

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

**FINAL REPORT ON THE OTLA PHASE 7 (ENGLISH) PROJECT –
FEEDBACK IN REMOTE DELIVERY**

Leeds City College

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For further information regarding the OTLA Phase 7 (English) programme and this project go to <https://ccpathways.co.uk/practitioner-research/otla-7/>.

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Final report - Feedback in remote delivery

Leeds City College

This project looked at the improvement of feedback in GCSE English with the aim of improving learners' engagement with their teacher's comments. We focused our investigation on the provision of verbal feedback during periods of remote learning.

Summary

Leeds City College is one of the largest FE institutions in the country with over 20,000 learners, including 6,000 learners across GCSE English and Maths. A significant proportion of learners at the college come from areas in the highest indices of both social and economic deprivation ratings, with over 50% of learners recruited from the poorest 10% of postcodes in the country.

This action research project initially involved 8 teacher participants across 4 different sites to encapsulate a diverse range of learners, something inherent in our student body as a whole. Our primary objective was to investigate and explore ways of improving the quality of feedback in GCSE English sessions as well as the learners' engagement with their feedback. Refining our feedback delivery was more pertinent than ever given the increased usage of online and blended learning in 20/21, which has accentuated the importance of quality feedback so learners can develop skills independently and understand how to progress when working remotely.

Rationale

We identified teacher feedback in GCSE English as an area for improvement, as although it is regularly given, it can be inconsistent at times and learners do not always respond to it, often forgetting constructive comments provided by the time they revisit the task. We set out to explore a variety of approaches to improve how feedback was given and increase learner engagement with this, as evidence suggests that for feedback to be useful, learners need to have time to reflect and act on the marking given (Jackson and Marks 2016).

For this reason, we originally set out to use visualisers for modelling live marking and feedback alongside use of model answers; however, we had to adapt this approach in order to respond to the challenges and demands of remote learning within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, we investigated a variety of innovative online feedback techniques during this period of remote learning, particularly using resources that fostered a sense of interaction – which felt even more crucial during the remote setting, e.g. Nearpod, Jamboard and Mote.

Approach

Our project benefited from the flexibility of an iterative and adaptive approach, which allowed us to respond to the numerous obstacles and challenges we encountered,

such as a college-wide cyber-attack, as well as the impact of Covid-19 and subsequent site closures. At the beginning of the project, we quickly realised that visualisers were not going to be the most effective feedback method to use during remote learning where we had a limited scope for synchronous learning, and so we expanded our approach to include formative feedback technologies. Of the various resources explored by our participating teachers, it quickly became clear that the Chrome extension 'Mote' was popular with learners, and therefore the decision was made to explore this verbal feedback technique for our project, focusing on one department for this investigation. Whilst other resources (such as Jamboard) did work relatively well for generating interaction or engagement from learners, we found this was much more the case for synchronous usage and less so for immediate feedback. We also felt that Jamboard lacked a personal or 'human' element, being more focused on multimedia, which perhaps contributed to this. Conversely, Mote enabled our practitioner to maintain a personal connection in an asynchronous manner and provide engaging, individual feedback to each learner (see Appendix 2). Because we had a limited scope for live sessions during the remote periods, this approach felt much better suited to our provision. Our Course Leader for Digital and IT studies at our Printworks campus led the trial of Mote, choosing it because it was a way of connecting with her learners whilst also optimising her time spent providing feedback, with voice commenting being approximately three times quicker than typing comments. She explained her decision to use Mote:

"I like Mote because they can hear my voice and I hope it feels like more of a personal connection for them whilst we are remote. Also, many of my students struggle to take in written information and I am fairly sure they don't always read the written feedback. [...] It allows me to be very specific as it takes a lot less time to record verbal feedback than type it. I can zoom in on a specific sentence they have written and discuss it in detail for example."

As a Google college, we routinely use Google Docs and Google Classroom as part of our lessons, and so the Mote extension was easily compatible with the technology already widely used. Mote works by enabling teachers to record verbal feedback in a maximum of 30 second bursts, by attaching voice notes to specific parts and sentences of the learners' work, in a similar way a 'comment' on a Doc might work (see Appendix 3). The teacher who pioneered our use of Mote used these voice notes containing her own verbal feedback for tasks completed within sessions, in assessments, and also for flipped learning. She reported that many of her learners struggle to absorb written information and do not always read written feedback, and so this pilot was a response to learners' expressed learning preferences. Furthermore, during her use of Mote, she found that learners felt far more connected to her through the voice notes than with written feedback - something which is crucial in the environment of remote learning where many learners report feelings of online isolation and detachment. We believe that having even a small amount of this personalised, verbal feedback from their teacher helped to foster learner engagement with their College work, as it is a more personalised way of

communication that upheld the learner-teacher relationship more effectively than solely using written feedback.

Another key benefit unique to Mote is that the voice clips can be replayed, meaning that learners can revisit it, unlike with the verbal feedback they receive in the classroom. Our teacher also praised Mote as being highly time efficient; giving verbal feedback allowed her to provide more detail but in a shorter timescale, thus providing individual feedback to her entire group in a manageable time (see Appendix 4). This notion of time efficiency is extremely valuable particularly in the context of teachers' saturated workloads throughout this academic year.

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

Through participating in this action research project, our teacher developed her knowledge and understanding of how her group learns most effectively and also increased her awareness of how to encourage learners to take a proactive and responsible attitude to their own work and study. Through this process, she was able to reflect systematically on the effectiveness of the feedback she was giving and use this to design and improve future formative assessments. Furthermore, the action of recording the verbal feedback she was delivering has undoubtedly increased the awareness of the language she uses, which prompted her to reflect on the effectiveness of her comments when giving verbal feedback in class. This type of reflection and consciousness enhances the effectiveness of the feedback given, and ultimately makes the feedback more impactful and meaningful, something further ensured by the succinct nature of the voice clips.

By using Mote, the practitioner's feedback methods developed from traditional to a much more innovative and technologically advanced style. This allowed for more meaningful marking and, during live remote sessions, live feedback without the traditional delay of collecting and writing comments in exercise books etc. Another significant benefit of this change in practice is that learners' can revisit and listen to and repeat their teacher's Mote comments at their convenience. Indeed, in a survey conducted, our participating learners detailed how they refer back to previous feedback received; with some learners stating that they '*always*' refer back to comments from previous sessions (see Appendices 7 & 8).

This experience ultimately developed her ability to adapt her teaching to respond to the individual needs of her learners; for example, although she learned that the class as a whole responded well to Mote, she identified that one SEN learner preferred written feedback, which was then given. During this period, our practitioner continually evaluated and collaborated with the learners to develop the best method for providing effective feedback during remote learning. This experience and use of Mote ultimately added another dimension to her skills as a practitioner and added to her professional development.

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

During the initial stages of remote learning, a number of the project's participating teachers held a Google Meet session to exchange a variety of ideas, strategies and teaching resources that they had explored in the online teaching sphere. This was a collaborative session to discuss the best practice they had utilised to date, and also provided the opportunity to reflect on things that had not worked as well or were too complex or time-consuming. This session was clear evidence of the validity of collaborative working across our diverse departments and campuses to support other teachers and offer fresh perspective, forming new relationships with colleagues from different areas. This meeting helped to enforce a sense of team ethos and allowed colleagues to share some of their most effective teaching strategies for helping learners engage effectively. (See Appendices 5 & 6 for teacher feedback).

Although we trialled the use of Mote on a small scale within one department, our teacher has already championed this tool across multiple departments, for example during meetings with all our English and Maths Leads in which she shared her experiences of using Mote and gave suggestions of best practice. This in turn led to the promotion of the use of Mote within the wider college community, as the awareness that this could make a positive contribution to feedback in other subject areas, particularly during remote learning and periods of isolation for students and staff, led to our Independent Learning Team (30 staff members covering all campuses) trialling the enhanced version of Mote - '*unlimited*'.

It is clear that this technique will prove extremely useful for blended and flipped learning in the future and will be promoted further across college. The use of feedback via Mote is something that we hope to incorporate into the ongoing development of engaging and impactful feedback across the college community.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

The learners who have received feedback via this approach found it beneficial in aiding their understanding of how to progress and work independently. Learner opinion was positive, with typical quotes being "*it is very helpful*" and "*I'm very satisfied with the feedback from my teacher*". Another learner reported that they "*like it because I can access it from home as well*".

We currently have limited statistical achievement data as we are in the process of collecting assessment evidence in lieu of exams, though we trust that evidence of potential improvement in learners' rates of achievement will emerge later throughout the course of this academic year.

However, perhaps the largest impact of Mote has been in the success in boosting attendance and retention in a time where attendance was clearly declining. Indeed, during the period of remote learning between January to March, our college average for attendance was 67%, whereas the department where we based our trial had a 7% higher attendance figure of 74%. Other departments at the same campus who were not taking part in the feedback pilot had attendance rates of around 65%, and it is possible that the practitioners' use of verbal feedback may have had a significant impact on student attendance and retention. This is echoed by our teacher who

reflected on the importance of the learners being able to hear her voice in terms of retaining levels of engagement, stating it *“the personal connection seemed to motivate them despite them being at home [...] they really responded to the verbal interaction”*.

Learning from this project

Though we were forced to significantly adapt our project’s focus due to the impact of the cyber-attack and due to difficulties surrounding remote learning because of Covid-19, we were ultimately able to use this as an opportunity for innovation. Our practitioners displayed tenacity and creativity during a very difficult period in the industry, and ultimately ensured that our learners received relevant and meaningful feedback for their GCSE English work throughout the academic year.

Through numerous opportunities for reflection, our project has helped learners identify their own preferences for receiving feedback and allowed our teachers to focus on those method(s) accordingly (Appendix 6).

We have seen an improvement in feedback via technological resources by identifying an effective way to give personalised and accessible comments even when online. We have developed our provision of verbal feedback through our experience with Mote, ensuring that instruction to learners is precise and engaging. Though our project sample was small, the learning from this has the potential to impact the feedback given in future online and blended learning. It is also important to note that the Mote tool is not just relevant for English feedback, but is applicable to multiple subject areas and levels, and thus has scope for widespread success that will impact a diverse range of learners.

Finally, we have also gained valuable insights into the research process itself, which will better equip us for future endeavours. A key lesson learned is to not be too ambitious with our aims; instead we need to be realistic in our vision by anticipating some of the potential difficulties and time pressures that can arise in a busy academic year.

We hope to make further progress with this research, and, by incorporating visualisers as a next step, we hope to embed more time to react to feedback in a live session.

References

Jackson, M. and Marks, L. (2016) Improving the effectiveness of feedback by use of assessed reflections and withholding of grades. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(4), pp. 532-547. (doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1030588)

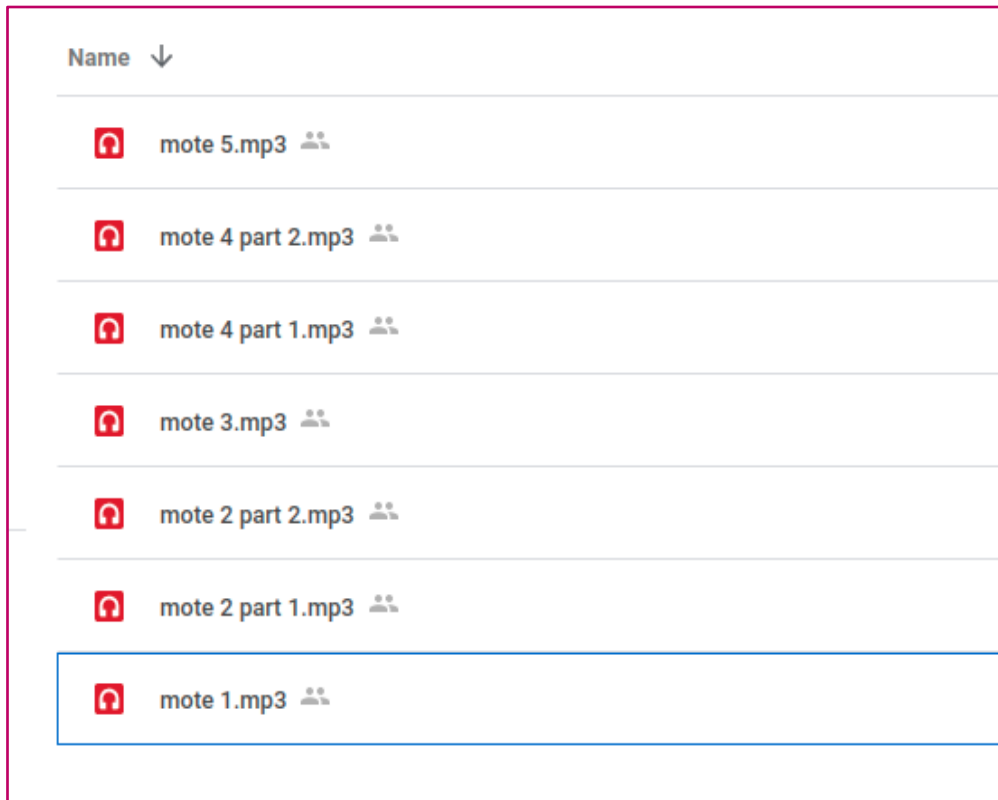
Appendix 1 – The project team

Project Role	Name	Job Role
Project Lead	Jonny Diamond	Head of English and Maths
Deputy Lead	Jess Margiotta	Project officer
Project team	Helen Wright	Course Leader
Project Mentor	Helen Hewlett (ccConsultancy)	
Research Group Lead	Bob Read (ccConsultancy)	

Appendix 2 – Sample Voice Notes

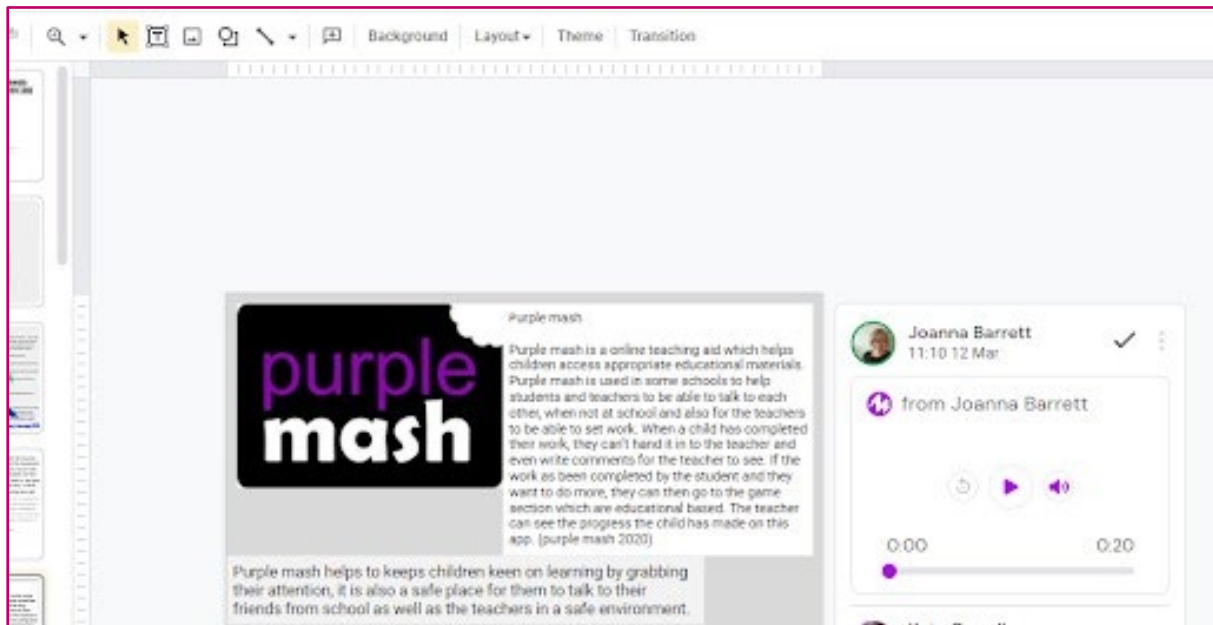
Folder containing example voice notes given to learners by using Mote.

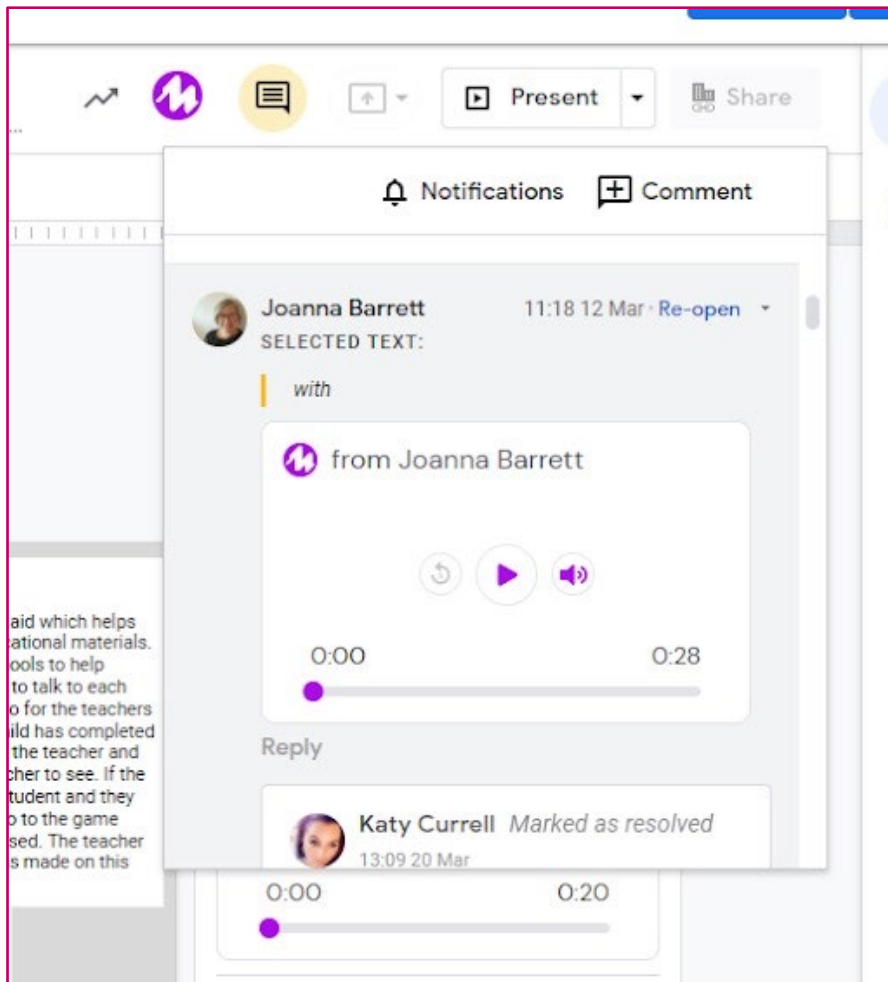
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YWvB6I0qvHGnRZcVfmHCJcHRu6VxO-0F?usp=sharing>



Appendix 3 – How Voice Notes appear on Learner Work

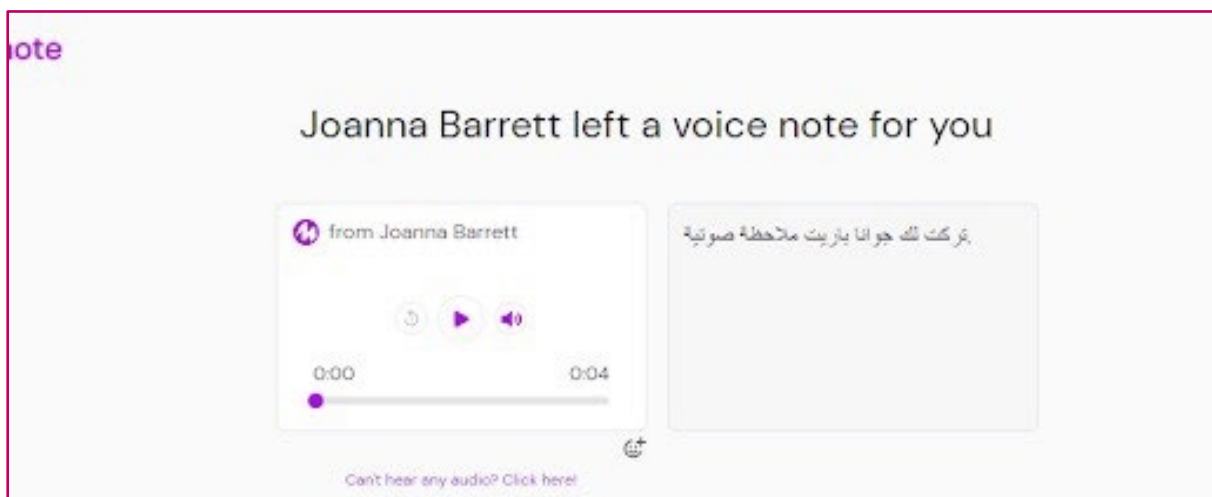
Screenshots displaying what the learners can see and how the Mote voice notes appear.





Screenshot of voice note transcript.

The learners can access a transcript of the voice note, which can also be translated into their preferred language as seen in the image below.



Appendix 4 – Link to User Guide

User guide for teachers showing how to create your first Mote.

Mote

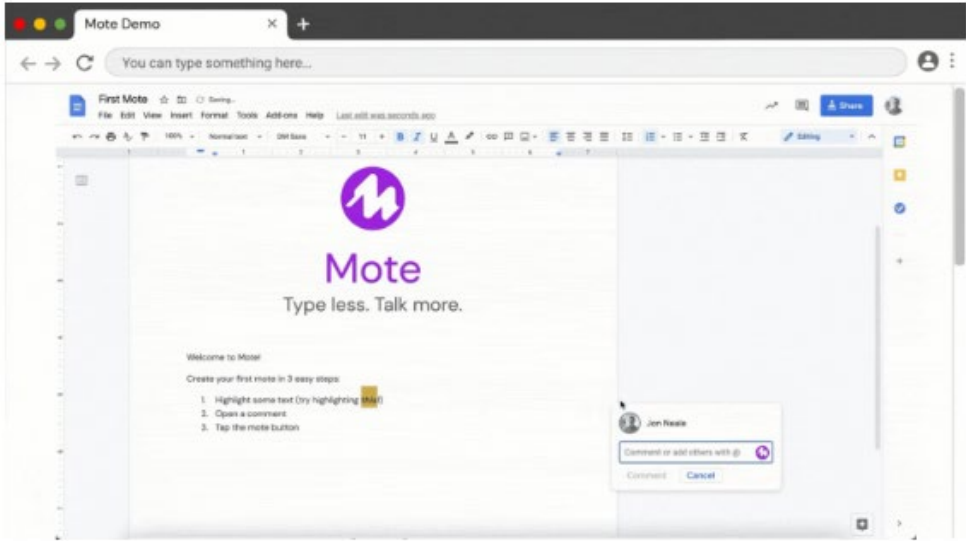
Type less. Talk more.

Welcome to Mote! 🙌

Create your first mote in 5 easy steps:

1. Highlight some text (try highlighting *this!*)
2. Open a comment
3. Tap the mote button and say 'Hello world! This is my first mote'
4. Click done when finished
5. Post! 🚀

How-to animation below 🖱️



Background image - [M. Krome template](#) SlidesMania

How-to video linked [here!](#)

Copy of Mote user guide -


https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZTdwyELqUd12Fgsj_aEy28ChsaHOi1Z9A_pJwHZkwuA/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix 5 – Teacher Survey


Screenshot of the teacher survey that we sent out to participating staff during the early stages of the project.

The screenshot shows a survey form with a light green background. It contains six text input fields, each with a question and a 'Your answer' label. Each input field has a blue icon with a question mark and an exclamation point. At the bottom left, there is a green 'Submit' button.


What is your primary method of giving feedback in remote delivery? Why have you chosen this? (Please try and give a detailed reason).

Your answer 


How long have you been using this method? (Please specify length of time if possible, e.g. "2 months", or "since X date".)

Your answer 


Has your use of this changed since you started using this method of feedback? If so, how have you adapted it?

Your answer 


How have your learners responded to this method of feedback? (please give any examples or anecdotes that may be relevant).

Your answer 

When returning to traditional classroom delivery, what primary method of feedback will you use? If this is different to the one you are currently using - why would you change?

Your answer 

In your opinion, how easy would it be for other teachers to implement this feedback strategy into their teaching?

Your answer 

Submit

Appendix 6 – Feedback from Teachers

Typical quotes from teachers across the College who have started to use Mote.

"I started using ReadWrite recordings in lockdown but swapped to Mote as it was more flexible and very intuitive to use."

"It's a really great tool from what I've seen so far and some of my learners have said they've already relistened to a few clips!"

"Verbal feedback using Mote on any piece of online writing is extremely easy to use".

"I like the discipline of keeping to the time, it makes me think about exactly what I want to say. You can use several voice notes for 1 student by picking out specific areas you want to focus on. It's great and definitely has saved me some time when marking work."

"It's just so much easier from the learners' perspective too [...] They can listen to what I'm saying, and they just get it. It's so much better than messaging them on Hangouts back and forth, or when I write in their books, and some don't even read it."

Appendix 7 – Learner Survey

Screenshot of the student survey that learners completed at the end of March.

Overall, are you satisfied with the feedback you receive for your English work?
Please explain your answer.

Your answer

Do you like getting feedback from your teacher through online resources such as Classroom, Docs, or Mote? Please explain your answer.

Your answer

During lockdown when College was closed, your teacher gave you verbal feedback via voice notes using Mote. What was your experience with this? Did you find it useful?

Your answer

Which statement do you most agree with:

"I like it when my teacher tells me how to improve my work so that I know what I need to do to progress."

"I find it demotivating when my teacher tells me how to improve because I feel like I haven't done as well".

If you receive feedback from your teacher explaining how to improve your work, what do you then do? (Please tick all that apply and let us know in the 'other' field if you do anything else.)

I don't do anything

I update my answer / I have another go at the task *during the lesson*

I update my answer / I have another go at the task *after the lesson*

I ask my teacher for more information or help

I use online resources (like GCSEpod or Seneca) to improve my knowledge

Other:

How often do you refer back to feedback that you have previously been given via a voice note on Google mote?

- Always
- Often
- Occassionally
- Never
- Other: _____

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve the feedback that you are given in your GCSE English lessons?

Your answer



Appendix 8 – Learner Feedback

A selection of typical quotes from the student survey regarding their satisfaction with the feedback given in their GCSE English lessons.

Are you satisfied with the feedback you receive for your English work?

Please explain your answer.

"I would say yes! I believe it has enabled me to progress much quicker to the Grade I wanted."

"Yes, I am satisfied and know what to improve."

"Yes, it's great feedback."

"Yes because my teacher tells me what I'm doing right and it reassures me."

"Yes I'm very satisfied with the feedback from my teacher as she gives me positive feedback and she points out what I have done well and also the improvements I need to make ."

"I am most satisfied with the feedback I have been given as I have learnt more and been able to make my work a higher grade."

"Yes it is very helpful and I can look back on it and do better."

"Yes I'm satisfied because she knows where I'm at."

"It's good because it makes me feel a bit more confident."

"Yes my teacher always gives me loads of feedback so I know what I need to work on next."

A selection of typical responses to the student survey question regarding their opinion on Mote.

During lockdown when College was closed, your teacher gave you verbal feedback via voice notes using Mote. What was your experience with this? Did you find it useful?

"Yes it was useful because I was still getting feedback from my teacher even though we weren't in college."

"Yes the voice notes were great, I liked listening to them and I could go back to them before I did my next bit of work to check what she had said."

"It was good for the time but I prefer it now we're back in college."

"Yeah I thought it was useful and I liked that I had different comments for different sentences, it wasn't just one overall bit of feedback. I could see exactly what part she meant."

"Yes because I can access it from home as well."

"Yes because feedback helps you to improve your performance."

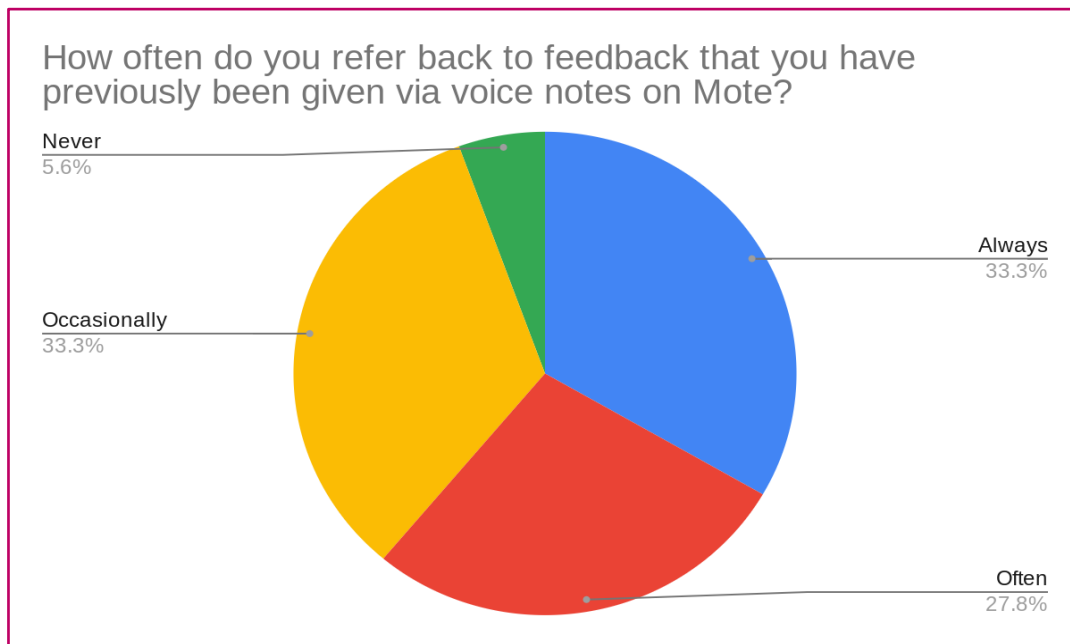
"Yeah it's just like them telling you it in person."

"Yes Mote was good for when we were in lockdown."

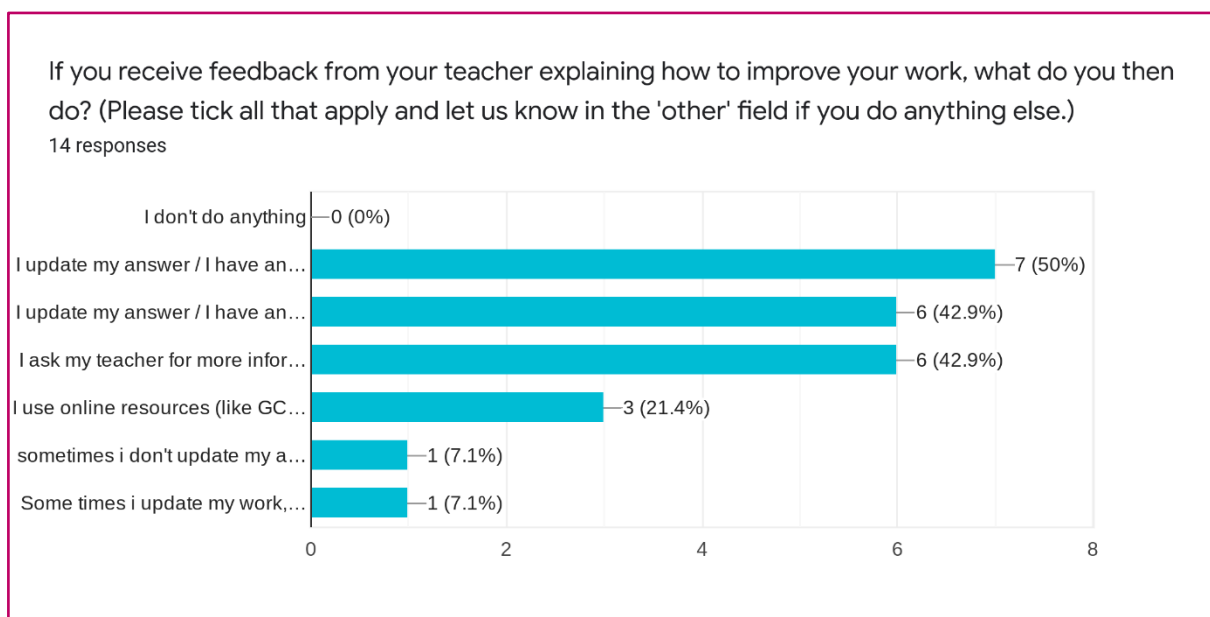
"I like it a lot because I like it when my teacher tells me what I'm doing right or wrong through the voice notes, I understand it more than reading the notes in my book or reading through all the messages on hangouts."

"Yes it was useful."

A chart depicting the responses to a question from the student survey regarding how often they relisten to the Mote voice notes.



A chart depicting the responses to the student survey question regarding how they act upon receiving feedback.



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