

6: Evaluating teaching

Just as assessment that supports learning is critical for student development, teacher evaluation that focuses on providing accurate evidence of practice and supports improvement is central for teachers' development. Having clear standards that teachers are expected to meet is an important starting point considered in this chapter. We review evaluation processes, emphasising the importance of teachers' reflective participation. We also consider classroom observation practices and giving feedback to teachers who support professional growth and development.

6.1 What is teacher evaluation and why is it important?

Teacher evaluation is a vital element in improving student learning outcomes. It is concerned with gathering evidence from a range of sources that inform on teacher performance and using this to support improvements in practice. This is sometimes referred to as performance review, teacher appraisal or teacher assessment. A good teacher evaluation system is a powerful tool to:

- help schools improve
- identify opportunities for teachers of all levels to develop further
- deliver accountability for learner progress.

In the first round of the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD 2009, p. 29), teachers reported that "performance review and feedback increases their job satisfaction and significantly increases their development as teachers".

There are a number of approaches that can be used in evaluating teaching. The most common include:

- classroom observations (by managers, other teachers or external evaluators)
- value-added models that try to measure gains in student achievement
- student evaluations of teachers
- judgements made by the teacher's line manager or principal
- teacher self-evaluation
- teacher portfolios of work.

How judgements are made is critically important. Too much weight can be given to a narrow range of evidence, for example students' examination performance. Triangulating evidence from a number of sources, systematically incorporating classroom observations and using more than one evaluator will help ensure judgements are sound.

Teacher evaluation systems are influenced by many factors. The following are important for their success:

- The system identifies and supports the values of the school.
- Teachers and managers are fully prepared for the implementation of the review system and they understand it.
- Care is taken that evaluation focuses on teachers' professional practice.
- Teachers are evaluated formatively to provide feedback and identify professional development needs, so their knowledge and experience can grow. In this way, performance review of teachers has a direct benefit on the learning experience of learners, and therefore on learner outcomes.
- The process is manageable and supports teaching rather than becoming a burden that hinders it.

Some systems emphasise evaluation with the intention of holding teachers to account rather than improvement. Some also link performance to salary changes. While there are effective evaluation systems that combine summative performance review with formative evaluation, there is a danger that they can unintentionally create a climate of fear and resistance among

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teachers and inhibit creativity and honesty. Teachers might be less willing to be self-critical if their pay is linked to performance. Systems work much better when they motivate.

6.2 Developing standards for teachers

Standards are clear descriptions used to define and measure quality expectations. We have already considered the importance of developing a clear understanding of learning and assessment objectives when planning lessons, and ensuring learners understand these. For teacher evaluation the practice is similar. Teachers need to have a clear knowledge and understanding of the standards and criteria against which they can evaluate their own performance and against which they will be evaluated by their managers.

Most schools will already have their own standards for teachers that can be refined and developed. Some Cambridge schools will be operating in systems where national standards are already prescribed, and they could expand these. Researching standards that have been developed by excellent schools and school systems is helpful (see for example Danielson 1996). However, it is important for schools to develop their own and not just copy a system designed for another context. Establishing appropriate standards needs to be led by the school's most skilled practitioners, who know the expertise and competencies good teachers must have. Standards need to be informed by the school's vision and mission as well as the expectations Cambridge International defines. We created the Cambridge teacher and learner profiles (see Chapter 4, Table 4) to help schools identify the sorts of attributes teachers need to be effective at delivering Cambridge programmes, and it provides an important reference.

One example of a four-criteria model for developing teacher standards is described next. Please note that this is provided for guidance only.

Table 8: Four-criteria model for developing teacher standards

Stage 1

Agree the criteria. The criteria in this model have been designed as broad headings to describe the key elements in which a good teacher will be engaged.

- Learner development and well-being.
- Learner achievement and progress.
- Teacher professional development and improvement.
- Contribution to whole school and community (in order to promote learning).

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Stage 2

Agree the aspects of the teacher's role that contribute to the criteria. It might be helpful to make a list of these and then to summarise the expectations as in the model below.

Learner development and well-being.

Every teacher in our school will:

- have high expectations of the behaviour, attitudes and potential for progress of all learners
- be confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged
- manage classes and the classroom well
- inspire and motivate all learners
- build, model and nurture strong and positive relationships with all learners
- encourage all learners to reflect on their work and progress
- help all learners to set and achieve challenging and appropriate targets
- identify learners who need additional support and/or challenge and provide this.

The teacher uses resources, routines and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, learner-centred environment that is supportive of all learners and conducive to learning.

Learner achievement and progress.

Every teacher in our school will:

- be accountable for learners' progress and outcomes
- plan and teach well-structured lessons that promote a love of learning
- have a secure knowledge of the curriculum area
- use a range of inspiring teaching resources
- use effective teaching strategies to help all learners to learn, including effective questioning
- assess learners' progress regularly and effectively
- give regular and supportive feedback to all learners.

The teacher plans and supports learning using the school's curriculum, effective strategies, resources and data. They engage learners effectively, measuring their progress and meeting individual learning needs.

Teacher professional development and improvement.

Every teacher in our school will:

- engage in professional development in their curriculum and/or specialist area
- take an interest in current research in the curriculum, effective teaching strategies and how children learn
- contribute to the professional development of other teachers in our school
- collaborate regularly with other teachers to improve our teaching practices
- develop expertise in and use a range of different resources, including ICT
- build, model and nurture strong and positive relationships with all colleagues
- contribute to our overall mission of the school as a learning community.

The teacher is a committed professional who communicates effectively. They take responsibility for and participate in professional growth that results in enhanced student learning.

Contribution to whole school and community (in order to promote learning).

Every teacher in our school will:

- build, model and nurture strong and positive relationships with all parents
- collaborate and communicate sensitively and respectfully with parents and the community
- make sure that parents understand what they can do to support their children's learning
- contribute to the personal development of learners outside the classroom through, for example, running an after-school club.

The teacher collaborates, communicates and works in partnership with learners, families and the school's community to promote student learning and achievement in and beyond the classroom.

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Stage 3

To make sure that teachers can effectively assess their own practice and are confident that, when they are evaluated, that evaluation is fair and unbiased, they need to have examples of what is expected for each criterion. Exemplar behaviours or indicators should, therefore, be developed at this stage to explain what each of the criteria means in terms of teacher behaviour. For example, what does highly effective lesson planning really mean? How can we judge the difference between effective and developing practice in assessing learners' work?

The exemplar indicators in the model are designed to help teachers and evaluators judge whether teaching is highly effective, effective, or developing in response to each of the criteria. When used with supporting evidence, for example from classroom observation, they also provide a rigorous 'checklist' system. This will make sure that your monitoring and evaluation fairly and accurately assesses your teachers. Appraisers can also use these exemplar indicators when assessing how effectively teachers are fulfilling the teacher standards and criteria in their professional practice.

Stage 4

Introduce the standards and criteria to all your teachers. You may decide to consult with the whole teaching staff at this stage. Or, the working group may have consulted with curriculum areas while writing them. Whatever you decide, teachers need to have a good understanding of the standards and criteria you have developed and of their purpose and use. Their introduction will be a good starting point for you to discuss, plan and develop your teacher performance review policy.



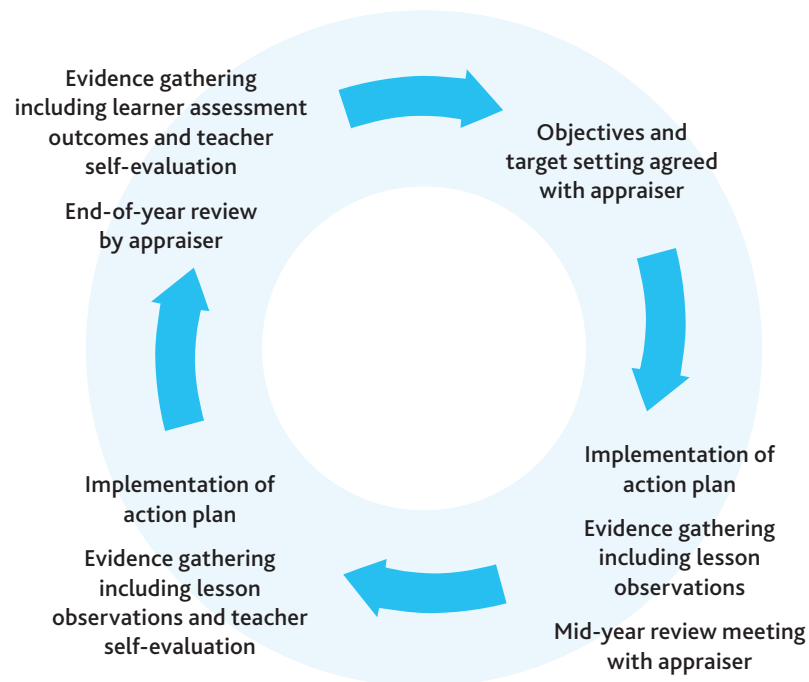
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6.3 The teacher evaluation process

The following diagram illustrates a typical annual review cycle. The process starts with setting objectives. This might be completed immediately after the final review at the end of a school year, or at the start of a new school year. The teacher needs to reflect on their evaluation report. This will identify strengths and areas needing improvement, and a few priority objectives for the year ahead. Objectives should be focused and achievable, and need to be discussed and agreed with managers. You will also need to identify any professional development support that is needed. Remember that having too many objectives makes it difficult to focus on achieving them.

Teachers will incorporate their objectives and apply the teaching standards throughout the year. In an ideal situation managers should be visiting classrooms regularly.

Figure 6: Model of a teacher evaluation cycle



Feedback should be formative, supportive and ongoing. An excellent practice is to encourage teachers to visit each other's classrooms and act as 'critical friends'. Schools should use their best teachers as role models and a resource to support less experienced or underperforming staff. How far a manager observes and oversees a teacher will depend on the situation – teachers who are new to the profession or who are struggling will need more monitoring and support.

Ideally include at least one more formal meeting (normally mid-year) between teachers and their managers to review progress. Classroom observations provide critical evidence, and we consider these in detail in the next section.

One valuable form of feedback that some schools decide to use is student evaluation of teachers' performance. This practice only works well in some cultures and settings, so you must decide if it could work in your school. When done well, it can provide a particularly powerful form of feedback. Good student evaluation of teacher systems includes the following characteristics:

- Students are given very clear and specific guidance about the feedback being requested.
- Students' comments are in relation to the teaching standards and never personal.
- Students do not rate the teacher; they provide feedback.
- Teachers give students a list of questions, based on their own objectives and school standards. Students only respond to these.

Ways of making student evaluation less threatening include encouraging, but not requiring it, and/or requiring all feedback to go to the teachers concerned rather than the teacher's manager. The teacher is then expected to write a summary of the feedback, which is shared with their manager and considered at the final review.

The final review should be a well-structured meeting following a clear agenda. Documentary evidence is presented and discussed. This is likely to include lesson observation reports and the teacher's own self-evaluation. A common format for the report will help structure the meeting and ensure consistency. The meeting should be highly reflective, with teachers encouraged to talk about what they have learned and what they found challenging.

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Procedures and practices also need to be defined to deal with any specific concerns about a teacher, for example by parents or students. This needs to be treated separately from teacher evaluation. Concerns that are repeated and substantiated will provide one source of evidence in evaluating performance. If concerns are proved justified, first create a course of action to help the teacher correct the performance issue(s). Keep a written record of the issues, agreed actions and support, as well as timeframes. The school needs to have a clear policy that identifies principles, practices and procedures that will be followed, ensuring fairness and transparency.

Managing the evaluation process

- Make sure that each teacher has an up-to-date job description.
- Allocate an appraiser to each teacher – usually the teacher's line manager.
- Identify a reasonable number of teachers that an individual appraiser is responsible for (a maximum of five teachers is recommended).
- Provide professional development and support to make sure that each individual appraiser:
 - has the specific knowledge, skills, understanding and time to carry out the role effectively
 - understands the school's policies and procedures and how performance review fits into the wider context of a teacher's professional development
 - has copies of all relevant documentation and any whole-school and team objectives as specified in the school development plan
 - understands the impact and implications of equal opportunities on the performance review process
 - is confident in evaluating evidence, including through classroom observation
 - is able to provide constructive feedback and engage in positive dialogue with the teacher
 - is aware of the resources available to support teacher development
 - is not over-burdened with performance review responsibilities.
- Make sure that there are opportunities for appraisers to share knowledge, learn from each other and align practice.

- Consider any justified request made by a teacher for a change in appraiser and make the final decision whether or not to agree a change.
- Make sure that all teachers understand the whole-school objective(s) they need to contribute to.
- Make sure that professional development not only addresses the needs of teachers identified through performance review but that it is also aligned to the whole-school improvement plan.

6.4 Classroom observation

Classroom observations are the most widely used source of evidence to give feedback to teachers. Observing lessons provides a unique opportunity to understand the curriculum students actually experience and what learners undergo on a daily basis. Unfortunately in many instances this is poorly done, with a very limited impact on student outcomes (Coe et al 2014). Schools need to ensure that the process is robust, understood and delivered in an environment of trust and understanding.

Observations can:

- give first-hand evidence to help evaluate an individual teacher's practice and the progress they are making in relation to the objectives agreed during teacher performance reviews
- monitor whether the school's teaching standards are being applied consistently throughout the school
- give a deeper view of the school's performance by triangulating classroom observation findings with other data (for example scrutinising learners' work, analysing end-of-unit assessments and students' performance in Cambridge qualifications)
- show how well new courses or schemes of work are being introduced
- provide first-hand knowledge of what learners experience in a particular year group or grade (learner shadowing, where an evaluator follows one student for a day or more, attending all their classes)
- establish where in the school good practice exists and identify expertise so that it can be used as part of the school's professional development programme

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- offer opportunities for mentoring and coaching
- offer opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively by becoming 'critical friends' of each other's practice.

Observing a lesson is a privilege and a responsibility. Positive relationships between teachers and learners and between learners themselves are built and developed over time, and are crucial for a strong learning ethos in the classroom. Having an observer in the classroom can place pressure on teachers, even when the observer is present as a 'critical friend' or to observe learners rather than aspects of the teacher's practice. This can affect the behaviour of teachers and learners.

Where classroom observations are primarily used for teacher evaluation in a school, teachers tend to be more nervous about the process. It can be very helpful to encourage using observation developmentally by involving all teachers in observing lessons of their peers. This could be through developing a coaching model or in a less formal way, for example teachers observing other teachers in their subject area. Peer observations can play a key role in gaining teachers' confidence in the benefits of classroom observation for sharing and developing practice.

Having clear protocols or guidelines for classroom observation practice can also help to make sure that the experience is as positive and developmental as possible – for the teacher, the observer and learners. Involve teachers in agreeing these protocols so that they understand the purposes of classroom observation and feel a greater ownership of the process. They will also recognise that it can be a key support for their professional learning. The following are examples of questions you might wish to ask:

- Should teachers always be warned about an observation, even when it is not part of their evaluation? What notice should a teacher be given of a formal observation?
- Should there be a limit on the number of times a teacher's class is observed?
- Can teachers arrange to observe each other informally in addition to any whole-school or subject-wide observation schedule?
- Should classroom observation guidance apply to impromptu 'drop-in' observations?
- Should there be guidelines for observers? For example, you may wish to state that, unless agreed in advance, the observer should not interrupt or join in with the lesson, but may take opportunities to talk to learners when appropriate.

- Should there be guidelines for teachers? For example, should teachers greet the observer? Should they make sure a lesson plan is placed where they wish the observer to sit?
- What preparation or training should the school provide for teachers in classroom observation practice and giving feedback?

Developing classroom observation strategies

For formal observations that form part of the evaluation process you will need a common approach to ensure fairness and consistency. Table 9 provides some guidance on effective observation practices. Table 10 provides one very simple example of a teacher evaluation form.

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Table 9: Suggested strategies for observing lessons

Observing lessons	
<p>Think how you would like an observer to behave in your classroom and model this. Remember that you are a colleague, not an inspector. Whatever the focus of the observation, the purpose should be about improving learning and so be developmental. Try to put your colleagues at ease and be as unobtrusive in the classroom as possible. If you stand with a clipboard and pen it looks more like you are there to judge performance rather than observe to support development.</p>	<p>Take opportunities to talk to learners. There should always be opportunities to talk and listen to learners without disturbing their learning or interrupting the teacher in a lesson. Of course, this should be done quietly and discretely. However, if there are no opportunities because it would interrupt the teacher, then the teacher is probably directing and instructing too much. If you are worried that it would disturb the learners, think about moving to sit and listen to different groups while they are working. Ask questions that are relevant to their learning. For example, ask them to describe what they are doing and how they will know that they have achieved the learning or lesson objective well. Ask if you may look at their workbooks while they are working on something else.</p> <p>Learners can provide us with lots of primary evidence including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what it is like to attend lessons with this teacher in this subject, so how typical the lesson you are observing is • how enthusiastic they are about their learning and the course • how much progress they think they are making and how they know this • how effectively the teacher delivers the course and helps them to understand what they need to do to improve further • any problems they are facing and what support they receive from the teacher. <p>Before the observation think about what you want to know and what questions you will ask if you have the opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to learners about the work they are currently doing and past work in their books. • Plan questions carefully to suit the age group of the learners. • Avoid leading questions. • Keep the questions brief and simple. • Use real examples in questions. • Ask questions that do not go back too far for younger learners to remember.
<p>Arrive at the lesson promptly. Unless you are only observing the final part of the lesson, or are conducting a learning walk, it is courteous to arrive at the lesson on time. Take the seat provided for you and see how the lesson starts.</p>	<p>Remember you are there to observe. Observing means watching attentively. If you are writing all the time you are in the lesson, you cannot observe properly. A good method to practise is to avoid writing anything for at least 10 minutes. Then, when you do write, make concise notes using bullet points. This will help you remember particular strengths and areas for improvement to discuss with the teacher (What went well; even better if...). Think of standing back and looking at the 'big picture'. This is often what teachers in the classroom fail to do for themselves, so your post-lesson discussions will be all the richer if you are able to 'replay' this for them.</p>
<p>Focus on the learners. Whatever the focus for the observation, look for the teacher's impact on each learner and their progress. This takes practice, but it is helpful to think in terms of cause (what the teacher does) and effect (what progress towards mastering the learning objective all learners make as a result). If we do this, it helps to make sure that we are objective observers. It also makes it less likely that our observations are influenced by our own style of teaching or over influenced by those teachers who are naturally more charismatic. It also makes sure that we recognise the strengths of a lesson planned so effectively that the teacher appears to be redundant because learners take full charge of their own learning.</p>	<p>Look at work and displays on the walls. Take time to look around you to observe the learning environment. Are there any resources on the walls to support learners? Do they find them useful? Are there any examples of assessed learner work on display? Does it help learners to know what to aim for and how they can get there?</p>
<p>Look at the resources available to learners. Are there sufficient and appropriate resources to support learners? Do learners and the teacher use technology effectively to support learning?</p>	

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Table 10: Example of a teacher evaluation form

A		Overall learning environment created by the teacher (Evidence in lesson observation)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
1.	The teacher creates a safe and pleasant learning environment					
2.	The teacher clearly respects the students and listens to the voice of the learner					
3.	The overall atmosphere in class is positive and encouraging					
4.	The teacher has an open and approachable relationship with students					
B		Instructional practice (Evidence in lesson observation, lesson plans)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
5.	The teacher leads the class in well-prepared activities					
6.	The objectives of the lesson are clear to the teacher and to the students					
7.	The lesson accurately develops student understanding of part of the Cambridge curriculum					
8.	The teacher has an open and approachable relationship with students					
9.	The teacher checks students' (previous) understanding					
10.	The teacher uses classroom materials and media when appropriate					
11.	The teacher delivers the lesson clearly in an effective style					
C		Differentiation (Evidence in observed lesson, lesson plans, student work, student questionnaire)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
12.	The teacher pays special attention to the very able students (e.g. by offering in-depth assignments and tasks)					
13.	The teacher pays special attention to the academically weaker students					
14.	The teacher supports bilingual students within his or her subject area					

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D		Preparation (Evidence lesson plans, student work, student questionnaire)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
15.	The teacher is aware of Cambridge expectations, as published in the guide, and uses the Cambridge syllabuses and support materials in planning lessons					
16.	Lessons are planned that incorporate a variety of appropriate activities consistent with Cambridge expectations					

E		Assessment (Evidence in marked student work, observed lesson, lesson plans, student questionnaire)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
17.	The teacher provides regular, clear and accurate formative feedback to students on their performance indicating what they need to do to improve. Cambridge assessment criteria are appropriately used					
18.	The teacher provides regular, clear and accurate summative assessment					
19.	Students demonstrate understanding of the nature and expectations of Cambridge assessment in the subject					

F		Beyond the classroom (Evidence: self-evaluation, faculty head comments, student feedback)				Comments
		1	2	3	4	
20.	The teacher is a proactive departmental colleague					
21.	The teacher is actively engaged in professional development to become a better teacher					
22.	The teacher supports students with their learning beyond the classroom by offering extra academic support					

6.5 Giving effective feedback to teachers

In a review of research, What makes great teaching? (Coe et al 2014, p. 39), the authors cite a range of studies that "... suggest the quality of feedback is a key component of any teacher assessment". To make sure that feedback is high quality, observers need guidance, training and practice. They identify six principles for teacher feedback that support sustained professional learning:

1. The focus is kept clearly on improving student outcomes.
2. Feedback is related to clear, specific and challenging goals for the recipient.
3. Attention is on the learning rather than the person or on comparisons with others.
4. Teachers are encouraged to be continual independent learners.

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5. Feedback is mediated by a mentor in an environment of trust and support.
6. An environment of professional learning and support is promoted by the school's leadership.

Just as classroom observation should be supportive and developmental, so feedback to teachers on what has been observed should help them to decide on their next steps for professional learning and development. Ideally give verbal feedback to the teacher

within 48 hours of the observation. If the observation is formal, review the lesson with the teacher and provide a written record, preferably within one week.

The written record should include the date of the observation, the focus of the observation, what was learned from it, the feedback given and any further actions/follow-up agreed. Teachers are learners, so many of the suggestions described in Chapter 5 on giving effective developmental feedback to students are also relevant to teachers.

Table 11: Providing feedback to teachers

<p>Conducting the lesson review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prompt. The review will be more worthwhile when it is easy to recall the lesson. • Encourage teachers to talk about what they have learned. They should also talk about what they found challenging in supporting learners to achieve the learning objective through the activities chosen. • Give teachers opportunities to discuss their work, focusing on how they can improve. • Ask teachers questions that encourage them to explain their thinking, e.g. "Can you tell me your thinking behind your choice of activities in the lesson?" • Make sure it becomes commonplace for teachers to reflect on each lesson and what they have learned as well as what students learned. • Help teachers to identify their next steps in learning.
<p>Providing feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be focused. Include two or three areas for improvement, referenced to the lesson observed. • Be intelligible. Feedback should be unambiguous and clear. • Be constructive. Include specific guidance for improvement and point towards the relevant criteria for success. Feedback should be specific to individual teachers (not comparing with other teachers) and identify what worked well in addition to what they need to do to improve and how to do it. • Be supportive. Use a positive tone and make clear the support that is available for the teacher. • Relate to the progress made by learners and what the teacher does to support and promote this. • Provide the teacher with more than he or she could gain from self-evaluation of the lesson e.g. information on learner progress gained from talking to individuals and small groups during the lesson; an objective view of whether all learners were engaged actively throughout the lesson. • Be challenging. Encourage the teacher to think more deeply about what they do well, what areas they could improve upon, and how they might do this. • Provide time and support for teachers to act on the feedback given. • Help to identify the next steps in learning.