

Subject Specialism

MENTOR GUIDANCE

Ideas on how to develop subject knowledge

How can I help the teacher develop their subject knowledge?

Below are some examples of tasks that can be discussed/ set with trainee:

- ❑ Work on a section of a scheme of work, changing the conceptual focus of a session
- ❑ Revise a section of an existing scheme of work in order to create more access to and interest for lower attainers
- ❑ Prepare new ICT resources in unfamiliar knowledge area, trial it with 3 learners and present a formal review & analysis to the curriculum area
- ❑ Link a section of scheme of work to Citizenship programme of study. Liaise with College citizenship co-ordinator
- ❑ Evaluate a new resource (video, textbook, website, visit, materials developed by Standards unit), present finding to team/curriculum area
- ❑ Mark 2 learners work (and analyse type/amount/layer of knowledge shown) from another group not teaching.

What is important is agreeing some targets to enable the individual to **develop & widen** their experience and skills

Observing experienced teachers

Observation is another invaluable training activity when carried out:

- purposefully and
- linked to targets that have arisen from observations/ assignments.

Trainees need to be aware that they should go in with a **clear focus** when doing an observation of an experienced colleague.

Below is a list of sample observation activities for stimuli/ starting points.

Discuss these with your trainee.

Example 1: Learners knowledge and delivery staff session planning

- i) Look for all the signs that the teacher is drawing upon prior knowledge

Watch the teacher – note down all the examples of assumed prior knowledge that the teacher appears to be able to take for granted

Watch the learners – what working knowledge do the learners seem to be operating with? How are they using this knowledge to feed into current activities or to help them in learning new material?

- ii) What happens when there appears to be a gap in learners' memory or understanding?

Watch the teacher – how does the teacher trigger the learners' memories?

Watch the learners – What types of triggers are effective in eliciting a response from the learners?

Example 2 – What part does content or enquiry play in keeping learners engaged and motivated to learn?

- i) How does the member of staff gain the learners' attention? What patterns seem to recur in successful efforts to gain attention? What part does content play (if any) in helping gain attention?
- ii) What are the signs that learners are listening well? When they are not? What kinds of details or types of question seem to intensify listening?
- iii) What makes the learners want to contribute orally? What factors cause more hands to go up or contributions to be offered? Which learners never seem to contribute? What factors might be making them reluctant to contribute?
- iv) When learners – whether individually or in pairs/groups – stay focused on a task, working at it purposefully, what has motivated them? Are they just carrying out a routine? Or can you see signs that they want to persevere with a problem or seek a solution?
- v) How does the member of staff intervene in pupils' individual, paired or group work? How do they focus the learner on the task/ topic?

Example 3: Using sources for different purposes

Observe, record and analyse how source/s are used in a session. How is the source(s) being used:

- o as an illustration?
- o as a stimulus?
- o as a source of information?
- o as a focus for analysis of its usefulness or reliability in an enquiry?

Example 4: formulating precise lesson objectives

Watch a session without asking the member of staff what the session objectives are first. Try to work out what knowledge, concept or skill the member of staff is trying to develop. See if you can devise a set of objectives for that session. Afterwards, see if your 'session objectives' are remotely similar to that of the deliverer's own.

Example 5: Quality of group talk

Watch a group of learners who are engaged in an activity requiring them to discuss and collaborate for at least four minutes

- i) How well do they listen to each other? How well do they build upon and use each others' comments? Where this is not happening effectively, why is this? Do you think the problem lay in the task, the explanation of the task, the resources or what?
- ii) Do they challenge each other? If so, how? How do these challenges move the talk forwards?
- iii) Are you able to judge any part of the discussion as worthwhile and focussed? If so, what characteristics does this discussion have? How might this discussion be helping their learning?
- iv) Imagine you are the member of staff. What would you do (either in setting up of the task, or at an earlier stage in the session, or during the group activity itself...) in order to improve the quality of the discussion and the learning that should result?



- √ Remember to keep a record of what has been agreed between yourself and the trainee.

- √ At your next meeting, ask the trainee to feedback to you :
 - what they have learnt/ gained from the experience
 - anything they aim to implement in their own delivery

- √ Ensure the trainee records the learning in some way

- √ Continue to have a 'learning conversation' and identify other development opportunities that will broaden the trainee's experience.