



## Learning Walk & Observation Policy

Nurturing today's young people,  
Inspiring tomorrow's exemplary citizens



**January 2020**

**To be reviewed Jan 2022 or as required**



## Learning Walk and Observation Policy

### Lesson Observations

Lesson observations are seen as a crucial way of supporting all staff at Bolton Darul Uloom. They are completed on a 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.

Consequently, staff may ask for areas of weakness or concern to be observed so that they can receive support in those parts of their work that they feel least secure about. Lesson observations should be a positive experience for all involved; it is recommended that each observation should be followed up with mainly positive comments and only one area for development.

Where the headteacher 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.

### Lesson Observation Protocol

**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 detail, 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?

**Decide in advance how the observation will be recorded.** 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. Audio and visual technologies can play their part, but might be intrusive and of great intrigue to pupils. Written methods need to be practical, and easy to interpret after the observation.

**Ensure an appropriate time and context for observation.** Observation for staff development need not last long. Short observations can lessen cover needs. Some classes organise team teaching of classes and create the opportunity to observe each other in this way.

**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 going about what you have observed.** Formal feedback can be followed by, or merge into, a broader mutual 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.

**Work with someone in the school who keeps an overview of all observation.** This need not be yet another co-ordinator. Whoever it is, they will keep track of the observations that are taking place, be aware of good practice, and offer support.

**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 that 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?
- Pace of the lesson
- Communication strategies
- Behaviour issues

Leadership & Management	Teaching, Learning	Assessment for Learning	Outcomes	Personal Development, behaviour, welfare

**This policy should be used in conjunction with the:**

- Learning Walk Checklist template
- Learning Walk suggestions
- Observation Learning Walk summary form

### 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 focusing 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?