



GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- This policy was agreed in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, the Governing Body and the staff of the school.

2. BACKGROUND (see Annex A)

- The Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum.
- Governors are also held to account for their own school performance. Ofsted assumes that governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.
- One of the ways in which a governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and children and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms.
- Visits will be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to assist the Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory duties, its role in monitoring and evaluation and to improve its understanding of the school to ensure informed decision making.

3. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- The policy aims to ensure: -
 - That governors are fully conversant with their duties in relation to school visits;
 - That teachers fully understand the purpose of governor visits;
 - That all involved understand how these visits fit into the statutory and strategic purpose of the governing body;
 - That all involved fully understand what a governor will and will not do;
 - That all involved know what will happen following a governor visit and how information will be used;
 - That all involved will understand how the success of this policy will be measured.
- School visits by members of the governing body a key component to being an effective school governor and have potential benefits to both governors and staff: -
- Benefits to governors: -
 - recognise and celebrate success
 - develop relationships with the staff
 - get to know the children
 - recognise different teaching styles
 - understand the environment in which teachers and other staff work
 - see policies and schemes of learning in action
 - inform decision-making
- Benefits to staff: -
 - help governors understand the reality of the classroom
 - get to know the governors

- understand better the governor roles and responsibilities
- have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion

4. PURPOSE OF GOVERNOR VISITS

- Visits are undertaken to: -
 - Improve governing body knowledge of the school and the people that work in it;
 - Assist the governing body in monitoring the implementation of the SIP;
 - Assist a governor to fulfil a specialist governor role such as SEN;
 - Assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties including monitoring and evaluation;
 - Assist the governing body in making informed decisions.
- Governors will not pursue personal agendas or arrive with inflexible or preconceived ideas.
- Governors will not visit their own child's class on official governor visits.
- Governors will not make any judgements about student's work, behaviour, any teacher's classroom practice or issues relating to the day to day running of the school. Those are the responsibility of the Headteacher.

5. PLANNING THE VISIT

- Visits will be undertaken only as part of a strategic programme formally organised by the governing body or one of its committees and with approval of the Head.
- Frequency of visits will depend on the complexity of the areas of responsibility allocated to them and the availability of appropriate staff and timetabling.
- The Head will be kept informed of, and agree, the subsequent details of the planned visit.
- At least one week's notice of a visit will be provided to teachers.
- Governors will make themselves fully acquainted with Health and Safety procedures, including fire safety, prior to any visit.
- Governors will make themselves fully acquainted with safeguarding procedures prior to any visit.

6. DURING THE VISIT

- Governors will at all times report to reception upon arrival and follow the procedure for visitors in order to provide a good example for other visitors.
- If visiting a classroom, the governor will arrive at the time planned to avoid disrupting the learning and follow the agreed purpose of the visit.
- Governors must be aware that some teachers may feel nervous or stressful about having a visitor in the classroom.
- At the end of the visit governors will thank everyone concerned, including the children.
- Governors should be aware of their behaviour and avoid any implication that they are inspecting, such as by using a clipboard.

7. FOLLOWING THE VISIT

- After visiting the school the governor will: -
 - Give some time and thought to reflection;
 - Consider what went well and what did not go so well with respect to their involvement in the visit;
 - Consider how the visit has helped them in their role as governor;
 - Consider what they would do differently in a future visit;
 - Following completion of the agreed monitoring programme/record the governor will report back to the governing body or committee as appropriate.

8. MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE POLICY

- The success of this policy will be measured by the following:
- The extent to which: -
 - Governors become involved in visits to school;
 - Governors make more informed decisions;
 - Staff feel comfortable with governor involvement in their school;
 - Governors feel more involved in school;
 - Governors can demonstrate an enhanced understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, needs and priorities.

Discussed and agreed by:

Staff and SLT on

Governing Body on.....

Review date:

Annex A - Extracts from The Governance Handbook, January 2017

All boards, no matter what type of schools or how many schools they govern, have three core functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

School visits

Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the board can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views; though are unlikely to be sufficient for these purposes.

Boards are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of executive leaders. If boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.

Accountability for educational performance:

Effective boards hold their executive leaders to account for improving pupil and staff performance by asking the right questions. It is essential that boards use, and are familiar with, specific data about their school(s) to help inform these questions. This might include asking:

- Which groups of pupils are the highest and lowest performing, and why? Do school leaders have credible plans for addressing underperformance or less than expected progress? How will we know that things are improving?
- How is the school going to raise standards for all children, including the most and least able, those with special educational needs, those receiving free school meals and those who are more broadly disadvantaged, boys and girls, those of a particular ethnicity, and any who are currently underachieving?
- Which year groups or subjects get the best and worst results and why? How does this relate to the quality of teaching across the school? What is the strategy for improving the areas of weakest performance?
- Is the school adequately engaged with the world of work and preparing their pupils for adult life, including knowing where pupils go when they leave?
- How is the school ensuring that it keeps pupils safe from, and building their resilience to, the risks of extremism and radicalisation? What arrangements are in place to ensure that staff understand and are implementing the Prevent duty?
- Are senior leaders including (where appropriate) the CEO and finance director getting appropriate CPD?
- Does the school have the right staff and the right development and reward arrangements? What is the school's approach to implementation of pay reform and performance-related pay? If appropriate, is it compliant with the most up to date version of the School teachers' pay and conditions document? Is the school planning to ensure it continues to have the right staff?

- Have decisions been made with reference to external evidence, for example, has the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Toolkit been used to determine pupil premium spending decisions? How will the board know if current approaches are working and how will the impact of decisions and interventions be monitored using appropriate tools such as the EEF DIY evaluation guide?
- Are teachers and support staff being used as effectively and efficiently as possible and in line with evidence and guidance?
- To what extent is this a happy school with a positive learning culture? What is the school's record on attendance, behaviour and bullying? Are safeguarding procedures securely in place? What is being done to address any current issues, and how will it know if it is working?
- How good is the school's wider offer to pupils? Is the school offering a good range of sports, arts and voluntary activities? Is school food healthy and popular?
- Is the school encouraging the development of healthy, active lifestyles by using the PE and sport premium for primary schools to fund additional and sustainable improvements to the provision of PE and sport?
- How effectively does the school listen to the views of pupils and parents?

Annex B - Governors' Code of Conduct

As individuals on the governing body we agree to the following:

Role & Responsibilities

We understand the purpose of the governing body and the role of the headteacher.

We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.

We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body meeting.

We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.

We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.

We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.

We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.

In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body.

We will actively support and challenge the headteacher.

We are aware of the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life.

Commitment

We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.

We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.

We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.

We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.

We will visit the school, with all visits to school arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the headteacher.

We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training.

Relationships

We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.

We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors.

We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.

We are prepared to answer queries from other governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.

We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside school.

We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting.

We will not reveal the details of any governing body vote.

Conflicts of interest

We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the governing body's business in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

Similarly, we will declare any personal interest, such as friend and family connections, and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the governing body.

Breach of this code of conduct

If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; the governing body will only use suspension/removal as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways.

Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, another governor, such as the vice chair will investigate.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations).

Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



Governor's Visit to School

Report to the Governing Body

Name of Governor
Date of Visit
Purpose of Visit
Area of school visited:
Links to School Development Plan (SDP) (where applicable)
Governor Observations and Comments (summary of activities, e.g. visiting a class, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources)
What I have learned, as a result of my visit
Positive comments about the visit
Aspects I would like clarified
Ideas for future visits
Priorities for Moving the School Forward (actions to be monitored)
Ideas for future visits