

# THE IMPACT OF PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT ON WRITING PROGRESS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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## Abstract

This study investigates how embedding peer and self-assessment strategies into daily classroom routines enhances pupils' progress in writing within a Year 6 setting. Drawing on academic research and pupil reflections, this article demonstrates how these practices improve self-regulation, collaboration, and critical thinking. Findings suggest that, when systematically implemented, peer and self-assessment contribute significantly to the development of independent learners, with benefits extending across the wider curriculum.

## Introduction

Fostering independence and reflective thinking is a cornerstone of effective primary education. In writing, peer and self-assessment have been recognised as key mechanisms for increasing pupil engagement and driving progress. While improvements in attainment cannot be attributed solely to these strategies, the value they add to the learning process is substantial. This article explores the effects of systematically embedding peer and self-assessment into a Year 6 writing curriculum, drawing upon academic literature and evidence from classroom practice.

## Literature Review

A growing body of research supports the positive impact of peer and self-assessment on deeper learning. Andrade and Du (2007) argue that self-assessment encourages students to reflect on the quality of their work and to think metacognitively about the strategies they use—skills vital to the development of independent writers. In practical terms, pupils were supported in this through structured sentence stems such as “I have included...” and “Next time I will...” to frame their reflections.

Topping (2009) similarly highlights the value of peer assessment in increasing pupils' ability to apply success criteria and take greater ownership over their learning. In our context, this involved pupils referring directly to a rubric to identify specific features of effective writing in their own and others' work. The role of dialogue is also central to effective peer assessment. Black and Wiliam (2009) emphasise that opportunities for peer dialogue about work standards support deeper learning than teacher feedback alone. This aligns with the classroom culture established in our setting, where collaborative discussion was modelled and expected as part of the learning process.

Falchikov (2005) notes that when students assess one another's work, they develop critical thinking skills and consolidate their own understanding through the process of justification and explanation. This principle underpinned the decision to treat peer and self-assessment not as evaluative endpoints, but as integral, developmental steps within each writing lesson.

## Methods

Peer and self-assessment strategies were embedded into daily writing lessons over the course of this academic year. Pupils evaluated writing using success criteria presented in a clear, curriculum-aligned table (see **Appendix 1 and 2**). Strengths were marked with a star (★), while next steps were identified with a ladder symbol. Reflections were completed using purple pens, enabling pupils to make visible improvements within their books.

Each assessed piece was annotated with 'PA' (Peer Assessed) or 'SA' (Self Assessed) (see **Appendix 3**), allowing for clear tracking and enabling the teaching team to monitor patterns of reflection. Quality and consistency were supported through regular teacher modelling, scaffolded sentence stems, and class discussions around sample texts.

As Harris and Brown (2013) observe, "collaborative assessment practices allow learners to internalise success criteria and make meaningful improvements to their own work." This evidence supported the decision to embed such practices consistently into classroom routines.

## Findings and Discussion

Pupil responses indicated high levels of engagement and ownership when using peer and self-assessment. One pupil noted, "Peer marking helps me spot what I need to do better next time and also helps my friends." Another remarked, "When we look at our work together, I understand the success criteria much more clearly." These reflections highlight how assessment became not just a judgemental task but a learning tool. The process of articulating feedback aloud was particularly powerful. One pupil commented, "It's helpful because you can actually see how much you're improving each lesson." This reinforces Falchikov's (2005) view that explanation and justification strengthen conceptual understanding.

The implementation of a clear, visual system significantly increased pupil independence. With consistent routines and familiar tools, pupils were able to identify strengths and areas for development without relying solely on adult intervention. Teacher workload was also reduced, as pupils became more autonomous and confident in editing and improving their own work. The most notable transformation was the shift in classroom dynamics. With pupils trained in constructive feedback techniques, the classroom environment became highly collaborative. Pupils coached, supported, and challenged one another meaningfully. This freed up the teacher and support staff to work with target groups, deepening personalisation of learning and enabling more focused interventions.

As Wiliam (2011) states, "The most effective classrooms are those where the students are as much involved in their own learning as the teacher." The classroom culture developed over the course of this study aligns closely with this vision.

Crucially, the impact extended beyond writing. Pupils naturally transferred assessment techniques to other subjects, including Maths, Science, and Reading. Reflection evolved from a teacher-scaffolded process into an independent, habitual part of pupils' learning behaviour.

### **Sustaining Impact Through Structured Planning and Motivational Strategies**

To ensure the long-term success of peer and self-assessment practices, lesson planning included purposeful opportunities for reflection. These included:

- Dedicated editing sessions using purple pens
- Starter activities revisiting prior targets
- Mid-draft checkpoints during extended writing tasks

Pupils reported that these opportunities helped them "visibly see the progress" they were making, reinforcing motivation and confidence. Healthy competition also contributed to the impact. The use of differentiated challenge levels encouraged pupils to push themselves further against the success criteria within a supportive and aspirational environment.

A key component of this approach was the emphasis on oracy. Pupils were encouraged to verbalise their targets and assessments before recording them in writing. This coaching model enabled even less confident writers to engage in meaningful reflection and receive peer feedback that supported improvement.

## Conclusion

Embedding peer and self-assessment into daily classroom practice had a demonstrable impact on pupils' writing progress, independence, and engagement. Supported by educational research and corroborated by pupil voice, these strategies empowered learners to take responsibility for their development and to engage critically with their own and others' work.





While writing progress is influenced by many factors, the systematic implementation of these assessment strategies proved to be a powerful catalyst for improvement. With the right structures, language, and culture in place, pupils flourished—not just as writers, but as reflective, collaborative, and independent learners across the curriculum.

## References

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1

Structure				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sender's address (the person sending the letter).</li> <li>• Recipient's address (the person receiving the letter).</li> <li>• Date (e.g., Thursday 9th January 2024)</li> <li>• Subject (Title explaining the content of the letter)</li> <li>• Greeting (e.g., Dear...)</li> <li>• Signature (e.g., Yours sincerely,)</li> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Paragraphs to structure arguments</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital letters and full stops.</li> <li>First person (e.g., I, we, myself)</li> <li>Present tense (e.g., I am writing to you...)</li> <li>Technical vocabulary (e.g., Artificial Intelligence, automate, algorithm, evolving, obsolete)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal pronouns (e.g., I, you, we, they, them)</li> <li>Factual Information (e.g., Technology is constantly evolving; AI stands for Artificial Intelligence)</li> <li>Opinion (e.g., In my opinion; I believe that)</li> <li>Statistics (e.g., 95% of people in the world have used AI.)</li> <li>Parenthesis (brackets, commas or dashes used to add extra information)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fronted adverbials (e.g., As you may be aware...; According to reports,...)</li> <li>Rhetorical questions (e.g., Can you really afford to ignore this warning?)</li> <li>Alliteration (e.g., terrible, treacherous technology, particularly perplexing puzzle)</li> <li>Conjunctions (including causal conjunctions) (e.g., furthermore, moreover, additionally, consequently, therefore)</li> <li>Powerful, persuasive adjectives (e.g., accurate, certain, confident, definitely, clearly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Powerful verbs (e.g., I urge you to...; I demand that you...)</li> <li>Emotive language (e.g., Imagine a world where the heartbeat of humanity is drowned out by the cold hum of machines.)</li> <li>Repetition (Using the same word or phrase consecutively to highlight its importance.)</li> <li>Groups of 3 (e.g., AI enables people to scam, lie and cheat their way through life.)</li> <li>Subjunctive form (e.g., If I were..., I would...)</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

Diamond ✓	Bronze ✓	Silver ✓	Gold ✓
Capital letters and full stops. ✓	Powerful verbs (glinted, cascaded, hunched) ✓	Emotive language (devastated, determined, lonely) ✓	Subordinating conjunctions in subordinate clauses (before, after, while, since, because, if, as, when, although, until) ✓
Expanded noun phrases (Deep endless pools of sapphire.) ✓	Similes (As swift as the desert wind.) ✓	Personification (Whispering stories into the darkness) ✓	Metaphors (A heart of fire.) ✓
Adjectives (midnight black, towering, frayed) ✓	Alliteration (stone and shadow) ✓	Relative pronouns for relative clauses (which, that, who, when, whom, whose) ✓	Imagery – Show <u>not</u> tell (Swiftly like the wind, Rumayza's midnight black hair, which shimmered under the silver moonlight, flowed behind her as she spun the golden straw.) ✓
	Prepositions (under, behind) ✓	Adverbs (quietly, tirelessly, fiercely) ✓	

## Appendix 3

(SA) I used really good vocabulary and short sentences.

I could improve by adding more personification.