

## **Lambeth lesson observation guidance (May 2007)**

Agreed by Lambeth CYPS and Staff representatives

### **1. Status of the guidance**

This document defines the likely scope of observations of staff work and provide guidance on best to manage these. The guidance refers to all members of the school staff who take lessons (including Teaching Assistants and staff employed to cover PPA sessions.) It does not cover OfSTED inspections, which are subject to OfSTED's protocol.

### **2. Context of the guidance**

Headteachers 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. (See *National Standards for Headstaff (2004)*, *Roles of Governing Bodies and Headteachers (2000)* *School Staff Pay and Conditions (2006)*)

Teaching is observed for a variety of purposes, e.g. School Self-Evaluation, Newly Qualified Teacher Status, Performance Management, Threshold Assessments, competency assessments and National Strategy developments. (Appendix 1).

Schools that are in OfSTED Categories or have been identified by the Local Authority as being a "School with Additional Support" are supported by an Action Plan that will identify specific monitoring of teaching & learning as part of the school improvement strategies.

The sharing of lesson observations across teams of staff and associate staff is important for the development and improvement of all professionals. The opportunity to learn from observing each other is fundamental to the improvement of teaching and learning.

### **3. Guidance**

- Observations should be part of a planned programme, allowing reasonable intervals between observations, enabling staff to act on advice.
- The purpose of the observation should be clear, e.g. subject review, performance management, etc.
- There should always be a clear rationale and focus for any classroom observation, which should be supportive and developmental.
- The focus of the observation should be agreed e.g. management of pupils' behaviour.
- Staff should be given at least 5 working days' notice of which lesson will be observed.
- The length of observation should be made clear. Where judgements are being made, observations should be no shorter than 30 minutes to ensure that there is sufficient evidence.

- Staff should not be asked to produce anything additional to normal school requirements. An observation should not create the need for extra planning. Staff should follow school policy for planning.
- Documents, pro-formas and the criteria used for observations must be shared and made clear to staff.
- Ofsted style judgements should only be given by staff who are experienced in lesson observation and who are fully aware of the Ofsted “Quality of a whole lesson” criteria.
- Staff should be clear how the information about the lesson will be used, whether the teacher’s name will be written on any record of the observation and whether the information will be stored; if so, where and in what form.
- Staff should know to whom the information about the lesson will be reported to and the reasons.
- Embedded into observation / monitoring programmes should be the school’s commitment to CPD for staff and classroom staff.
- Practical advice should be given to the teacher to help make realistic improvements. .
- Future observations should focus on the areas for development.
- Staff should have the opportunity to engage in classroom observation with other professional colleagues, by agreement, in order to review and develop their practice.
- Developmental peer observations are voluntary and initiated by staff and are not part of performance management arrangements.
- Classroom observations by Ofsted or by a local authority using its statutory powers of intervention are also not part of performance management. Even in these circumstances observation should be reasonable, proportionate and fit- for-purpose and should be the subject of consultation with staff and unions.

#### **4. Observing lessons to review individual teacher performance**

- It is assumed that a teacher will be meeting the requirements of their job description, the relevant professional duties, the relevant professional standards and adherence to school policies
- Observations for Performance Management purposes should aim to be “multi-purpose” and provide monitoring information for all other necessary purposes, such as school self evaluation or a school improvement programme.
- Where evidence emerges which gives rise to concern about the employee’s teaching performance, additional classroom observations may be required.
- Capability procedures may be initiated where, despite targets, support and guidance staff do not achieve satisfactory or better outcomes from observations

## 5. Frequency of observations

The Headteacher should make sure that no individual teacher is overburdened with observation and that, wherever possible and appropriate, observations should aim to serve more than one purpose.

The number of observations planned and agreed in the statement should reflect, and be proportionate to, the needs and experience of the individual reviewee

Head teachers have a right to drop in to inform their monitoring of the quality of learning in the school. Drop-ins do not form part of the performance management procedure. In large schools, they may delegate drop in to appropriate members of the senior leadership group. However, head teachers may feel that Performance Management observations fulfil this purpose sufficient to render drop-ins unnecessary.

***NB therefore, for the majority of staff, the three hour limit should be sufficient to cover all observations***

## 6. Conduct of the observer

All who observe lessons should be discreet and, as far as is possible, should ensure that their presence does not significantly change the normal teaching and learning context. The competency of the observer should be appropriate; e.g. a trained member of the leadership team, a qualified OfSTED Inspector, a School Improvement Adviser, a School Improvement Partner.

The school's policy should also take account of staff who observe each other on an agreed basis for mutual benefit and support. In all cases the observer will be subject to the code of conduct re the confidentiality of the outcomes, and is required to provide a feedback based upon sound evidence. Written feedback will be stored in accordance with the school's protocols. Any additional notes must be destroyed, in accordance with Freedom of Information Act requirements.

There may be occasions when a member of staff is observed by two or three observers at the same time. Multiple observation must be carried out in as discreet a manner as possible, and the purpose of this observation must be reasonable and explained to the member of staff beforehand.

## 7. Giving Feedback

For joint observations it is useful to leave time for observers to discuss / agree their findings before giving the oral feedback. They will need to agree on the strengths and points for development and identify any questions required for issues that need clarification.

Verbal Feedback:

- Verbal feedback should be given by the end of the next working day
- When giving the feedback the observer should keep the discussion as positive as possible and ensure that strengths of the lesson are given.
- The teacher must be given clear feedback about the aspects for his / her development and an outline of what he or she needs to do to improve (i.e. strategies).
- The teacher may correct any factual errors on the part of the observer and this should be taken into account when the written feedback is given.

Written Feedback:

- Written feedback should be given within 5 working days of the observation.
- When writing the feedback the observer should write up the key points of the lesson observation as 'strengths' and 'areas for development', with appropriate evidence, using the agreed feedback document. A summative judgement will also be included if this has been agreed.
- Verbal and written feedback should not vary, apart from adjusting the factual errors from verbal feedback.
- There should be space on the form for the teacher to make a written comment on the feedback received, if he/she wishes, and space for teacher and observer signatures if appropriate.
- If a teacher and an observee differ on the quality of the lesson outcome, this should be recorded.

## Complaints procedure

- Any complaints about the conduct of a lesson observation should be raised informally in the first instance with the Headteacher. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved the member of staff may invoke the School's Grievance Procedure.
- Staff, including Headteachers, are advised to refer concerns to their own professional associations.

## APPENDIX 1: Possible reasons for a lesson observation

| <b>Purpose</b>  |
|---|
| 1. School's own Self Review procedures                      |
| 2. Subject review   |
| 3. Formative/Peer Group review                              |
| 4. School review  |
| 5. Link adviser joint evaluation                            |
| 6. Performance Management                                   |
| 7. Provision for SEN pupils                                 |
| 8. NQT monitoring visit.                                    |
| 9. Consultancy related to National Strategy development     |
| 10. Graduate Teacher Scheme                                 |
| 11. Prospective Advanced Skills Teacher                     |
| 12. Prospective leading subject teacher                     |
| 13. Schools with Additional Support or in OfSTED categories |
| 14. Pre-competency support                                  |
| 15. Competency proceedings                                  |
| 16. School-commissioned                                     |
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