

Fowey Primary School Governor Visits Policy

Governor's visits to schools

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies, and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own 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. OfSTED says: *'If Governors are to monitor and evaluate the school's work they need to visit the school. When handled well these visits build trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the school's work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings. The visits to the school by governors work well when the focus of the visit is agreed in advance and understood by all involved.'*

Aims

1. To inform the Governing Body as to the working of the school
2. To enable the Governing Body to fulfil their statutory responsibilities / requirements
3. To foster a sense of partnership between all members of the school community.

The governors have the ultimate responsibility for what happens in school so it is in everyone's interest that they are enabled to make decisions based on the best possible information. This policy is to assist the process of consultation and communication in a constructive, considered and organised manner.

Organisation

At Fowey Primary School the governing body has linked individual governors to different roles as a way of monitoring the curriculum (See SDP and Terms of Reference). This involves governors visiting the school and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss their different areas with the Curriculum Leaders and Headteacher. Governor visits are undertaken to see the school generally in operation or for a specific classroom visit.

Some governors also have specific responsibilities e.g. SEN, Health & Safety, Safeguarding, etc. (Refer to Governor Terms of Reference).

Benefits of Governor Visits

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 children's needs	
To recognise & celebrate the good things going on	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the School Development Plan	To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of governors
To increase their first hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions	
To understand the environment in which the staff and teachers work	To ensure the governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school
To understand how resources are used, and what resources maybe needed so helping with priority setting	To highlight the need for further resources
To show support and encouragement to staff and children	
To develop links with a class, year groups and/or subject area	
To develop individual governor roles in terms of their specific responsibility i.e. English, SEN	To share an understanding of the specific area
In the 'triangulation approach' provides evidence of a 'governor view' when monitoring and evaluating an area.	

The Visit

An important part of visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply the 'ground rules.'

Individual governors make visits on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate for governors to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body. Staff should also be aware that governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

What Governor Visits are not about

The main point to emphasise is that governor visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of the members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching. Governors must remain in their 'lay' role irrespective of their own expertise.

In addition governor visits are not about:

- Checking on the progress of a governor's own child or that of a child known to them
- Monopolising staff time
- Drop in casual meetings
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues
- Monitoring per se, they are part of that role as supplementary information and seeing plans in action

What Governor Visits are about

Governor visits are undertaken on behalf of the Governing Body, they are:

- Planned, arranged and follow protocols agreed by the staff
- Have a clear focus
- An opportunity to recognise what the school does really well
- An opportunity to ask questions and talk to children
- Opportunity to get to know and learn about aspects of the school
- Opportunity to see in action what has previously been reported on paper or in meetings

Governor Development

Any governor involved in undertaking a classroom visit will ensure that they have received the appropriate training and feel confident to do a visit. There are a number of different training opportunities provided by Cornwall Governor Services e.g. course GO2 Induction for New Governors – Part two, Online Learning for Governors 'Governor Visits' module, 'Confident Governor Visits' workshop held as part of the Cornwall Governor Networks Conference. Further information can be sought from the Chair of Governors or Development Governor.

If it is the first time that a governor has undertaken a classroom visit then a more experienced governor / mentor can accompany them for support and guidance.

Visit Schedules

At the start of each school year the Governing Body will develop a schedule of visits with the Headteacher to take place over the year. The number of visits (not too many or too few) will be considered and they will be planned to ensure that there is a balance of different types of visit i.e. classroom, governor link visit and meetings.

What should and shouldn't happen

	Always	Never
At least 1 week prior to visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review action points in the School Development Plan Agree the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher Headteacher draws up schedule for visit: when, where, with who, duration, time for feedback etc.. Discuss with Headteacher or SMT what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be observed and possible involvement Meet with teacher to be visited: clear about where to sit, when to ask questions etc.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn up unannounced Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week Visit during SATS or without authorisation of Headteacher
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared, organised and punctual Report to school office and wear Governor badge Ensure you are introduced to the children Use open questions where there is no right or wrong answer i.e. what can you tell me about this book? Observe school guidelines and policies including Governor Code of Conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interrupt the teacher Monopolise staff Behave like an inspector! Take notes with a clipboard, take notes when you have left the room
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank children and teachers for sharing their class with you Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit Feedback to the Headteacher before leaving the school if requested Complete the Visit Form and give copy to the Headteacher A written report agreed between the governor, Headteacher and member of staff involved to be circulated to the full governing body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave without thanks and giving some feedback Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual governors (except Chair) unless given permission

Visit Preparation

Governors should refer to the 'Governor Visits Checklist' in Appendix 1, and the 'Governors Visit Form' (Appendix 3) which can be partially completed at this stage. Guidelines on observations that could be made where relevant are included in Appendix 2.

After the Visit

Report

The governor will complete the 'Governor Visits Form' during meetings with Curriculum Leaders or observations. **The completed Governor's Visit Form will be agreed and shared with the members of staff involved in the visit** including feedback to the Headteacher (if HT requests depending on nature of visit) before leaving the school. A written report will then be circulated via the clerk to the relevant Committee /Full Governing body. All completed forms/reports to be placed in Governor Visits File held in School Office. In addition copy to be put in Triangulation File as necessary.

Governors would in turn also appreciate feedback from the Headteacher on how their visit was perceived.

Procedures in the event of concern

Where concern exists it is vital that it is discussed immediately with the Headteacher. If the governor is not satisfied with the response and remains concerned then the Chair of Governors should be informed.

Follow up

Following governing body meeting, governor to update last section of Visits Form with any action / follow up to be taken.

Policy adopted on: 30th March 2011

Amended on 5th February 2015

Signature of Headteacher:.....

Signature of Chair of Governors:.....

Review date: October 2015

Appendix 1

Fowey Primary School Governor Preparation Checklist

TOPIC	<i>ACTIVITY</i>	DONE
Visit Purpose	Identified from governing body	
Logistics	Date/time of pre-meeting with HT or SMT	
	Date/time of pre-meeting teacher to be visited	
	Date/time of visit	
	Date/time of feedback to HT post visit	
	Actions to cover during visit	
	Protocol for visit note / governor visit form	
	Agree date for Visit Form to HT	
	Letter of thanks to member of staff and class	
	Visit Form to Clerk for circulation	
	Visit Form to keep with report for HT on this issue and to await any visit note from external professional giving external professional view on topic.	
Reading	Governor Visits Policy	
	Aims of School (Prospectus)	
	Relevant curriculum or other policy	
	SEF	
	Section of Development Plan on topic	
	Section of HT's report on topic	
	Previous OfSTED report on topic	
	School profile Any other documents of relevant date recommended by HT or senior teacher	

Appendix 2

OBSERVATIONS YOU MIGHT MAKE WHERE RELEVANT – CLASSROOM BASED Remember you are learning not making judgements

How are the relationships between staff /pupils and pupil/ pupil?

Have there been a variety of teaching styles and grouping of pupils (whole class, group work, in pairs, ability, age, friendship groups, gender mix) to observe?

How about class/pupil behaviour and attitudes? Do students appear attentive, interested in what they are doing. Do they ask and answer questions well? Do more girls ask questions than boys or vice versa?

How does the teacher manage the differing abilities of the students or students whose first language is not English? You may have to ask this question.

Have you been able to observe the role of any support staff?

Has there been opportunity for students to show you their work for interest or their work in displays?

Did you experience examples of praise and high expectations and encouragement? What about humour and enjoyment?

Is the environment and working conditions interesting and stimulating?

Has there been opportunity to experience any school policies at work?

How are resources and any equipment used, including technology, computers, white boards, PDA's? Is there any suggestion that resources need updating or renewing?

Part of your report might focus on future needs or a follow up visit in 6 months or a year

What do the students tell you?

Are pupils acting as mentors for their peers?

Is a wide range of work is displayed, not just the good work? Are the displays clear and vibrant?

Is all the classroom equipment in good working order?

Appendix 3

Fowey Primary School Governor Visit Form		
Name of Governor:	Date of visit:	Time of visit:
Teacher/Class/Key Stage being visited:		Length of visit:
Date visit form circulated to FGB:		Copy filed in Governors Monitoring File -
Preparation checklist read - Observations checklist read -		
PURPOSE OF VISIT – reasons why topic agreed for a visit		
LINKS WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (Identify area and target in SIP this visit is linked to)		
HT REPORT/GOV MINUTES – Identify section & date of HT report/Gov minutes where target was identified/reported as completed/updated or progress made		
OBSERVATIONS Record what you saw and experienced. Refer to Observations Checklist Appendix 5 Governor Visits Policy. <i>Continue on separate sheet and attach as necessary.</i> •		
Any key issues arising for governing body (Resources allocation, issues for the future, further visits) •		
Action following governing body meeting (Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)		

Signed (Governor) _____

Signed (Member of staff) _____

Date _____