



# Thriftwood School & College

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## *Classroom Observation & Learning Walk Policy*

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November 2018

Next Review Due:	December 2019
Staff were consulted on this document and it was accepted by them on :	December 2018



## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION and LEARNING WALK POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Classroom observation is an essential part of school and college life and can take several forms – formal, informal, curriculum focussed, paired or peer; in doing so we will improve and develop pupils' learning and experiences. In addition to these observations, Learning Walks will be carried out to provide a school / college wide view of learning.

### **PURPOSE OF LESSON OBSERVATION**

- To provide individualised positive and constructive feedback.
- 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, threshold and internal monitoring and reviewing procedures.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

There should be a consistent approach to lesson observation.

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

- Lesson observations are usually arranged at least 3 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 feedback within 48 hours of the formal observed lesson and written feedback within 5 days of the formal lesson observation.

Ofsted criteria for teaching & learning will be used as an exemplar for outstanding practice. Teacher standards will be referenced.

A teacher being observed should expect to receive fair and just feedback that is objective and evidenced against teacher standards.

All teachers are expected to participate in lesson observation as an observer and observee. Observers should ensure that they are well prepared to make an informed and objective, evidence based, judgement about the work of a colleague.

The observations of other professionals may contribute to the observation cycle – EP, speech and language therapist, peer reviews with professional colleagues from within the SEAX Trust..

## CATEGORIES OF OBSERVATION

There are two types of observation:

1. **Formal** – those for Performance Management and Threshold Assessment. They are concerned with judgements based on strengths and areas of development that will influence career and pay progression and professional development. Observations for professional management purposes should be limited to a maximum of 3 hours per year.
  - Teachers must have agreed date, time & focus for the observation
  - The teacher must provide a lesson plan using the agreed lesson-planning sheet.
  - The agreed lesson observation form should be used to record all formal observations.
  - The observer must arrive at the lesson on time.
  - The length of the observation should be no more than 1 hour.
  - A copy of the lesson observation feedback form may be kept by the observer and a copy given to the Headteacher and teacher.

Where evidence emerges which give rise to concern about the reviewees teaching performance, additional classroom observations may be arranged.

2. **Informal** – those for teacher professional development and those forming part of the school's monitoring and reviewing procedures. They are concerned with non-judgmental support and will not be used as part of the appraisal process. Peer, paired, learning walks and drop-in observations are considered informal. To support their own CPD teachers will arrange mutually agreed observation of colleague's classrooms and take part in mentoring and coaching.
  - Informal observations are agreed between the observer and the teacher. *However, drop-in observations can happen daily and form part of the expectation of the Headteacher and other senior leaders.*
  - Learning walks may take place in order to collect evidence about teaching and learning, evidence of progress and areas for school / college development.
  - No grading of the teacher's competency should be made following an informal observation.
  - The teacher should previously agree to any recording carried out, if applicable and who has access to copies.
  - The teacher will provide a lesson plan where appropriate.
  - Evidence obtained through informal observation will not provide evidence for judgements that inform Performance Management, Threshold or competency procedures.

As part of an Ofsted inspection, classroom observation is used to gain evidence to inform inspectors' judgements on the quality of T&L provided by the School and College. Participation in an Ofsted inspection, including classroom observation by Ofsted inspectors as part of their responsibilities, is a statutory requirement.



## **HLTA AND SUPPORT STAFF**

All support staff are observed in conjunction with teachers and should be included in the feedback where appropriate.

Where an HLTA has responsibility for a group or a subject they will be observed formally once a year and verbal and written feedback given using the agreed observation form.

Informal observations and monitoring visits will take place across the year as in Point 2 for teachers.

## **DISPUTES REGARDING OBSERVATIONS**

In the event of a difference of opinion relating to the organisation or conduct of an observation, or to the strengths and areas of development identified in the lesson observed, the Head of School or Head of College should be consulted. If the situation cannot be resolved, the Head of School or Head of College will conduct a second observation and all the records pertaining to the original observation will be destroyed.

The senior leaders feedback to the Strategic Leadership Team regularly on the outcomes of their monitoring and resulting action taken. This could include suggestions for individual staff, class teams or whole school CPD. The findings are also discussed with the Local Academy Committee / SEAX Trust in generalised terms.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR FEEDBACK**

- Evaluate objectively and be impartial, basing all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- Report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- Carry out observations with integrity, treating all with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- Endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the observation
- Maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being observed, and communicate findings clearly and frankly
- Respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- Take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.



## **LEARNING WALKS**

Learning walks are purposeful “walk-throughs” of classrooms to focus on pupil learning behaviours and classroom practice. Unlike a classroom observation, which provides a view of a single classroom, a learning walk creates a school-wide picture made up of many small snapshots.

It is a strategy for providing our academy with broad feedback about pupil learning and classroom practice. Learning Walks are based on spending a brief period of time (up to 15 minutes) in a number of classrooms over a learning walk.

### **A learning walk should have many different purposes**

- To monitor or audit practice throughout the school or college. Providing a ‘snapshot’ view.
- To share good classroom practice and promote consistency.
- To check for progression e.g. a learning walk to focus on how phonics/ basic skills are taught throughout the school.
- Training e.g. display for learning.
- To provide quality time for reflection and to stimulate professional discussion. To ensure colleagues see the practice across the curriculum.

### **How learning walks work**

The Senior Leadership Team will decide on a focus prior to a learning walk e.g. looking at lesson starters, establishing a calm climate, pupil engagement, focus on specific groups of pupils such as ASD, review of learning, plenary, group work.

The purpose and the focus will be shared with the whole staff team including support staff in the week before each ‘learning walk week’.

The observers will visit lessons individually and or in pairs – this will be decided by the observers prior to the learning walk. Observers will be reminded by the leadership team when the focus is announced in the week before the walks take place to prepare for their walk.

Each classroom will only be visited once during the learning walk week.

The observers will decide between themselves the day and time (lesson) they will carry out a learning walk.

From time to time, other professionals / colleagues from different schools may visit the school and college for their own professional development / share good practices e.g. looking at the use of sensory integration techniques within the classroom. In addition to this, Trustees may wish to visit classrooms to become familiar with the School and College or to observe specific aspects of the curriculum. Such visits will be by prior arrangement and will not be professional observations. Trustees and other visitors will not evaluate the work of the teacher.



A summary of findings from learning walks will be discussed by the leadership team and shared with the whole staff team including support staff to share good practice, positive news, areas for development and to celebrate what we do well.

### Who goes on a learning walk?

- Staff
- Pupils
- Governors
- Other professionals

### What will be the outcomes?

- Short written report highlighting strengths and areas of excellence.
- Identification of good practice and a plan on how to extend that across the academy. A change or tweaking of policy, practice or routine.
- Further information required to gain a more detailed picture.

### TIMETABLE FOR OBSERVATIONS /LEARNING WALKS ACROSS THE YEAR

WHEN	TYPE	BY WHOM	FOCUS
Regularly at any point during the year.	Informal, drop-in	Leadership team *	Consistent practice Routines, timetable application of policies behaviour of pupils emotional climate use of resources and LSA
Autumn (Sept)	Learning Walks	Leadership team	Focus on settling in routines, structures.
Autumn (Sept – Oct)	Formal – PMR	Leadership team	Teacher standards
Spring (Jan)	Learning Walk	Leadership team / Staff *	Focus on pupil work, learning over time.
Spring (Jan – Feb)	Formal - PMR	Leadership Team	Follow up on previous targets
Spring (March-April)	Sharing & practice team teach	Peer / Paired	AIP
Summer (May – June)	Learning Walk	Leadership team *	Audit of teaching and learning

\*This may include Local Authority advisors, consultants or other Headteachers as part of a peer review.

