



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTING SUBJECTS AND ASPECTS 11-18**

**CLASSICS**

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# INSPECTING CLASSICS

## INTRODUCTION

As an inspector of classics, you need to find out how good the pupils are at the classical subject(s) taught - Latin, Greek and/or classical civilisation. Where you inspect more than one classical subject, you should report in such a way that the judgements on each are clear. You will take an interest in the extent to which the pupils understand what lies at the heart of the subject, and whether it captures their interest. You are likely to be able to explain your findings largely by evaluating the rate at which they progress and judging how stimulating and effective the teaching is.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

These are the main questions which your inspection should answer.

- How high are the standards in classics, and are they high enough?
- How well are pupils progressing?
- How well is classics taught?

### Before you begin your inspection in the school

- Revise your knowledge of the *Handbook* and associated guidance.
- Make sure you are familiar with the course objectives and the examination syllabuses used by the school.
- Analyse performance data to form a view of the standards achieved in recent years and any trends, and to establish hypotheses about strengths and weaknesses in classics.
- Study any departmental documentation which has been made available, and evaluate its potential contribution to the quality of teaching.

*Consider its rationale for the teaching of classical subjects, the aspects which it includes in its curriculum, and its coverage of course requirements in examination subjects.*

### When you are in the school

- Use the first-hand evidence from observation of lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with them to assess what the current pupils are like at the subject, what they do well, and where they could do better. Focus on the pupils in the year groups in which they become 14, 16 and 18. Refer to the records of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. Assess what progress pupils are making through the school - how rapid it is, on how wide a front and in what depth.

- Observe teaching, talk with teachers about their work, look at their plans and records, and judge how effective the teaching is - how it contributes to pupils' attitudes to learning, progress and standards. See which approaches work well and which are unsuccessful.
- Take stock of any other factors which affect the teaching of classics and the standards achieved. In particular, assess how effectively the subject is led and managed.
- Make sure that your observation forms contain enough evidence to support your judgements; telling examples are needed for your subject report.

### **Literacy and information technology**

- Judge the contribution of classics to pupils' reading and writing.
- Evaluate any contribution which classics makes to pupils' capability in information technology.
- Where information and communications technology is used to support pupils' learning in classics, evaluate the extent to which it enhances the pupils' standards of work. Whilst the pupils may be working well below their competence in information technology, this may still be appropriate to the classics task.
- Record your evidence and evaluations in the 'Other significant evidence' section of the observation form.

### **Feeding back your inspection findings**

- Feed back your findings clearly and helpfully to the head of classics and to the individual teachers by:
  - identifying the most important strengths and weaknesses in the teaching, and supporting your assessments with illustrations from the lessons you have seen;
  - giving convincing reasons for what you judge to be successful or otherwise, making clear how the teaching affects what is achieved;
  - showing the head of department how other factors, particularly leadership and management, affect the quality of teaching and the standards achieved;
  - ensuring that there is opportunity to discuss the findings and that points for development are identified.

### **Writing the subject section**

The classics section of the report should tell a coherent and convincing story. It should explain why the standards achieved are as they are. In particular, you should evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the teaching. The following questions will help you to check the quality of your reporting.

- Are examination results interpreted so as to give a clear view of the standards attained, to show how they compare with other subjects in the school, and to identify any trends over time?
- Are there clear judgements of what is achieved by the pupils in the year groups in which they become 14, 16 and 18? Are the strong and weak features identified in the different aspects of the subject?
- Is there a convincing explanation of any significant differences between what is seen and what results indicate?
- Are variations in the progress of different groups or in different years evaluated and explained?
- Does the evaluation of teaching spell out how it affects the pupils' response and what they achieve? Is it clear which teaching methods are successful and which are not? Is there an explanation of any other factors, such as leadership and management, which are significant in affecting standards?
- Is it clear how far standards and teaching have improved since the last inspection and are reasons given?
- Are the main judgements supported by the most telling examples?
- Is it clear what needs to be done to improve standards in classics?

## **ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS**

Your judgements on attainment and progress in classics will be based on performance **data** and direct **observations** in the school. Any differences between these judgements **must be explained convincingly**.

### **Interpreting data**

- For pupils aged 16, compare the school's GCSE results with:
  - the results achieved in schools nationally;
  - the results achieved in other subjects in the school.

*These comparisons give indications whether standards are as high as they should be and whether there are any notable points - for example, differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The GCSE results for all kinds of schools are published in the national press each August in provisional form, and they include Latin, Greek and classical civilisation as separate subjects.*

*Bearing in mind the school's curriculum policies and the options available, you will be alert to the patterns of entry for GCSE Latin, Greek or classical civilisation and how these may influence the standards attained. In interpreting*

*results, you may need to refer to matters such as a change in the syllabus or the nature of the year group.*

- Evaluate the A-level and AS results. Look at them over several years and take account of performance in GCSE and any value-added measures. Also compare with results in other subjects in the school.

*You should note that national results for individual classical subjects are not readily available, and those for classical subjects as a whole do not provide useful comparisons. In making judgements, you will need to **exercise caution** because of the various factors at play, such as the numbers involved and the nature of the students and courses.*

### Using evidence from observations

- For pupils in the school year in which they become 14, establish their attainment by professional judgement. For pupils in the year groups in which they become 16 and 18, judge their attainment according to the requirements of the courses which they follow.

*There are no national statistics or level descriptions for pupils to the age of 14, and curricular arrangements for classical subjects, particularly Latin and Greek, vary widely in the time provided and the age of beginning the study of the subject. Standards are judged by what is considered typical attainment. However, it is important to emphasise progress in relation to the provision made for the course. For pupils likely to proceed to a course leading to a public examination, the standards achieved need to be placed in the context of what is expected at age 16.*

*Judgements about standards of pupils' work must be based on evidence from the different aspects of the curriculum for the classical subject in question. Up to age 14, such a curriculum is not established nationally, but it may be loosely defined by the aims and assessment objectives of the National Criteria for GCSE. For Latin and Greek, these cover: **language** (including translation), **literature**, and the **cultural context**. For pupils taking public examinations, inspectors should consider the syllabus objectives in question. For pupils who have not yet begun the study of literature, its place is taken by the synthetic Latin or Greek which they read as part of their course. For classical civilisation, the objectives are related to **literature in translation** and to **classical institutions, achievements and events**. For pupils who have not begun the study of literature, its place is taken by the classical stories and history which they come across in a simplified form. The use of primary evidence is a requirement for pupils on examination courses. **Significant weakness in any aspect compared with others means that standards overall cannot be high enough.***

- Judge the **progress** which pupils make in each year, referring to any significant differences between particular groups, such as able pupils, those with special educational needs, and boys and girls.

*The evidence comes from talking with pupils, looking at their written work and seeing how they get on in lessons - how much do they learn and at what rate?*

*For pupils with special educational needs, judgements of standards, particularly progress, should be made by taking into account their best means of communicating - for example, by computer or other form of technology. There may be a need for pupils to do work pitched at levels lower than is normally associated with their age.*

- As you **look at pupils' work** and **talk with them**, consider the extent to which pupils can:

#### **(Latin/Greek)**

- read, understand, appreciate and make a personal response to Latin or Greek texts (original or synthetic, and including an unprepared passage of Latin/Greek);
- apply a sound knowledge of grammar, syntax and vocabulary;
- display a sensitive and analytical approach to language and understand the differences between inflected and uninflected languages and the different ways in which ideas are expressed in English and Latin/Greek;
- appreciate the influence of Latin/Greek on English;
- understand the social, cultural and political background of the texts which they read;
- evaluate evidence and draw comparisons between the classical world and later times;

#### **(classical civilisation)**

- read classical texts in translation and understand their content, literary form and social/historical significance;
- interpret, evaluate and respond to literature in translation;
- show knowledge and understanding of the society, politics and culture of the classical world;
- use evidence from literary and archaeological sources and make an informed response to classical artefacts;
- interpret motives and attitudes, evaluate achievements and draw comparisons between classical and later times.

*These attributes will help you in shaping the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in classical subjects as well as the overall judgement about attainment and*

*progress. Remember that in your reporting you need to go further than citing the attributes; draw on the most telling evidence which exemplifies them.*

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES TO LEARNING**

- Look out for the following characteristics:
  - interest in the subject by taking initiative in such activities as questioning the etymology of words, refining translation and investigating aspects of classical culture;
  - fascination with classical stories, literature, history, art and architecture;
  - deriving intellectual satisfaction from knowledge and understanding of vocabulary, grammar, classical terminology, history and civilisation;
  - appreciating how awareness of a classical language and/or the classical world illuminates understanding of the modern world, through causation, parallel and contrast;
  - care and thoroughness in using glossaries and other reference material;
  - accuracy in noting new language and/or information and practising its recall and use.

## **TEACHING**

- Judge the quality of teaching by weighing its strengths and weaknesses according to the criteria in the *Framework*, and assess its **impact on educational standards**. Effective teaching in classical subjects is rooted in a good command of the language, literature or civilisation in question.

*Teaching cannot be satisfactory where pupils, or a significant minority of them, learn less than you would expect considering what they already knew. The same is true where they do not firmly consolidate their learning.*

- Inform your views by reference to the characteristics of effective classics teaching, in which the teacher:
  - enthuses pupils with the notion that classical subjects illuminate the understanding of many other things, by emphasising the relevance of Latin/Greek to the vocabulary and grammar of English and other languages, helping pupils to explore the similarities and differences between aspects of classical and modern civilisation, incorporating cross-curricular themes, and forging links with aspects of National Curriculum subjects (*subject knowledge, expectations, planning, methodology*);
  - extends pupils' knowledge and understanding and develops their insight into the Latin/Greek language and/or classical literature and the social and historical context in which it is set (*subject knowledge, expectations, planning, methodology*);



- insists on accuracy in such matters as the use of vocabulary, grammar, technical terms, and the names of people and places (*subject knowledge, expectations*);
  - (Latin/Greek) encourages pupils to read for sense and to translate accurately and idiomatically (*subject knowledge, expectations, methodology*);
  - (classical civilisation) encourages pupils to study and discuss a range of classical material, such as art, architecture, science, philosophy and different kinds of literature (*subject knowledge, expectations, planning, methodology*);
  - strikes a good balance between active teaching and the need for pupils to prepare, investigate, practise, discuss and make an informed response to aspects of language, literature and civilisation (*planning, methodology, organisation*);
  - uses audio-visual/reference material and visits to sites, museums and theatres to enhance learning (*resources*);
  - assesses the full range of the subject's aims, not merely those which are easy to test, such as vocabulary, translation or factual knowledge (*assessment*);
  - sets homework tasks to consolidate and extend understanding of the subject; this is particularly important where teaching time is constrained (*expectations, homework*).
- Be alert to imbalances in teaching, such as:
- lively translation and discussion but insufficient emphasis on systematic learning and consolidation of vocabulary, morphology and syntax (*planning, methodology*);
  - translating Latin/Greek but giving insufficient emphasis to comprehension or the social/historical context (*methodology*);
  - extensive grammatical work out of a realistic context (*methodology*);
  - too much or too little help in the translation and comprehension of original Latin/Greek texts (*expectations*);
  - excessive reliance on text books and exercises (*methodology*);
  - setting work which involves copying, drawing pictures and retelling stories rather than encouraging fresh interpretation or insight (*expectations, methodology*).

## **OTHER ASPECTS OF PROVISION OR MANAGEMENT**

### **Curriculum and leadership**

- Be alert to factors which may have an impact on standards in classics, such as:

- the place of classics in the curriculum as a whole and the effectiveness of the curricular arrangements, including the way it is represented in any scheme of options;
- the rationale for the teaching of classical subjects, and the quality of the departmental planning and guidance for teaching them;
- the head of department's leadership and its effectiveness in promoting awareness of the nature and value of classical subjects;
- liaison with other departments and the school's management;
- the contribution of classics in supporting pupils' development in other subjects, such as English and history;
- the adequacy of the time allocations to enable worthwhile courses to be offered;
- the suitability of the conditions in which classical subjects are studied;
- attention to the needs of those who discontinue a classical subject (particularly Latin) before taking a public examination;
- the provision of alternative forms of certification where many pupils do not proceed to GCSE.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

- Assess the effect of the following factors:
  - the provision for staff development in classical subjects;
  - the provision of time to co-ordinate work, where it involves teachers from several departments;
  - the provision of extra non-contact time, when lessons are provided outside the time-table;
  - the quality, quantity and use of textbooks, library books and teaching aids such as audio-visual resources, computers, artefacts, and theatre, museum or site visits;
  - the availability of a specialist room with adequate storage and good display of maps, posters and pupils' work.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- Judge the contribution of classics by considering the extent to which pupils:
  - reflect on religious beliefs and practices different from and similar to those with which they are familiar;

- gain a sense of the human condition in different times and places and are inspired by great literature or art;
- gain an insight into issues of right and wrong through literature, history or myth;
- understand differences in social organisation and status;
- understand the similarities and differences between the cultures of Rome/Greece and those of later times and appreciate the influence of classical culture on the modern world.

## **Literacy**

- Judge the extent to which classics helps to develop pupils' literacy. The evidence may come from:
  - the reading of myths, stories and plays which extend vocabulary and phraseology and inspire the pupils' own writing;
  - pupils' experience of different genres of writing, such as history, drama and epic;
  - the teacher's correction of pupils' own writing, to strengthen spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The classical languages have a particular value in showing the grammatical structure of language and the basic spelling and composition of many words, particularly those which are difficult because they are technical, formal, or compound.

- For these reasons, judge the extent to which the learning of Latin or Greek enables pupils to increase their understanding of:
  - English grammar (for example, the difference between subject and object and the relationship between main and subordinate clauses);
  - the use and meaning of prefixes and suffixes;
  - formal and compound vocabulary;
  - scientific and other technical terms.

## **OBSERVATION FORMS**

There follow two sample observation forms for classics. These are intended to show how evidence and judgements contribute to a coherent picture of attainment in these classics lessons. In one lesson, the teaching is judged to be 'very good' (grade 2) and in the other it is considered 'satisfactory' (grade 4).

### LATIN YEAR 8 MIXED ABILITY - Satisfactory teaching

**CONTEXT:**

T introduces Roman education and the importance of arguing a point of view. Followed by explanation of 1st and 2nd person plural and translation of passage of Latin. Homework to make notes on Roman education.

**TEACHING:**

Teacher's knowledge of language and culture is good. Introduction on Roman education a little rushed, because T is conscious of need to start translation. Lesson well prepared for class and pairs, but peters out with no summing up - just quick setting of homework. Expectations suitable for high and average attainers, but less able really need more help in translating - eg revision of singular/plural of nouns. T's relationship with class is good but individuals have difficulty in getting attention during pair work. No particular focus on assessment, but T already knows pupils' capabilities well. Homework suitable in content.

Grade 4

**RESPONSE:**

Good: interest shown and questions asked. Ps respond well to comparison between Roman and modern schooling. Ps work well in pairs for translation. Behaviour good. Concentration good overall but, for the lower attainers, flags a little towards end of lesson, because they do not produce a coherent translation, and begin to lose the thread of the story.

Grade 3

**ATTAINMENT:**

Below average for pupils towards end of first year of course. Reason, mainly the time allocation for the subject. The high attaining ps have secure knowledge of grammar - tense/person/singular and plural/superlative fortissimi - but other ps are inaccurate. The less able make many errors in interpreting grammatical detail, but their grasp of Roman education is satisfactory.

Grade 5

**PROGRESS:**

Overall in the lesson, progress is satisfactory in aspects of language and civilisation. Ps have learnt several facts about Roman education and most distinguish reasonably clearly between the first and second person plural. All are now aware of similarities between Latin and French pronouns (nous and vous) and verb endings. LAPs make slow but noticeable progress.

Grade 4

### CLASSICS YEAR 11 MIXED ABILITY - Very good teaching

**CONTEXT:**

Continuation of earlier lesson on Homer's Odyssey, in which the narrative importance of Odysseus' crew was considered. Task set to skim text and note evidence for the relations between Odysseus and his companions, including differences of opinion. Class divided in two, one half to work from Book 9 and the other half from Book 10. Pupils work in pairs and later feed back their ideas and evidence.

**TEACHING:**

T displays very thorough knowledge of Odyssey and enthusiasm for it. Very clear explanation of the task. Allocation of time clearly set to maintain pace of working. Demanding tasks set. T encourages developing views and plays important role in plenary to see that episodes are in the overall context of the Odyssey and its themes. Praises good insights and use of evidence. Homework task set to write up 'companions' eye' view of Odysseus. Teaching effective in stimulating interest, and leads to very good progress.

Grade 2

**RESPONSE:**

Ps concentrate hard on the task. Close examination of text and careful note taking. Discuss very well in pairs. Enjoy presenting their views to the class and react with interest to differences of opinion in interpretations - for example, whether Odysseus should have followed the companions' advice and not investigated the Cyclops himself, and why the animals into which the companions were turned were pigs. Very well motivated for homework task and clearly used to preparing for assessed tasks.

Grade 2

**ATTAINMENT:**

Well above average by standards usually found for GCSE. Higher and average attainers show very good familiarity with Odyssey and know major themes extremely well. They have very good insight into aspects of character and development of plot, and are able to interpret evidence very convincingly in the context of the Homeric world. Lower attainers also have very secure understanding, with simpler but clear views, a little limited by standard of expression.

Grade 2

**PROGRESS:**

All pupils do a great deal to consolidate previous knowledge and to see much greater significance in episodes already familiar. Good amount of work is covered in available time. HAPs gain sharp insights into questions of leadership and character; LAPs also make very good progress in linking evidence to views.

Grade 2

## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This is one of a set of booklets which make up *Inspecting subjects and aspects 11-18*. The set consists of:

- an introductory booklet, *General guidance*, which is for all inspectors who evaluate the work of secondary age pupils - it is mainly about inspecting subjects;
- separate booklets on inspecting specific subjects and aspects; the contents page of *General guidance* shows the subjects and aspects which have booklets.

The main points in the *General guidance* are summarised in each subject, but if you are inspecting the work of secondary age pupils you should read the introductory booklet so that you are fully in the picture of what you have to do.

The contents of all the booklets are on the Internet and can be accessed from OFSTED's website [<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>]. This will allow you to obtain guidance for individual subjects or aspects.

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