

Classroom observation protocol

For Teachers based in City Schools/Colleges and other establishments including centrally based teachers)

Human Resources
Education and Children's Services
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Although this document refers to the Headteacher, it also applies to the Principal / Line Manager / governors as appropriate. Where there is reference to teacher in this document amendments will be required if the school decides to apply this policy to other staff.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FORMAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATION OF TEACHING STAFF

Overview

This agreement is intended to cover all situations where teachers are being formally observed whether by the Headteacher, a senior member of staff, an LA adviser or consultant.

Whilst there is no defined /required limit to the number and time of formal observations it is recommended that schools consider 3 hours as the normal limit for annual appraisal observations.

During the overall cycle and in line with this protocol the number of observations may be adjusted by mutual agreement between the observer and teacher but should not exceed the overall recommended total of 3 hours per cycle- e.g. in certain phases it may be more useful to have 6 thirty minute sessions rather than 3 one hour sessions.

Under normal circumstances formal observation takes place as part of the appraisal cycle. The planned observation programme for the whole school would normally be issued for the start of the academic year.

Learning walks can also form part of formal observation, as part of the normal limit. There are two categories of learning walks. Learning walks that form part of the formal observation will be recorded, reported back and used to inform decisions, plans and actions regarding the individual teacher's performance and/or appraisal.

However, learning walks may also be undertaken to inform decisions regarding school plans and actions and/or evaluation of whole departments, faculties or year groups and not the performance of the individual teacher. A teacher will be given appropriate notice of the timing and by whom they will be conducted. A formal record relating to an individual teacher will not be made on such occasions. If during these learning walks a potential problem with an individual teacher's performance is identified, this must be reviewed separately by conducting a formal observation, giving the appropriate notice.

Governors may, by prior arrangement with the Headteacher and teacher concerned, visit a lesson to familiarise themselves with their link area, but these visits do not form part of formal observation.

Other classroom visitors, e.g. prospective parents of the school, do not form part of formal observation, but a teacher will, wherever possible, be given notice of such visits.

The Headteacher and other leaders with responsibility for teaching standards have the right to drop in to monitor the standards of Teaching & Learning and check that high standards of professional performance are established and maintained. The number and length of these drop in/monitoring activities will be for the Headteacher to determine as appropriate but should not be excessive. These sessions will not form part of formal class observations.

[NAME OF SCHOOL] MODEL PROTOCOL

1. Purpose

The Governing Body is committed to ensuring that formal classroom observation is developmental and supportive and that all involved in the process will:

- Contribute to this process professionally with integrity and courtesy
- Evaluate objectively
- Report honestly and fairly
- Respect confidentiality of information obtained
- Be supportive, constructive and identify training needs for individuals and whole school acting in the best interests of the pupils and staff at the school

2. Scope

In line with the Appraisal Policy, teachers' performance will be regularly observed but the amount and type of classroom observation will depend on the individual circumstances of the teacher and the overall needs of the school. Observations will be kept to the minimum needed to determine that objectives are met and in accordance with regulations.

The planned observation programme for the whole school will normally be issued for the start of the academic year, and discussed at the appraisal planning meeting.

Whilst there is no legally defined/required statutory limit to the number and time of formal observations the Governors have agreed that the normal number and time spent on annual appraisal observations in any one cycle will be as recommended within the LA's model protocol i.e. for annual appraisal this will equate to 3 hours per cycle normally as hourly sessions. Any adjustment to this process will only take place, if mutually agreed, in advance between the observer and teacher.

There may be circumstances where in addition to formal classroom observations for appraisal purposes other formal observations will be required. These may result from:

- Ofsted inspections including monitoring visits
- Schools requiring improvement or placed in an Ofsted category
- Capability cases – formal observations will be agreed as part of the individual teachers action plan and support programme
- LA review

In these circumstances individual teachers will not be formally observed for the purpose of appraisal. The purpose will be to improve practice and assist the school and individual development.

Should any potential problems be identified regarding an individual teacher during the above reviews a separate meeting will be arranged giving the teacher appropriate notice.

3. Planning and Preparation

Teachers performance will be regularly observed but the amount and type of formal classroom observation will depend on individual circumstances of the teacher and needs of the school, as outlined previously.

Formal classroom observation will only be carried out by those with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Observers should have the appropriate training and professional skills to undertake formal observations and provide constructive oral and written feedback.

In advance of the formal observation the Appraiser and appraisee will agree the purpose and nature of the formal observation programme.

All teachers will be advised annually of the formal observation programme for the school.

A discussion will take place between the teacher and observer, prior to the formal observation, to clarify the agreed purpose and nature of the observation.

Individuals will be given a minimum of 5 working days' notice of their formal observation, which must be agreed at the planning meeting.

For appraisal purposes account will be taken of teacher standards and individual objectives.

Arrangements for formal classroom observation will include details of:

- The agreed primary purpose/focus of the formal observation
- The agreed duration of the formal observation

4. After the Formal Observation

Sufficient time should be allowed for oral feedback during directed time which under normal circumstances will take place by no later than the end of the next working day.

Feedback cannot take place during PPA time, but may take place during periods of non-contact time where applicable.

Written feedback will be provided within 5 working days unless exceptional circumstances make this impossible.

The teacher will be provided with a copy of the report which cannot be amended unless there is a factual error. However the teacher will have the right to make a written comment in the appropriate place in the report.

The report will be treated as confidential and it will be confirmed who will have access to the report.

All records must be kept secure and confidential by the identified parties.

5. Information

Information gathered during formal classroom observations may also be used to inform a range of school strategies.