



# **St Paul's School**

## **OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY**



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## OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

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## Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to promote the importance of lesson observations within St Paul's School and set out a positive procedure for all relevant staff to follow. Lesson observations are completed on an annual cycle and are to be supportive. They are an integral part of professional development and all staff should see them as a way of supporting their development as well as the development of the school overall.

Lesson observations should be a positive experience for all involved; it is recommended that each observation should be followed up with mainly positive comments with areas for development.

Where the Head Teacher has concerns about a teacher's skills and ability, lesson observations may be used to support that teacher with the development of their skills. In this instance, the teacher will always be aware that the observations are being used to provide additional information in order to increase the support offered.

Aspects of this Protocol have been taken from Teaching Standards and the OFSTED Framework (September 2012).

## Purposes of Lesson Observations

- To raise standards of learning and teaching
- To identify and disseminate good practice
- To identify staff development needs
- To contribute to CPD by providing an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own practice and effectiveness and to develop their own skills
- To provide evidence for performance management and internal reviewing procedures and systems

Observation should not place undue stress on teachers and should facilitate a supportive dialogue between teachers to raise standards of teaching and learning, therefore:

- Formal lesson observations are usually arranged at least three working days in advance
- The focus of the observation is usually negotiated with the teacher who is to be observed and the professional dialogue that follows centres on the agreed focus
- The teacher receives verbal feedback within 24 hours of the observed lesson, and written feedback within two days, if applicable.

## Categories of Observation

There are two types of observation:

1. **Formal** i.e. those for Performance Management, NQT and trainee, and competency procedures or similar.
2. **Informal** i.e. those for the teacher's professional development and those forming part of the internal monitoring system. They are concerned with non-judgmental support. Peer observations, learning walks and "drop-in" observations are also considered to be informal. To support their own CPD, teachers are encouraged to **arrange mutually agreed observation of colleagues' classrooms and take part in mentoring and coaching**

## Formal Observations

- Members of the Senior Management Team carry these out, except in the case of trainees and NQTs.
- Teachers must have agreed a focus for the observation
- The teacher should provide a lesson plan using the agreed lesson plan template. (except in the case of trainees from other establishments)
- The agreed lesson observation record sheet should be used to record all formal observations. The observer must arrive at the lesson on time, and before the start of the lesson
- The observation should generally last for a whole lesson – approximately 40 minutes
- The teacher will have the following documents available: teaching folder with lesson plan and teaching resources available for the observer to refer to
- A copy of the lesson observation record sheet may be kept by the observer and a copy given to the head teacher and to the teacher.
- Judgements and gradings made during a formal observation must be directly related to the Ofsted definitions which translate into ‘What is good teaching?’ (WIGT) ‘What is good learning?’ (WIGL)
- Teachers who have a responsibility for making formal observations, take part in a lesson observation moderation exercise with a colleague on a regular basis.

### Informal Observations

- Informal observations are agreed between the observer and the teacher. However, ‘drop-in observations happen daily and form part of the expectation of members of SMT and leadership team.
- Evidence obtained through an informal observation will not provide evidence for judgements that inform Performance Management, NQT assessment or competency procedures.

### Timetables of observations across the year

#### a) For qualified teachers / class teachers

When	Type	By whom?	Focus
Throughout the academic year	Informal ‘learning walks’	SLT	As agreed annually – display, pupil engagement and participation, policy in practice, use of support staff, behaviour
Autumn and summer term	Formal	SLT / External	As agreed annually – related to whole school priority and/or on a rolling programme

#### b) For Newly Qualified teachers

In line with statutory requirements, NQTs have at least one lesson observation each half term. These are arranged with the NQT mentor and carried out by the mentor, head teacher, deputy head or a subject leader, as appropriate to the needs of the NQT.

#### c) For teachers in their second year

Teachers in their second year should have an additional observation to those listed in a) above. This is usually carried out by the Head teacher in the autumn term

#### d) For Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants are observed in conjunction with teachers and should be included in feedback. It is essential that the nature of this observation is supportive.

### **Disputes regarding observations**

In the event of a difference of opinion relating to the organization or conduct of an observation, or to the judgement grading of the lesson observed, the Head teacher should be consulted. If the situation cannot be resolved, the Head teacher will conduct a second observation and all records pertaining to the original observation, will be destroyed.

### **Capability procedures**

There may be a very small number of teachers who are subject to formal capability procedures. These teachers may undergo more frequent lesson observations. Please refer to Staff Supervision and Performance Management and Capability Policy.

### **Record Keeping**

A copy of all monitoring records, including written observation feedback, should be given to the head teacher. Each term, the results of monitoring are discussed at SMT meetings and decisions taken as to necessary action. This could include support or training on an individual, phase or whole school basis.

## Lesson Observation Protocol

### General Principles

There should be a consistent approach to lesson observations. Criteria and guidelines, against which judgements are made in a formal observation, are available to all staff. A teacher being observed should expect to receive fair and just feedback that is objective and evidenced against these criteria and guidelines. Observers should ensure they are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to make an informed and objective, evidence-based judgement about the work of a colleague.

### Guidelines

- **Prepare well**

You need to agree in advance with the staff member, a clear and manageable focus for what is to be observed. You don't always need to observe a whole lesson. Focus instead on a particular process, for example, how the lesson begins, or questioning techniques. This will help both of you to explore the details and the assumptions under the surface of the lesson.

- **Set ground rules for the style of the observation**

This is as important as agreeing the focus. Will the observer take part in the lesson, or be a silent 'fly on the wall'? Will they stay in one place, (if so where) or observe from different parts of the classroom?

- **The observation will be recorded on our school evaluation form**

Feedback is a crucial part of the process, so the observer needs to be able to make notes relevant to the staff member's particular concerns and the focus of the observation. Written methods need to be practical and easy to interpret after the observation. Clarity is important.

- **Ensure an appropriate time and context for feedback**

Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the session. This could be just a summary with a longer discussion a couple of days later. Feedback should always be given in confidence. It should be explicit, focus on the areas agreed beforehand, and aim to give and provoke reflection. It is more like holding up a mirror to the person's teaching and posing some questions, than making definitive pronouncements. The observed staff member may then want to move into a more evaluative mode and identify what went well in the session and where there may be room for improvements.

- **Resolve the issue of developmental versus judgemental feedback.**

Developmental observation should build upon points identified in previous observations and look at progress since the last observation. The emphasis on self-evaluation puts pressure on feedback to become judgemental. If feedback is judgemental, it might be helpful to adopt the Ofsted scale. If this is done, the staff members involved should mutually agree the judgement so that the observed staff member feels involved in the reflection and the observer can point to clear evidence.

- **Keep an open ended staff member to staff member dialogue on-going about what you have observed**

Formal feedback can be followed by, or merge into, a broader discussion to explore the many possible interpretations of, and concepts supporting classroom interactions.

- **Look to provide expertise or examples of excellence in what you have observed**

Observation is least effective in a vacuum that is without appropriate professional, practical and theoretical follow-up. In particular, teachers developing their practice need clarity about what to aim for and knowledge about possible steppingstones in between.

- **Recognise that peer observation works best within a coaching model**

Keep asking the who, where, what, when, why questions. Extend them to: how could you have done better? Why did it happen? What will you do next time? What have you learnt? What will you do better next time? What went well? What went not so well?

- **What should we look at in lesson observations?**

There are many things that could be focussed on during a lesson observation and the primary area must be that which has been agreed prior to the observation.

Below is a list of some things that could be the focus of the observation:

- Lesson plans: are they clear and are they being followed?
- Management of staff and resources.
- Are the pupils engaged in learning? Are the children challenged and motivated to want to learn more.
- Pace of the lesson.
- Assessment
- Communication strategies.
- Behaviour Issues/management.
- Strengths of subject knowledge.
- Progress over time.

- **Checklist for Observer Feedback**

The following are areas that observers may want to consider when giving feedback to staff:

Does the observer deliver the messages sensitively, e.g. through body language, good eye contact, tone?

- Are they aware of the way the messages are being received?
- Are they focussing on behaviour (and not personality/identity).
- Do the messages come across clearly and in a helpful way?
- Is the observer adopting an elective or directive stance/or both, e.g. asking questions or making statements)? Is this effective?
- Are strengths as well as areas for improvement emphasised? Is the balance correct?
- Are difficult messages delivered sensitively but confidently and assuredly?
- Is the observer adapting tone/style to the way that the teacher is responding? Is this effective?
- Does the staff member respond appropriately to the questions being asked?
- Does the feedback give the staff member a clear indication of strengths and a clear target for improvement?

- **Lesson Observation Prompts**

When observing lessons, the observer may find the following prompts helpful. It is important that they consider the impact of teaching and the use of assessment in relation to different groups of pupils and individuals as well as the class as a whole.

- **Quality of Learning**

What are different groups and individual pupils actually learning as opposed to doing? Are pupils consolidating previous skills/knowledge or learning something new? Can all pupils make the links between previous/new learning? Can pupils talk about what they are learning as opposed to simply describing what they are doing? Do they consistently produce work of a good standard? Are pupils working independently? Are they self-reliant – do they make the most of the choices they are given or do they find it difficult to make choices? To what extent do pupils take responsibility for their own learning? How well do pupils collaborate with others? Do they ask questions of each other, of the teacher or other adults, about what they are learning? Are pupils creative, do they show initiative? How well do pupils follow routines/expectations?

- **Enjoyment of Learning and Attitudes**

Are pupils engaged, working hard, making a good effort, applying themselves, concentrating and productive? Are pupils developing habits of good learning? Are pupils happy with their work? Are they proud of it? Are pupils interested in their work and in what they are learning? Or are they easily distracted? How smooth is the transition from teacher input to group work? Do pupils settle to work easily?

- **Assessment to Support Learning**

Are there any significant differences in the learning of different groups of pupils, or of any individuals? Are pupils involved in assessing their own learning and progress? Do pupils know what they are learning and why? Do pupils have targets and do they understand what they mean/what to do to achieve them?

**Related Policies:** Capability Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy