



Bromstone Primary School & St.Mildred's Primary
Infant School

Federation

Governor Visits Policy

Formulation date: October 2017

Senior Team Responsibility: Business Manager

Governors' Reviewing Committee: Full Governing Body

Reviewed on: 6th February 2023

Next Review Date: February 2024

Associated Documentation:

Governing Board Monitoring Visits Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to school visits made for the purpose of governance and not to visits to the school site that any individual may make in other capacities e.g. as parents, prior volunteers or members of staff.

Purpose

All school visits will:

- Have a clear focus, linked to strategic priorities and designated statutory governor roles and be timely, planned and on the approved monitoring schedule which is agreed by the full governing board
- Be arranged with adequate notice through the Executive Headteacher who will agree it with the relevant members of staff
- Be of value to the governing board which can be demonstrably evidenced to outside agencies e.g. Ofsted or the LA

It is not the role of those governing to form judgements about the performance of school staff during visits and individuals should make every effort to avoid this impression.

Governor Conduct

Governors undertaking visits will comply with the school and governing board's codes of conduct and the standards of presentation expected of staff. They will be mindful that they are representing the whole governing board through their words and actions. The governing board's code of conduct will contain reference to governor visits.

Governor reports following visit

Governors undertaking their visits will have the opportunity to discuss the visit, including any concerns, with the Executive Headteacher immediately or soon after the visit.

A 'Governor Visit Report' (Appendix A) must be completed after each visit. A draft will be shared with the Executive Headteacher and any other members of staff involved in the visit and, when agreed, a final version will be sent to the clerk to be included in the supporting papers for discussion in the next governing board meeting or committee meeting as appropriate from the monitoring schedule.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the Executive Headteacher with whom the visit was arranged but not with other staff or with parents. Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) should not be identified in school visit reports.

Frequency of Visits

Governors, trustees and local governing committee members will undertake visits as agreed in their approved monitoring schedule with a minimum of one visit to the school per academic year but no more than three times a year unless the school circumstance necessitates.

Review

This policy, protocol and procedure should be reviewed by the governing board every academic year alongside the code of conduct.

Purposes of a governor visit

The benefits to governors:

- To see the strategies in action as outlined in the school improvement plan e.g. meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement and learning about the strategy adopted and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning
- To improve knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
- To develop an understanding of issues facing the school and how they are dealt with on a day to day basis to inform strategic decision making
- Gaining an understanding of a particular curriculum area or year group
- Gaining an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts
- To see the use of resources and how the premises are utilised, understanding the environment for teachers and pupils
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To show themselves as part of the school and to gain stakeholder engagement with pupil, parents, staff or the wider community e.g. Pupil voice, school council, parent forum
- To evidence the governing boards ethos, vision and values in action
- To observe the impact of policies in action including monitoring the implementation of a particular policy e.g. safeguarding, behaviour
- To assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties and demonstrate their accountable role as both supportive and challenging

The potential benefits to staff:

- To ensure governors understand how school priority strategies are embedded in practice, understanding the reality of the classroom and environment
- To get to know and build positive relationships with governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To feel valued
- To have an opportunity to reflect on the impact of policies and procedures through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

The potential benefits to students:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom environment, broad curriculum and school life
- To get to know governors
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities
- To give feedback about the school and their views of the impact of policies to the governors

The potential benefits to parents:

- To ensure governors understand the issues that parents have
- To get to know governors
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities
- To give feedback about the school to the governors

What a visit is not about

- Visiting classrooms to observe a lesson, unless as part of an accompanied learning walk against a specific school improvement priority. This prevents any confusion on a class visit being confused as a form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of a teacher.
- Undertaking staff role's e.g. touring the school undertaking health and safety checks, even if professionally qualified in this area.
- Checking on progress of individual children.
- Pursuing a personal agenda.
- An opportunity to tackle staff about specific issues.

Protocols or ground rules for visits

- Ensure the visit has a clear focus linked to the school improvement plan. strengths and weaknesses, impact of policies or responsible areas of the individual statutory governor required roles i.e. safeguarding, SEND, Health & Safety.
- Governors to remember that during any visit their role is strategic not operational.
- The Executive Headteacher will liaise with the member of staff responsible for the school/ priority/policy objective to arrange the meeting.
- Staff should know in advance the date and focus of the visit arranged via the Executive Headteacher.
- Staff should have the opportunity to explain the context of any lesson on the rare occasion that a governor visits a classroom.
- Governors will not interrupt lessons by asking teachers questions on the rare occasion that they may visit the classroom.
- Governors may talk to students during learning walk visits to lessons, about their understanding and learning journeys, but must not ask questions about the teacher's conduct of the lesson.
- Governors will ensure that they are familiar with the school's code of conduct as well as that of the Governing board, with expectation that they follow the same behaviours; understand how they will be addressed and how to address others and dress code as outlined within both codes of conducts.
- A breach of the monitoring policy will be dealt with following the process of a breach of the board's code of conduct.
- Governors will formally write reports on their visits using the approved templates ensuring that draft reports are sent to the Executive Headteacher for proof reading, accuracy and comments prior to the final report being produced.

- Monitoring visit reports will be circulated, via the clerk, to either the relevant committee or Governing body meeting to enable discussion, triangulation and key questions to be raised and documented showing the impact of the visit.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits (monitoring schedule) should be planned, using the school improvement plan and subsequent approved, priority and statutory monitoring governor roles, spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Executive Headteacher. Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to ensure they are monitoring and triangulating against the current school priorities and know the school in terms of being able to describe to Ofsted or other outside agencies. The number of visits by each governor should be a minimum of once a year and not more than three times a year, unless the school situation necessitates.

Visits can take the form of

- Learning walks with members of staff
- Pupil voice in the class or interviews in groups
- School council
- Parent forum
- Visiting break and lunchtimes
- Looking at pupils work against marking policy
- Monitoring implementation of a policy e.g. behaviour, equality
- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum, or particular area
- Gaining an understanding of the impact of spend of funding with spending leads
- Ensuring finance processes are in place
- Monitoring the culture, ethos and values and for Church schools, the distinctive Christian character is maintained in all that is undertaken
- Monitoring the British values
- Monitoring the preparation for the next stage of education
- Seeing in action deployment of staff and impact of any change e.g. reduced class sizes/ split classes
- Reviewing the environment, the condition and maintenance, use made of the buildings or the site and resources of the school
- Focussed whole governing body days in school

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

The policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

Areas we should consider when reviewing are:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Are our visits timely against the school improvement plan?
- Do we have the right governor monitoring roles against the current school priorities?

- Are we better informed and can evidence the accuracy of Executive Headteacher and SLT reports?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better? Is there anything we need to change in how visits are conducted from feedback from staff?

Governor Visits - Good Practice

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy and schedule for governors' visits.
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to visit, within the monitoring schedule window, with the Executive Headteacher.
- Discuss the visit and agreed timetable with the Executive Headteacher and ensure that any member of staff who will be involved in the visit, understands the arrangements.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit as outlined within the monitoring schedule and background preparation reading required. Understand your strategic monitoring role.
- Review the action points in the School Improvement Plan. What are the relevant school policies associated to this area? How does this determine the activities I am interested in seeing in action? What questions do I want to ask?
- Discuss with the Executive Headteacher/staff lead if any new supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
- Ensure that you are familiar with safeguarding and health and safety procedures.
- Read the Governing Board code of conduct and staff code of conduct to ensure understand behaviours required.

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body; it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Be punctual, reporting to reception and signing in as a governor. Wear a badge to identify you. Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible to the school needs.
- Decide with the Executive Headteacher how you will be introduced and how you will address staff and pupils.
- Be courteous and professional throughout the visit, friendly not critical, including thanking members of staff before leaving.
- Remember you are there to learn, it is a visit not an inspection.
- Keep to the role agreed; only talk to students if invited/ agreed to do so.
- Observe discretely. Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Respect confidentiality.

- Meet the Executive Headteacher at the end of the visit and discuss what you have seen, any issues or concerns you may have. Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Ensure that you have signed out.

After

- Share any concerns with the Executive Headteacher and Chair, however trivial. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Thank the staff by email via the Executive Headteacher for contributing to the success of the visit and for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Complete the agreed visit template proforma (see appendix A).
- Draft the report ensuring Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) are not identified in school visit reports.
- Send the draft to the Executive Headteacher and once you have taken their comments into account send the final written report to the clerk for circulation at the appropriate committee or governing board meeting.
- Ensure that your visit is included as an agenda item at the next appropriate committee or governing board meeting.
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity for less formal occasions such as school plays, sports day, and celebration events. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the school. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role. Visiting governors should ensure that they follow the governor visits protocols as appropriate and report using the informal template (Appendix B)

For example, times when governors may be visiting the school as governors not against an agreed monitoring schedule

- The chair making a regular visit to see the Executive Headteacher.
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- New governor tour of the school.
- Attending working groups, committee or board meetings.
- Invited to attend prize giving or celebration events.

For example, times when governors may be visiting the school NOT as a governor

- To help in a class
- To lend a helping hand with a school event.

- To speak to a teacher/ Executive Headteacher in relation to your own child.
- Attending a school function or educational visit.
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor.

Record of governor's visit to xxxxxx school – Formal

Visiting Governor	
Date of Visit	
Staff Members Involved in Visit	
Brief description of activities undertaken during the visit	
Where are we now?	
What are our strengths ?	
What are the issues ?	
What are we doing about them ?	
Is funding appropriate ? And is it being used to best effect ?	
Additional Notes / Comments	
Planning for the Next Visit	
Identified Areas of Focus for Visit	
Particular Questions to be asked	
Format of Follow up Visit	
Signed: Governor	

Record of governor's visit to xxxxxx school – Informal

Visiting Governor: Date of Visit:
Focus of visit <i>(event, celebration, parents evening, function)</i>
Observations and comments by the governor <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned)</i>
Any key issues or questions arising for the governing body or leadership team <i>(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)</i>
Signed: Governor