St. James’ & Ebrington C of E Primary School

Governors Visiting Policy
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Introduction

As governors we have a statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school, ensuring that the pupils get the best possible education within the resources available. Visiting the school is one of the most important activities a governor can perform. It allows us to learn about the education of the pupils and evaluate the impact of plans and policies we make on the day to day running of the school.

Visiting also improves the relationship between governors and teachers. Both parties can see visiting as teamwork, directed towards a common goal. Teachers often feel better supported and being in the classroom generally leads to increased respect for their hard work and the complexity of the job. Seeing how the schools work on a working day can improve the quality of our decision-making. Gaining an increased understanding can help us to more effectively promote the schools and broadcast their achievements.

In order for staff and governors to benefit from the visit it needs to be planned carefully, within the framework of the School Development Plan, to minimise disruption and ensure the staff and pupils understand why the visit is taking place.

Our role is not to make judgements about the pupils’ 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 Head Teacher.

Governors are required to record their visit as evidence for Ofsted inspection.

Values of Visiting are:

- to gain information to aid policy making and decision taking.
- to see the attitudes, behaviour and achievements of the pupils.
- to understand the views and values of the staff and pupils.
- to evaluate the resources and environment and ethos of the school.
- to enable governors to help in selecting new staff to meet the needs of the school.
- to observe the operation of agreed policies.
- to give support to the activities of the school.
- to enable governors to become aware of developments in the school and understand different approaches to teaching and learning.

Some suggestions for meetings are included as Appendix 1.

Frequency of Visits

It is recommended that a minimum of one formal governor visit is made every term and is planned in accordance with the School Development Plan. Formal visits and the purpose thereof will be agreed at full Governing Body meetings. A list of names will be maintained in order for governors to arrange their own informal visits in accordance with their areas of interest. Visits will also be made as the need arises. A governor should not make a formal visit to a class in which they have a child.

Before the Visit

The governor should meet with the Head Teacher (or nominated member of SMT) and relevant class teacher (if applicable) at least one week prior to the event. This meeting should agree:

- the purpose of the visit, establishing clear aims and defined objectives
• which aspect of the schools’ work you hope to focus on
• who you will see and when
• the level of governor participation during the visit
• preparation/reading which may be appropriate before the visit
• timing of follow-up meeting(s)

The governor should familiarise himself with any relevant information and prepare any questions prior to the visit, including reading relevant parts of the School Development Plan.

The governor making the visit should make themselves fully acquainted with the Health and Safety procedures, including fire and safety, prior to making the visit.

**During the Visit**

• Governors should not take any notes during the visit to avoid it appearing like an inspection: try to get involved without being obtrusive.
• Staff will introduce the visiting governor to the class and give a brief explanation as to how they will be involved in the lesson.
• Governors will, wherever possible, ensure they stay in for a whole session in order to see a lesson through from beginning to end.
• Governors may make notes after the visit to aid their written report to the Governing body.
• Governors are welcome to use the staff room at break and lunchtimes, if invited to do so by the staff. This is an ideal opportunity for staff and governors to get to know one another better.
• Governors are also welcome to go into the playground at break and lunchtimes to talk with midday supervisors and to see the arrangements for children’s’ playtimes. They will inform the Head Teacher in advance.

After the visit, governors should always make time to speak to the class teacher, either at the end of the visit itself or at a time convenient to both staff and governor. This is an ideal opportunity for the governor to ask follow up questions and to ask the teacher for their ideas and comments which could be taken back to the Governing Body or Head Teacher. Some suggested questions are included as Appendix 2.

**After the visit**

Governors will record the visit using the standard visit log (attached). This should clearly identify any agreed actions and key points for noting or consideration by the Governing Body. Governors will always show visit log to any staff visited and the Head Teacher and invite their comments before returning it to the School Office or the Head Teacher. The record will be stored in the Governor's Visiting Folder.

All governors should submit the visit log under a separate agenda item for consideration at the next meeting of the Governing Body. Sharing the findings and perceptions with the other governors will help the whole Governing Body have a clearer understanding of how the school is functioning.

A note of thanks should be sent to the teacher and pupils.

This policy was agreed by the full governing body in February 2011 and will be reviewed in the autumn terms of 2013.

Signed

Date
Appendix 1

Suggestions for Visits

- The school’s curriculum policy and its aims
- Early Years provision
- Religious Education
- Health and Sex Education
- Equal Opportunities, eg gender issues
- Special Educational Needs provision – contact SEN governor first
- Communication with parents
- Following 20 minutes Guided Reading Sessions across Key Stages
- Accommodation in classrooms
- Use of the ICT suite
- School resources for delivering the curriculum
- Homework Policy
- Wet weather management
- Participation in a school trip
- Primary /secondary links
- Accompanying pupils to swimming lessons
- Extra Curricular activities
- Looking at the deployment of Teaching Assistants
- Tracking groups of children eg lower/higher ability
Appendix 2

Suggested questions

Questions are just to enable governors to get a fuller picture of life in the school. They should inform us about the guidance and support staff receive in planning, assessment, behaviour managements, SEN provision and curriculum information. Questions should not be used to challenge an individual about their working style, methods, techniques etc.

It is particularly important that governors do not make assumptions about what we see in school, and that we follow up our observations with focussed questions. These may be to a member of staff or to the Head Teacher, before, during or after the visit.

Typical Questions are listed below:

- What does the policy say about how we do this in school?
- What examples have I seen that provide evidence of this?
- How might I help the Governing Body understand what is happening in this area?
- What different teaching methods and styles have I seen?
- How are pupils grouped?
- How do we know whether pupils are working at the right level?
- How do staff measure progress?
- How do we know whether parallel classes are working to the same standard?
- How do we cater for children who are struggling/ high achievers?
- Do we have sufficient resources?
- What would the governors do to help make any aspect of a teacher’s work more effective?
- What support do staff have with regards to providing for children with SEN?
- What support do staff have for managing difficult behaviour?
- How is the timetable arranged?
- What happens to children during wet lunchtimes?
- How do the children feel about school/lunch/playtimes/assemblies?
- What do children enjoy/not enjoy about school?
- What would make school a better place for staff/pupils?
- What extra curricular activities do we provide/take-up/ run by whom?
## Appendix 3
### Visit Protocol Aide-Memoire

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<tr>
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<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BEFORE</strong></td>
<td>• Agree purpose of visit.</td>
<td>• Turn up unannounced.</td>
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<td>• Agree how much time.</td>
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<td>• Agree when you will discuss the visit with the Head Teacher.</td>
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<td>• Consider practicalities (dress, parking, times of arrival, who to</td>
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<td>report to, how to make notes, breaks and lunch).</td>
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<td>• Find out how the teacher wants you to contribute (or not).</td>
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<td><strong>DURING</strong></td>
<td>• Introduce yourself to staff and pupils.</td>
<td>• Walk in with a clipboard.</td>
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<td>• Note and praise the positive.</td>
<td>• Arrive with preconceived ideas.</td>
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<td>• Ask questions to increase understanding.</td>
<td>• Interrupt the teacher.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Remain focussed on the purpose of the visit.</td>
<td>• Make professional judgements about staff expertise (governors are not inspectors).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AFTER</strong></td>
<td>• Thank the teacher and pupils.</td>
<td>• Pursue you own personal agenda/focus on the progress of your own child.</td>
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<td>• Discuss the visit with the teacher.</td>
<td>• Monopolise the children’s or the staff’s time.</td>
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<td>• Write a thank you note to the teacher and pupils.</td>
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<td>• Complete the visit log and report to the full Governing Body.</td>
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<td>• Raise any concerns sensitively with the Head Teacher.</td>
<td>• Leave without a word.</td>
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GOVERNOR VISIT LOG

Governor: ______________________ Date of Visit: __________

Staff link: ______________________

Purpose of Visit:

What I saw:

Evaluation: How has this increased my knowledge?

Further action if required:

Key Points for Governing Body:

Please return this form to the Head Teacher at the end of your visit for discussion.

Signed: ______________________