

OFFICE  
FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION



# Inspecting Drama

11–16

with guidance on  
self-evaluation



**Inspecting**

**Drama**

**11–16**

**with guidance on  
self-evaluation**

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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
Context of drama to age 16	5
OFSTED inspection of drama	5
<b>COMMON REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1 STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Performance data	9
1.2 Analysis of pupils' work	11
1.3 Talking with pupils	12
1.4 Evidence from lessons	13
<b>2 TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 What to look for in lessons	17
2.2 Observing lessons	18
2.3 Other evidence on teaching and learning	21
<b>3 OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4 SUMMARY</b>	<b>25</b>



# INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended to help school inspectors, headteachers and staff to evaluate education in drama for pupils aged 11–16. It complements OFSTED’s inspection handbooks and is part of a suite of guidance booklets for inspecting subjects and aspects 11–16. The suite includes a booklet on English, which contains references to drama.

The booklet gives guidance on evaluating standards and achievement, teaching and learning, and other factors that have a bearing on what is achieved. You will find advice on how to interpret performance data; what to look for in pupils’ work and the questions to ask them about it; the subject-specific points to observe when in lessons; and how to bring your evaluations together to form a coherent view of the subject.

Examples of evidence and evaluations are *italicised* and presented in boxes, sometimes with a commentary to give further explanation. These examples show a range of ways in which evidence and findings can be recorded and reported. They are not meant to endorse any particular method or approach.

School inspectors on short inspections and senior staff in schools are likely to evaluate a range of subjects and may need to refer to more than one booklet. To facilitate this, all the subject guidance booklets can be downloaded from OFSTED’s web site ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

Our School Inspection Helpline team, on 020 7421 6680, will respond to any queries (or you can e-mail [schoolinspection@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:schoolinspection@ofsted.gov.uk)).

## Context of drama to age 16

Drama is part of the National Curriculum programme of study for English at Key Stages 3 and 4. There are over 50,000 girls and over 30,000 boys from Key Stage 4 in maintained schools entered each year for GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) drama.

There is some consideration of the drama element within the National Curriculum for English in Key Stages 3 and 4 in *Inspecting English 11–16* (OFSTED, 2001). However, this present booklet is concerned largely with drama as a separate timetabled subject. Some schools meet the National Curriculum requirement by separately timetabled drama in Key Stage 3. The main focus of the booklet is on GCSE drama, with due consideration to work in Key Stage 3, on which it builds. The general advice in the booklet is illustrated using a case study of the hypothetical William Shakespeare School. The school has two mixed-ability groups taking GCSE drama in each of Years 10 and 11.

## OFSTED inspection of drama

The nature of the subject is such that formal provision may run beyond normal lesson time. Lessons starting in normal timetabled periods may, on occasion, continue into lunch breaks or after school, to give opportunity for more extended work. Lessons formally timetabled before or after ‘normal’ hours are, for OFSTED purposes, just as much part of the formal curriculum as any other. Lessons in any subject taken by only one or two groups in each of Years 10 and 11 will not occur many times during an OFSTED inspection. So inspectors should make every effort to avail themselves of most of this limited available evidence. Where drama has a GCSE entry of at least 20, it will feature in table S5 in the Performance and Assessment (PANDA) report; its evaluation then merits a discrete section in Part D of the published report. Where it is a less significant part of the school’s work, it is sufficient to add a paragraph to the section for English.





# COMMON REQUIREMENTS

Inspectors or evaluators in schools should have a good understanding of the key characteristics of the school and its pupils. The achievement of individuals and the different groups of pupils in the school must be evaluated to judge how effectively their needs are met. Credit should be given where, against the odds, pupils achieve well even though they may not have reached the levels of attainment expected for their age.

As an evaluator, you must be thoroughly familiar with the specific requirements for drama in the National Curriculum. You will need to consider how successfully the subject contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and how effectively it helps to prepare pupils for adult life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

When evaluating drama, you should consider how well planning and teaching take account of the following principles of inclusion:

- setting suitable learning challenges;
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs;
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils;
- promoting racial equality.

You need to be informed about the responsibilities and duties of schools regarding equal opportunities, particularly in respect of discrimination on grounds of gender, race and disability. These are covered by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, and their respective Codes of Practice. These Acts underpin national policies on inclusion, on raising achievement and on the important role schools have in fostering better personal, community and race relations, and in addressing and preventing racism.

In many schools you will find additional resources and initiatives aimed at promoting educational inclusion. You must know about any nationally funded or local initiatives in which the school is involved so that you can assess their effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> There is guidance on this in the OFSTED publication *Inspecting New Developments in the Secondary Curriculum 11–16 with guidance on self-evaluation* (published 2001).

<sup>1</sup> Notably, Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG), and other programmes funded through the Standards Fund, the Single Regeneration Budget, the New Opportunities Fund and New Deal for Communities



# I STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT

If the subject was part of the curriculum when the school was last inspected, read the previous inspection report carefully to gather information about standards and achievement at that time. This provides the reference against which you can gauge improvement.

Interpret what past performance data say about standards in drama (you may well need to consider data for other related courses such as theatre studies or expressive or performing arts). Identify the characteristic strengths and weaknesses in pupils' current work from direct observation. Judge the standards of 16 year olds using the same scale as for test and examination results: 'above average', 'average', 'below average', and so on. In the interests of clarity, you can report standards using terms such as 'high', 'average', or 'low'. You should explain convincingly any differences between past results and the standards you observe.

Judge pupils' achievement by considering whether standards in drama are high enough, taking into account the pupils' starting points or capabilities, the progress they make over time and the demands made on them. Look for and pursue any significant differences in achievement between groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, pupils of different ethnic heritage, those learning English as an additional language (EAL), Traveller children, those with special educational needs (SEN), and gifted and talented pupils.

## I.1 Performance data

Each year, schools receive a PANDA report. Use the data and analyses it presents to gain an overall picture of the standards and achievement of pupils entered for drama and drama-related examinations, and note areas for further exploration. Be cautious about reading too much into the data when the number of pupils involved is small. Add to this picture by taking account of any other relevant data or analyses the school can provide, such as:

- GCSE results over time, but remember that changes from year to year may well reflect differences in the capabilities of the group of pupils opting to take the subject, particularly where individual entry numbers are small;
- data from monitoring the relative performance of pupils of different ethnic heritage and other groups, but take care not to over-interpret statistics for a small number of individuals;
- value-added analyses, or comparison with the same pupils' attainment in English or other performing arts subjects, such as music or dance, in which some of the same conventions are used.

Table S5 in the PANDA report shows details of the most recent GCSE results where at least 20 candidates have been entered. Consider, for instance, whether the school's distribution of pupils to grades looks significantly different from the national distribution, and look with particular care at the key indicators given in the table.

In interpreting GCSE results, take account of examination entry policy. For example, above average results might have been obtained because the entry was restricted to more able pupils. Always identify how many pupils this involves and investigate the reasons for their non-entry.

Use tables S1 and S3 in the PANDA report to check girls' and boys' results separately, to see if there are significant differences, keeping in mind the national picture. Remember that differences may reflect the differing capabilities of the girls and boys who take the subject. Discuss differences with the department and pursue the issue further in your first-hand observations. Sometimes, where drama GCSE features in table S5, the number of girls or boys entered may be insufficient for inclusion in tables S1 and S3. However, the department should have this information and may have collected it on a three-yearly basis to facilitate more robust interpretation.

Tables S3 and S5 for William Shakespeare School show the following for the school's most recent results (S) compared with the national picture (N), when percentages are rounded.

Drama		%A*-A	%A*-C	%A*-G	Average points score (APS)	Entry as % of year group
Girls	S	11.4	77.1	97.1	4.98	35.0
	N	22.3	74.9	99.2	5.33	19.4
All	S	8.0	68.0	96.0	4.65	25.0
	N	18.8	69.1	98.9	5.10	15.4

(As fewer than 20 boys were entered, table S1 gives no information about drama. However, national data for boys were: A\*-A 13.0%, A\*-C 59.5%, A\*-G 98.4% and APS 4.72.)

Tables S4 and S6 for William Shakespeare School show the following.

Dance	Subject APS	Average in all other subjects	School difference	National difference	Relative performance indicator
Girls	4.98	4.50	0.48	0.81	-0.33
All	4.65	4.32	0.33	0.78	-0.45

(As fewer than 20 boys were entered, table S2 gives no information about drama. However, the national difference for boys was 0.73.)

Other relevant information is that:

- in the PANDA report, the school's overall performance (average total points for each pupil) in GCSE/GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) was graded as average (grade C) against all other schools and above average (grade B) against similar schools; girls obtained better results than boys;
- the last inspection report (four years ago) noted that standards in drama were average in Key Stage 3 and at least average in GCSE.

#### **Example DRI: notes on GCSE results and on information from the department**

- The most recent GCSE results show the proportion of A\*-C grades in line with national.
- There were few of the highest (A\*-A) grades (departmental information shows none amongst the boys).
- Whilst pupils nationally do considerably better in drama than in their other subjects, this is less evident at William Shakespeare School. This could suggest weak achievement compared with the other subjects. From comparison of PANDA data for all pupils (RPI -0.45) and for girls (RPI -0.33), it is apparent that boys' achievement is weaker than girls'.
- As GCSE results overall are graded B against similar schools, the negative RPI probably suggests satisfactory rather than weak achievement.
- The uptake of drama is greater than nationally, particularly so among girls.
- Departmental information shows that attainment in GCSE for boys and girls has been similar over the last three years.
- The head of department believes that the results would be better if she were able to teach the whole course (at present, the part-time specialist takes one period with each option group).

#### **Hypotheses**

- Pupils' achievement at GCSE is satisfactory, though not as good as in their other subjects.
- Boys' achievement may be weaker than girls'.
- The most talented may not be challenged sufficiently.
- There may be variation in teaching quality between the two teachers, possibly compounded by weak co-ordination.

Always discuss with the department the picture of standards and achievement you have formed from the performance data, and take into account their views and any other data they can supply.

Finally, remember that the performance data are important in supporting your evaluation but be sure not to give them undue weight or to report them at length. Report the salient points from the data in a way that reveals their significance, and give prominence to your own findings, to make sense of the total picture of standards and achievement.

## 1.2 Analysis of pupils' work

The main purpose of this activity is to collect and evaluate evidence of pupils' standards and achievement. Looking at pupils' work gives you a particularly good opportunity to assess whether the pupils' progress is sufficient over the course and whether the demands made on them are consistently high.

You can also collect evidence about pupils' attitudes by considering whether their written work shows care and interest. Begin to make links with the quality of the teaching and how well work is marked or more formally assessed.

Analyse samples of work by gender, or focus on other groups within the school, where significant differences in achievement may be at issue, or where 'inclusion' may be precarious – for example, because of poor attendance, high mobility or lack of familiarity with the English language. You might examine the work of a gifted pupil, or of a pupil who has not been in the country for long. Where any groups of pupils do not thrive as well as they should, examine whether the teaching and curriculum take sufficient account of their needs.

The volume of written work arising from drama may legitimately be limited, as it is a practical subject. There is a need to seek other available evidence. The staff may be able to provide video examples showing pupils' practical work. If so, ask them to cue the tapes at the key moments (probably about five-minute excerpts) which show you their view of particular standards.

When evaluating standards of work in drama (whether during analysis of work, talking to pupils or when observing lessons), important questions to consider include whether the pupils:

- demonstrate a secure understanding of key dramatic terms (such as 'script', 'improvise', 'monologue', 'dialogue', 'freeze-frame', 'corpsing' and 'upstaging');
- show knowledge and understanding of a range of different dramatic styles and genres;
- have good performance skills, and show sensitivity and an awareness of place, occasion and audience;
- have a feel for theatre and a knowledge of its conventions and growth historically;
- know about the form and structure of dramatic performance and apply their knowledge to the dramatic texts they study and the improvisations they undertake;
- choose language, gesture and movements which interpret the given stimulus effectively;
- recognise, explore and show understanding of the human relationships which form the basis of much of the drama they study – for example, whether they use drama to amplify work in personal and social education;
- know and understand cultural and historical aspects of drama and its relationship with other art forms;
- know and visit drama web sites and see live performances or videos to improve their knowledge and understanding and increase their experience.

### **Example DR2: evidence from pupils' work: two each of more able, average and less able pupils**

#### *Average attainers, Year 8*

*No specific drama books used, but evidence of work done in 'rough notebooks'. A great deal of work is on question and answer worksheets, of varying quality. However, there is a recognition that work is to be taken seriously and that there are valuable skills to be learnt – illustrated by pupils' care with answers and the corrections made subsequently. Freeze-frames and other basic techniques recorded, with explanations for their use. Art folders contain linked work on 'animal' make-up, set design for a 'Harry Potter' scenario and some sketches of Elizabethan costumes. No record of any evaluation of their own or others' work. (This should be complemented by analysis of the work of higher and lower attainers in Year 8.)*

#### *Higher attainers, Year 10*

*Notes on playwrights, dramatic genres and acting techniques – many of them dictated or in the form of worksheets supplied by teacher and glued into books. All, however, carefully annotated and followed up by analysis or examples of pupils' own choice and*

research. Some knowledge of Shakespeare, Robert Bolt and Berkoff apparent. Evaluation of own performance in improvised work and that of other groups. Diagrams of staging and movement carefully prepared and explained. Some designs for costumes and make-up. Limited reference to technological skills. Some enthusiastic scripting of performance work, clearly individual and original. Film of pair work and monologues, showing a good sense of dramatic presence, clear speaking skills and a command of emotions to be conveyed. (This should be complemented by analysis of the work of average and lower attainers in Year 10.)

Lower attainers, Year 11

Both pupils clearly have learning difficulties and both are boys. Work is all very thin in quantity, with much left unfinished and some offering only a few short sentences, which do little more than repeat the nature of the task. Worksheets are left unannotated and uncorrected. No real evidence of attainment in drama or of development of skills. Almost impossible from written work to tell what are the freely chosen areas of the syllabus. (This should be complemented by analysis of the work of average and higher attainers in Year 11.)

### Commentary

This analysis suggests that average attainers in Year 8 are making satisfactory progress. Basic techniques are being cultivated, both those for performance work and those of a more technical nature. Despite the absence of specific subject books, a significant amount of written work is being provided and pupils' progress is, to some degree, being assessed by the teacher. The significant omission is the lack of development of evaluative skills. (However, see DR6 for further evidence on achievement in Year 8.) Two thirds of the way through the first year of the GCSE course, the higher attainers in Year 10 are making good progress and using their own research and creative skills to enhance their knowledge and understanding of drama. They are obviously being given the opportunity to use dramatic text of different genres, to improvise, to evaluate and to watch themselves critically. They are acquiring a sense of stagecraft, though there is less evidence of experience of lighting and sound. They are working individually, as well as using the teacher's notes and worksheets. The lower attainers in Year 11 are making unsatisfactory progress. It may be that their practical skills, particularly with such things as lighting and sound, are better developed, but their understanding of drama is rudimentary. They attempt the work they are told to do, but clearly have little interest or involvement with it. (See follow-through in DR4.) All this adds up to a picture of variable achievement: from good to unsatisfactory. There may be a failure to motivate less able boys and to monitor their work effectively. The explanation may lie in uneven teaching quality.

### 1.3 Talking with pupils

Evidence of standards and achievement also comes from talking with pupils, either individually or collectively, both during lessons and in formally arranged meetings. Such meetings can also provide evidence of pupils' attitudes and personal development, together with indications of the quality of teaching. When formal meetings are arranged, choose a few pupils to include the ability levels or groups of pupils you particularly need to investigate. Use your earlier evidence to identify the areas of drama on which you particularly want to focus and which hypotheses you want to test further.

Your questions need to take account of the ground the pupils have covered by the time you talk to them, but useful lines of enquiry include questions about:

- the difference between scripted and improvised drama;
- the kinds of stage techniques that can be used and to what effect;
- the considerations that can change the way drama is staged;
- the difference between different genres – for example, pantomime, farce and tragedy.

Questions also need to explore:

- pupils' sense of improvement in drama skills;
- what they have learnt about performing as individuals and as part of a group;
- what helps pupils learn and what prevents them learning;
- how they improve their work and recognise their own improvement.

It is particularly useful to include questions about recent work (practical and written) when the relevant written work has already been analysed. Alternatively, you could look at the written work together with the pupil(s).

### Example DR3: evidence from talking to pupils

#### Lower attaining boy in Year 7

Sean does not like drama lessons, because he cannot see any purpose to them. He talks readily but only about the opportunities they offer for some horseplay and 'running into other people'. Three-quarters of the way through Year 7, when asked what he has learnt, he cannot think of anything. He is dismissive of the subject, feeling that 'it's all right for girls' and he is dismissive of his teacher, who is a woman. When asked what he would like to learn from it, he can think of nothing other than using the sound equipment to run a disco. Sean was at Stage 2 on the SEN register (1994 Code of Practice). He has problems of a dyslexic nature and is not making good progress in any of his subjects, except art, at which he is proving to be very creative.

#### Higher attaining girl in Year 9

Very articulate, Pupil X enthuses over the subject and has already planned her GCSE course next year. She cannot resist showing how much she has learnt about stage techniques, talking of 'corpse' and 'upstaging' with enjoyment. Part of her experience is the result of having a good singing voice, which has enabled her to take part in the last three school musical productions. She also belongs to a drama group attached to her local youth club. She has always been interested in the theatre and would like to make it a career. She is very intelligent and is able to link work done in English very relevantly with her drama work. For example, her class has been reading 'Of Mice and Men' and she talks for five minutes on its possibilities for staging and how this would be infinitely more successful than the film of it she has been shown. She delights in Shakespeare and demonstrates with alacrity the gossiping tone and exaggerated behaviour of the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet': 'She would be much more fun to play than Juliet.' She is slightly contemptuous of the level of some of the improvisation work her class is doing: 'It's always about drugs or AIDS.' Clearly, she would like to be more adventurous and to see more of an end product. This year she is being taught by the head of department, whom she finds encouraging and interesting, but she found her experience of the part-time teacher last year 'boring and repeating the same things over and over'. Despite her strong views, she listens well and is very ready to absorb new ideas.

#### Four average attaining pupils in Year 10 (2 boys and 2 girls)

The girls immediately take control of the conversation, eager to explain what they are doing at present and describing in detail a group improvisation loosely based on 'Lord of the Flies'. They are very involved with the task and understand well their exploration of the descent from civilisation into brutality, but their views are often stereotyped and coloured by programmes such as 'Big Brother'. When offered a wider view, they find it difficult to change their preconceptions. When the boys are deliberately brought into the discussion, one hesitantly offers a much more imaginative and thoughtful concept, while the other merely echoes what others say. It emerges that this boy is obsessive about film making and yearns to spend his time in drama lessons filming what others are presenting. His regret is that the school does not offer media studies – so he has had to do drama instead. The other boy, spurred on by this admission, admits that he wants to direct, but is 'afraid of not knowing enough'. All show knowledge of some stage techniques and experience with collaborative group work. They are enthused by their teacher and welcome the rigour of her lessons.

### Commentary

Sean raises significant questions about the choice of schemes of work for this age group, for boys and for less able pupils. The immediate task is to find a way for him to regard the subject as offering something worth learning. At present, he is making unsatisfactory progress and underachieving. Overall, Pupil X shows intelligence, enthusiasm and a real love for the subject. She is obviously making good progress, but perhaps she could be stretched further by her teacher, so that she does not become over-complacent or bored (see DR5). The Year 10 pupils are clearly making sound progress, though the boys' development is not being as carefully promoted as the girls', largely because of their own reluctance or lack of confidence. This confirms the impression from DR2 that less able boys may not be managed well enough to promote satisfactory achievement. There are significant strengths overall. However, the impression with Pupil X confirms the picture from GCSE results (DR1) that the most talented may not be stretched enough.

### 1.4 Evidence from lessons

Grade attainment by considering the difficulty of the work and how well the pupils are succeeding with it, bearing in mind the age of the class. Grade 4 signifies an average or typical standard of work for the age concerned; grades 1-3 reflect high standards that are increasingly above average; grades 5-7 signify low standards that are progressively below average.

### Example DR4: Year 11 mixed-ability group of 15 pupils: 12 girls and 3 boys, of whom 5 are of Asian background and one has EAL

Context. Pupils have read 'Twelfth Night' and know the text. Some initial work has been done on Shakespearean English and pupils have completed written assignments – character studies of Viola and Olivia. Pupils are working in pairs, on the meeting of Viola and Olivia, concentrating on characterisation and mood. The objective is to explore the motives and emotions of the two

women, to give pupils a better understanding of their actions. The teacher recaps on knowledge of the two characters previous to the scene, then gives pupils time to digest the chosen scene. Each group works independently at first, then watches other groups critically, offering constructive comment.

Most are able to read Shakespearean English with relative fluency, but the subtlety of Viola's satire on conventional love and her mockery of Olivia's self-regard escape all but two higher attaining pupils (both girls). The two higher attaining girls are not questioned on their understanding and appreciation of the dialogue, so their achievement is not extended. Most pupils' attention to details of language is patchy, but dialogue is often spirited and at least in tune with the essence of the meeting. The pupil with EAL is less fluent and stumbles over one or two words but seeks help from the teacher. He makes some telling contributions in the group evaluations, demonstrating a deeper understanding of the text than his reading conveys.

[Attainment average (4)]

### Commentary

The pupils' response to the characters they portray is developed well but more in terms of the contrast that they represent than of their emotions and the motives behind what they say and do. Without the deeper understanding of levels of irony and innuendo, attainment is only average.

Higher attaining pupils' potential is not tapped sufficiently, so their achievement may be no better than satisfactory. It tends to confirm the hypothesis in DR1 (most talented not challenged sufficiently). DR2, analysis of work, noted that two lower attaining Year 11 boys were making unsatisfactory progress and underachieving because the written work did not engage their interest and was not checked adequately by the teacher. (DR1 also raised an hypothesis about relatively weak achievement for boys.) The commentary for DR2 suggested that the pupils' practical skills might show better development. In this lesson on practical interpretation of Twelfth Night, pupils are generally well engaged and all are making better headway than that suggested in DR2. Achievement is generally good (but note the reservation about the talented and the patchy achievement for less able boys).

### Example DR5: Year 9 mixed-ability group of 25 pupils: 10 girls and 15 boys (3 boys on SEN register with behaviour difficulties)

Context. Lesson on exploring urban violence and crime; linked with scheme of work for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE); looking at motivation for crime and crime prevention. Pupils working in groups of six, each devising scenarios for different crimes, such as muggings and vandalism and deciding on moments when violence escalates or could be controlled, using the freeze-frame technique to emphasise them.

Three of the four groups work with interest and effort, exploring situations with common sense and practicality. The fourth group (all boys, including two of the boys on SEN register) do not interact well, but use clichéd pastiche of 'Men Behaving Badly' and 'The Bill', with no originality or continuity. Most pupils gain some insight into self-discipline from their task and, although the language of the streets predominates, there are some attempts to assume the voice of reasoning authority. The use of freeze-frames to pinpoint exact moments and feature them is well assimilated by the majority of pupils. Girls are more willing to reflect on the social and moral issues behind crime prevention.

[Attainment average (4)]

### Commentary

The girls in this class display a more mature approach than the boys. They can move away from 'playing out' mini crime dramas and explore the issues in more depth. The boys' group is immature, both in terms of working sensibly and also in understanding the reason behind the work. Nevertheless, all pupils understand the dramatic technique of freeze-framing moments and they use it quite well. Attainment ranges from above average to below average and is average overall. The boys' technique is underdeveloped; their work lacks originality and continuity. This underachievement is likely to result from the teacher's difficulty, over time, in managing this group of boys, who do not interact well. There has been insufficient motivation of their efforts and interest. The impression of at least satisfactory achievement and good motivation for girls is reasonably consistent with DR3 (Pupil X); the achievement situation with these Year 9 boys is consistent with points relating to Year 11 boys' work (DR1 and DR2) and impressions from Year 10 (DR3).

### Example DR6: Year 8, low ability group, setted against those taking German as a second modern language: 27 pupils, predominantly boys (22 boys, 5 girls)

The lesson focuses on playing 'trust' games as a precursor to improvisation work.

These pupils lack interest. Most are unable to 'trust' others physically and are not able to concentrate and enter into the spirit of the lesson. They do not understand the reasons for working in this way and poor behaviour (breaking away from the group and joking over others' attempts, perhaps through embarrassment) prevents progress. The fact that the group contains a large



*number of boys, many with learning difficulties, renders the sustained practice of such an abstract concept unsuccessful.*

*[Attainment well below average (6)]*

### **Commentary**

Evaluation of attainment and achievement inevitably leads to evaluation of teaching. Whatever the exercise proposed by the teacher, pupils follow it in a lacklustre manner, paying lip-service only and using as little effort as possible. Most refuse to allow themselves to 'trust' others physically or to enter the spirit of the lesson. The teacher allows disruptive behaviour to continue throughout the lesson, rather than adapting it to a more concrete objective, which might involve pupils to a greater extent. The pace of the lesson is very slow, the tasks unproductive and little learning takes place. It is essential that the boys should be engaged by their activity and they are not. Pupils are underachieving because the lesson is poorly organised. The picture in DR5 and DR6 confirms that, whilst there is satisfactory achievement for girls, teaching and timetabling in Key Stage 3 lead to many boys developing negative attitudes. This is consistent with the picture in GCSE of weaker uptake and subsequent weaker achievement by boys. The impression of poor achievement in this lesson differs from the indication from analysis of work, where average attainers in Year 8 were making sound headway. The inconsistency appears to arise from the pupil groupings that result from timetabling arrangements.

### **General advice**

More generally, bring together all your evidence on standards to come to overall judgements. Note important changes since the last inspection. Compare the picture of standards from direct observation with that from past results. Remember that you will need to explain any differences convincingly.

From your detailed evidence, you should identify the relative strengths and weaknesses which characterise what the pupils are achieving, so that the department has a clear picture of standards and how they can be improved. It is also essential to explain why standards and achievement are as they are. Some links between teaching and achievement have already begun to be made. These will be developed further in the next section.



## 2 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Read the previous inspection report carefully to gain a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of drama teaching and learning at that time. This provides a reference against which you can gauge improvement.

### 2.1 What to look for in lessons

Evaluate how effectively pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in drama. Focus on evaluating whether pupils are learning to the depth and breadth and with the speed and motivation you would expect, given what you know about them. Interpret the general criteria in the *Handbook* in the context of drama, by considering whether pupils:

- show understanding of what they are learning – for instance, by successfully applying the knowledge and skills they have been taught, to improvise dramatic scenes which explore themes and issues and convey feelings and emotions;
- plan and perform their drama with an awareness of audience and purpose;
- use appropriate dramatic techniques and show an appreciation of style and convention;
- understand the benefits of collaborative work and use this opportunity to learn more – for example, when working on dialogue or chorus;
- are able to employ music, light and costume knowledgeably, to enhance their drama – for example, to set the scene, create atmosphere or suggest emotions;
- are interested and motivated by the subject so that, for instance, they produce pieces of sustained research, find their own stimulus material (including reading texts), work imaginatively, and make use of theatre visits and information and communication technology (ICT).

Judge the quality of teaching by how well it promotes effective learning in drama. Identify the main strengths and weaknesses in the teaching which best explain how well pupils are learning, and make the links between the two clear.

Keep in mind that good drama teaching, which leads to effective learning, is rooted in good understanding of the subject and its examination specification, in high expectations, and in methods of teaching which cater well for all pupils in the class. In addition to the characteristics of all good teaching, effective drama teaching is likely to include features such as the use of:

- topical and local issues (such as the closing of a local factory or the pros and cons of fox hunting) to stimulate pupils' interest;
- a good blend of classroom teaching, including individual, paired and group work, and support for pupils' individual work on assignments;
- live performances, so that pupils have opportunities to apply their learning and to learn to present their work to 'real' audiences of their peers and of adults;
- professional artists to bring a wider dimension to pupils' experience of drama in a range of cultures, genres and styles;
- ICT and other up-to-date resources, so that pupils learn how to use modern equipment and software;
- skilled demonstrations, video and 'in role' work by teachers, to serve as good role models for their pupils and to challenge and extend pupils' thinking;
- regular opportunities for the evaluation of practical work, with the teacher modelling the kind of incisive comment that suggests ways to improve, as well as praising effort or attainment.

Look beyond the surface when evaluating teaching which has positive features such as good relationships or firm discipline. It may lack rigour or depth, or a command of the subject, or be badly matched to the pupils' needs, with the result that learning is not as good as it should be. This might happen where, for instance, pupils:

- accumulate information on methods and techniques without experimenting with them when improvising their own drama, and therefore do not understand how they should best be applied;
- are left too much on their own, when completing assignments or working in groups on poorly focused practical tasks;

- repeat activities or techniques (such as hot seating, drama games or reading known texts) without the challenge being raised;
- do little practical drama and are given an abundance of written work, particularly when using worksheets which rarely demand extended answers;
- are given too much credit for well-presented written work which masks shallow thinking;
- are not given the opportunity to evaluate their own and others' work, and do not have their work marked until the end of assignments.

Teaching is judged by the impact it has on pupils' learning and, as a consequence, teaching and learning will usually be of the same quality. Where this is not the case, you should carefully note and explain why the judgements are different.

## 2.2 Observing lessons

In principle, the choice of lessons to observe should be determined partly by what you need to follow up from your analysis of pupils' books and other sources, and partly by the need to sample the work of different teachers. However, if there is likely to be a very limited number of lessons each week, evaluation should make the most of all available evidence. To maximise a small number of opportunities, observation of whole lessons is likely to be worthwhile. In such circumstances, it is particularly important that all potentially significant evidence should be recorded (which may necessitate lengthy notes); events which may seem inconsequential at the time may subsequently prove the key to interpretation of overall patterns. For example, at William Shakespeare School, in the Year 10 drama lesson (DR11), the main aim of the lesson is to explore the witches' supernatural powers and their ability to equivocate. The boys are singled out to provide technical effects, and they are quite successful in creating subdued lighting, evocative music and sound effects. However, they do not increase their understanding of the play or grasp the subtleties of ambiguity, uncertainty and suspicion. Thus, standards overall are unsatisfactory.

Always evaluate the effectiveness of any additional support provided in lessons for particular groups of pupils, such as pupils with SEN or developing bilingual pupils.

Examples DR 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 for William Shakespeare School illustrate different styles for recording evidence in lessons.

### **Example DR7: Year 11 mixed-ability class of 12 girls and 4 boys in 90-minute lesson; teacher is head of department**

[+ indicates strength; ++ indicates considerable strength]

*Context. Rehearsal of improvisation piece for practical examination. Pupils have been working on it for five weeks and the examination is next week. They are divided into two groups of eight, each working on theme of 'Communal Life', one looking at the 'white' side and one at the 'black'. The teacher's plan is simply the polishing and refining of productions. It indicates particular objectives – impact, fluency, articulation and audibility.*

*++ Teacher spends first 20 minutes allowing the two productions to be played simultaneously at opposite ends of the studio. Does not interfere in either; merely watches and listens. This allows both groups to set their mood, get into their stride and start to polish their own work, encouraging constructive, independent learning. It also enables her to note brief assessment points for use later in the evaluation session.*

*+ Teacher calls whole group together and recaps succinctly on main principles of presentation to audience. She stresses the need for allowing visual effects to have their impact and for speech to be audible, controlled and accessible to audience, and she asks the pupils to consider whether they have accomplished these goals.*

*+ Groups divided once again, performing in sequence, with non-performance group writing evaluative notes on the improvisation of other group. This encourages the pupils to think about the key performance considerations and how the audience is helped to access the drama. Teacher steers process only by intervention when things really go wrong, and then merely starts performance from point of collapse, with constructive suggestions.*

*++ Excellent plenary session by both groups, led by teacher, with objective evaluation of the respective performances and, above all, helpful suggestions to enhance both performance and presentation of themes. Teacher allows groups to argue out ideas and develop them, with skilful intervention when needed. All pupils contribute and clearly have an increasing understanding of the issues involved, three of the girls to a very sophisticated level.*

*++ Groups again perform in sequence, this time with teacher intervening, largely to praise areas of success and encourage further development of good ideas introduced as a result of plenary session. For instance, in the 'white' production, some of the sentimentality of the virtues of helping others less competent than oneself is eliminated in favour of the self-esteem gained by giving anonymous help.*

+ No pupils escape teacher's attention, however small a part they are playing. Boys particularly gain from encouragement and celebration of their success. One boy, with very short role as a postman, is congratulated on the objectivity he throws on the scene with his arrival.

+ Management of the lesson seems effortless, with all pupils concentrating and intent on improving their work, ensuring collaboration and taking up teacher's and their peers' suggestions with thought and interest.

[Teaching and learning excellent (1)]

### Commentary

This lesson is as successful as could possibly be expected, because the teaching is a careful mixture of spurring pupils on to higher levels through self-evaluation and the evaluation of their peers, as well as by the teacher's own contributions. Her expertise in drama is matched by her expertise as a classroom manager, so that pupils' understanding of the process and the content of the drama is enhanced and their skills improved significantly. A high level of challenge is offered to all: the nature of the parts played provides differentiation, but all are helped to reach their full potential. A particular strength in the teaching is the teacher's ability to refrain from intervening, thus encouraging pupils to think for themselves and solve their own problems.

**Example DR8: Year 7 mixed-ability class of 29 pupils; 15 boys and 14 girls (5 pupils are from Asian background and one has a visual impairment and works with a classroom assistant); 45-minute lesson; teacher is head of department**

Lesson objective: learning the use of mime as part of a unit of work on Commedia dell'Arte. Pupils have been introduced to the stock characters and the key features of the genre

The teacher established classroom discipline in the earlier part of the year and this is clearly apparent in the manner in which these pupils approach the task. The stock characters, introduced to them in earlier lessons, have been appreciated and understood. The teacher's good modelling has made pupils very enthusiastic about the uses of mime and many display high levels of sensitivity, as well as a talent for comic ingenuity. All pupils show good co-ordination and control over movement and gesture, particularly the Asian girls. All pupils eagerly accept and adopt ideas that could improve their mime technique, and they are able to convey the comic and the tragic with equal perception. Very basic props are used, such as strings of sausages, but pupils prove innovative and imaginative in conjuring bunches of flowers, pet dogs and babies out of thin air. Boys and girls are equally successful. The lesson ends with a 'circus' in which they all parade their individual skills most effectively.

[Teaching and learning very good (2)]

### Commentary

This is a very successful lesson in which pupils develop their existing knowledge of the different characters into a deeper understanding of the conventions of the particular genre. Skilled teaching (with excellent subject knowledge and good demonstration linked to careful lesson planning) has enabled them to make very good advances in their learning and reach high standards.

**Example DR9: Year 10 pupils (15 girls and 8 boys); 45-minute lesson; teacher is head of department**

Context. Pupils working on first scene of 'Coriolanus' (though not realising it until end of lesson) as a study in the escalation of mob violence and revolt. (1) Warm-up activities – 10 minutes. (2) Improvisation: a prison scene, in which prisoners are to protest and attempt to revolt against their guards (through a series of factors added by teacher at intervals) – 25 minutes. (3) Plenary with video clip – 10 minutes.

### Strengths

Lesson very well planned. The three-part structure enables pupils to extend their understanding of the reasons for the escalation of violence and then discover the relationship with the Shakespeare play. Pupils' successful development of the very clear prompts provided by teacher leads to significant learning.

The teacher provides a high degree of challenge in the improvisation, while still allowing the pupils to work at their own individual levels. Natural leaders emerge, who reach the stage of being able to move the action on, without prompting, but are able to prompt the less adventurous themselves.

Methods used by teacher are provocative and exciting. Pupils are never aware of where the scene is leading them and believe they are creating their own direction. At the end, when shown a video clip of the crowd scene at the beginning of 'Coriolanus', they are amazed and excited at the similarity and beg to be allowed to see more.

Good use is made of time. This allows pupils to reflect on the ways in which emotions have built up and on the reality of the

psychology they, and Shakespeare, have used.

### **Weaknesses**

Towards the end of the improvisation, teacher allows some of the crowd's spirit of rebellion to move too close to physical violence, rather than just the threat of it. Pupils do not have the techniques to deal with this, and teacher is forced to intervene at two points, thus reducing the impact of learning and breaking the flow of the exercise.

[Teaching and learning good (3)]

### **Commentary**

Very good planning and knowledge are apparent, so that pupils' learning is enhanced through exciting methods and skilful use of literature. Pupils remain fully engaged, work with thought and response, and are able to assess the validity of what they have accomplished. The task is very well chosen and allows a natural differentiation, according to ability. Time is used productively. However, the teacher misjudges the skill level of the group. This is the only factor which prevents this from being a very good lesson.

### **Example DR10: Year 11 mixed-ability class of 12 girls and 3 boys; 45-minute lesson; teacher is part-time drama specialist**

*Context.* Second lesson in unit of five examining Pinter's 'The Lovers'. Teacher's introduction (five minutes). Five-minute dialogues in pairs delivered to rest of class, each evaluated by whole class and teacher (35 minutes); homework set (five minutes).

#### **Strengths noted during the lesson**

Teacher has good knowledge of the text and is able to communicate the nuances of language and silences competently.

This enables pupils to gain a greater understanding of the meaning of the dialogues.

Teacher uses dialogue well.

This helps pupils use the spoken word more clearly. All pupils make progress in this respect.

Planning is sound.

This enables all pupils to participate, both performing and evaluating. Again, this allows some pupils to improve their dialogue.

Homework set is relevant and has the clear purpose of developing learning in the next lesson.

This challenges pupils to reflect on their work and bring new ideas to the next lesson.

#### **Weaknesses apparent on reflection**

Teacher does not appear to notice the pupils' apparent lack of theatrical skills needed for this particular genre, or chooses to ignore it and not rectify it.

As a result, pupils approach the text without real understanding of what can be conveyed through action rather than words – essential for Pinter.

Teacher misjudges the challenge presented by the textual and emotional content of the dialogues.

The three boys and four of the girls are out of their depth with the complexities of the text. Boys are embarrassed by the relationships presented by the dialogues and the girls spend much time collapsing into giggles, thus losing touch with what they are trying to achieve.

#### **Summary**

Teacher lacks flexibility, refusing to adapt the plan and nature of task in the light of pupils' lack of progress.

All the class make reasonable progress in oral skills. Just over half improve their close pair work. The rest struggle with the content. All need more help with theatrical skills, but no attempt is made to teach these.

[Teaching and learning unsatisfactory (5)]

## Commentary

By the end of this lesson, just over half the pupils have made some progress, particularly in oral skills and in close pair work. However, the rest progress either slowly or unsatisfactorily in their learning, inhibited either by poor attitudes from boys or by the nature of the text itself. Basic ideas and approach are suitable, but not the choice of text for this particular group. The teacher fails to recognise pupils' difficulties sufficiently to adapt the task.

### **Example DRI1: Year 10 mixed-ability class of 13 girls and 5 boys; 45-minute lesson; teacher part-time drama specialist**

[WT = weak teaching; WL = weak learning; WW = very weak]

*Context.* Work on witches in 'Macbeth', with the aim of realising their supernatural powers and their ability to 'equivocate'; linked with their work in English literature for GCSE. Pupils given texts to act out (witches' first scene and the scene with Hecate). No specific learning objectives given.

*WT* Teacher has little real knowledge of the play. It is clear that she herself does not understand the full extent of equivocation throughout the play. Pupils are presented with a black and white version of the witches as evil and as having 'cast a spell' on Macbeth, rather than as catalysts for his own nature.

*WL* Consequently, the pupils have only a superficial understanding of the plot rather than an in-depth appreciation of the complexity of Shakespeare's characters.

*WWT* Lesson loosely planned. Pupils are given texts of the two scenes and told to 'act them out'. No mention is made of equivocation. It is not explained or explored.

*WWL* Since this is early in the first year of GCSE study and the pupils know little of the play and its background, this leaves them in the realms of what they have learnt about the supernatural from horror films. Thus, their attempts are full of cliché and lacking in sensitivity. They are not able to explore the double meanings to gain a deeper understanding.

*WT* Methods used lack challenge, and the teacher's expectations are low. Movement is only introduced as a circling round the cauldron. Incantation is left unexplored and the possibilities for choral work are ignored.

*WL* Pupils, therefore, are not able to increase their knowledge and understanding of dramatic techniques or improve their skills in using them.

*WWT* Teacher singles out boys to provide 'technical effects'. Consequently, they spend the session experimenting with coloured gels and creating atmospheric music on a keyboard, with little relation to what is taking place in the groups.

*WWL* They learn little about the play, so that the chief planning aim is not fulfilled.

*Attitudes.* Because the teacher has good relationships with the pupils, they remain intent on what they are doing. They are eager and make a good attempt at the task given, although this was misdirected.

[Teaching and learning poor (6)]

## Commentary

Pupils make little headway in this lesson, since they have neither the background nor the direction to fulfil its aim of understanding the witches and the part they play in equivocation. Boys, particularly, gain little from the lesson. The teacher is clearly not at ease with the exploration of a literary text. Planning is inadequate: it does not match the pupils' level of previous learning. Even dramatic techniques are insufficiently explored to allow some grasp of genre and atmosphere.

### **2.3 Other evidence on teaching and learning**

Overall judgements on teaching and learning must be more than a simple averaging of the grades from the individual lessons observed, though these are important findings. Valuable evidence also comes from the analysis of pupils' work, talking with pupils and the quality of departmental planning. Earlier examples (DR2 and DR3) and DRI2 which follows exemplify this.

Weigh carefully all the evidence available to reach a balanced overall judgement. Make the links between teaching and pupils' standards and achievements crystal clear. Above all, you will need to ask yourself:

- if the judgements on teaching explain why standards and achievement are as they are;
- whether there are other aspects of provision which help to explain that picture.

If your judgements about teaching and what is achieved appear inconsistent, you must identify which other factors have a significant impact.



# 3 OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY

The quality and impact of the curriculum, staffing, resources, accommodation, and leadership and management in drama should be evaluated, and reported if the impact has a significant bearing on what is achieved.

Factors to consider in provision for drama include:

- how it is staffed, with specialist or non-specialist teachers;
- how it is timetabled in Key Stage 3 – for example, as part of the English department, as a discrete department or part of a performing arts faculty;
- the time allocation and its distribution (possibly in carousels) in Key Stage 3 and the time available over the two years of the GCSE course;
- opportunities for pupils to get a grasp of what they are opting for when they make subject choices in Year 9;
- the management and leadership of drama, the profile it is given in the school and, if it is taught by more than one teacher, how work is planned, co-ordinated and monitored;
- extra-curricular opportunities, their quality and what they add to pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, both in drama and more widely (for example, in oral confidence and in spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning).

Here is a note about factors affecting quality at William Shakespeare School.

## **Example DRI 2: leadership and management notes**

### **Staffing**

*One full-time drama specialist, head of department (HoD).*

*One part-time teacher, drama trained, who also teaches some music and leads extra-curricular productions.*

*HoD teaches one third of Key Stage 3 classes, the part-time teacher takes the others.*

*Standards and progress are noticeably poorer in those classes taught by the part-time teacher; this is often due to unsatisfactory classroom management and planning and sometimes to discipline.*

### **Planning: Key Stage 3**

*Long-term plans set out major objectives for Years 7-9.*

*No specific schemes of work are used by both teachers in parallel classes in the same year.*

*Simplistic assessment scheme for drama skills but not speaking and listening (Attainment Target 1, English).*

*All this leads to an inequality of provision: some classes (those taught by HoD) achieving much greater expertise and understanding of dramatic techniques and genres.*

### **Planning: Key Stage 4**

*Covers all appropriate areas for GCSE but ...*

*No coherence – too little common planning to link with and complement each teacher's work – so learning is inhibited.*

### **Timetable**

*Key Stage 3 setted against modern foreign languages (German as second language) leading to more able sets (mainly girls) and less able (predominantly boys). Achievement reflects this, with slower progress in lower sets.*

### **Accommodation**

*School hall used for majority of Key Stage 3 lessons. Size and acoustics inappropriate, often leading to intolerable noise levels. No*

*lighting facilities there or stage blocks or similar. Sound system antiquated. All this has an adverse effect on standards. The drama studio is adequate in size and facilities.*

***Extra-curricular activities***

*Good opportunities for performance but they tend to be focused on lighting, sound, costume and make-up rather than understanding genres and style.*

## 4 SUMMARY

Bring together your various judgements to form a coherent view of the subject. You should provide a convincing summary which explains why standards and achievement are as they are. The summary should refer centrally to the quality and impact of teaching, and include any other important factors that are necessary to account for what is achieved. Show how much the subject has improved since the last inspection and give a clear indication of the action needed to improve it further.

Below are some of the points which may be included in summary evaluation of drama at William Shakespeare School. (These points also involve additional evidence not found in Examples DRI-DR12.)

### **Example DR13: outline evaluation of drama**

*By the age of 14, attainment is broadly average. Girls are generally achieving satisfactorily; boys' achievement is not as good as it should be.*

*In GCSE, the percentage achieving grades A\*-C is in line with the national average. However, few of the very highest (A\* or A) grades are achieved (none by the boys). Achievement is generally good for pupils of middle ability. The more talented are achieving satisfactorily, but could sometimes be challenged more. Less able boys do not do as well as they could on knowledge-based work. Overall, the quality of achievement reflects the quality of teaching in different parts of the course.*

*Some teaching is very good, but too much of it is unsatisfactory. This is a weakness because it results in unsatisfactory learning for a significant minority of the pupils.*

*As at the time of the previous inspection, there is too little emphasis on the spoken word and pupils do not profitably evaluate their own performance in this area.*

*Regular performances by Key Stage 3 and GCSE pupils provide interesting cultural experiences for the rest of the school.*

*There are very close links with the English department and productive occasional links with the music, art and physical education departments.*

*The drama studio is adequate in size and facilities. However, learning is not as good when lessons are conducted in the school hall.*

### **Points for improvement**

- *More emphasis needs to be placed on the spoken word and on pupils' self-evaluation.*
- *Planning should focus more clearly on the acquisition of a good grasp of dramatic genres and texts.*
- *Detailed schemes of work should be written and used in common for all classes.*

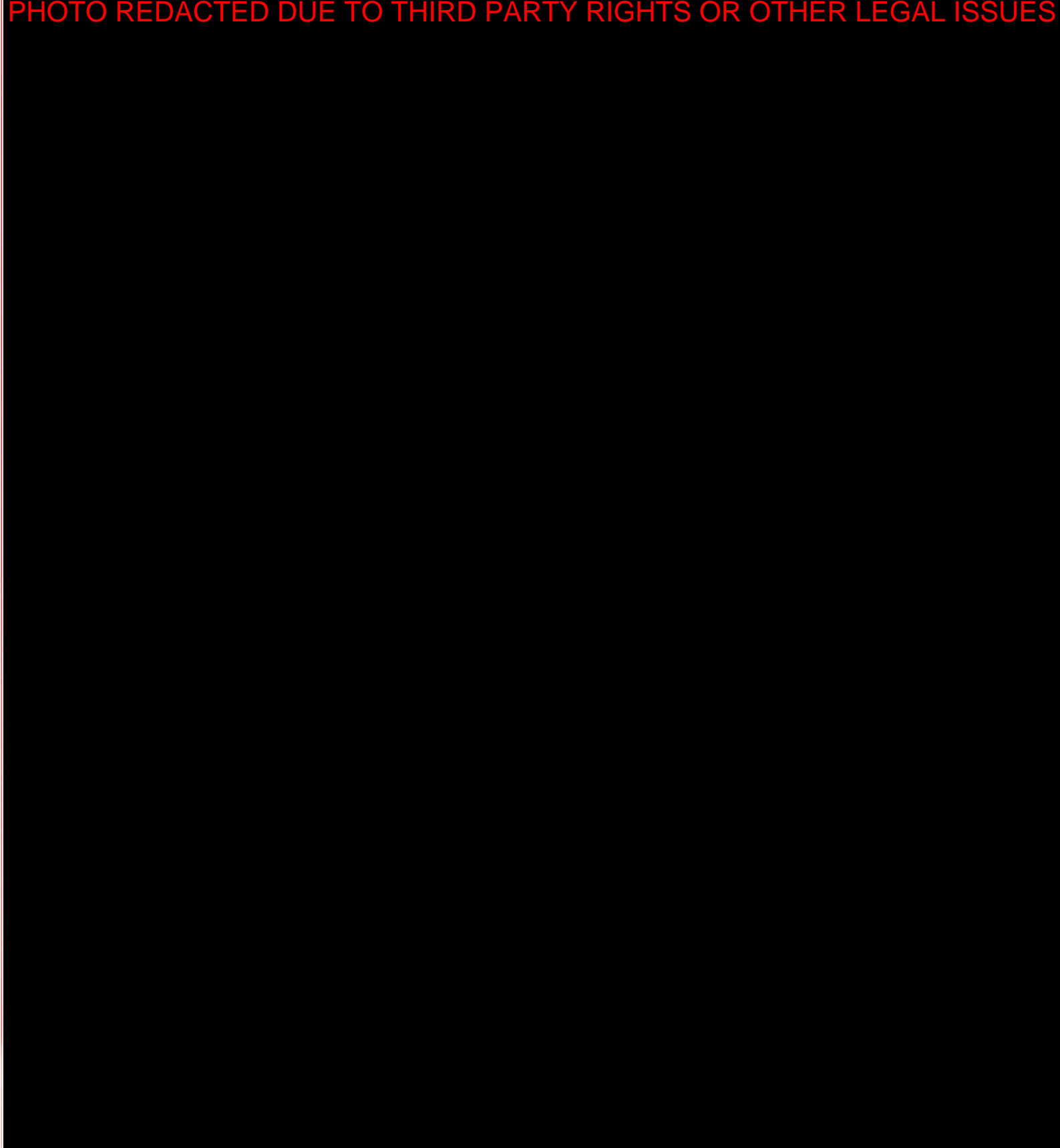
Draw on your detailed evidence base to amplify and illustrate the points made in such an outline summary.











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