



CLASSROOM OBSERVATION



It should be noted that in at least certain Districts this matter is never a problem for members because an agreement has been reached between the authority and the teacher unions on the matter. The following is issued as guidance to members.

1. The SSTA has absolutely no objection to observation where it is part of an agreed scheme of Staff Review or Staff Appraisal. Before we would agree to such a scheme the points in paragraphs 2 to 4 below would require to be agreed.
2. Only staff who have received specific training in the matter should undertake classroom observation.
3. The observation should be as laid down in the documentation relating to the Review or Appraisal and would include the following elements:
 - An agreed agenda for the visit
 - An appropriate form of reporting to the teacher
 - An agreed record of the visit
 - An agreed complaints mechanism
4. The teacher has right to object to any particular observer (but should be prepared to give reasons for the objection). Any scheme should involve a mechanism to permit a substitute observer to be approved.
5. In the light of the above, the SSTA totally opposes any form of ad-hoc “in-school” arrangements. In particular (and following specific reference in at least one report) HMI do not have the right to require a system of observation in any school. This matter is one for discussion and negotiation between the authority and the teacher unions. Where any headteacher attempts to introduce a system of observation which does not follow the terms of a local agreement, advice should be sought from head office. Members are advised to register their objections to any such attempts. It is worth noting that schemes of review or appraisal cannot operate effectively without the full support of all staff.
6. Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that the headteacher has the right to visit any teaching situation. Where a teacher feels he/she is being “targeted” then advice should be sought from head office. The right belongs to the headteacher and should not be delegated to another member of the senior management.

7. The use of a system of monitoring in support of a particular teacher who has requested a support mechanism is a different situation and is not covered by the terms of this general advice.
8. It is always open to an individual teacher to seek some form of classroom observation as part of a career development programme. The SSTA has no objection to this. It is worth noting that the SSTA has always supported a system of peer-group review.
9. Where an observation is proposed which directly relates to the teacher's classroom performance and is not part of a whole school scheme, then the teacher should be informed in advance of this and of the reason for the observation.
10. It should be noted that persistent, unrequested observation may amount to harassment. Where a member suspects this, advice should be sought.

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