

MILLWOOD SCHOOL, BURY

POLICY: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

DATE: JANUARY 2018

DATE ADOPTED BY GOVERNING BODY:

A PROTOCOL FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

This document should be read in conjunction with the school's policy on performance management of teachers.

1 INTRODUCTION

The governing body is committed to ensuring that classroom observation is developmental and supportive and that those involved in the process will:

- Carry out the role with professionalism, integrity and courtesy
- Seek to reach agreement in advance on how classroom observations are to be carried out
- Evaluate objectively
- Report accurately and fairly; and
- Respect the confidentiality of the information gained.

The recognised teacher professional associations and Bury Local Authority have discussed issues relating to the classroom observation of teachers. These discussions were in response to requests from the professional associations. The teacher associations were ASCL, ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, and NUT. The resulting protocol is an attempt to define effective practice in relation to classroom observation that takes account of statutory requirements and national agreements. This protocol applies to all observations except Ofsted, Induction and voluntary peer appraisal, although principles of good practice such as feedback and notice should always apply. Account should be taken of other adults working in the classroom when planning observations to ensure staff are not over-observed.

2 THE RANGE OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

2.1 OFSTED Inspections

As part of an Ofsted inspection, classroom observation is used to gain evidence to inform inspectors' judgements on the quality of teaching and learning provided by the school. There are no individual teaching grades in the current OFSTED Common Inspection Framework. However, teachers have agreed to grades during internal annual formal lesson observations as they feel it gives them a benchmark for improvement. This is always under review.

2.2 Induction

Observations are an important part of the statutory induction process for newly appointed teachers and they are carried out by senior managers.

NQTs

Observations for newly qualified teachers are undertaken by the member of the SMT who is the teacher's mentor.

2.3 Peer observation for the purposes of Professional Development

Peer observation (co-coaching), as a professional development opportunity, is effective where colleagues believe that they would benefit from being observed by a colleague of their choice or from observing a colleague of their choice and choose to work together on a voluntary basis, identifying and focusing on the issues they have agreed to address. It is a common form of professional development during the induction process of newly qualified teachers. Peer observation is by its nature a voluntary process for all concerned and involves a teacher observing another teacher's practice. It is developmental and involves teachers learning from each other. It offers first-hand experience and direct evidence about what happens in other classrooms. It is a practical and powerful way to support teachers' practice and knowledge about teaching and learning. The outcome of the observation would be a matter of professional discussion between colleagues and would not normally be recorded.

2.4 Appraisal

Appraisal is a statutory and contractual obligation, as set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

The agreed model policy for appraising teacher performance is attached to this protocol.

Annual appraisal will involve a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 formal observations per year. Advice on the number and frequency of formal observations is contained in paragraph 3 of this document.

Where particular issues are identified as part of the process and if it is developmental, supportive and agreed after discussion with the teacher, or requested by the teacher under his/her own initiative, then in such cases it is recognised additional time may be required.

2.5 Head Teacher and Local Authority Observations

2.5.1 Classroom observation has a role in the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning that is separate from inspection and appraisal requirements.

2.5.2 Head teachers may wish to observe teachers carrying out their duties as part of their responsibilities. This may include visits to classrooms whilst lessons are in progress.

2.5.3 Classroom observation may be undertaken by Local Authority School Improvement officers within a programme of support provided to a school as part of improvement programmes, or as part of the Local Authority's statutory intervention powers. In all cases, classroom observations should follow the school's agreed procedures and follow guidance contained within this protocol. Only where the programme of support follows an OFSTED report which places the school as Requiring Improvement, in Serious Weaknesses or Special Measures, could the frequency of monitoring observations possibly be greater than in a school not subject to intervention. This would be in accordance with the agreed School Improvement Plan. In order that classroom observation is kept to a minimum, and to support efforts to deliver schools' commitment to streamlining data collection and minimising bureaucracy and workload burdens on teachers, the information gathered will be used for multiple purposes, including informing self-evaluation and school improvement strategies. This will enable the head to evaluate standards of teaching and learning and to ensure that proper standards of professional performance are established and maintained.

2.5.4 Formal observations are when a report or judgement is made on an individual teacher. The limits suggested in paragraphs 2.4 and 3 would not apply to informal observations. Informal observations would include learning walks, voluntary peer observations, observations of staff wanting to demonstrate good practice, SLT/headteacher drop-ins where no judgement is being made, or governor visits.

2.5.5 There is also flexibility within this protocol that allows for additional observations where there are concerns about a teacher's performance.

2.6 Capability Procedures

The number of teachers subject to capability procedures at any one time is very small compared to the overall number of teachers. In the event of a headteacher deciding to introduce capability procedures for a teacher, classroom observation may be used as a means of providing evidence of a teacher's strengths and areas for improvement. Classroom observation carried out as part of the capability procedure is not included in normal classroom observation time.

2.7 Governor Visits

Governors have no role in classroom *observation*. Governor visits are different from informal and formal observations of lessons. Individual governors may wish to visit classrooms to become familiar with the school or to observe specific aspects of the curriculum. Such visits should always be by prior arrangement and follow procedures agreed and specified by the head teacher and the governing body following consultation with the teaching staff. Such procedures should specify that governor visits are not professional observations. Governors should not evaluate the work of teachers. No report by a governor evaluating the work of a teacher or teachers should be presented to the governing body. At Millwood governor visits are carried out in order to celebrate the good work of the school and to understand, for example, seeking to understand the reasons for a particular intervention or support, clarifying understanding about assessment and the curriculum, having an acute and sensitive awareness of behaviour management. No governor may judge the quality of a lesson or teacher.

2.8 Drop-ins and Learning Walks

There is no clear consensus as to what constitutes a drop-in. A possible definition in the context of this protocol is that a drop-in is classed as an informal monitoring visit, not over frequent, which focuses on the quality of learning rather than an individual teacher's performance. The drop-in should be brief, cannot form part of appraisal and is used for developmental rather than judgmental purposes. A drop-in by definition may not always be notified in advance – it may be a short "walk through" to get a feel for what is going on.

A learning walk is a procedure to support school self-evaluation. It is a strategy that all teaching staff should be aware of in advance for peers to work together to provide feedback and information on a negotiated focus. It involves an organised tour through a school's learning areas to provide feedback on learning and teaching overall and consequently does not focus on the performance of an individual nor is it part of formal appraisal.

3 ADVICE ON CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

3.1 While the 2012 Regulations are silent on schools setting a limit on the number and length of observations, such formal observations should normally be undertaken on no more than three occasions and within a three hour limit, having regard to the individual circumstances of the teacher. The amount of observation for each individual teacher should reflect and be proportionate to the needs of the individual. There is no requirement to use all three hours.

3.2 There should be 5 day period of notice prior to an observation. There should also be a reasonable amount of time between classroom observations irrespective of the purpose of those observations although it may be appropriate to follow a piece of learning through more than one lesson. For the purpose of satisfying the requirements of the annual appraisal cycle, each teacher should undergo a minimum of one classroom observation a year. Each observation should not last more than 60 minutes.

3.3 Teachers should be observed on a proportionate and equitable basis. As far as possible all observations will take place at a time agreed between the teacher and the observer.

3.4 Under the appraisal process, the arrangements for classroom observation will be included in the planning and review statement and will include the amount of observation, specify its primary purpose, any particular aspects of the teacher's performance which will be assessed, the duration of the observation, when during the appraisal cycle the observation will take place and who will conduct the observation.

3.5 Observations should be conducted in a supportive and professional manner and should be neither intrusive nor threatening.

3.6 The Inspectors' Code of Conduct, in the OFSTED Inspections guidance, contains a number of principles that would apply equally to anyone undertaking a professional classroom observation.

3.8 Before the Observation

3.8.1 The purpose or purposes of any observation should be made clear before it takes place. The following information and arrangements should be available to and understood by both observer and observed beforehand:

- a) the reasons why the observation is taking place;
- b) the procedures to be followed;
- c) an agreement about the recording of any evaluation outcomes made and their reporting;
- d) a discussion about the aims, objectives and context of the lesson;
- e) where relevant, the identity of the person from whom further information may be obtained if required.

3.8.2 If appropriate the checklist below could be used for discussions between observer and observed.

- Has the purpose of the observation been made clear?
- What is the focus of the observation?
- Which lesson or part(s) of lesson(s) are going to be observed?
- Has there been an opportunity for the teacher being observed to describe the context of the lesson?
- What level of involvement will the observer have in the observed lesson?
- Should there be a standard format for recording the observation, for example, a pro-forma?
- When and how will the feedback be given?

☐ What use will be made of any information arising from the observation?

3.9 During the Observation

3.9.1 During the lesson(s), the observer should respond positively to any reasonable requests from the teacher being observed. The observer should act in as unobtrusive, sensitive and professional a manner as possible.

Information gathered during the observation will be used, as appropriate, for a variety of purposes including informing school self-evaluation and school improvement strategies in accordance with the school's commitment to streamlining data collection and minimising bureaucracy and workload burdens on staff.

3.10 After the Observation

3.10.1 The feedback offered following the observation should be well balanced and constructive. Where possible, feedback should be given at the time and in the manner agreed during pre-observation discussions.

3.10.2 Feedback may take a number of forms. In many cases, a brief discussion after the class will be sufficient. In other cases, where it is agreed that there is a need for a more detailed analysis, a suitable opportunity should be agreed as soon as possible after the observation and no later than the end of the following working day. The observer might wish to have time to reflect on the observation in order that feedback can be balanced and constructive. This should be within directed time (not within PPA), and in an appropriate environment which ensures confidentiality. Oral feedback will be given as soon as possible afterwards and by no later than the end of the following working day. It should take place in a suitable private environment.

3.10.3 Written feedback should be provided within five working days of the observation taking place and should note the date, time and length of the observation. It should identify good points from the lesson and constructive advice on areas for improvement. Identification of the teachers' professional needs and CPD resulting from the feedback should be considered at the next appraisal review meeting. If issues emerged from an observation that were not part of the focus of the observation as recorded in the planning and review statement, these should be covered in the written feedback and the appropriate action will be discussed with the teacher.

Schools should be aware of how the classroom observation feedback report is shared if the observation is multi-purpose. Where this is the case, all aspects within the report, recorded for purposes other than appraisal should be written as an annex to the final written report. Both the final written report and any annex should be shared with the teacher for their comment.

Information within any annex would not be kept as part of the information gathered for the performance management arrangements.

3.10.4 Report(s) arising from observations should be kept in a secure place and remain confidential to the observer, the observed and the head teacher. Teachers will have access to all written accounts of the observation after their lessons and, if they request, copies will be provided.

3.10.5 A visit by a local authority school improvement officer, for example, may lead to reports which are circulated within relevant local authority teams. Such reports will not identify or name individual teachers.

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