

Lesson Observation : Guidance Protocol

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document aims to define the likely scope of observations of teaching and should fit within any individual schools' policies and practices.

This protocol recognises the rights and responsibilities of the Head teacher, or any person directed by the Head teacher, to monitor any lesson at any time, as part of their normal duties and statutory requirements. Head teachers have a requirement to be satisfied as to the quality of teaching & learning, the effectiveness of the management of health and safety, and reassurance as to the well-being of staff and pupils.

2. SCOPE OF THIS PROTOCOL

Teaching is observed as part of the school's overall framework for performance management and it will be conducted for a variety of purposes, including informing school self-evaluation and school improvement strategies to allow school management to evaluate standards.

All observations should be set out within a published framework that has been consulted and communicated to all staff and wherever possible agreed with staff. Such communication is a principle of best practice that runs throughout this protocol.

3. FREQUENCY OF OBSERVATIONS

The Head teacher should make sure that no individual is overburdened with observation, ensuring that there are a reasonable number of lesson observations, agreed in advance, within the context of their specific purpose.

The total time for observations should not exceed three hours per year and the focus and timing should be agreed in the teacher's appraisal form. It is recommended that some forms of observation are excluded from this limit and examples of these are identified below.

Quality Assurance / Departmental and Subject Reviews

The sharing of lesson observation within departments and across teams of teachers and support staff is pivotal in the development and improvement of all professionals. The opportunity to learn from observing each other is fundamental to the improvement of teaching and learning. Some of these observations will be related to quality assurance and as such are part of the school's performance management arrangements. Some will be coaching and mentoring and as such will be part of the teacher's CPD.

Individual Performance Concerns and Capability Procedures

Where concerns about a teacher's performance emerge the appraiser should draw up an Improvement and Support Action Plan in consultation with the teacher. In these cases the appraiser should discuss with the teacher, who may be assisted by a trade union representative or work colleague, the number of observations that will be undertaken with a view to supporting the

teacher in meeting the required levels of improvement to their performance. The plan will set out the focus of the observations and who will carry them out.

Local Authority Intervention

Schools that are in Ofsted Categories or have been identified by the Local Authority as being a Cause for Concern are supported by an Action Plan that will identify specific monitoring of teaching & learning as part of the school improvement strategies.

Ofsted Inspections

This protocol does not cover Ofsted inspections, which are subject to Ofsted's own protocol.

Learning Walks

The LA has produced separate good practice guidelines in relation to Learning Walks.

Drop Ins

Head teachers have a right to drop in to inform their monitoring of the quality of learning. This may be delegated to appropriate members of the leadership group. Drop ins will only inform the performance management process where evidence arises which merits a revision to the appraisal form and any amendments should be discussed with the teacher first.

4. COMMUNICATION AND RECORDS

The following points should be established and communicated before lesson observations take place:

- The purpose of the observation, e.g. subject review, appraisal.
- The focus of the observation – e.g. management of pupils' behaviour
- Give at least 5 working days' notice of which lesson will be observed, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances.
- Length of observation – e.g. full lesson, half hour etc.
- Prior information required from the person taking the lesson – e.g. lesson plan.
- The nature of any judgements to be made, and how they will be recorded and graded, if appropriate.
- How and when feedback will be given, e.g. as soon as possible and within 24 hours for oral feedback and 5 working days for written.
- How the information about the lesson will be used, and who the information about the lesson will be reported to.

The criteria for judging the quality of teaching and learning should be in line with those used in the Ofsted Framework of Inspection.

Schools should make a written record the lesson observation and individual schools have developed pro-formas for this purpose. The format of these may vary according to the nature of the observation. The teacher may append

written comments on the written record of the observation. Written feedback should be stored in accordance with the school's protocols.

5. ROLE OF THE OBSERVER

All who observe lessons to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning should ensure that their presence does not significantly change the normal teaching and learning context.

Where the observer has a CPD role in the lesson, then it may be that interactions occur, by agreement with the person taking the lesson.

Lesson observations will be carried out by those with QTS. There may be exceptional circumstances, however, where this will not be possible. In all cases, the competency of the observer should be appropriate and they should receive appropriate training for that role.

6. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Any complaints about the conduct of or judgements made from a lesson observation should be raised informally in the first instance with the Head teacher. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved the member of staff may invoke the school's Grievance Procedure.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The LA recommends that each school should establish a Lesson Observation Policy, based upon this and any subsequent guidance.