

# Lesson Observations Policy



*Learning together in a changing world, creating success for all.*



# Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre

## Policy for Lesson Observations

**Trinity Fields is a Rights Respecting School, a Healthy School, Investors in Families School, an ECO School, a MOVE school and an Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Flagship School.**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our pupil friendly and adult version of our “**Shared Values and Aims**”.

### School context

Trinity Fields is a **Rights Respecting School**; we are committed to the principles and values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all areas of our work. We are a school where pupils are at the heart of everything we do. We successfully achieved UNICEF’s “Rights Respecting School Award” in **January 2017** and we have a well-established record of developing pupil engagement at all levels.

Refer to pupil friendly “**Pupil Participation**” policy and our whole school “**Pupil Participation**” policy for further details.

We are a **Healthy School**; we take responsibility for maintaining and promoting the health and wellbeing of the Trinity Fields team (pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors etc.). This includes teaching pupils about how to lead healthy lives by enabling them and staff to take control over aspects of the school environment that influence their health and wellbeing. We achieved the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes National Quality Award in March 2018, with re-accreditation in December 2020.

Refer to “**Health and Well-being for Pupils**” policy and our whole school “**Health and Well-being**” policy for further details.

We are an **Investors in Families School**. We are committed to developing active and effective relationships with parents/carers and families and recognise the value of close partnership working to improve outcomes for our pupils. We were the first Special School in Wales to achieve the Investors in Families Quality Mark, and regularly share our excellent practices with other settings.

We demonstrate our commitment to the Rights to Action agenda and value and support the important role that families play in the education of their child. We strive to promote social inclusion and a sense of wellbeing for families through positive participation in their child’s education.

During the re-accreditation process (2019), the school’s work was judged to be of a very high quality. Family and Community Engagement are fully embedded and it was evident that the school works hard on its journey towards excellence. The assessor was very pleased to award the school the **Diamond Standard**.

We have demonstrated through a national annual assessment that we have the capacity to play a strong leadership role in developing inclusion best practice across a network of schools; as well as being committed to extending those networks and develop classroom-based research.

Refer to “**Inclusion**” policy and to **IQM assessment reports** for further details.

In **summer 2022** we gained our **Platinum ECO Schools Award**; the Eco-Schools programme is designed to be pupil-led and looks at the impact of our actions on the environment.

Our sustained journey towards attaining the Platinum Award showcases pupils' ideas and helps to inspire others to make the right environmental choices.

More recently (2019), the school started its journey towards becoming a **MOVE school**; successfully accredited at Silver level in **December 2021**. The MOVE Programme is an activity-based practice that enables children and young people with physical disabilities to sit, stand, walk, and transition as independently as possible.

**Our overarching philosophy is summarised in the following statement:**

**“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning experiences. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.**

## **Education in Wales: Our National Mission**

Our work with pupils and their families will be developed building upon Wales' National Mission. This national mission is ambitious, innovative and confident ensuring that we all take responsibility for all of our pupils to have equal opportunities to reach the highest possible standards.

Trinity Fields will continue to develop as a learning organisation to ensure it has the capacity to adapt to and explore a range of new approaches which results in improved outcomes and well-being for all of our pupils.

In order to realise our shared vision and approaches in delivering Wales' transformational curriculum that will enable all of the pupils at Trinity Fields to make the progress commensurate with their individual needs we are committed to the 4 key enabling objectives, detailed in **“Education in Wales: Our national mission (2017)**. These are:

- **Developing a high-quality education profession.**
- **Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards.**
- **Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellent, equity and well-being.**
- **Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.**

The core purposes and values that are associated with these prestigious national awards are encapsulated in our vision and aims:

**“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning opportunities. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.**

## **Principles**

This updated policy takes account of Estyn's supplementary guidance: “Lesson observations and learning walks” (autumn 2017 and the Excellence in Teaching Framework (ETF, Portal). This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Learning walks
- Self-evaluation, monitoring and development planning

- Continuing professional development

At the heart of effective education is high quality learning and teaching. All staff at Trinity Fields have a crucial role to play in working together to develop the best possible learning opportunities for all pupils as well as developing a range of teaching strategies that will allow all pupils to make progress commensurate with their individual needs and achieve high standards.

Effective lesson observations assess the impact of staff actions upon pupil progress. We should always be asking how our actions directly impact on learning and teaching:

**“It’s not what we do it’s the difference that we make!”**

In order for staff to understand the impact of their input they need constructive feedback on their teaching, within a systematic framework.

The headteacher will work in partnership with other senior leaders and members of the School Leadership Team (SLT), staff, Governing Body, Local Authority and EAS Officers in order to monitor, review and evaluate all aspects of the school’s work and work towards agreed targets for further development.

At Trinity Fields, termly lesson observations have been part of the school’s culture for development and improvement for many years; our processes have been developed over time in consultation with staff and the Governing Body.

We have developed a culture of professional dialogue that includes regular and open discussions about the skills necessary for effective classroom practice that in turn acts as the bedrock for pupils to achieve and be the best they can be.

In our professional dialogue about classroom practice, specifically about learning and teaching, our key foundations are built upon the following principles:

- pupils are central to all that we do;
- we are competent and successful staff who respect each other as professionals;
- the skills of classroom practice are varied, there is no one version of ‘best practice’, although there are some common features of effective pedagogy such as: good subject knowledge, conducive learning environment, pace, effective use of classroom support, engagement and relationship with pupils etc.;
- classroom skills can be extended and enhanced through effective professional development.

## **Purpose of lesson observations**

Our termly lesson observations are part of our whole school self-evaluation process and school improvement planning cycle. They might include:

- reviewing a particular area of learning and teaching prior to planning for development;
- reviewing how the development has impacted on learning;
- promoting professional dialogue about best practice;
- evaluating pupils’ learning, progress and achievements;
- evaluating progress and developments in teaching.

At Trinity Fields our process of self-evaluation, including visiting classrooms will be high on professional trust and personal development and low on bureaucratic procedures.

## Lesson observation guidelines

- Each teacher will have **ONE** lesson observation per term.
- Level 3 and Specialist TAs will have **ONE** lesson observation **PER YEAR**.
- A timetable of lesson observations will be agreed at the beginning of each term; this will be in full consultation with the staff being observed.

The purpose(s) of these observations will be made explicit before they take place and may vary, for example, according to the priorities within the School Development Plan (SDP), or the school policies being implemented. Those being observed will be aware of the context and purpose of the visits.

## The process

Our lesson observation process has 3 key stages. These are:

- **Stage 1:** planning the observation
- **Stage 2:** the actual observation session
- **Stage 3:** preparing for feedback- "The learning conversation"

### Stage 1

With the teacher/L3/specialist teaching assistant the observer will need to:

- Agree the session to be observed, along with the date and time;
- Share any relevant information- lesson plan, context of the session etc.;
- Share any relevant pupil information that may be pertinent;
- Share the criteria, evidence form and focus with staff being observed.

### Stage 2

The observer will need to:

- Avoid being too intrusive;
- Sensitive to pupils and staff needs;
- Concentrate on the agreed focus of the observation;
- Screen out how they would teach the lesson and remain focus on effectiveness;
- Observe how pupils respond to the teaching and opportunities for learning that are provided;
- Talk/communicate with pupils, as necessary;
- Record as much evidence as possible;
- Avoid trying to arrive at a judgement and/or grade during the observation;
- However, should there be an immediate health and safety issue the observer will act in best interest of pupils in either supporting the lesson to continue or suggesting an alternative.

### Stage 3

#### 3a: Reflection and preparation for feedback

- Take time to reflect on the evidence gathered;
- Observee should also be encouraged to be reflective;
- Feedback should be a shared experience.

### **3b: Giving/receiving feedback- “The learning conversation”**

All staff that are observed will receive feedback from their lesson evaluation. They will receive some immediate oral feedback and written feedback within **5 working days**; this will allow a considered discussion of the observation between the member of staff being observed and observer to take place. The spirit of the discussion will be a professional dialogue that has the principle purpose of supporting the teacher’s further professional development. The “learning conversation” will include discussion and agreement of:

- Strengths;
- Area(s) requiring further development.

#### **Observers should:**

- Establish a professional but relaxed atmosphere;
- Give a reminder of the contact of the observation;
- Use evidence directly from the observation;
- Use open ended questions- why did you, how was? Etc.;
- Identify the key strengths and areas that require further development;
- Don’t just hint if there are any issues. If something is difficult to say then pave the way by describing what you actually saw and by asking direct questions;
- Make sure that strengths and areas for developed are linked to their impact on pupils’ learning;
- Give opportunities for constructive dialogue about the session- make sure staff can talk about their perceptions and explain their thinking;
- Ensure that any points to be developed are clearly identified and agreed;
- Be honest and remember that the aim is to say something that will lead to development and improvement.

If a lesson that has been observed is not good enough then an honest view has to be given to the observee in a **DETAILED, FACTUAL** and **CONSTRUCTIVE** manner. Hiding practice that does not come up to the standard that we expect will not assist the continuous improvement in teaching and learning that we strive to achieve. It will simply endorse ineffectiveness.

Although all feedback needs to be planned carefully it may be necessary to take some extra time to consider the **MAIN** messages and areas that need to be covered in a difficult learning conversation and ensure that there is clear evidence to support each point. It may be important for the observer to have time to discuss any lesson observations that are not good enough with the headteacher or deputy headteacher who will then support the observer in providing the difficult feedback to the member of staff.

Further information will be found on pages 22 – 23 of the **Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework** (Portal). The HT and DHT have copies of this.

Remember: teachers/TAs should always add their comments on the Classroom Evaluation Proforma. The proforma used as part of our lesson observations are included as an appendix to this policy.

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed as detailed in the school's policy review cycle. It may also be necessary to review and amend it sooner to reflect both local and national changes.

<b>Signed</b>		<b>Headteacher</b>
<b>Signed</b>		<b>Chair of Governors</b>
<b>This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review cycle.</b>		

As a Rights Respecting School we are committed to embedding the principles and values of the United Nation Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This policy enables our pupils to access and enjoy the following articles of the convention:

**Article 12:** Every child has the right to be heard.

**Article 28:** Every child has the right to an education.

**Article 29:** Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

**Article 42:** Every child has the right to know their rights.