

## 10 top tips for lesson observations

Lesson observations are a very valuable form of CPD if they are approached in the right manner. Below are some tips and ideas for ensuring you get the most out of internal and Ofsted lesson observations whether you are observing or being observed.

**1. Feedback and Follow up are Key:** Comprehensive, constructive and timely feedback is an essential part of the lesson observation process. Even if a lesson goes very badly, the situation can be turned into a positive one if the teacher being observed has constructive feedback and is able to learn from the situation.

**2. Treat Every Lesson as if it were being Observed:** You shouldn't save all your best tricks for the day you are being observed. You should plan and prepare engaging, motivating well differentiated lessons as a matter of course. Always preparing as if you were being observed will mean that you never find yourself under prepared.

**3. Treat Every Observation as if it were a Normal Lesson:** When you're being observed, don't put on a show. You will learn far more from the feedback if you just deliver the same great style of lessons you do all day every day. Some teachers are too nervous to be adventurous in observed lessons so their observer sees them below their best. If you're normally daring be daring – just make sure you have a back-up plan in case it all goes wrong. Just as you would for any other lesson...wouldn't you? (see point 2!)

**4. Think Outside the Box when Observing:** There are endless methods for judging how successfully a lesson is going and these will vary depending on the type of lesson. Some interesting ideas you could try out next time you're observing a lesson include noting how often children and the teacher smile or calculating how much the teacher is talking as a percentage of the lesson.

**5. Both the Observer and the Observed are Learning:** Lesson observations are excellent CPD for both the observer and the observed as there is a real opportunity to share good practice. For this reason, some schools find it very helpful to carry out 360 degree lesson observations with teachers observing their heads of department as well as the other way around. It can also be very interesting to observe lessons from a completely different department. It's surprising how often you can pick up new ideas that way.

**6. Take the Opportunity to Record and Revisit:** If your school has a system for recording lesson observations such as [Iris Connect](#) this can provide an excellent opportunity for you to watch your own lessons back. You will be your own harshest critic and you will also find that you learn something new each time you re-observe your own lessons. You can rapidly build on your existing skills and improve your practise this way. Also, if you are able to record your feedback sessions using a voice recorder or similar, this can be very useful to revisit and to use for reflection. Failing that, a very comprehensive set of notes is vital.

**7. Use Student Voice:** Of course, you are being assessed every time you teach a lesson – by your students. Why not formalise this process a little and ask for specific feedback from your students about aspects of the lesson. Students will often relish this opportunity and give you an excellent constructive critique. At the end of the day, they are your customer!

**8. Hold Moderation Sessions:** It is important that all teachers within a school / department have a shared understanding of the criteria that make up a satisfactory, good and outstanding lesson. A very good way of doing this is to observe a lesson together during a staff meeting and discuss how you would have judged it.

**9. The Observed and Observer are a TEAM:** There's nothing more intimidating than an observer skulking at the back of your room with a clipboard. They can often feel like the enemy. This couldn't be further from the truth. The observed and the observer must act as a team if the lesson observation is to be of maximum value. Take time to share goals and objectives before the lesson and to make sure that you are both relaxed and at ease – and that the students know why the observer is present too.

**10. Have the Observer Play the Role of a Student:** Sometimes both teachers and students can feel uncomfortable having a lesson observed. When practical, why not have the observer join in with all or parts of the lesson as if they were a student. This will give them an excellent idea of how the lesson is really going and whether it is engaging and it will rapidly break down barriers and prevent the students and the observed teacher from acting awkwardly around the observer.