



# Guide to Pre- ITT School Experience and Observation

*A journal for school experience before initial  
teacher training (2nd Edition)*

**The purpose of this workbook is** to prepare for your ITT training year through both school experience and observation. This booklet explores through a set of focused practical tasks, the foundations of observation of teaching and learning creating a baseline of teaching experience to build on as a beginning teacher.

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*“What is important when overserving in classrooms is to bear in mind that learners are not passive recipients or are not aware of who is in the classroom. They acknowledge the presence of all adults involved in a lesson...” including you as an observer!*

*(Redondo, 2016, p.89)*

*Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough but because they can be even better*

*(Dylan Wiliam SSAT Speech 2013)*



# Pre-ITT School Experience and Observation of Teaching and Learning

Mapping my school experience before starting my initial teacher training...

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Programme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Start date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Confirmation of completion of school experience<sup>1</sup>

<b>School name</b>	
<b>No. of days completed</b>	<b>Age Range</b>
<b>Signature: Participant</b>	<b>Signature: Supervising Teacher / Role</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Comments</b>

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<sup>1</sup> This is a self-declaration that you have completed the relevant school experience.

# Introduction

Throughout your initial teacher training (ITT) year, formal lesson observation will form an essential part of your professional training and development. In most cases this will involve you being observed by an ITT Mentor<sup>2</sup> or Professional Mentor<sup>3</sup>, and will include you observing experienced teachers to inform your progress as a *beginning* teacher.

Some of your observations will be informal and unstructured, influencing your thinking on a subconscious level, whereas others will be more formal and recorded, with deliberate reflection reinforcing or challenging prior assumptions and experience. The reflective writing that you will undertake as part of your ITT develops conscious and deliberate reflection, and formal observations aid this process, enabling you to focus in on specific aspects of learning and teaching.

This booklet contains six structured tasks to help you get the best out of your observations. Before you start, discuss with the class teacher what 'The role of the teacher' is and make notes below.

**Notes** (continue on page 21, as required)

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<sup>2</sup> The school-based subject teacher assigned to you when you start at your home school placement in September.

<sup>3</sup> The school-based mentor that oversees ITT trainee, their ITT Mentors and the placement experience.

## What is observation?

The purpose of observation for trainee teachers and experienced teachers is to gain a greater understanding of classroom dynamics and the impact of teaching and learning activity on pupils' progress. It helps teachers to become conscious and reflective practitioners, able to learn from all learning experiences, be they positive, neutral or negative.

Our vision for the LJMU Teacher is that she/he is a thinking teacher, inquisitive, creative and reflective. Observation is a key component in initial teacher education and beyond as you become an effective practitioner.

## What are the benefits of observation?

Focused observation can serve a number of different purposes. Through guided observation trainee teachers can:

- shift their thinking from a pupil to a teacher perspective;
- learn to analyse what is happening in classrooms<sup>4</sup>;
- get a sense of the standards which teachers set;
- discover different ways of approaching learning;
- learn how to identify pupil progress in a lesson;
- identify aspects of classroom culture, activity or behaviour that they don't fully understand;

Observing and sharing good practice is an essential skill for the good and reflexive teacher. It helps you to know what works, or doesn't, and maintain and improve the quality of your teaching.

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<sup>4</sup> **Note:** in this document 'classrooms' is used to denote the learning environment where teachers and learners interact in formal settings (i.e. lesson), and includes the range of spaces in most school, such as workshops, studios, gymnasiums, sports halls and pitches, kitchens, etc.

# Beginning to observe

For observation to be useful it needs to have a clear purpose and be conducted in a way that is appropriate for that purpose. There are many approaches to lesson observation, here are just some of them.

- **Unstructured observation** and using *field notes* to record general observations – a good place to begin, which can be reflected upon critically at a later time. In this kind of observation, you may have no set agenda, observing activity as it emerges. You may identify specific themes, patterns or behaviours<sup>5</sup> to observe in the future
- **Structured observation** on specific aspects of learning, including activities, behaviours, communication and the learning environment. You may observe:
  - a *part of a lesson*, such as a demonstration, explanation, starter, plenaries or assessment
  - *specific activity or learners* (ignoring everything else) – for example, observing individuals, groups or classes for specific behaviours (e.g. “on or off task”), or interactions (e.g. teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, pupil-teacher)
  - *timed observations*, where you make an observation of specific criteria at timed intervals, using a grid to record observations at predetermined intervals (e.g. every 5 minutes)
- **Reverse engineering** a lesson plan from observing a full lesson – i.e. determining what the lesson plan would look like

These are just a few examples, and the format of the recording depends on the method being used and will be expanded as a repertoire in your training year. In this booklet you will consider beginning to observe teaching and learning. These notes can then be reflected on afterwards and be useful reflective tools to inform the context of the beginning of the course and preparing to teach.

Remember that you are observing to **reflect on practice**, rather than making value judgements on the teaching being observed. The structured tasks are designed to consider, structure, content and context and also behaviour.

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<sup>5</sup> **Note:** in the context of observation, behaviour is a neutral term referring to the things that teachers and/or learners do, rather than notions of ‘bad’ or ‘naughty’ behaviour that can be synonymous with the way it tends to be used in wider society, when talking about classrooms.

# The principles of classroom management

As you gain more experience you will begin to notice that the behaviour that children and young people demonstrate is only one part of thinking about creating positive learning environments.

In your observations, you may begin to recognise the importance of three underlying features of effective classroom management: routines, responses and relationships. Use the 3Rs as a framework for observing and interpreting activity and behaviour in lessons (see Task 4).

## **Routines:**

Classroom routines as a fundamental source of high expectation, scaffold for conduct, and a community vision of optimal habits and behaviours

## **Responses:**

Strategies and interventions for de-escalating confrontation, resolving conflict, redirecting unproductive (or destructive behaviours), and reacting to antisocial behaviour in a just, productive and proportional way. These include formal interventions (for example: consequences described by the school behaviour policy) and informal ones (for example: verbal / non-verbal cues, body language).

## **Relationships:**

Regulating one's own emotional state; understanding personal triggers in one's own behaviour, expectations or reactions; how special educational needs and disability (SEND) affects behaviour. Understanding for example: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, dyslexia, Asperger's; the basic psychology of: motivation; long and short term memory; concentration, learning; cognitive load, spacing and interleaving; group dynamics.

# Task 1: Getting started with observation

When you begin to observe lessons, you should aim to get involved with the classroom activities as a participant observer. So get involved and make notes after the lesson has finished. Then reflect on the lesson with the teacher. Use the table below to record your observations.

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Description of lesson</b>			
<b>Your reflections after the lesson</b>			
<b>Reflections with the class teacher</b>			

## Now have another go...

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Description of lesson</b>			
<b>Your reflections after the lesson</b>			
<b>Reflections with the class teacher</b>			

## Task 2: Developing structured observations

Use the table below during your school experience, undertaking a structured observation, making a brief note of what the learners and the teacher are doing at 5-minute intervals

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Learning intentions (objective/outcomes)</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Learner Activity</b> (primary focus)	<b>Teacher Activity</b> (secondary focus)	
<b>0</b>			
<b>5</b>			
<b>10</b>			
<b>15</b>			
<b>20</b>			
<b>25</b>			
<b>30</b>			
<b>35</b>			
<b>40</b>			
<b>45</b>			
<b>50</b>			
<b>55</b>			
<b>60</b>			
<b>General observations and comments (after the lesson) – what have you learnt?</b>			

## Now have another go...

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Learning intentions (objective/outcomes)</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Learner Activity</b> (primary focus)	<b>Teacher Activity</b> (secondary focus)	
0			
5			
10			
15			
20			
25			
30			
35			
40			
45			
50			
55			
60			
<b>General observations and comments (after the lesson) – what have you learnt?</b>			

## Task 3: Unstructured observations

Next use the table below to record an unstructured observation of a **Key Stage 3** (Yr7-9) lesson, focusing on subject content and teaching/learning styles, making notes as you notice things.

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Description of lesson</b>			
<b>Your notes during the lesson</b>			
<b>Reflections with the class teacher after the lesson</b>			

## Now have another go...

Now use the same table to record an unstructured observation of a **Key Stage 4** (Yr10-11) lesson, focusing on the same areas as the KS3 activity...

<b>Date</b>		<b>Group</b>	
<b>School</b>		<b>Room</b>	
<b>Description of lesson</b>			
<b>Your notes during the lesson</b>			
<b>Reflections with the class teacher after the lesson</b>			

## Task 4: Observing effective strategies

In the table below record instances where you have observed effective behaviour management in an observation. Note the strategies the teacher used, how often they used them and to what effect.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Teacher initials</b>	<b>Strategies</b> – practical strategies might include the use of praise / positive reinforcement, school sanctions, etc.	<b>Effect</b> – the impact on learning that you observed.

## Task 5: Exploring classroom routines

In the next table note the 3Rs (routines, responses and relationships) and how the teacher anticipates and manages potential behaviour hotspots (e.g. during moving from one activity to the next, nearing the end of the lesson)

<b>Year:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Classroom:</b>
<b>Focus of Observation:</b> classroom management		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	
<i>Start-of-lesson (or pre-lesson) routines</i>		
<i><b>Starter</b> (and Introductory) activities – what practical strategies can you observe in the beginning of the lesson – e.g. when giving instructions. Note the effect on the learning</i>		
<i><b>Main</b> activities (including episodes and mini-plenary activities) Consider the transitions on the lesson how pupils move from one activity to another how is the classroom and behaviour managed? note the effect on the learning</i>		
<i><b>Plenary</b> (and Concluding) Activities</i>		
<i>End-of-lesson routines</i>		

## Task 6: Reverse engineering a lesson

Once you have observed a range of lessons and strategies, you can have a go at 'reverse engineering' a lesson plan based on an observation. Use the basic lesson plan template below to deconstruct a lesson, working from your observation notes with the support of the class teacher.

### Learning Intentions

<b>Lesson focus:</b> aims, concepts and keywords		
<b>Learning Outcome:</b> What the learners demonstrated in relation to the learning focus		
<b>Assessment:</b> How the progress against the learning outcome was measured/evaluated.		
<b>Classroom management:</b> strategies used, including groupings, transition between activities, etc.		
<b>Resources:</b> consumables, resources, examples, equipment, etc.		
<b>Time</b> <i>(real-time)</i>	<b>Teacher Activity:</b> <i>Input and interventions to lead learning</i>	<b>Learner Activity:</b> <i>Activities to develop and consolidate learning</i>

## Recommended reading for this workbook

Green, A. and Leask, M. (2016). What do teachers do? In S. Capel, M. Leask and S. Younie. *Learning to teach in the Secondary School: a companion to school experience* (7th edition). Abingdon, UK: Routledge. See <http://www.routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138787704/>

DFE (2014). *National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4* (online). Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>

## References

Redondo, A. (2016). Reading classrooms: how to maximise learning from classroom observation. In S. Capel, M. Leask and S. Younie. *Learning to teach in the Secondary School: a companion to school experience* (seventh edition). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

## Suggested reading

In preparation for starting your initial teacher education in September, you have been set standard and personalised tasks based on your interview, which involve reading and reflecting on aspects of education policy and teaching in your subject in preparation for your first tutorial.

In addition, you *may* wish to undertake further reading and we would suggest three areas for you to consider: education theory and research; personal resilience; and professional development. The suggested reading for each of these areas are:

### Education theory and research:

We would recommend that you consider reading **one** of the following books:

Brown, P.C., Roediger III, H.L. and McDaniel, M.A. (2014). *Make it stick: the science of successful learning (first edition)*. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Mujis, D, and Reynolds, D. (2017). *Effective Teaching: Evidence and Practice* (4th edition). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Petty, G (2014). *Teaching Today: a practical guide* (5th Edition). Cheltenham, UK: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

### Personal resilience:

Mindfulness is a useful and evidence based approach to personal resilience and managing stress. We would recommend that you consider **one** of the following books (printed, ebook or audiobook) or smart phone apps

Chaskalson, M. (2014). *Mindfulness in Eight Weeks: The revolutionary 8 week plan to clear your mind and calm your life*. London: Harper Thornes.

Headspace Meditation Limited (2017). *Headspace: Guided Meditation and Mindfulness (version 2.11.2) [App]*. Available at <https://www.headspace.com> (last accessed 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

Tan, C.-M. (2012). *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.

### **Personal and professional development:**

Receiving feedback is a critical component of teacher training, and if you are interested in getting more out of feedback from your mentors, or you recognise that you can find it hard to receive criticism, you may wish to read:

Stone, D. and Heen, S. (2014). *Thanks for the feedback: the science and art of giving feedback, fairly, effectively, and, frankly, in the mood.* London: Penguin Random House UK.

### **Classroom management:**

Most trainee teachers are concerned about behaviour management. At LJMU we focus on classroom management, encouraging trainees to plan lessons to 'design out' avoidable behaviour issues. However, all teachers need to have a repertoire of behaviour management strategies, and you may wish to read one of the following:

Bennett, T. (2010). *The Behaviour Guru: Behaviour Management Solutions for Teachers.* London: Continuum.

Hook, P. and Vass, A. (2011). *Behaviour Management Pocketbook.* Alresford, UK: Teachers' Pocketbooks.

### **Core texts:**

Should you wish to purchase a textbook for use during the course, the core text is:

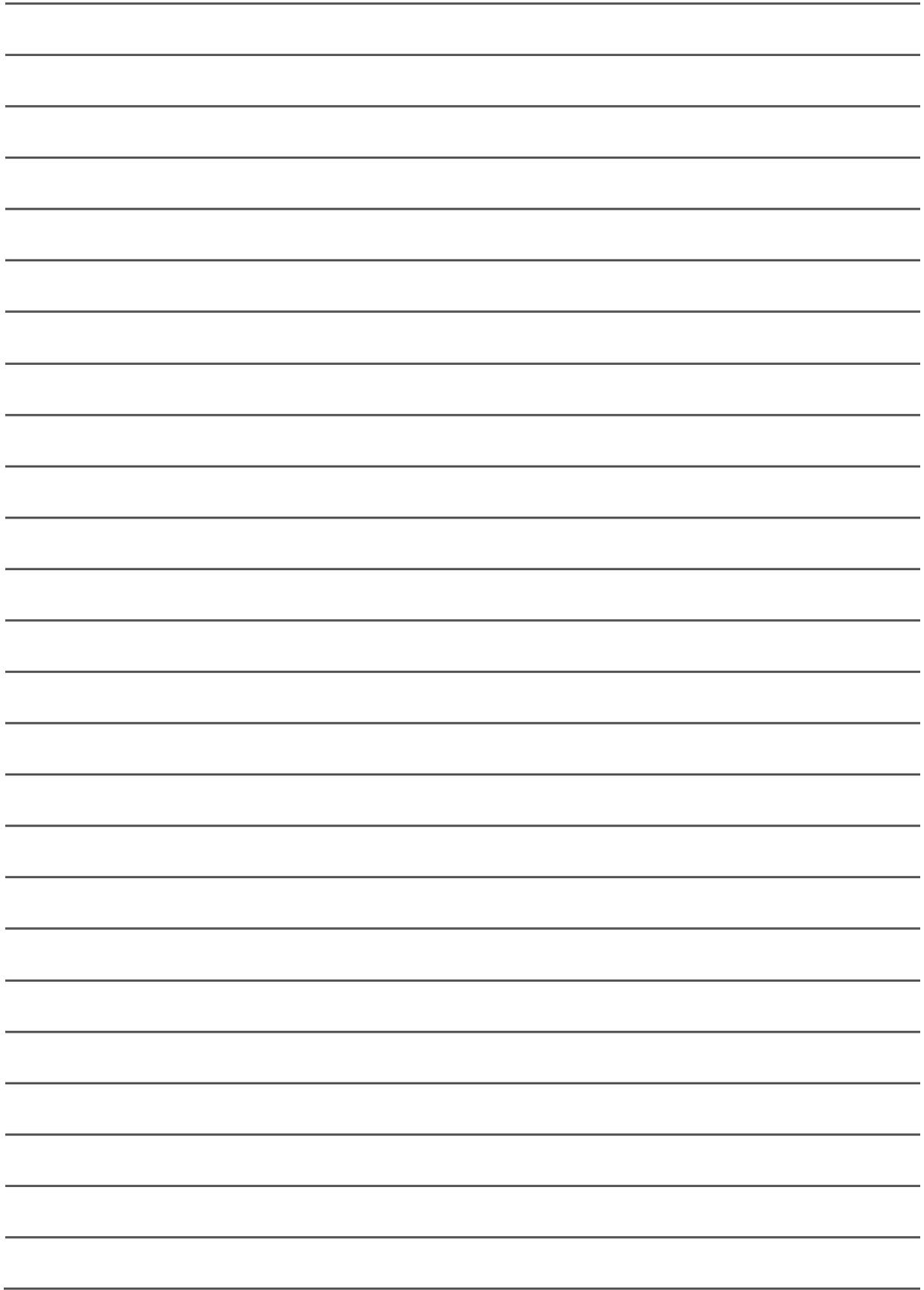
Capel, S., Leask, M. and Younie, S. (2016). *Learning to teach in the Secondary School: a companion to school experience (seventh edition).* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Companion texts are also available for most secondary subjects, and we would recommend that trainees purchase a copy of the latest edition. Visit the Routledge website and peruse the subject titles available in the series at:

<https://www.routledge.com/Learning-to-Teach-Subjects-in-the-Secondary-School-Series/book-series/LTTSS>

**Note: reading lists will be provided for all modules in September and copies are available in our Library.**





**Notes...**



