

## **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – CYPS**

### **ADVICE FOR HEAD TEACHERS, CONCERNING THE PLANNED OBSERVATION OF LESSONS**

**Date of advice: October 2008**

#### **1. STATUS OF THIS PROTOCOL**

- 1.1. This document aims to define the likely scope of observations of teaching and should fit within any individual schools' policies and practices. It does not cover Ofsted inspections, which are subject to Ofsted's protocol. It takes account of the need for schools to adopt a lesson observation protocol for the purposes of performance management, under the revised regulations that took effect from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2007. There is an NCC recommended policy for performance management, including a lesson observation protocol. This is based on the RIG<sup>1</sup> national model policy, and has been consulted on and agreed with the local WAMG<sup>2</sup>, although schools can of course adopt their own policy, in line with statutory requirements.
- 1.2. Head teachers are strongly advised to draw this protocol to the attention of all staff who may be involved in the observation of lessons.<sup>3</sup>

#### **2. HEADTEACHER'S RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.1. This protocol recognises the rights and responsibilities of the Head teacher, or any agent directed by the Head teacher<sup>4</sup>, to monitor any lesson at any time, as part of their normal duties and statutory requirements. Head teachers 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

#### **3. CONTEXT OF THIS PROTOCOL.**

- 3.1. Teaching is observed for a variety of purposes, e.g. School Self-Evaluation (New Relationship with Schools), Newly Qualified Teacher Status, Performance Management, Threshold Assessments, competency assessments and National Strategy developments – see summary at the end of this document (Appendix 1).

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<sup>1</sup> RIG = National Rewards and Incentives Group

<sup>2</sup> Northamptonshire Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group

<sup>3</sup> NB: This Protocol refers not only to the observation of Qualified Teachers, but to all members of the school staff who take lessons. (This includes Teaching Assistants, HLTAs and staff employed to cover PPA sessions.) However Performance Management regulations apply only to those employed under school teachers pay and conditions.

<sup>4</sup> A separate policy is available from NCC Governor services regarding classroom visits by governors, and advice has also been provided for school improvement staff regarding lesson observations that they carry out.

- 3.2. All observations should come within a published framework that is communicated to all staff, and is open to challenge and review with staff, in order to seek agreement,<sup>5</sup> wherever possible. Such communication is a principle of best practice that runs throughout this protocol.
- 3.3. Section 13 of Appendix 1 refers to observations relating to Schools that are in Ofsted Categories or have been identified by the Local Authority or SIP as being a Cause for Concern. Schools in these categories are supported by an Action Plan that will identify specific monitoring of teaching & learning as part of the school improvement strategies. Lesson observations for this purpose that are conducted by LA representatives are excluded from the performance management limits and feedback requirements. A separate but related protocol is to be used for observations carried out by School Improvement service personnel.
- 3.4. The sharing of lesson observation within departments and across teams of teachers and associate staff is pivotal in the development and improvement of all professionals. The opportunity to learn from observing each other is fundamental to the improvement of teaching and learning. Some of these observations will be related to quality assurance and as such are part of the school's performance management arrangements, Some will be coaching and mentoring and as such will be part of the teacher's CPD; LASI observations as part of national strategies, including those where the SIP has identified an area of focus, fall into this area, and do not form part of performance management arrangements.
- 3.5. Schools are statutorily required to be accountable for standards. The School Self Evaluation Process is a mandatory requirement relating to the Education Act 2006 and the revised School Inspection framework 2005. Schools are therefore turning to external agencies, including to LASI, to assist them with their evaluation and benchmarking of Teaching and Learning standards. These include lesson observations on a commissioned basis. When a school commissions LASI to undertake a teaching and learning review the lesson observation protocol for school improvement colleagues will be followed.

#### **4. FREQUENCY OF OBSERVATIONS**

- 4.1. The Head teacher should make sure that no individual is overburdened with observation, ensuring that there are a reasonable number of lessons observations, agreed in advance, within the context of either individual performance, National Strategy support, Subject Review or Local Authority intervention and the Performance Management regulations.

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<sup>5</sup> In this context and because demands for observation can come from so many directions each school should agree a global total time and number of observations, with appropriate consideration being given to using multi purpose observations, and consultation with teaching staff and their unions on a timetable for the year, or at least a term in advance for locally controlled observations. Where there are no union representatives in school area representatives should be notified and involved.

## **5. COMMUNICATION**

### **5.1. NCC strongly advises that Head teachers ensure all of the following points are established and communicated before classroom observations take place, in the context of section 3.2**

1. The purpose of the observation, e.g. subject review, performance management, (see appendix 1)
2. The focus of the observation – e.g. management of pupils' behaviour
3. Consideration needs to be given as to the nature of the observation, formative or summative. In some cases there is a need for a summative assessment e.g. NQT termly monitoring.
4. Give at least 5 working days' notice of which lesson will be observed, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances<sup>6</sup>, to all colleagues involved
5. Length of observation – e.g. full lesson, half hour etc.
6. Prior information required from the person taking the lesson – e.g. lesson plan.
7. The nature of any judgements to be made, and how they will be recorded and graded, if appropriate
8. How and when feedback will be given, in line with the timescales of within 24 hours for oral feedback and 5 working days for written.
9. How the information about the lesson will be used, and whether or not the person observed's name will be written on any record of the observation.
10. Who the information about the lesson will be reported to.
11. Whether or not the information will be stored; if so, where and in what form, and for how long.

5.2. The proforma used to record the lesson observation vary according to the nature of the observation. The majority of observations are based upon the Ofsted Evidence Form – i.e. a loose format, recording details of lesson (subject, Year group, numbers of pupils, needs of pupils, etc.) with an open box to record teaching & learning, standards, achievement etc.

5.3. Some statutory observations have their own proforma – school based or national, e.g., Advanced Skills etc.

5.4. The criteria for judging the quality of teaching and learning should be in line with those used in the Ofsted Framework of Inspection

## **6. CONDUCT OF THE OBSERVER**

6.1. All who observe lessons to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning should ensure that their presence does not significantly change the normal teaching and learning context. Where the observer has a CPD role in the lesson, then it may be that interactions occur, by agreement with the person taking the

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<sup>6</sup> The Ofsted Framework, 2005, provides for short inspections only, with 2 days notice to a school. In these circumstances, there will be short notice (i.e 2 days) to staff who take lessons that observations will occur and that they may be observed. A similar situation may apply when e.g. HMI monitoring visits take place.

lesson. The competency of the observer should be appropriate; i.e. a qualified Ofsted Inspector, a School Improvement Adviser, a School Improvement Partner, a National Strategy consultant etc, or a trained member of the school staff. 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, in line with performance management regulations. Any additional notes must be destroyed, in accordance with Freedom of Information Act requirements.

- 6.2. It is strongly recommended that not be more than two observers should be present at any one time, and that the norm would be one. Where more than one observer is present, for internal moderation or training purposes, that should be agreed with the person being observed.

## **7. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- 7.1. Any complaints about the conduct of or judgements made from a lesson observation should be raised informally in the first instance with the Head teacher. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved the member of staff may invoke the School's Grievance Procedure.

## **8. TEACHERS ENGAGED IN CAPABILITY PROCEEDINGS**

- 8.1. See Annex 1 & 2 for recommendations. It is expected that the Head teacher will draw up a plan with the member of staff concerned and their adviser beforehand, which will agree the number of observations, purposes, and who will carry them out. In such situations performance management arrangements are put on hold, as set out in the performance management regulations 2006 (section 5 (2) b).

## **9. NCC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 9.1. The Local Authority recommends that each NCC school should adopt a Lesson Observation Policy, based upon this and any subsequent guidance. This should either incorporate or complement the statutory classroom observation protocol required by the performance management regulations in force from September 2007.

**NCC Human Resources (Schools) + LASI October 2008 (to be reviewed January 2009)**

## APPENDIX 1: POSSIBLE PURPOSES OF LESSON OBSERVATION (not exhaustive)

Purpose	Who commissions
1. School's own Self Review procedures	Headteacher, or Head of Department/ Subject Lead
2. Subject review	Headteacher or NCC.
3. Formative/Peer Group review (SIA with member of SMT/MMT)	Headteacher/SMT
4. School review	Headteacher, governing body or NCC
5. School support adviser joint evaluation	NCC in negotiation with school.
6. Performance Management	Focus agreed with reviewer as part of annual planning meeting, by October 31st
7. Provision for SEN pupils	School or CYP Service
8. NQT monitoring visit.	NCC, in response to DCSF requirement.
9. Consultancy related to National Strategy development	School or NCC Schools' Services staff
10. Graduate Teacher Scheme	Headteacher and NCC.
11. Prospective Advanced Skills Teacher	Teacher, headteacher
12. Prospective leading subject teacher	NCC, in consultation with teacher and headteacher.
13. Schools causing concern or in OFSTED categories	NCC monitoring visits (usually half-termly).
14. Pre-competency support	Headteacher
15. Competency proceedings	Headteacher
16. School-commissioned	Headteacher
17. LIG	NCC, in consultation with teacher and headteacher

## APPENDIX 2: RECOMMENDED LEVELS OF OBSERVATION

Purpose	Recommended levels
Performance Management <sup>7</sup>	Maximum of 3 hours per year, proportionate to need, as agreed at PM planning meeting
Prospective Advanced Skills Teacher	As required by assessment process
Prospective Excellent Teacher	As required
Schools causing concern or in OFSTED categories	As required in the post Ofsted action plan, within the context of paragraph 3.2 of this protocol
Pre-competency support	As agreed
Competency proceedings	As agreed
Subject review	Sufficient to cover each year group/ range of attainment - agreed with HoD
School review	Sufficient to cover focus of review – subjects, key stage etc. – as agreed with Senior Management
Link adviser joint evaluation	Sufficient to ensure moderation of standards with SMT/HoD – to be kept to the minimum
Provision for SEN pupils	Sufficient to cover key requirements of DSP monitoring programme – as agreed with Senior Management
Consultancy related to National Strategy development	Sufficient to cover key requirements of strategy where school is targeted – levels agreed with SMT and HoD
<b>NQTs</b>	
NQT monitoring visit.	1 per term
<b>GTPP</b>	
Graduate Teacher Scheme monitoring visit	1 per term

<sup>7</sup> NB it should be noted that the RIG performance management guidance section 5.10 indicates that “*the classroom observation agreed in the planning and review statement should be proportionate, multi-purpose and should provide monitoring information for a range of other necessary purposes, such as school self evaluation or a school improvement programme, as well as for performance management.*”