

4 Ways Subject Leaders can Judge Standards and Quality

- Observation of teaching
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Analysis of data
- Discussions with pupils

Work Scrutiny

Key Questions:

- How high are standards?
- Are National Curriculum requirements met?
- Is there effective differentiation?
- Is there progression from year to year?
- Is assessment consistent and accurate?
- Does assessment inform future activities?
- What is the standard of presentation?
- Is marking regular and evaluative?
- Do comments set short term targets and lead to improvement?
- Is there evidence of a range of approaches to teaching and learning?
- Is pace of work appropriate and consistent?
- Are tasks completed?
- Are there opportunities for pupils to improve their work?
- Is teaching effective?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Sampling Pupils' Work / Scrutiny of Work

Sampling is more effective if it is done over a period of time at regular intervals with a specific group,

Or

If it is done as a whole staff where a common focus is identified and all class teachers bring samples of work from a range of pupils to a whole school monitoring exercise.

It can involve teachers and school leaders in a joint evaluation exercise.

It can involve students and teachers in a joint exercise.

It may focus on a random group or a specific group of pupils, e.g.

- 2 more able, 2 average, 2 less able
- A gender group
- An able or gifted and talented group
- A less able group
- A minority ethnic group

It should have a very specific focus on evaluating pupil progress and attainment:

- Evidence of improvement over time
- Evidence of increased levels of achievement
- Evidence of pupils' attention to presentation
- Evidence that any monitoring / assessment is followed up in learning
- Evidence of appropriate level of challenge and expectation
- Evidence of a range of learning techniques

An evaluation of such work scrutiny should lead to a judgment about:

- How high are standards?
- Are they high enough?
- Do all pupils do well?
- Do some groups make more progress than others?
- Are expectations of teachers the same / high enough?
- Is there continuity in learning?
- Is assessment used effectively?

Using the National Summary Results

By comparing your own school's results with the national results you can identify areas where your own results differ most markedly from the national picture.

Answering the questions below may help you identify priorities and strategies for school improvement:

- Is the performance in English, Mathematics and Science better or worse than the national average?
- If all school performance is above the national average, where is the gap the smallest? Equally, if all performance is below the national average, where is the gap the largest?
- Are the results consistent with previous years?
- Have some results shown a marked change this year?
- Where results are better than average, can teachers identify features of student mix, subject organisation or teaching practices that have particularly contributed to these performances?
- Are any of these features common across subjects?
- Can any of these features be applied elsewhere in the school, especially where performances are below the national average?

From the comparisons and discussions, what appear to be the emerging priorities for raising pupil performance for the school?

Using Value Added Line Graphs to Evaluate Past Performance

When analysing your school's performance, it is helpful to probe for reasons why pupils have made better or worse progress than expected.

The questions listed below are useful for identifying priorities and strategies for school improvement. The **interactive autumn package** will help you to examine the performance of different groups of pupils:

- Are there noticeable differences in the progress made by boys and girls or between other groups, such as those from different ethnic groups? Is this related to pupils in any particular range of performance or to any particular class or set?
- Which pupils have made significantly better or worse progress than others? Can the reasons for this be identified?
- In classes or groups where the majority of pupils make better than average progress, can teachers identify any teaching practices that they think contribute to their success? From the comparisons and discussions, what are the emerging priorities for the school?
- Is the progress made in different subjects comparable? If not, are there any reasons why this might be?
- Are the schemes of work in the various subjects appropriate to all pupils? Have the prior attainments and potential of pupils played a sufficient part in developing the teaching strategies?
- How have teachers set their expectations of pupils at the beginning of Years 7 and 8? Do pupils with high or low prior attainment generally make the progress expected of them?
- How does the progress shown by pupils (and groups of pupils) relate to their prior performances? What does this tell you about the success of your existing strategies and your priorities for development?

- How far are the strengths and weaknesses identified specific to the particular year group or are they the same for other year groups or the school as a whole? How will you find out so that strengths can be built upon and weaknesses can be addressed?

Some Further Questions For You To Consider Include:

- How do parents' expectations of future performance compare with the information shown in the Progress Charts?
- If parents' expectations are low, can they identify any particular aspects of work pupils find difficult and where they would benefit from extra help?
- How do teachers' forecasts and expectations for their pupils compare to what the Progress Charts suggest they could achieve? What are the reasons behind any low teacher expectations; what needs to be done, in the classroom or in other ways, to counter low expectations?

Pupil Discussions

A sample from a year group / key stage.

Include a range of abilities:

- More able
- Average
- Below average

Or

Have a focus on a specific ability group:

- Gifted and talented
- Boys
- Girls
- Minority ethnic group
- Average attainers
- Less able or pupils with special educational needs

Have a set of questions to elicit appropriate information:

- What do the pupils know about this subject?
- What do the pupils feel they make good progress in and why?
- What difficulties do the pupils have and what are they doing to overcome them?
- Do they get regular feedback on their progress?
- Do they feel able to ask for help?
- What helps them learn (who) and why?
- What hinders their learning and why?
- What do they feel their next target for learning is in this subject and why?
- What other support would they like?

At the Herb Garden Secondary School all teachers are observed once per year for performance management and on another occasion by the subject leaders or the 'link' member of the SMT. The school has a Code of Practice, agreed by all staff, for lesson observation and feedback. Feedback is always provided within 3 working days in an appropriate location.

Each term every subject leader dedicates part of a team meeting to a scrutiny of a sample of pupil work on a given theme. All teachers bring work and share in the activity.

Each year a pupil questionnaire is given to one class so they can evaluate provision. A sample group has a shared discussion with the subject leader. The subject leader is careful to avoid choosing the same year group or the same class teacher two years running.

The department uses prior attainment data from the partner primary school and end of Key Stage 2 tests to set targets for the end of Year 9. Key Stage 3 tests and teacher assessments are used to set the end of Year 11 targets. The department uses subject differences to judge the progress pupils make in the department with the progress they make in other departments.

This is all presented annually in a brief report to the Senior Management Team. The subject leader talks to the report in an annual 30 minute meeting with the link Senior Management Team member. On a rota basis the subject leaders visit the Governing Body to present the report and describe the work of the subject area. This usually happens every other year.

As a Subject Leader Do You Know...?

- How standards in your department compare with standards nationally and locally?
- How standards in your department compare with those achieved by the same pupils in other departments?
- The standards of minority groups; e.g. children looked after, and different groups, e.g. boys and girls?
- The quality of all aspects of teaching in all years, by all teachers to all types of groupings?
- What learning styles are preferred by pupils?
- The usefulness of assessment, recording and reporting in the subject area?