

# User Guide

My Education, My Future  
Classroom Observation tool

MARCH 2025



**RIGHT TO PLAY**  
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

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## Introduction

The observation indicators focus on behaviours that can be actually observed in the classroom. They are not aimed at assessing behaviours that are not readily observable (for example, the impact of teaching on learning outcomes). They also do not make judgements about the teacher's performance, but rather the application of Right To Play's play-based learning approach to their teaching practice.

The objective of the Classroom Observation Tool is to:

- assess to what extent teachers are using what they have been trained on regarding play-based learning, in the different types of lessons that they teach every day;
- understand the gaps in teachers' learnings to inform future trainings;
- support observers' feedback to teachers for teacher professional development;
- provide insights into how well the programme is going with the support of Right To Play.

The core of the observation tool is located on pages 1-3 of the tool. It shows indicators that should be assessed during the observation. Pages 4-5 of the tool are meant to provide support to the observer with cross-referencing and reflection after the observation.

## 1 - Before, During and After the Lesson

### BEFORE THE LESSON

#### What you will need for the observation:

Ensure you have the observation tool and the user guide, a pencil/pen, and a watch/phone to note down the start and end time of the observation (be sure to put your phone and any other device on 'silent mode').

Ask the Headteacher to provide the information needed for you to complete the Classroom Context section. If it is not possible to complete the whole form before the lesson, ensure that it is completed after the lesson.

#### Upon arrival to the classroom:

Introduce yourself to the teacher and explain that you will be watching their lesson today to learn about how teaching is done in this school. Reassure the teacher that he/she is not being evaluated and should teach as normal. Sit in a corner or at the back of the classroom where you have a good view and can observe what happens during the lesson, but where you are not distracting the teacher or students.

“ Good morning/good afternoon, Mr/Ms [*teacher's name*]. My name is [*observer's name*] and I will be observing your lesson today to understand better how teaching is done in this school. I am not here to evaluate you as a teacher. Your identity and the information that I record will be confidential. Please proceed with the lesson as you normally would. ”

**If the teacher does not wish to be observed:**

If a teacher does not want to be observed, kindly remind him/her that the observation is not an evaluation. A teacher cannot be forced to be observed; if the teacher continues to decline consent, exit the classroom and document what happened on the observation sheet. Complete the “Classroom context” section.

**Classroom Context section:**

The observer will visit the Headteacher to gather most of the information for this section e.g. teacher name, years of experience, numbers of children and numbers of those with a disability. The observer will record the start and finish time of the observation and will complete the ratings section in the final part of the Classroom Context section.

## DURING THE LESSON

**Setup:**

Sit towards the back of the classroom so that you can see the entire classroom; ensure that wherever you sit, you do not block any student’s view of the lesson. If visiting a classroom with another observer, sit separately and refrain from talking with him/ her at any point during the lesson.

**Observation:**

Begin the observation when the class is scheduled to begin. If the teacher is delayed, wait until s/he arrives and make a note of the time on the observation sheet. In the case of classrooms where there are children from more than one grade (for example, Grades 1, 2 and 3), treat the observation as one grade and document it on the observation sheet. Observers should try to score throughout the lesson rather than scoring each behaviour at the end of the lesson.

**Avoid interaction:**

Avoid engaging with or distracting the students or teacher and do not participate in classroom activities, even if explicitly asked by the teacher or student. If you need to check students’ textbooks, worksheets, notebooks, or other classwork, do this after the lesson with the teacher, to avoid distractions during teaching.

Avoid positive or negative nonverbal expressions and convey a neutral attitude to avoid unintentionally distracting the teacher. Redirect the teacher and students to the lesson if they ask questions or focus their attention on your presence in the room.

## AFTER THE LESSON

**Conclusion of the observation:**

When you have completed the observation, remain silently in the classroom, finish scoring and remain in the classroom without creating distractions. Thank the teacher for allowing you to conduct the observation and offer some constructive feedback on the lesson observed at the end of the lesson, once the children have left the room, for example:

“ Thank you, I enjoyed watching your lesson and appreciate you allowing me into your classroom. The goal of the observation was to learn about how RTP’s training in x, y, and z is actually being used in the classroom. Notes from this observation will help RTP with project monitoring and to design effective teacher development activities. Here are some things that I observed that you might find helpful... ”

Do not discuss the observation scores with anyone. You can refer to the Right To Play staff if the teacher insists on having more details. Refrain from discussing with anyone what occurred during the lesson in a joking or disrespectful way. This may affect your credibility as an observer.

## 2 - Scoring and notetaking

The observation sheet is divided into five sections:

- Classroom Context
- Classroom Environment – Readiness to Learn Goals
- Positive, Child-Centred and Inclusive Learning Environment Goals
- Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goals
- Overall Lesson Ratings

Each section has a set of indicators written as statements (e.g. *Children are actively participating in the classroom*) that describe the behaviour that will ideally be seen in a typical Right To Play classroom. There are four scoring options next to each of the behaviours. In the ‘Classroom Context’ section, the scoring options are: 1 = No; 2 = Yes, partly; 3 = Yes, completely; N/A = not applicable. Other scoring options have a similar set of options, with 1 being the lowest score and 3 being the highest.

Teaching and learning goals set		Indicators		Scoring options							
<b>Experiential Play-based learning Methodology Goals</b>											
<b>6.</b>	<b>Children are actively participating in the classroom</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>6.1</b>	The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions.										
<b>6.2</b>	The children are provided with choices e.g. different ways of approaching a task.										
<b>6.3</b>	The children spontaneously ask the teacher questions related to the learning activities and are unafraid to interact with the teacher.										
Notes and comments:											
<b>7.</b>	<b>The teacher engages the children through participatory learning</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>7.1</b>	The children have opportunities to discuss, practice and expand on what they learned e.g. in small groups, through open-ended questions.										
<b>7.2</b>	The children have opportunities to take on roles in the classroom.										
<b>7.3</b>	The children are asked questions by the teacher to stimulate critical thinking.										
Notes and comments:											
<b>8.</b>	<b>Children are engaged in play-based, experiential learning during lessons</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>				
<b>8.1</b>	The children are given opportunities to describe how they would apply their learning from the lesson to everyday life.										
<b>8.2</b>	The children are engaged in subject-specific games or play-based learning (PBL) activities in the classroom.										
<b>8.3</b>	The children are involved in generalised (not subject-specific) games and play during the lesson e.g. energisers and relays.										
Notes or comments on each type of activity e.g. which games or PBL activities did the teacher deliver?											

**Examples of observed behaviour**

Observers should try to score throughout the lesson rather than scoring each behaviour at the end of the lesson to provide a judgement which is as accurate as possible.

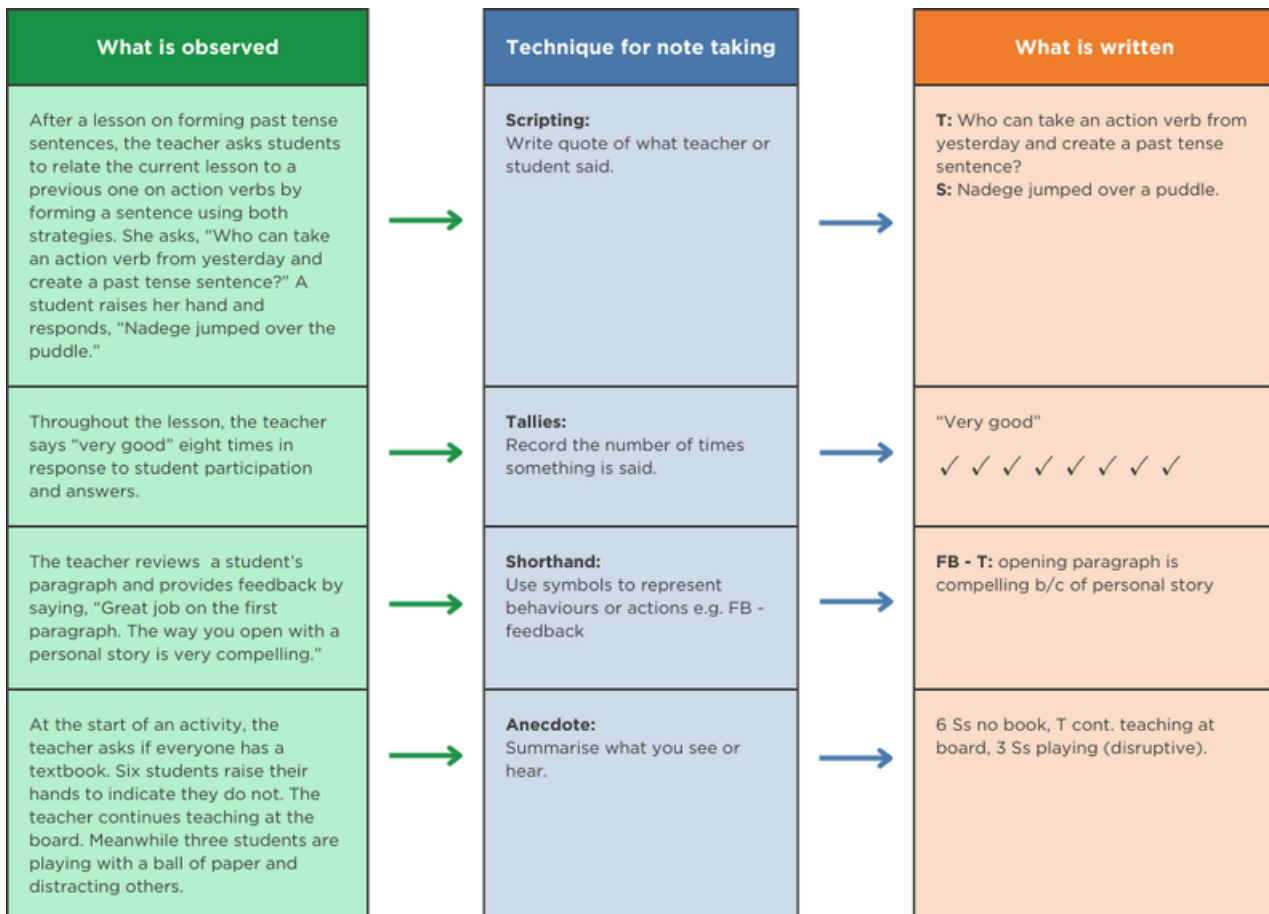
It is very important that observers give only one score for each behaviour observed. If observers want to change an answer, they must clearly remove the invalid score by striking through it with a cross (X). Some behaviours may not be observed. For those behaviours, the observer can place a mark (✓) in the “N/A” square.

Once the observation begins, the observer uses the observation sheet to document specific behaviours of the teacher during the lesson, including questions, instructions, and actions. The observer should read each statement of the observation sheet carefully and put a ‘tick’ (✓) under the score that accurately describes what they observe as in the following example:

Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goal					
6. Children are actively participating in the classroom		3	2	1	n/a
6.1	The children assist classmates in solving problems or understanding questions.		✓		
6.2	The children are provided with choices e.g. different ways of approaching tasks.			✓	
6.3	The children spontaneously ask the teacher questions related to the learning activities and are unafraid to interact.		✓		
Notes and comments:					

The observer should ensure that the 'notes and comments' section under each of the learning goals is completed as this will help to explain why a particular score was given and support the coaching conversation. The note should contain examples of what they saw in the observation, so that the score can be justified with evidence. Scores and comments should only be given for indicators that are in the observation sheet (not indicators that the observer would like to see there).

When note-taking, it is important to be as descriptive as possible - so that your notes are clear to others, who may not have seen the class. Observers will use their notes and use them in the coaching conversations as part of the teacher development process, but the coaching conversation may need to take place with someone else, if the observer is not available. All observers should create a note-taking system that works for them; below are some helpful note-taking techniques.



**To note:** the class sizes are large, with sometimes more than 70 children in each class. It is important to keep this in mind when rating each observed indicator.

### 3 - The teaching and learning goals

The observation tool is organised around three sets of teaching and learning goals: i) Classroom Environment - Readiness to Learn Goals; ii) Positive, Child-centred, and Inclusive Learning Environment Goals; and iii) Experiential, Play-based learning Methodology Goals. Below are some examples to help with understanding the requirements for the indicators in the observation tool.

The first goal is to create a physical learning environment which sets a foundation to promote learning. There are six indicators to observe in this set, which are related to classroom maintenance, accessibility, resources, space, safety and lesson planning.

0

#### Classroom Environment and Readiness to Learn



It's important to keep in mind that the teacher doesn't have much control over the Classroom Environment and Readiness to Learn goals. For instance, the size of the classroom and how well it is maintained, accessibility to children with disabilities, and whether it has sufficient resources are the responsibility of the school's senior leadership team. However, documenting the extent to which the classroom environment promotes readiness to learn, helps the headteacher advocate for these things. At a minimum the classroom should:

- Be clean and free from clutter and safety hazards.
- Have sufficient space for children to sit and complete a written task.
- Have a space at the front of the classroom to engage children in a game or role-play.
- Have minimum resources needed for the teacher to teach and the child to learn.

The second set of goals - Positive, Child-centred and Inclusive Learning - is about creating a physically and emotionally safe classroom. It has five sets of indicators which, when observed, show how closely the teacher is endeavouring to achieve the goal. The five sets of indicators relate to behaviour management, encouraging children, communicating with children, gender inclusivity and opportunity, and inclusivity for children living with disabilities.

1

#### Teacher manages the children's behaviour in the classroom



Examples of inappropriate behaviour in the classroom include: children constantly interrupting the teacher's instructions; passing notes to other children; talking to other children when not required in the activity and shouting out. To adequately address the behaviour and involve children in identifying preferred behaviour the teacher could:

- Be alert to 'catch the child doing something positive' and encourage the positive behaviour.
- Give the child some extra responsibility (example: collecting exercise books after the lesson).
- Direct the child to go to a 'time-away' area for a short time to reflect. Explain to the child why they are having time away. Discipline should always be connected with the action.

There is also non-disruptive behaviour which indicates a lack of engagement e.g. distraction; resting head on the desk; looking at the observer instead of the teacher; sleeping. This may also indicate that the child needs support with their psychological wellbeing.

Note how the teacher manages the child's behaviour - this should be in a calm, patient, and non-stressed manner and does not physically punish, disrespect or make the child feel scared. Note also if the teacher ignores an act of misbehaviour, including bullying.



**2**

## Teacher encourages children in the classroom



The teacher behaviours listed under Indicator 2 are examples of how the teacher can encourage children. Children may face many different types of challenges on a daily basis (e.g. hunger, trauma, home-life). The teacher should be aware of the different challenges that their students face and that might affect their ability to learn.

In the case of a lesson in progress, teachers should be encouraging even if the children give incorrect answers. For example the teacher could say:

- That's not the answer I was looking for.
- Can anyone help him/her with a better answer?
- Well done for trying.

Children who participate less in the class should be encouraged, for example, by asking them questions and inviting them to participate.

- Ginette, could you read the question from the board?
- Christophe, would you like to have a go at writing the answer on the board?
- Marie-Claire, would you like to choose the next song?

Please check that all children are being given opportunities to participate and make a note if girls and children with disabilities are not encouraged.

**3**

## Teacher communicates to the children in a way that aids their understanding



The teacher behaviours listed under Indicator 3 help to create a positive learning environment in which the children can participate and learn. As the classes are large, the teacher needs to ensure that the children at the back of the class can hear her/him.

- Annette (or child at the back of the class) what did I say?
- In other words, what I am asking you to do is...
- Put your hand up if you don't understand the question.
- Are we together?

**4**

## **The classroom environment is gender inclusive and girls and boys have equal opportunities**



Gender equitable participation in play-based learning is a core focus of MEMF. Teacher should do their best to not draw attention to the differences that have typically been expected of boys and girls. For example:

- Girls don't play with footballs
- Boys are allowed to be noisier and more active than girls.
- Girls serve boys with food and drinks.
- Boys don't cry when they are hurt.

Some of the ways that teachers can show that they are working to promote a gender-inclusive classroom:

- Providing positive role models by having experienced and knowledgeable girls help beginner girls and boys.
- Giving both girls and boys the opportunity to do an exercise on the board.
- Displaying positive images of women in sports, science, academia, work etc. (in addition to men).
- Encouraging and challenging girls and boys to go beyond stereotypes when choosing subjects, activities, higher studies, work etc. by discussing and showing girls and boys examples of those who have succeeded in doing so.
- Inviting male and female speakers to the classroom to speak to the girls and boys about how they succeeded in non-stereotypical occupations, studies, or sport.

**5**

## **Children living with disabilities are included in classroom activities and discussions**



The observer should note down the number of girls and boys living with disabilities in the classroom context section and make a note on how the teacher is ensuring that they participate in the class activities. The observer should probe a little to see if the teacher is aware of which of the children have difficulty seeing and hearing. Note whether provision has been made for them to sit closer to the front of the classroom.

Note on Indicator 5.2: Modification of activities can include:

- Giving children extra time to complete a task, where needed.
- Using brightly coloured materials for children with a visual impairment.
- Using simple signs for instructions for children with a hearing impairment.



The next set of goals focus on children's participation in the play-based learning activities provided by the teacher. These activities, along with the quality of the learning environment will help to develop the children's confidence and socioemotional skills, including those in communication with their peers, and the teacher.

## 6 Children are actively participating in the classroom



When children are participating in a class activity, it helps them to stay focused on the lesson, it builds their confidence and strengthens their understanding of the concept being taught. In large classrooms this can be done through a variety of ways, for instance:

- By being invited to answer questions.
- By being brought into team-based activities.
- By taking part in a call and response activity (such as reciting the times table as a class).
- Having the children sing the concept being taught (e.g. nge, twe, she maria...).

## 7 The teacher engages children through participatory learning



When teachers engage children in participatory learning, they are creating opportunities for triangulation of learning and assessment. It helps them to informally check understanding, and build on what has been taught. Teachers need to keep an eye on children who seem to be disengaged and find a way to include them, by for instance:

- Breaking up 'teacher talk' with a song or an energiser.
- Inviting certain children by name to answer questions.
- Inviting the child to share what they have written or are planning to write in their exercise books.
- Counting something (number of children smiling or folding arms) and having the children guess what the teacher is counting.

## 8 Children are engaged in play-based, experiential learning during lessons



Experiential learning is a process of 'learning by doing' and then 'reflecting' on what has been done. When children are engaged in experiential learning, it gives them the opportunity to do something in real time, connected to the real world, and then reflecting critically on what they have done. It is easier to retain and recall what has been learned through activities that are aimed at experiential learning. Play-based activities provide opportunity for experiential learning. Observe how teachers:

- Ask questions that help children reflect on what they just experienced and connect the experience or learning to earlier ones.
- Help children to think about how they could use what they have learnt in real life situations.

## Overall lesson indicator ratings

The observer should complete this section after the lesson, rating each of the indicators with an overall judgement. Alternatively, this section can be used as a short, standalone lesson observation by the Headteacher or as part of a coaching conversation. Complete the lesson planning section if the teacher has prepared a lesson plan. Note on **m**, a variety of teaching methods could include:

✓ group work

✓ discussion

✓ in-class writing

✓ student presentations

✓ outside readings

✓ creative play

✓ role-playing

✓ games & sports

✓ multiple choice questions

The final sections on the **Overall summary of the lesson** and **What went well, What can improve** are to note down points for feedback to teachers and should be aligned to the feedback protocol currently being used. Ask the RTP staff if you are unsure about how RTP currently share post-observation feedback with teachers.

### A note on Inter-Rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability is very important when using a classroom observation tool, as it shows the extent to which observers agree on the scores associated with a specific observation. However, several challenges can affect objectivity and reliability, including:

- personal experiences and familiarity with the tool,
- exposure to different teaching styles,
- additional information, and
- comparison.

Personal experiences and pre-existing knowledge can influence how observers score rubrics, which can result in observers giving different scores to each indicator. Additionally, observers can sometimes adjust scores based on pre-existing information or assume certain behaviours, which should not affect the tool's reliability. To maintain reliability, observers should observe each segment independently and avoid comparing what they are observing to other situations or teachers.

Overall, it is crucial to score behaviours as defined in the manual without being influenced by their use or reflection.