



SUNDON PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL Governor Visit Policy

Introduction

This policy is written in light of the following advice from the Department for Education, issued in April 2012.

While not a statutory requirement, the Department recommends that the governing body draws up a policy on governor visits to the school. This policy should take the following into account:

- *Governors do not have any rights of access to the school.*
- *Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:*
 - *Improve governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses*
 - *monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the development plan*
 - *assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties.*
- *Before visiting the school the governor(s) should:*
 - *inform the school of the visit and seek approval of the arrangements*
 - *ensure that they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire.*
- *After visiting the school the governor(s) should:*
 - *complete a visit report outlining the objectives and results of the visit*
 - *report back to the committee or governing body as appropriate*
 - *provide constructive feedback as appropriate.*

It is important that governors remember the purpose of governor visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision or to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the Headteacher or SLT.

Why visit?

Many Governing Bodies link Governors to subjects, classes or year groups as a way of monitoring the curriculum. This will involve individual Governors visiting the school and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss issues with the Headteacher and relevant subject co-ordinator. A number of Governors have specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Safety, Equality and Looked After Children. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a reasonably regular basis.

It also allows Governors, however, to focus on particular areas, e.g.:

- the management of the school's resources
- the condition of the building and its use
- the development of teaching and support staff
- a specific subject area
- a particular year group or class

By visiting school and becoming better informed Governors will be:

- more aware of the needs of the school
- more able to approach staff to meet those needs
- well placed to bring to the Local Authority or Diocese any matters of concern
- in a good position to support the school in its community

What are the benefits to Governors and staff?

Governors	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff	To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors
To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs	
To recognise and celebrate success	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the School Improvement Plan	To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors
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 ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school
To see policies and schemes of work in practice	
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them	To highlight the need for further resources
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 links with a class, year group or subject area	
To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Educational Needs, Literacy etc.	To share an understanding of the specific area.

What are Governors' visits not about?

The main point to emphasise is that 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 your own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues.

How often should I visit?

This will essentially depend on the number of Governors available to take on the responsibility and the size of the school staff.

Who schedules the visits?

Visits should always be agreed with the Headteacher and will follow discussion at the Governor's Business Meeting at the start of the academic year.

Visit preparation

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply 'the ground rules'. It is essential that a disproportionate amount of time should not be spent on planning and arranging visits. If you plan in advance what should always and never happen before, during and after a visit, the ground rules will be firmly established and should avoid any problems and hopefully make the visit more beneficial and enjoyable. The Governor's Visit Form attached to this policy at Appendix A should be partially completed at this stage and reference should be made throughout the process to the 'Preparation Checklist' which is attached at Appendix B.

What should and shouldn't happen?

	Always	Never
Before (at least one week prior to visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the action points in the School Improvement Plan ▪ Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher ▪ Arrange details of the visit ▪ Try to visit at different times of the day ▪ Headteacher draws up a schedule for visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? ▪ Discuss with the Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be visited and possible involvement ▪ Agree 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 and a recommended minimum notice of one week ▪ Visit during a SATs without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be prepared, organised and punctual ▪ Report to the school office and sign in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monopolise Staff ▪ Interrupt the teaching or talk to the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit ▪ Observe school/class guidelines ▪ Jot down discussion points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ teacher while he/she is teaching ▪ Behave like an Inspector! ▪ Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils ▪ Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit ▪ Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher ▪ Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant ▪ Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher ▪ Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback ▪ Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except the Chair) unless given permission

What should I do if visiting lessons?

A week before a classroom visit there are some questions you should clarify with the Headteacher or teacher:

- When I come into the classroom, where would you like me to sit?
- What should I do if a pupil asks for help?
- Would you like me to be involved in the lesson?
- Do you mind me asking pertinent questions if I'm not sure about detail when helping e.g. If I'm not sure about the spelling policy, the methods used for calculations, how to help pupils read unknown words?
- What should I do if I see a pupil behaving inappropriately?
- What should I do if the teacher has problems controlling the class?

The focus of the visit

Remember a visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific classroom visit. Visits can focus on the following:

The School

- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- The use made of buildings and premises
- Security on site
- Break and lunch times
- The monitoring of Health and Safety
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture and subject equipment
- The impact of class sizes
- The deployment of support staff
- Office procedures e.g. budget monitoring
- To see a class or teacher led assembly

The Classroom

- Observation of particular curriculum areas i.e. English/Literacy, Mathematics/Numeracy, Science, Information and Communications Technology(ICT), Design Technology (DT), History, Geography, Religious Education, Art and Design, Music, Physical Education or Thinking Skills
- The implementation of the curriculum
- Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment
- Assessing a group of pupils working together on a task
- The impact of learning on educational visits

The list is by no means exclusive or exhaustive.

After the visit

We all need feedback after we have been visited or observed. This can be a sensitive area but it is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed.

Remember as a Governor you are making the visit on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body.

Staff should also realise that Governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

Any expression of concern should be shared with the Headteacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety is being compromised. This should always be reported immediately.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- The member(s) of staff involved
- The Headteacher
- The appropriate Committee or Governing Body

Oral feedback should be given to the member(s) of staff at the end of the visit.

Governors should agree with the Headteacher the level of detail that should be fed back to the member of staff.

Written feedback using the Governor's Visit Form (see Appendix 1) should be completed with the member of staff present and copies given to the Headteacher and member(s) of staff.

The reports will be discussed with the Chair of Governors, filed and made available to the appropriate Committee or Governing Body.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Governing Body's policy

The appropriate Committee will review this policy annually and report back to the Governing Body in the Summer term. The review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Have I learned more about the school?
- Are we better-informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do the staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have I helped the Governing Body fulfil its duties?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Agreed by Governors

September 2012

Governor Visit Form

Name:	Responsibility of Governor:	Date: Duration:
Area of School/Staff/Class visited:		
Purpose of visit: (Objectives)		
Governor's comments:		

Staff comments:

Headteacher comments:

Signed:

Governor:

Staff member(s):

Headteacher:

Date:

Pre and Post Visit Checklist for Governors

School	Governor
Do we know why the Governor is visiting?	Have I made a formal appointment with the Headteacher?
Do we know what the Governor is expecting to see?	Do I know the specific purpose of the visit?
Is the focus of the visit also a focus in our school improvement plan?	Have I arranged my time so that I can be sure to be punctual?
Have we drawn up a timetable for the visit?	Have I thought about what I will actually do during the visit/lesson?
Do individual members of staff know they are going to be visited?	Have I thought about how I will approach the teaching in the classroom?
Have other key members of staff been informed?	How will I give feedback to the staff, Headteacher and Governing Body?
Is the appropriate documentation ready and available?	Have I remembered that what I see or hear or might find out is confidential and not for sharing with other Governors or parents in general?
	How can I build on this for the next visit?