



Ein cyf/Our ref

Directors of Education

Cc:
Consortium Coordinators
WLGA
Governors Wales
School Workforce Trade Unions

April 2012

Dear colleagues,

The role of classroom observation in raising standards

Classroom observation is a key element of school improvement strategies to raise standards and improve learner outcomes through the development of high quality teaching and learning. As such, observation needs to be considered as an entitlement for practitioners and form an integral part of their professional development activities.

Observation can take many forms and provides valuable opportunities to share what works well in the classroom including receiving feedback on new areas of practice or learning. It provides practitioners with the opportunity to share their professional skills and experience and to enrich their understanding of learning in different settings. Observation provides a powerful means for practitioners to share effective practice and provide mutual support.

Effective observation can also support arrangements for peer coaching and mentoring which enable practitioners, as part of the wider team working to improve learner outcomes, to benefit from the experience and support of more experienced colleagues. Observation can also be a key tool in identifying and addressing areas of teaching and learning that require additional support and development, and as such, observation benefits both learners and practitioners.

Given these potential benefits I am concerned that, from the contact I have with schools and practitioners, it is apparent there exists some misunderstanding about arrangements for classroom observation. I therefore wish to clarify the position.

It is for head teachers to decide on the purpose, nature and frequency of classroom observation. Arrangements for observation should be planned and well managed and the

purpose of observation should be clearly understood by those involved so that it supports effective teaching and learning. However, contrary to some peoples' misunderstanding, there are no set limits on the amount of observation that may be carried out either as part of performance management arrangements or for other purposes.

Depending on its intended purpose observation may involve peers, line managers or other persons identified by the headteacher. Where observation is carried out for the purposes of making judgements on a teacher's performance, such as when part of performance management arrangements, this should be carried out by a person with Qualified Teacher Status.

I hope this has clarified matters and that head teachers and governing bodies are able to plan with confidence for the use of classroom observation as part of their wider strategies to secure high quality teaching and learning.

I would be grateful if you could forward this letter to your schools.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Tweedale', written in a cursive style.

Chris Tweedale
Director, Schools and Young People