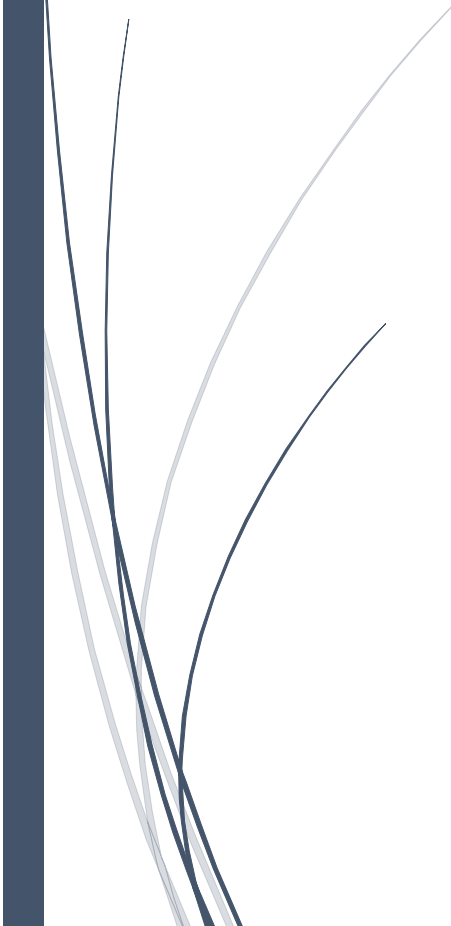




# **The Excellent Teaching Handbook 2018-19**



“If we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve.”

**Dylan Wiliam, University of London**

# The Excellent Teaching Handbook

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>The MEA ‘Excellent Teaching’ Model</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Six Pedagogical Principles to support great Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenge</li> <li>- Explanation</li> <li>- Modelling</li> <li>- Deliberate Practice</li> <li>- Questioning</li> <li>- Feedback</li> </ul>	
<b>Frequency of Assessment and Formal feedback</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Presentation of Work and Developing Students’ Communication Skills</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The MEA Learning Principles and Basic Expectations</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Lesson Planning and Planning Expectations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sharing of Best Practice</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Formal Lesson Observations</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Learning Walks</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Work Sampling</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>22</b>

# The MEA 'Excellent Teaching' Model

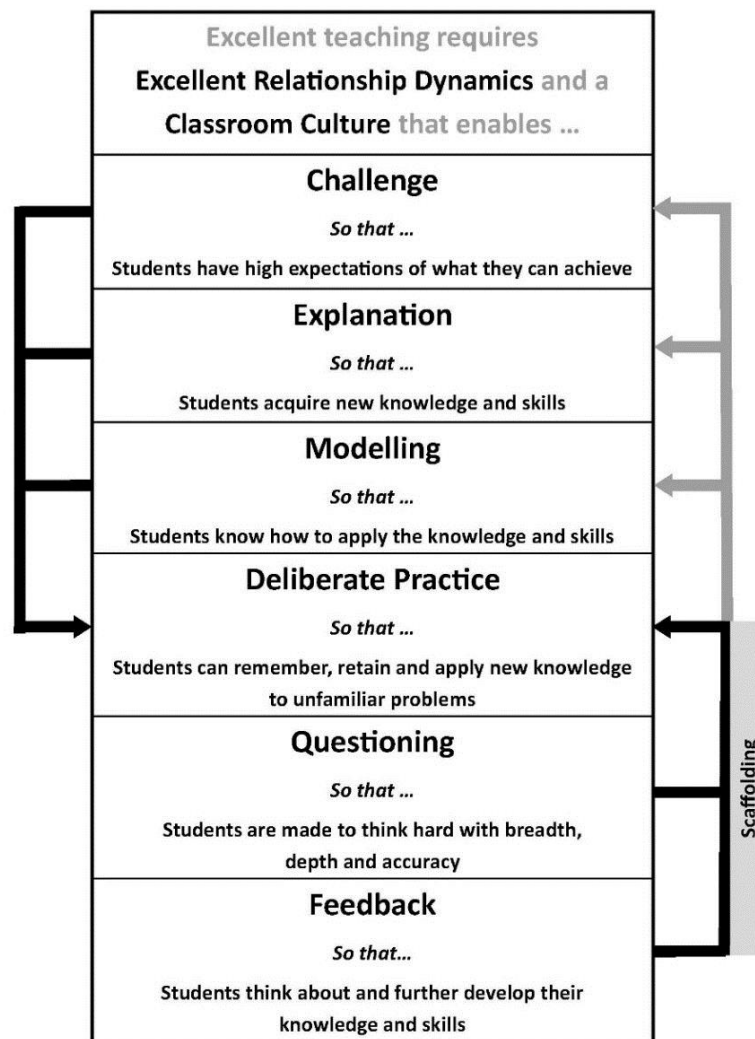
There are many very powerful models of what makes excellent teaching. Our model places particularly high value on the relationship dynamics within a classroom as we believe these are the crucial bedrock of a teacher thriving and inspiring within our context.

## Excellent Relationship Dynamics and a Positive Classroom Culture

For any learning to take place, there needs to be excellent relationship dynamics. Such dynamics are built upon positively enjoying teaching our students, communicating to them their worth and embracing the fun of teaching them. We believe at MEA, that a classroom culture that sets the highest of expectations will ensure that students can and deliver excellent work and results. Without such optimism and vibrancy, we know that behaviour for learning is unlikely to be excellent and our students will not feel secure in the learning environment. Emotional intelligence and humour don't guarantee all lessons will be excellent but without them it is unlikely that learning will flourish. To ensure that excellent learning takes place, learning routines and transitions are well planned and clearly structured; Excellent classroom management ensures that there is rarely any 'lost learning time' and lessons flow from one phase to the next.

## Six principles to support great Teaching and Learning

At MEA we focus upon six core pedagogical principles which can unleash excellence: challenge, explanation, modelling, deliberate practice, questioning and feedback. These principles, coupled with strong content pedagogical knowledge and high teacher engagement with their own professional development have been evidenced to improve student progress.



Model - Adapted from Making Every Lesson Count by Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby

The MEA Teaching model is based upon a report from the Sutton Trust, What Makes Great Teaching?<sup>1</sup> and the work and research of Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note that the model above is not a neat cycle to be adhered to in every lesson; Learning is messy and complex, with teaching at times, returning back to teacher explanation and modelling repeatedly as students struggle to refine new knowledge and skills.

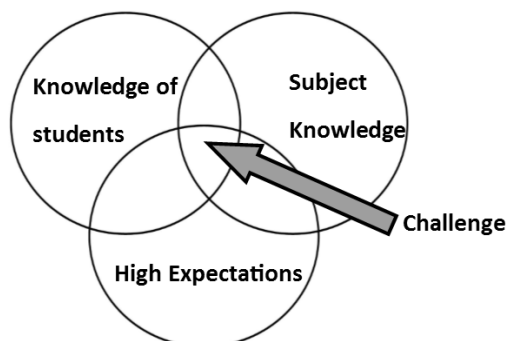
## Challenge

Challenge is the driving force of teaching. It is the provision of difficult work that causes students to think deeply and engage in healthy struggle. Some overarching principles are needed when considering challenge in the classroom:

- It is not just about the ‘most able’.
- We should have high expectations of all students, all of the time
- It is good for students to struggle just outside their comfort zone, **as that it when they are most likely to learn the most.**

Comfort zone	Struggle zone	Panic zone
<p>Low challenge. Low stress. Limited thinking. Limited learning</p>	<p>High challenge. Low stress. Thinking required. Effective learning.</p>	<p>Very high challenge. High stress. Cognitive overload. Limited learning</p>

To ensure that students are working at their optimal place, teachers need to have a clear knowledge of their students, good subject knowledge and high expectations.



When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Is the learning objective challenging for all?
- Are all students expected to developed their knowledge and skills during the lesson?
- Is formal, subject specific language modelled by teachers and encouraged from students?
- Is the bar of expectation high for all students?
- Is appropriate support and scaffolding in place to enable all students to achieve this level of expectation?
- Are examples of excellence shared, discussed, constructed/deconstructed with the class?
- Is subject content relevant and challenging?

<sup>1</sup>Robert Coe, Cesare Aloisi, Steve Higgins and Lee Elliot Major. What makes great Teaching? Review of underpinning research (London: Sutton Trust, 2014). <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-makes-great-teaching-FINAL-4.11.14-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Shaun Allison and Andy Tharby. Making every lesson count: Six principles to support great teaching and learning. (Cornwall: TJ International, 2015)

## Explanation

Explanation is one of the master arts of the classroom. In line with an ever-growing body of evidence<sup>3</sup> that supports the claim that teacher-led instruction is more effective than asking students to discover new knowledge and skills for themselves, at MEA we believe that the best teacher explanations or ‘direct instruction’ can transform complicated and abstract material into something clear and meaningful for students.

Central to any explanation must be a teacher’s subject knowledge; pre-empting misconceptions and explanations of key knowledge (including technical vocabulary) should be carefully planned.

Explanations go hand in hand with modelling, are enhanced by regular and targeted questioning and are informed by the feedback we get from students.

When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Is prior knowledge established and used to ‘hook into’ new knowledge?
- Does the explanation focus on the key learning points and success criteria?
- Are there opportunities to make the explanation more concrete and credible e.g. demonstration, visual, practical etc.?
- Does the explanation generate curiosity and so ‘open up’ the learning gaps’?
- Is the explanation clear and concise, especially when subject matter is challenging?
- Is teacher talk and gesture enthusiastic, kind and inclusive?

## Modelling

Modelling is a vital element to teaching. To learn how to do something, students need to watch and listen to experts as they guide them through the process, step by step, before they make an attempt themselves. This can also work in reverse through deconstruction. Students start by seeing an example of an end product and work backwards from there, carefully identifying and dissecting the stages and parts that together, contribute to its overall quality and accuracy.

Good modelling, often aided by strong questioning and timely feedback, can support students on a journey towards independence. Talking through the thinking process, whilst modelling at the board or using the visualiser will help students develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills, which has been shown to have high levels of impact.<sup>4</sup>

Within the recent (2018) guidance report on metacognition and self-regulated learning, recommendations from the Education Endowment Foundation included:

- Modelling by the teacher is a cornerstone of effective teaching; revealing the thought processes of an expert learner helps to develop pupils’ metacognitive skills.
- Teachers should verbalise their metacognitive thinking (‘What do I know about problems like this? What ways of solving them have I used before?’) as they approach and work through a task.
- Scaffolded tasks, like worked examples, allow pupils to develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills without placing too many demands on their mental resources.

When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Is practical work and other activities carefully modelled?
- Are examples of excellent work shared and compared? This is excellent because...
- Are exemplary examples of subject-specific products including writing, deconstructed with students?
- Is ‘thinking’ modelled by verbalising implicit thought processes?
- Is the explanation clear and concise, especially when subject matter is challenging?
- Is modelling scaffolded to maximise the learning for all students?

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<sup>3</sup>John Hattie, Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. (New York: Routledge, 2009)

<sup>4</sup>Education Endowment Foundation. Metacognition and self-regulated learning (London: EEF, 2018)

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Metacognition/EEF\\_Metacognition\\_and\\_self-regulated\\_learning.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Campaigns/Metacognition/EEF_Metacognition_and_self-regulated_learning.pdf)

## Deliberate Practice

The basic premise of this principle is that teachers should provide students with the time they need to practise new material, and the practice should be careful, deliberate and just outside the student's comfort zone.

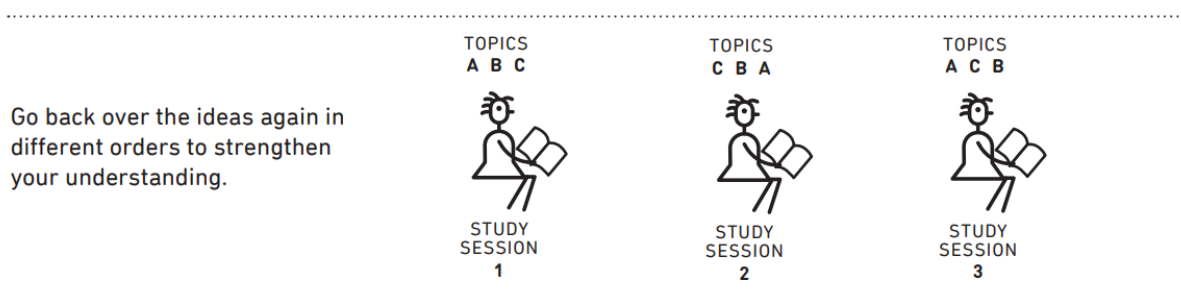
**Practice for Fluency** - By fluency, it is referring to knowledge and procedures so well-consolidated in the student's long term memory that they can be effortlessly recalled or performed once mastered. They do not place any pressure on the 'thinking space' in the student's mind – the working memory – and so can be brought to mind swiftly and easily.<sup>5</sup> Knowledge that forms the bedrock of your subject should be practised to fluency. Once known, students can move onto using this knowledge to think about something more challenging, however, without this fluency, lack of knowledge will hamper future progression.

**Deliberate Practice** - This is when practice is hard, when students struggle at the outer reaches of their ability to learn something intrinsically difficult and stretching. The amount of help the teacher provides during practice and the amount of independent thinking the teacher expects during practice will shift along a spectrum from dependency to independence as students become more confident and fluent in new material.

Evidence from cognitive science has evidenced that the best conditions for students to take in new knowledge includes **retrieval practice**. Retrieval practice involves recreating (retrieving) something students have learnt in the past from memory.

**Spaced practice**, this is where a considerable amount of time lapses between practising material.

The third is **interleaving**, if students interleave between different problems/topics the material is more likely to be retained.



Example of learning to study using interleaving from the Learning Scientists - <http://www.learningscientists.org>

When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Once students have had input from the teacher, are they given enough time to practise the new knowledge and skills?
- Are mistakes observed, leading to intervention when necessary to ensure that practice is perfect?
- Are mistakes utilised as a key aspect of learning?
- Are there any inconsistencies with student outcomes, are all students producing enough work?
- Is practice supported by scaffolds and support when necessary?
- Are scaffolds and support removed at the right time to allow for independence?
- Is there evidence that threshold concepts (key subject-specific knowledge and skills) are practised regularly to improve retention?
- Within planning are strategies such as spaced practice and interleaving practice embedded throughout?
- Do independent study tasks support effective learning strategies<sup>6</sup>?

<sup>5</sup>Daniel T. Willingham, *Why Don't Students like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What it means for the Classroom* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009)

<sup>6</sup>Yana Weinstein, Megan Smith and Oliver Caviglioli. *Six Strategies for Effective Learning- Materials for Teachers and Students*. <http://www.learningscientists.org/downloadable-materials/>

# Questioning

Questioning enables teachers to deepen and develop understanding; Questioning should provoke students to think.

The interaction between teacher and student is an important feature of the classroom. Whether helping students to acquire basic skills or a better understanding to solve problems, or to engage in higher-order thinking such as evaluation, questions are crucial. Of course, questions may be asked by students as well as teachers: they are essential tools for both teaching and learning.

For teachers, questioning is a key skill that anyone can learn to use well. Similarly, ways of helping students develop their own ability to raise and formulate questions can also be learned. Raising questions and knowing the right question to ask is an important learning skill that students need to be taught.

Research into questioning has given some clear pointers as to what works. These can provide the basis of improving classroom practice. A very common problem identified by the research is that pupils are frequently not provided with enough 'wait time' to consider an answer; another is that teachers tend to ask too many of the same type of questions.

The kind of question asked will depend on the reason for asking it. Questions are often referred to as 'open' or 'closed'. Closed questions, which have one clear answer, are useful to check understanding during explanations and in recap sessions. If you want to check recall, then you are likely to ask a fairly closed question, for example 'What is the grid reference for Great Malvern?' or 'What do we call this type of text?'

To support students to develop higher-order thinking skills, teachers need to ask more open questions that allow students to give a variety of acceptable responses. During class discussions and debriefings, it is useful to ask open questions, for example 'Which of these four sources were most useful in helping with this enquiry?', 'Given all the conflicting arguments, where would you build the new superstore?', 'What do you think might affect the size of the current in this circuit?'

## 'Basketball Questioning'

One strategy to try in your lessons is 'Basketball questioning' where you bounce answers around the room to build on understanding and develop stronger reasoning out of student misconceptions. For example "Emma, do you agree with Charlotte's answer?" "Kate, how could you develop Emma's answer to include more detail?" "Dave, how might you combine all of what we've heard into a single answer using full sentences and technical vocabulary?"

## Hinge Questions

Using questioning to determine how a lesson will progress is something that good teachers do instinctively. So what is different about a hinge question?

A hinge question is **planned** within a lesson to gauge the level of understanding, the depth of thinking and hence to determine the next stage of the lesson. We call this a "hinge point" in the lesson because the lesson can go in different directions, depending on student responses. By explicitly integrating these hinge points into instruction, teachers can make their teaching more responsive to their students' needs in real time.

Hinge questions are often multiple choice questions (or at least these are easier to design) but can be more open ended in nature. But, either way the purpose of the question is to elicit what the learner understands.

- The planning of the question **prior to the lesson** is essential
- The question should be asked about midway in the lesson to allow time to address the issues
- All students in the class must respond to the question within two minutes
- The teacher must be able to assess the results within 30 seconds.



The use of mini-whiteboards (students must have an answer...you hear everyone) is especially powerful when assessing student understanding.

Below is an example of a Hinge Question taken from Dylan Wiliam's presentation at the National Conference of the School Network 2011.<sup>7</sup>

Which of the following is the correct translation for "I gave the book to him"?

- A. Yo lo doy el libro.
- B. Yo doy le el libro.
- C. Yo le doy el libro.
- D. Yo doy lo el libro.
- E. Yo doy el libro le.
- F. Yo doy el libro lo.

*This item is diagnostic because it has been designed so that if students answer incorrectly, it is easy to work out why. Response A indicates a pronoun error, responses B and E indicate placement errors, and responses D and F indicate both pronoun and placement errors*

## Classroom Culture

For effective questioning to take place, the classroom needs to be a 'safe environment', where all students, even those who lack confidence feel safe to enough to take risks and answer challenging questions. The ethos and relationship dynamics in the classroom will have a significant impact on the quality of answers that students will be willing to share. Ensuring that teachers at MEA maintain the same high expectations when students are answering questions verbally as when they are answering written questions, is a constant focus. When students are responding to questions, teachers should insist upon the use of full sentences and should support students to use technical vocabulary/subject specific key words.

## Common pitfalls and possible solutions

Although questions are the most common form of interaction between teachers and students, questioning techniques are not always well judged or productive for learning. This section identifies some common pitfalls of questioning and suggests some ways to avoid them.

**Asking a question then answering it yourself:** What's the point? This pitfall is often linked to another problem: not giving students' time to think before they answer. Build in 'wait time' to give students a chance to respond.

**Asking bogus 'guess what's in my head' questions:** Sometimes teachers ask an open question but expect a closed response. If you have a very clear idea of the response you want, it is probably better to tell students by explaining it to them rather than trying to get there through this kind of questioning. Remember, if you ask open questions you must expect to get a range of answers. Acknowledge all responses. This can easily be done by saying 'thank you'.

**Dealing ineffectively with wrong answers or misconceptions:** Teachers sometimes worry that they risk damaging students' self-esteem by correcting them. There are ways of handling this positively, such as providing prompts and scaffolds to help students correct their mistakes.

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<sup>7</sup>Dylan Wiliam. Embedded formative assessment: Still more rhetoric than reality. National Conference of the School Network 2011. [http://www.dylanwiliam.org/Dylan\\_Wiliams\\_website/Presentations.html](http://www.dylanwiliam.org/Dylan_Wiliams_website/Presentations.html)

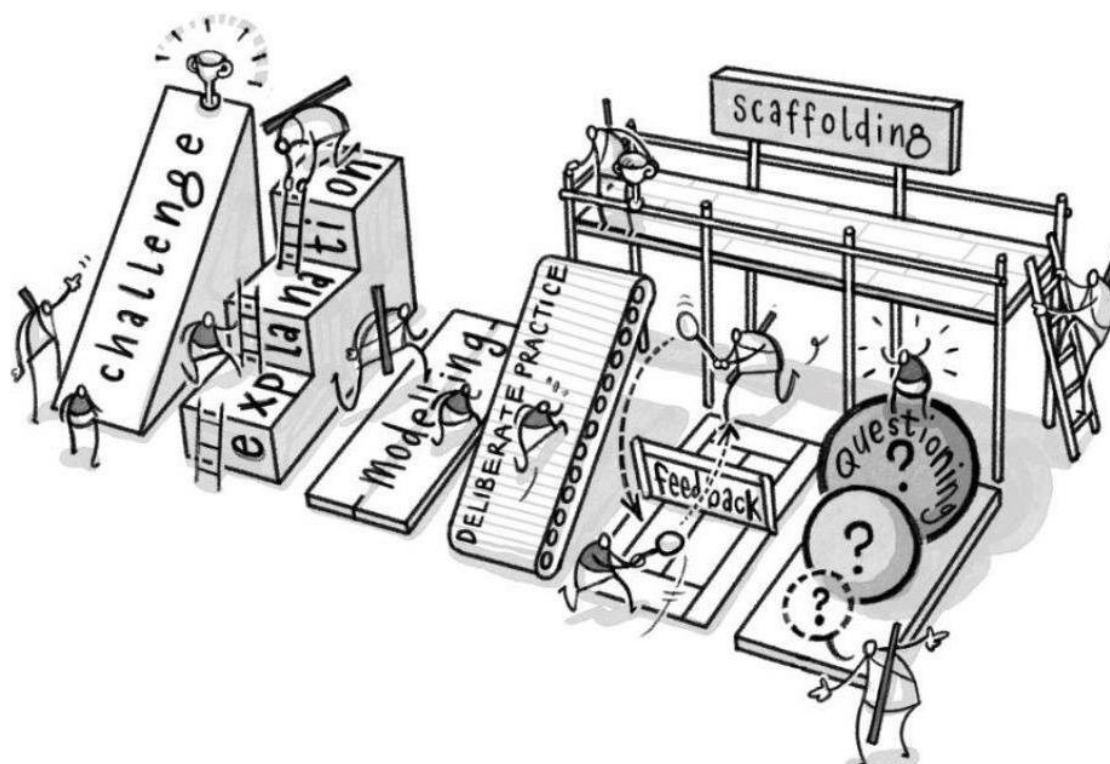
**Focusing on a small number of students and not involving the whole class:** One way of avoiding this is to get the whole class to write their answers to closed questions and then show them to you together. Some teachers use mini whiteboards for this. Another possibility, which may be more effective for more open questions, is to use the 'no-hands' strategy, such as 'cold call'<sup>8</sup> where you pick the respondent rather than having them volunteer.

**Not treating students' answers seriously:** Sometimes teachers simply ignore answers that are a bit off-beam. They can also fail to see the implications of these answers and miss opportunities to build on them. Teachers should use this as an opportunity find out why students have given that answer or if there is anything they would like to add. It is important not to cut students off and move on too quickly if they have given a wrong answer.

Questioning is central to the development of thinking and students capacity to learn, it is essential that key questions are planned in advance and questioning techniques are practised. Most research indicates that as much as 80% of classroom questioning is based on low order, factual recall questions. Teacher should formulate questions with precision, as well as targeting the right questions with the right students.

When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Does questioning involve a wide range of students?
- Are student responses developed by further questioning?
- Are reluctant respondents encourage to respond by careful scaffolding?
- Are students encouraged to ask questions?
- Are students expected to answer questions using full sentences and technical vocabulary?
- Do I leave enough wait-time to encourage students to think?
- Do I use a range of strategies such as no-hands up, whole class student response systems etc.?

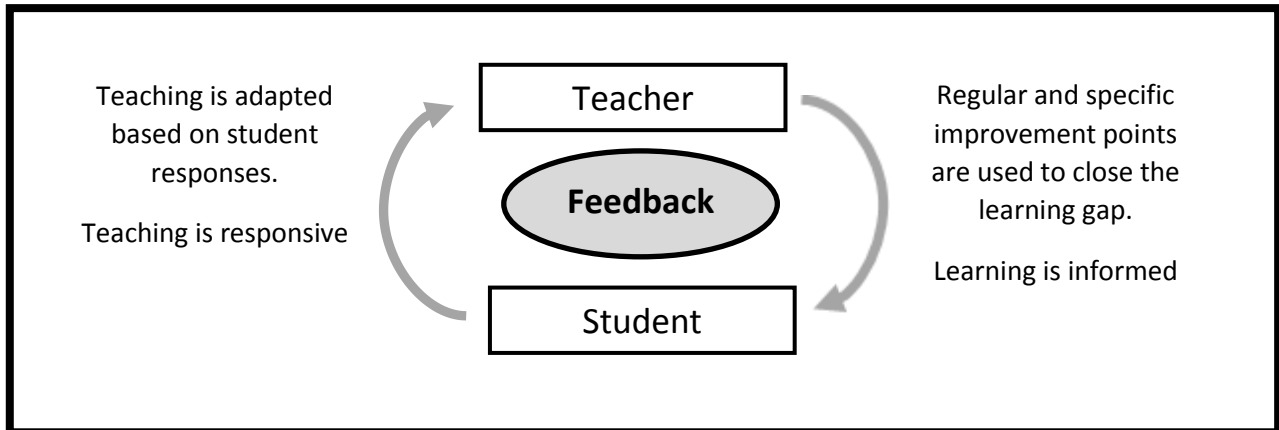


<sup>8</sup>Doug Lemov, Teach like a Champion 2.0. 62 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015)

# Feedback

Feedback matters. Teachers need to show students what they need to aim for, set them off and then keep their learning on track through precise and timely feedback.

Feedback, at its best, is a reciprocal process.



Following the identification of a 'learning gap' (something a student cannot yet do or does not yet know), the resulting feedback should be aimed at closing this gap. It could be written or verbal, from the teacher, peers or self-generated.

Feedback from the performance of students should inform future teaching. It might happen in a number of ways:

- **In the lesson.** The feedback the teacher constantly receives from students allows for swift and timely interventions. Stopping, reframing and adapting lessons is an essential feature of excellent teaching.
- **In-between lessons.** Using student work, teachers identify inconsistencies, misconceptions and sticking points; using the whole class feedback teachers plan to 're-teach' these areas again. Teachers also identify students that are 'on-watch', (students that are underperforming) so that timely classroom intervention strategies, such as changing the seating plan, checking work completion rates every lesson, can be employed immediately.
- **In-between units of work.** After a summative assessment (Big Test), using question level analysis (QLAs) teachers should identify common weaknesses and knowledge gaps. Teachers highlight topics that need to be addressed in their Big Test Whole Class Feedback Sheets.
- **When reviewing the curriculum.** Leaders look at the performance of classes across highlighted topics. Where there has been under achievement or unsecure understanding, leaders review how these topics have been taught and plan how learning gaps will be addressed.

When planning lessons teachers should reflect upon their own practice and ask the following questions:

- Is feedback from marked/assessed work timely, specific and helpful?
- How is marked/assessed work used to inform planning and 'close the gap'?
- Are strategies in place for those students identified as being 'on-watch'?
- Is teaching flexible, based on feedback from the performance of students?
- Within lessons is feedback timed right i.e. are students given enough 'struggle time'?
- Are self-assessment strategies such as proofreading, editing and redrafting employed to aid metacognition?

### Whole Class Feedback Sheets

In 2016, a key finding of the EEF's report 'A Marked Improvement? A review of the evidence on written marking'<sup>9</sup> was the significant disparity between the large amount of effort teachers invest in marking and the research available to inform them which marking approaches are the most effective. Marking is a vital element of teaching and has two purposes – to inform future planning and for students to act upon feedback and make progress over time. At MEA, we recognise the difference between marking and feedback<sup>10</sup>.

At MEA, classroom teachers use feedback to inform planning using 'whole class feedback sheets'. The classroom feedback sheets have been slightly modified for different curriculum areas but are all underpinned by identical principles, that is, for students to make good progress they need frequent, timely feedback about what it is they need to do to improve.

### What does marking and formal feedback look like at MEA?

- Teachers scan and lightly mark students' books and make notes on the whole class feedback sheets focusing upon identifying common mistakes and misconceptions from the whole class.
- The sheets are then used to inform planning of the 'feedforward lesson' where learning gaps in knowledge and skills are addressed.
- Feedback also includes sharing of excellence and celebrating outstanding effort to further embed a classroom culture of excellence. Presentation should evidence that students take pride in their work.
- A copy of the whole class feedback sheet is stuck in students' books. The Curriculum Leader/Assistant Curriculum Leader responsible for that Key Stage is also given a copy of the feedback sheet and a second copy is also placed in the central storing tray which is located in the staffroom.
- Where students are not making good progress or the quality of work is not in line with expectations, class teachers identify these students as 'on-watch' and plan timely interventions as part of their quality first teaching.

### Examples of interventions (at classroom level) include:

- Changing the seating plan – Move students 'on watch' to the front of the class so that the teacher can check the quality of work and work completion rates.
- In the student's book, make a note of the time when students start their deliberate practice – Explain to the student that routine checks will be made throughout the lesson to check the quality of work and work completion rates.
- Incorporate a wide range of questioning techniques including 'no hands up' so all students, not just 'regular volunteers' are involved in classroom discussions.
- Mark students identified students' books at the end of every lesson.
- Telephone parents/carers to discuss concerns regarding quality of classwork.
- Discuss with Curriculum Leader about concerns, is the quality of work improving through intervention?

### See Appendix A - Generic Whole Class Feedback Sheet

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<sup>9</sup> Victoria Elliot et al., A Marked Improvement? A review of the evidence on written marking. (EEF: London, 2016)  
[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF\\_Marking\\_Review\\_April\\_2016.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit – Feedback, A Printable Summary (EEF: London, 2018)  
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/generate/?u=https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/toolkit/?id=131&t=Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Toolkit&e=131&s=>

## Frequency of Assessment

For most departments, including Ebac, we have a curriculum which is assessed in a cycle of two or three Mini Tests followed by a Big Test. The cycle for reviewing and assessing work should look as follows for Y7 and 8.

Week	Assessment	Model A – Teacher Review / Check
1		
2	Mini Test	Class Feedback Sheet incorporating feedback on the Mini Test/classwork
3		
4	Mini Test	Class Feedback Sheet incorporating feedback on the Mini Test/classwork
5		
6	Big Test	Big Test Report and Question Level Analysis
7	Review Week	

## How often should students' receive feedback from marked work?

Alongside continual feedback during lessons, students should receive formal planned feedback in core and option subjects every 2 weeks from either classwork in books, a Mini test or Big Test. The quality of feedback following marked work and completed assessments will be subject to regular monitoring by the Curriculum Leader/Assistant Curriculum Leader and Senior Leadership Team in accordance with the Academy's Quality Assurance calendar.

What	Comment
<b>Student work in books</b>	A set of class books is collected and reviewed by the teacher. As the books are being reviewed, the teacher completes a Class Feedback sheet.
<b>Mini Tests (Fortnightly)</b>	<p>Mini Tests are assessment designed at class level to inform the teacher of progress being made and misconceptions or gaps in learning that students currently have. There is no need for Mini Tests to be the same across all sets within a year, although this may be the case at times.</p> <p>Mini Tests most usefully provide information for the 'Misconceptions' part of the Class Feedback Sheet.</p> <p>Some departments design their Mini Tests to be completed in exercise books, others on paper. Either approach is acceptable as long as the student has their score recorded in their exercise book.</p>
<b>Big Test (Termly)</b>	<p>Big Tests are designed at department level and are consistent across all schools in the Trust. They perform the same function as Mini Tests – that of identifying individual strengths and weaknesses – but also form a key component in identifying where a student is currently 'at', as they feed into the Teacher Assessment Notional GCSE Grade.</p> <p>After a Big Test, classroom teachers complete a Big Test Feedback Sheet. Question Level Analyses enable misconceptions and learning gaps to be identified and are addressed swiftly during 'Feedforward lessons'.</p>

**See Appendix B – Big Test Class Feedback Sheet**

## Presentation of Work

Students should take pride in their work and this will evidence that they share the Academy's vision of a 'fantastic future for all'.

The Academy's expectations about the presentation of work are:

- Writing should be upon lines and well presented.
- Titles and the date should be underlined with a ruler.
- Where a diagram is drawn a ruler or other equipment should be used so that the diagram is well presented and legible.
- Graffiti and doodles are not acceptable on exercise book covers or in student work. Student work will be used for assessments and checked/read by adults and must therefore demonstrate a business-like approach.
- Writing should be completed in blue/black ink and if a mistake is made it should be neatly crossed out with a single line.
- Large gaps must not be left between pieces of work in exercise books and both sides of the paper should be used in exercise books. Work that is completed on paper should be stuck into the exercise book or stored safely in an appropriate folder.

## Developing Students' Communication Skills

All subjects should contribute to the teaching of Numeracy, Literacy and Communication skills so that students can make good progress across the curriculum.

- Subject specific vocabulary should be supported in classrooms and the use of key words should be planned for in lesson planning. In addition, expectations from examination boards should be applied at KS4 and post 16 in terms of spelling, presentation and grammar.
- Formal English and appropriate grammar must be used in all written work and assessed as such. The use of different types of writing should be encouraged and common forms and conventions used.
- The use of word walls, writing frames, spelling mats etc. should be encouraged and departments should provide support materials for literacy in their subject area as appropriate.
- Individual approaches, support for EAL students and those with special educational needs should be used where applicable.
- Where graphs/diagrams are drawn a ruler should be used and labelling should be tidy and clear.
- Where mathematical calculations are part of a piece of work the member of staff should check the accuracy of the numeracy. Number work should be laid out in an orderly manner so that units, tens etc. are clearly aligned if necessary for the completion of a calculation.

## Planning for Excellence

We believe at MEA, that a classroom culture that sets the highest of expectations will ensure that students can and deliver excellent work and results. Excellent relationship dynamics coupled with excellent teaching are key components for creating a purposeful climate for learning. The MEA 'Excellent Teaching' model supports the Academy Learning Principles which are visible in every classroom:

### **The MEA Learning Principles:**

- **Students have the right to learn without having their learning disrupted.**
- **Students follow teachers' instructions**
- **We speak respectfully to each other, avoiding negative language and language that may cause upset.**

We believe that positive reinforcement of good behaviour and rewarding success are tools of managing behaviour in the academy. Praise is used much more than warnings. Opportunities for praise are actively sought by all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to ensure positive messages and meaningful rewards dominate student culture.

At times, some students will fail to meet the high expectations of MEA and will need to be sanctioned. We believe that most negative behaviour can be addressed by effective lesson planning, exciting learning opportunities, seating plans and teacher impact however some of our students will still display negative behaviours despite excellent lesson planning. In such cases staff should use the academy consequence system to manage negative behaviour as outlined in the MEA Behaviour for Learning Policy.

*(See MEA Behaviour for Learning Policy)*

### **Excellent Routines and Expectations 'The MEA Way'.**

The MEA 'Excellent Teaching' Model defines teaching excellence, however we reject the notion of set forms of lessons (i.e. that all lessons must be in five parts) as this constrains the creativity and craft of the individual teacher. There are, however 'MEA Basic Expectations' to support students and colleagues to establish a consistent, calm start to lessons and further support an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

#### **The 'MEA Way' – Basic Expectations for the Beginning of a Lesson include:**

- Seating plan in place
- Students welcomed at the door - Uniform is checked upon on entry
- Students enter and settle purposefully
- Bags are removed and placed safely underneath the desk
- Distribution of equipment/resources/books is managed effectively – Clear routines are in place
- Thoughtfully planned starter task or 'hook' engages students with learning quickly
- Any lateness is challenged with the number of minutes late recorded in SIMs

*See Appendix C – The 'MEA Way' – Basic Expectations for the Beginning of a Lesson doc.*

## Lesson Planning

To ensure that we meet the needs of all of our learners, thoughtful planning should consider individual student needs, prior attainment and the role of any other adults to target support and challenge. When planning lessons teachers should take the following into account:

- Prior attainment and learning, including KS2, KS3 or KS4 data – depending on age of student
- Assessment information including Whole Class Feedback Sheets/Big Test Class Feedback Sheets/Question Level Analysis to target future teaching strategies/intervention strategies
- The needs of EAL students
- Literacy data, including students’ reading ages.
- Any information provided by the SENCO which will help planning for SEND students, including recommended teaching and learning strategies.
- Subject specific key terms and technical vocabulary
- Learning objectives and learning outcomes for each lesson, and across a programme of lessons, should provide challenge for all students
- Time must be given to considering whether resources need to be edited, or activities modified, to make sure all learners find the work accessible and challenging
- The use of other adults/TAs should be carefully planned so that learners across the different groups receive quality first teaching.

## Planning Expectations

We expect that all lessons are thoroughly planned however we do not expect to receive ‘hard copies’ of planning for individual lessons. It is, however academy policy for teachers at the beginning of their careers and for those engaged in the academy coaching programme to provide evidence of planning to focus coaching conversations, support collaborative planning and demonstrate progress against the Teachers’ Standards.

Planning should be informed by curriculum maps which are available in the shared area.

The table below outlines minimum expectations regarding planning however the academy reserves the right to receive additional planning if there are concerns about students’ progress in lessons.

Career Stage	Minimum Expectations of Planning
Teach First Participant (Working towards gaining QTS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weekly Planning pro-forma completed for all classes.</li><li>• Full MEA lesson plan completed for formal lesson observations.</li></ul>
Newly Qualified Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weekly Planning pro-forma completed for all classes.</li><li>• Full MEA lesson plan completed for formal lesson observations.</li></ul>
All Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full MEA lesson plan completed for 1 hour lesson observations.</li></ul>

***See Appendix D – MEA Lesson Plan***

***See Appendix E – MEA Weekly Planning Sheet***



## Developing Excellent Teaching

To secure excellent teaching and learning the academy is committed to the continuing professional development of all teachers and support staff. We believe that focusing upon the professional development of staff not only improves staff morale and engagement but furthermore brings greater improvement for student outcomes.

As part of our commitment to striving for excellence in teaching and learning, we have invested funding to enable all teaching staff to meet with their designated line manager/mentor at least once every two weeks. As such, timetabled meetings should enable colleagues to:

- Discuss teaching, learning and assessment strategies and developments within their own/their teams practice.
- Plan peer observations or discuss feedback.
- Discuss progress of specific groups e.g. SEND, PP, EAL, More able.
- Identify students performing below expectation and ensure they are identified on subsequent planning.
- Refer to progress made towards CPD targets, appraisal targets and Teachers' Standards.

## Academy CPD Programme

In July 2016, the Department for Education published a new Standard for Teachers' Professional Development for all schools in England. The Standard sets out a clear description of what effective continuing professional development (CPD) looks like for teachers. At MEA, to ensure that our CPD provision remains high quality, and to ensure that planning is aligned to the DfE Standard for Teachers' Professional Development<sup>11</sup>, each year we engage in an external CPD audit from the Teacher Development Trust. The assessment visit is carried out by an expert who analyses the Senior Leadership Teams' self-review, staff survey results, uploaded evidence (such as policies, examples of CPD undertaken) and undertakes a series of interviews with a range of staff (teaching and non-teaching, varied experience levels and roles).

To ensure that all staff make good progress towards the Teachers' Standards, there is a menu of CPD sessions and workshops that are advertised each half term. *Please see each academy calendar for timetabled workshops.*

## Sharing of Best Practice

There is an 'open door' culture at MEA, where all teachers no matter how experienced welcome colleagues into their classrooms to observe teaching. To support teachers at the beginning of their careers to develop their practice, all NQTs and Teach First Participants have a weekly protected 'Peer Observation' slot on their timetable where teachers are encouraged to observe colleagues within and outside their own departments. To further support structured coaching conversations and reflections, colleagues are encouraged to use the MEA coaching pro-forma when engaging in peer observations so that observations and discussions are focused.

As part of our commitment to developing excellent teaching we have invested in IRIS Connect Video Platform so that teachers can regularly use, reflect upon and share videos of teaching and learning strategies.

***See Appendix F – MEA Peer Coaching Pro-forma***

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Education. Standard for teachers' professional development Implementation guidance for school leaders, teachers, and organisations that offer professional development for teachers. (DfE: London, 2016)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/537031/160712\\_-\\_PD\\_Expert\\_Group\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/537031/160712_-_PD_Expert_Group_Guidance.pdf)

## Formal Lesson Observations

Teaching and learning information from formal observations is used to share effective practice, inform personalised targets and shape academy CPD training. Time is precious and the academy is a 'busy building', but we firmly believe that coaching and offering personalised support for teachers through discussion about their practice is essential so that teachers can flourish and develop at MEA.

We do not grade the quality of teaching of individual lessons. The 'Excellent Teaching Model' is used to inform coaching conversations, with elements within the six pedagogical principles: challenge, explanation, modelling, deliberate practice, questioning and feedback informing targets and identifying practice that should be shared.

To support teachers to make progress with their teaching practice and performance management targets, it is recommended that all teaching staff have at least 3 formal lesson observations per academic year.

Career Stage	Minimum Number of Observations	Who
All Teaching Staff with QTS (except NQTs)	3 per academic year.	At least 3 observations by Teaching Coach

All observers have attended external/internal lesson observation training and complete at least one joint observation with their line manager as part of the academy quality assurance process.

## Behaviour for Learning and Student Progress - Minimum Expectations

The academy believes that the main engine of academy improvement is providing excellence in the classroom. This will always be our key strategic priority and the academy expects all teachers to aspire to the highest standards of classroom practice at all times. In line with our teaching model, we understand that for high quality learning to take place, there must be a positive classroom culture where all students feel safe to take risks when answering probing questions and attempting challenging work.

As a supportive measure, we grade the behaviour for learning of individual lessons, this not only is to support teachers to reflect upon relationship dynamics and culture but is also used to direct the Teaching Team about where additional coaching and support is needed.

It is important to note, that if behaviour for learning is judged as 'good', this does not necessarily equate to students making 'good' progress. Challenge is the driving force of our model, for students to retain information, teaching strategies should ensure that students are working just outside their comfort zone, work should cause students to 'think hard' about the content and engage in healthy struggle. If lessons are not challenging, then students cannot make good progress.

Where observations highlight that students are not making 'good' or better progress, additional observations will occur:

- Follow up observation to take place within 2 weeks of initial observation. This should demonstrate learning from feedback given after the initial observation where students did not make good progress.
- If students do not make good progress during the 2nd observation there will be 3rd observation scheduled within 2 weeks. This observation will be conducted with the Teaching Coach and SLT Line Manager.
- If during the 3<sup>rd</sup> observation students do not make good progress, the first stage of Capability procedure will be triggered. An intervention support plan will be produced as part of this informal stage.

We understand that for new staff joining the academy that developing excellent teacher-student relationships may prove challenging in the first few weeks so within the first term, new colleagues benefit from additional informal coaching observations alongside the academy formal observation process. The Developing Teacher Programme for Term 1 also focuses upon different aspects of behaviour for learning which all staff are invited to attend.

## Newly Qualified Teachers and Teach First Participants

To ensure that Newly Qualified Teachers and Teach First Participants make good progress towards the Teachers' Standards, typically the observations for such colleagues will be:

Career Stage	Minimum Number of Observations	Who
Newly Qualified Teachers	Once per half term if making 'good' progress towards the Teachers' Standards	6 observations by the Subject Mentor 3 observations by Professional Mentor
Teach First Participant (Working towards gaining QTS)	9 per academic year if making 'good' progress towards the Teachers' Standards	6 observations by the Subject Mentor 3 observations by Professional Mentor

If observations highlight that the teacher is not making good progress towards the Teachers' Standards then additional coaching and support plans may be introduced in accordance with statutory guidance for Newly Qualified Teachers and Teach First Participants.

***See Appendix G – MEA Lesson Observation Pro-forma***

## Learning Walks

MEA is committed to being a leading institution; the academy of choice for learners, their parents and employers locally, regionally and beyond. We look to be acknowledged nationally for excellence in teaching and learning and for the quality of students' outcomes. We recognise that our learners are at the heart of all we do and are committed to properly understanding every aspect of their 'MEA' experience.

As part of this commitment, members of the Extended Leadership Team regularly undertake learning walks. During a learning walk observers watch and talk to students, in a range of classes and other learning or social spaces in order to better understand the everyday experience of students. As such, observers will identify whether the following aspects of practice are clearly present in each lesson:

- Student motivation and engagement supports a good climate for learning
- Students are clear about what they are learning and how objectives build upon prior learning
- Quality of feedback is in line with academy policy

**Observers or 'walkers' may also record any aspects of practice that can be shared or any follow up questions that they may have.**

- If there is a question mark i.e. there are aspects of practice that need refining, there will be a follow up meeting to discuss observations.
- If practice is not present or is highlighted as cause for concern, the teacher involved will be informed and the observer will return to that class the following week to repeat the process
- If during the 2<sup>nd</sup> visit, practice is not present or is highlighted as cause for concern, the teacher involved will be informed and a follow up lesson observation will take place.

## Guidance for Observers

- If a teacher goes into classes as part of a learning walk they will normally spend no more than 10 minutes in any one lesson.
- Walkers will behave unobtrusively during learning walks although they may talk to students where this is not disruptive to the lesson.
- Walkers will take notes in relation to the theme of the learning walk but will never grade the quality of teaching.
- If a learning walk highlights concerns about health and safety, safeguarding, equality, professional conduct or capability these will be addressed without delay and normal academy procedures followed.
- Outcomes and actions from Learning Walks will be shared with the Curriculum Leader, SLT Line Manager and the Vice Principal for Teaching.

Type of Learning Walk	How often?	
Within department: Led by Curriculum/Assistant Curriculum Leads	At least one learning walks per half term.	Curriculum Leads/Assistant Curriculum leads to inform teams when learning walks will be taking place.
Across the academy: Led by the Senior Leadership Team	At least one learning walk per half term.	Unannounced
Across the academy: Led by External Quality Assurance Partner/Senior Leadership Team	At least one learning walk per term.	Unannounced

**See Appendix H – MEA Learning Walk Pro-forma**

## Work Sampling

At MEA we believe that work sampling (rather than ‘work scrutiny’) is not just a tool to find out whether teachers are following academy policy regarding providing students with the quantity and quality of feedback that is requested but furthermore is a vehicle to find out how students are progressing within classes, across departments and across the academy.

Work sampling can also serve as an opportunity for teams to come together to share best practice and to discuss teaching strategies which support students to make progress against specific learning objectives/topics.

As part of the work sampling exercise, leaders are asked to meet with a group of students so that they can reflect on their ‘best piece of work’, why they feel they made good progress and discuss the level of challenge within that subjects/across subject areas.

Where there are concerns about the quality of work that students are producing or if students are not receiving the quality of feedback required, there will be a follow up meeting to discuss aspects of practice that need refining and a follow up work sampling exercise will take place after 2 weeks.

If during the 2<sup>nd</sup> work sampling, there has been no progress made, additional coaching and support will be given before a 3<sup>rd</sup> work sampling exercise takes place after a further 2 weeks. The final work sampling exercise will be conducted by the Vice Principal.

Type of Work Sampling	How often?	
Within department: Led by Curriculum/Assistant Curriculum Leads	At least one work sampling exercise per half term.	Curriculum Leads/Assistant Curriculum leads to inform teams when sampling will be taking place.  Work sampling can be done as a team exercise and serve as a professional development opportunity.
Across the academy: Led by the Senior Leadership Team	At least one work sampling exercise per half term.	Unannounced

***See Appendix I – MEA Work Sampling Pro-formas***



# APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Whole Class Feedback Sheet</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Big Test Class Feedback Sheet</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>The 'MEA Way' – Basic Expectations for the Beginning of a Lesson doc.</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Lesson Plan</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	<b>Weekly Planning Sheet</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	<b>Peer Observation Coaching Pro-forma</b>
<b>Appendix G</b>	<b>Lesson Observation Pro-forma</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	<b>Learning Walk Pro-forma</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>Work Sampling Pro-formas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Across a class (individual)</li><li>• Across a department (Curriculum Leaders)</li><li>• Across the academy (Senior Leadership Team)</li></ul>

