes could be drawn out. Graphical representations of the data formed three areas:

- Year 8 questionnaire data (single cohort, 8 different subjects)
- English/Law questionnaire data (single teacher, 6 cohorts)
- Year 10 questionnaire data (single cohort, 8 different subjects)

The interview/discussion data formed six areas:

- Focus group with SLT to validate and disseminate data and discuss the emerging themes
- Year 9 Art student interviews (undertaken October 2015 and July 2016)
- Presentation and subsequent discussion with all teachers in the school at INSET training day January 2016 to validate and disseminate data
- English/Law student interviews
- Teacher Interviews (Art and English/Law teachers)
- Deputy Head Teacher interview

4.13.2 Stage Two: Reflecting, standing back

The Excel spreadsheets and subsequent generation of graphs enabled comparisons to be drawn from the student responses by examining the generic and subject questions noting any difference between the subjects and the genders. It also demonstrated the students' general perceptions of feedback. This process enabled the data to be handled in a manageable way and could be shared with the school staff to increase their understanding of student learning and use this information to inform practice (Research Objective four).

4.13.3 Stage Three: *Analysing*

Grbich's (2007) approach to thematic analysis was used. I adopted her two-stage process of thematic analysis. The first stage is the ideographic mode, which involves

gathering of closely connected ideas, words and concepts. Stage two is the nomethetic mode, which she described as a process in which the abstract principles are sought. The first stage enabled a preliminary analysis of the data to be undertaken, with more detailed analysis during the second stage.

There have been two main forms of data collected: numerical from the questionnaires and narrative from the interviews. Plowright (2011) advised data processing does not need to be restricted to mathematically processing numerical data and narrative analysis for narrative data. The graphs provided a useful visual representation of the students' view but were not subject to statistical analysis unless a comparison of two particular categories were considered to be useful. This was evident from the graphs. Otherwise, the numerical data was treated as a helpful way of categorising the large quantity of data and representing student views.

Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analysis involves tracking the data to see what emerges and to identify what areas might need to be followed in subsequent research (Grbich 2007). The ideographic stage started with the analysis of the Year 8 questionnaire data and grouping together of closely related ideas and concepts. The graphs were examined for patterns of responses and where differences were noted between gender, this was analysed further to identify if these were significant. This was explained in section 4.13.4 (i). The questions were grouped in themes to provide an overview of the student perception, which enabled easier analysis. When undertaking this process, I identified areas to follow up in further research. The emerging themes were:

- Forms of feedback: linked to Research Objective 1;
- Understanding Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Valuing Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Using Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2.

Categorising the data into these themes enabled me to summarise the findings for dissemination. The forms of feedback were identified, and connections made between students' understanding of feedback, how they used it and whether they valued it.

The graphs were shared with the SLT, which enabled validation of the data by considering it within the context of the school. The data was accepted by the Senior Leaders and the differences between the subjects were explained by the differing teaching practice known to the team. It was decided this data should be shared with the wider school as it provided a useful view of the student experience and was agreed it should provide a platform for further research. The data was shared with all the

teachers in the school during an INSET event (Research Objective 4). Graphs were not displayed to the whole school for each subject, as it was considered inappropriate in this forum. However, at the SLT's request, each department were provided with charts for their subjects prior to the presentation. The data which was shared was the student perceptions grouped into the themes providing the data overall and also with female and male responses separated. This presentation and the subsequent workshop that followed allowed further discussion of the data and identification of the next steps in research. This is shown in Figure 2. The discussions that emerged from the SLT and teachers was useful in eliciting further information about the processes in the school to shape the direction of the research.

The preliminary data analysis was used to inform the questions in the Art student interviews in October 2015 and July 2016 (cycle 1 and 2). The questions, although specific to Art, focused on the themes:

- Forms of feedback;
- Understanding feedback;
- Using feedback;
- Valuing feedback.

Preliminary data analysis was also undertaken of the English/Law questionnaires (cycle 2). For this data, the teacher was not a variable, so the data was analysed to explore the differences between the student cohorts and gender. The same four themes were used to categorise the data, which informed the questions that were asked in the interviews with these students. This process enabled the student voice to be used to investigate how current processes could be enhanced to promote student learning (Research Objective 3).

The teacher interview transcripts (Kirstie, Katie and Annie) were initially analysed. They sought to explore the impact student voice had on teachers' practice (Research Objective 5), the emerging themes from both interviews were categorised as:

- Valuing Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Success Criteria: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Self-Assessment: linked to Research Objective 2.

Emerging themes from the student questionnaires and teacher interviews identified aspects of feedback that were followed up in the Year 10 questionnaires (cycle three). The views of students about peer feedback were common across the data sets, so their views of self-assessment were sought in the Year 10 survey as skills in self-assessment can lead to greater skills in peer assessment (Lawson 2013, Boud *et al* 1999). In both of

their interviews, the Art and the English/Law teachers referred to the importance of success criteria, this aspect had also been identified by the students in the first Art student interview. To explore student views on their understanding of success criteria, this was included in the Year 10 survey.

As a result, aspects of the questionnaire were changed to incorporate the new themes and areas of exploration. This was explained in Table 7.

The preliminary analysis of the Year 10 questionnaire data followed the same approach as the previous questionnaires. Graphs were produced to represent student views. Areas where there was a difference of views between males and females were identified and subjected to statistical testing. Gender comparisons were only carried out for three subjects: Maths, English and Science as the remaining five subjects were optional with lower numbers of responses, so splitting these into gender resulted in numbers too small for useful analysis.

The themes emerging from the year 10 questionnaire data were categorised as:

- Understanding Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Valuing Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Using Feedback: linked to Research Objective 2;
- Confidence in understanding success criteria and self-assessment: linked to Research Objective 2.

The Year 8 questionnaires revealed a possible gender difference in student view, so the males and females were interviewed separately in October 2015 and April 2016. However, the re-interview of the Art students in July 2016 was undertaken as a combined group because the responses in the first interviews did not show a particular gender difference. Once all the data was collected, the three sets of questionnaires and five sets of interviews could be combined to provide an overall picture. This formed the detailed data analysis.

The outcomes of the preliminary analysis can be found in Chapter Five.

4.13.4 Stage Four: *synthesizing or recombining data*

Detailed Data Analysis

The established themes, above, were used to draw out and make connections, to identify similarities, differences and variations between the different data sets (Cohen *et al* 2018). The data obtained throughout the research was brought together to form an overall picture of the issue being explored.

Grbich (2007) explains the first part of the detailed analysis is to bracket out the researcher's own experience, but as I was not a practitioner in the school, I had no experience relating to this context. However, the interpretation of data inevitably brings in a degree of subjectivity by the researcher who chooses how to interpret it (Cohen *et al* 2018) but the process and justification of collecting the data and approach to analysis explained throughout this chapter validates the strategies used.

Grbich's (2007) second stage of thematic analysis, the nomethetic mode, was used. She described this as a process in which the abstract principles are sought. Combining the themes from the preliminary analysis, the themes were recategorized as:

- Recognising Feedback: student perception of what feedback was; why teachers gave feedback; the forms feedback took;
- Understanding Feedback: student views regarding whether they understood the verbal and written feedback provided to them;
- Valuing Feedback: whether feedback was useful and helped to improve work;
- Using Feedback: the opportunities students had to use feedback, whether it promoted thinking and improved students' work;
- Success criteria: students' understanding of success criteria in the eight subjects;
- Self-assessment: students' confidence in self-assessment in the eight subjects.

Firstly, I re-examined the Year 8 questionnaire data. The responses to generic questions (1 – 5, see Appendix 1) were scrutinised. An exploration to determine whether differences in responses between the genders was undertaken with the use of SPSS software (section 4.13.4 (i)). The subject questions (6–12), had a greater number of variables than questions 1-5 as students selected one out of four categories for each question and for each subject. For comparison purposes, the responses were collated by considering the combined percentage of students who chose 'all' of the time or 'most' of the time. This enabled me to compare patterns of responses to the questions and for the different subjects. The same process was used for the English/Law questionnaires, however instead of subject comparisons, I was able to compare the responses from students in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. A similar approach was taken when analysing the year 10 questionnaire data. Taking this approach made it possible to compare the student responses in Year 8 to those in Year 10. This gave a picture of a single cohort's perceptions as they progressed from KS3 to KS4. I was able to add to this by undertaking a further comparison of the Year 9 English questionnaires. These students were in the target cohort and would have completed the year 8 and year 10 surveys. Thus, I had the data from a single cohort of students when they were in year 8, 9 and 10.

I was able to examine student perceptions from year 7 through to year 11, where the student cohort changed but the teacher remained constant (Kirstie). This enabled an understanding of student perceptions when the experience they had from the teacher would be similar across the years, assuming she was consistent in her practice.

The students who undertook Law in KS4 could only do so if they have been high attainers in KS3. Therefore, the year 10 and 11 Law data could be viewed as obtained from students who were higher achieving compared with the English groups, which were average attaining student groups.

The student interviews were analysed and categorised into the existing themes. As the interviews provided more depth about students' views with regards to a particular approach to assessment (Art) and how they like to receive and engage with feedback (English/Law), the themes were broadened to integrate these aspects. These are listed below, the aspects in italics were generated from the interviews:

- Recognising Feedback: student perception of what feedback was; why teachers gave feedback; the forms feedback took, *the importance of levels;*
- Understanding Feedback: student views regarding whether they understood the verbal and written feedback provided to them;
- Valuing Feedback: whether feedback was useful and helped to improve work; *factors affecting how students received feedback; how students liked to receive feedback, valuing peer feedback;*
- Using Feedback: the opportunities students had to use feedback, whether it promoted thinking and improved students' work;
- Success criteria: students' understanding of success criteria in the eight subjects; *the students and teachers' views about success criteria in the feedback process;*
- Self-assessment: students' confidence in self-assessment in the eight subjects, *the students and teachers' views about self-assessment as an aspect of feedback, students' views about self-assessment and peer assessment.*

The teacher interviews had a different focus than the student ones but were analysed in context with the existing themes: Valuing Feedback; Success criteria and Self-assessment. The impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning was established (Research Objective 5) and teacher views about student learning were also identified. This created two further themes:

- Student voice: the teachers' views with regards to the impact of gaining student voice on their understanding of learning and on their practice;

- Teachers' beliefs about learning: the teachers' views with regards to their understanding of learning and supporting students.

Grbich (2007) suggested concept maps can be useful to undertake this level of analysis. I created a concept map based on these themes to draw them together and make connections between them. I colour coded the entries on the maps according to the form of data from which they were generated. This map can be seen in Appendix 20. I was able to observe similarities and differences between the data sets. Although the data sets had different foci, it was still possible to see connections between them, which could be interpreted providing a greater insight into the student experience and engagement with the feedback they received. Plowright (2011) described this as data integration, by which combined written descriptions and explanations of numerical data helped to anchor the meaning of research findings.

Grbich (2007) suggested part of the nomothetic mode can involve ranking to decide an order of importance of the data. I did not do this as I felt all aspects of the data were important and contributed to the overall picture in different ways from a range of angles. Variables in the research (subjects, teachers, and age of student) made it difficult to fully identify any specific cause, but by combining the range of data and noting the variables, patterns emerged which were explored.

Using this process, a detailed picture was obtained of student views on the feedback they received on their learning, enabling a valuable insight into their lived experience (Morgan 2011, Flutter 2007, Thompson 2007, Cowie 2005, McIntryre *et al* 2005). The outcomes of the detailed analysis can be found in Chapter Six.

4.13.4 (i) Statistical Analysis of data

It was noted on the graphs that there were differences between some of the responses for males and females. SPSS data analysis software was used to undertake statistical analysis to determine if these differences were statistically significant. In this research, attitudes and beliefs, normally attributed to qualitative data, were collected in a numerical format enabling it to be subjected to quantitative methods (Muijs 2011). Through statistical testing, it could be established if differences in the responses were due to random factors or were unlikely to be random (*ibid*). The probability value (p value) generated from the test indicated this likelihood. If the difference was statistically significant, it is unlikely to have occurred as a consequence of randomness (Norris *et al* 2012).

The Chi-Square measure of statistical significance was used. This tested the frequency counts (responses) of the males and females to any generic question (1 to 6 on the

questionnaire) when a difference had been observed on the graphs. Chi Square is used when the variables are nominal in the form of frequency counts (Norris *et al* 2012, Muijs 2011). As there were two variables (male and female), cross-tabulation was used (Muijs 2011). Chi-Square compares the actual count (frequency) with the expected count for that sample. The responses compared were 'yes' responses from boys and from girls. If a student had ticked a category, this was a 'yes' response. These were seen in the graphs as the percentage of responses. For example, Chart 12 in Chapter 5 shows 30% of females and 41% of males ticked 'Helps me to see what I am good at' in response to the question 'What do you find useful about feedback?'. These are 'yes' responses to that category. Chi-Square measured the difference between these yes responses for males and females. The raw data was entered into SPSS software, percentages were not used. SPSS provided a Pearson Chi-Square value, a df value (degrees of freedom) and a significance (p) level. The significance level was the indicator as to whether the difference between male and female 'yes' responses were significant. If this was equal to or less than 0.05, it indicated the difference was unlikely to occur by chance giving a 95% confidence level (Muijis 2011). In some cases, the number of responses was too small for a Chi-Square p value to be determined, so SPSS generated a Fisher Exact Probability score instead which was used as the significance score. Like Chi Square, if this value was equal to or less than 0.05, it indicated the difference was unlikely to occur by chance.

Preliminary analysis was undertaken of the questionnaires to identify if there appeared to be a difference in male and female 'yes' responses for the generic questions. Where a difference was observed, the data was interrogated in SPSS to establish if the apparent difference was significant. This data is presented in Chapter Five. SPSS was not used for the subject specific questions because there were too many variables generated from the Likert Scale.

4.13.5: Stage Five: *Relating to other work:*

When data is compared with previous published research, it enables a deeper exploration (Silverman 2010) and helps to seek explanations of the findings. The data I obtained from researching this issue was explored and connections made with the previous research discussed in the Theoretical Framework (Chapter Two) and the Literature Review (Chapter Three) which identified areas of similarity and revealed aspects that had not been reported previously. These connections were added to the concept map (Appendix 20).

4.13.6 Stage Six: Reflecting back:

Once the detailed analysis had been completed, I summarised the findings, identifying key points of interest. This reduced the quantity of data and analysis to succinct outcomes and could be shared with the school (Research Objective 4: Present the data to the teachers so the student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim to improve the student learning experience).

4.13.7 Stage Seven: Presenting, disseminating and sharing the findings

The preliminary data analysis outcomes were shared with the school at various stages, identified as dissemination parts of the research. The detailed analysis was shared with the school to be utilised in developing approaches to assessment and feedback. On 20th April 2018, I attended a meeting in school with a working group tasked with creating a new school assessment policy. I presented the outcomes of the research with the group members, which was used to inform the development of the new policy (Research Objective 4). On a wider scale, the research outcomes were presented and shared with my colleagues through research seminar events, trainee teachers on teacher training courses, and with Teacher Educators at a national conference.

This chapter has explained and justified in detail how the research was designed and undertaken to answer the research aim, which was to investigate how students valued and used the feedback they received on their learning. It has also specifically explained how data was obtained to answer all five research objectives. The data and preliminary analysis have been presented within the eight themes in the next chapter. Key data charts are provided, with additional supplementary data charts included in the Appendices.

Chapter Five: Data and Preliminary Analysis

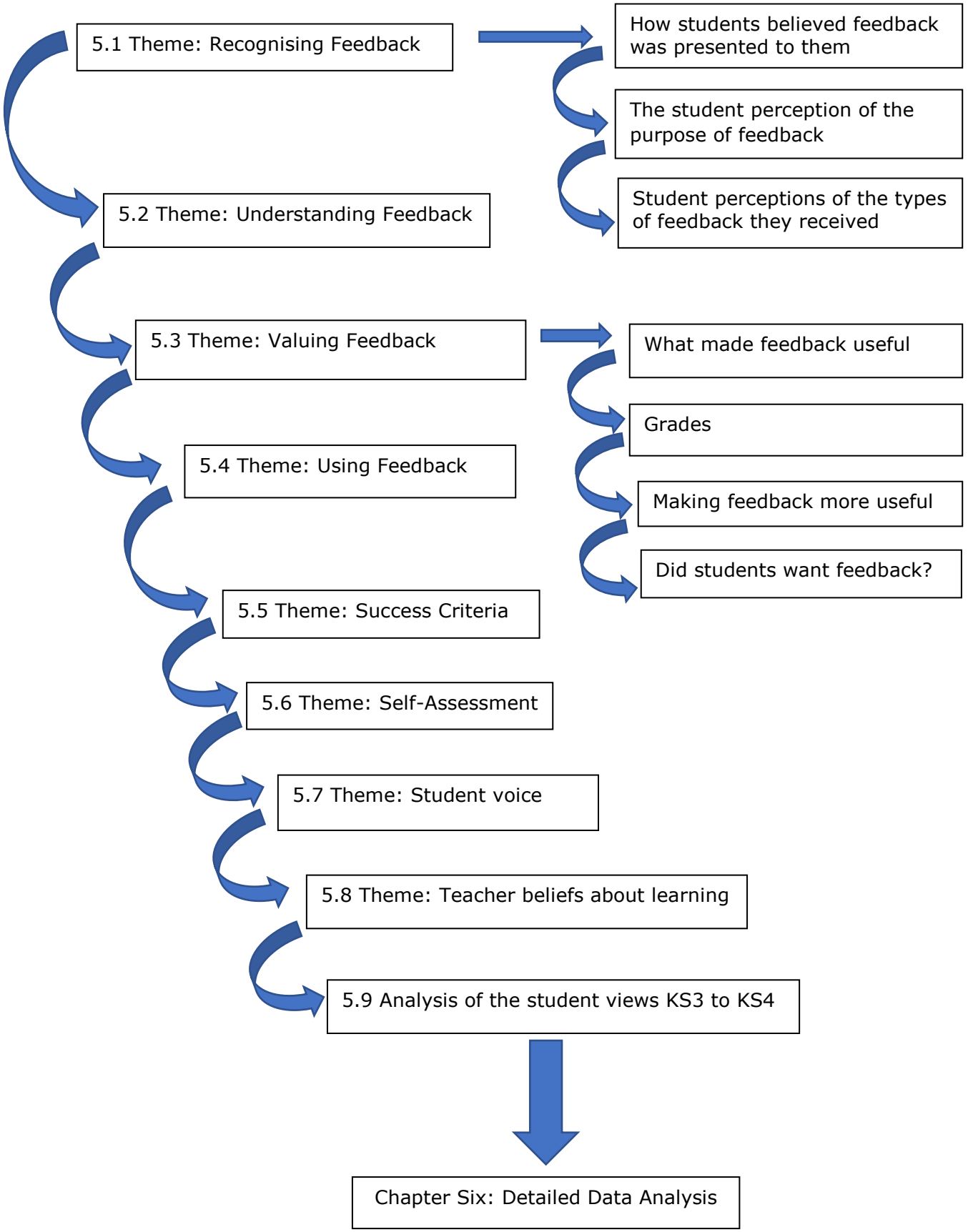
Introduction

This section presents the data obtained during the three cycles of the research. It includes a preliminary analysis, demonstrating how this influenced the next stages of data collection. Through the analysis process, data was categorised into the themes below:

- **Recognising Feedback**: student perception of what feedback was; why teachers gave feedback; the forms feedback took, the importance of levels;
- **Understanding Feedback**: student views regarding whether they understood the verbal and written feedback provided to them;
- **Valuing Feedback**: whether feedback was useful and helped to improve work; factors affecting how students received feedback; how students liked to receive feedback, valuing peer feedback;
- **Using Feedback**: the opportunities students had to use feedback, whether it promoted thinking and improved students' work;
- **Success criteria**: students' understanding of success criteria in the eight subjects; the students and teachers' views about success criteria in the feedback process;
- **Self-assessment**: students' confidence in self-assessment in the eight subjects, the students and teachers' views about self-assessment as an aspect of feedback, students' views about self-assessment and peer assessment;
- **Student voice**: the teachers' views with regards to the impact of gaining student voice on their understanding of learning and on their practice;
- **Teachers' beliefs about learning**: the teachers' views with regards to their understanding of learning and supporting students.

Additional data can be found in the appendices and is referred to when appropriate in this chapter. A detailed analysis is presented in Chapter Six.

Format of the chapter:



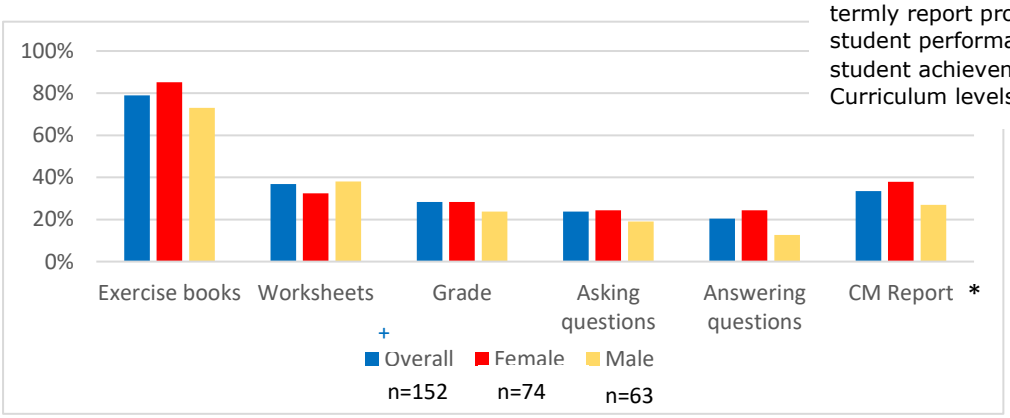
5.1 Theme: Recognising Feedback

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: student perception of what feedback was; why teachers gave feedback; the forms feedback took, the importance of levels. This has been gained from the Year 8 survey, English/Law survey, Year 10 survey, interviews with students and the SLT focus group.

5.1.1 How students believed feedback was presented to them

The first part of the questionnaires in the Year 8 survey and the English/Law survey was to establish the form in which students believed feedback most commonly occurred.

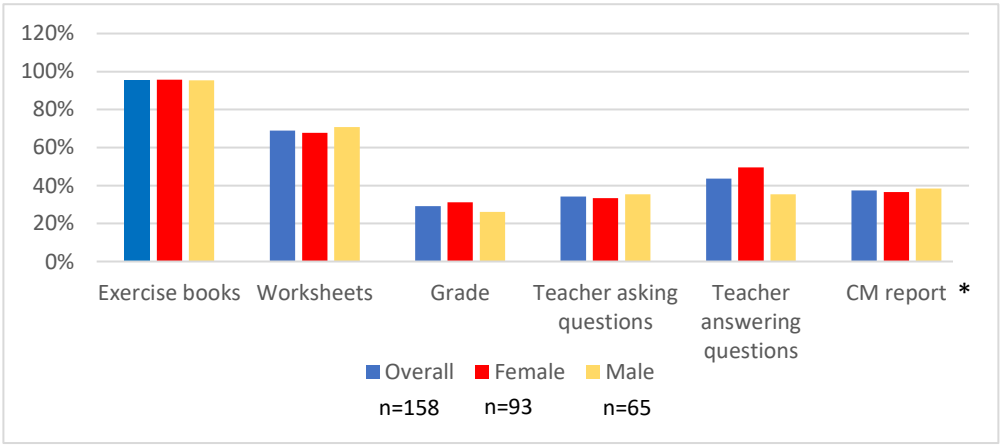
Chart 1: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'I think feedback is…'



*CM (Constant Monitoring) Report: a termly report provided to parents on student performance, represented as student achievement against National Curriculum levels

+ includes gender not disclosed

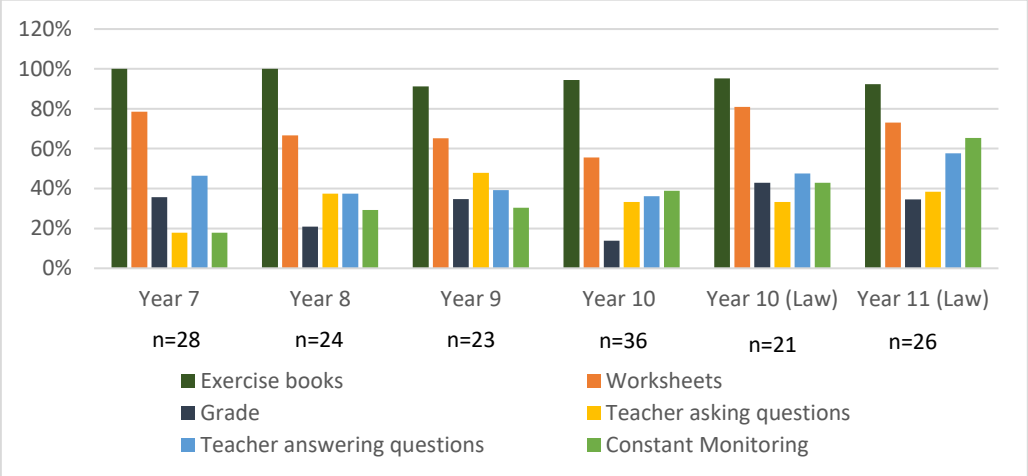
Chart 2: English/Law Survey: Student responses to 'I think feedback is...'



The two surveys revealed similar findings about students views of the form in which feedback was most commonly provided. Written comments in exercise books was recognised the most in both surveys, however other forms were acknowledged more by the English/Law students, such as worksheets and questions in class. There was no significant difference between the views of males and females.

A breakdown of the English/Law student responses by year group shown in Chart 3 indicated the views of students from year 7 to year 11 followed similar patterns although the teacher asking questions was lowest with year 7. Over the year groups, students showed an increasing tendency to value the Constant Monitoring report, which provided a numerical measure of performance. The Law students are offered the opportunity to undertake the subject due to high performance during KS3. They can, therefore, be considered to be a high attaining group compared with an average student cohort of students who will achieve at various attainment levels. The pattern of the views of the Law students did not show any particular difference than the other student groups for this question.

Chart 3: English/Law Survey: Responses for all students by year 'I think feedback is...



5.1.2 The student perception of the purpose of feedback

The second question sought to establish what students believed was the purpose of feedback. Table 8 provides a comparison between the Year 8 and year 10 surveys for this question.

	Percent of students who agreed with the statement	
Why teachers gave feedback	**Year 8** n=~152	**Year 10** n=~83
To give a level/grade	15%	15%
To show my work has been looked at	16%	23%
To improve my work	46%	35%
To show what I have done well	21%	20%
Not sure	3%	6%

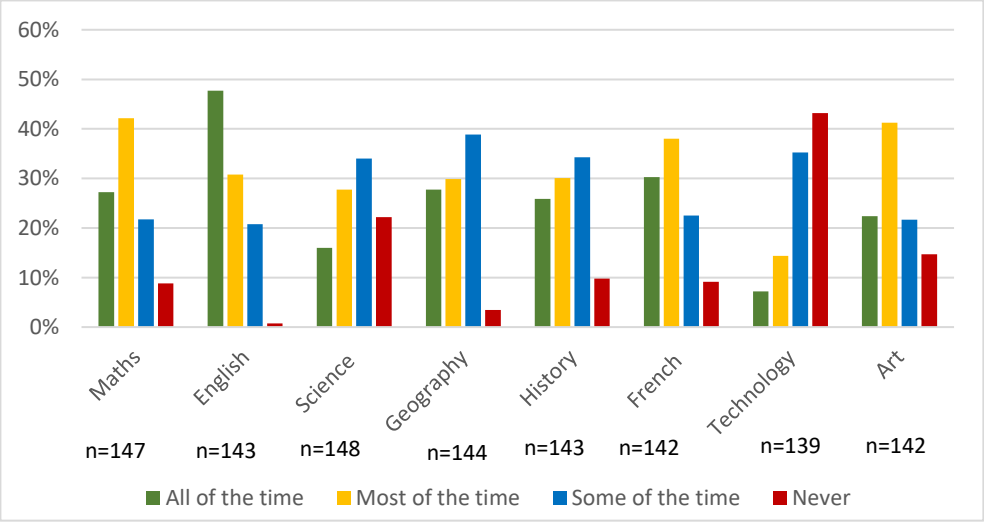
Table 8: A comparison of student views about why teachers give feedback

Feedback was provided 'to improve work' was the main reason identified in both Year 8 and Year 10 surveys. However, in year 10, the students' responses to this category reduced by 11% compared with the Year 8 survey. A higher percentage of the students in year 10 identified feedback was provided to show the teacher had looked at their work compared with Year 8. In the English/Law survey, students also identified the main purpose of feedback was to help to improve their work, but a higher proportion stated it was provided to show them what they had done well. The views followed a similar pattern across all the year groups (see Appendix 15A).

5.1.3 Student perceptions of the types of feedback they received

The second part of the questionnaire sought to establish students' views about the type of feedback they received in the eight subjects (Year 8 survey) and in the six year groups (English/Law survey). Students were asked to give their response to each question using a Likert scale, with categories: All of the time; Most of the Time; Some of the Time; Never.

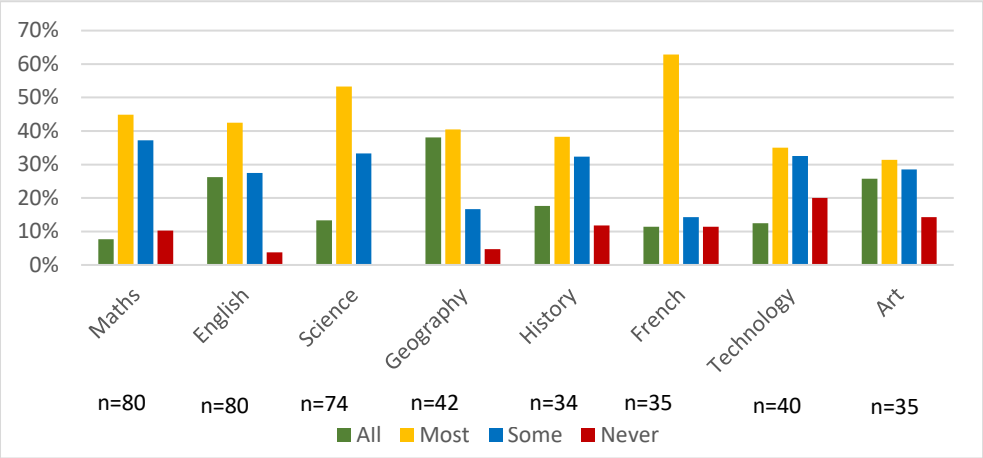
Chart 4: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: WWW/EBI?'



For some subjects, such as Maths, English and French more than 68% of the students reported they received feedback in the form of written WWW/EBI 'all' or 'most' of the time. In Science this was reported by 44% of the students and 21% of the students for Technology. When this data was presented to SLT (Appendix 6), they noted that for most subjects surveyed, the school Marking Policy of using WWW/EBI as feedback was being followed, however they commented it did not seem to be applied within Technology and to varying degrees in other subjects. In Year 10, the question changed to determine the value students placed on these forms of feedback. Maths, English and

Science were compulsory subjects in KS4, the remaining subjects were optional so there were less students answering questions about them.

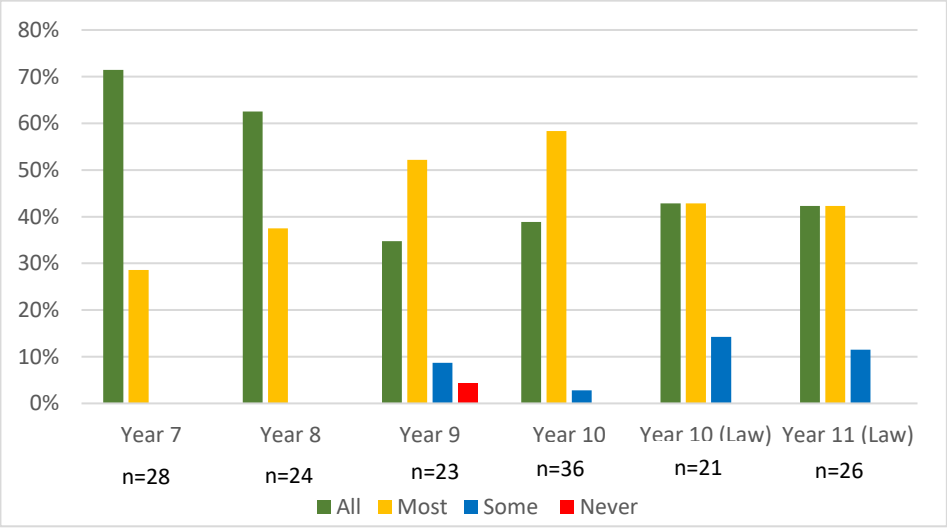
Chart 5: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'Written feedback makes a positive difference to my learning'



Written feedback in English, Geography and French was considered to make a positive difference to learning 'all' or 'most' of the time by over 70% of the students who responded to this question. The students taking Technology did not present a similar picture, with 48% of students stating written feedback made a positive difference 'all' or 'most' of the time.

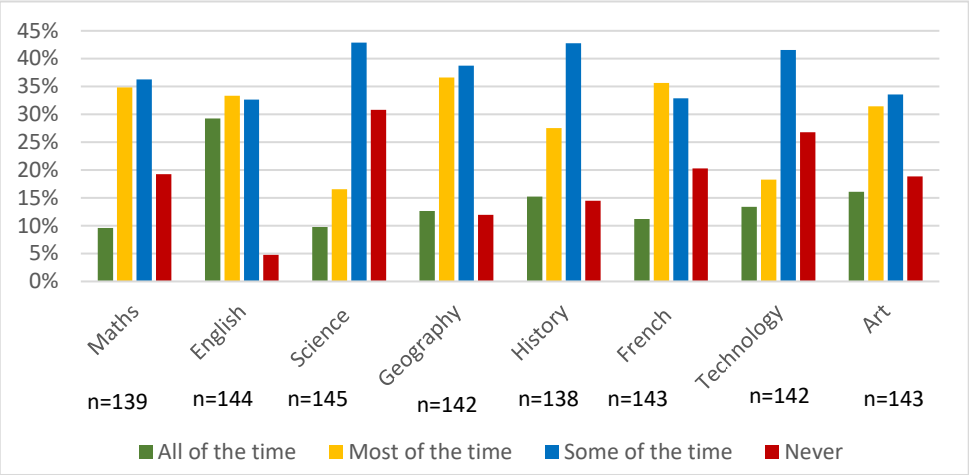
The students partaking in the English/Law survey, administered by Kirstie, showed a greater recognition of receiving written feedback through WWW/EBI than students in the Year 8 survey.

Chart 6: English/Law Survey: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: WWW/EBI?'



When examining student views in the Year 8 survey about the frequency of receiving verbal feedback, the responses showed varied patterns both across and within the subjects.

Chart 7: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: Verbal Feedback?'

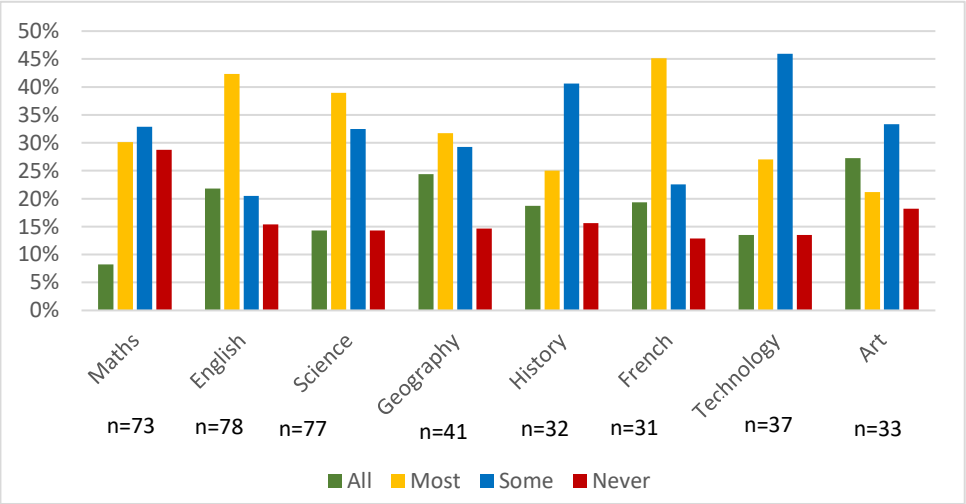


For Art, 16% of students stated they received verbal feedback 'all' of the time, whilst 19% claimed they 'never' received it. A similar pattern was seen in Maths, Geography and French. There was a wide range of views about verbal feedback, indicating student views about this form of feedback varied more than they did about the written form.

In the focus group (Appendix 6), SLT noted students appeared to prefer written feedback more than verbal feedback. The group discussed whether verbal feedback should also be recorded. During the second interview with Katie, she referred to a suggestion made by the Head Teacher after a lesson observation which involved creating a system for students to record verbal feedback she gave them during the lesson. Katie explained this did not work, the students did not like doing it and it affected the flow of the lesson (Appendix 13).

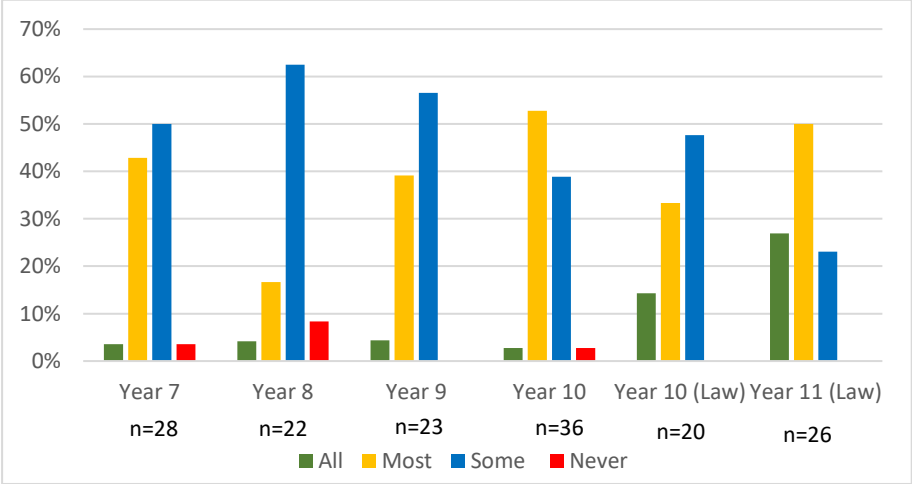
The Year 10 data indicates a variation in perception about the difference verbal feedback made to student learning.

Chart 8: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'Verbal feedback makes a positive difference to my learning'



A comparison between Charts 5 and 8, indicates when students were in Year 10, they believed written feedback made a more positive difference to their learning than verbal feedback.

Chart 9: English/Law Survey: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: Verbal?'



The Year 11 Law students showed a higher recognition of verbal feedback than the other groups with 77% of students stating they received this 'all' or 'most' of the time.

In the interview with the Art and English students (Appendices 9 and 11), mixed responses were given with regards to a preference between verbal or written feedback. The students were able to distinguish between the two forms, explaining verbal feedback was helpful because it was instant, they could take immediate action and it could clarify any confusion. Written, on the other hand, was a permanent record, which students said they could go back to later. The Art students (Appendix 9) referred to feedback from

another Art teacher who they claimed gave more verbal and less written feedback. They said this was less useful than written feedback from Katie because it was hard to remember from one lesson to another. These students went on to explain that in other subjects they also found verbal feedback difficult to remember.

Student views about peer feedback showed little variation between the subjects in years 8 and 10. Although the question asked in year 8: '*What types of feedback do you get on your learning: Peer feedback'* is different from that asked in year 10: '*Peer feedback makes a positive difference to my learning',* the two can be used to gain a picture of student views about peer feedback as they progressed in their education.

	Percent of students who said 'all' or 'most' of the time	
Subject	**Year 8** n = ~152	**Year 10** n= ~83
Maths	31%	20%
English	38%	44%
Science	23%	24%
Geography	34%	36%
History	30%	25%
French	34%	29%
Technology	21%	30%
Art	39%	25%

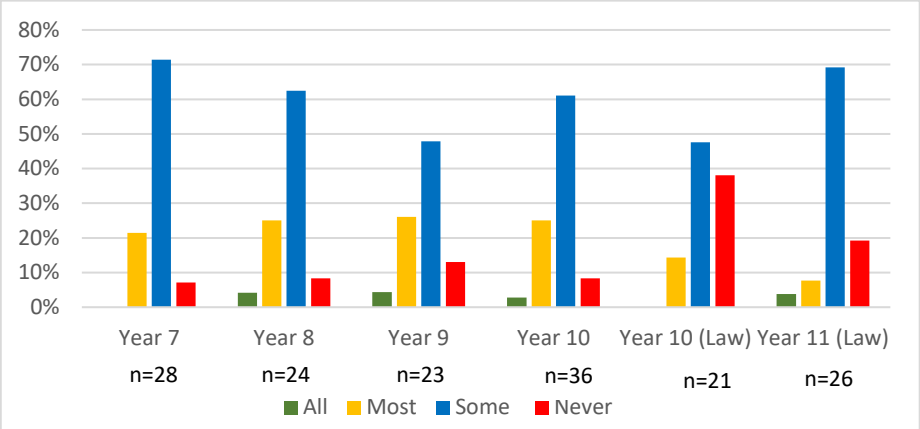
Table 9: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: Peer feedback' (Year 8) and 'Peer feedback makes a positive difference to my learning' (Year 10)

The Year 8 question did not differentiate between useful and not useful peer feedback. Students may have answered 'never' if they did get peer feedback but did not find it helpful as they may have regarded unhelpful peer feedback as no feedback.

In the first Art student interview, it was suggested by one of the students that they should undertake an evaluation in the form of EBI on each other's work. After some discussion, the students concluded this was not a good idea, one of them explaining '*you should see the feedback I got from someone else, there was hardly anything there, it was really vague and empty*'. Other students shared other examples when peer feedback had not been helpful (Appendix 8). In the second interview (Appendix 9), the students agreed that when giving feedback to someone else, it made them think more about their own work but emphasised the feedback they got from a peer was not useful.

A comparison of the responses in the English/Law survey indicates students' views did not differ considerably across the year groups indicating the views of peer feedback did not change as students got older.

Chart 10: English/Law Survey: Student responses to 'What types of feedback do you get on your learning: Peer feedback?'



In the interview with Kirstie (Appendix 12), she explained the data in Chart 10 suggested she needed to do more work with the students on peer and self-assessment as they were important skills to master in English.

The Year 10 responses are summarised in the chart below.

Chart 11: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'Feedback makes a positive difference to my learning'

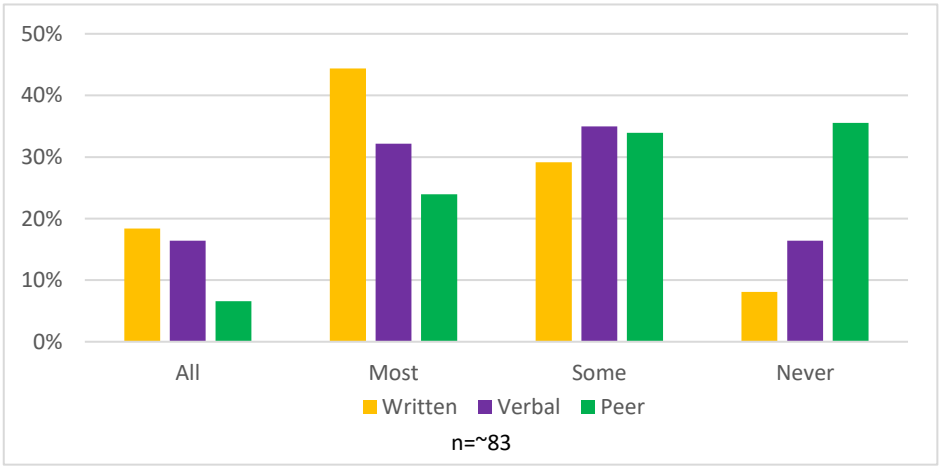


Chart 11 represents the total responses for all of the subjects.

Male and female views in response to this question followed a similar pattern (Appendix 15D).

In this theme, it has been established that written feedback in the form of WWW/EBI in exercise books was recognised the most by students and they believed it made a more positive difference to their learning than verbal feedback. Peer feedback was recognised the least and was generally not considered to make a positive difference to learning.

5.2 Theme: Understanding Feedback

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: student views regarding whether they understood the verbal and written feedback provided to them. This has been gained from the Year 8 survey, English/Law survey, Year 10 survey, interviews with students and with the DHT (Annie).

A comparison of the responses by students in the Year 8 survey to the questions about whether written and verbal feedback was explained clearly and whether feedback, overall, was easy to understand is provided in the table below.

	Percent of students who said 'all' or 'most' of the time n=~152		
Subject	**Written**	**Verbal**	**Feedback is easy to understand**
Maths	46%	51%	67%
English	70%	65%	69%
Science	36%	39%	42%
Geography	50%	45%	58%
History	47%	47%	54%
French	49%	46%	51%
Technology	34%	41%	47%
Art	55%	50%	61%

Table 10: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'Is [written/verbal] feedback explained to you?' and 'Is feedback easy to understand?'

The data in this table presents an overview of student perceptions. It does not take into account the frequency that the types of feedback were provided. The final column of Table 10 indicates that despite an apparent low frequency of feedback being explained, students were slightly more inclined to say they understood their feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time. In the English/Law survey (Table 11), students in all the year groups stated verbal feedback was explained more often than written feedback, although they believed verbal feedback occurred less regularly than written (Charts 6 and 9). There was no particular difference in the pattern of responses for the Law students compared to the English.

Percent of students who said 'all' or 'most' of the time				
Year	**Written**	**Verbal**	**Feedback is easy to understand**	
7 n=28	43%	82%	82%	KS3
8 n=24	29%	46%	84%	
9 n=23	61%	65%	83%	
10 n=36	58%	64%	97%	KS4
10 (Law) n=21	53%	57%	90%	
11 (Law) n=26	69%	77%	96%	

Table 11: English/Law Survey: Student responses to 'Is [written/verbal] feedback explained clearly to you?' and 'Is feedback easy to understand?'

Year 7 and year 8 students stated verbal feedback was explained clearly more than written feedback was 'all' or 'most' of the time. The responses across the other years with respect to the explanation of written and verbal feedback were similar. Despite the variations in responses, a high proportion of students stated feedback was easy to understand. This increased slightly from KS3 from KS4.

In the interviews with the English students (Appendix 11), the frequency and depth of feedback was explored. The year 10 females wanted instant feedback more regularly, whilst the male year 10 students were clear they wanted detailed comments less often. The year 7 females gave a similar preference to the males, preferring feedback less often as they felt regular feedback in class was often rushed and unclear, although this is not represented in Table 11. The students said more detailed feedback less often allowed them to make improvements, so it was more useful. When these students were asked what they did if they did not understand feedback, the two males said they would ask the teacher whilst the year 10 females said they would either ask someone else or the teacher. One girl added she might ask someone else to explain it adding when you explain feedback to someone else, it '*makes you think about your own feedback*'. The year 7 females said they would try to work the feedback out for themselves and then ask the teacher if they were still not sure. If the teacher was busy, they would ask each other, but this was only occasionally.

A change of student perception from the Year 8 survey to the Year 10 survey with regards to student understanding of feedback indicated there was a reduction in Maths, but an increase in Science and Geography from year 8 to year 10. For the remaining subjects, the views remained reasonably consistent, not following the increase from KS3 to KS4 noted in the English/Law survey. The Year 8 and Year 10 survey data has been captured in Table 12 below.

Feedback is easy to understand 'All' or 'most' of the time	**Year 8** n=~152	**Year 10** n=~83
Maths	67%	50%
English	69%	69%
Science	42%	69%
Geography	58%	83%
History	54%	60%
French	51%	56%
Technology	47%	55%
Art	61%	66%

Table 12: A comparison of Year 8 and Year 10 Surveys: Student responses to 'Is your feedback easy to understand?'

The views of males and females in year 10 were similar, with 63% of females stating it was easy to understand 'all' or 'most' of the time, and 64% of males stating this (Appendix 16B).

In the second interview with the Art students (Appendix 9), a student said that after the changes Katie had introduced, the feedback was '*easier to understand, it is clearer to see what you have done well and then it makes you happier'*. The view that feedback in Art was easier to understand in KS4 more than in KS3 was not evident in Table 12. This student's enthusiasm for the changes may have been a result of her involvement in the project, or a preference for the subject.

Examining the year 10 data for Geography, Annie noted the students reported a positive picture in relation to understanding feedback and whether it helped them to improve their work (Table 12 and Table 16: section 5.4). She explained the Geography department were proactive in designing their own assessments of student learning in KS4, rather than using past GSCE papers.

The changes in student perception in Maths from year 8 to year 10 were also noted. Annie explained the Head of Maths put a lot of emphasis on using past test papers, she reflected this was probably not a good strategy as it focused the students on grades. She also explained there had been a change in the Maths teaching team, which she thought may have resulted in a less positive experience for the students. She reflected the decrease in the value students placed on their feedback in Maths from year 8 to year 10 could be a result of this. Annie explained there was an established teaching team in Science, particularly in KS4, which she reflected probably provided students with a better experience than in KS3. She added new Science staff in the school improved the student experience overall.

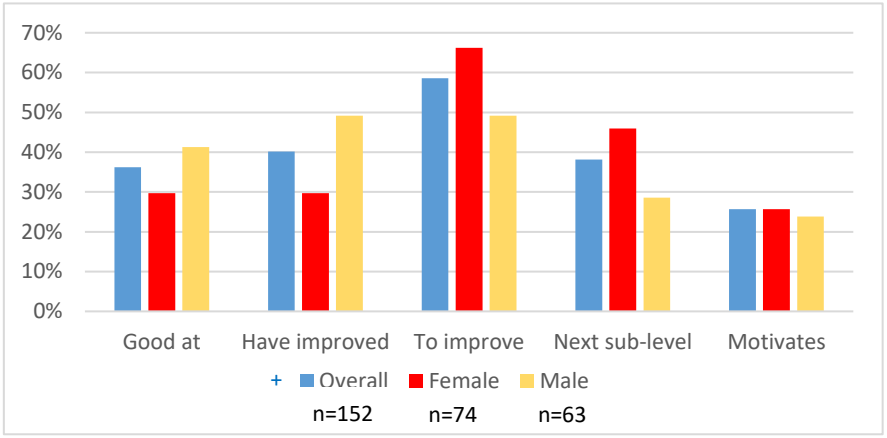
In this theme, it has been established that students did not always appear to need an explanation of the feedback in order for them to understand it. Verbal feedback was explained more clearly by Kirstie than written was, but overall, a high proportion of students understood her feedback. The content of feedback determined how useful it was to students, which could be influenced by how often it was provided. Students' understanding of feedback in the subjects from year 8 to year 10 varied. In some subjects this increased, in some it decreased but for most it remained similar.

5.3 Theme: Valuing Feedback

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: whether feedback was useful and helped to improve work; factors affecting how students received feedback; how students liked to receive feedback, valuing peer feedback. This has been gained from the Year 8 survey, English/Law survey, Year 10 survey, interviews with students and both teachers (Katie and Kirstie).

5.3.1 What makes feedback useful

Chart 12: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'What is useful about feedback?'

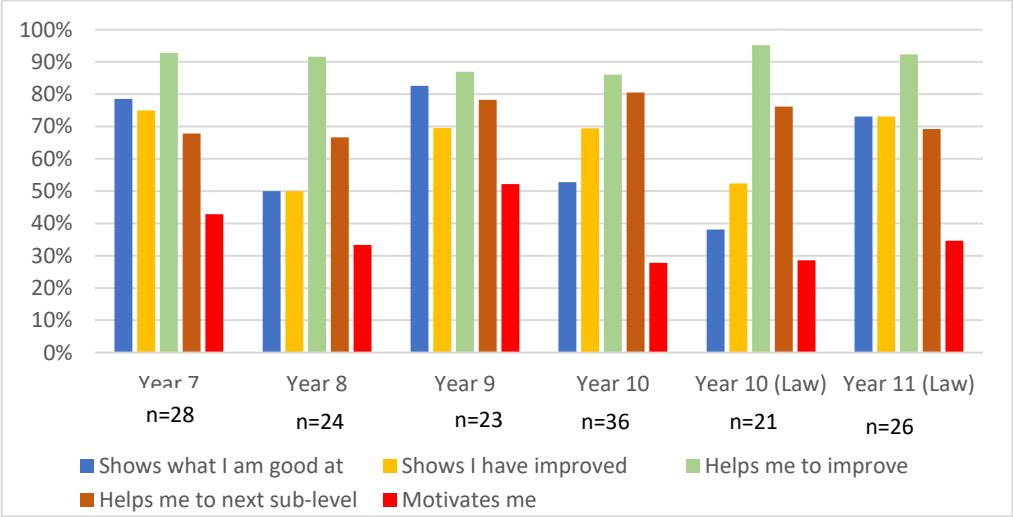


The most useful aspect of feedback identified was to help students improve their work. This corresponds with Table 8 (section 5.1), which represents students' views why teachers gave feedback. Chart 12 shows only 26% of students considered feedback to be motivating indicating that almost three quarters of students were not motivated by feedback. This corresponds with the response that only 36% of the students felt feedback helped them to see what they were good at. A further analogy is found in the data in Table 8 where only one fifth of students believed the purpose of feedback was to show students what they had done well. This data indicates two thirds of students in this survey did not feel feedback was effective in identifying what they had done well. Although 'to improve' was the most commonly selected category to describe what was useful about feedback (Chart 12), it was only identified by 59% of students indicating there may have been many occasions when feedback did not help students with this. After Katie had implemented changes to her feedback process, the students were interviewed again (Appendix 9). They explained since the changes, feedback was better in identifying what they had done well and they were more motivated by it since it had been improved. However, it is worth noting their motivation may have been influenced by being involved in the changes so the views might not be representative of their peers.

Chart 12 shows a 19% difference between male and female responses to the category 'Feedback is useful to show I have improved'. A statistical significance test was undertaken using Pearson Chi Square. The significance was p=0.026, indicating this difference was statistically significant (see Appendix 18). Males were more likely than females to value feedback in year 8 because it showed them they had improved. The other categories were checked for significant differences; none were found.

Data from the English/Law survey also indicated feedback was useful to students to help them improve and it was useful to show students how to get to the next sub-level. Views about feedback showing students had improved or what they were good at varied across the year groups. It was not considered to be a motivator in the any of the years.

Chart 13: English/Law Survey: The response by students to 'What is useful about feedback?'

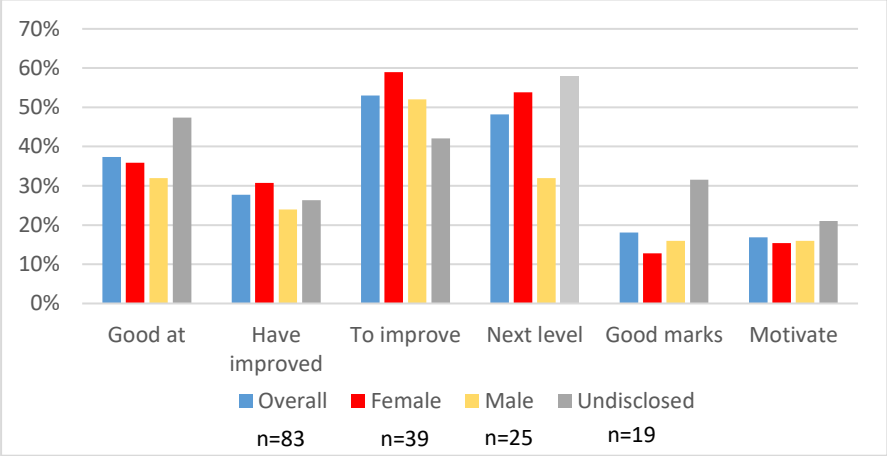


Statistical analysis of the responses for females and males in the English/Law survey was undertaken as graphs in Appendix 15B indicated there was a difference between some of the responses. A Fisher Exact score of 0.05 was obtained between the difference of male and female responses in the English year 8 views about feedback being useful to show them what they were good at (Appendix 18). This difference was just within the significance level indicating year 8 boys were significantly more likely to find feedback useful to show them what they were good at than girls. There was no significant difference for any of the other year groups or for any other categories, except for 'feedback motivates me'. Statistical analysis indicated females were more likely to be motivated by feedback than males in English year 8 (Fisher Exact Test 0.011 Appendix 18). However, due to the low percentage of students who selected motivation as a

category in this question, the statistical analysis was undertaken on a small number of responses.

Data from the Year 10 questionnaire showed similar results to the Year 8 data, with regards to student views on what was useful about feedback.

Chart 14: Year 10 Survey: The response by students to 'What is useful about feedback?'



The most popular reason identified by students was that feedback was helpful to improve their work, the least popular was to motivate them. In year 10, there was a lower proportion of students who stated feedback was useful to see they had improved, compared with year 8 (28% in year 10; 40% in year 8).

The Year 10 data showed a reduction in the males' responses that feedback was useful to show students they had improved, compared with year 8 (26% year 10; 49% year 8). However, in year 10, 23% of students did not disclose their gender (10% were undisclosed in year 8), so it cannot be determined if there was a reduction in the views of males with this regard or less males declaring their gender.

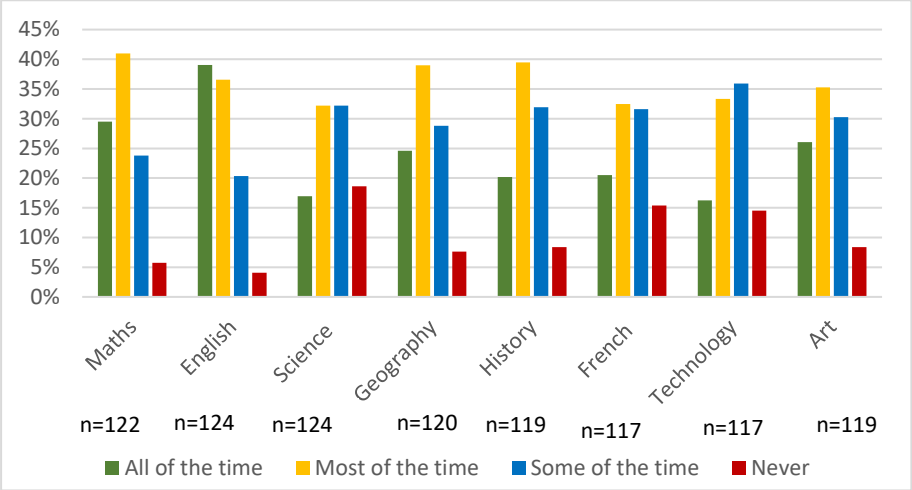
An additional question was included in the Year 10 survey to obtain the students' views about receiving good marks. This was added following the Art student interview (Appendix 9) where some students had mentioned it was important. As there was a significant difference in the responses in year 8 between males and females to the category 'Feedback shows I have improved', a statistical analysis was undertaken for the categories 'Good at', 'Have Improved' and 'Next level' in the Year 10 survey. No significant differences between male and female responses were found.

The teachers' views of the purpose of feedback was also explored. Katie explained since the first student interview, she had a greater awareness of the content of feedback and ensured it aligned with the assessment (Appendix 10). Kirstie explained feedback should

focus on student progress and identify next steps in learning, she emphasised that *'for some students these will be bigger and others smaller'*. She also emphasised feedback needed to be targeted and specific for students to support progress (Appendix 12).

The student views about the how useful feedback was for each of the eight subjects in the Year 8 survey can be seen in Chart 15.

Chart 15: Year 8 Survey: Student response to: Is the feedback that you get back useful to you?'



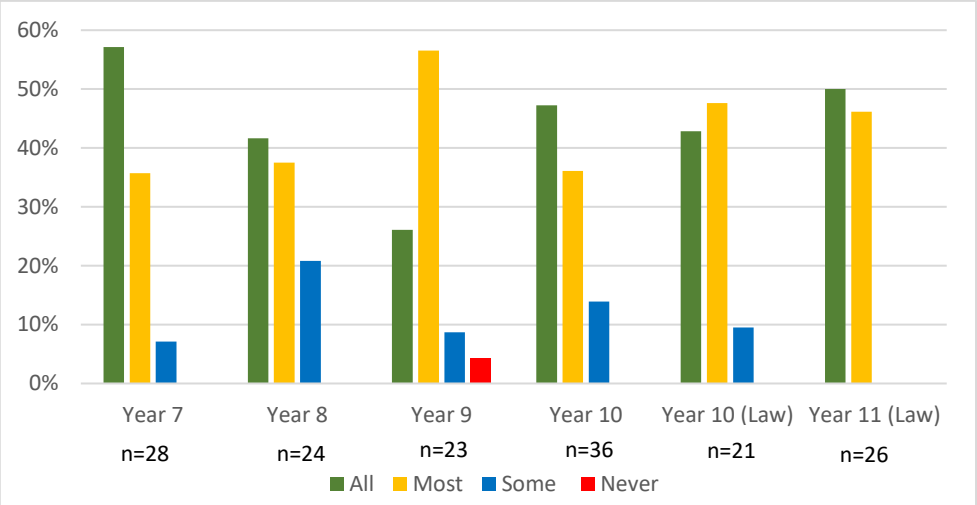
For six of the eight subjects, over 50% of students considered their feedback useful 'all' or 'most' of the time. However, in only two of these subjects this was stated by more than 70% of the students (Maths 71%, English 76%). Extremes of student responses can be seen with this question. In French, 21% of students considered feedback to be useful 'all' of the time, but 15% felt it was 'never' useful. Similarly, 17% of students considered feedback in Science to be useful 'all' of the time, but 19% stated it was 'never' useful; and 16% of students considered feedback in Technology to be useful 'all' of the time, but 15% stated it was 'never' useful.

In this survey, 61% of students reported feedback in Art was useful 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 15), yet all of the students in the Art interviews said it was useful (Appendix 8). The difference in the views could be attributed to Art being taught by several teachers, using varying approaches. Alternatively, the difference could be attributed to the students looking at an example during the interview but when completing the questionnaire, the responses had been given without a context. However, despite the students saying the feedback in a particular assessment was useful, they identified that the Assessment Record created by Katie (Figure 4: section 5.5) did not provide them with sufficient information about why they had not achieved. They also said it was not easy to see how the feedback could be transferred to another project (Appendix 8). So,

in this respect, the feedback was not considered to be useful as it could not be applied elsewhere. This highlighted a different interpretation of 'useful'. The students felt the feedback was useful to explain their achievement, but not for future work. Due to this interpretation, this question was changed in the Year 10 survey.

The students considered feedback they received in English/Law from Kirstie to be useful.

Chart 16: English/Law Survey: Student response to 'Is the feedback that you get useful to you?'



In the interviews, the students were asked whether they preferred feedback that indicated what they were doing well or indicated what to do next (Appendix 11). The male year 10s were very clear they wanted feedback to tell them they were doing well. They both agreed '*we don't need to worry about the things we are doing… Like to know we have got it and can move on*'. The female year 10s said they like to get both. They wanted to see they were improving, and this gave them confidence, but they also wanted to know what to do next. The female year 7s also said they liked the positive comments as it showed them what they were doing well, which made them more enthusiastic. One girl added '*you don't feel rubbish if it is not just about improvement but do want to know how to improve and move on to the next level*'. In the interview with Kirstie (Appendix 12), she explained that listening to the students had confirmed to her that '*WWW is important as the positive aspect was essential and celebrated success, feedback should not just be about development'*. One of the English students explained feedback in another subject in year 7 was received at the end of the topic which was too late. She added that in English, the feedback was received in time to use it.

Students in the second Art interview (Appendix 9) explained what they believed influenced their engagement with feedback. The first factor was 'time' and the subject

itself. They recognised if they enjoyed the subject, they were more inclined to improve so they took feedback in a positive way. One girl added it also depended on the person, the teacher, the student and the relationship between them. The students also explained the environment was important. Disruptive students could make it difficult to concentrate and lessons after the lunchbreak were a problem. They felt the best time to focus on feedback was the first lesson of the day, which tended to be quieter. The same comments were made by students in the English interviews, although they added the relationship with the teacher was important, they needed to trust the teacher to be more willing to accept feedback. They emphasised they valued feedback in English because they trusted their teacher (Appendix 11).

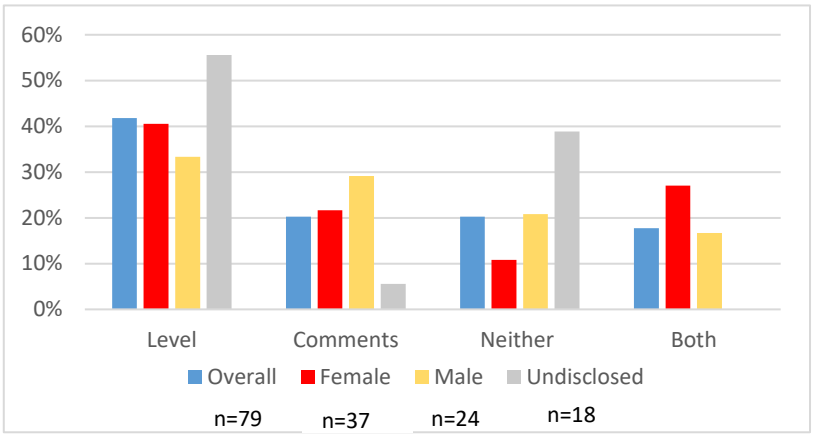
5.3.2 Grades

In the development of her feedback approach, Katie had retained a numerical scoring system (Figure 4: section 5.5). The students were asked their view about this approach. All students said they liked the numerical system, with one student saying '*I like having something to aim towards. I aim to get the most marks*.' One boy said he felt the scoring system linked to the new GCSE levels better than the previous [National Curriculum] levels. One girl referred to a system used in another subject where there is a learning ladder with bronze, silver, gold, platinum and diamond levels. She liked this approach because the statements to achieve the levels were easy to understand and she could tick them off and aim for a level. She added '*I want to get a Diamond!*'. The students preferred a numerical system to a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating as it was not clear what the colours always meant in the RAG but said they could see how well they did with numbers (Appendix 9).

In the Year 8 questionnaires, which these Art students recalled they had participated in, a grade was not seen to be the dominating purpose of feedback as only 15% of students identified it to be a reason that teachers gave feedback (Table 8*).* Taking this data and the interviews together, it appeared students found numerical figures represented their performance, but they recognised feedback needed to be more than this to help them improve their work. In response to the first Art interviews (Appendix 8), Katie had introduced a process of the student completing the EBI. The students said they liked this approach as it made them think about their work and took the focus off a level or numbers (Appendix 9) reinforcing that students felt feedback was more than a numerical score.

In year 10, the students were asked what aspect of feedback they valued the most: a level, comments, neither or both.

Chart 17: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'What part of feedback is valued the most'

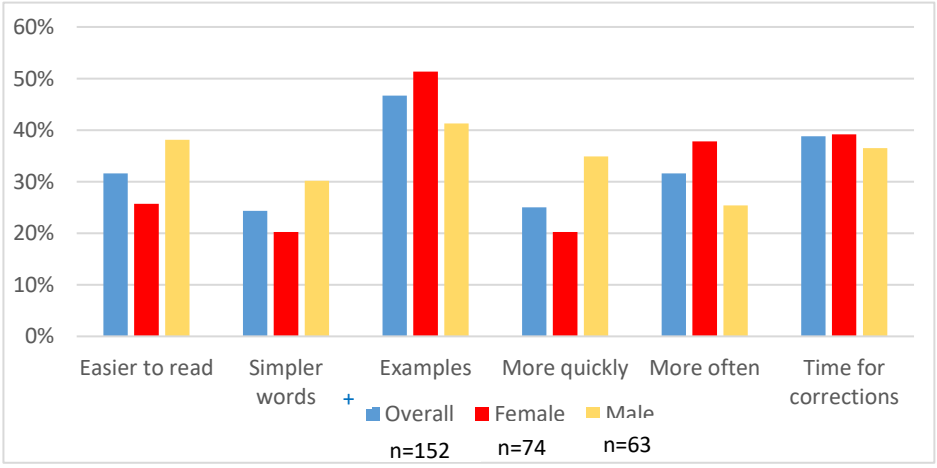


A level was identified as the most common aspect suggesting this dominated the way feedback was presented or received. This contrasts with Table 8 where 15% of Year 10 students identified teachers gave feedback for the purposes of providing a grade. It does, however, correspond with Chart 14 where 48% of students identified feedback was useful to help them to move to the next level. The data from these questions suggests students did not believe the purpose of feedback was to provide a grade, but it was useful to help them quantify their performance and achieve the next level.

5.3.3 Making feedback more useful

Students' views were sought on what could be improved about the feedback they received.

Chart 18: Year 8 Survey: Student responses to 'What would make feedback more useful?

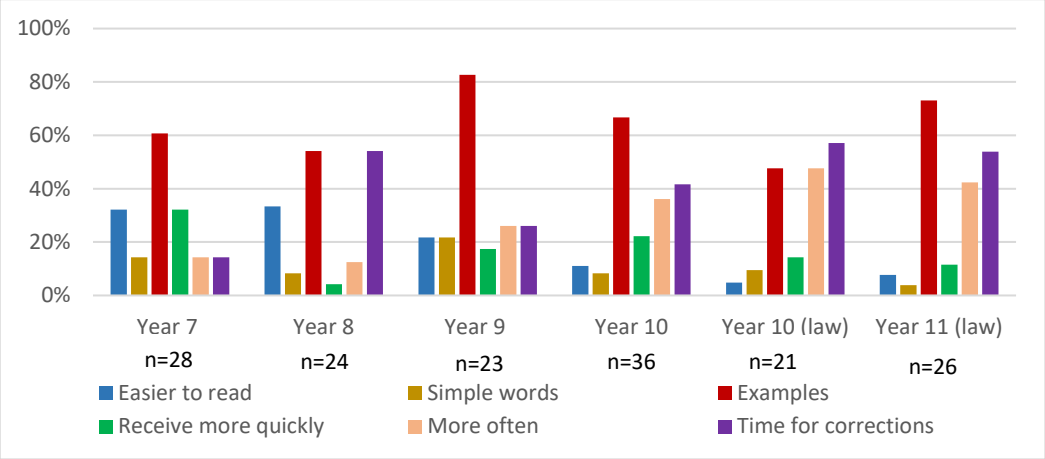


+ Includes gender not disclosed

Overall, examples and time to do corrections were the most frequently identified category selected to improve feedback. In addition, males tended to want feedback to be provided more quickly, with simpler words and easier to read, whilst females tended

to want feedback more often. The responses were tested to see if there was a significant difference between the males and females, none were found.
The provision of examples and time for corrections was also the predominant category identified in the English/Law survey, except for year 7.

Chart 19: English/Law survey: Student responses to 'What would make feedback more useful?'



In years 7 and 8 the students identified 'easier to read' as important, but this reduced as the students were older. 'Simpler words' was not identified as a particularly high need in any of the year groups, suggesting the terminology used was age appropriate. Requiring feedback more often increased across the year groups.

Overall, males and females gave similar responses, but they varied in each year group (Appendix 15C).

5.3.4 Do students want feedback?

The final question in the first part of the questionnaire established whether, overall, students wanted to receive feedback. It can be concluded that despite varied views shown in the previous charts, the majority of students did want to receive feedback.

		Percent of students		
Year (Survey)	**n**	**Yes**	**No**	**Sometimes**
Year 8 (from Year 8 Survey)	152	86%	14%	0%
Year 7 (from English/Law Survey)	28	100%	0%	0%
Year 8 (from English/Law Survey)	24	91%	0%	9%
Year 9 (from English/Law Survey)	23	94%	6%	0%
Year 10 (from English/Law Survey)	57	97%	3%	0%
Year 11 (from English/Law Survey)	26	100%	0%	0%

Table 13: Student responses to 'I like to receive feedback'

In this theme, it was established that students valued feedback that showed them how to improve but they also liked to know they had improved. Year 8 males were statistically more likely to require feedback that affirmed their achievements than females. There was no significant difference in the views between genders in year 10, but less students in year 10 disclosed their gender making a comparison difficult. The usefulness of feedback varied across the subjects in year 8. Feedback from Kirstie was considered to be useful by all year groups. Students wanted feedback and suggested it could be improved by providing examples, time to make improvements to their work and in year 7 by making the feedback easier to read.

5.4 Theme: Using Feedback

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: the opportunities students had to use feedback, whether it promoted thinking and improved students' work. This has been gained from the Year 8 survey, English/Law Survey, Year 10 survey, interviews with students, SLT focus group and the discussion with teachers at the INSET event.

	Do you have opportunities to use feedback to improve your work 'all' or 'most' of the time? Percent responses n=~152	
Subject	**Written**	**Verbal**
Maths	61%	60%
English	68%	67%
Science	40%	40%
Geography	58%	48%
History	55%	49%
French	45%	39%
Technology	38%	42%
Art	56%	53%

Table 14: Year 8 Survey: Student response to 'Do you have opportunities to use written and verbal feedback to improve your work?'

As seen in Table 14, the data on student views about opportunities to use written and verbal feedback showed similar patterns. They were also similar to responses for the previous questions in the survey. The only two subjects where more than 60% of students stated they had opportunities to use feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time were Maths and English. Students' views about opportunities to use feedback 'all'' or most' of the time in Science, Technology and French were less positive.

Although the Art students interviewed in July 2016 claimed to prefer written more than verbal feedback (Appendix 9), the Year 8 survey did not show a particular difference in the usefulness of these two forms in Art. However, the survey was undertaken before Katie had made changes in Art, so the difference in their perceptions in the interview

compared with the Year 8 survey data could be attributed to these improvements. In the Year 10 survey, a high proportion of students stated feedback in Art helped them to think about and improve their work (Table 16). The year 10 survey was undertaken after Katie had incorporated the changes.

In the focus group (Appendix 6), SLT noted that although students said they received feedback through WWW/EBI (Chart 4), the data in Chart 15 suggested they did not necessarily find it useful. The group recognised the school Marking Policy that required teachers to provide feedback in the form of WWW and EBI may not be effective. Using the data in Table 14, SLT concluded this could be because students were not given sufficient opportunities to use feedback. SLT also explained that as part of the feedback process, the Policy required teachers to set a question to which students were expected to respond. On examination of this data, they questioned whether this approach was effective in engaging students in the use of feedback. These issues were discussed with the teachers in the INSET workshops (Appendix 7). The Policy requiring them to set the feedback question was debated. A few teachers explained they re-visited the student responses, but others argued it would take too much time citing timetable constraints and pressure of curriculum content preventing them from doing so. Teachers discussed the type of questions they posed for the students. It emerged in some cases this was a closed question to which students would only need to provide a one-word answer. This was evident in French, Technology and History.

In the first Art interview (Appendix 8), students were asked their views on the questions set by Katie as part of feedback in Art. Both the boys and girls said the question made them think about their work, but some girls expressed concern that they did not always know what the question meant. There was a feeling that the feedback question was not specific enough or linked to the topic, although some students said they felt giving a response gave them the opportunity to be involved and express an opinion about the topic. However, one boy said he did not like giving the response because '*I don't like writing, I know I have to write and I have to get better, but I don't like it. When I have to write a response, I feel rushed and the pressure to write something gets in the way of my thinking, so I just put anything down. I don't have enough time to think about it properly*'.

It was also noted by SLT the feedback practices within Science and within Technology showed a consistently less positive pattern than the other six subjects. SLT believed it was probably due to an under-staffed Science department where a series of supply teachers were being utilised, affecting the continuity of approach and a potentially

difficult experience for students. They noted there had already been a series of concerns about the Technology department's performance.

In the DHT interview, Annie explained after the Year 8 survey data had been presented to SLT, the school policy on Marking was changed requiring teachers to set an action to encourage students to use feedback rather than the previous approach to pose a question for them to answer.

An examination of the data from the English/Law survey of student responses about the opportunities to use their feedback can be seen in Table 15 below. This data represents the percentage of students who believed they had opportunities to use written and verbal feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time.

		Do you have opportunities to use feedback to improve your work 'all' or 'most' of the time? Percent responses	
Year Group	**n**	**Written Feedback**	**Verbal Feedback**
Year 7	28	75%	68%
Year 8	24	59%	33%
Year 9	23	77%	48%
Year 10	36	74%	56%
Year 10 (Law)	21	81%	57%
Year 11 (Law)	26	65%	57%

Table 15: English/Law Survey: Student responses to I have 'Opportunities to use feedback'

Year 8 stands out as a having a lower proportion of students who stated they had opportunities to use feedback, particularly verbal. To explore if this is an issue associated with a year 8 timetable or curriculum, the data from the 2015 Year 8 survey (Table 14) can be used. The responses of the year 8 students for English in that survey does not suggest the data from year 8 in the English/Law survey is associated with an issue with a year 8 curriculum or timetable.

Although the teacher was a constant in this survey, there was still variation across the year groups when exploring opportunities to use written and verbal feedback. When referring to Table 15 above, and to Charts 6 and 9 (section 5.1), it can be seen that students in this survey recognised they received and used written feedback more than they did verbal.

In the Year 10 Survey, the term 'useful' was avoided due to the possible confusion of interpretation revealed in the first Art Interview, so it was changed to 'feedback makes

me think about my work'. A second question was added to identify whether feedback helped students to improve their work.

Table 16 provides a comparison of the views of students who stated 'Feedback makes me think about my work 'all' or 'most' of the time and 'Feedback helps me to improve my work 'all' or 'most' of the time.

	Percent responses 'all' or 'most' of the time n=~83	
Subject	**Feedback makes me think about my work**	**Feedback helps me to improve my work**
Maths	48%	53%
English	63%	73%
Science	70%	75%
Geography	75%	87%
History	60%	65%
French	60%	63%
Technology	51%	55%
Art	70%	75%

Table 16: Year 10 Survey: Student response to 'Feedback makes me think about' and 'helps me to improve my work'.

A pattern was seen in all subjects where the proportion of students in year 10 who stated feedback was easy to understand 'all' or 'most' of the time (Table 12: section 5.2) was similar to those who stated feedback made them think about their work 'all' or 'most' of the time (Table 16). For subjects where students stated the feedback made them think about their work often, there was also a high proportion of responses from students stating it helped them to improve their work.

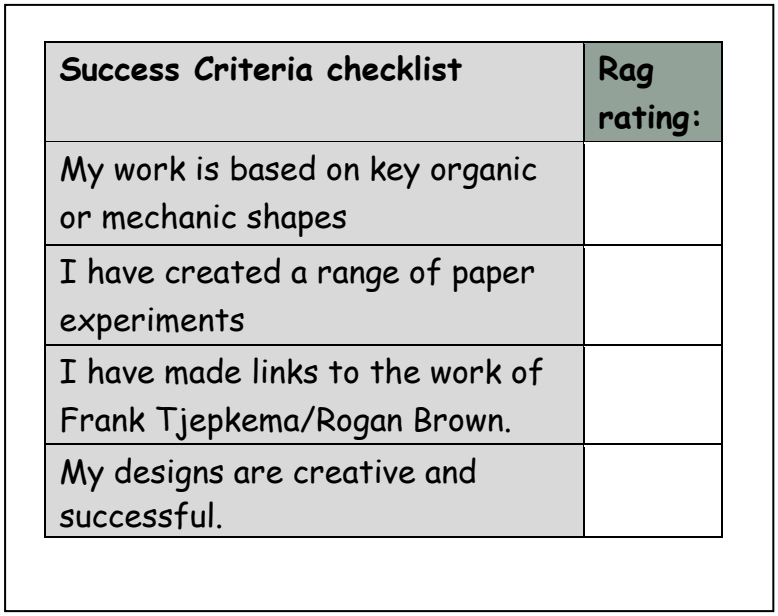
In this theme, it has been established that students appeared to have differing opportunities to use feedback. Opportunities to use written feedback were believed to occur more than opportunities to use verbal feedback in the English/Law survey. For other subjects, opportunities to use both forms of feedback tended to be similar. The school Marking Policy was questioned by SLT as it did not necessarily appear to result in students' engagement with feedback. The process of setting a question by the teacher was not seen to be effective in enabling or encouraging students to use feedback. In the Year 10 survey, it was apparent that when feedback encouraged students to think about their work, it was more likely to help them improve.

5.5 Theme: Success Criteria

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: students' understanding of success criteria in the eight subjects; the students and teachers' views about success

criteria in the feedback process. This has been gained from the Year 10 survey, interviews with Art students, and with Katie, Kirstie and Annie.

Students in Art were expected to use a Success Criteria checklist to ensure their work meets the criteria, then teachers rated it red, amber or green (RAG) to indicate how these criteria had been achieved. This is seen in Figure 3 below:



Success Criteria checklist	Rag rating:
My work is based on key organic or mechanic shapes	
I have created a range of paper experiments	
I have made links to the work of Frank Tjepkema/Rogan Brown.	
My designs are creative and successful.	

Figure 3: Success Criteria Checklist

In the first Art interview, the boys explained they liked the Success Criteria checklist, saying it was simple and easy to use, but some girls commented it was not always clear what they could do if the element was rated as red or amber. All students were confident they understood what the terms meant, such as a 'range', explaining this was because they had a task sheet which explained them. One of the boys suggested there should be two RAG rating columns: one for the student to complete and one for the teacher. He added '*it is always nice when the teacher scores the work more highly than you do*' (Appendix 8).

Katie used an Assessment Record to give feedback on their work, shown in Figure 4 below.

Task		Score (out of 9)
ARTIST SELECTION		/2
- An appropriate choice of artist		
- Good quality images included		
ARTWORK ANALYSIS		/4
- Accurate answers		
- Spelling & grammar		
- Use of key art terms		
- Relevant comments made		
Overall Presentation		/3
- Thoughtful layout		
- Appropriate decoration		
- *[left blank by teacher]*		
		/9

WWW:
EBI:
QUESTION:
STUDENT RESPONSE:

Figure 4: Natural Form Homework Project Assessment Record

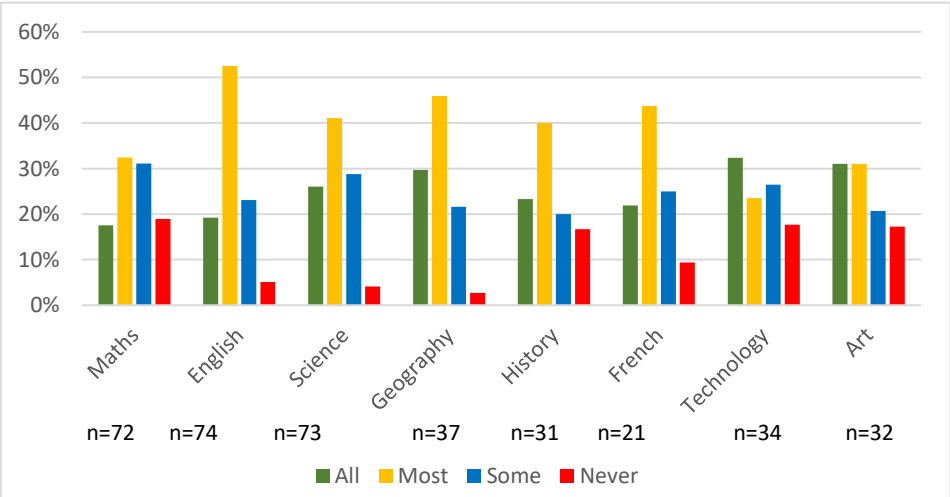
The students said this Assessment Record was easy to use, the scoring system was clear, they knew what they had to do, and they could see if there was anything they had missed in their work. However, they suggested the feedback on the Assessment Record could be linked more clearly to the Success Criteria checklist. They explained this was important as there were times when they believed they had achieved an aspect of the task, but the teacher did not. On these occasions, there was insufficient explanation about what had not been achieved (Appendix 8).

In the first interview, Katie explained she was interested in the students' comments about success criteria. This was something she believed she had always included and was reassured the students said they understood them. However, since the first student interview, she had become more aware of the significance of success criteria and subsequently ensured they were explicitly shared with students. As a consequence, she had observed that conversations with students about their work were more in line with the success criteria, '*they* [the students] *are more compliant as they know what is expected of them in the first place*'. She added '*you can give all the feedback in the world but if they don't understand what they are assessed against, it is pointless*' (Appendix 10).

When interviewing Kirstie, she also referred to the importance of success criteria, explaining '*feedback is only effective when you know your subject. The success criteria and learning outcomes are key*'. She felt feedback needed to be centred around these, if a teacher did not understand the success criteria properly, the feedback will not be useful. She emphasised, '*I am confident that I know my subject and the students know that too and respond to the feedback'* (Appendix 12).

As a result of the comments raised by students and teachers about success criteria, this was included in the Year 10 survey. The student responses about success criteria showed a similar pattern to the other statements in the survey.

Chart 20: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'I understand the success criteria in my subjects'



The subjects in which the highest proportion of students stated they understood the success criteria 'all' or 'most' of the time were English (72%), and Geography (76%). The subjects for which the lowest proportion of students who stated they understood the success criteria 'all' or 'most' of the time were Technology (56%) and Maths (50%). The responses for the other subjects ranged from 62% to 67%. This indicates there were many occasions when students did not appear to understand success criteria.

There was little difference between the female and male responses, 61% of females and 66% of males stated they understood the success criteria 'all' or 'most' of the time (Appendix 16C). However, the proportion of students who did not disclose their gender could mask any differences between male and female responses.

In the interview with Annie, she explained the focus in the school had been on sharing learning outcomes with students, marking exercise books and undertaking work scrutiny. She acknowledged the Year 10 questionnaire data indicated a greater focus was needed on helping students to understand assessment criteria, which could improve self and peer assessment. Annie explained the More Able students were not achieving the grades they were expected to and questioned whether a greater focus on success criteria could support this.

In this theme, it was established the two teachers and the DHT recognised the importance of success criteria, that they should be communicated to students and feedback focused around them. Students in the Art interview also recognised their importance, but felt feedback was not always linked to them. In the Year 10 survey, it was apparent there were mixed views about student understanding of success criteria across the subjects.

5.6 Theme: Self-Assessment

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: students' confidence in self-assessment in the eight subjects, the students and teachers' views about self-assessment as an aspect of feedback, students' views about self-assessment and peer assessment. This has been gained from the discussions with teachers at INSET event, Year 10 survey, interviews with Art and English students and with Katie, Kirstie and Annie.

In the INSET workshops, the role of self-assessment was discussed. The teachers thought it could help student evaluation of their work and form part of a goal setting process but were unsure they would have time to do this effectively due to the quantity of subject knowledge to deliver. They felt high ability students could do this, but low ability students would be unable to (Appendix 7).

In the first Art student interview, one female student suggested they should do their own EBI. When Katie pointed out they currently did this as part of an existing evaluation, the student remarked she had not seen the connection between the two and suggested their evaluations should be presented as EBI (Appendix 8). Following this interview, Katie had changed the teacher feedback question, which students had said was not specific enough to the topic. The change Katie made was to pose this question to students after she had given them feedback:

Based on the feedback above, how will you improve your work?

She had also incorporated the suggestion from a student in the first interview about both teacher and student doing the RAG rating, seen in Figure 5. Katie felt this might help to develop transferrable skills (Appendix 10).

STUDENT:		DATE:
GCSE – OBSERVATIONAL ARTWORK/ARTIST STUDY		
SUCCESS CRITERIA	STUDENT RAG RATING	TEACHER RAG RATING
Accurate artwork		
Suitable choice of materials		
Effective application of materials		
Suitable choice of image		
A challenging choice of image		
OTHER:		
TEACHER QUESTION: Based on the feedback above, how will you improve your work?		
STUDENT RESPONSE:		

Figure 5: Assessment and Feedback Grid for GCSE

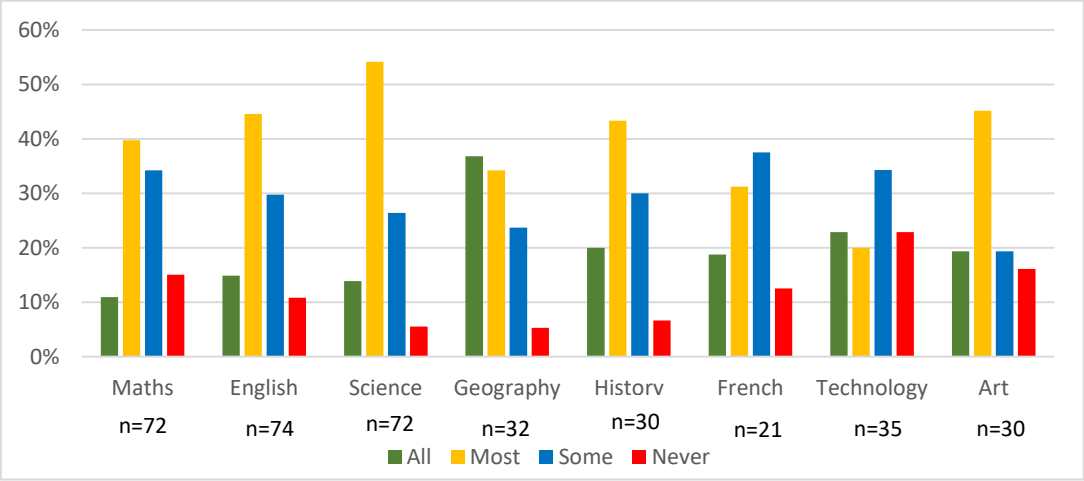
The students stated that since these changes, the feedback was now more specific and focused on improving work, which helped them to answer the question. All the students said they preferred the later approach to feedback because it was more detailed and helped them to see what they could do to improve their work in future (Appendix 9).

Katie stated the most successful strategy she had introduced following the first student interview on October 2015, was student evaluation. She explained it provided a way to have a dialogue with the students, enabling her to explore why they thought as they did, gaining a greater understanding of their learning (Appendix 13).

In the English interviews, the relevance of self-assessment was raised by a year 7 student who explained she might '*disregard the feedback if it does not match my own opinion*'. The second year 7 student agreed with this comment.

Due to self-assessment being referred to in the interviews, this was added to the Year 10 survey.

Chart 21: Year 10 Survey: Student responses to 'I am confident in assessing my own work to identify strengths and areas for improvement'



There was no difference between the views of males and females as 57% of both stated they were confident in assessing their work 'all' or 'most 'of the time (Appendix 16D).

There was only one subject where more than 70% of students stated they were confident in self-assessment 'all' or 'most' of the time (Geography). Student perceptions of self-assessment aligned with their views about other aspects of feedback from the questionnaire, seen in Table 18: section 5.9.

Chart 10 (section 5.1) indicates the English/Law students did not value peer feedback as a useful feedback strategy. Kirstie had noted this and explained she was going to ensure that she focused on peer and self-assessment once a week with the students, saying '*the questionnaires shows this was not strong*'. She believed focusing on peer feedback could help students to recognise their own strengths and development (Appendix 12).

When examining the data from the Year 10 questionnaires, Annie identified a connection between students having confidence in self-assessment and understanding success criteria. She reflected that if students did not understand success criteria, they would not be able to self-assess their work effectively. They would also have difficulty in providing meaningful peer feedback. Annie stated this could be why students consistently stated

they did not value peer feedback, adding '*they don't really like doing peer feedback and are not very good at it'* (Appendix 14).

In this theme, it has been established that students could recognise the value of self-assessment, particularly in Art, which became a feature of the developments introduced by Katie. However, in the Year 10 survey, students were generally not confident in assessing their skills across the subjects.

5.7 Theme: Student voice

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: the teachers' views with regards to the impact of gaining student voice on their understanding of learning and on their practice. This has been gained from the interviews with Katie, Kirstie and Annie.

Katie commented '*before the* [feedback] *project, I valued giving the students feedback, but now it was really nice to see how much they value it and that they want it and the impact it can make*'. Katie went on to say, previously she had found it difficult to make the content of the feedback useful. She now recognised the value of engaging the students in the process, '*I do the WWW and they do the EBI so it brings the two together and gets them involved'*. She explained she had taken student suggestions and mainly applied them to KS4 but had also made some changes with year 9, such as the student evaluations. One of the changes she had made in KS4 was to take photographs of students' work, so they could recognise their improvements as it developed. She felt this was helpful to support their evaluations required in the GCSE. She was inspired to do this from the student comments in the second interview that they did not remember verbal feedback. She felt the photographs provided a fixed record to support the verbal feedback she had given and acted as a useful prompt for students. Katie also noted students used key terms more in conversations with her and with each other. She believed this was because she had incorporated them more. Katie said it had been helpful to hear the students' views, which provided a good balance along with her knowledge and experience. She explained asking the students had helped to reassure her they valued feedback. She was pleased they had expressed their own opinions, offered helpful suggestions and was reassured they understood what she was aiming to achieve. She said some of the comments were insightful and was interested in the views of boys, girls, lower ability and More Able students. She finished by saying '*it was a really positive experience – having the students part of the process – being involved in it gave it a deeper meaning for me…. it was a team approach*' (Appendix 10).

In the second interview with Katie, she explained she had started investigating the way students learn as the feedback project had sparked an interest and given her confidence

to explore this further. She wanted to undertake a Master's degree, inspired by her involvement in this research. She was moving to a new school and planned to take these strategies to her new job (Appendix 13).

Kirstie explained that although she was confident prior to the research, the student views reassured her she was doing the right thing. She had recently been appointed Lead Practitioner and had run a training session for her colleagues. During this she explained the outcomes of the research, highlighting to staff the importance of feedback, saying '*look, they really like feedback, they want it – the data shows this*, *so it is important to make it useful'*. From listening to the students' views, Kirstie said she was more aware that students behaved differently and it '*has made me think that I need to adopt a variety of styles as everyone is individual and different ways work with different students*'. She acknowledged if students respected the teacher, they were more likely to take the feedback on board. Kirstie also said it was nice to hear from the students that they valued the time she put into designing effective feedback systems. She explained that she had been commended on her approach by senior management and OfSTED but hearing from the students that they valued her feedback was reassuring and had reinforced her practice (Appendix 12).

When examining the data from the student surveys, Annie acknowledged they reflected her view of the practice within the departments. She valued their views, possibly because they aligned with hers. She explained the school Marking Policy had been changed after the Year 8 survey and acknowledged the school needed to develop their practice further. She felt she had mainly been operating in an audit role, focusing on teaching and learning but not on student progress. She reflected the data showed a greater focus was required on assessment and feedback. She added some work had been done with staff about the use of Bloom's taxonomy in the setting of learning outcomes and lesson activities (Appendix 14).

In this theme, the impact of obtaining the student voice in this research was established. Changes to school policy and to local practice had occurred as a result, teachers had found it reassuring to hear student views and it had helped to build confidence. Subsequent data demonstrated to the DHT that further development was required.

5.8 Theme: Teacher beliefs about learning

Within this theme, the following data has been collated: the teachers' views with regards to their understanding of learning and supporting students. This has been gained from the SLT focus group, discussions in the INSET interviews, interviews with Katie, Kirstie and Annie.

References to the ability of students were made on a number of occasions during discussions with the teachers. During the INSET event, teachers said they thought high ability students could undertake self-assessment, but low ability students would be unable to. Comments were also made about the differing student responses in the Year 8 survey data, which some teachers attributed to student attitudes towards learning affecting their engagement with feedback (Appendix 7). In the first interview with Katie, she made a number of references to high and low ability students and appeared to have different expectations of them. She had also re-designed the layout of her classroom from clusters of tables into rows, explaining the intention was to manage behaviour by placing the lower ability students at the front and higher ability at the back (Appendix 10).

Kirstie reflected on the differing student needs, which became more apparent through the student interviews. She acknowledged she needed to respond to these on a individual basis but did not make any reference to student ability (Appendix 12).

A possible confusion by senior management about the role of feedback was noted. When the Year 8 data was presented to SLT in the focus group, they noted that written feedback appeared to be valued more than verbal feedback and suggested that teachers should also write down verbal feedback for students (Appendix 6). When Katie was observed by the Head Teacher, it was suggested she designed a system for students to record verbal feedback she gave them. When this was tried, Katie said it was not successful as it interrupted the flow of the lesson and students disregarded the notes they had made (Appendix 13).

In this theme, comments from teachers and SLT revealed an insight into how they viewed student learning.

5.9 Analysis of the student views KS3 to KS4

This research has provided a unique opportunity to explore the views of a single group of students when they were in year 8 (Year 8 Survey, 152 students), in year 9 (English/Law Survey, 23 of these 152 students) and when they were in year 10 (Year 10 Survey 83 of these 152 students). This data has been collated and is shown in Appendix 17.

Using this data and the student interviews, it has, therefore been possible to explore differences and similarities in the perceptions of students as they progressed from KS3 to KS4. This has been summarised in Figure 6. KS3 data was formed from Year 8 questionnaires, Art student interviews, English questionnaires and English student

interviews. KS4 data was formed of Year 10 questionnaires and English/Law questionnaires, English/Law interviews.

Key Stage Three (years 7, 8, 9)	Key Stage Four (years 10, 11)
Students want to receive feedback	Students want to receive feedback
Feedback is mainly presented in exercise books	Feedback is mainly presented in exercise books
WWW/EBI (written) feedback is recognised the most, followed by verbal	WWW/EBI (written) feedback is recognised the most, followed by verbal
Peer feedback was generally not valued	Peer feedback was generally not valued
Feedback was not a motivator	Feedback was not a motivator
The main purpose of feedback is to improve student work	The main purpose of feedback was to improve student work, but an increase in student perception that it was provided to show the teacher has looked at the work
Feedback would be more useful if it included examples and students had time to use it	Feedback would be more useful if it included examples and students had time to use it
Liked feedback which focused on improving work but need to know what they have done well too	Liked feedback which identified improvement but it generally did not identify what they had done well
Subjects were feedback was consistently more positively received: English, Maths and Art Subjects were feedback was consistently viewed more negatively: Science and Technology	Subjects where feedback was consistently more positively received: English, Science and Geography Subjects where feedback was consistently viewed more negatively: Maths and Technology
Like a numerical representation of feedback (grades/levels)	Levels are preferred more than comments
Feedback was not always understood well by all	Feedback not always understood by all but an increasing level of understanding from Year 9.
Males like feedback to show they have improved or what they are good at	Most students want feedback to show them what they are doing well and what to do next. No gender difference apparent.
Feedback is influenced by student liking for the subject, the relationship with the teacher, when it is provided and classroom environment	Feedback is influenced by student liking for the subject, relationship with the teacher, when it is provided, classroom environment, own mood
Feedback should be easier to read	Feedback should be provided more often
Verbal feedback is explained more clearly than written, but written is used more than verbal	Written feedback used more than verbal, although mixed preferences expressed for written and verbal feedback
Verbal feedback can be forgotten	
Would like feedback to be explicitly linked to success criteria	Do not always understand success criteria (mixed views)
When there are opportunities to use feedback, it is valued more	When feedback encourages students think about their work, it enables them to understand and use it to improve their work
Feedback useful to understand current performance but not how it applies to future work	Perceptions of the usefulness of feedback for some subjects increased in some aspects in Year 10
Keen to undertake their own self-evaluations	Generally, not confident in self-assessment
Feedback may be disregarded if it does not align with students' own perception	
Like a simple feedback system	
Not always enough information about what has been achieved	
The student response to feedback (question) should be purposeful. It can be repetitive, vague and inhibits thinking	

Figure 6: A summary of student perceptions of feedback from KS3 to KS4

Tables 17 and 18 summarise the responses given by students in the Year 8 and Year 10 surveys regarding feedback they received within the subjects.

	Maths n=~152	English n=~152	Science n=~152	Geography n=~152	History n=~152	French n=~152	Technology n=~152	Art n=~152
Receive written Feedback	69%	79%	44%	58%	56%	68%	21%	63%
Receive verbal Feedback	45%	62%	27%	50%	43%	47%	31%	47%
Receive peer Feedback	31%	38%	23%	34%	30%	34%	21%	39%
Written Feedback explained	46%	70%	36%	50%	47%	49%	34%	55%
Verbal feedback explained	51%	65%	39%	45%	47%	46%	41%	50%
Understand feedback	67%	69%	42%	58%	54%	51%	47%	61%
Feedback is useful	71%	76%	49%	64%	59%	53%	49%	61%
Use written feedback	61%	68%	40%	58%	55%	45%	38%	56%
Use verbal feedback	60%	67%	40%	48%	49%	39%	42%	53%

Table 17: Year 8 Survey: The percentage of students who stated 'all' or 'most' for the questions in the questionnaire

	Maths n=~83	English n=~83	Science n=~83	Geography n=~42	History n=~34	French n=~35	Technology n=~40	Art n=~35
Written feedback positive difference	53%	69%	69%	78%	56%	74%	48%	57%
Verbal Feedback positive difference	38%	64%	53%	56%	44%	64%	41%	48%
Peer Feedback positive difference	20%	44%	24%	36%	25%	29%	30%	25%
Easy to understand	50%	69%	69%	83%	60%	56%	55%	66%
Makes me think about my work	48%	63%	70%	75%	60%	60%	51%	75%
Helps to improve my work	53%	73%	75%	87%	65%	63%	55%	75%
Understand success criteria	50%	72%	67%	76%	63%	66%	56%	62%
Confident in self-assessment	51%	60%	68%	71%	63%	50%	43%	64%

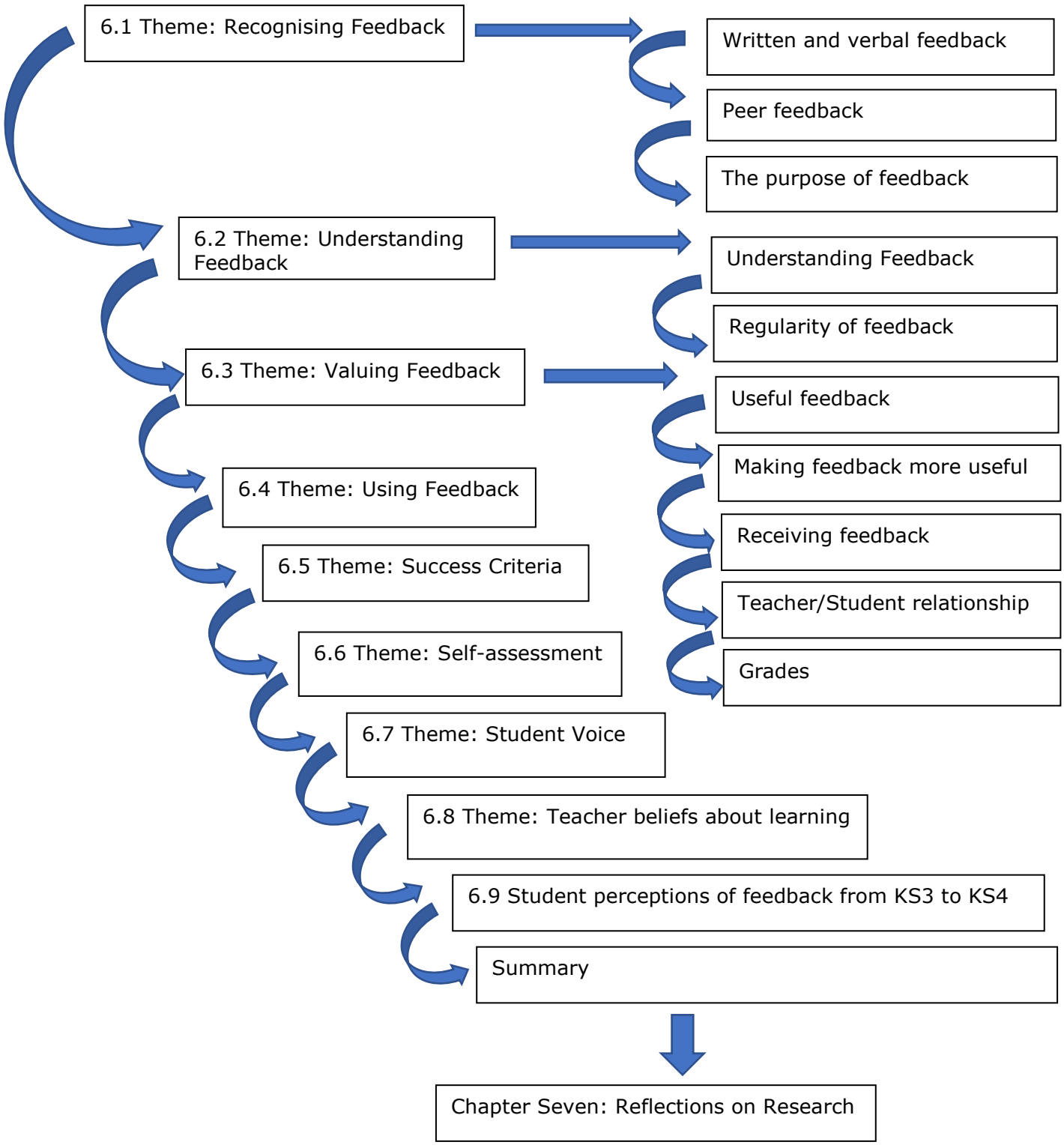
Table 18: Year 10 Survey: The percentage of students who stated 'all' or 'most' for the statements in the questionnaire

Key	
	<30%
	30-39%
	40-49%
	50-59%
	60-69%
	70-79%
	>80%

Chapter Six: Detailed data analysis

This chapter explores the key themes from the preliminary data analysis in Chapter Five. It makes connections between the data sets and draws on the theoretical framework from Chapter Two and the literature discussed in Chapter Three to present a position and develop an argument formed from the data.

Format of the chapter:



6.1 Theme: Recognising Feedback

6.1.1 Written and Verbal Feedback

The year 8 students and the English/Law students identified exercise books as the most common form of feedback (Charts 1 and 2). This could be because it is the most visible and recognisable form of feedback they encountered. Although feedback could well occur through a dialogic exchange in the classroom, students may not recognise or value it as feedback. Students identified differing roles of feedback themselves, explaining verbal feedback was helpful because it occurred straight away and could clarify confusion, but written feedback provided a permanent record which could be referred back to (Appendices 9 and 11). The permanency and visibility of the written feedback may have influenced students' perception of how feedback occurred.

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984) explains a dialogic exchange through argumentation and negotiation is required for a communication to be effective as this can result in agreement and understanding between two parties. For this exchange to be effective, Habermas argued both parties need to have an active role in the interaction and the recipient must be able to challenge the validity of the speaker. Such open dialogic exchanges in the classroom are unlikely to occur readily, as found by Carnell (2004) and a power relationship between the teacher and student could result in no agreement or a pseudo-consensus (Van den Berg 1990) rather full consensus or may result in ineffective communication. Such limitations in a dialogic exchange in a classroom may influence the value students placed on these interactions. If they did not achieve the purpose of helping students to improve their work, which they believed was one of the main purposes of feedback (Table 8 and Appendix 15A) the students may not regard verbal dialogue that did take place as feedback because it had not achieved what they believe feedback should. Furthermore, in their research, Gamlem and Munthe (2014) found verbal feedback was low quality, focusing on engagement instead of learning. If the verbal feedback the students experienced in my research was of a similar quality reported by Gamlem and Munthe, the students may not have regarded it as feedback. It is also important to consider that students' views of feedback can be influenced by the way it has been represented to them in the past. If they had come to associate written comments or a grade as feedback, this might influence their belief that feedback takes this form.

Tables 10 and 11 show varying views about how well verbal feedback was explained across all the subjects. The Year 10 questionnaire data indicated a slightly lower percentage of students believed that verbal feedback made a positive difference to their learning than it did for written (Charts 5 and 8). This data consistently indicates verbal feedback is regarded with less value than written feedback. This could occur if verbal

exchanges in the classroom were not clear or rushed as a year 7 English student noted (Appendix 11) or were difficult to remember from one lesson to the next (Appendix 9). Weeden *et al* (2002) claimed students showed a preference for verbal feedback, although in their meta-analysis, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) cited feedback that was delivered orally as a threat to the positive effect of feedback. These contrasting views highlight the complexities of verbal feedback and can help explain the variance in student views in my research.

Katie explained that following an observation by the Head Teacher, she incorporated a system for students to record the verbal feedback she provided. This was not successful as the students did not keep the notes and it interrupted the flow of the lesson (Appendix 13). The comment by the Head Teacher suggests the role of verbal feedback in the classroom was not seen to be different from written and indicates there was a perceived need to provide evidence that such exchanges occurred. It suggests the Head Teacher was concerned about recording feedback to provide evidence to the Inspectorate (OfSTED), highlighting Stiggins (2006) view that assessment and feedback is often used for different audiences. It also suggests the Head Teacher's perception was that feedback should be in a written form, not recognising it can occur verbally with the evidence of it occurring taking the shape of improvements in pupil learning. The Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review (2016 pg. 9) specifically states '*Ofsted does not expect to see any written record of oral feedback provided to pupils by teachers'*. The Head Teacher's concern about providing written evidence of feedback is an example of the pressures of an external system, the *perceived* requirements by OfSTED influencing the practice in the classroom, even if it did not serve any purpose.

Providing feedback for multiple purposes, such as the student, senior management and the Inspectorate can distort the message intended. Thomassen (2010) explains such external drivers can dominate the discourse, which Habermas (1987) identified as a system colonising the lifeworld. Another example of this was seen in the first Art interview when students were asked about the response they were expected to provide to the teacher question. In accordance with the school policy, the students were required to write the response in their workbooks. One male student felt challenged by this process, stating '*When I have to write a response, I feel rushed and the pressure to write something gets in the way of my thinking, so I just put anything down. I don't have enough time to think about it properly*' (Appendix 8). The school requirement to provide documentary evidence of the feedback process appeared to be influencing and inhibiting learning.

6.1.2 Peer Feedback

Data from all the surveys and the student interviews identified that peer feedback was generally not considered to be a useful process. It was initially suggested by one student in the first Art interviews they could undertake an evaluation of each other's work. This idea was rejected by others as they considered peer feedback to be '*really vague and empty'* (Appendix 8). However, in the English interview, a year 10 female identified the benefit of asking a peer about feedback received from the teacher, was that it '*could make you think about your own work'* (Appendix 11). In the first interview with Katie, she said she recognised the benefits of peer assessment, but explained the quality of student responses were not always helpful (Appendix 10*)*. Annie also commented that students did not really like engaging in peer feedback and it was not usually good (Appendix 14). Neither of these members of staff recognised the importance in guiding students in the provision of peer feedback. Hargreaves (2001) and Gamlen and Smith (2013) explained students need to be trained to provide effective peer feedback, to critically look at other's work and make suitable judgements linked to the learning outcomes. Similar to findings of DeLuca *et al* (2018), my research found that peer feedback was the least valued form of feedback, which may be because the importance it was not recognised by teachers and hence not taught effectively. Fluckiger *et al* (2010) stated that to be effective, peer feedback like other forms of feedback needs to relate to specific criteria. If the peer feedback did not do this, it can explain why the students regarded it as vague and empty. Kirstie recognised the English/Law survey data indicated students did not value peer feedback and set this as an action to address as she recognised the students needed to master this skill as it was of particular importance in English.

6.1.3 Purpose of feedback

The students' views about the purpose and usefulness of feedback were similar in all the questionnaire surveys. In the Year 8 survey, they identified the main reason teachers gave feedback was to help students improve their work. By the time the students had reached year 10, their views had altered with less students identifying feedback was useful to show them they had improved (40% in year 8; 28% in year 10). This could occur if different approaches were used by teachers in KS4, if feedback did not focus on pupil success, or if the students had a different need for feedback as they moved closer to GCSEs. In the intervening time between the Year 8 survey and the Year 10 survey, exams had been introduced in the school at the end of each year, so the students' attitudes towards improving performance may have changed, or the teachers' approach to feedback may have focused more on exam performance (Appendix 14).

To explore the attitudes of year 10 students in more detail, the English/Law surveys indicated that students did still value feedback to show they had done well (Appendix 15A), so any change in attitude regarding what was useful about feedback is more likely to be due to teacher approaches rather than student need. The percentage of students who stated the purpose of feedback was to show the teacher had looked at their work increased from 16% in year 8 to 23% in year 10 (Table 8). This change may be due to the increased scrutiny and audit of marking in exercise books explained by Annie (Appendix 14). This strategy could have increased the quantity of feedback for the purposes of satisfying a third party (auditor) but did not necessarily mean it was helpful to the students. Habermas (1984) would describe this as an ineffective communication mechanism because it was a perlocutionary speech act which had a strategic objective as it sought to achieve the aims of the teacher, not the student.

6.2 Theme: Understanding Feedback

6.2.1 Understanding Feedback

The Year 8 questionnaire data indicated there were only two subjects in which more than 50% of the students stated both written and verbal feedback were explained 'all' or 'most' of the time (English and Art: Table 10). It suggests there was a high proportion of occasions when feedback was not explained, however, written feedback might not have necessitated a follow up explanation. It also indicates there was a high proportion of occasions when verbal feedback was not clearly explained although students may not have considered verbal exchanges that occurred between them and the teacher as feedback. The third column of Table 10 indicates a slightly higher proportion of students felt feedback was easy to understand for some subjects despite a lower occurrence of it being explained. Feedback may have not needed an explanation all the time for it to be understood. When examining Chart 18, between one quarter and one third of students stated feedback could be improved by making it easier to read or to use simpler words. If students found the terminology difficult to read or too complex, they would have difficulty in understanding feedback.

Table 11 summarised the English/Law data regarding student understanding of feedback. Students in years 7 and 8 believed verbal feedback was more clearly explained than written, which also corresponds with the suggestion by these students that writing could be easier to read (Chart 19). However, over 80% stated feedback generally was easy to understand 'all' or 'most' of the time. So, it appears that when it could be read by the student, written feedback by Kirstie was structured in a way that was understood. Further analysis of the English/Law survey shows that in the remaining years, the student views about the explanation of verbal and written feedback were more even,

with approximately two-thirds of students stating both written and verbal feedback was explained 'all' or 'most' of the time.

Overall, whilst this data provides a mixed picture, it does suggest students in years 7 and 8 may find written feedback difficult to understand if they are unable to read the writing of the teacher, or they do not have the skills to make sense of the comments. This highlights Dann's (2018) concern that some students may not have sufficient cognitive development to understand feedback in these earlier years. This could influence and shape students' perception, affecting their subsequent engagement with feedback in later years.

Table 12 presents a comparison of the students' views about their understanding of feedback from the Year 8 and Year 10 surveys. There were 5 subjects when more students stated they understood their feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time in year 10 than they did in year 8. This was Science (+27%), Geography (+25%), History (+6%), Technology +(8%), Art (+5%) and French (+4%). With the exception of Science, all of these subjects were optional, so an increase in the way students valued feedback could be a result of their preference for the subject. This was expressed by the students in the English and Art interviews (Appendix 9 and 11*)* who explained their liking for the subject influenced their engagement with feedback. In the interview with Annie (Appendix 14), she explained the Geography team designed their own assessments in KS4, whereas the Maths department used past exam papers. In their research to explore the use of summative assessments to support learning, Black *et al* (2011) believed using summative assessments, such as past exam papers or ready-made tasks did not guide student learning. They also claimed using these did not encourage teachers to develop skills in designing their own tests. My data supports Black *et al's* views suggesting the approach taken by the Geography teachers enabled them to give feedback that was easy to understand, encouraged students to think about and improve their work (Tables 12 and 16). An OfSTED inspection undertaken in September 2018 identified Geography as a high performing subject with good strategies to support students' learning (OfSTED 2018). OfSTED's view corroborates this data in my research.

In contrast, in the Maths department, where past exam papers were used, a lower proportion of students in KS4 understood their feedback, or felt it prompted them to think about or improve their work (Tables 12 and 16). In DeLisle's (2015) research on the effect of formative assessment on a continuous assessment programme in Trinidad and Tobago, he found teachers focused on summative assessment to the detriment of formative. The emphasis on past GSCE papers in Maths in KS4 seems to have produced similar outcomes with teachers focusing on the process of undertaking external tests. If the students were regularly receiving grades on their performance in these tests, this

could influence how they felt about themselves, their learning and engagement with feedback. Peterson and Irving's (2008) research in a New Zealand secondary school found students said low grades affected how they felt about their learning, whilst good grades made them feel good. The use of assessment papers in Maths in my research could influence students' beliefs about their ability through the regular provision of grades. Such an approach would focus on an outcome, rather than exploring why students gave the answers they did. Bennett (2011) argued this is often overlooked when providing feedback and it could account for the perception by year 10 students. Table 12 shows 50% of students understood the feedback in Maths 'all' or 'most' of the time, which indicates 50% of students only understood feedback 'some' of the time, or 'never' did. Such a wide variation in views could be due to grades being received positively by some students and in a negative way by others.

These findings suggest purposeful assessments designed by teachers provided more opportunities to support students' learning and have important implications for developing practice in the classroom. However, an unstable teaching team in Maths, explained by Annie (Appendix 14), could also account for the student views as this may prevent relationships and mutual understandings to be achieved in the feedback process.

Despite the slightly more positive experience in year 10 than year 8 for most subjects, the data indicated that there were a considerable number of students who did not understand the feedback they received. It could be because they did not have the necessary skills or strategies to understand and engage with it (Jonssen 2012) or feedback was too complex or contradictory (Irons 2008). Jonssen (2012), Lawson (2013) and Ruiz-Primo and Brockhart (2018) explained feedback should adopt terminology that students can understand. An assumption could be made by the teacher who provides the feedback that it will be understood by the student, however if it was not specific or related to targets or learning outcomes, the relevance of it may not be clear to the students. In both the Year 8 and the English/Law surveys, providing an example was the most common suggestion as to how feedback could be improved (Charts 18 and 19). This suggests students believed it would be useful for them to have a clearer understanding of what good quality work looked like, which Chappius (2012) explained is important in helping the student understand what they are aiming to achieve. Without a clarity of the learning intention, feedback can lack purpose (Fluckiger *et al* 2010) and students focus on the activity, not on learning (Chappuis 2012).

6.2.2 Frequency of providing feedback

The English student interviews showed a range of preferences in the regularity and depth of feedback. The year 10 boys wanted more detailed feedback less often, a view

shared by the year 7 girls, whilst year 10 girls wanted feedback more regularly. Williams (2010) also identified girls were inclined to want feedback more regularly than boys. This was also demonstrated in my research, but the low numbers of students interviewed makes it difficult to draw any conclusions. It is possible previous experiences of the way feedback had been provided to students influenced their preferences. Lander (2011) and Francis (2000) suggested teachers' perceptions of gender could influence how teachers provide feedback to students and support their learning. The varying data on gender preferences in this research could be explained by Lander and Francis' views that the student preferences were influenced by prior experiences as well as personal choices.

6.3 Theme: Valuing Feedback

6.3.1 Useful feedback

A difference in the views of male and female students is seen in the response to the question 'What do you find useful about feedback'. In the Year 8 survey, males identified feedback was useful to show them they had improved. In the English/Law survey, year 8 males stated feedback was useful to show them what they were good at. These aspects of feedback were not as important to the year 8 females and the difference was statistically significant. From this data, it can be concluded that in year 8, males placed a higher value on the affirming aspect of feedback than the females did in these years. Although it was still identified as an important aspect throughout the other year groups (Chart 13 and Appendix 15B), there was no significant difference between male and female views, possibly because females found it more important in these other years than they did in year 8. In the interview with the year 7 girls, one student explained '*you don't feel rubbish if it is not just about improvement but do want to know how to improve and move on to the next level*'. Although the importance of reassurance of success was expressed here, it was followed with clarification that feedback was important for improvement. The two year 10 males in the English interviews said they wanted feedback to tell them they were doing well because they '*like to know they have got it and can move on'*. The confirmation they were on track was important to them. These views could reflect the confidence of boys identified by Murphy and Elwood (1998), Francis (2000) and Younger *et al* (2005). In the younger years, the male students may require reassurance more than females to develop or maintain confidence in their ability. My data suggests reassurance of success was important for all students but appeared to be of particular importance to the year 8 males. In the year 10 survey, the higher proportion of students who did not disclose their gender might have masked any gender difference. The findings are significant for teachers, who should design feedback which recognises and builds on student success not just focusing on

improvement. Strategies used by teachers should ensure this is part of the feedback process and may need to reinforce success to younger males.

SLT noted that even when feedback was provided in the form of WWW/EBI, students did not always consider it to be useful (Appendix 6). The closed questions that teachers were asking as part of the process, were not useful to help students to engage with feedback. Although the teachers recognised this, they explained it would take too much time to write a question which required a longer student response (Appendix 7). The process of setting a question for students to answer was not found to be helpful by the students in the Art interview with comments such as '*the question is okay, but you don't always know what the question means'* and '[it] *should be more specific and relate to the style of the topic*' (Appendix 8). This data demonstrates that even though when the school policy was being followed, feedback was not helpful to support student learning. When she changed the question posed in Art to '*Based on the feedback above, how will you improve your work?'* Katie recognised the feedback she gave to students had to change to enable them to answer this question. The students stated this change had improved the feedback they received from Katie (Appendix 9). Coe *et al* (2014), Brown *et al* (2012) and James (2006) explained teachers need to have a critical awareness of effective learning and feedback. This research had enabled Katie to reflect on the purpose of feedback and develop her approach to make it more effective.

6.3.2 Making feedback more useful

When examining the responses to the question 'what would make feedback more useful', examples and time to make changes to their work were the main categories selected (Charts 18 and 19). As previously discussed, an example could provide students with a clear direction of what they are aiming to achieve. However, it could narrow the learning by focusing on the outcome, which Torrance and Pryor (2002) described as convergent teaching, avoiding deeper learning. Students requiring time to make improvements to their work corresponds with Table 14, where students felt there were limited opportunities to do this for many of the subjects in year 8. If students are not provided with opportunities to use feedback, they are unlikely to engage with it as they have not been able to apply it to their learning. This corresponds with Wiliam's (2011) comments that feedback needs to occur within a system where students can use it, otherwise it should not be regarded as feedback.

As previously discussed, students in years 7 and 8 stated feedback could be easier to read, a view which reduced from year 9 to year 11. An explanation could be that students became more familiar with the teacher's comments and writing as they were

older or developed skills to understand it better. This was noted by Dann (2018). Whilst her research was undertaken with primary school children, the data from these surveys suggests students entering into secondary education could also face challenges in the cognitive engagement with feedback. Table 12 shows between half and two-thirds of students generally found feedback easy to understand across the eight subjects, indicating there was a proportion of year 8 students who stated they did not understand feedback often or at all. The Year 10 data shows a slight increase in responses by students with regards to understanding feedback in some subjects, so the year 8 views could have been due to difficulty in reading or interpreting the writing. However, the small changes in Year 10 could also have been due to different techniques used when these students were in KS4.

6.3.3 Receiving feedback

All the data charts show a variation in student perceptions for all the questions. Even when the teacher was a constant factor (English/Law survey) a variation was still noted. For example, Chart 4 shows a range of responses from 'All' of the time' to 'Never' about student views as to whether they received written feedback on their work. Similar patterns of responses occur throughout the data. These variations could be a result of the importance and relevance students placed on feedback. Chappius (2012), Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Harlen (2007) explained higher attaining students can value feedback as a positive sign of their ability, whilst for lower attaining students, it can reinforce belief in their ability. Dann (2016) and Havnes *et al* (2012) added higher attaining students were more likely to actively engage with feedback, whilst lower attaining ones tended to take a passive or negative approach. If students actively engaged with it, they may be more likely to recognise they received feedback. The variance could also depend on how the feedback was presented. If it was presented in a way that students were unable to use or included terminology they did not understand, (Jonsson 2012, Bennett 2011) students may disregard it as feedback. Students in the first Art interview explained some of the feedback they received did not show them how they could apply the comments to future work. This may have resulted in them disregarding the feedback and not acknowledging they had received it. Stiggins (2006) argues an assessment system should provide information about students' achievement and inform them how to improve their work. If this is not achieved, feedback would have little value for students.

The type of feedback provided may also influence whether it is acknowledged by students. Hattie and Timperley (2007) claimed the feedback teachers give is influenced by their perception of student needs. They argued teachers who considered students to be lower ability were more likely to give them praise rather than instruction. As praise

does not contain information (Hattie and Timperley *ibid*), it may not be regarded as feedback.

The variance in student perceptions is, therefore, important. It is possible lower attaining students did not recognise or acknowledge feedback as much as their higher attaining peers. This could lead them into a cycle of not engaging with feedback, thus maintaining their current performance, reinforcing to them and their teachers of their 'ability' resulting in a repeat of the cycle. As the Law students in Years 10 and 11 could be regarded as higher attaining students, based on the views of Dann (2016), Havnes *et al* (2012), Chappius (2012), Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Harlen (2007) it could be expected the pattern of responses of these students would show a greater indication of engagement with, and use of, feedback than their peers in an average group. The data in my research does not show this. Data from Law questionnaires does not show any difference in patterns to the student views across all groups. This indicates these higher attaining students did not show different preferences or relate to feedback in a more positive way than their peers. It should be acknowledged this may be due to the way Kirstie provided the feedback and the way she engaged with all of her students. Nevertheless, it could be expected that the higher attaining students would still show a tendency to view feedback more positively than their peers. These findings are significant for teachers as they show it should not be assumed that higher attaining students will engage with feedback in a different way from their peers. This highlights that all students need to be supported in the use of feedback to help them improve their work.

In their meta-analysis, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) identified feedback could have a negative effect on performance in 38% of the studies they examined. They argued this was due to the type of feedback provided. When feedback indicated the performance of the student fell short of the goal, the student could either change their behaviour to reach the goal; modify or abandon the goal; or reject the feedback. The value placed on the feedback will influence the subsequent action taken by the student. This can be determined by the way the feedback was presented and in their motivation in achieving the goal. Such power of feedback was noted by Hattie and Timperley (2007), who explained it can either motivate a student or reinforce views about deficiencies. A student who receives feedback which they believe reinforces their deficiencies, may then reject the feedback or abandon their learning goals. Applying Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984), specifically validity claims, this could happen because the teacher's claim to truthfulness or authenticity is questioned by the student if they do not feel the teacher is acting with the genuine intention to help them and without an opportunity to challenge the teacher's claim, the feedback is not communicated

effectively. A student who has received feedback on prior occasions, from this or other teachers, which reinforced deficiencies, will be influenced by this experience and it may affect how they value feedback on later occasions. Habermas (1987) referred to this as the lifeworld affecting how the student interprets the feedback they receive. Black *et al* (2003) argued that removing grades as part of feedback can avoid such self-affirming belief in students. Stiggins' (2006) claim that any assessment system which has a negative impact on students must be replaced with one that '*engenders hope and sustained effort for all*' (pg.14) would be applicable here.

The way in which students viewed themselves as learners could affect how they engaged with feedback. The NRC (2000) explained that children can view intelligence as fixed (entity theorist) or malleable (incremental theorist). For a student who is an entity theorist, feedback would be likely to reinforce their ability level, whereas a student who is an incremental theorist would be more likely to engage with feedback and regard it as a mechanism to improve their learning. The variation in student views could be a result of how students regarded themselves and how they believed learning and development occurred. This perception can be formed by their outlook, attitude to learning and the priorities they set themselves, which can be the result of previous experiences (Dann 2018). Ruiz-Primo and Brockhart (2018) explained if feedback is focused on outcomes, rather than the person it will reinforce to a student that intelligence is fixed and outside of their control. This would be likely to result in a student not using or valuing feedback if they do not believe they can improve.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) explained students with low self-efficacy are more likely to react negatively to feedback, Wiliam (2011 pg. 12) captures this by stating '*thoughtful feedback given to students who see themselves with low, or no ability is likely to be ignored or rejected*…' In addition, Wiliam (2013) claimed if feedback is presented in a way that leads the student to believe they are of low ability or cannot learn, the student will disengage to avoid further failure and reinforcement of their ability. The variations regarding student views on how feedback was valued, even when the teacher remained constant, could be explained by the way the student saw themselves as a learner and their self-efficacy. This has important implications for teachers and the way feedback is designed and shared with students.

When feedback is used, it is more likely to be understood and valued because the students can apply it. Irons (2008) points out feedback given at the end of a topic is too late for it to be used. In the English student interviews (Appendix 11), a year 7 student noted feedback they received in another subject always came at the end of a topic, which she explained was too late. As feedback should be located within a system that leads to action (Wiliam 2011a), when it is provided too late to be able to do this, it could

be disregarded by students as feedback. During the interviews, the Art students identified a lack of time as a limitation on using feedback (Appendix 9). Gamlem and Smith (2013) found when students said they did not have time to act on feedback, they viewed it negatively and it affected how they felt about themselves as a learner. This was not expressed by the students I interviewed, who instead showed feelings of frustration of not being able to use it. This echoes Priestley and Sime's (2005) warning about the limitations of a rigid time-table on formative assessment practices in secondary education.

Askew (2004) explained the relationship between the giver and receiver of feedback is important. This concurs with Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984) where he states two parties involved in an exchange should have equal power to enable argumentation and negotiation to occur enabling an agreed understanding to be achieved. The relationship between the student and teacher can influence how the students receive and value feedback. This was identified by one of the Art students in the second interview (Appendix 9) who emphasised the relationship between teacher and student was an important factor. This was also commented on by the Year 10 males in the English interview, who explained if they trusted the teacher they would be more willing to accept feedback (Appendix 11). This could be because the validity claims were being met in such a relationship, whereby students recognised and accepted the intention, authority and credibility of the teacher so they valued the feedback. Data from the English/Law survey, in which 80% or more of students in years 7 to 11 stated feedback was useful 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 16) suggests the way feedback was provided and the relationship students had with Kirstie was valued by most students. Hopfenbeck (2017) argued students who feel connected to their teacher and peers are more likely to perform better in assessments. However, Stipek (2002) warned teachers may develop closer relationships with students who are higher achieving as they are easier to teach, have more confidence and show less behavioural issues in class. Not all of the students valued feedback from Kirstie, which could be because they did not all have a positive relationship with her, or the students' own aspirations and values influenced whether they accepted her claims. These aspirations and values could be influenced by their background, the importance they placed on education and by their own motivation to learn, which may in turn be affected by previous experiences in education. Hence, the lifeworld could have been influencing the way students perceived the communication (Habermas 1987).

These factors could provide further explanations for the variance in the student perceptions in the surveys, including the English/Law survey. The Year 8 survey showed students generally did not value the feedback they received in Science (Chart 15) and

the year 10 survey showed similar views for Maths (Table 16). These were explained by Annie as unstable teaching teams, which consisted of new and supply teachers. Such an arrangement would be unlikely to develop an effective relationship between teachers and students, limiting the acceptance of validity claims which could account for the student views.

The students also identified other factors that limited engagement with feedback, particularly the classroom environment and the time of day. The noisy or disruptive class environment made it difficult to focus on feedback and lessons after lunch were cited as being difficult (Appendices 9 and 11). It was also commented when students were all given feedback at the same time, the classroom could become loud, which made it difficult to engage with and respond to feedback. This data shows there are many factors that affect how students will engage and value feedback, in addition to the actual words used. To maximise the likelihood of students engaging with it, teachers need to consider other factors in the class environment that can interfere with the communication and receiving of feedback. The time-table and the curriculum pressures identified by the teachers (Appendix 7) can limit the flexibility and opportunities for students to engage with feedback in class. However, an awareness and understanding of the factors that interfere with this can help teachers to plan the times when they provide feedback in class with care, so they maximise its impact.

Across all the surveys, feedback was not viewed as a motivator. This could correspond with student views that feedback was not useful in showing them what they had done well. If feedback is not constructed to draw out and celebrate the student success, but solely focuses on improvement, it is unlikely to be motivating. Hattie (2012) claimed feedback should focus on detecting and correcting errors, but the year 7 student comment ('*you don't feel rubbish if it* [the feedback] *is not just about improvement*…') challenges his view by identifying feedback should also recognise student success. The Art students interviewed in July 2016 (Appendix 9) said they were motivated by their feedback in Art since it had been improved, although this could have been because they had been involved in the changes. Examination of the English/Law questionnaires shows that although there was a high proportion of students who identified feedback was useful in showing them what they were good at or they had improved, this was not accompanied by a similar high proportion of students who were motivated (Chart 13). This data suggests feedback alone, even if it demonstrates the student has achieved, is not necessarily motivating. There must be other factors affecting student motivation.

My data shows there was a range of student views even when the teacher remained constant, so understanding the factors which affect how students receive feedback is important. Harks *et al* (2014) stated the mediating factor of feedback is often overlooked

with teachers assuming it is received by the students in the way they intended. The data in my surveys suggests the way students perceive feedback requires greater consideration.

6.3.4 Grades

Students in the Year 8 and English/Law survey did not identify a grade as being an important aspect of feedback (Charts 2 and 3). In year 10, 42% of students stated they preferred to receive a level alone, 20% preferred comments alone and 18% preferred both (Chart 17). It suggests students' preference for grades increased as they moved into KS4. However, in both the interviews with the Art students, they said they liked to receive a numerical figure as part of their feedback, one student saying '*I like having something to aim towards. I aim to get the most marks'*. In the Year 8 survey, 38% of students felt feedback was useful to help students to get to the next sub-level (Chart 12). More females than males stated this, but the difference was not statistically different. Over 60% of students in the English/Law survey stated feedback was useful to help them to get to the next sub-level (Chart 13). This presents a mixed picture about how students regarded grades as part of feedback. It can be argued that although they did not consider grades to be a main purpose of feedback, they did provide targets to aim for. The responses suggest students identified feedback was important to help them improve their learning and that such improvements are measured in terms of a level. This can lead to a focus on performance rather than learning goals, which Dweck (1999) argued can influence how students see themselves as learners.

Research by Black *et al* (2003) in KMOFAP, identified comment-only marking with the absence of grades was effective in improving student performance. Although they were unable to replicate this, Smith and Gorard (2005) concluded the quality of the comments were important for this strategy to be effective. Similarly, Irons (2008) claimed feedback that only justifies a grade will not contribute to student learning. Harks *et al* (2014) also found feedback which focused on learning, rather than grades had a more positive effect on learning than grades alone. Elliott *et al* (2016) explains this is because grades do not provide information about learning. The students' responses in Year 10 suggest the comments received through feedback may not have been detailed sufficiently to support their learning or to help them in recognising their progress. A grade or level that enabled students to recognise they had improved or progressed could become more important to them because of what it represented.

The student preference for grades could also reflect the influence of the National Curriculum levels, which formed a key measure of student progress from 1988 until they were removed in 2014. Ball (2016 pg. 299) commented '*numbers define our worth,*

measure our effectiveness and…. work to inform or construct what we are today'. This can explain why grades remained important to students. The school's emphasis on student performance, represented through assessment levels may have also reinforced a focus on grades. As the school was placed in Special Measures it was under scrutiny by the Inspectorate with pressure to show evidence of rapid student improvement. This external influence could lead the school to adopt a measurement/outcomes culture leading to a regular check on student progress (Harlen 2007), indicated by grades/levels, which Baird *et al* (2017) explained can influence teacher and student behaviour. The Assessment Review Group (2017) warned the use of grades or overarching categories can label children and have an adverse effect on motivation. The data in my research shows that students considered grades or levels were important, so teachers should ensure the feedback they provide focuses on recognising progress and in developing skills and knowledge to avoid the limiting impact of grades.

6.4 Theme: Using Feedback

The Year 8 data shows that student views about opportunities to use written and verbal feedback were similar within the subjects (Table 14). Feedback appeared to be used the most in English. The subjects in which students felt they had the least opportunities to use their written and verbal feedback were Science and Technology. When this data was presented to SLT, they acknowledged that even when the students received feedback through WWW/EBI, they did not necessarily get an opportunity to use it (Appendix 6) and this could influence the value students placed on it. For example, in French, 68% of students identified they received written feedback in the form of WWW/EBI 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 4), 45% of students said they had opportunities to use this feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time (Table 14) and 53% said feedback was useful 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 15). SLT recognised that even though the school policy on providing feedback through WWW/EBI was being used in most departments and was acknowledged by the students, it did not necessarily result in students using or valuing the feedback. This was evident in the discussions with the teachers during the INSET event in January 2016 (Appendix 7) when most teachers said they usually set students a question to which they should respond, but this question was often a closed one and in most cases was not re-visited by the teacher. The closed questions enabled students to provide a brief response, rather than actively engaging with the feedback.

Students in the Art interview stated they liked the WWW/EBI approach (Appendix 8) although only 61% of students in the Year 8 survey stated they found feedback useful 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 15). The difference in views from the interviews and the questionnaire could be explained by different teachers being involved, or the opportunity in the interview to discuss a specific example. However, on further exploration in the

interviews, the students said the feedback was useful to understand their performance on a single assessment but was not helpful in helping them apply it elsewhere. Student interpretation of 'useful' emerged here. It might be useful to explain current achievement but not future work. In the Review of Teacher Workload, Elliott *et al* (2016) warned that feedback which is very closely aligned with learning outcomes could restrict it being applied to other situations, which Torrance and Pryor (2002) referred to as convergent teaching. This further emphasises the importance of teachers and students understanding the purpose of feedback and it being designed to fulfil that purpose.

Further analysis of the Year 8 data indicated there was a similarity in the views of students about how useful feedback was and whether they had opportunities to use it. The subjects in which more than 70% of students identified their feedback was useful 'all' or 'most' of the time were Maths and English (Chart 15). For these subjects, 60% or more of students said they had opportunities to use written and verbal feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time. The three subjects which had the lowest proportion of students stating they found feedback useful 'all' or 'most' of the time were: French, Technology and Science. These subjects showed similar student responses to opportunities to use feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time (Table 14). A similar pattern was seen across the subjects when examining the data for the student views on whether their feedback was easy to understand (Table 10).

These findings show that for the subjects where year 8 students identified their feedback was useful and easy to understand, they also said they had opportunities to use it. This supports Wiliam's (2011) view that feedback needs to lead to action for it to be effective, otherwise it is just information. Ruiz-Primo and Brockhart (2018), Elliot *et al* (2016) and Blanchard (2009) explained the action leads the student to engage with the feedback so it does not become ignored. The closed questions set by the teachers would not lead to action and would not provide an opportunity to remember, translate and apply the feedback, which Chappuis (2012) explained is necessary for it to be effective.

An analysis of the English/Law data showed students felt they had more opportunities to use written feedback than they did verbal (Table 15). The teacher had developed a process in which she would provide feedback regularly in students' exercise books with a specific action for them to take to improve their work, which she then re-visited. Written feedback was, therefore, highly visible to these students. In the English/Law survey, students in year 8 showed the lowest proportion identifying they had opportunities to use verbal or written feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time. Overall, the year 8 students reported a less positive picture of how their feedback was explained and used compared with the year groups. As the teacher was constant and unlikely to change her methods for one year group, it is possible the year 8s had a different perception of their

experience than the younger or the older students. However, the views of year 8 in the 2015 survey were more positive about their feedback in English than in this survey. The difference in views could be affected by the environment in which the feedback was provided. A comparison of the views of the students in all year groups in the English/Law survey regarding whether they understood feedback and if it was useful (Table 11 and Chart 16) shows there was a high proportion of students who stated feedback was easy to understand and was useful 'all' or 'most' of the time. With the exception of year 8, 65% or more of the students stated they had opportunities to use written feedback. Again, it can be concluded that when students used feedback, they were more likely to value it. After the presentation to the SLT and the discussions with the teachers at the INSET event, the school policy was changed to require an action for the students to undertake, rather than set a question to answer (Appendix 14).

Analysis of the year 10 data showed a similar pattern to the Year 8 data with regards to using feedback. The subjects where a higher proportion of students stated they understood their feedback 'all' or 'most' of the time (Table 12) also showed a higher proportion of students who stated feedback helped them to improve their work (Table 16). Thus, when students understood the feedback, they were able to use it to improve their work. This was most commonly seen with Geography, English and Science. From their research, Peterson and Irving (2008) reported that students stated they wanted to receive feedback and acknowledged it could improve their learning. This was also found to some extent in my research as 86% of the year 8 students and over 90% of the English/Law students stated they wanted to receive feedback (Table 13). However, less than half of the year 8 and year 10 students believed feedback was provided to improve learning (Table 8). Further analysis of the students' views about the usefulness of feedback indicates that 56% of the students in year 8 felt it was useful to help them improve their work (Chart 12) and when they were in year 10, 53% of students stated this (Chart 14). It can be concluded that the overall student views about the usefulness of feedback had not changed from KS3 to KS4. The student views regarding the usefulness of feedback to improve their learning 'all' or 'most' of the time in the English/Law survey were over 85% across all the year groups (Chart 16).

Jonssen (2012) noted that although students claimed to want feedback and could identify its potential value, he found little evidence that students acted on it. My data may help to explain why students do not act on their feedback. The data shows that when they had opportunities to use the feedback, students were more likely to understand it and find it useful. This is because they had an opportunity to translate and apply it (Chappuis 2012). Gamlem and Smith (2013) also concluded that when students were given opportunities to use feedback they were able to see how it could enhance

their learning. Blanchard (2009) agreed students need to be given time and opportunities to extend their work and use feedback, otherwise it will be ignored. Gamlen and Smith (2013) claimed the best type of feedback enabled students and teachers to engage in a dialogue to discuss and develop future learning but acknowledged it was rarely seen. They also stated the dominant process they observed in their research in four Norwegian schools did not give students sufficient information or opportunities to use feedback. My data suggests this appeared to be the situation in this school. Gamlem and Smith (2013) explained that for learning gains to be achieved, feedback has to contain information about how to improve, not just that improvement is required. If the feedback provided in my case study did not do this clearly, students would not be able to use and apply it and therefore it would not be valued. Katie reflected on the way she had provided feedback, and in order for students to answer the new question '*Based on the feedback above, how will you improve your work*?' she had to change the feedback (Appendix 10). This is similar to Willis and Adie (2014) who found that when teachers reflected on the purpose of feedback they were more likely to present it in a way that was useful to students.

The Assessment Review Group (2017) stated teachers should use assessment and data to develop an understanding of student learning and explore what lies behind it. If students are not provided with sufficient opportunities to use feedback, teachers will be unable to evaluate their application of it and therefore miss chances to understand what lies beneath their pupils' performances.

6.5 Theme: Success Criteria

In both the teacher interviews, success criteria and learning outcomes were referred to as an important aspect of providing feedback (Appendices 10 and 12). Kirstie said '*feedback is only effective when you know your subject. The success criteria and learning outcomes are key'* and she explained she constructed feedback to align with success criteria. Wiliam (2011) and Jonssen (2012) argued that linking feedback to assessment criteria will make it easier for students to understand, which could explain the high proportion of students who understood Kirstie's feedback. This also emerged from the first Art interview when the students were confident they understood the success criteria because Katie had explained it, although they did comment that some of the feedback did not explicitly link to them (Appendix 8), noting a disconnect between the two.

Katie explained since the first interview with the students, she shared and embedded the success criteria more. This was a strategy used in the KMOFAP, which Black *et al* (2003) claimed helped students to become more aware of what they are learning and how to learn. Chappuis (2012) explained that a clarity of learning outcomes and success criteria

enables students to know where they are going. Harlen (2007) stated an understanding of goals and recognition of good quality work is important to support student learning. As well as embedding the success criteria, Katie explained she had increased the use of key terms in Art, referring to them in her feedback. As a result, she had noticed students used them more both in their writing and dialogue. The success criteria for Art stipulated students should use key terms in their work, so there was greater alignment between these success criteria and her feedback which resulted in the students showing more satisfaction with the feedback they received (Appendix 9).

As a result of both the teacher and student references to success criteria, this topic was explored in the Year 10 student survey (Chart 20). The two subjects in which the highest proportion of students stated they understood the success criteria 'all' or 'most' of the time were Geography (76%) and English (72%). The subjects with the lowest proportion of students who stated this were Technology (56%) and Maths (50%). Weeden *et al* (2002) explained where there is no clarity of learning outcomes, marking and feedback can be unfocused. This could be another factor that influenced how students regarded their feedback. Wiliam (2013) and Stiggins (2006) stated well-defined learning outcomes and success criteria can enable expectations to be shared with students, create a belief they can achieve and develop the confidence to try. Hargreaves (2001) argued students can take responsibility for their own learning when they are aware of learning outcomes.

The data from the Year 10 survey suggests students did not always have clarity in what they were working towards as they were unfamiliar with the success criteria (Chart 20). Habermas (1984) argued for communication to be successful, it needs to achieve a common understanding between both the speaker and hearer. This can occur through the discussing success criteria with students, so they can come to an agreement with the teacher about their meaning and therefore will have a greater understanding of them and feel they are achievable. If this is established, students will be more likely to put in effort to achieve them (Wiliam 2013). If the subsequent feedback is also centred around these criteria, this would enable a common understanding to be achieved about the student work, which will increase the likelihood of the student engaging with it. An example of a student rejecting feedback was made by a year 7 girl in the English interview: '*I will disregard the feedback if it does not match my own opinion*' (Appendix 11). This supports Hattie and Timperley's (2007) view that feedback can be rejected by the recipient and emphasises the importance of ensuring students understand what is required and how the work will be assessed. A frustration was expressed in the Art interviews, where the students said the Assessment Record (Figure 4) did not provide them with sufficient information about why they had not achieved an aspect of the assessment. If a mutual understanding about the success criteria and expectations can

be reached through the communication process, it will minimise the likelihood of students becoming frustrated or disregarding feedback because it was not helpful or did not match their views.

When examining the students' responses about success criteria, Annie acknowledged that if students did not understand them, they would have difficulty in assessing their own work. She added the focus over the last year in the school had been for teachers to share learning outcomes and success criteria with students, this was part of the audits in which she had been involved (Appendix 14). However, sharing learning outcomes with students does not necessarily mean they understand them, and could result in a behavioural approach to learning where the teachers assume students will respond to the instruction or feedback to meet the stated outcomes (Torrance 2012). Crichton and McDavid (2016) found learning outcomes and success criteria were not always understood by teachers and were often applied in a tokenistic way, rather than a useful one. If learning outcomes and success criteria were presented to students to meet the requirements of an audit, rather than to generate a discussion and reach a shared understanding with the students, it would be unlikely they would support learning. The learning outcomes and success criteria could be written in a way that students did not understand because the purpose was for a difference audience. This would affect student perception and could explain my data which shows students have a mixed understanding of success criteria across the subjects in year 10. Lam (2017) argued feedback can allow students to become agents in closing their own learning gaps, but if these gaps are not understood by the student, or feedback does not support them in doing so, the opportunity to develop this skill is missed.

Similar to Crichton and McDavid (2016), Kirstie identified the importance of teacher understanding of success criteria, noting if they do not understand them, the feedback will not be useful. She added '*I am confident that I know my subject and the students know that too and respond to feedback'* (Appendix 12). This concurs with Jones and Moreland's (2005) study of teachers in a New Zealand primary school who demonstrated improvements in the support of student learning and provided more effective feedback after they had improved their subject knowledge. Hallam and Ireson (1999) stated that a teacher who feels positive about themselves and their ability will transfer this to the students. This could be a factor influencing the positive views of the students in the English/Law survey.

Despite the Katie's focus on success criteria with the Art students, the data in the year 10 survey indicated only 62% of students understood the success criteria in Art 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 20). This survey was undertaken 14 months after the first interview with the students which had promoted Katie to embed them more. It is

possible different Art teachers influenced the outcome of the year 10 data, or that Katie did not explain the success criteria in a way that students could understand. Elliott *et al* (2016) suggested teachers over-estimate the extent to which students understand targets or success criteria. Students in the first interview (Appendix 8), confirmed they did understand the success criteria, but this would not have been representative of all their peers. As 38% of the Art students only understood the success criteria 'some' of the time or they 'never' did, it could result in feedback that was not helpful because the students did not understand on what it was based. Similar to the findings of Dann (2018), it suggests a greater teacher understanding of student need was required.

6.6 Theme: Self-assessment

As the Year 8 data had identified peer feedback was not a useful process in the school, the student confidence in self-assessment was explored in the Year 10 surveys. Willis (2011) claimed students develop autonomy when engaging in peer and self-assessment as they learn to reflect on and evaluate their own learning. The Year 10 data (Chart 21) showed, that generally, students were not confident in assessing their own work. The only subject where more than 70% of students stated they were confident in assessing their work 'all' or 'most' of the time was Geography. The design of their own assessments by the Geography team rather than relying on national tests seemed to help the students in developing confidence in self-assessment, concurring with Black *et al's* (2011) study that bespoke assessments seemed to be better in supporting learning than standardised national assessments.

Only 37% of the year 10 students identified that feedback was useful to show them what they were good at (Chart 14). If feedback mainly focused on improvement, students may not learn to recognise the strengths of their work, making it difficult to develop skills in self-assessment. Moreover, the data in Charts 18 and 19 indicated students would find examples useful, suggesting they may not be aware of what good quality looked like, which would make self-assessment difficult or ineffective.

Kirstie acknowledged the data in the English/Law survey indicated her students did not value peer feedback (Chart 10) and recognised this, along with self-assessment needed to be improved as they were both important skills in English. Chart 21 indicates 60% of students stated they were confident in assessing their own work 'all' or 'most' of the time in English in year 10. The greater confidence reported by the students compared to some of the other subjects could be due to the strategies Kirstie had introduced following the English/Law survey.

Self-assessment needs to be learned or guided by the teacher. Some students may find it easier than others, which could explain the variance in the data. Munns and Woodward

(2006), Black *et al* (2004) and Weeden *et al* (2002) emphasised the importance of helping students to develop skills in self-assessment so it can become an effective tool but stated that lower attaining students may find this harder to do so guidance and support would need to be provided. The teachers in the INSET workshops (Appendix 7) acknowledged self-assessment could be beneficial but the year 10 survey data suggests this had not been developed in most areas across the school. Similar to Munns and Woodward (2006), Black *et al* (2004) and Weeden *et al* (2002) the teachers believed lower attaining students would find this difficult.

Katie's developments in Art had particularly focused on student evaluation with the introduction of this into the feedback process '*I do the WWW and students do the EBI*' (Appendix 10). It could be anticipated that students would show a high level of confidence in assessing their own work in Art, however only 64% of students stated they were confident 'all' or 'most' of the time (Chart 21). This data could be explained by a variety of approaches used by different teachers, or some students finding it harder to develop these skills. It could also be due to terminology used in the survey as students would be familiar with EBI and evaluation, but they may not recognise this as self-assessment.

My data for this question in the survey suggests a large proportion of the students were not confident in assessing their own work. Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) and Briggs and Ellis (2004) explained self-assessment can help students to understand their learning better through a greater awareness of learning goals and the progress in achieving them. Annie was able to identify the connection between students having confidence in self-assessment and understanding success criteria (Appendix 14). If students did not understand the success criteria, they would have difficulty assessing their own work in relation to them. Therefore, helping students to develop the skills in self-assessment is unlikely to be effective if they do not understand the success criteria and do not recognise what good quality work looks like. Fluckiger *et al* (2010) explained both peer and self-assessment needed to be linked to specific criteria. If the students did not understand the criteria on which they were providing peer feedback, it would explain the comment that peer feedback was '*vague and empty'* (Appendix 8). Annie also recognised the students did not value peer feedback (Table 9 and Chart 10), and she commented that if students were unable to assess their own work effectively, they would have difficulty in providing meaningful peer feedback. In his study of secondary level students in Sweden, Berggren (2014) identified peer review could help students to make changes to their own work, thereby enabling them to carry out a self-assessment. One of the year 10 female students in the English interviews recognised this when explaining

teacher feedback to a peer by saying it '*makes you think about your own work*' (Appendix 11).

Lawson (2013) and Boud *et al* (1999) explained peer assessment can equip students with skills in self-assessment. My data suggests there is scope for further development of students' skills in peer and self-assessment, ensuring they also understood learning outcomes and success criteria against which the assessment is made. A focus on developing these skills can enable the students to become better learners and, as identified by Fluckiger *et al* (2010), is an important aspect of feedback.

6.7 Theme: Student Voice

The responses gained from the two teachers involved in the research, Katie and Kirstie and the Deputy Head Teacher, Annie demonstrates the power of using student voice to improve practice.

Katie explained that the hearing the student views had enabled her to gain a greater understanding of the student experience and added '*it was a really positive experience – having the students part of the process – being involved in it gave it a deeper meaning for me…it was a team approach*' (Appendix 10). This research enabled Katie to explore why students responded to feedback in the way they did, which Bennett (2011) argued is often overlooked. Kirstie expressed similar thoughts about listening to the student views. She explained the survey and interviews made her more aware of how students regarded and received feedback. The interviews had shown her that if the students respected the teacher they were more likely to value feedback. They had also shown her it was important how she worked with and supported all students. From both these teacher interviews, it is evident this research has enabled these teachers to develop their knowledge and confidence about student learning. Hallam and Ireson (1999) claimed this will have a positive impact on pupils. In this case study, it enabled the teachers to reflect on the way students perceived feedback, which Harks *et al* (2014) stated is often overlooked. The students involved in the Art developments were excited about having their voice heard and used.

Morgan (2011), and Thompson (2007) argued management support is required to enable student voice to have the most effective impact on practice. In this case study this was achieved as the senior leaders in the school were receptive to the year 8 data, requesting a greater dissemination to the wider school. When it was recognised the current school policy which required students to answer a question did not appear to be effective in helping them to use feedback, they approved a change to the policy where the teachers were required to give the students an action to utilise feedback (Appendix 14). The students' exercise books were subject to scrutiny through the audit process

Annie was responsible for (Appendix 14), however it is not known if the student's use of feedback was monitored and evaluated.

Thompson (2007) explained effective pupil consultation requires teachers to see students as responsible and capable of expressing their opinions. It is evident in my research that both Katie and Kirstie valued the student opinions. McIntryre *et al* (2005) found teachers can take up the ideas of pupils with enthusiasm, which was demonstrated by Katie who explained how it gave her confidence and knowledge to develop and implement changes to her practice and has inspired her to deepen her knowledge about student learning. This includes the intention to undertake a Masters degree inspired by the research in which she had participated. Kirstie used the data from the student views to emphasise to her colleagues that students wanted feedback and it was important to make it useful to them. For both these teachers, pupil consultation was effective because they respected and valued the student views. In the INSET workshops, other teachers were less persuaded by the data. Some teachers justified their existing approaches to providing feedback by citing time and curriculum pressures as limitations restricting them from changing their practice. They also cited student attitudes to learning as an explanation of the views of feedback (Appendix 7). These teachers did not appear to value pupil voice sufficiently enough to enable it to prompt them reflect on their practice. In the interview with Annie, she initially viewed the questionnaire data with some scepticism. However, once she saw parallels between their views and her own, she became more engaged with it and was open to the evidence that suggested there was a need to focus on assessment and feedback in the school (Appendix 14).

My research has enabled the student voice to become a catalyst for change in some areas in the school. This supports Flutter (2007) that listening to students' views about their experiences can help teachers to improve their practice. However, Arnot and Reay (2007) warns consultation does not always elicit the voices of all students and can become a mis-represented view. The large number of students involved in my research ensured a wide range were able to contribute, but the lower return rate of questionnaires in year 10 means some student views were not captured in this survey. The small number of students interviewed would not have been representative of all their peers, and those that were invited but did not attend may have chosen not to if they did not have the confidence to express their views in such a forum. Hence, there were limitations in obtaining the voice from all students. Nevertheless, the combination of questionnaires, interviews and the large number of student cohorts surveyed did enabled a wide range of students to participate and subsequently influence teacher practice and shape their own learning experiences.

6.8 Theme: Teacher Beliefs About Learning

Teacher understanding about learning can influence the way they engage with students and provide feedback. Through their research with primary school children, Hargreaves *at al* (2004) identified two main ways teachers gave feedback, which reflected on their understanding of how students learned. Feedback that contained a judgement about student work, which they referred to as 'evaluative feedback' was more prominent when teachers believed students learned by a transmission process. Askew (2004) pointed out this model of learning does not acknowledge students' understanding during the learning process, which would result in ineffective communication (Habermas 1984). However, teachers who believed learning occured through construction and discovery were more likely to give 'descriptive feedback', which provided a greater explanation about the student performance, specifying improvements and encouraging pupils to suggest ways they could improve (Hargreaves *et al* 2004). My data indicated that most students did not have confidence in self-assessment (Chart 21). This would suggest it did not form part of the feedback system, which in turn indicates feedback provided by the teachers adopted a more evaluative approach rather than a descriptive one. The Art students suggested a greater emphasis on self-evaluation should be included in the assessment and feedback process, which Katie implemented. Whilst they still valued grades, the students said this process took the focus away from them.

The student views about how they valued feedback in year 8 largely remained consistent in year 10 for Technology, History and French (Chart 15 and Table 16) and was not considered to be a valuable source of information for the students. This could be due to the way these teachers believed students learned and how they regarded the role of feedback, which would determine how it was provided. In the discussions that occurred during the INSET event (Appendix 7), the teachers of these subjects explained they did not re-visit student's responses to feedback due to timetable and curriculum pressures. The French teachers had explained their use of closed questions to which students were required to respond. Their views about feedback expressed during this discussion suggested they did not recognise the importance and power of feedback in their practice, limiting opportunities for learning.

References made by teachers to 'high' and 'low' ability students also suggested fixed views were held about learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) claimed teachers give more praise than constructive feedback to those they believe are of lower ability. Low expectations of students can influence how the teacher provides feedback (Stipek 2002, Weeden *et al* 2002), and how students behave and respond (Wiliam 2013). The regard which some teachers in this case study placed on the ability of students suggests a culture where they may have a fixed view of learning. This could influence the way they

provided feedback, leading students to believe they have a certain ability or intelligence which cannot be changed (Ruez-Primo and Brookhart 2018). Annie referred to More Able students in the interview, explaining they were not achieving the potential they should (Appendix 14). The teachers might be assuming that More Able students will naturally engage with learning and feedback in a positive way. My data indicates higher attaining students did not regard feedback any differently from their peers, so to help More Able students achieve higher grades, teachers would need to provide feedback that specifically supports their learning and guide them in its use.

My data supports the views of Coe *et al* (2014) presented in their review of research on teaching where they found teachers' knowledge about pedagogy had an impact on student outcomes. They recommended teachers needed to have deep knowledge about formative assessment to enable them to implement it successfully.

6.9 Student Perceptions of Feedback KS3 to KS4

Figure 6 shows there were few differences between the views of students in KS3 and KS4. Most students indicated they wanted to receive feedback, but the students' skills in engaging with it, understanding success criteria and undertaking self-assessment did not appear to be developed as they got older. As students approached their national assessments in year 11, they wanted feedback to help them improve, but still required the affirmation they were doing well. However, the student perception about how useful feedback was in helping them to improve was similar in years 8 and 10. Students wanted to receive feedback more often in KS4 than KS3, which could reflect their approaching examinations. In KS3, students felt that feedback could be easier to read but this was not identified by as many students in KS4, suggesting students became familiar with the teacher's writing or had the confidence to question it. The few gender differences that were apparent in year 8 were not present in the Year 10 data, although a higher proportion of students in year 10 did not disclose their gender which could mask any differences.

KS4 students showed a slightly greater focus on numerical representation of their feedback and progress which could be a result of regular assessment of students and grades or levels applied. As the school was in Special Measures it was under pressure from the Inspectorate to show progress. Assigning student grades is one way to do this despite research showing the negative effect of grades which can lead to the labelling of students, influencing their progress (Assessment Review Group 2017) and affecting how they regard their ability (Harlen 2007). A greater focus on the importance of grades in KS4 could be due to increased assessment and monitoring across the school, or due to the proximity of the national assessments, dominating the value of feedback.

Overall, the views of these students did not change considerably from KS3 to KS4. The school had focused on improving student performance during this time, but this does not seem to have influenced the student views of feedback. The student views and beliefs seem to be reasonably fixed, suggesting they may have been formed from earlier experiences in secondary or primary education. There were some exceptions, notably an improvement in Science and Geography and a decrease in Maths (Tables 17 and 18) which could be due to a change in teaching teams or approaches used in KS4. However, it can be concluded from this case study that student views of feedback did not naturally change as they progressed through their secondary education and therefore a focus on supporting all students to use feedback effectively early in KS3 and throughout their education would be beneficial.

Summary

The overall data indicates the students in this research wanted to receive feedback and they recognised it could help them improve their learning. This was most commonly identified as written feedback which was valued more than verbal or peer feedback. It could be due to the visual nature of written feedback which made it easy to identify and remember which students could refer to later. Verbal feedback may not be valued as much as written feedback, because it could be provided in a rush, was not understood or remembered. The classroom environment may restrict the verbal communication preventing a mutual understanding from being achieved, thus the recipient may not acknowledge or reject the feedback. However, it is important to note that verbal feedback could be occurring and being used by students without them being conscious of doing so. Written feedback which occurs as a linear process will not enable the student to question the teacher unless it is always followed up with a verbal dialogue, which the data suggests did not happen. The students' preference for written feedback over verbal challenges Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984) which argues that for communication to be effective, mutual understanding through a dialogic exchange needs to occur.

Peer feedback was not valued by the students, they did not appear to have the necessary skills to engage in this effectively, yet it is an important aspect of AfL. If students were supported in developing skills and engaging in peer feedback, it could be very effective as it would be more likely to meet Habermas' conditions for successful communication by providing more opportunities for students to reach a common understanding and agreement through a verbal exchange with each other. However, such an approach would need to be aligned to specific criteria (Fluckiger *et al* 2010) and students need to be supported in developing the skills to do this effectively (Berggren 2014 and Hargreaves 2001). Students participating in the interviews demonstrated a

keenness to be involved in assessing their own work, but the year 10 survey data suggested that generally the students did not have the confidence in doing so. This would restrict the potential of developing skills for independent learning. Peer assessment and feedback appeared to be undervalued by teachers and was not considered by students to be effective, however Topping (2009) claimed it can provide a wealth of valuable feedback for learners.

Classroom practice was influenced by the understanding of AfL and feedback by senior management and teachers, as well as curriculum and timetable limitations. This, in turn, can be influenced by external requirements of the Inspectorate or a misunderstanding of their expectations. The school was focused on compliance with school policy, but the data in the surveys suggested this was not effective in supporting student learning through teacher feedback. The perceived need to document all feedback and interactions led to an interruption in the natural flow of lessons and obscured the purpose of students engaging with feedback. The school requirement to display learning outcomes to students did not consider their understanding of them. However, the student views gained in this research have enabled the two participating teachers and management to reflect on the purpose of feedback and to develop strategies with the intention of improving the experience for students.

The action research within Art enabled students to become involved in the review of practice and led to a greater understanding of the purpose of feedback by Katie. This resulted in changes to her approaches, incorporating student ideas. Being involved in the research has helped Katie to develop confidence in making changes to her practice, which expanded beyond feedback and resulted in her reflecting on her support of students and development of the curriculum. Kirstie made smaller changes to her practice in English and Law, the main aspect was recognising students responded differently to feedback, were influenced by the class environment and her relationship with them was important. She ensured she took a personalised approach to supporting students after she had heard their views.

The data suggests teachers needed to consider the way they engage verbally with students and whether feedback is provided in a way that is useful to them. Written feedback should be constructed to consider the value to students and ensure it has sufficient depth to provide information about learning, success and improvement. This concurs with Black *et al's* (2003, 2004) view that feedback comments should provide a detailed evaluation of the work and a defined action to improve. My data suggested there was varied practice of this across the school, with many opportunities missed to provide valuable feedback to students. When the purpose of feedback was re-considered by Katie, she changed the content to ensure it was of more use to students, similar to

the findings of Willis and Adie (2014) and reflecting Irons' (2008) views about the importance of teacher understanding.

The types of approaches to assessment and feedback should be considered. The Year 10 survey data suggested purpose-made, rather than the use of standardised national assessments, appeared to be more effective in supporting learning. This highlights Hargreaves' *et al* (2004) view that teachers' understanding of learning can determine how they design and provide feedback. The way students consider themselves as learners could explain the variation with which they regarded and valued feedback in this research. This could be influenced by teacher expectations of students and how they interacted with them. The power and impact of feedback needs to be recognised by teachers and school managers. My data has suggested that teacher understanding about student learning should be considered when designing feedback practices. The references by teachers to the ability and capability of students suggested a fixed view of learning could be restricting opportunities to engage in AfL in full.

This longitudinal research has enabled an exploration of the views of a single cohort of students from year 8 to year 10. There was little change in the views of these students as they moved from KS3 into KS4. The teacher's approach to assessment and feedback appeared to be a key aspect in determining how the students valued feedback. However, their views could be fixed, formed from prior experiences. Year 10 students showed a slight preference for feedback to be received more frequently, but they still valued being shown what they had done well in addition to how to improve.

The research with Kirstie enabled an analysis of the attitudes of higher attaining students (Law) and their peers. There was no noticeable difference between the groups of students in my research with regards to how they recognised, valued and utilised feedback. Therefore, all students, regardless of their attainment level should be supported in the use of feedback to enhance their learning. This supports the view of Dann (2018) who argues the individual in the process should not be overlooked.

This research has shown that students can provide a valuable insight into their learning experience and make worthwhile recommendations for improving feedback, which has been incorporated into practice and influenced school policy. The participating teachers found it reassuring to hear students wanted and valued feedback. They have been able to recognise students receive it differently, which could be due to their confidence, previous experiences, interest in the subject, the classroom environment and relationship with the teacher. The data shows students valued and used feedback differently across the year groups, but there was no specific pattern to identify particular needs at any stage of learning. Therefore, to be effective, feedback has to be flexible

and personalised to the student need, which requires teachers to understand their students. It is acknowledged this is not easy to achieve in a '*rigidly timetabled and exam-focused environment of the secondary school'* (Priestley and Sime 2005 pg.489).

The data does not give sufficient information to make recommendations about specific strategies in providing feedback. It does, however, suggest the school did not encompass an AfL approach and would benefit from reviewing its beliefs, understanding and expectations for student learning and the principles of AfL. Capturing the breadth of student voice and the longitudinal approach has enabled an exploration of student views about their experiences. It has provided the school with an opportunity to increase their understanding of how students learn and what they value, as well as providing new knowledge about students' views of feedback as they progress through their secondary education.

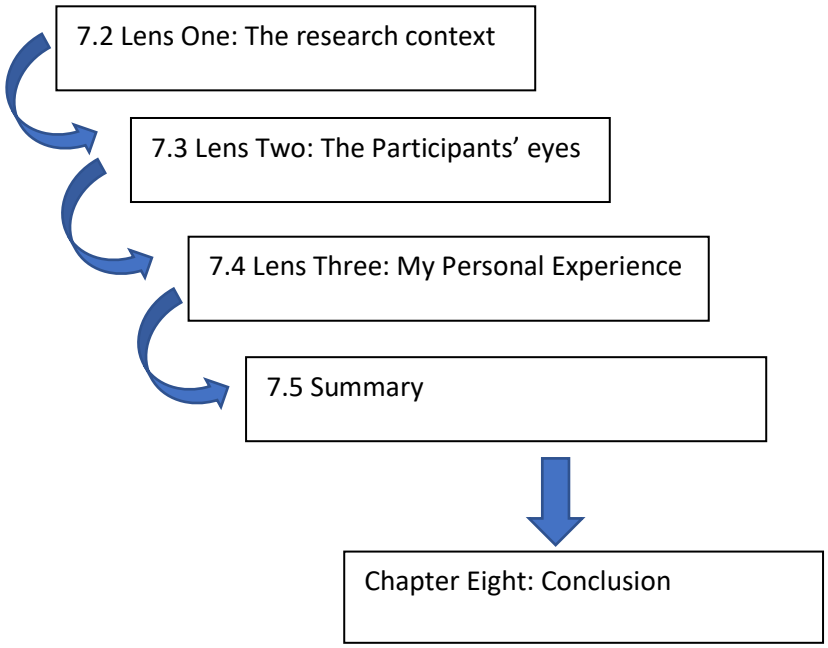
Chapter Seven: Reflections of myself as a researcher

7.1 Introduction

Habermas (1972) believed that it is through reflection that knowledge is generated. Johns (2017) added that reflection can lead to empowerment and allow a practitioner to take necessary action to overcome barriers and resolve contradictions in their practice. Among other benefits of reflection, Moon (2004) argued it can build theory, enhance self-development, enable a critical review of practice and lead to decisions or resolutions of uncertainty. The aim of this chapter is to generate knowledge enabling me to improve my skills and confidence as an educational researcher. This has been achieved by reflecting on the research undertaken in this project. This, in turn, will have an impact on the wider community as a result of future research I undertake.

Mason (2017) argued that through critical reflexive practice, researchers can learn to improve their skills. I have not identified any models of reflection for research purposes, so I have adapted Brookfield's (2017) four lenses that he used for reflecting on teaching practice. The four lenses he proposed are: the students' eyes; colleagues' perceptions; personal experience; and theory. I have adapted these to use in the reflection of my research to: the research context in which the research took place (the perceptions of 'the school'); the participants' eyes (teachers and students); and my personal experience. I have embedded theory into the reflection in each of the lenses.

Format of the chapter:



7.2 The research context:

When I started the research, it was my plan to gather student voice and use this to shape the practice of providing feedback to learners across the school. The Head Teacher was newly appointed and had a clear objective to take the school out of Special Measures. She was enthusiastic for me to begin the research alongside other developments being undertaken in the school. Such developments included the implementation of new expectations and standards to demonstrate immediate improvement in practice to the Governors and OfSTED. This resulted in the audit approach explained by Annie. When considering Annie's comments about focusing on compliance rather than development and those from Katie about the Head Teacher's reference to evidencing verbal feedback, I reflected on the recognition by school staff of the need for a change in feedback practice. If there was a lack of understanding about the issue being researched because they did not have the depth of knowledge that I had gained through published research, then the school would not be as receptive to changing practice. This was evident in the discussions with teachers during the INSET event when they explained why they were unable to provide feedback differently, rather than explore ways in which this could be done. A lack of recognition of a need to research and subsequently change practice was evident in the culture of the school. Priestley and Sime (2005) advised that improvements to practice need to align with teachers' views and incorporate an approach that starts with small, rather than large changes from which differences can be observed. Moreover, Black *et al* (2003) advised that that teachers need to feel they have control in the development of their practice. Thus, although there was a recognition of a need for improvement by the Head Teacher, the necessity and an agency for change was not acknowledged throughout the school. Fortunately, there were two members of staff, Katie and Kirstie who were keen to participate in my research.

Timing of the research was important. Although it could be argued it was ideal as OfSTED identified the school needed to improve its practice in relation to marking and feedback, the school underwent two re-organisations in the period during which I undertook the research and in the first year had a particularly high turnover of staff. This can create an unstable workforce. The school was also served with an Academy Order requiring it to join an established Academy Trust. After nine months of working towards an alliance with a Trust, which involved changing systems and processes to align with it, the alliance was withdrawn. The Order dominated the focus of SLT over this period making it difficult for them to engage with my research. Another factor that could not have been predicted, was that the school experienced two student deaths within six

months of each other during 2016/17. These had an unsettling effect on the students and staff.

In 2018, the Head Teacher had identified there was a need to reconsider the school approach to assessment and feedback. By this time, the workforce had become more established, the School was removed from Special Measures and the Academy Order suspended. The timing appeared to be suitable to re-visit current practice. Annie had left the school and an existing Science teacher, Charlie was promoted into this role. Charlie was enthusiastic to change the school practice and created a culture shift within the Leadership Team. Charlie was keen to utilise the research data and use it to inform their policy. The policy was developed for implementation in the academic year 2018/19, it focused on enabling students to use the feedback they received and in developing skills in self-assessment.

7.3 Participants' eyes

The sphere of influence my research was narrower than I was hoping for. When I initially spoke to the school about the research, there were five teachers who wanted to be involved. However, two left after a re-organisation and two others decided not to participate. Katie was the only person who had originally expressed an interest but following the presentation and workshop at the INSET event, Kirstie became involved. The original purpose of the research was to take an action research approach with several cycles of reflection, action, dissemination and validation, as described by Efrat Efron and David (2013). However, this did not materialise to the extent I had hoped. The Year 8 data revealed a great variance in student experiences and it became evident there was mixed practice across the school. This led me to the conclusion that a wider approach across the school was not going to be realistic. A discussion with the SLT in November 2015 about the Year 8 data revealed that whilst they recognised the current school policy was not effective and it needed to change, it also showed a narrow perspective on the view of assessment and feedback.

Greater co-ordination and communication with the Leadership Team may have resulted in changing the culture and awareness of the issues being researched, leading to a larger involvement and influence in the school. Local changes were achieved, which had a positive impact on those students and teachers. Through Kirstie, the awareness of student perceptions of feedback was shared with other teachers, so the influence of the research could be wider than is apparent from the project itself. Katie had also shared her experience with her colleagues and discussed it in the interview for her new job. Thus, the impact of the research may have extended to other schools.

The questionnaires were administered by gatekeepers. This could have influenced the way in which they were managed and the students' responses, particularly in the Year 10 survey with a lower return rate. Although there were benefits to the questionnaires being administered by staff the students were familiar with, in future I would aim to administer and explain them myself or in conjunction with the school staff to clarify any queries or uncertainties, which could improve the reliability and return rate (Cohen *et al* 2018).

The views of students about what was 'useful' obtained from the questionnaire varied from those in the interviews. This could have been because their perception of useful was different when the question was asked without context. In the Art interviews they had examples to discuss, revealing a more in-depth interpretation of 'useful'. The students thought the feedback was useful to help them understand their achievement but was not to identify improvement. This demonstrated how methods can elicit data in different ways. The questionnaires could only provide one dimension, so I took the approach of using the overall patterns and trends from the questionnaire data, rather than focusing too specifically on particular responses as the variance in opinion highlights the complexities of the student experience and perception.

7.4 Personal Experience

The communication between myself and the school affected the project. On reflection, as I was not clear about the direction of the research, I was unable to explain this succinctly to the school. The research evolved over time, particularly with the involvement of Kirstie. With greater planning of the research prior to starting it, I would have had a clearer direction of how it could benefit the school which may have enabled it to have a greater impact. This process of research has highlighted the importance of communication between the researcher and the school.

In response to the request from the Head Teacher, I started to gather data quite early on in the process as, I believed if I did not begin the research when I did, I would lose the opportunity to do so. I am still of the opinion it was right to start then, but it did not allow me sufficient time to fully prepare the research and consider what form of data I would obtain. With hindsight, greater consideration should have been given as to how the data would be collected, scrutinised and analysed to draw out valuable information to be used as evidence (Thomas 2009). Questionnaires allowed me to involve many participants but did not provide the depth needed to fully understand the student perception. The interviews gave a greater depth of data to explore the issue. Undertaking more interviews would have given a deeper insight, particularly to ascertain students' attitudes as they progressed from KS3 to KS4.

Greater planning of the data analysis process before data was collected could have influenced the way in which the data collection tools were designed. The Likert scale used in the questionnaires provided a range of views to be obtained but the numbers of responses generated from them could only reveal patterns, rather than definitive views. However, student perceptions will vary according to their experiences, so to reduce the options available would have restricted the way they could express their views. I believe the Likert scale was helpful in collecting the range of views and gave the students the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, but it was challenging to analyse in this research.

The research evolved into areas I had not anticipated. The gender difference apparent in Year 8 was unexpected and lead me to undertake further reading into this area. I had only intended to work with a single year group, but the involvement of Kirstie gave me the opportunity to explore the perceptions of students across year groups. It also enabled me to look at higher-attaining students in comparison with their peers. The flexible approach I took had enabled new areas to be explored, which have not previously been researched. I would maintain this flexibility in future research. McNiff (2017) argued a feature of action research is that it evolves and is never completed. The developments in my project are a feature of this type of approach. The new school Assessment and Feedback policy introduced in 2018/9 is another evolution of the research, which is worthy of evaluating in future.

7.5 Summary

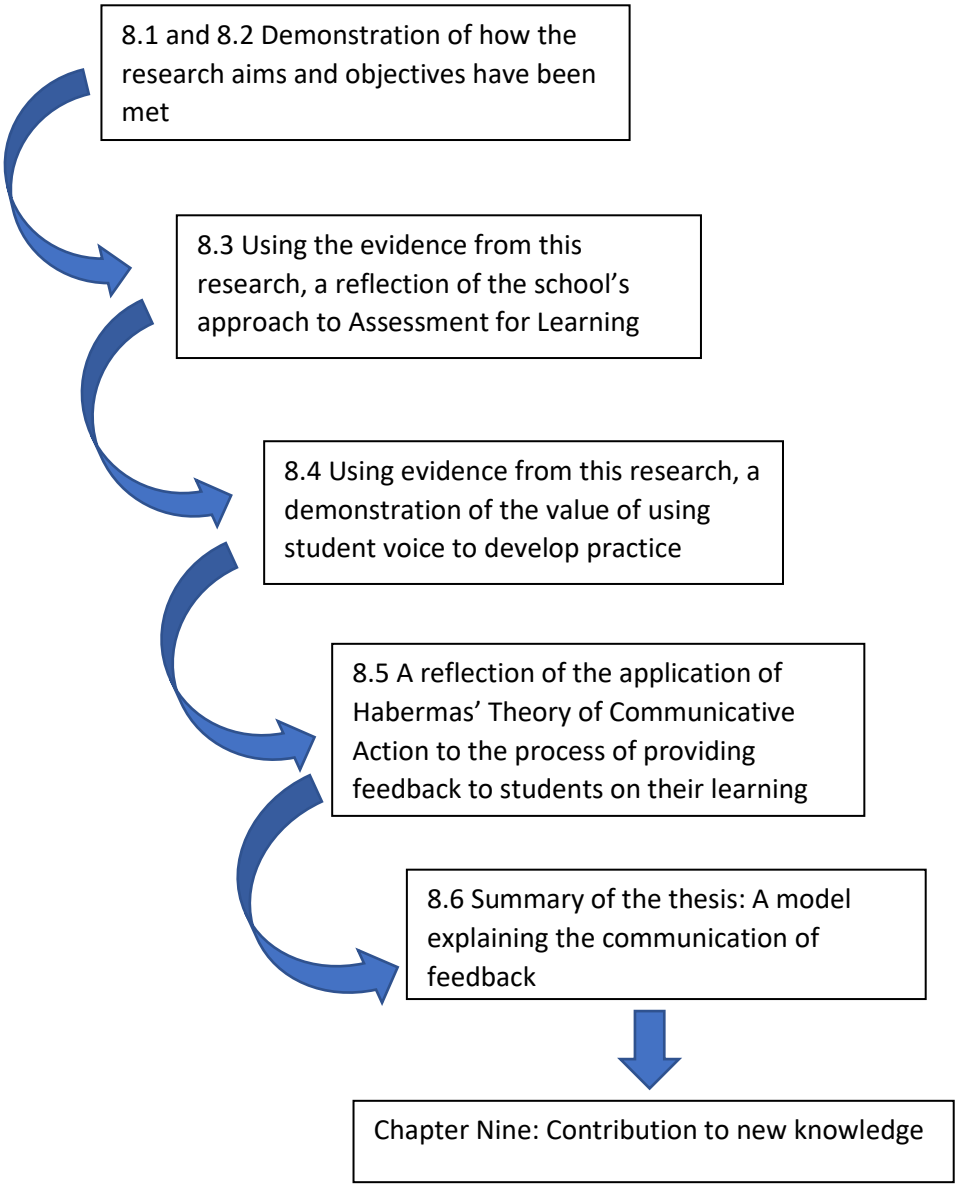
This research has provided a valuable insight into the experience of students and how they engage with and value feedback from teachers and their peers. It has also highlighted the complexities of undertaking research in an organisation that has many internal and external factors influencing its readiness to engage with and embrace the outcomes. For future research to be effective, these aspects will need to be considered alongside the research design itself. The next chapter concludes the outcomes of the research and demonstrates how the aims and objectives have been met to gain a greater understanding of this subject.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how the research aim and objectives were met. It concludes the findings of the research and, along with the reflections of the research process, identifies implications for practice. Using the data generated from the research project, it explains how existing knowledge of AfL, feedback and student voice has been further developed. It also demonstrates how knowledge about student engagement with feedback has been challenged, explores the relevance of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action to the feedback process and captures the complexity of the feedback process in a model.

Format of the Chapter:



8.1 Research aim

The aim of this research was to investigate how students valued and used feedback they received on their learning. Specifically, the research had the following objectives:

8.2 Research Objectives:

1. Identify the range of feedback given to students;
2. Explore student perceptions of feedback they received;
3. Using student voice, investigate how current teacher feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning;
4. Present the data to the teachers so the student voice can be used to inform and shape practice with the aim of improving the student learning experience;
5. Establish the impact of using student voice to inform and shape the practice of providing feedback on student learning.

Objective one: The first objective was achieved during the Year 8 and English/Law surveys. It can be concluded the two main types of feedback students recognised the most were written feedback, usually in the form of What Went Well/Even Better If (WWW/EBI) that was provided in exercise books and verbal feedback received in class. Written feedback was considered by the students to be more useful than verbal feedback. Peer feedback was identified by some students but was not generally considered to be a useful mechanism of feedback, supporting the research of Berggren (2014) and Hargreaves (2001) who explained students need to learn how to provide effective feedback to a peer.

Objective two: The three questionnaire surveys and the student interviews established the student perceptions of the feedback they received. Overall, students valued feedback because they felt it could help them improve their work. Students wanted to receive feedback on their learning, but they did not tend to find it motivating and liked to receive a grade to quantify attainment. This finding adds to Black *et al* (2003)'s research on comment only marking where they found that comments alone are only effective if they contain sufficient information about students' performance and how to improve.

Student perceptions about feedback varied between the subjects included in this research. The data indicated that even when feedback was received, it was not necessarily useful or valued. It emerged this was because students did not recognise how to apply it to subsequent work, it was received too late to make use of, there were no opportunities to use the feedback or it did not align with the students' own view of the quality of the work. These findings build on the work of Chappius (2012), Wiliam

(2011a) and Hattie and Timperley (2007), by providing empirical evidence which demonstrates when students use their feedback they are more likely to accept and value it. It also demonstrates that even if there is a school policy that stipulates feedback should be responded to, this may not be effective.

The Year 10 survey indicated that generally, students were not confident in assessing their own work, and did not always understand the success criteria against which their work was assessed.

Adding to the findings of Askew (2004), the student views gained through interviews revealed the relationship between teacher and student is important. Thoughtfully constructed feedback may be disregarded if the student does not value the teacher's opinion.

Objective three: The student perceptions were used to investigate how current teacher feedback processes might be enhanced to promote student learning. Through an action research approach, this was achieved with Katie, the Art Teacher who incorporated students' views into the changes to her practice. It was also achieved by Kirstie the English/Law teacher, who reflected on her approach to supporting individual students as a result of hearing their views. Through this approach, both Katie and Kirstie were able to learn about more about how students valued and responded to feedback in the way they did, which Bennett (2011) argued is often given little consideration. As a result of the research, the school policy was initially changed to create opportunities to engage students with the feedback by stipulating an action to be taken instead of answering a question. Further developments then took place in 2018 with the revision of the school policy. These are discussed in Chapter 10.

Objective Four: The data was presented to the Senior Leadership Team and the teachers. There were a number of occasions when this was done which also allowed a member checking process to occur. The data from the Year 8 surveys and corresponding preliminary analysis was shared with the SLT, who recognised the current school policy was not effective in helping students to engage with feedback. It was also agreed to share these outcomes more widely with all teaching staff in the school. This led to a reflection of practice by the teachers, with the active engagement an additional one in the project. The Year 8 and Year 10 survey data was also shared with the Deputy Head Teacher. She accepted the views of the students as being credible, possibly because they reflected her knowledge of the practice in the school. She acknowledged greater focus was needed on developing assessment and feedback, moving away from the compliance approach it had adopted.

Objective Five: The final aim of the research was to establish the impact of using student voice to influence teachers' understanding of learning and on their practice. This was achieved by interviewing the two teachers. Katie explained that gaining student voice had been powerful in giving her the confidence to develop her practice. She had wanted to make changes prior to the project but did not know how to go about it. Listening to the students had given her the focus she needed. Hearing their reflections in the second interview demonstrated to Katie the power of listening to student voice. Kirstie explained gaining student views through both the surveys and interviews was reassuring that the approach she was taking was effective and useful. She used the data to show her colleagues that students wanted feedback, and emphasised it was important to provide it and ensure it was useful. The survey data helped Annie to recognise the importance of developing an effective assessment and feedback policy to enhance practice and that focusing on audit and compliance alone was not sufficient to develop practice in the classroom. These findings add to the work of Flutter (2007), Thompson (2007) and Cowie (2005) who have argued that pupil consultation can benefit classroom practice.

8.3 Assessment for Learning culture

The data gained from this research suggests the school did not have an ethos of adopting Assessment for Learning to its fullest extent. The driver in the school was to show compliance with school policy and achieve rapid progress in student learning, measured through assessments. This pressure probably occurred as a result of the school being placed in Special Measures and the need to provide evidence of improved practice to the Inspectorate. Frey and Schmitt (2007 pg. 417) explained feedback in an AfL culture should '…*provide feedback to students to assess the quality of learning and to improve learning behaviours*'. The data from the student surveys and INSET teacher discussion suggested this was not the approach throughout the school. The research, however, had enabled Katie to introduce this in her practice and Kirstie to embed it further. Through their research of AfL in practice, Marshall and Drummond (2006) found teachers who did not fully embrace the principles of AfL were less inclined to recognise student autonomy and their own responsibility in helping students to learn. My research demonstrated that different approaches existed across the school, the INSET teacher discussions revealed teacher beliefs about learning were dominating their practice. The Assessment Reform Group stated the principles of AfL should focus on student learning; foster motivation; promote understanding of goals and criteria; help learners know how to improve; develop the capacity for self-assessment and recognise all educational achievement (Gardner 2006). My data suggests this was not happening across the school. Feedback did not motivate the students and their understanding of success criteria was varied. Generally, students did not have confidence in assessing their own

work and feedback appeared to focus on improvement, not always recognising what the student had achieved. Similar to the findings of Havnes *et al* (2012) from their research in Norwegian upper secondary schools where they found that even in the absence of a culture of AfL, students still showed a desire for constructive feedback, this school had not adopted a culture of AfL yet the students wanted to receive feedback to improve their learning. Despite the differences in nationalities between Havnes *et al's* research and my own, the findings have been the same.

Priestley and Sime (2005) explained changes in school practice need to be congruent with teachers' values to enable them to be easier to implement. Marshall and Drummond (2006) found if teachers believed their current approach to teaching and learning was appropriate and, moreover, did not feel they had any agency to change student learning and motivation, it was very difficult to change practice. My data indicates this was also occurring in this case study. The audit approach, explained by Annie, did not consider teacher beliefs and understanding about learning and hence would be a difficult mechanism to use to improve practice. Moving to fully embrace the principles of AfL would require supporting staff to recognise and challenge their own beliefs about learning so they gain a greater understanding of AfL and the power of feedback. To enable easy implementation, changes need to be congruent with teachers' values. This was demonstrated by Katie who was keen to make changes and was open to the views of students because she had recognised a need for improvement.

The purpose of feedback was re-considered by Katie after listening to the students. She changed the approach from setting a question for students to respond to, which they had commented was not purposeful, to one that involved their own evaluation of their work. Students were required to identify improvements they would make based on the feedback she had provided. Katie explained this had required her to change the feedback she provided to enable students to undertake this evaluation. This demonstrates a greater engagement with the principles of AfL than had previously been adopted.

8.4 Student Voice

It can be concluded from the data that gaining the student perception in this research enabled a valuable insight into their experience, motivation and views about feedback. Both class teachers found the approach reassuring and informative.

The unique approach in gaining student perceptions over a period of eighteen months has enabled an exploration of their views about feedback as they moved from KS3 to KS4. It has also enabled views to be obtained from a student cohort that was attaining higher than their peers, providing an opportunity to compare the student perceptions of

feedback on their learning. Using student voice as a platform to explore feedback on learning in this research has revealed the power of listening to students.

8.5 Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984) has been considered throughout the analysis of my data. The data suggests his theory, with respect to a successful communication being achieved through argumentation, negotiation and agreement can be applied to the process of providing feedback in a learning situation. Students reported when there was a positive relationship with the teacher, they would be more willing to accept and value the feedback. This was because they trusted them and recognised the feedback was in their best interest. This is an example of the students accepting this validity claim of the teacher, hence making the communication process effective. The relationship could also affect the students' confidence in challenging the teacher about the comments, which enables a mutual understanding to be achieved. Habermas argues this process is essential in successful communication. The Science team was mainly formed of supply teachers in 2015, and there was a similar situation for Maths in 2016. Such an arrangement is unlikely to enable a trusted relationship to develop, so a mutual understanding would be difficult to achieve. If mutual understanding is not achieved and the hearer has a different expectation of the message and is unable to challenge the teacher, the feedback could be rejected, as was demonstrated by the student who explained if feedback did not align with her own views, she disregarded it. A mutual understanding and an opportunity to engage in an argumentation process could be achieved by the teacher sharing and agreeing the success criteria with students allowing them to recognise what good quality work looks like. Such an approach could provide the students with an opportunity to challenge and accept the validity claims of the teacher, thus making the communication more likely to be effective.

The data shows students' views differed across and within subjects for the survey questions, even when the teacher remained constant. This could be explained through Habermas' (1987) theory about the influence of the lifeworld. The student background and prior experiences (their lifeworld) could influence how they interpreted and valued feedback. The way the teacher viewed the student, influenced by their prior experience with them and their expectations of them (their lifeworld) could affect their relationship, thus influencing the way feedback was communicated by the teacher and valued by the student. However, the data from this research is not sufficient to determine if this was a factor affecting the outcomes.

The data in all surveys indicates students recognised and valued written feedback more than verbal. Habermas' (1984) Theory of Communicative Action centres on the spoken

dialogue of communication, particularly on the process of reaching a mutual understanding through argumentation and negotiation. My data challenges Habermas' theory as it indicates a linear process of written feedback appeared to be a more effective communication process than a verbal one in this case study. This could be because the verbal dialogues in class did not achieve a mutual understanding, for example, one student referred to conversations in the classroom as rushed. It can be concluded that the students felt verbal feedback was not always a successful process of communication, and despite the lack of a dialogue or further explanation, a written linear process was considered to be more effective in providing feedback to students in this case study.

Whilst Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action may not have been initially developed for formal learning communication, it has been valuable to analyse and understand possible reasons for student perceptions about the feedback they received on their learning.

8.6 Summary of the thesis:

This thesis has presented existing research on the role of feedback in learning and added to it by showing how my data develops existing ideas or raises new concepts. It has presented an enhanced picture of secondary school student perceptions of feedback in a single case study but identifies how this can be applied to other schools. This is captured in a graphical format in Figure 7, which identifies how the feedback process can be affected by a variety of factors.

The right side of the model captures the factors emerging from this research which can affect how feedback is constructed by the teacher. Pressure from internal audit or external inspection can result in the teacher constructing feedback in a certain way, possibly for an audience other than the student. The perceived needs and expectation of a student's ability can influence the way feedback is provided, a teacher who has low expectations of a student may provide feedback that does not challenge them or has insufficient information to help them improve. The teachers' understanding of success criteria and the way in which these are shared and agreed with students can determine how well feedback aligns to them. The terminology used by the teacher and content of the feedback, whether it can be used by the student and if opportunities are provided for the student to use and apply it, can determine the extent to which they engage with feedback and whether it supports their learning. If there are no opportunities to follow up whether students have used the feedback in future work, the teacher would be unable to determine if it is helpful in enhancing learning and supporting the student.

They would be unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the feedback they provide and consider the value it has for the student.

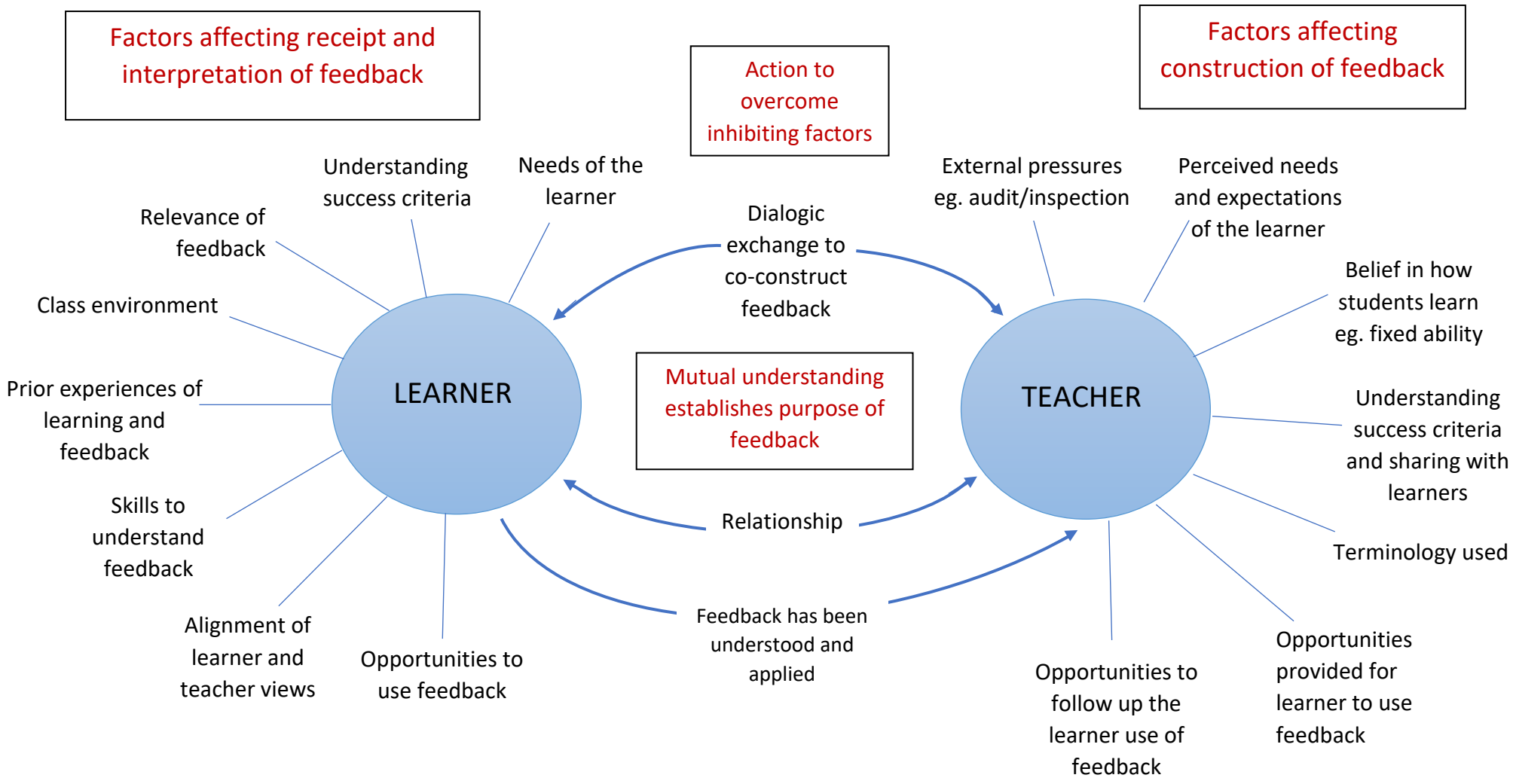
On the left side of the model, the factors that can influence how students receive and interpret feedback are presented. These have emerged from this research. The needs of the student can determine whether they engage with the feedback: if the feedback does not provide affirmation of success but only focuses on development, it may reinforce a students' low self-esteem and expectations of themselves. If the student does not understand the success criteria, the feedback could be difficult to frame and understand because it would have no context. The relevance of the feedback to current and future work can determine how it is regarded. Feedback that is too generalised, non-specific or received too late to use would have little value to a student. A noisy class environment or external distractions can limit students' concentration on feedback. Previous experiences can determine how students value feedback, although students can differentiate between different approaches so negative experiences in one situation may not necessarily influence their perception in others, as seen in the data for the different subjects in the Year 8 and Year 10 surveys. The skills the students have in understanding and applying feedback can determine their engagement. If a student is able to undertake self-assessment effectively, they would be more likely to understand feedback, it will align with their own views, increasing the likelihood of them engaging with the feedback. Opportunities provided to enable students to use, apply feedback and whether it helps them to think about their work will determine how much they value feedback. If it is not constructed in a way that students can actually use or are unable to do so, feedback is unlikely to be regarded by the student as useful and it may be rejected or ignored.

The central part of the model provides a way in which the inhibiting factors that affect how feedback is constructed, received and interpreted can be mitigated. This is through a process of dialogic exchange during which feedback can be co-constructed between the teacher and student. Such an exchange would enable success criteria to be shared and agreed, for the teacher to understand learner needs, to identify and agree terminology and for the teacher to consider the purpose of feedback and hence provide it in a way that is useful to support student learning. Through this dialogic process, the relationship between the two parties can be established. Through this, the students may develop trust in the teacher, which my data showed was a key factor in students' engaging with feedback and the teacher can learn about students' needs so a personalised approach can be adopted.

Whilst it is recognised this may not be achievable at all times in a classroom environment, this model demonstrates how factors which can lead to the distortion, mis-

interpretation, mis-understanding or rejection of feedback can be minimised. It highlights the complexity of the feedback process and provides a convincing argument for a need for a greater understanding of how it is constructed and interpreted so it can be effective in enhancing learning. It would be a useful model for schools who are reviewing or developing processes to embed feedback.

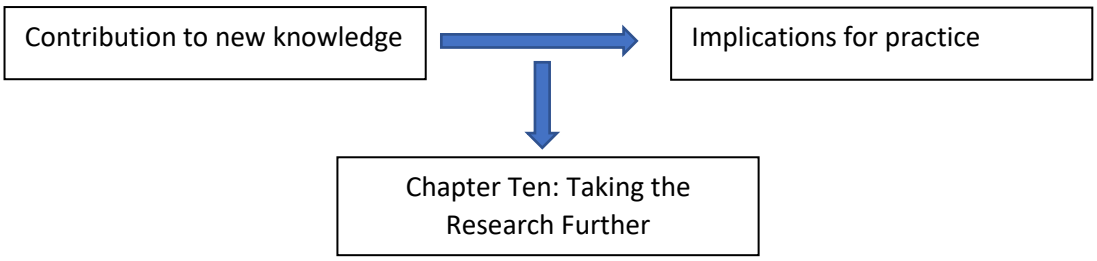
Figure 7: Model illustrating factors affecting the communication of feedback in learning



Chapter Nine: Contribution to New Knowledge

This study adopted a unique approach by investigating student views about the feedback they received on their learning over a period of eighteen months as they progressed from year 8 to year 10. The large number of students involved in this research has enabled a wide range of views to be obtained. As a result, seven new contributions to knowledge have been made.

Format of the chapter:



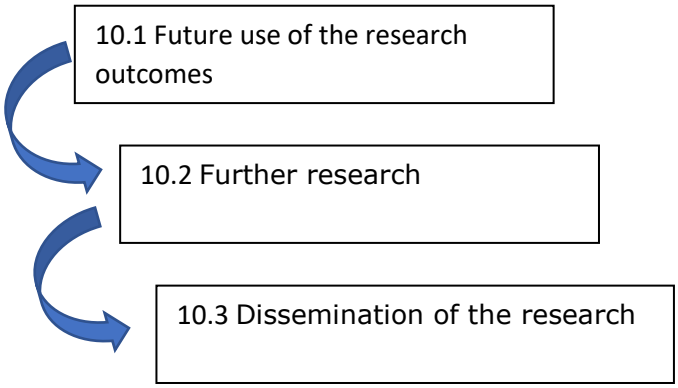
Contribution	Implications for practice
This is the first study which considers any difference between how males and females students engaged with feedback. My data indicates that males in year 8 valued feedback because it affirmed they had improved or were good at their work. Whilst this was also important to females, it appeared to have a greater importance to males and the difference was statistically significant, suggesting this was not a random occurrence. ○ The gender difference was not apparent when the students became older, or for any other aspects of feedback explored.	The affirmative nature of feedback is important to all students but appeared to have a particular importance to younger males. Teachers should ensure this is considered when providing feedback to all students. Other than this aspect, there were no differences between male and female views.
The research has shown that students did not significantly change their perception with regards to how they valued feedback as they progressed through their secondary education. The views of students in this Case Study in KS3 were similar to those when they were in KS4, so it cannot be assumed students' value and engage with feedback differently as they get older.	Students would benefit from specific support in learning to engage with and use a range of feedback early in their secondary education. This would enable them to value and benefit from the feedback and develop skills to become effective learners.
The research has highlighted how a school in Special Measures can become dominated by external pressures to show improvement in teaching by	Policies and strategies for assessment and feedback should take into account how feedback

focusing on compliance with school policy and expectations. ○ The data demonstrates this approach did not result in the improvement of feedback to support student learning as the teacher understanding of how students learn was not considered. The school Marking Policy was not effective in directing teachers to provide feedback in a format with which students could engage.	engages the individual and develops their learning. Teachers need to have a detailed understanding of the purpose of feedback.
Chappuis (2012), Jonsson (2012) and Bennett (2011) claimed students of lower ability have different attitudes to feedback than their peers who are performing at higher levels. My data challenges this, as the student views from average cohorts show a similar pattern to those of a cohort of higher attaining students. ○ Although it may be unique to this Case Study and the specific teacher's approach, this does demonstrate the importance of supporting all students and highlights that higher-attaining ones may not necessarily have different attitudes with regards to feedback or engage with it in a more positive way than their peers.	All students need to be supported in the understanding of and using feedback to enhance their learning, regardless of their current attainment level.
Previous research has highlighted the value of self-assessment but has not established how this can influence how feedback is valued. The interviews in this Case Study revealed a student may disregard teachers' feedback if it does not align with their own views.	Developing students' skills in self-assessment can result in greater alignment between the student and teacher views about the work, which will increase the likelihood that feedback is accepted.
The data from this Case Study has revealed a wide range of factors that can influence how feedback is constructed, received and interpreted. This has been presented in a model in Figure Seven.	This model would be useful to teachers, teacher educators and managers seeking to understand and improve feedback practices.
The reflections of the research presented in Chapter Seven has utilised an approach to reflect on the	This approach can be undertaken when reflecting on research to

process of research in this case study. In the absence of any models of reflection of research practices, Brookfield's (2017) four lenses were adapted by reflecting on: ○ The context in which the research was located ○ The participant's eyes ○ The researcher's personal experience ○ Theory was embedded throughout each of these lenses. This process has enabled an effective reflection of research practice to be undertaken and identified how future research would be shaped as a result.	ensure subsequent approaches are more effective and elicit the data required.

Chapter Ten: Taking the Research Further

This final chapter will explain how the research can be further developed, expanded and how it can be disseminated.



10.1 Future use of the research outcomes

Annie was interviewed in July 2017 before she left the school. An existing science teacher, Charlie was promoted into this position and was keen to revise the school policy on assessment and feedback, so she established a working group to develop this. I met with Charlie and the group to share the outcomes of my research, which they used in their development of the new policy (Appendix 19). The new policy involves students referring to previous feedback, identifying how they will apply it and demonstrating this in their work. Due to the valuable insight gained from my research, Charlie decided to involve students in the development of the new policy to ensure their perceptions were gained. Whilst this approach represents a much greater alignment with the principles of AfL, it will require teachers to reflect on the feedback they provide and revise it, so students are able to take relevant action. As Priestley and Sime (2005) identified, staff development will be required to help teachers understand why this process is being introduced to aid the changes, ensuring it is effectively implemented and evaluated to achieve the aim of improving student learning.

Further research in this school can be continued to evaluate the impact of the new Assessment and Feedback policy.

According to OfSTED's (2013/14) report on the education provision in the East Midlands, the quality of learning in the region falls below that which is expected. My literature review has presented a compelling argument about the importance of feedback in the learning process, which can either enhance or inhibit learning. Improving feedback to enhance learning is, therefore, not unique to this case study. This means the conclusions

drawn from the data in my research would be applicable to other institutions (Yin 2018), so the outcomes of the research can help similar schools develop their practice.

This research would therefore be particularly relevant to other schools placed in Special Measures, or those for which marking and feedback requires improvement.

10.2 Further research

In this research, the student perceptions have predominantly been gained from questionnaires. Whilst this has provided a valuable overview of the perceptions of many students across KS3 and KS4 in the school, it has not enabled a deeper understanding of the student experience to be obtained. The interviews revealed a greater insight into how students valued and engaged with feedback, but the number of students who participated in these was low. The questionnaires have indicated there was a difference in how males and females valued feedback in year 8, but this was not evident in later years. Further research could explore this possible gender difference on a more widespread scale to determine if this is evident elsewhere or was a unique finding in this study.

The data in this research indicated there was no particular difference in the way students in KS3 viewed feedback than they did when they were in KS4. This is worthy of further research to identify whether feedback should be constructed differently as students get older to engage with feedback more effectively, to develop skills in self-assessment and in independent learning.

My research was undertaken in a local authority secondary school. It would be valuable to explore the views of students in other schools, such as high performing state schools and independent schools to determine if there is a difference in how students view feedback in these settings. The possible influence of feedback from primary education has been referred to in this study, it would be valuable to undertake research in the primary sector to explore how students' views about feedback are developed at this stage of learning.

The pivotal role of feedback has been recognised in previous research. This data adds to those arguments and demonstrates the complexity of feedback, which is influenced by teachers' understanding of learning and student needs. Further research on student perceptions would provide a better understanding of how students learn. It would also be valuable to undertake more research into teachers' understanding of learning and how feedback is influenced by this. The data in this research indicates feedback was seen both as a process to simply demonstrate engagement with student work, but also an opportunity to support learning and help students improve their work. These

contrasting perceptions are worth researching further to identify how teachers can improve feedback to enhance learning.

A reflection of the research in Chapter Seven has identified that to maximise the impact of such a project, the school has to recognise the importance of the issue and have a culture which will support both a reflection of, and, improvements to practice. Any future research needs to consider the timing of intended developments and the willingness of the teachers to recognise the issue and embrace change.

10.3 Dissemination of the research

Practitioners and those involved in teacher training would benefit from these research outcomes. Further dissemination to teacher educators can take place through the Teacher Education Advancement Network conference (TEAN), which attracts teacher educators across the country. The journal *Teaching Education* and *Journal of Education for Teaching* would also be a useful mechanism to disseminate this research to people involved in teacher education. Dissemination to educational practitioners and other researchers could take place through the *British Educational Research Association* (BERA) annual conference and journal.

The journals *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* and *The Curriculum Journal* have both published research within this topic area and would be suitable for disseminating my research nationally and internationally. My data would advance the knowledge already published in these journals about assessment and learning. The journal *Educational Researcher* would be a useful source to disseminate the value in utilising a longitudinal study and the contribution student voice has made to the development of this new knowledge.

As this research has highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to assessment and feedback through suitable strategies and school policies, the journal *Management in Education* would be suitable to disseminate the research from a management perspective.

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Appendices

Contents

Appendix 1: YEAR 8 QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigating Feedback

Name:

Form:

Gender: Male / Female

Tick all those that are relevant

1. I think that feedback is	✓
Written in exercise books	
Written on worksheets	
A grade	
Teachers asking me questions in class	
Teachers answering my questions in class	
On my constant monitoring report	

2. Why do you think teachers give you feedback on your work:	✓
To give me a working grade	
To show they have looked at my work	
To help me improve my work	
To show me what I have done well	
I am not sure	

3. What do you find useful about feedback?	✓
It helps me know what I am good at	
It helps me to know that I have improved my work	
It helps me to improve my work	
It helps me to know what I need to do to get to the next sub-level	
It motivates me to improve my work	
Any other comments (write them here):	

4. What would make your feedback more useful?	✓
Easier to read	
Use simpler words	
Give examples	
To get feedback more quickly	
To get feedback more often	
To have time to make corrections to my work	
Any other comments (write them here):	

5. Generally, do you like to receive feedback on your work? YES / NO

Please answer the questions honestly, using the criteria:

1 = **all** of the time 2 = **most** of the time 3 = **some** of the time 4 = **never**

Question	Maths	English	Science	Geography	History	French	Technology	Art
6. What types of feedback do you get in class on your learning?								
WWW/EBI	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Verbal feedback	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Peer feedback	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
7. Is written feedback explained to you?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
8. Is verbal feedback explained clearly to you?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
9. Is your feedback easy to understand?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
10. Is the feedback that you get useful to you?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
11. Do you have opportunities to use written feedback to improve your work?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
12. Do you have opportunities to use verbal feedback to improve your work?	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Appendix 2: ENGLISH/LAW QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigating Feedback in your English lessons

Name:

Form:

Gender: Male / Female

Tick all those that are relevant

1. I think that feedback is	✓
Written in exercise books	
Written on worksheets	
A grade	
Teachers asking me questions in class	
Teachers answering my questions in class	
On my constant monitoring report	

2. Why do you think teachers give you feedback on your work:	✓
To give me a working grade	
To show they have looked at my work	
To help me improve my work	
To show me what I have done well	
I am not sure	

3. What do you find useful about feedback?	✓
It helps me know what I am good at	
It helps me to know that I have improved my work	
It helps me to improve my work	
It helps me to know what I need to do to get to the next sub-level	
It motivates me to improve my work	
Any other comments (write them here):	

4. What would make your feedback more useful?	✓
Easier to read	
Use simpler words	
Give examples	
To get feedback more quickly	
To get feedback more often	
To have time to make corrections to my work	
Any other comments (write them here):	

5. Generally, do you like to receive feedback on your work? YES / NO

Please answer the questions honestly, using the criteria:

1 = **all** of the time 2 = **most** of the time 3 = **some** of the time 4 = **never**

Question	English			
6. What types of feedback do you get in class on your learning?				
WWW/EBI	1	2	3	4
Verbal feedback	1	2	3	4
Peer feedback	1	2	3	4
7. Is written feedback explained to you?	1	2	3	4
8. Is verbal feedback explained clearly to you?	1	2	3	4
9. Is your feedback easy to understand?	1	2	3	4
10. Is the feedback that you get useful to you?	1	2	3	4
11. Do you have opportunities to use written feedback to improve your work?	1	2	3	4
12. Do you have opportunities to use verbal feedback to improve your work?	1	2	3	4

Appendix 3: YEAR 10 QUESTIONNAIRE

Investigating Feedback (Year 10)

Name: Form:

Gender: Male / Female

This questionnaire is designed to review your views on the feedback that you receive in your subjects, building on the responses that you first gave in July 2015.

Please answer the questions honestly. Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

1. **Why do you think teachers give you feedback on your work:** ✓

(tick all those that apply)

To show what level I am	
To show they have looked at my work	
To help me improve my work	
To show me what I have done well	
I am not sure	

2. **What do you find useful about feedback?** ✓

(tick all those that apply)

It helps me know what I am good at	
It helps me to know that I have improved my work	
It helps me to improve my work	
It helps me to know what I need to do to get to the next level	
It motivates me to improve my work	
Any other comments (write them here):	

3. **What part of feedback do you value the most?**

Please tick one box only

Being given a level	
The teacher's comments	
Neither	
Both	
Other (please state)	

Please give your views on the statements below, using the criteria:

1 = **all** of the time 2 = **most** of the time 3 = **some** of the time 4 = **never**

Question	Maths	English	Science	Geography	History	French	Technology	Art
13. Feedback makes a positive difference to my learning:								
Written feedback	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Verbal feedback	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Peer feedback	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
14. Feedback is easy to understand	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
15. Feedback helps me to think about my own work	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
16. Feedback helps me to improve my work	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
17. I understand the success criteria in my subjects	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
18. I am confident in assessing my own work to identify strengths and areas for improvement	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

If you would like to make any comments or suggestions about your feedback, please note them here

Appendix 4: PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

School headed paper

Dear Parent/Carer

The [Name] School is working in conjunction with an academic from Nottingham Trent University to investigate student views of feedback with the aim to develop the ways that teachers give feedback to our students about their work in order that they are able to improve the quality of their work in future.

As part of this process, we would like to include your child to take part in a small focus group with a number of their peers so that we may gain their views about the way feedback is presented and how it might be improved. This will take place during their lunchbreak for no more than 20 minutes.

The focus group will be conducted according to British Educational Research Association Guidelines, all participating students' identities and contributions will be anonymised.

For your child to take part, this letter should be signed and returned to [teacher name] by [date].

Yours sincerely

[Head Teacher Name]
Headteacher
[School Name]

Belinda Ferguson
Principal Lecturer, Education Studies
Nottingham Trent University

I give consent for _____ [student name] to participate in a focus group to investigate student views of feedback conducted by Nottingham Trent University and [Name] School.

Signed _____(parent/carer)

Appendix 5: ETHICAL APPROVAL FROM NTU

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

JOINT INTER COLLEGE ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CHECKLIST
College of Art & Design and Built Environment; College of Arts and Science; and the Centre for Academic Development and Quality (CADQ)

(TO BE COMPLETED FOR ***ALL*** INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING PARTICIPANTS)

All staff and students wishing to conduct an investigation involving participants in order to collect new data in either their research projects or teaching activities are required to complete this checklist before commencement. It may be necessary after completion of this form to submit a full application to the Joint Inter College Ethics Committee (JICEC). Where necessary, official approval from the JICEC should be obtained ***before*** the research is commenced. This should take no longer than one month.

IF YOUR RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED OFF CAMPUS AND ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR YOUR STUDY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY AN EXTERNAL ETHICS COMMITTEE, YOU MAY NOT NEED TO SEEK FULL APPROVAL FROM THE JICEC. HOWEVER, YOU WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF APPROVAL FROM THE EXTERNAL ETHICS COMMITTEE AND THE TERMS ON WHICH THIS APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED.

IF YOUR RESEARCH IS TRANSFERRING INTO NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY AND APPROVAL WAS OBTAINED FROM YOUR ORIGINATING INSTITUTION, THERE IS A REQUIREMENT ON THE UNIVERSITY TO ENSURE THAT APPROPRIATE APPROVALS ARE IN PLACE.
If you believe either of these statements applies to your research, please contact theProfessional Support Research Team adbresearch1@ntu.ac.ukwith evidence of former approval and the terms on which this approval has been granted.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATORS AND/OR SUPERVISORS TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS APPROPRIATE INSURANCE COVER FOR THEIR INVESTIGATION.
If you are at all unsure about whether or not your study is covered, please contact the Finance &Planning Manager in your Finance team to check.

Name of Applicant: BELINDA FERGUSON

School: School of Education

Title of Investigation: Using feedback to enhance student learning

Student: Yes X(*if student, please complete)

Degree Title and Level :PhD Doctor of Philosophy

Name of Programme Supervisor : Dr Sheine PEART and Dr Ruth RICHARDS

Section A: Investigators

Do investigators have previous experience of, and/or adequate training in, the methods employed?	Yes ✓	
Will junior researchers/students be under the direct supervision of an experienced member of staff?	Yes✓	
Will junior researchers/students be expected to undertake physically invasive procedures (not covered by a generic protocol) during the course of the research?		No✓
Are researchers in a position of direct authority with regard to participants (e.g. academic staff using student participants, sports coaches using his/her athletes in training)?		No✓

** If you select ANY answers marked **, please submit your completed Ethical Clearance Checklist accompanied by a statement covering how you intend to manage the issues (indicated by selecting a ** answer) to the JICEC.

Section B: Participants

Vulnerable Groups

Does your research involve vulnerable participants? If not, go to Section C

If your research does involve vulnerable participants, will participants be knowingly recruited from one or more of the following vulnerable groups?

	Yes ✓	No
Children under 18 years of age (please refer to published guidelines)		
People over 65 years of age		No✓
Pregnant women		No✓
People with mental illness		No✓
Prisoners/Detained persons		No✓
Other vulnerable group (please specify Click here to enter text.)		No✓

* Please submit a full application to the JICEC

Full permission has been sought by the head teacher. Al work will be carried in open classrooms in the school. The children will always have a permanent member of school staff present during the research

Chaperoning Participants

If appropriate, e.g. studies which involve vulnerable participants, taking physical measures or intrusion of participants' privacy:

Will participants be chaperoned by more than one investigator at all times?	Yes		N/A
Will at least one investigator of the same sex as the participant(s) be present throughout the investigation?		No	N/A
Will participants be visited at home?		No	N/A

* Please submit a full application to the JICEC.
If you have selected N/A please provide a statement in the space below explaining why the chaperoning arrangements are not applicable to your research proposal: My research will involve children at the school. The permanent teachers will chaperone the students during the research process.

Advice to Participants following the investigation

Investigators have a duty of care to participants. When planning research, investigators should consider what, if any, arrangements are needed to inform participants (or those legally responsible for the participants) of any health related (or other) problems previously unrecognised in the participant. This is particularly important if it is believed that by not doing so the participants well-being is endangered. Investigators should consider whether or not it is appropriate to recommend that participants (or those legally responsible for the participants) seek qualified professional advice, but should not offer this advice personally. Investigators should familiarise themselves with the guidelines of professional bodies associated with their research.

Section C: Methodology/Procedures

To the best of your knowledge, please indicate whether the proposed study:

Involves taking bodily samples		No✓
Involves procedures which are likely to cause physical, psychological, social or emotional distress to participants		No✓
Is designed to be challenging physically or psychologically in any way (includes any study involving physical exercise)		No✓
Exposes participants to risks or distress greater than those encountered in their normal lifestyle		No✓
Involves use of hazardous materials		No✓

* Please submit a full application to the JICEC: **N/A**
†If the procedure is covered by an existing generic protocol, please insert reference number here Click here to enter text. If the procedure is not covered by an existing generic protocol, please submit a full application to the JICEC.

Section D: Observation/Recording

Does the study involve observation and/or recording of participants? If yes please complete the rest of section D, otherwise proceed to section E	Yes✓	
Will those being observed and/or recorded be informed that the observation and/or recording will take place?	Yes✓	

* Please submit a full application to the JICEC
In order to fully capture the participant's responses I will use a digital voice recorder. Participants will be fully informed of the procedure, exchanges will be recorded and all participants will be asked for verbal consent to confirm they are happy for this to happen

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Section E: Consent and Deception

Will participants give informed consent freely?	Yes✓	

If yes please complete the ***Informed Consent*** section below.
*If no, please submit a full application to the JICEC.

ᶜNote: where it is impractical to gain individual consent from every participant, it is acceptable to allow individual participants to "opt out" rather than "opt in".

Informed Consent

Will participants be fully informed of the objectives of the investigation and all details disclosed (preferably at the start of the study but where this would interfere with the study, at the end)?	Yes✓	
Will participants be fully informed of the use of the data collected (including, where applicable, any intellectual property arising from the research)?	Yes✓	

For children under the age of 18 or participants who have impairment of understanding or communication:

- will consent be obtained (either in writing or by some other means)?	Yes✓	No*☐
- will consent be obtained from parents or other suitable person?	Yes✓	No*☐
- will they be informed that they have the right to withdraw regardless of parental/ guardian consent?	Yes✓	No*☐
For investigations conducted in schools, will approval be gained in advance from the Head-teacher and/or the Director of Education of the appropriate Local Education Authority?	Yes✓	No*☐
For detained persons, members of the armed forces, employees, students and other persons judged to be under duress, will care be taken over gaining freely informed consent?	Yes☐	No*☐

***** Please submit a full application to the JICEC:

Does the study involve deception of participants (ie withholding of information or the misleading of participants) which could potentially harm or exploit participants? If yes please complete the ***Deception*** section below.		No✓

Deception

Is deception an unavoidable part of the study?	Yes☐	No*☐
Will participants be de-briefed and the true object of the research revealed at the earliest stage upon completion of the study?	Yes☐	No*☐
Has consideration been given on the way that participants will react to the withholding of information or deliberate deception?	Yes☐	No*☐

***** Please submit a full application to the JICEC:

N/A as no deception will be used

Section F: Withdrawal

Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the investigation at any time and to require their own data to be destroyed?	Yes✓	

***** Please submit a full application to the JICEC

Section G: Storage of Data and Confidentiality

Please see University guidance on https://www.ntu.ac.uk/intranet/policies/legal_services/data_protection/16231gp.html. You will need your user name and password to gain access to this page on the Staff Intranet.

Will all information on participants be treated as confidential and not identifiable unless agreed otherwise in advance, and subject to the requirements of law?	Yes✓	
Will storage of data comply with the Data Protection Act 1998?	Yes✓	
Will any video/audio recording of participants be kept in a secure place and not released for use by third parties?	Yes✓	
Will video/audio recordings be destroyed within six years of the completion of the investigation?	Yes✓	

***** Please submit a full application to the JICEC

Section H: Incentives

Have incentives (other than those contractually agreed, salaries or basic expenses) been offered to the investigator to conduct the investigation?		No✓
Will incentives (other than basic expenses) be offered to potential participants as an inducement to participate in the investigation?		No✓

** If you select ANY answers marked **, please submit your completed Ethical Clearance Checklist accompanied by a statement covering how you intend to manage the issues (indicated by selecting a ** answer) to the JICEC.

Compliance with Ethical Principles

If you have completed the checklist to the best of your knowledge without selecting an answer marked with *, ** or † your investigation is deemed to conform with the ethical checkpoints and you do not need to seek formal approval from the JICEC.

Please sign the declaration below, and lodge the completed checklist with Melanie Bentham-Hill in the Professional Support Research Team, Maudslay 312, City Campus, or via email adbresearchteam1@ntu.ac.uk.

Declaration
I have read the Ethics & Governance Statement http://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/ethics_governance/index.html. I confirm that the above named investigation complies with published codes of conduct, ethical principles and guidelines of professional bodies associated with my research discipline.

Signature of Applicant

(Research Student or Principal Investigator) 

Belinda Ferguson

Signature of Supervisor/Line Manager
(Director of Studies/ATL) Click here to enter text.

Date 30/04/2015

If the provision for compliance with ethical principles does not apply, please proceed to the ***Guidance from JICEC*** section below.

Guidance from JICEC

If, upon completion of the checklist you have selected ANY answers marked **, please submit your completed Ethical Clearance Checklist accompanied by a statement covering how you intend to manage the issues (indicated by selecting a ** answer) to the JICEC.

If, upon completion of the checklist, you have selected an answer marked with * or † it is possible that an aspect of the proposed investigation does not conform to the ethical principles adopted by the University. Therefore you are requested to complete a full submission to the JICEC. A full submission to JICEC comprises of

- this form
- a project proposal*
- a copy of consent forms or letters
- an additional statement of up to 800 words outlining the ethical issues raised by the project and the proposed approach to deal with these.

If the project has been subject to ethical review by another University or external body

- a copy of the full application submitted is also required.

*The document may be any of the following: Project Approval Form (RD1PA), Transfer Form (RD2T), Annual Monitoring Form, or a Case for Support for an external funding proposal e.g. AHRC.

Checklist OK to file ☐

or

Forward form & attachments to JICEC ☐

Signature of JICEC Chair Click here to enter text.
Date 20/07/2015

Dear Belinda

I am pleased to inform you that the JICEC was happy to confirm that in its judgement there were no outstanding ethical concerns that required further discussion or exploration prior to data collection related to your application: Using feedback to enhance student learning. The committee would like to wish you well in the completion of your project.

Best Regards,

Research Office Team Leader
Maudslay 312
College of Art, Design and Built Environment

Nottingham Trent University
Burton Street
Nottingham NG1 4BU

Tel: 0115 848 2393

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Appendix 6: Focus Group interview with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) November 2015

Purpose: The aim of the focus group was to share the year 8 questionnaire data and to discuss the emerging themes and implications with the school senior management. The SLT was made up of the Head Teacher, Deputy Head, Assistant Head Teacher, four Heads of Department and the Chair of Governors. Graphs of the Year 8 questionnaires were presented to the SLT in a scheduled meeting on 12th November 2015. The graphs showed a breakdown of the responses to each question overall, by each subject and by gender.

At the start of the meeting, I stressed to SLT this data might not represent actual practice, or the teacher's perception of the practice but did represent the students' perception of it, which could be influenced by a range of factors. However, the cohort was large (152 students) so it could be taken to be a good representation of their experience.

The charts were scrutinised by the group and the emerging themes identified and discussed:

- In most subjects surveyed, the school policy of using WWW/EBI was being followed, however it was noted it did not seem to be applied in Technology and to varying degrees in other subjects.
- Although students said they received feedback through WWW/EBI, the data in Chart 15 suggested they did not necessarily find it useful. The group recognised the school Marking Policy that required teachers to set a question for students to respond to, might not be effective.
- When students valued their feedback, they appeared to have been given opportunities to use it. This was concluded when comparing Charts 12 with Table 14.
- Students appeared to prefer written feedback more than verbal feedback. The group discussed whether verbal feedback should also be recorded in writing.
- Feedback practices in Science and Technology showed a consistently less positive pattern than the other six subjects. It was discussed this was probably due to an under-staffed Science department where a series of supply teachers were being utilised, affecting the continuity of approach and a potentially difficult experience for students. There had already been a series of concerns about the Technology department's performance.

It was agreed this data should be shared with each department and the wider school at the INSET day in January 2016. Workshops were to be held with the teachers where the implications of the data could be explored in more depth.

Appendix 7: Notes of discussion with teachers during INSET workshops January 2016

Purpose: At the request of the SLT, the data from the Year 8 questionnaires and emerging analysis was presented to the whole school (teaching and support staff). Following the presentation, workshops took place to discuss the student views in more depth and what could be learned from them. The staff were aware this was part of the research project. There were five workshops, with 10-12 teachers at each. Support staff did not attend the workshops.

The following issues emerged from the discussion:

- It was acknowledged there were subject differences, teachers felt the student attitudes to learning could affect their engagement with their feedback. Teachers discussed the current school policy requiring them to set a 'feedback' question for students to answer. They generally felt they did not have time to re-visit the student responses due to timetable constraints and the pressure on curriculum content. A few teachers explained they did re-visit the student response, but most argued it would take too much time.
- Teachers discussed the type of 'feedback' questions they posed for the student. It emerged in most cases this was a closed question to which students would only need to provide a one-word answer. This was particularly evident with the French, Technology and History teachers.
- Some teachers explained it would take too much time to write a question which required a longer student response.
- The role of self-assessment was discussed. The teachers thought it could help student evaluation of their work and form part of a goal setting process but were unsure they would have time to do this effectively due to the quantity of subject knowledge to deliver. They felt high ability students could do this, but low ability students would be unable to.
- Finally, teachers were asked to discuss what their focus would be to develop feedback strategies, based on the issues discussed and the questionnaire data. Most teachers felt there were further improvements to be made and this could be a focus of their Learning and Teaching Communities. The English/Law teacher requested to undertake the questionnaires with all her students.

Appendix 8: ART STUDENT INTERVIEWS 1 (October 2015)

Natural Form Homework Project Assessment Record

Scoring

Homework Project Assessment Record

Task		Score (out of 9)
ARTIST SELECTION		
- An appropriate choice of artist		
- Good quality images included		/2
ARTWORK ANALYSIS		/4
- Accurate answers		
- Spelling & grammar		
- Use of key art terms		
- Relevant comments made		
Overall Presentation		
- Thoughtful layout		
- Appropriate decoration		/3
-		
		/9

Question	Male	Female
What do you think about the scoring system that is used (above)?	Like it. It is clear, and we can see what we have done and included in our work. Also, can see what is missed out. Like the way it is broken down into sections.	Like the way it is split into sections. It is not always clear what they haven't done, especially if they think it has been done. Teacher could circle or indicate on the homework briefing sheet what they haven't done and link to sections on the assessment form.

Written Comments

WWW:
EBI:
QUESTION:
STUDENT RESPONSE:

Question	Male	Female
What do you think of WWW/EBI?	It is useful. I like the scoring and breaking it into the sections – it makes it easier to see and use. It is helpful and motivating. Yes, it would be better if it linked more to the success criteria. It could be broken down and show how they can transfer it to another project more.	It is useful. The scoring helps you to see if anything was missed in the work. The way it is split into sections is good and easy to use. Helpful and motivating. It makes you feel happy. But sometimes there is nothing to take forward as the next project uses different techniques, so the feedback can't be used. It doesn't always link to the success criteria though. Sometimes it can be difficult to understand if you think you have done something and the teacher does not. Yes, it needs more explanation. The students should complete a WWW/EBI of their own work before the teacher does.
Isn't this what the evaluation is? (Katie)		I suppose so, I hadn't thought about it like that. Perhaps evaluation should be presented more as WWW/EBI. Peers could do WWW/EBI on each other's work. [After further discussion, students felt a peer would not give very useful feedback]. You should use the feedback from someone else, but there was hardly anything there, it was really vague and empty.
What are your views on the Question on the Assessment Record?	It makes me think about my work and can see it relates to other work.	The question is okay, but do not always know what the question means. The questions should be more specific and relate to the style of the topic. The question could be used to set further work or research. Others disagreed.
If you don't understand the question, who do you ask?	A teacher A peer	A teacher A peer
How do you feel about giving the student response to the question?	I like being able to put a response as it gives me the opportunity to have a say about the topic. Teacher's handwriting is not always easy to understand. It was difficult to come up with a response in class. I don't like writing, I know I have to write and I have to get better, but I don't like it. When I have to write a response, I feel rushed and the pressure to write something gets in the way of my thinking, so I just	It can be a bit rushed in class to put a response. Perhaps it should be done as homework. But if we did it as homework, there would be no support be available if we struggled with it.

	put anything down. I don't have time to think about it properly.	

Success Criteria Checklist

Students were shown a copy of a Success Criteria Checklist. They have seen similar formats of this in previous work, but not with these specific criteria as this relates to a new topic.

Success Criteria checklist	**Rag rating:**
My work is based on key organic or mechanic shapes	
I have created a range of paper experiments	
I have made links to the work of Frank Tjepkema/Rogan Brown.	
My designs are creative and successful.	

Question	Males	Females
What do you think of the RAG rating?	Comfortable with it as it is simple and easy to use.	It is not always clear what we can do about it if it is rated as red or amber. Sometimes we are not sure of an element.
Do you understand the terms used, eg. What is a 'range'?	These are explained on the task sheet, so it is clear what they mean. The checklist should have 2 grids, one that the student completes and one that the teacher completes as it is always nice when the teacher scores them more highly than you do.	All were confident they understood the terminology.

Appendix 9: ART STUDENT INTERVIEWS 2 (July 2016)

8 year 9 students: 4 males, 4 females. All students were part of the group interviews on 12th October 2015 and completed questionnaires in July 2015. 3 of the 8 students had elected to study Art to GCSE. Katie led most of the questions in the interview.

Question	Male	Female
Using their workbooks, students identified their last 2 feedback grids. What are the differences between them? (Katie)	The last one is more detailed, they could see what they needed to do next.	The second one is much better. It is clearer what to do next.
Did that help you in generating a response to the marking? (Katie)	Yes	Yes
Do the numerical numbers help [a score of 1-9]? (Katie)	The scoring links to the new GSCE levels better than the [national curriculum] levels previously.	I like it. I like having something to aim towards. I aim to get the most marks.
Students were asked to look at a Contemporary Project portrait in their workbooks. What do you think the difference is between this and the previous assessment? (Katie)	I prefer the numbers to the colours (RAG rating). Not sure what an amber means. The key words are underlined. In our response we can include the key words.	Newest assessment grid is easier. Very clear Can see how well you've done with the numbers.
How was your feedback on the Organ Project? How did you feel about filling in the EBI yourself [this came from a suggestion from one of the students in the last interview]? (Katie)	It makes you think about the work, not just the level or number	It makes you think about it Completing the EBI avoids you focusing on the levels
What limits your EBI response? Is there anything that would help? (Katie)	Yes, more time	More time
How did you get on with [another teacher]'s assignment? *Question directed to students who did Organ Piece with a different teacher.* (Katie)	There was not as much feedback as there is with you. She gives more verbal feedback, but this is hard to remember. We only have her lesson once a week, so I can't remember the feedback to the next lesson.	
Do you find that in other subjects too it is difficult to remember the feedback? (BF)	Yes You can act on verbal feedback there and then, but you can go back to	

	written feedback later. It stays there.	
What are the limits of using your feedback? (BF)		Time.
The tasks need to be quite quick we can't spend too much time on them (Katie)		
it seems that you like the final version of the feedback grid the best (BF/Katie)	Yes definitely	Yes
What about peer feedback? Do you like it? (Katie)	Not much	Not helpful Showed an example of peer feedback that she didn't find very useful.
When you look at someone else's work, does it make you think about your own work? (BF)	It does make you think about your own work differently	Yes, it does
Feedback is also about recognising how good you are at your work. Does your feedback do this? (BF)	You can see what you are doing well and what to improve	Yes Yes definitely
What things influence how you receive, listen to or use feedback? (BF)	If you are engaged in the subject	
what influences this? (BF)	If you enjoy the aspect of it. Depends on the person – the teacher and the student - and whether they like the subject. That's true, if something happens at break, it is talked about in class, so students can be disruptive. The first lesson is quiet, can focus on feedback then.	I like being able to use different materials or do different things – that makes me enjoy the subject more and I take feedback more positively. After break or after lunch the class is more distracted, so students are less likely to listen.
When you completed the questionnaires a year ago, it became clear that you found feedback important to help you improve but were not motivated by it. How do you feel about the feedback you get now in Art? Does it motivate you? Yes? No? or A bit of both? (BF)	Definitely more motivating All agreed.	Yes definitely. All agreed. Because the feedback is easier to understand, it is clearer to see what you have done well then it makes you happier about it

		In Performing Arts, we use a learning ladder scheme with different levels: bronze, silver, ruby etc to Diamond. We really like this.
What do you like about it? (BF)		It is easy to figure out –the statements [success criteria] are easy to understand. We can tick them off and aim for the next level. I want to get a Diamond!

Appendix 10: ART TEACHER INTERVIEW 1 (October 2016)

What changes did you make about giving feedback to students?

KS4 has taken had the biggest changes throughout the year – the booklets I have produced and the comparisons between the projects and the introduction of taking photographs to visually evidence progress. I was having a debate as to whether this actually benefits students and this lead to the thought of something that was brought up something that came up in the second interview which was that a different teacher who taught the same lessons I had, had mainly given verbal feedback which is useful in the instance of the lesson– that student who brought that up preferred having written feedback and I think the pictures support the comments that are made in terms of tallying up with the EBI comments and to reflect back at a later date and make comparisons between projects. Yes, it can be cumbersome to take lots of pictures, but if you get into a routine it does provide an opportunity for me to prompt them to redevelop their work. There is a space in the booklet for them to resubmit their work – they might not but they are allowed to do that. It has become embedded in the practice now and is part of our process now.

I feel like I change it all the time and that was one of my concerns, but the feedback we got in the second interview showed that as long as the changes I make are clear, the students go with it. The next concern in is the new assessment system in the school as a whole. Making moving… I need to look at this.

Did you need to do much with the students to get them used to the changes?

No, it is the kind of relationship we have. Because the assessment criteria is shared throughout the whole process, one of the things that surprised me was that their conversations changed when talking about it with me – it is more in line with the success criteria. If I say, you have not done this, you have not done that, they are much more complaint as they know it was what I expected of them in the first place. If you are very clear about what you expect, then they are quite honest. If anything, they under sell themselves about how well they have met it. It is about sharing it throughout the process.

Is that a change you have seen since you were involved in this project?

Yes definitely, it is embedded in the powerpoints, embedded in how I deliver the lessons, making sure that we are reviewing our work against it and making it part of our review lessons. The biggest thing is maintaining it and keeping on top of it and making sure that now [other Art Teacher and HoD] has been off work, it is making sure we are doing the same thing. Even if we don't use the same system of feedback, it is about sharing good practice between us. Time has definitely been set aside more often– this comes up in discussion with other staff – should we spend half an hour reviewing feedback, well I don't spend half an hour, I spend 10 minutes. I want to develop systems to support, not just the weaker students. I do think the quality of answers has improved through constant talking with the key terms. that is not to say that the higher ability students couldn't be pushed further. If they are hitting all the criteria they have to maintain that and should use a higher /wider range of key terms and they should know that they should know and expect from me. For the lower ability students, if I don't have time to see all of them – they might want to just get on with their work. It is making a point of checking they are filling in their book, making sure they know what to do, what language to use. Once it is embedded it becomes second nature. It hasn't been that much of a

problem if you read what they actually write but if it will make them more confident, if they have some sort of support there I am happy to provide it.

Do you think the quality of work has improved as a result?

I definitely think it is an integral, crucial factor but it is not the sole. We have changed the projects and that has had an impact. Before the [feedback] project, I valued giving the students feedback but now it was really nice to see how much they value it and that they want it and the impact it can make. The hours that I spent constructing these different systems and time spent filling it all in is worthwhile. Ultimately if their work gets better – I think their confidence grows, particularly boys. I have noticed an increase in confidence in boys, we have an increase in boys taking GSCE art. It will be a combination of factors that may have led to this.

Has your view of the purpose and role of feedback changed as a result of this project? Do you view feedback differently now?

I think I am more concerned about exactly the content of the feedback I give. Firstly, about making sure they know what they are assessed against, you can give all the feedback in the world but if they don't understand what they are assessed against, it is pointless. So engaging students in that process as well. There are lots of different methods that teachers have proposed as to how to do that so that keeps it interesting. I do the WWW, they do the EBI so it brings the two together and gets them involved in it.

When I changed the question in the GSCE grid (below), I realised I needed to make my feedback different, so students could answer it. I had to think about what information I needed give students, so they could respond. I also used this question with the year 9 students, which they said they thought was better than the previous approach. That was reassuring to hear.

STUDENT:		DATE:
GCSE – OBSERVATIONAL ARTWORK/ARTIST STUDY		
SUCCESS CRITERIA	STUDENT RAG RATING	TEACHER RAG RATING
Accurate artwork		
Suitable choice of materials		
Effective application of materials		
Suitable choice of image		
A challenging choice of image		
OTHER:		
TEACHER QUESTION: Based on the feedback above, how will you improve your work?		
STUDENT RESPONSE:		

I do see the benefit of peer assessment, but I am still on the fence of the quality of those answers. I think self-assessment - building up their confidence to honestly to assess their own skills. Feedback is given timely, constructively and maintaining that is

the fundamentals for me. When I have done all this I realise that we have made progress but there are still things to look at and keep looking at.

What are your next steps?

[The Head of Department] is looking at the new [school] assessment system and how it directly applies to Art. That might affect whether we continue to RAG rate art, but they are not assessed against levels but 5 key terms: the old levels coincide with words. Whether I adapt the feedback systems I have got is something I want to look at. This idea of consistently across the making process. I thought about developing assessment criteria at KS4 – the booklets have evolved: got WWW, got EBI and the question which is devised to extract and support this. The ideas is to redevelop and resubmit if they want. The assessment grid that I mark their work against which is a lot of jargon so if it was simplified that might help in terms of… for their mind map I am looking for a range of relevant images. I know in my head what I am looking for and they have a rough idea as I have told them but if there was a list of every key piece – a simple breakdown of what they need to get those higher – talking about it is one thing and the higher level students do the things I talk about but if it was written down for the ones who don't take it in the first time. I can be clear - eg you have pictures but they are not all relevant. .. I don't know maybe I am looking at it in too much detail, but I just think that is something I would like to …. When this feedback was scrutinised last night in terms of differentiation – I do have sentence starters and all sorts of things to support them, so the suggestion was to put that into the booklet as a way to support them and refer to them. I could keep going – sometimes I need to learn where to stop as well. At the moment I am identifying what assessment objectives are being covered, previously the book was laid out so that it covered each section of a project but as students work at different rates it makes sense to make each page more generic and specify what tasks they are covering rather than fit it in a certain page: research over here – observation at the back, I would mark it and they wouldn't think to turn back to that page and then they would lose it so it makes sense to do it all in order.

Develop clear opportunities for students to review their own progress between projects: but constrained by time. Maybe with this [new assessment criteria] coming in it is an opportunity to review this. We had a grid before where you input what they got for each project and could reflect so this is now redundant so the opportunity to track progress they made. I like the idea of transferrable skills which was brought up in the first interview – you still cover the same skills in different projects, it is being able to see that, and using the evaluation skills they need in other subjects. I would like to look at that. I often get asked where Art can lead to.

The students we met in July – not all of them have gone on to do Art, yet they were all very positive about it. **How did you feel about that?** It was lovely to hear that. I was worried about the intake of GSCE intake, but our numbers have increased. We have gained more students and a definitely increase in boys. If we can keep building on that. Photography and Art club has helped.

We need to look at what projects we do as that is a hook and allows then to develop their confidence.

I have changed the tables [groups to rows] and this has had a positive impact on behaviour, All students are face forward – I can see if they turn around. I have who I want at the front and give them one to some support. It seems to work and get a better grip on the group. I have the lower ability students with me at the front, I can spend more time with them and let the higher ability ones get on with their work at the back.

The approach that we took – getting students' views – is quite unusual. Was it a useful approach to take coming from this direction?

I think it was a good balance – ultimately, I influence and create the feedback structure that pulls back on my ITT and CPD and see how that pans out in lessons but to actually ask the students those kinds of questions out of the context of a lesson and to think about the questions to ask them. I am conscious they might say things to please but they had their own opinion and it reinforced my views in terms of what I wanted their view to be like – I wanted them to value feedback and see a value in it and thought it was positive that they understood why were we doing what we were doing and they were willing to suggest things in a constructive way so the feedback that they gave was helpful and it was interesting to compare opinions between boys and girls, the lower ability and more able students. Some of their comments were really insightful. On the second interview – one student made the connection to the new GCSE system [the work that was marked out of 9] – I thought that was really forward thinking and shows a level of value for assessment and are thinking ahead of where they are going in their future, so it shows they want to do well, know where they are going in their education and they care about it. Some students don't want to change their work and are happy to take what they are given but if there are those students who want to resubmit their work I want to give them that opportunity. That is what happens in the real world. It was a really positive experience – having the students part of the process – being involved in it gave it a deeper meaning for me in terms of I wasn't just doing this off my own back and relying on my own… I reciprocate their thoughts and value their thoughts. It was a team approach.

Appendix 11: ENGLISH STUDENT INTERVIEWS (March 2016)

Question	Male Year 10	Female Year 10	Female year 7
How do you like to receive your feedback? Written/verbal?	Written. Take more time to read it when it is written.	Both. Both written and verbal are explained	Both. The written feedback is always there, and I can figure out what it means, but the verbal feedback is straight away. Verbal feedback can clarify any confusion straight away.
Do you prefer regular comments from the teacher in class or less often but more detailed?	More detailed comments less often.	Like instant feedback, regularly and often.	More detailed but less often. When it is less often it is clearer and less rushed. It allows more time to do the improvements, so the feedback is more useful.
What do you want your feedback to tell you? That you are doing well? Or what to do next?	Like to know what we are doing well, then we don't need to worry about the things we are doing. Like to know we have 'got it' and can move on. Like the green pens.	Like to get both. Like to see improvement and get confidence when I recognise that I have done well. Like the green pens.	Like the positive comment, shows we are doing something well and makes me more enthusiastic. You don't feel rubbish if it is not just about improvement, but we do want to know how to improve and move to the next level. Like the green pens in English. In XX, the feedback is at the end of a section, we are told to make improvements, but nothing is seen after that. Prefer short steps in improvement. In English we get feedback in time to use it.
What do you do if you don't understand your feedback?	Ask the teacher	Ask someone else or ask the teacher. Might get someone else to explain my feedback – this makes you think about your feedback.	Try to work it out and then ask the teacher. Occasionally ask each other if the teacher is busy.
What affects the way that you receive feedback?	Own mood, the lesson, the teacher. Need to be able to trust the teacher and will then receive it better. Need to spend time with the teacher to build trust. We trust [Kirstie] so we value her feedback.	It is very loud when the whole class get feedback at the same time. It can be difficult to know what to put [as a response]. The time of day can affect how feedback is received [not at the end of the day]. If you can talk to the teacher about feedback, it helps. Sometimes I might disregard the feedback if it does not match my own opinion.	Type of mood I am in. Level of tiredness. The noise level in the room affect how I receive feedback. Whether I like the subject. Which lesson of the day – 'don't give feedback in the last lesson'! The time of day – in the last period, I just want to go home, especially when the buses have arrived. The confidence I have in asking the teacher about my feedback.

Appendix 12: ENGLISH/LAW TEACHER INTERVIEW (October 2016)

Since undertaking the student questionnaires and interviews, has your practice changed or been changed?

I was confident before, I had been commended on my approach by SLT and by Ofsted, so I was fairly sure what I was doing was good but listening to the students has been reassuring so I suppose it has reinforced my practice. It has been very helpful as it has been interesting to see how students respond – or think they respond to my comments and feedback.

In the interviews, the frequency of giving feedback to the students, how they receive feedback and what influences it was discussed. Has your practice changed as a result?

It made me aware that students respond differently, boys seem to value verbal feedback more than girls, so I have been conscious of that, but it has really made me think that I need to adopt a variety of styles as everyone is individual and different ways work with different students. It is important to set an environment and behaviour for learning in the classroom to set the culture that they use and respond to feedback.

Has your view of feedback and its role changed or been reinforced since the research?

I think I had a pretty good awareness of how valuable it is. I am now a lead practitioner in English and I mentor and support other teachers. I have used the data from the questionnaires and interviews to show other staff why feedback is so important, and it is so important to get it right. I say to them: 'look, the students want your feedback, they realise it can help them, so it is important to make it effective'.

I spend a lot of time designing effective systems, so it is nice to hear from students that they value it. It is worthwhile doing then. Hearing the students' views has reinforced to me that WWW is important as the positive aspect was essential and celebrated success, feedback should not just be about development.

Do you find it takes a lot of time to provide and respond to the feedback in the way that you do?

Not really – maybe at first. I used to be a solicitor, so I am used to working hard and fast. I just feel that it is part of our jobs, so it is worth ensuring it is effective. Once I am going with it, it doesn't take that long as I am focused.

What do you think the main reasons are for giving feedback?

It is about student progress. Identifying the next steps and helping them get there. For some students these will be bigger and others smaller. The feedback has to be targeted and specific. It is really important that the teacher knows the subject otherwise the feedback can't be specific and helpful to support progress. The teacher must know and understand the learning outcomes and success criteria in order for feedback to be useful. If a teacher doesn't understand that, they can't help the students to get there. I am confident that I know my subject and the students know that too and respond to the feedback.

Do you have any next steps yourself if developing your feedback mechanisms?

I want to develop peer and self-assessment. We are going to work on this once a week. I think the questionnaires showed that peer assessment and feedback was not strong.

It may be that it does happen, but students don't recognise it as that

It could be, but I think it is an area we/I can do more on and it will help students to recognise their own strengths and developments. It is definitely an area I want to focus on and I guess the data has confirmed that.

The students identified factors that influence how they receive feedback, such as time of day, environment and the teacher. Do you have any thoughts about these views?

[laughs] Yes, last thing is a Friday is not popular, or when the buses are due! We might not be able to change these things, but it is important to be aware of them. Not to waste time giving important or crucial information when it is unlikely they are paying attention. We can manage the environment though, set expectations and behaviour for learning. It was interesting to hear them say that the relationship with the teacher matters. They respect what I say because they trust me and know I work hard for them. That is important.

What about the view that they disregard the feedback if it does not fit in with their own view?

Yes, that was interesting. Perhaps there is something to take note there. If the student and the teacher both understand the learning outcomes and success criteria and use the terminology that would help.

Appendix 13: ART TEACHER INTERVIEW 2 (July 2017)

Looking back at the changes you made during this project, what do you think has been the most successful?

Building in the student evaluation as part of the feedback process has definitely been the most useful. This provides a way of having a dialogue with the students as I can ask them why they think what they do and we can have an open discussion so I can understand them better.

This was also commended by the Head Teacher in a recent observation.

Are there any new strategies that you have introduced?

The Head felt that I needed a way of the students recording verbal feedback. I give a lot of verbal feedback, but it is not evidenced so I created a slip for them to fill out to record what I have said and what they will do with it.

How has that been?

It hasn't worked. It doesn't feel natural and interrupted the flow of the lesson as the students had to stop what they were doing and record it. Then the question is what they do with the slip of paper afterwards, mostly they lose it or leave it behind.

Have there been any other developments?

Over time, it has changed and evolved, and the methods have become more effective. I am hoping that I can take these feedback strategies to my new job. I have explained my process to [the replacement teacher] so she will hopefully continue with it. I have applied a lot of the ideas I first introduced in KS3 into KS4 now, and it has worked well. For example, I have created a short evaluation form that the GCSE students complete which incorporates both the student and teacher evaluation. This seems to be working well, it encourages students to reflect on their work which they probably wouldn't do otherwise.

Another project that I have been involved with is metacognition and helping students to understand more about being learners and what type of learners they are. I have done one approach for all years, but I think it might need to be different for different ages groups. What do you think? [conversation diverted to discuss metacognition]

What prompted you to look into metacognition?

Doing the work on feedback project has given me confidence to look into this. I am really interested in finding out more about students' learning experiences.

Appendix 14: INTERVIEW WITH DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER (July 2017)

The data from the year 8 and 10 questionnaires was discussed.

Does the data represent your view of the student experience?

I can see there is a link between students' confidence in self-assessing their own work and their understanding of the success criteria. If students don't understand the success criteria they won't be able to evaluate their own work. I suppose if students don't understand success criteria, they won't be able to give meaningful peer feedback. This could be why this scored consistently low in the survey.

The student views about feedback in Geography were more positive than they were in year 8 and were the most positive in many aspects in the year 10 survey. Do you know what practice this adopted in this department, which could account for this?

The teachers in Geography design their own assessments of student learning, rather than using past GSCE or other standard assessments, like the Maths department do. It is really interesting to see how the students' views reflect this. I can see how the students experience reflects what I know is occurring in the school. That is really interesting. It is also reassuring that my understanding of classroom practice is in tune with theirs.

You mention the practice in Maths. The student experience seems to be less positive in year 10 than it was in year 8.

Yes, the new Head of Department does put a lot of emphasis on using past test papers as formative assessment. I am not sure this is a good strategy as it might focus on grades or performance and too much.

The year 10 data shows a more positive experience than in year 8.

Well, in Science there is a better teaching team in KS4 than KS3. There are more supply teachers in KS3.

The data suggests that the students recognised improvements in KS4 since they were in KS3.

Yes, that is also my view. There have been a lot of changes to the Science department over the last 2 years so the whole team has become more established. There are less supply teachers now. This probably accounts for the improvements. Actually, we have had a large turnover of staff in Maths – now there are a lot of supply or new teachers. This is the reverse of Science. That could explain the student views about Maths.

What other changes have occurred across the school to enhance student learning?

Exams have now been introduced in all years. Previously they had only been undertaken by year 11s. This could change the way teachers provide feedback and is more targeted toward exams. The school policy on marking was amended after you presented the [year 8] data before. Students are now required to undertake an action following feedback because it was thought it might help students to use their feedback more.

What are the next steps now in developing assessment and feedback?

I took up the role of Teaching and Learning during the year 2016/17. Up to this point, I had focused on compliance by the teachers, such as establishing and sharing learning outcomes, marking exercise books and undertaking work scrutiny. This has really been

an audit role, and I suppose focused on teaching and learning but this has not resulted in sufficient progress by the students.

We also need to look at More Able students. They are not achieving the grades they should be so that is another area we need to do some work on.

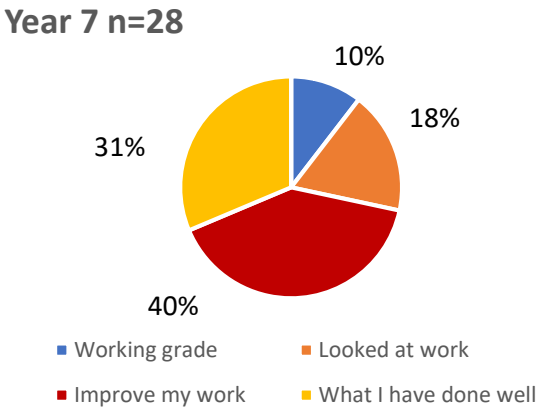
It is my aim to move towards a greater focus on assessment and feedback. I think this data can be used to start discussions about improving assessment and feedback. I have done some work with staff on the use of Bloom's taxonomy in the setting of learning outcomes and lesson activities.

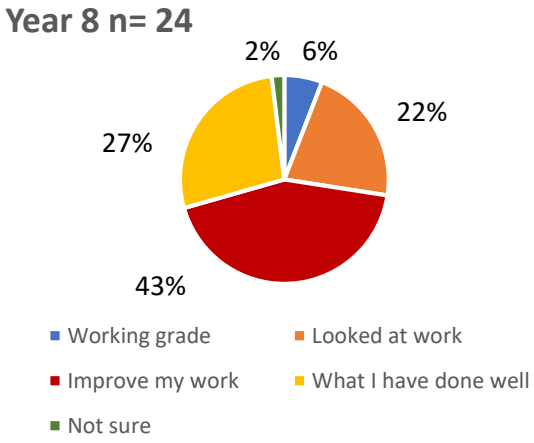
The content of the feedback should link with the learning outcomes, so the two work together.

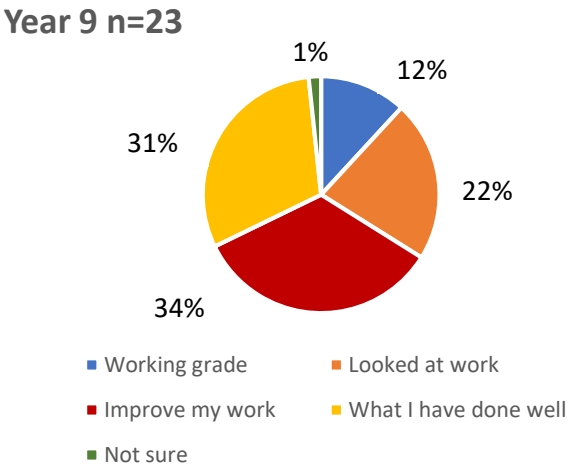
Yes, I can see that. I guess feedback should be presented in a way to reinforce the objectives. I would like a greater focus on helping students to understand success criteria. I can see from this [the data], that needs to be improved. If we improve that, it might help to improve self-assessment and peer assessment.

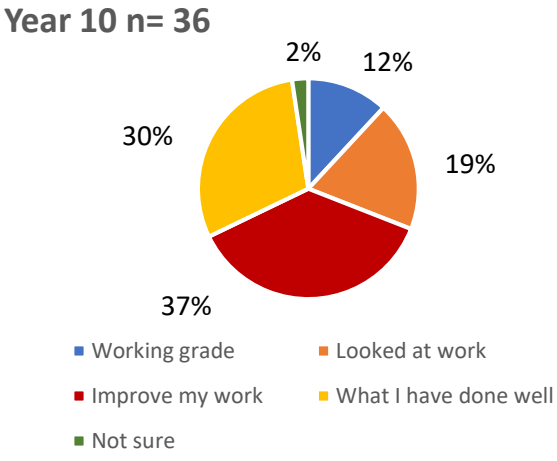
Appendix 15: ENGLISH/LAW QUESTIONNAIRE – ADDITIONAL DATA CHARTS

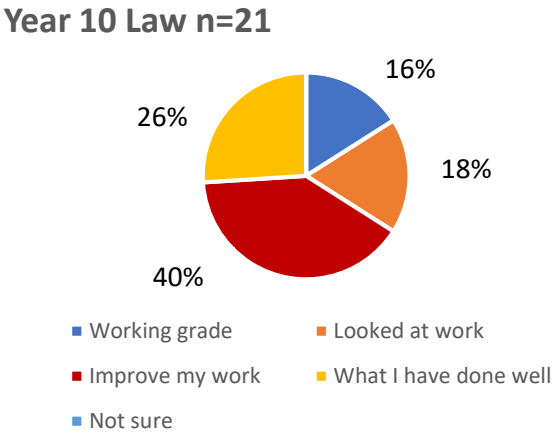
15A: Why teachers give feedback

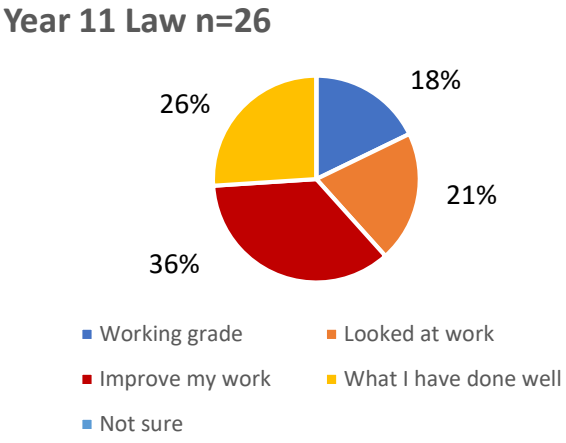




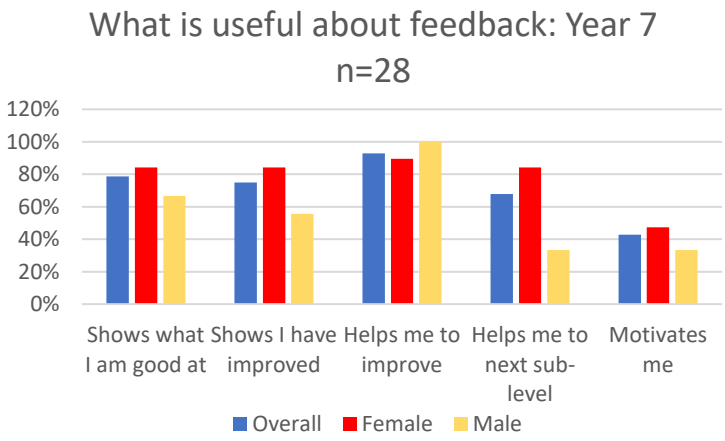


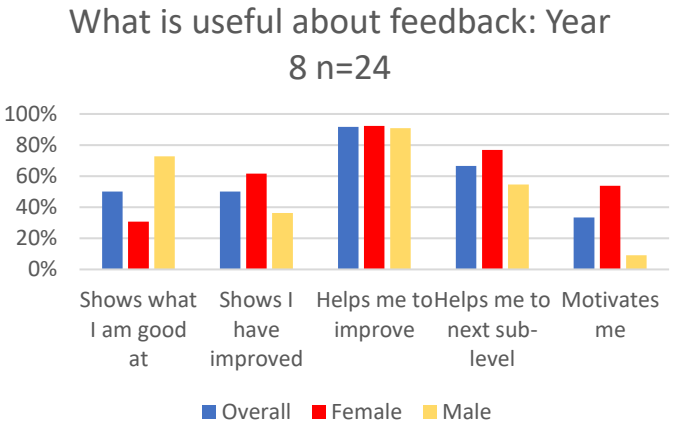


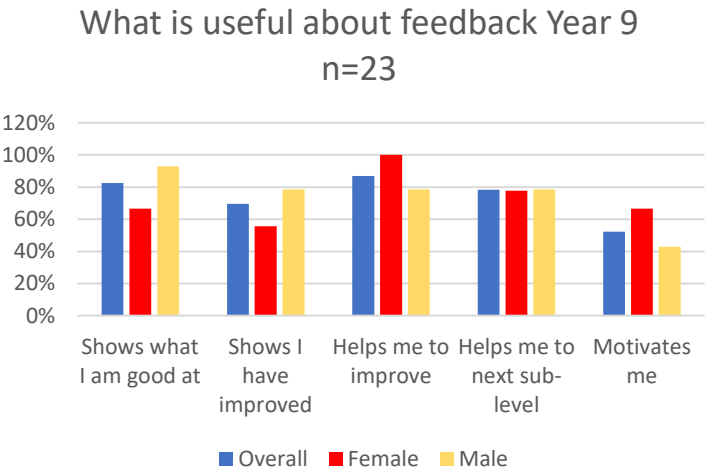


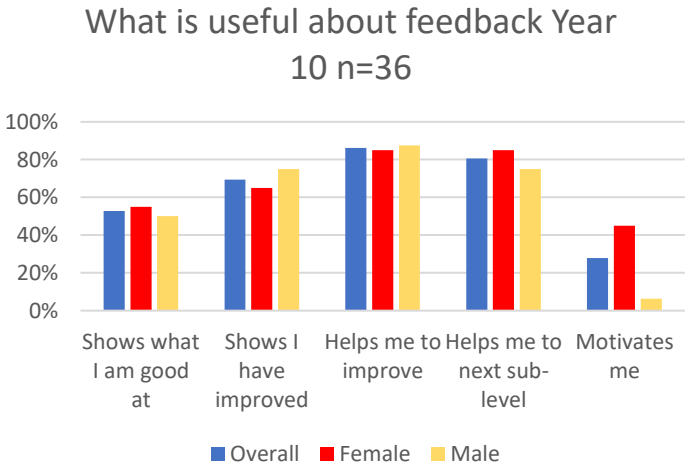


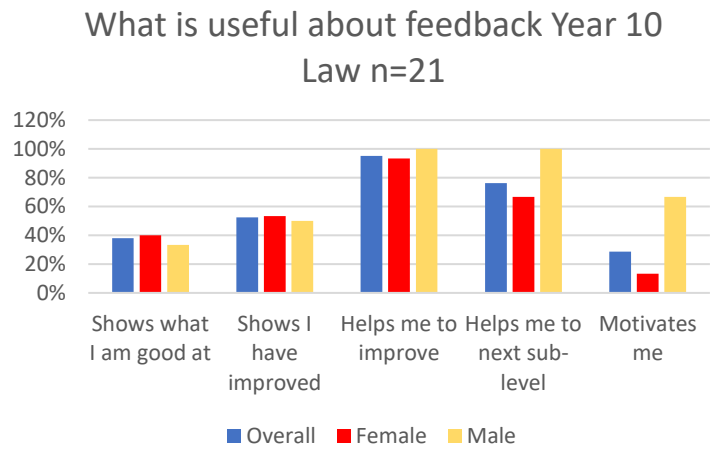
15B: What is useful about feedback?

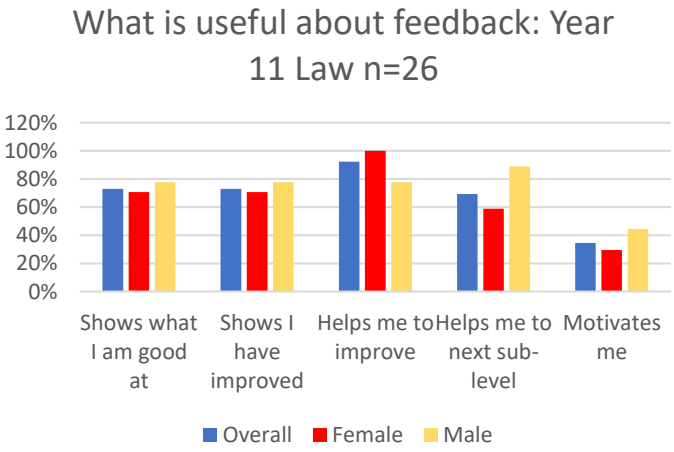




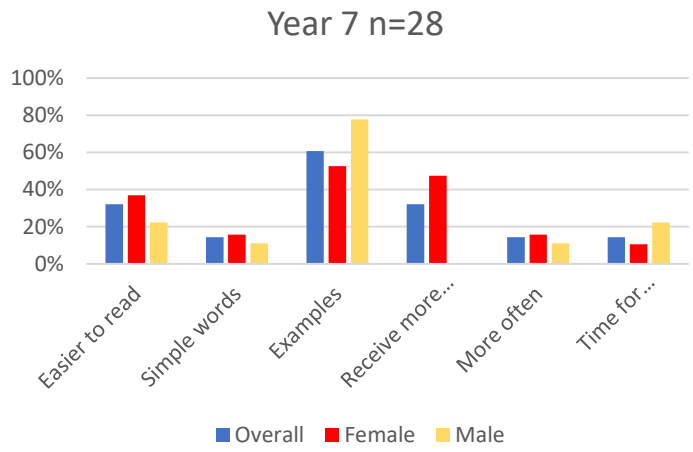


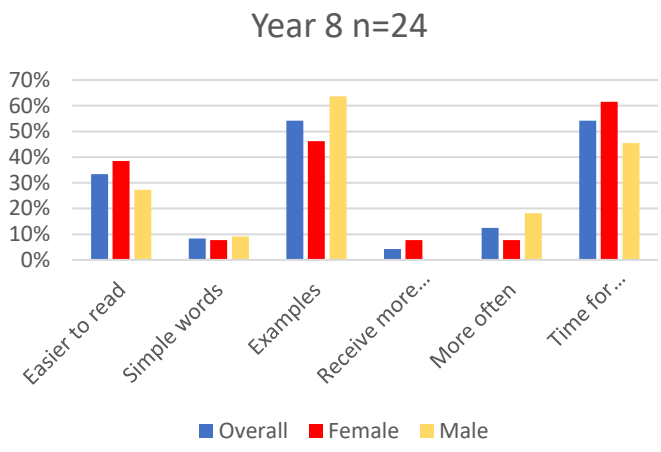


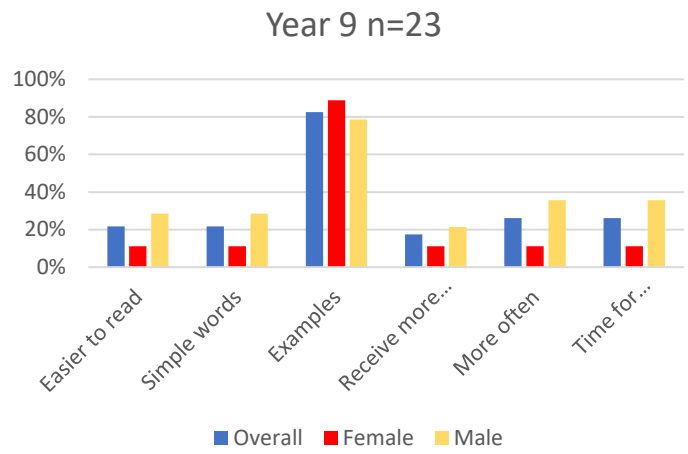


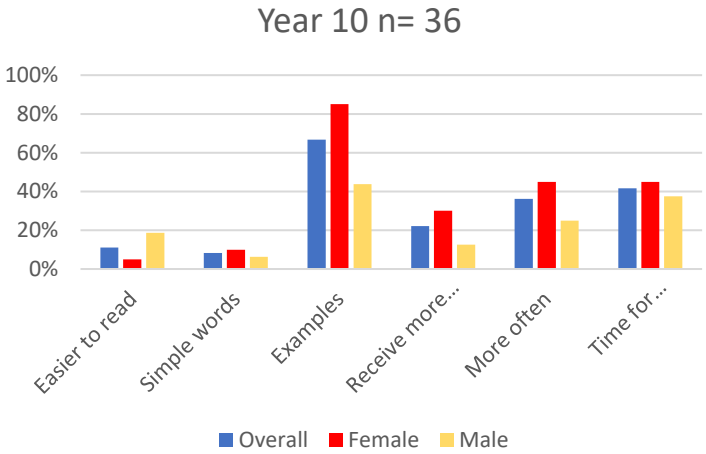


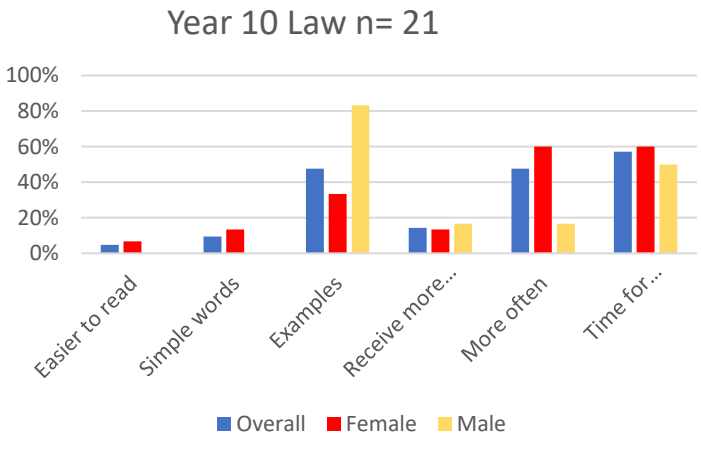
15C: What would make feedback more useful?

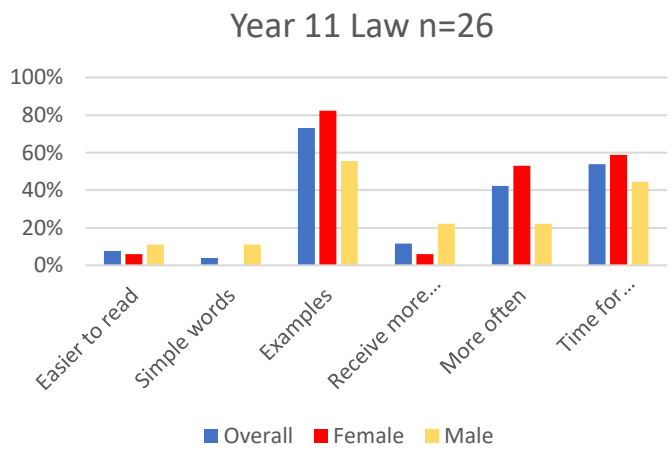




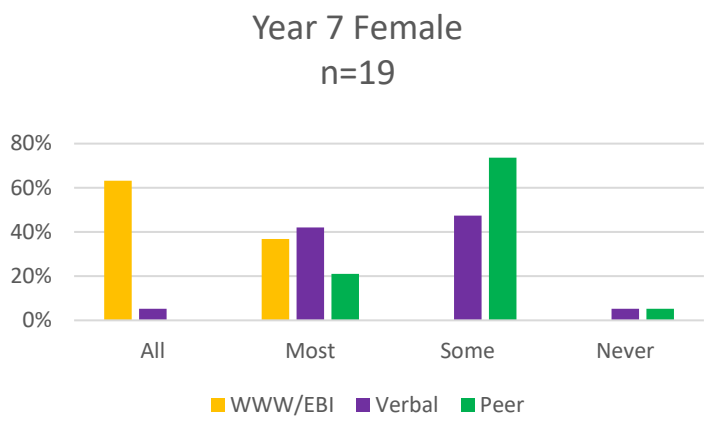


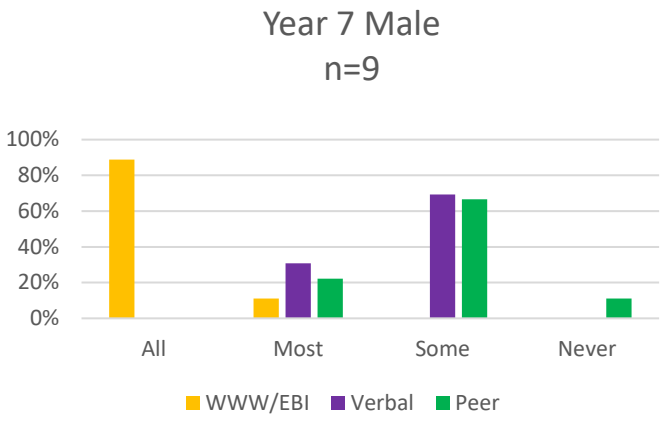


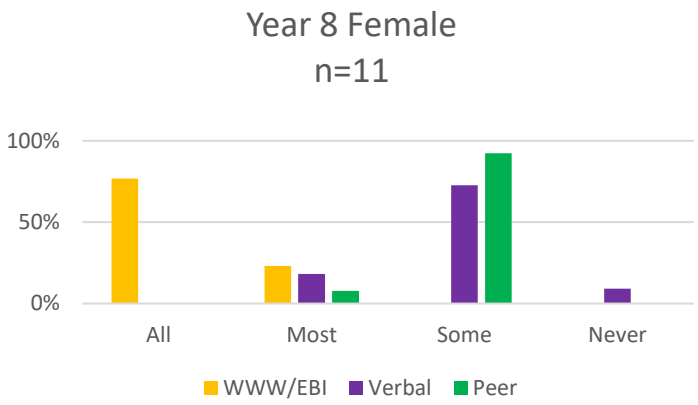


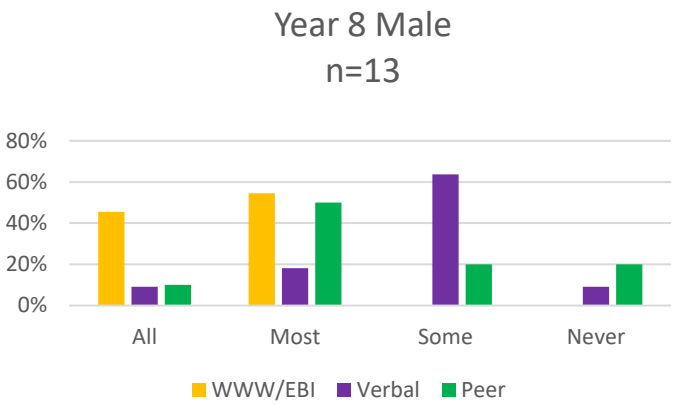


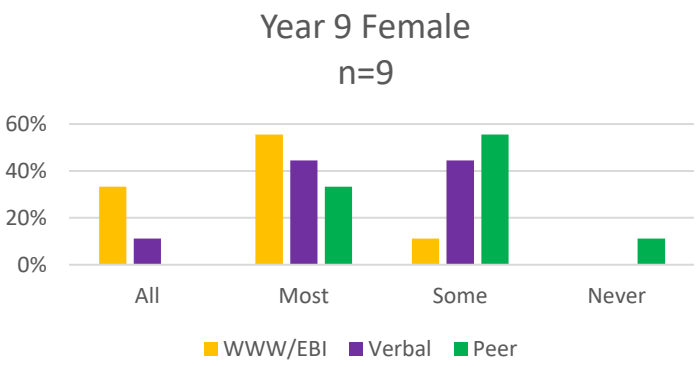
15D What type of feedback students get on their learning

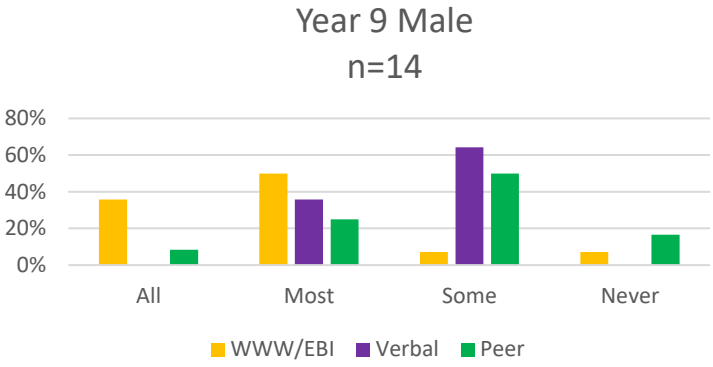


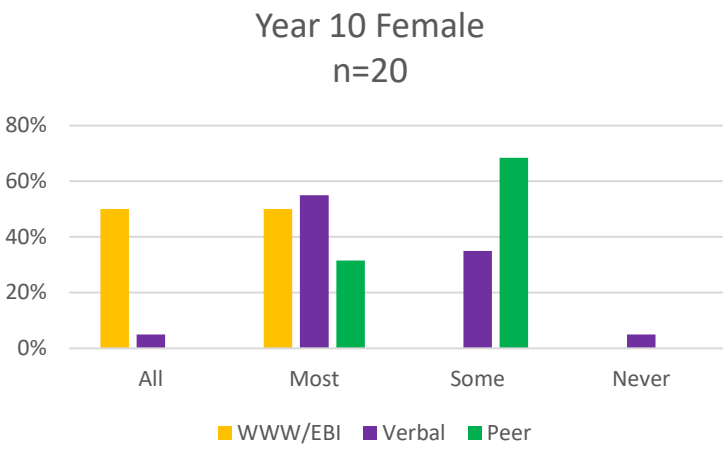


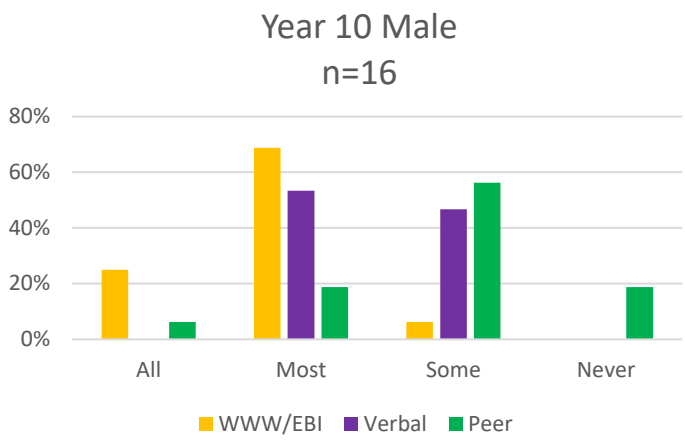












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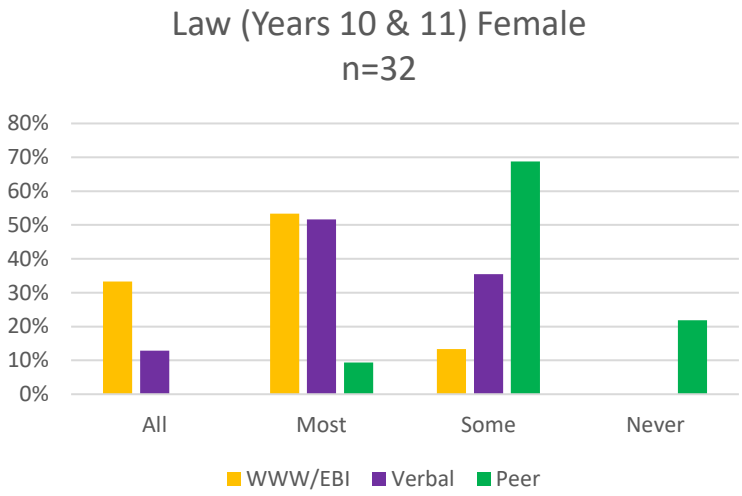
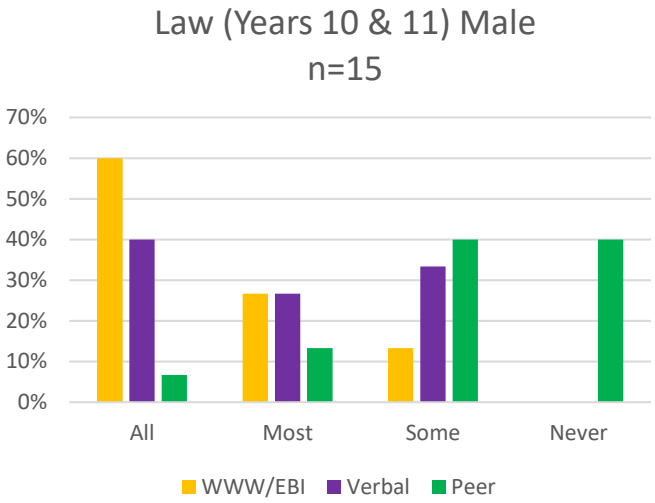
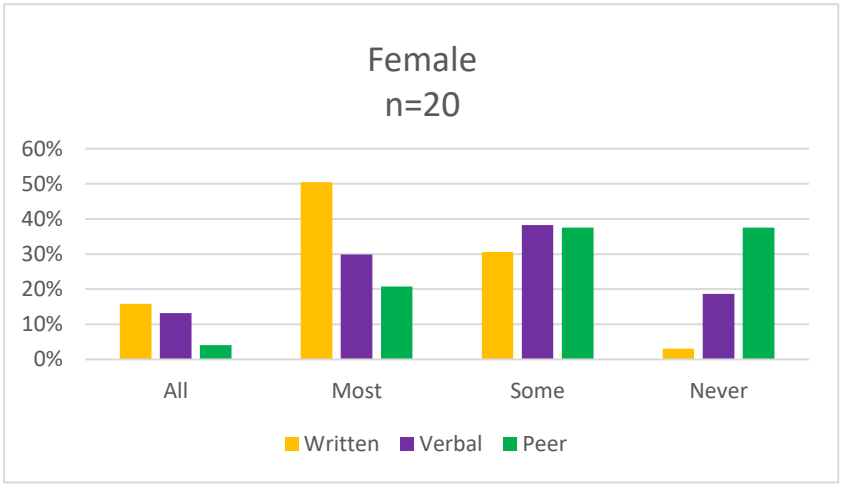
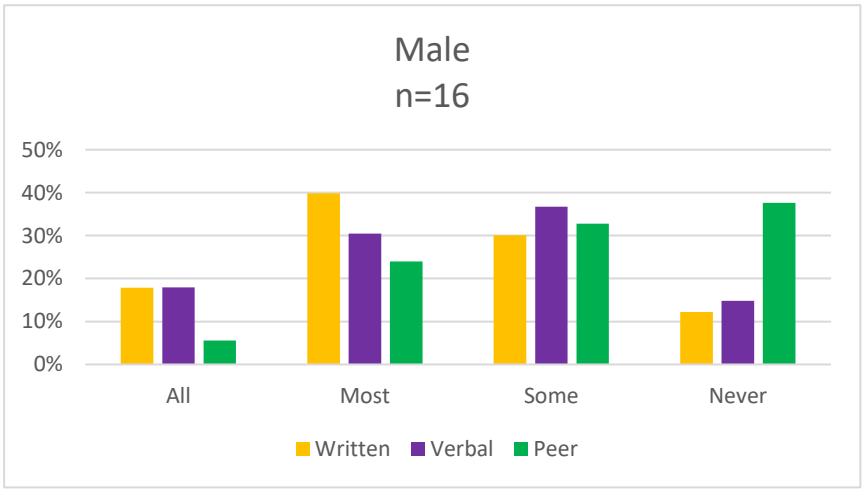




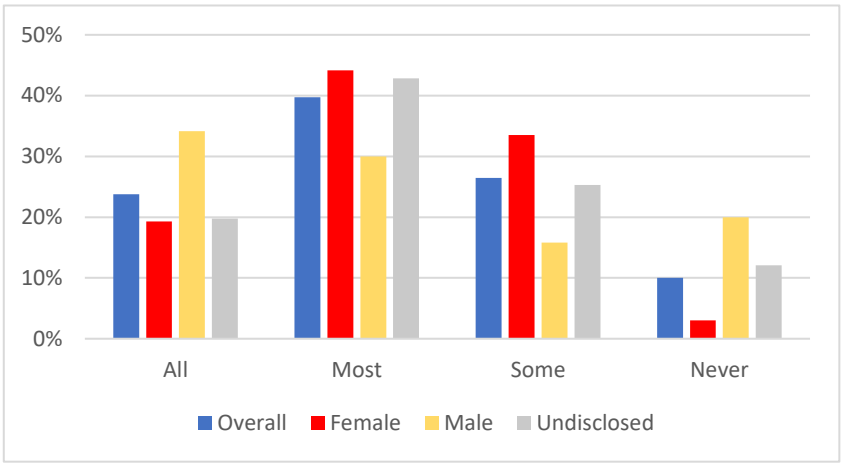
Appendix 16: YEAR 10 QUESTIONNAIRES ADDITIONAL DATA CHARTS

16A Feedback makes a positive difference to my learning

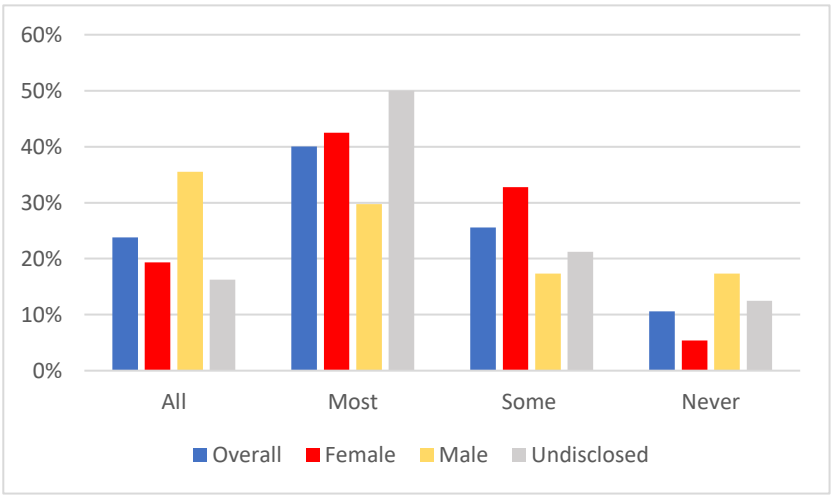




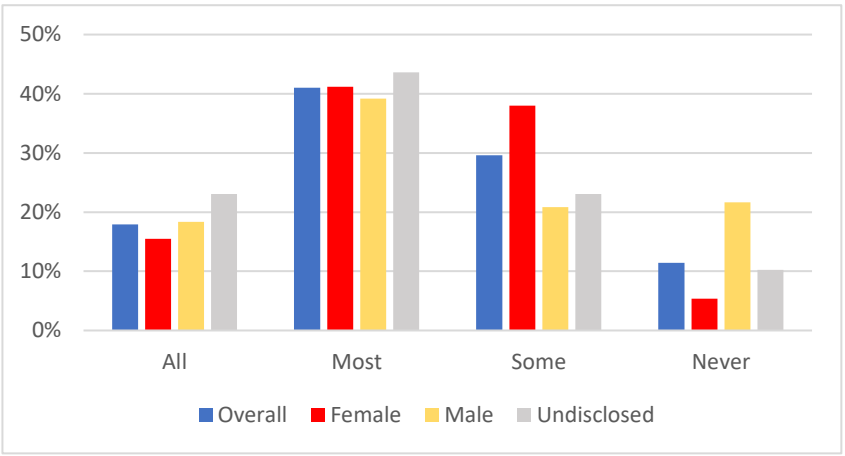
16B Feedback is easy to understand



16C I understand the success criteria in my subject



16D I am confident in assessing my own work ….

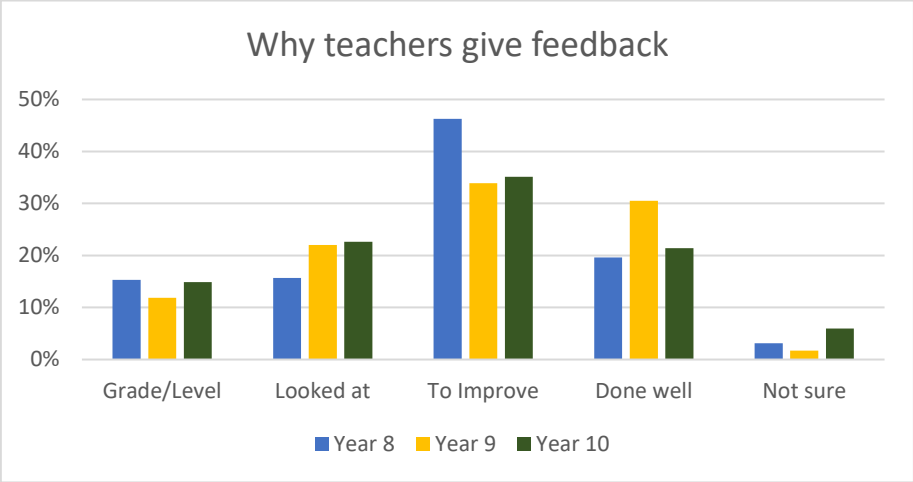


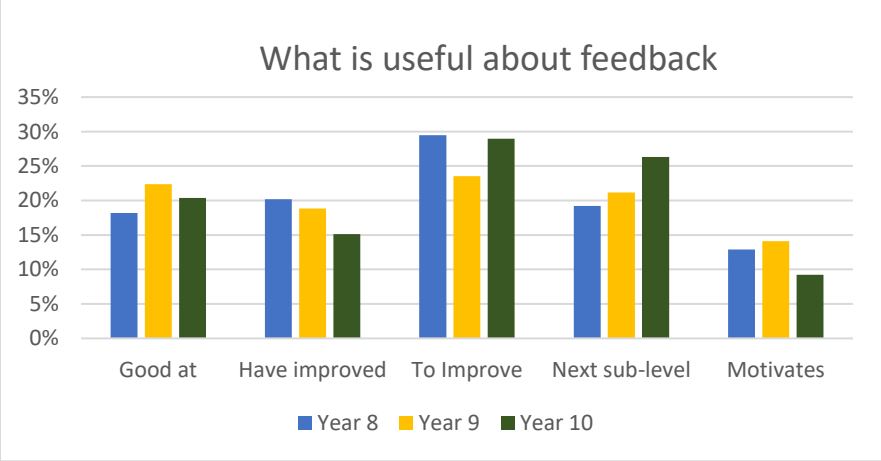
Appendix 17: A comparison of student views from questionnaires

(year 8, year 9 and year 10)

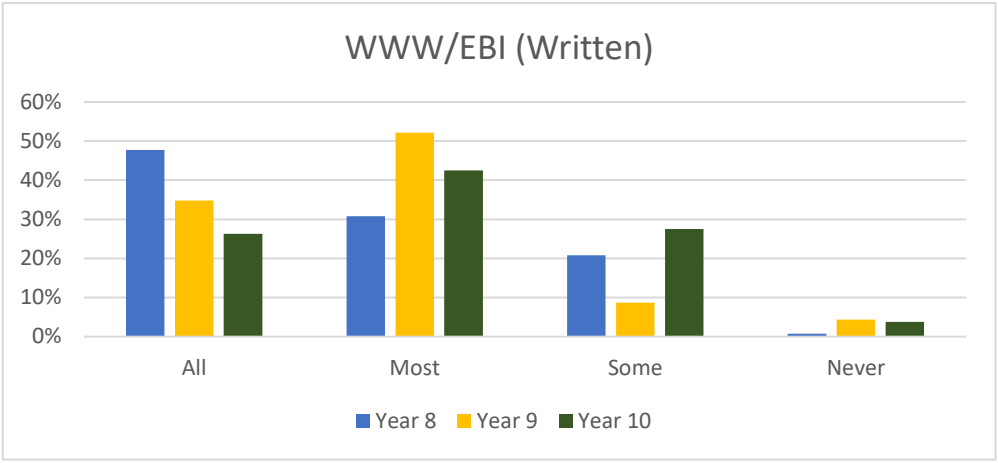
A single cohort of students' views were captured when they were in student were in year 8, year 9 (data only available for English), year 10. This enabled an analysis of the views of them same students to be undertaken over three year. Although there appear to be some differences in the responses between the year groups for some questions, statistical testing was not undertaken because the numbers in the three surveys were too varied. The overall distribution of the responses gives an overview of student perceptions.

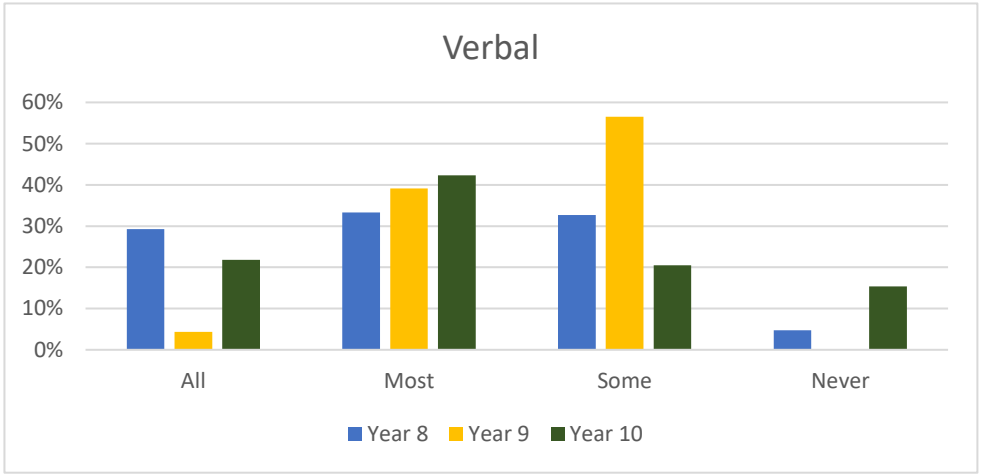
<u>Recognising Feedback</u>

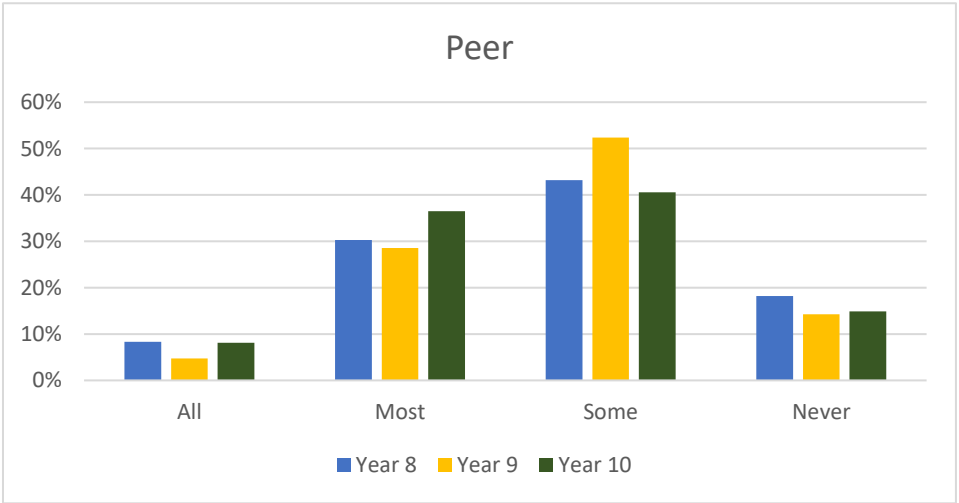




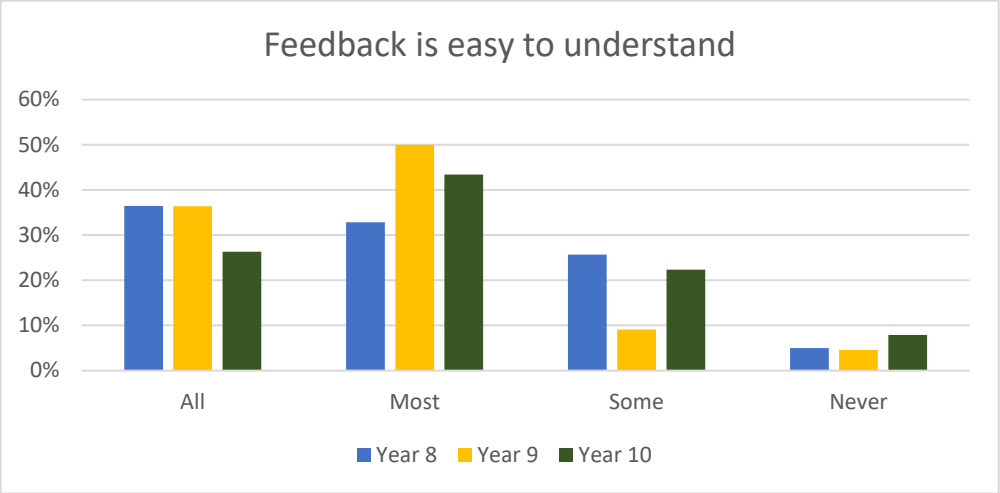
Recognising forms of feedback





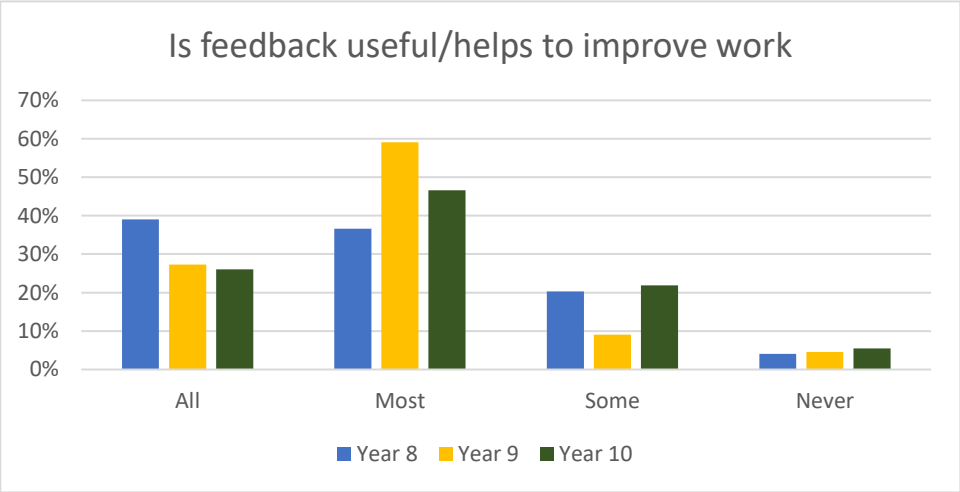


Understanding Feedback



Using Feedback

In years 8 and 9, this question was presented as 'feedback is useful' but in year 10 it was changed to 'feedback helps me to improve my work' due to perceptions about what is useful that emerged in interviews with students. The two questions are not the same and could result in differing views but are presented here for a rough comparison.



Appendix 18: SPSS STATISTICAL DATA CHARTS

Year 8, Whole cohort

It helps me to know that I have improved my work * Gender Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.336[a]	2	.026
Likelihood Ratio	7.414	2	.025
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.279	1	.258
N of Valid Cases	152		

Year 8, English only

What do you find useful about feedback? It helps me know what i am good at * Gender Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.196[a]	1	.041		
Continuity Correction[b]	2.685	1	.101		
Likelihood Ratio	4.332	1	.037		
Fisher's Exact Test				.100	.050
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.021	1	.045		
N of Valid Cases	24				

Year 8, English only

Feedback motivates me to improve my work * Gender Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.993[a]	1	.008		
Continuity Correction[b]	4.934	1	.026		
Likelihood Ratio	7.730	1	.005		
Fisher's Exact Test				.013	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.702	1	.010		
N of Valid Cases	24				

Appendix 19: Discussions with the new Assessment and Feedback Policy task Group (April, May 2018)

20th April 2018

A member of staff was tasked by the Head Teacher with the responsibility for developing a new Assessment and Feedback Policy in the school. She will be referred to as CP.

I met with CP on 20th April 2018 to share the research I had undertaken and an overview of the student perceptions. We discussed how this might be utilised in the development of the new policy. She recognised the need to develop students' skills and confidence in self-assessment and to make peer assessment more meaningful. She reflected this data helped her to re-consider the purpose of feedback and felt this would be a valuable starting point for the new policy.

Following this meeting, CP met with the Group established in the school to develop the policy. She shared my research outcomes and invited me to the next meeting to develop the policy further.

18th May 2018

I met with the Group to further develop the school policy. The Group agreed a new approach needed to engage the student in the use of their feedback. One strategy suggested was that on new pieces of work, students identify their previous feedback by writing this done and show how this has been incorporated in the new work. It was recognised there would be opposition to this from some staff and that feedback would need to be written to enable students to use it in this way. CP clarified the purpose of feedback was to improve student learning and recognise achievement, and that it needed to be presented to achieve this.

Due to the outcomes of my research, the Group felt it would be beneficial to seek the students' views on this approach.

Appendix 20: Concept Map to demonstrate approach to data analysis