



# **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

## **MODEL POLICY**

**November 2010**

---

### **Introduction**

Excessive classroom observation is a serious problem in many schools. The various purposes for which observations may be required has meant that in some schools the total number of observations has increased, and the context in which they are carried out can be felt to be hostile and bullying, rather than supportive and developmental.

The NUT seeks to tackle this by reaching agreement with the school management team on the conduct of classroom observations, using the NUT Classroom Observation and Drop-In Policy and 'Learning Walk' Protocol, which are set out below. NUT school representatives should seek to secure from the school management team an agreement on the total amount of classroom observation for any purpose to which teachers can be subjected within the academic year and on the procedures to be followed before, during and after such observations. The support of the NUT school group will help to achieve this, so it is important to discuss the need for the protocol with colleagues. You may also wish to seek support for such an approach from representatives of other teachers' organisations at the school.

If agreement with the school management team cannot be reached, NUT school representatives should seek advice and support from their local division or association Secretary, NUT regional office, or in Wales, NUT Cymru.

The NUT regional office, or in Wales, NUT Cymru, should be informed immediately if members are required to participate in classroom observation practices or procedures which are contrary to the NUT's advice.

A more detailed document entitled 'Classroom Observations Guidance' is also available on [Hearth and teachers.org](http://Hearthandteachers.org).

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND DROP-IN POLICY**

### **Introduction**

1. This 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 classroom observation to be carried out;
  - evaluate objectively;
  - report accurately and fairly; and
  - respect the confidentiality of the information gained.
  
2. In accordance with these principles, the head teacher will:
  - consult staff on the pattern of classroom observation which teachers can expect annually and seek agreement with the teachers and their recognised organisations on these arrangements;
  - ensure that there will be a reasonable amount of time between classroom observations, irrespective of the purpose of those observations;
  - ensure that classroom observation will be undertaken solely by persons with qualified teacher status and the appropriate training and professional skills. Neither pupils nor governors will undertake observations; and
  - ensure that as far as possible, the results of observations are used for multiple purposes, in order to restrict the number of observations carried out.
  
3. The governing body recognises that visits to classrooms by head teachers or senior staff in order to support teachers or talk to pupils are separate from this classroom observation protocol.
  
4. The purpose of visits by head teachers and senior staff to classrooms will be made clear before they occur.
  
5. The governing body undertakes that, in accordance with this protocol, unannounced 'drop-ins' to fulfil the statutory duties of evaluating teaching and learning and performance management will not take place. A further protocol on 'learning walks' is attached.

### **Maximum periods and occasions of observation**

6. The governing body agrees that classroom observation for the purposes of performance management will be limited to one observation per teacher, of a maximum of 60 minutes in length per performance management cycle, except

in exceptional circumstances. Those exceptional circumstances are where the reviewee chooses to request a further observation, or where concerns have been raised about a teacher's performance which require further observation to take place.

7. In the exceptional circumstances in which more than one observation of a maximum of 60 minutes is to be conducted, this governing body agrees that the amount of observation will be kept to the shortest necessary period on the fewest number of occasions, with a maximum overall limit of 3 hours of observation, made up of observations on no more than 3 occasions. This overall limit will apply to all observations carried out for the statutory purposes of performance management and evaluation of standards of teaching and learning.

### **Preparations for observations**

8. In keeping with the school governing body's commitment to supportive and developmental classroom observation, the date and time of observations conducted for the purposes of performance management or for the evaluation of standards of teaching and learning (or for both purposes) will be fixed at least five working days in advance. Every effort will be made for observation to be conducted at an agreed time.
9. Before any performance management observation is conducted, there will be an opportunity for reviewer and reviewee to meet in order that the context of the lesson to be observed can be discussed. Where there will be another teacher or a member of support staff present during a class which is to be observed, there will be consideration at this meeting of any necessary arrangements to be made.
10. The arrangements for classroom observation for performance management will be included in the planning and review statement and will:
  - include the number of observations;
  - specify its primary purpose(s);
  - specify any particular aspects of the teacher's performance which will be assessed;
  - specify the duration of the observation;
  - specify when the observation will take place; and
  - specify who will conduct the observation.

### **Feedback and records**

11. Oral feedback from classroom observation at a pre-arranged time for the purposes of performance management will be given as soon as possible after

the observation and no later than the end of the following working day. Sufficient time will be allocated within the school day to enable participants in classroom observations to discuss and agree the arrangements for the observations. In addition, release time within the school day will be provided, as soon as possible, to enable the reviewer and reviewee to organise time for discussion on the outcomes of classroom observation. Time for preparation and feedback for classroom observation for performance management purposes will be made available in addition to PPA time.

12. Written feedback will be provided within five working days of the observation taking place. The reviewer will be given sufficient time within the school day to put in written form the conclusions agreed with the reviewee on the outcomes of the classroom observation.
  
13. The written record of feedback will include the date on which the observation took place, the lesson observed and the length of the observation. The reviewee will be able to append written comments to the feedback document. No written notes in addition to the written feedback will be kept.
  
14. Teachers will have access to all written accounts of the observation after their lessons.

## **'LEARNING WALKS' MODEL PROTOCOL**

This governing body agrees that 'learning walks' (including other short visits to classes) will only be carried out in accordance with this protocol.

'Learning walks' may take place in order to collect evidence about teaching and learning, evidence of progress and areas for development. They are intended to be developmental and constructive rather than judgemental and are a whole-school improvement activity. There should, therefore, be no attempt to use this approach as part of capability procedures or for performance management.

1. A programme of 'learning walks' should be agreed with teachers so that they know the date, time and focus of the learning walk and who will be conducting it, so that they can organise their classes accordingly.
2. The purpose or focus of a 'learning walk' should be explained to all relevant staff prior to its commencement. That purpose or focus will not relate to the performance of an individual.
3. 'Learning walks' will be conducted with minimum disruption to teachers and pupils.
4. 'Learning walks' will be undertaken in a supportive and professional manner.
5. A maximum of two colleagues will be involved in 'learning walks' at any time.
6. Pupils will not be asked for their views of an individual teacher during 'learning walks'.
9. Those teachers whose classes are visited will be given the opportunity to see any written records which have been made during the 'learning walk'.
10. There shall be no evaluation of an individual teacher during a 'learning walk'
11. Regular reviews of the operation of 'learning walks' will be held with all staff.
12. Any concerns about the implementation of this protocol should be raised initially with management either by the individual teacher concerned or with the support of the NUT school representative.