Ysgol Aberconwy

Lesson Observation Policy

POLICY DOCUMENT NO: 27	ISSUE NO: 5

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

Signed:	
Date: 30/06/26	
Review due date : 30/06/29	**LT Link : IG**

LESSON OBSERVATION POLICY

As a teacher is a professional in a learning community, lesson observations provide an opportunity for teachers to be reflective in their own practice and effectiveness and to further their own skills through this method of continual professional development.

This policy will enable staff within the school to:

- Adopt consistent approach to lesson observation, both formal and informal.
- Understand their role and responsibilities in lesson observation as a method of CPD.

It should also be read in conjunction with the 'Learning Walks' policy. Learning walks are classroom visits and may involve observation of learning; they are governed by the school's Learning Walks policy and are not formal lesson observations unless explicitly identified as such in advance.

General Principles

Lesson Observation makes an important contribution to the school's Professional Learning (PL) provision for teachers and all teachers are expected to participate in it. Criteria and guidelines, against which judgements are made in a formal observation, are available to all staff.

A teacher being observed should expect to receive fair and just feedback that is objective and evidenced against these criteria and guidelines.

Teachers holding posts of responsibility are also expected to participate in formal lesson observations as observers and are expected to ensure that they are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to make an informed and objective, evidence based, judgement about the work of a colleague.

The purpose of lesson observation within the framework of school improvement is:

- To raise standards of teaching and learning through a process of quality assurance in the delivery of a high quality educational provision.
- To identify and disseminate good practice and to identify staff development needs.
- To provide evidence for performance management, threshold and internal reviewing procedures and systems, and to meet the requirements of external awarding bodies.

Categories of Observation

Observations fall into two main categories – formal and informal. There must be an agreed understanding of the category of an observation before it takes place.

- **Formal observations** are those used for statutory induction, ITE, PDR, formal capability procedures, or where an observation is explicitly identified in advance as formal. Formal observations may contribute to Learning Reviews, but Learning Reviews draw on a broader range of evidence and are not, in themselves, lesson observations.

- **Informal observations** are those used to support professional learning, coaching, peer development and the thematic evaluation of provision at department or whole-school level. Peer observations, such as those that form part of a departmental inquiry, and "drop in and develop" observations are also considered to be informal.

Either formal or informal lesson observations can be used by a teacher to inform their professional development. Formal Professional Development Review (PDR) observations may be used as evidence within the PDR process. These will follow the school's PDR Policy and national guidance. Developmental visits, coaching observations, drop-ins and learning walks are used to support professional learning and to evaluate the quality of provision at department or whole-school level. They will not be graded and will not be used as standalone evidence for judgements that inform Threshold Assessment, NQT Assessment, ITE Assessment, or procedures identified in the school's 'Capability' policy or similar, unless this purpose has been agreed in advance.

It is expected that teachers who have a responsibility for making formal observations, will take part in a lesson observation moderation exercise with a colleague on a regular basis. Such an observation will be deemed to be informal.

Informal Observations

- Informal observations may only be conducted with the full agreement of both parties and shared understanding of the purpose of the observation.
- No grading of the teacher's competency should be made during, or as result of, an informal observation.
- Any recording carried out in an informal observation should be previously agreed by the teacher and a clear agreement of the destination of the written record/hard copy agreed.
- Evidence from informal observations will be used in line with the purpose agreed in advance and the principles set out above.
- Video footage and/or audio recording of a lesson or part of a lesson as an informal observation must be agreed in advance.
- Any PL needs identified as a result of an informal observation or through the feedback, should be discussed with the Head of department or relevant PL Co-ordinator. This may include the PL needs of the observer or of the teacher.

Formal Observations

- Each member of staff will be expected to engage in at least one lesson observation per year as part of the school's Learning Review Cycle, carried out by a designated senior or middle leader.
- The week in which these observations will take place will be known at least 2 weeks in advance. The individual lesson will be identified and the time for all formal observations must be agreed at least two working days in advance.
- It is good practice for the teacher being observed to provide a lesson plan, but this is not a requirement. Lesson plans for a formal observation may be provided at the start of the observation and should be developed using an agreed lesson planning sheet. The only exception to this policy is that of a situation for which an external agency has provided a custom form (e.g. ITE).
- The lesson observation record sheet produced by the school should be used to record all formal observations.

- The observer must strive to arrive at the lesson on time, and before the teacher has started teaching. The observer should remain throughout the lesson, except in the circumstance of a "double" lesson, where the period of observation should be agreed between the teacher and the observer, but in total, should be no less than the length of a single period.
- Although the place where the observer will sit in the classroom to conduct the observations may be agreed between the teacher and the observer, it must be accepted, that to carry out the necessary requirement of a formal observation, the observer may need to move around the classroom and to talk to students and inspect their work.
- During a formal observation, the teacher may choose to make the following documents available to the observer:
  - Schemes of work and learning plans showing the basic structure of the whole course and the module of work as appropriate.
  - A lesson plan (see above).
  - A Data summary for the group, providing their prior attainment, targets for the end of the Key Stage and assessment grades awarded throughout their time with this teacher.
- All judgements made during, or as a result of, a formal observation, must be directly related to the 'Characteristics of Effective teaching and Learning' produced by the school. Evidence must be produced by the observer that supports any judgements made.
- The observer must provide feedback at a time convenient to the teacher and as soon as possible following the observation.
- The lesson observation record sheet, should be used as evidence in the feedback and, following the feedback, should be copied with one copy given to the teacher and to the Headteacher.
- Any PL needs identified as a result of a formal observation or through the feedback, should be passed to the Coordinator.
- Observations for use as part of PDR must be recorded on the Bluesky system.

Disputes regarding observations

In the event of a difference of opinion relating to the organisation of an observation, the conduct of an observation, or judgements made during an observation or as a result of an observation, the Headteacher should be called upon, by either party, to mediate.

If the situation cannot be resolved, the Headteacher will conduct a second observation and all records pertaining to the original observation, will be destroyed.

Frequency of lesson Observation

A teacher will not be observed formally for more than a total of three hours per year, without prior agreement, unless observations form part of a formal process, such as capability, statutory induction, ITE or another agreed support process.

Learning walks and other short classroom visits are governed by the school's Learning Walks policy. They are not formal lesson observations unless explicitly identified as such in advance. They will be proportionate, focused on agreed school or departmental priorities, and used primarily to inform professional learning and thematic

evaluation of provision. A teacher will not normally be visited in any more than 3 learning walks during an academic year (see 'Learning Walks' policy).

The school will monitor the frequency and pattern of classroom visits to ensure that they remain reasonable, purposeful and proportionate, and that no member of staff is subject to excessive or unnecessary monitoring.

Appendix – Workload Impact Assessment

(Lesson Observation Policy – Issue 5, 2026)

Workload Impact Assessment

This workload impact assessment considers whether the updated Lesson Observation Policy (Issue 5, 2026) introduces any **new or additional workload demands** on teaching staff, support staff, school leaders or governors when compared with the previous version (Issue 4, 2023).

The assessment considers formal lesson observations, informal professional learning activities and leadership quality assurance processes.

Nature of Policy Change

The updated policy:

- provides clearer distinction between **formal lesson observations**, **learning walks** and other classroom visits;
- aligns terminology with the school's current Professional Development Review (PDR) arrangements;
- clarifies the purposes for which evidence from observations may be used;
- strengthens expectations around proportionality and monitoring of classroom visits;
- updates references to current school policies and professional learning processes.

The policy does not increase the number of formal observations expected of staff and continues to distinguish developmental activities from formal performance-related processes.

Impact on Teaching and Support Staff

The updated policy:

- maintains the expectation that teachers participate in lesson observations as part of normal professional practice;
- continues to require one formal observation each year as part of the school's Learning Review Cycle;
- provides greater clarity regarding when observations are formal and when they are developmental;
- reinforces that learning walks and developmental visits will not normally be used as standalone evidence for formal capability, threshold or appraisal decisions unless agreed in advance.

The clearer separation of observation types is likely to reduce uncertainty for staff and improve consistency of practice.

Assessment:

➡ **No additional routine workload impact on teaching or support staff.**

➡ Clarification of processes may reduce unnecessary administrative burden and uncertainty.

Impact on Leadership and Governors

The updated policy:

- maintains existing leadership responsibilities for undertaking formal observations and providing feedback;
- introduces clearer expectations regarding the monitoring of the frequency and proportionality of classroom visits;
- reinforces moderation and evidence-based decision-making within existing quality assurance processes.

These responsibilities reflect good leadership practice and are not expected to generate significant additional workload. There are no new governance or committee responsibilities.

Assessment:

➡ No material increase in leadership or governor workload.
➡ Improved procedural clarity supports more consistent implementation.

Equality and Fairness Considerations

The revised policy strengthens fairness by:

- clearly distinguishing between developmental activities and formal assessment;
- ensuring that evidence is used only for the purpose agreed in advance;
- reinforcing evidence-based feedback and objective observation criteria;
- emphasising proportionality in the frequency of classroom visits.

These amendments support consistency, transparency and procedural fairness while reducing the risk of disproportionate monitoring of individual staff.

Conclusion

This workload impact assessment concludes that the updated Lesson Observation Policy:

- does **not** introduce additional routine workload;
- improves clarity regarding the purpose and use of different forms of classroom observation;
- strengthens procedural safeguards for staff;
- supports professional learning while maintaining proportionate quality assurance arrangements.

Overall judgement:

➡ **No adverse workload impact identified.**