



South Stanley Junior School

Governor Visits to Classrooms and Protocol Policy

Agreed: November 2018

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 headteacher who has the responsibility of the day to day management of the school.

Purposes of visit

Potential benefits

to 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 what resources are needed and prioritise them

to 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 reflection 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
- Ensure that visits are no longer than 1 hour

How to feedback after the visit

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 report to the headteacher 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?

Reporting your 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 head 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.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/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
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes eg reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls
- Enjoyment of pupils
- Behaviour
- Resources
- Safety

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 headteacher
- 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
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child
- Attend a school function or educational visit
- Positive comments, Areas that need clarification. Questions should all be reported
- Where possible all governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the headteacher.

Annual programme of visits

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

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

- Are your visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- 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 Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the headteacher and or subject coordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the proforma.
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the visit. It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the coordinator if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement 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 but **it is not appropriate to make judgements or 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.

Monitoring & Questions

Governor Monitoring can take several forms:

- Meeting with subject leaders/head of year/house/support staff
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Discussions with pupils
- Walk around the school

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for a subject
- Understand what pupils like best/least in the school
- Know the standards of achievement in a subject area
- Know what steps are being taken to improve standards
- Know how well strategic policies approved by governors are working
- To report main findings back to the full governing body

Observations to make when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and pupils
- Relationship 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 pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children's work & Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space, quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and safety regulations practiced ie fire exits kept clear

Questions

To ask pupils

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)

To ask subject leaders/co-ordinators

- What is your vision for the subject?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject?
- What are the strengths of the subject and areas for development? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this 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?

- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

In the classroom

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
Help me to understand how you plan your lessons: how do you get from the National Curriculum to deciding what Karen or Tom will be doing in Science today?	National Curriculum Key stage plan Scheme of Work Year/termly/weekly/daily plans Individual plans	
How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress?	Questioning in lessons Marking Assessments, including tests SATs Target-setting and achieving Value-added data	
What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?	ICT – access to computers Use of library Classroom library Use of basics like pens and pencils. Good labelling Borrowed resources	
How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?	Boys v. girls Most able/ SEN English as an Additional Language Badly Behaved Disabled	
How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?	Ability groups Mixed or single age groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities	
How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning?	Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters Diaries	

Communication

- How are parents kept informed of progress?
- How do you gather parents' views? Has action been taken on their views?
- What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading/writing at home?



Record form for a governor's school visit

South Stanley Junior School

Governor Visit Proforma

NAME:		Date:
Governor Responsibility:		Staff seen during visit
Focus of previous visit (if applicable);		
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):		
Links with School Improvement Plan		
Preparation/background to visit (eg reading policy, discussion with Head/teacher, LA focus)		
Information gathered during visit: (e.g. What you saw, what you learned, would you would like clarified. How long the visit lasted)		
Any key issues arising for the governing body (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)		
Action following governing body meeting (record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit e.g. training for governors)		

