



Doing our best to achieve our best

Clarendon Primary School & Children's Centre

GOVERNOR SCHOOL VISITS POLICY

Rationale:

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor school policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for the school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will test this assumption during a school inspection.

This policy includes a sample Governors' Visit report form, which will help guide discussion on the issues raised and provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base, e.g. a member of staff's performance management.

Policy Aims:

To enable Governors to:

- Gain insight into the life of the school
- Create and develop relationships with staff, children and where appropriate parents.
- Better understand the Governors' roles in raising standards.
- Have a better understanding of the school's current performance, practice, strengths and areas for further development, thus enabling them to provide more targeted and effective challenge and support.

Overarching principles:

The Governors of Clarendon Primary School recognise that one of the best and most effective ways they can get to know their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work. To this end the Governors undertake official termly 'monitoring visits' to the school to review and explore a specific aspect of practice. (These visits are not an inspection, but a 'fact finding' and observational opportunity and a platform to help Governors ask questions and understand practice.)

To further support the effectiveness of their work the Governing Body also appoint a link Governor to key areas of the school practice, such as SEN, and review other areas of practice through the use of Governor working groups. These groups include:

- A data working group
- A finance working group
- A pay and performance working group
- A Children's Centre working group
- A health and safety working group

Other visits to the school are agreed with the Senior Leadership Team, (SLT) in advance and focus on ensuring the aims outlined above are fulfilled.

What are Governor visits about? (The main purposes)

A Governor visits school to:

- Increase the governing body's first-hand knowledge about the school and its daily operation; thus helping to inform ongoing and future strategic decision making.

- Keep under review the way in which the school is operating and performing and what it is doing to manage areas requiring further development.
- Experience the impact and progress resulting from the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies.
- Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously.
- Establish and develop good professional working relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with an individual area of responsibility, e.g. Special Educational Needs or Health and Safety.
- See in context some of the monitoring systems employed by the school.
- Demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process.
- Show support and encouragement to staff and children.

What are Governor visits not about?

Governors' visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of their own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues

Benefits of Governor visits to school:

Potential Benefits to Governors	Potential Benefits to Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs. • To recognise and celebrate success. • To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff. • To monitor the implementation of the School Development/Improvement Plan. • To increase their first-hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions. • To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach. • To recognise different teaching styles and understand the environment in which teachers teach. • To see policies and schemes of work in practice. • To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them. • To get to know the children. • To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils. • To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process. • To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, Literacy etc. • To inform future decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand better the Governors' roles and responsibilities. • To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion. • To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors. • To feel valued. • To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors. • To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school. • To highlight the need for further resources. • To share an understanding of the specific area.

Setting up the visits:

- Dates of the termly 'Governor monitoring' visit to classrooms will be agreed with the headteacher at the start of the year and shared with all relevant stakeholders. To organise other visits the visiting Governor(s) should make contact with the appropriate member of staff, (by telephone, email or in person) to negotiate dates/times and to agree the focus of the visit.
- To support the visit Governors will receive a copy of any relevant plans or documentation.
- When Governors make visits to classrooms, this should be undertaken individually or in pairs. If larger groups are required, this should be approved in advance by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher to ensure it doesn't lead to unnecessary disruption to the children or daily operation of the school.

Undertaking the visit:

- Governors will arrive in good time for their visit.
- Particularly for 'termly monitoring' visits, Governors should allow enough time for an informal briefing and debriefing after the visit activity has taken place.
- Brief notes may be taken in the classroom; however copies of these could be made available to staff, if required.
- Governors will concentrate on the agreed focus of the visit.
- If in the rare eventuality, a Governor feels that their presence is making a member of staff feel uncomfortable or the lesson is clearly going awry for some reason, the Governor will judge whether to withdraw. If a major problem arises in any classroom during a visit, a member of the SLT should be informed before leaving the school.
- During the lesson opportunities may arise for the Governor to talk to pupils; however care should be taken to ensure this doesn't affect the delivery or flow of the lesson.
- Whilst Governors should be sensitive about distracting pupils from their tasks, they should use the opportunity to see the lesson from the pupils' perspective by asking questions. For example, can you tell me what you are learning, what do you do if you get stuck? How do you know how well you are doing? What is your best piece of work and why? What helps you learn best?

When in school Governors will be expected to follow our 'Code of Conduct' and behave in an appropriate manner at all times showing courtesy to all adults and children.

At the end of the visit:

- Any monitoring visit or activity should be discussed with a member of the SLT at the end of the visit and a written record made.
- Governor(s) will avoid being drawn into judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governor(s) may ask questions to help clarify their understanding of things seen, heard or told.
- Governor(s) will share with staff what they have learned from their visit.
- Records made or written summaries completed will be subsequently made available to both relevant staff and the full Governing body.

See Appendix 3 for a pro forma to record visits.

Roles and responsibilities:

The governing body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Clarendon Primary School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, children and parents are aware of this policy and that it is fully implemented.

Policy monitoring and evaluation:

The Governing Body will review this policy at least once every 3 years or sooner if necessary. This review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we more able to make informed decisions?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Review:

Date reviewed by staff: Spring term 2017

Date due for next review: Spring term 2020

Appendix 1

What if..... (questions that may arise)

What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?

It depends how serious the misbehaviour is and how frequently it happens. The occasional incident should probably be overlooked, but if the teacher is consistently failing to notice misbehaviour, it is something which should be taken up after the lesson.

You could ask the teacher if they noticed a particular incident, for example, and what they would have done about it had it been noticed, or whether they chose to ignore it?

If you still have major concerns you may need to talk to the headteacher or member of the SLT about it, in confidence. The headteacher should find a way of following it up without suggesting in anyway that you have reported a concern.

What if a pupil asks me how to do something?

It depends what it is. If it is something the teacher has already explained in the lesson, you can reinforce the teacher's message by explaining it again to the pupil. Otherwise, unless it is a trivial thing, you should ask the teacher on the pupil's behalf or encourage them to ask the teacher directly. You might also be able to ask a teaching assistant, if one is present.

What if the teacher has problems controlling the class?

It depends on the level of poor control. Maintaining perfect class control at all times is not easy, especially in practical activities, so some leeway should be given. Also a certain level of noise might just be a sign of enthusiastic participation in an activity.

Usually if a teacher is really struggling, the headteacher would know about it anyway and not encourage a Governor to visit in the first place. There will be some kind of support available for the teacher, possibly from a more senior colleague; but if control is obviously seriously lacking, then the headteacher needs to be told.

Appendix 2

Summary Visit protocol sheet (Code of Conduct)

	Always	never
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team. This includes considering which actions of the School Development Plan to review or the context of lessons being visited. • Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. Arrange and plan the details of the visit with the Headteacher/relevant member of staff, drawing up a schedule for the visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? • Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available. E.g. Ofsted report, improvement plan, scheme of work etc. • Try to visit at different times of the day. • Agree the level of confidentiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up unannounced for a focused / formal visit. • Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement or a recommended minimum notice of one week. • Visit during a SATs week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared, organised and punctual. • Report to the school office and sign in. • Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit. • Observe school / class guidelines. • Jot down discussion points to consider later at the feedback session. • Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit. • Listen to staff and pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monopolise staff time. • Interrupt teaching or talk to the teacher while he / she is teaching. • Behave like an Inspector! • Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes. • Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body. It is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on their behalf.
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils. • Discuss what you have observed with the teacher or staff lead as soon as possible after the visit. Use the opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about. • Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher / relevant SLT member. <i>(Refer to the purpose of the visit, considering together whether it has been achieved.)</i> • Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant. • Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher, (unless a group feedback sheet has been completed during the feedback session.) • Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave without a word of thanks. • Leave the school without giving some feedback. • Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors, (except the Chair) unless given permission to do so.

Appendix 3

Record of Governor's Visit

Governor's Name:	Date of Visit:
Focus of visit:	
Areas/classes visited:	
Sources of information: <i>e.g.: Headteacher, class teacher, display work, students' workbooks, talking to students, looking at resources</i>	
General comments:	
Summary of what was learned:	
Points to take forward for discussion at the governing body meeting:	
Signed:	Date:
Received and discussed with Headteacher:	
Received by the Governing Body:	