



*Believe, Succeed &
Grow Together*

FRINTON ON SEA PRIMARY SCHOOL

GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

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Ratified/Approved: by School Governing Body

Chair of Governors: _____
Mrs S. Young

Date: Summer 2017

To be reviewed: Summer 2020

Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

Purposes of visit: potential benefits:

For governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out about resources and prioritise them

For 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

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Protocols or ground rules for visits

Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surroundings

- Consider what should happen and what should not.

How to feed back after the visit

- Governors should feed back to the Heads of School in the first instance.
- A 'Record of Governor Visit' should be completed on the day.
- This must be sent to the Clerk of Governors prior to the next full meeting.
- Positive comments, areas of concern, questions and suggestions should all be reported.
- All Governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the Head of school/school office.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Heads of School and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

This policy should be monitored.

- What has been the impact of Governor visits?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- Is there a suitable balance of challenge and support?
- How can we make our practice even better?

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the areas I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the Heads of school and or subject leader well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the proforma provided
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the subject leader if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, development plan, performance data.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions and submit to staff in advance.

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, **it is not appropriate to make judgements regarding the quality of teaching and learning or to make 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
- 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, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

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.
- Submit your 'Record of Governor Visit' to the Heads of school for approval
- 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 with regards to challenge and accountability?

Reporting your visit – completing your 'Record of Governor 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.
- You must circulate a draft to the Heads of School 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.
- Provide this to the clerk for circulation at the next governing body meeting.

Visit Focus

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises /environmental factors
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and Maths
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls
- Behaviour

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the Heads of School
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- To help in a class
- Attend a school function or educational visit

Things to observe when visiting a classroom

Relationship between staff and pupils

Relationships between pupils

Variety of teaching styles

Availability and role of support staff

Behaviour and attitude of pupils -are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?

Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils

How the pupils are grouped

How different abilities are catered for

Children's work

Displays

Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)

Use of space and working conditions

Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

Key questions for governors to ask (Primary English and Mathematics)

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of Literacy and Maths. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in Literacy or Maths can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as Literacy/Maths governor, as you find out about the teaching of Literacy/Maths across the school. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits — it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Achievements and attitudes

What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?

- Compared to similar schools?
- In relation to the national rates of increase?
- In relation to 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 and which 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 and the others? The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

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
- The work of a range of pupils — average, below average and above average
- Special Needs

How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/Maths lessons?

How have Individual Support Plans (ISPs) been adapted to support children in their daily

Literacy/Maths lessons?

Management of the subject

How is the role of the English/Maths subject leader developing?

Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?

How has the budget for this area been spent?

Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?

How much additional adult support does each class have?

(Literacy only) Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using the library? What links does the school have with the local library?

How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/Maths?

Communication

How are parents kept informed of progress?

What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?

Key questions for subject/learning link governor discussion with subject leader **(Foundation Subjects)**

- What is your vision for the subject?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the subject? (This question is mainly for Literacy, Maths, Science and ICT. Other subjects may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection.)
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised?
- Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching the subject?

PURPOSE OF VISITING

1. Observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements of the pupils.
2. Understand the views and values of the staff and pupils.
3. Evaluate the resources and the environment of the school.
4. Gain first hand information to assist policy making and decision taking.
5. Governors are known and demonstrate their commitment to the school.
6. Observe the operation of policies.
7. Give active support to the activities of the school.
8. Be aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning.
9. Demonstrate being a critical friend of the school.
10. Holding the school to account, evaluating its progress.

ARRANGING AND PLANNING A VISIT

1. Be aware of the school's policy on Governor Visits.
2. Agree a date and time with the Heads of School.
3. Clarify what you will do:
 - a. Time of arrival
 - b. Time of departure
 - c. Who you will see and the focus of your visit.
4. Remember that you are representing the governing body, and are a guest of the school.
5. Remember to respect the professionalism of the teachers and to respect the children.
6. Be supportive of the Heads of school and all staff.
7. You may wish to make a full report of your visit for the Governing Body, using the notes overleaf. Share your observations with the Heads of School first.

THOUGHTS IN ADVANCE OF YOUR VISIT

Note down here any questions that you intend to ask or any special focus for your visit:

Frinton-On-Sea Primary School

Governor Visit Log

Date	Teacher	Class
Subject and / or Class visit		Governor

<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talking to class teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talking to children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking at displays	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking at pupils work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending assembly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet with co-ordinators	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking at resource	<input type="checkbox"/>	Review of finance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending staff meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking at playtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Over the course of one academic year it is expected that at least six of the above will be used to gather evidence and inform your summary of progress made towards the key priorities.

Agreed focus for visit:

Discussion towards key Priority:
Evidence to support progress towards Key Priority:
Signed