

Slaithwaite CE J & I School



Governor Visits Policy



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GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

Purpose of Policy

The governing body has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the school and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis. Visits can also be a useful opportunity for governors to gauge the progress of the School Improvement Plan, to contribute to breadth and depth to some subject areas linked to an individual governor's area of personal experience and knowledge and to provide enhanced social capital and support to the school values and vision. Governors should report back their findings, thus helping the whole governing body and its committees to make better informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the School Improvement Plan and informing strategic decision making.

The head teacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and School Improvement Plan to be covered each term. The policy and protocol for school visits is formulated in consultation with the staff.

Annual programme of visits

The governing body will organise a programme of visits with the help of the headteacher. These should be spread throughout the year, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per term. In addition, new governors will make a general introductory visit of the school as part of their induction programme.

Purpose of visit

The focus of a visit could be on any policy in place in the school, e.g., teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, collective worship. It could also focus on particular areas, such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class, or attending a service e.g Harvest, or supporting parent events etc

Potential benefits

to governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff
- To build an effective relationships with the staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

to teachers:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- To get to know governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not about

- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the headteacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Protocols for visits

Governors should, with the guidance of the whole governing body and head teacher, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus upon. This will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team.

When organising and conducting a visit governors will be courteous and considerate, respecting the professional roles of the headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the head and staff, they will confirm in advance with the head teacher the date, timing and focus of each visit. This will include agreeing what will be observed, whom it would be useful to talk to and agreeing any protocols to be observed whilst in the school. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/ guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit. Governors visiting cannot make personal judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body. They will discuss their observations with the head teacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body on the visit.

See annex (i) for good practice when visiting a school and annex (ii) for the form to record and report on visits.

- **Teachers and support staff** will be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.
- They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors.

Questions will be invited from governors whilst being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See annex (iii) for examples of questions which governors could ask. Although they are focused on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions are relevant to other areas.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact.

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing body. At the final meeting of each academic year the Link Governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. The Governing Body will evaluate the extent to which visits have informed whole governing body understanding of the school's work. Staff governors will feed back from colleagues and describe the extent to which staff's understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

The governing body can then consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

and make changes to the policy and protocol that may be required.

Policy written: September 2015

Next review date: September 2017

The following sections list examples of good practice. The opposite of each, could feature in a 'never' column.

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Discuss with the headteacher if any supporting information is available - Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

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.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely. Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, do not interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Do not lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and children.

After

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.

- 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?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Record form for a governor's school visit

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Purpose of visit (Previously agreed by the governing body with the head teacher)	
Links with the School Improvement Plan (How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Improvement Plan?)	
Governor observations and comments (Eg. what did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)	
Any key issues arising for the governing body (Eg. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy)	
Action following governing body meeting (Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)	

English and Maths: Questions for Governors

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and numeracy. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in literacy or numeracy can help to ensure that literacy issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as Literacy/Numeracy Governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/maths across the school.

Discuss with your head teacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your job, in partnership with the head teacher, is to provide a link between your governing body, its committees and the staff of your school.

1. *Achievements and attitudes*

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/maths?
 - ⇒ Compared to similar schools?
 - ⇒ With the national rates of increase?
 - ⇒ With the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups and if so why?
- How do our results in English/maths compare with those in other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy/hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
 - ⇒ Girls and boys
 - ⇒ Pupils with special educational needs
 - ⇒ Very able pupils
 - ⇒ Pupils with English as an additional language
 - ⇒ Any other groups e.g. traveller families
- In meetings with the English/maths Coordinator can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:
 - ⇒ Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - ⇒ A range of pupils' work - average, below average and above average
 - ⇒ Other evidence.

2. Special Needs

- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy lessons?
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their daily literacy/maths lessons?

3. Management of the subject.

- How is the role of the English/maths coordinator developing?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- What is the allocation of funding to English and maths for this financial year?
- How has it or will it be spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- What further training do teachers and support staff need?
- How much additional adult support does each class have?
- What was the outcome of the local authority's literacy/numeracy monitoring visit?
- Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? What links does the school have with the local library? (English).
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

4. Communication

- How are parents kept informed about pupil progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?
- How are governors kept informed about standards and progress of children?
- How do governors celebrate the school's success when things go well?