



LNCT 08 – Classroom Visits

December 2018

Classroom visits play a key role in spreading good practice in teaching and learning and assuring quality as part of school self-evaluation within the improvement planning process. Sharing classroom practice is a two-way process at the heart of collegiality and all visits should take place within a climate of trust and support. The overall context of classroom visits is to improve teaching and learning for the benefit of pupils. However, all participants need to be clear regarding the purpose of any specific visit in which they are involved.

It is important that the following guidelines for classroom visits are adhered to:

The guidelines contained in this agreement should be adhered to in a spirit of trust, cooperation and collegiality, being mindful that the process must benefit the learning experience of pupils.

Members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Principal Teachers (PTs) are required to visit a range of classes as part of their management role. This is a valuable form of professional development and the time spent for follow-up meetings should be allowed for in the school Working Time Agreement (PRD). Feedback from visits will be collated and shared at whole school level and individual feedback will be given to class teachers. Although it may be helpful to do so, there is no requirement to produce a written record other than to note the date of the visit and any agreed next steps. Participants should discuss issues arising from this process with senior colleagues, for example CLPL opportunities. Once a series of class visits has been completed the information will inform the improvement planning process.

Formal class visits should be conducted in a culture of improvement and mutual respect. The aim of any class visit is to improve learning and teaching and share good practice. Practitioners should be aware of the process and any focus of visits. Timings and the number of visits per session, should be negotiated and agreed.

The visitor should be sensitive to the everyday working of a class and may, if appropriate, play an active part in the lesson.

Feedback **may** include a written record. However, this should not be completed during the lesson and any form of 'clipboard and tick box' approach would be entirely inappropriate. After the visit has taken place, there should be a follow-up meeting. The professional dialogue that takes place after the observed lesson is the most important part of the process. The dialogue should not be one-sided and should allow the practitioner to be reflective as to what went well and the next steps.

The classroom visits will contribute to the overall evaluation of teaching and learning within the school. Evaluative language should be used in feedback so that teacher has a clear understanding of strengths and improvement needs.

In addition to classroom visits, there are other strategies which can be used to audit teaching and learning e.g. reviewing schemes of work and/or forward plans, reviewing pupil written work/homework/test results/examination performance, discussion with colleagues, pupils, parents/carers, etc. Many SMT complete learning walks

Visits can also take place on a peer-to-peer basis. Visits involving colleagues will be on a voluntary basis, and the timings the areas for observation negotiated and agreed beforehand.

Peer visits can:

- Help develop reflection
- Encourage professional dialogue amongst colleagues
- Allow dissemination of good practice
- Encourage support strategies amongst colleagues
- Possibly provide additional support to individual teachers.

Where concerns arise from classroom visits, teachers should be supported with the issues that have arisen. The support should be agreed, and a clear time frame set for review.

Should any dispute about the process arise, every effort should be made to resolve the matter at school level, underlining the need for a collegiate ethos. In the unlikely event of a failure to find a resolution, it should be raised with the teachers' side joint secretary of the LNCT who will discuss it with the appropriate head of service with a view to resolving the dispute. If this fails, the issue should be considered by the whole LNCT. All classroom visit processes under dispute must be suspended pending these procedures taking place and resolution of the dispute.