

Our guide to

Observations vs Awards & Activities

Teachers now have two powerful tools to support pupil progress and motivation. While they work well together, each serves a different purpose.

Observations of Pupil Learning

Purpose

To record and evidence learning in action.

What they are

Short records (notes, photos, assessment comments) showing how pupils learn, engage, and achieve in the classroom.

Why they matter

- Provide a rich, accurate picture of pupil progress.
- Help identify strengths, gaps and next steps.
- Build a reliable bank of evidence for assessment, reports and moderation.
- Support meaningful conversations with parents around learning, progress and next steps.

Example

A photo of a group science experiment with notes on how a pupil applied problem-solving skills.

Awards & Activities

Purpose

To recognise, motivate, and celebrate positive behaviours and achievements.

What they are

Quick acknowledgements given to pupils for meeting expectations, showing effort, or demonstrating school values. Activities can also be linked for engagement and fun.

Why they matter

- Encourage positive behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Create a culture of recognition and celebration.
- Motivate pupils through consistent, fair rewards.
- Build pupil confidence and enthusiasm for school life.

Example

Awarding a pupil for showing resilience in Maths, or for consistently helping others.

How they work together

- ★ Observations give the **evidence** of learning.
- ★ Awards & Activities give the **recognition** that motivates pupils to keep going.
- ★ Used together, they create a cycle of **progress** and **celebration**

