

## Lesson Observation to Support Appraisal Revised June 2013

This document should be read in conjunction with the school's Appraisal Policy

### **Introduction**

Classroom observations are now standard practice in schools. They are used for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across a school and also as a means of supporting teachers in improving their practice. In the case of the former lesson observations are usually carried out by the headteacher and/or senior leaders in a school. In the case of the latter observations are most likely to be undertaken by line managers, subject specialists and peers.

For appraisal purposes it makes sense for the performance reviewer to be the person who undertakes observations that relate to appraisal targets. Peers are likely to be involved in observations that feature as part of the professional learning agreed with a teacher, aimed at supporting them in achieving specific targets relating to classroom practice.

As effective appraisal focuses on a teacher's overall performance as well as on specific agreed targets, it is sensible for any observations undertaken to form part of the evidence used in appraisal review meetings.

### **Lesson Observation Guidelines**

*These guidelines refer to lesson observations undertaken as part of the appraisal arrangements in school. Any observations outside of the appraisal process will be consistent with these principles.*

### **Purposes**

Classroom observations are used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in school as a part of school self-evaluation and performance management. They should support a culture of continuous improvement by helping individuals develop their professional practice.

### **Principles**

Classroom observations relating to appraisal:

- Should provide evidence of a teacher's pedagogical skills
- Should be supportive and developmental
- Should be multi-purpose, wherever possible, to minimise the potential burden of observations
- Should be undertaken in accordance with the school's appraisal policy

- Will be undertaken by performance reviewers but may also be done by other school leaders who have appropriate professional expertise, for example subject leaders
- In the case of teachers, will be undertaken only by those with QTS
- Should be made possible by sufficient timetable release time being provided
- Will not be done in PPA time (unless requested/agreed by both parties)

## **Frequency and Duration**

The focus of classroom observations to be undertaken in relation to appraisal should be agreed in the review meeting statement at the start of the review cycle, if possible. Precise times and dates do not need to be finalised in the review meeting. However, when agreeing the timing of observations for performance management, teachers should have reasonable notice of when they will occur (recommended 5 working days notice). The number of observations made will vary, but will not normally exceed 3 hours per appraisal cycle. If concerns arise during the review cycle it may be necessary to revise the number of observation agreed at the start of the cycle.

Observations may be for whole lessons or parts of lessons, depending on the agreed focus.

Teachers may be involved in observing and/or being observed as part of the support being provided to assist with achieving agreed targets. Beyond this, teachers should have the opportunity to engage in further classroom observations by agreement. For example, many schools encourage the use of coaching pairs or triads and peer observations.

Any observations made by Ofsted or the local authority in relation to statutory duties fall outside normal observation arrangements.

## **Effective classroom observations should:**

- Provide a performance reviewer with evidence of the quality of a reviewee's classroom practice (quality of teaching and learning)
- Help the headteacher develop an overview of the quality of teaching and learning in school
- Provide teachers with feedback on practice which aids reflection and self-evaluation and helps continuous development
- Identify and celebrate good practice
- Help to improve classroom performance by identifying areas for development which will extend expertise

## **Planning**

The focus of observations to be undertaken for appraisal purposes should be agreed in the planning and review statement at the beginning of the performance management cycle. Nearer to the time of observation, and at least five working days before it, the following should be agreed:

- The exact focus for the observation and criteria to be used (if different to general lesson observation criteria)
- A time for the observation
- How and when the feedback will take place

## **Protocols and Methodology**

The teacher being observed should assist the process by:

- Having relevant planning to hand, for example lesson plan or scheme of work
- Providing any relevant information on pupils, such as attainment data, pupil targets, grouping arrangements within class and location of pupils with SEN

The criteria used for lesson observation should:

- Be agreed and understood by the teacher being observed and the appraiser. For most lesson observations we will use our school's lesson observation schedule but sometimes more detailed criteria will be appropriate. For example, if a teacher is working on improving questioning techniques, a schedule of what effective questioning involves may be used to support the observation. The important thing is always that the person being observed has a copy of and understands the criteria being used.
- Be used to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning
- Be used to provide constructive feedback and identify areas for possible improvement and development

All observers should demonstrate:

- Courtesy and objectivity in the conduct of observation and related meetings
- A respect for the confidentiality of any information gained in the course of carrying out the observation and giving feedback

During the lesson being observed they should:

- Sit somewhere which provides a good view of the activities of the students and teacher. S/he should be as unobtrusive as possible
- Talk to pupils, where appropriate, about their understanding and experiences so long as it does not disrupt the progress of the lesson
- Look at work being done in the lesson and, where appropriate, look at earlier work done by pupils

Recording the observation

- It is important to record observations as the lesson progresses rather than relying on memory to recall what took place. A timeline could be used to help with this
- Teacher activity and impact on pupil activity should be noted
- Progress observed during the lesson should be noted

### Giving feedback

- Before giving feedback the observer needs to take time to reflect on the lesson and to identify the key messages from his/her notes. The teacher also needs time to collect his/her thoughts on the lesson
- Feedback following a lesson observation should include a clear judgement on lesson quality, carefully explained. It should enable teachers to build on what they are doing well and feel confident about introducing modifications where necessary
- Verbal feedback should be given as soon as possible after the observation and no later than the end of the next day. It should always be out of the hearing of others and where disruptions can be kept to a minimum. There should be enough time allocated for a professional discussion around the feedback to take place. Written feedback will normally be provided within ten working days of the observation.
- PPA time must not be used for giving feedback unless this has been requested/agreed by both parties.
- The observer should focus on how effective the lesson was in enabling learning to take place and the ways in which the teaching and activities contributed to it. When making an assessment, observers should always refer to the evidence they are drawing on and link it to the agreed observation criteria
- Recommendations, targets or action points set as a result of the observation should be practical and achievable and leave the teacher feeling that they can make progress. Clearly agreed deadlines and review timescales should be provided. If specific support and/or training is needed this should be noted, with a clear statement of who will organise this. It is likely that most CPD needs arising from observation will be met 'in house'.
- A short written record should be produced in line with school policy and presented to the teacher being observed, normally within 5 and no more than 10 working days of the observation. The teacher should be given the opportunity to add any comments they feel are appropriate to the record sheet