

Reflections on a Standards Check Result: Ed Marshall

It is that time again when the letter has fallen through the post box and the nerves start to build and the night before seems endless. Oh joy its my Standards Check and I keep reminding myself what I say to my pupils what would you do to relax, so I pretend I am just giving a normal lesson and breath deep and relax, NOPE it's not working...!!!

So I get to the test centre in good time and out comes the SE and he introduces himself and we have a quick chat about my pupil for today's lesson. I introduce my pupil to the SE. (just to fill you in a bit on this my pupil Callum has had about 30 hours of training. However recently he has been touring for the past four months. Callum has had an 8 week break then a single 2 hour lesson, then another 7 weeks off and a 2 hour lesson on Sunday 14th September before my SC on Tuesday 16th September)

We started by talking about Callum's goals for the lesson mainly led by what happened on the previous one and parallel parking. Callum had struggled with tight junctions with restricted views when turning into them. We discussed areas to practice and decided on a village nearby with a selection of very tight turns to emerge from and turn in to. I asked if it would help his understanding if we approached to emerge from a narrow road to appreciate what view an oncoming vehicle would have of someone turning in to the side road from the major road before we attempted to turn in off the major road. He thought this would be good and agreed to this. We discussed having an extra person in the car and how he thought it would affect the handling of it and agreed that some initial practice of clutch control and setting off would help discover any difference. We also agreed to recap the parallel parking when we found a suitable car. We then recapped the roles and responsibilities of both of us and how Risk Management would be shared. This would be shared by Callum saying he would like me to point out some of the risks by asking questions, prompting if he was not working early enough and in exceptional situations giving full instruction (nothing to this degree occurred in the SC).

All of this took 13 minutes to get the car to a point of moving.

Callum soon discovered by self awareness and analysis of the movement of the car after a couple of stops and moves off, that there was very little if any difference as to how the car handled with an extra person in the car. We soon came to a junction on a hill emerging on to a major road where Callum used clutch control to emerge without stopping and found the car responded very well much the same as Sunday on different hills with no passenger. We stopped to talk about how Callum turned right in to the village we were using as he did a perfect turn off the major road and used a block gear change. I picked up this as on Sunday he had changed down through the gears occasionally. I asked him how he thought the drive had gone up to this point and he said he felt happy about how the car handled and was now very relaxed with the extra passenger and we agreed that this did not require any further development. He then mentioned the junction we had just done and how he thought it was very smooth and he had timed his gear change like we had practiced on Sunday. I asked him where his belief had come from about changing down through the gears and he said he had been watching his brother do this and thought it worked for him

so he would try it. However after reflecting on how he felt after the junction he had just done he was going to stick with block changes as his preferred style. We moved on to the subject of tight turns and came down a very narrow road to a small very closed emerge. On the way down the road I was asking how he felt and had he thought what he would do if a car turned in towards us and how would that make him feel. I explained this would be the road we would come back to turn in to. At the junction it was safe to stop and discuss how we could limit the risk of emerging without vision. Callum could not think of how to do this as there were no windows available for reflection of moving cars, so I asked how putting the window down may help he said he would never of thought of that and thought it was a great idea.

We drove down a high street with parked cars on both sides and Callum wanted to return to his side of the road instead of keeping straight down the centre. I corrected his position on the move. He also tried to stop for an oncoming car which was also corrected on the move as the other car had already stopped for us. We soon found somewhere to stop and discuss the two corrections on the high street. Callum said he felt uncomfortable maintaining his position and thought he should return to his side of the road and also give the other car priority as he had room to pull in. So we discussed how the other driver would have read what Callum was doing and how the other driver had already made a decision to stop, how it could get confusing as to who was stopping or going. We discussed strategies for him to cope with these situations by keeping slow and planning what other drivers were doing and knowing the rules of priority in all cases not just equal. He wanted me to give a bit of talk through the drive back through the high street. So we then drove back up the high street with some talk through, similar things happened and he said he felt more comfortable and understood what and why we were giving way because of another car already moving through a tight gap and giving a large vehicle room to move, whilst still allowing us to see from our position. We came to the tight junction this was managed with some agreed prompts which led to an emerge, which was discussed at the road side. Callum reflected on his drive and decided he wanted to try something at the emerge we had just done and also try some new positions when turning in to the side road to gain a better view. After his explanation of what he was going to do it was agreed he wanted full control and no help at all unless safety critical. As we approached the emerge I could tell he was turning way too early so I pushed the steering wheel to correct his position and then gave him back full control. We stopped to reflect and he worked out for himself that what he was going to try was no good as there was a hidden kerb which I had to ask him about in the reflection. We went round again and he could see exactly where he had gone wrong last time. Callum learned he was not looking in the correct places to see all the information he needed to turn early and was happy with how he had developed closed junctions and tight turns.

With 15 minutes till the end we recapped the Parallel Park and had the first go. We had a good starting position and turning point however he had weak observations (which I prompted an agreed correction) to the rear and missed the second turn to bring the nose in. At which point we stopped as Callum did not want it to end up in the wrong place, he wanted to learn when it was going off track. Callum identified where he needs to look, to

be able to see when to turn the nose in. Callum wanted no prompts on the second go unless it was unsafe. Callum's second go was done in one go with no prompts on observation or when to turn which he was very pleased about. However he did swing the front across to early when he first initiated the steering and ended up very close to the car in front as the front swung in, he watched it carefully and judged the clearance well. When I asked how comfortable he felt with the distance he scaled himself 4. 0 being low comfort 10 being very comfortable. When asked how he could move the scale upwards and where he would like it next time, he said he needed to turn later and that would give more clearance and would like it to be 8. This has been noted for the next time we do PP as we did not have time to do another one. The drive back was uneventful so we went over strengths and development areas and set the goals for the next lesson on arriving back at the test centre the 11.40 test was getting ready and we were over running slightly, so I gave feedback on what I had heard about the strengths and development areas to confirm my understanding of what was said and finished the lesson.

My score was 49/51. I lost one mark at the debrief because I did not ask Callum how he thought the lesson had gone despite the fact we had gone through the strengths and development areas. I also dropped one mark for not prompting enough use of the main mirror which I chose not to do. I recognise this was incorrect and I should have asked Callum if he wanted prompts on using it and not made the decision myself. I thought it would be a bit overloading given the intensity of what was going on in a tight area we were working in. This decision should have been discussed. Overall I am very pleased with how it went and I hope my reflection of the events helps someone out there.