1. **Observation (general guidance)**

**Proformas**

1. **Observing across lessons**
2. **Unstructured observation as a participant**
3. **Observing with structure of a lesson**

## **Observing learner and teacher activity**

**Observation (general guidance):**

Following is a guide to helping you observe.

Observing can help you improve your practice whilst on placement and help with your reflection and targets for your weekly log.

Observations maybe informal and unstructured, with reflections being adapted and accommodated into your practice on a subconscious level. Observing can help you improve your practice and help with your reflection.

Formal observations can help this process and enable you to focus in on specific aspects of learning and teaching.

Unfocused observation, without a clear purpose, can be a waste of time and counter-productive for the following reasons

* Experienced teachers’ teaching is often *so fluent that it looks easy*; the skill, which cannot be seen by the observer, is very largely in the expert information processing and decision making that is going on;
* Trainee teachers *only see what they already understand*, and when they are first in schools they do not know enough to see how complex teaching really is.
* Trainee teachers have already spent *thousands of hours in classrooms as pupils*. At first, still with this *pupil perspective*, everything in classrooms looks familiar and obvious, and *they can find it difficult to see things in the way that teachers do*.
* Trainee teachers often have strong *preconceptions* about the kind of teachers they want to be. They are quick to judge the teachers they observe as falling short of these preconceptions, and therefore think they have little to learn from them.
* Trainee teachers are generally *keen to prove themselves* as teachers. They are *eager to get on with teach*ing and to learn from their own practice rather than from observing others.

Focused observation can serve a number of different purposes. Through guided observation trainee teachers can:

1. Be helped to shift *from a pupil to a teacher perspective*;
2. Learn to analyse *what is happening* in classrooms;
3. Get a sense of the *standards* which teachers set;
4. Discover *different ways of doing things*;
5. Learn to *monitor the progress* of a lesson;
6. *Identify things which they do not understand*, and which can provide a basis for *discussion* with the teacher.

Observing and sharing good practice is an essential skill for the good and reflexive teacher. It helps you to know what works, or doesn’t, and maintain and improve the quality of your teaching.

## **Summary**

 **Purpose of observation: Most appropriate time:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1 Shifting from a pupil to a teacher**  **perspective:** Helping trainee teachers to  be realistic about the demands of teaching and their ability to handle them | At the beginning for you to see what teaching entails; At any time when you feel that important aspects of teaching are being neglected;  |
| **2 Learning to analyse what is happening in**  **classrooms:** Enabling you to recognise that while variations properly exist between the rules and expectations of different teachers, these fall within certain acceptable boundaries…  | Early on; At any time if the standards you are setting in your own teaching are inappropriate;  |
| **3 Getting a sense of the standards which**  **teachers set:** Reflecting on the personal and professional standards within the teaching profession and how these impact on personal impressions and aspirations…  | At the beginning for you to see what teaching entails; Ongoing – developing professional attitudes and behaviours;  |
| **4 Discovering different ways of doing things:**  Encouraging you to appreciate that teachers can bring about pupil learning in a variety of ways, and to extend their own repertoires of skills and strategies…  | At any time;  |
| **5 Learning to monitor the progress of a lesson**  Bringing home to you the importance of pace and timing, and the need for flexibility…  | Early on when you are in a protected environment; Later, focusing on the need for flexibility and how teachers adapt their plan;  |

**6 Identifying things which you do not understand, and which can provide a basis for discussion with your mentors:** Identifying gaps in your knowledge and experience, which will enable you to progress and improve your classroom practice…

* At the beginning for you to see what teaching entails;
* Ongoing – developing professional attitudes and behaviours;

# Beginning to observe

For an observation to be useful it needs to have a clear purpose and be conducted in a way that is appropriate for that purpose. There are many approaches to lesson observation. Here are some examples:

* Straightforward observation and using *field notes* to record general observations – a good place to begin, which can be reflected upon critically at a later time.  Observe specific *parts of lessons* – e.g. demonstrations, starter/plenaries etc.
* *Tracking* individual learners, recording either general observation or specific, predetermined, criteria – for example, track a learner with special educational needs (SEN), using their Individual Education Plan (IEP) to inform observations (speak to the SENCO first).
* *Guided observation* of *specific criteria* or *learners* (ignoring everything else) – for example, observing individuals, groups or classes for specific behaviours (e.g. “on or off task”).
* *Timed observations*, where you make an observation of specific criteria at timed intervals. A grid can be used to record observations at predetermined intervals (e.g. every 5 minutes)
* *‘Reverse engineering’* a lesson plan from observing a full lesson – i.e. what would the lesson plan look like for the lesson that you have observed?

The format of the recording depends on the method being used. In first few days placement you should make general field notes of observations and move towards observing specific criteria and/or learners. Some of the methods of observation are best left for placement B

Remember that you are observing to **reflect on your developing practice**, rather than making value judgements on the teaching being observed.

# Possible foci for your observation

* Beginnings and ends of and transitions within lessons
* Teachers’ questions and the kind of answers they generate
* Teachers’ explanations and instructions: how they are made clear and explicit
* Organisation of equipment
* Methods of class control: verbal and body language
* Giving praise and providing instructional feedback
* Behaviour management techniques

# Some questions to ask when observing…

* How do learners enter the teaching space (e.g. classroom, gym, lab, workshop etc.)?
	+ What is the layout of the teaching space?
	+ What strategies are used to settle the learners?
	+ When does the teacher take the register?

* Start of lesson – is the first activity long or short?
	+ What is its purpose?

* How are the lesson objectives shared?
	+ Are they revisited during the lesson?

* What is the focus of the teaching and learning?
	+ i.e. teacher lead, group or paired work. o Why did the teacher plan this?
	+ What was the impact?

* What different activities are there for the learners to practise their new skills?

* How is new material presented?
	+ What visual aids or support are there for learning?

* What teaching resources are used?
	+ e.g. handouts, slideshows, materials, equipment, etc.
	+ How is ICT used to enhance learning?

* How does the material match the maturity of the age group?
	+ How might it differ from, similar, materials for a different age group?

* How does the teacher manage learners’ learning and behaviour?
	+ What strategies were used?
	+ What are the timings for each activity?

* How does the teacher communicate?
	+ i.e. verbal and non-verbal, to the whole class, groups or individuals.

* Are there points in the lesson at which the teacher assesses the pupils’ understanding?
	+ How does the teacher give feedback?

* Are *adults other than teachers* (AOTT) used in the lesson?
	+ e.g. technician, teaching assistant, learning support assistant, etc.

* How does the lesson conclude?
	+ Does the final activity allow pupils to celebrate their new learning and reflect on how they learnt?
	+ What homework was set? o How were pupils dismissed?

## **Observing across lessons**

Start with your first observations pro forma below to record observations across a number of lessons, making notes on instances where you have observed different pedagogical approaches.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Area**  | **Notes on observed activities**  | **When?**  |
| **Starter activity**  |   |   |
| **Plenary activity**  |   |   |
| **Teacher modelling**  |   |   |
| **Teacher explanation**  |   |   |
| **Questioning**  |   |   |
| **Groupwork**  |   |   |
| **Independent learning**  |   |   |
| **Formative assessment** (how does the teacher respond to pupils’ learning?) |   |   |
| **Behaviour management**  |   |   |
| **Developing literacy**  |   |   |
| **Developing numeracy**  |   |   |
| **Homework**  |   |   |

## **Unstructured observation as a participant**

Start with your next observation without an agenda, other than to be part of the lesson and get involved with the lesson. Before the lesson, ask the teacher what they want you to do (e.g.

support an individual or a group of pupils in the class). Record field notes immediately after the lesson with the table below.

|  |
| --- |
| **What is/was your role in the lesson?**  |
|   |
| **What did the learners you observed do in the lesson?**  |
|   |
| **What did you learn?**  |
|   |
| **What questions do you have?**  |
|   |

## **Observing with structure of a lesson**

You will not participate in the learning activities for this observation. Find a position in the class where you are able to see the teacher and learners clearly without unduly interfering or disrupting the activities. Make a note of the time and a description of each activity you observe. Focus on transitions, such as how the teacher manages moving from direct teaching (e.g. an explanation) to pupil led activity (e.g. collaborative or cooperative learning).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject:**   | **School:**   |
| **Year:**   | **Date:**   | **Classroom:**   |
| **Time**  | **Activity**  |
| *Introduction and start-up routines*  |
|   |   |
| *Starter activities*  |
|   |   |
| *Main activities (including episodes and mini-plenary activities)*  |
|   |   |
| *Plenary Activities*  |
|   |   |
| *End of lesson routines*  |
|   |   |

## **Observing learner and teacher activity**

In this observation, you will be undertaking a timed observation of learner and teacher activity. It is important to make quick notes that capture the activities of both the teacher and the learners at 5-minute intervals. This approach forces the observer to focus on the general activity in the lesson, rather than focus on specific phenomena.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date:** |   | **Cohort:** | **Class / Group / One-to-One** |
| **School:** |   | **Subject:** |   |
| **What is the focus of your observation?** **(Refer to your SMART target actions if applicable)** |  |
| **Learning Objectives:**  |  |
| **Success Criteria:**  |  |
| **Minutes**  | **Learner Activity**  |  | **Teacher Activity**  |
| **0**  |   |  |   |
| **5**  |   |  |   |
| **10**  |   |  |   |
| **15**  |   |  |   |
| **20**  |   |  |   |
| **25**  |   |  |   |
| **30**  |   |  |   |
| **35**  |   |  |   |
| **40**  |   |  |   |
| **45**  |   |  |   |
| **50**  |   |  |   |
| **55**  |   |  |   |
| **60**  |   |  |   |
|  |  |  |  |

# Reading

Heightman, S. (2009). Reading Classrooms: How to maximise learning from classroom observation. In Capel, S., Leask, M and Turner T. (2009). *Learning to teach in the secondary school* (fifth edition). London: Routledge.

Krill, E., Orsa, K. and Pikksaar, E. (2010). Promoting student teachers’ lesson analysis and observation skills by using Gagné’s model of an instructional unit. *Journal of Education for Teaching,* 36(2), pp.197–210. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02607471003651789>[accessed 27 July 2018]

McCormick, J. and Leask, M. (2009) Teaching Styles. In Capel, S., Leask, M and Turner T. (2009). *Learning to teach in the secondary school* (fifth edition). London: Routledge

Wragg, T. (1999). *An introduction to Classroom Observation* (second edition)*.* London: Routledge