



Governors Visiting the School

The King's School
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POLICY STATEMENT ON GOVERNORS VISITS TO SCHOOL

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 that assumption during a school inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms.

If school and classroom visits are done well they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

Rationale

The school will link Governors to specific departments as a way of monitoring and supporting the curriculum. This will involve individual Governors visiting the school and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss issues with the appropriate Head of Department.

A number of Governors have specific responsibilities eg Special Needs, G&T, Health and Safety. 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, eg:

- 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 and its curriculum
- 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

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.

The benefits

There are a number of benefits to both staff and the governors in carrying out 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 pupils' needs	
To recognise and celebrate success	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the School Development 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 Needs, G&T etc.	To share an understanding of the specific area

Frequency

The frequency of the visits will depend on the availability of the governors and Heads of Department and can also be determined by key policy or curriculum changes. Ideally a link governor will visit their linked department on a termly basis.

Conduct for Visits

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply 'the ground rules'. Appendix 2 provides some prompts for possible discussion points and questions for department representatives.

Before making a visit Governors will:-

- Contact the appropriate member of staff and agree a date, time and focus for the visit
- Clarify the etiquette, courtesies and expectations for the visit
- Plan which classes will be visited
- Draw up a timetable for the visit with the appropriate member of staff and ensure that all staff are aware of the visit and the expectations on them.

On the day of the visit the Governor will remember to:-

- Arrive on time and clarify the timetable with the member of staff
- Act as an observer and only participate in the class at the invitation of the teacher
- Respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting but not interfering
- Be calm and enjoy the visit

After the visit the Governor will:-

- Remember to thank the teachers and children
- Meet with the relevant staff member to give a verbal report, and to raise any issues that are pertinent
- Complete the Governor Visit Proforma, reporting on the focus of the visit (Appendix 1). The completed form should be given to the host staff member and then, after any possible alterations, the form will be circulated (via the Clerk) to the governing body.

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

Appendix 2:

LINK GOVERNOR / H.O.D. MEETINGS

If you have not already had a meeting with your linked Head of Department, and particularly if you are not from an education background, deciding on discussion topics for the first meeting may seem difficult. If you are unsure it might be as well to ask the H.o.D. to simply tell you about the department. Making the SEF the focus for the meeting will give you a powerful insight into how the department operates. However, if you would like a more structured approach the following headings with some example questions, would provide you with useful information about how a department operates. Do tell your H.o.D a little about yourself, your background and any relevant expertise you might be able offer. The exercise is also about possible help and support as much as gaining information.

Departmental Structure and Staffing: How many staff? Are they FT or PT? How much of their week do they teach in the department? Have there been many changes of staff recently?

Rooming: Is the department suited or spread around the school? Are there dedicated department rooms or do they use any general purpose teaching rooms? Do they need to book specialist areas such as halls or the ICT suite?

Resourcing: How big is their budget and how is it spent? Are there big items in the pipeline? Where and in what forms are materials kept and how do staff access them?

Timetabling: How many periods per week / fortnight do each year group get and what does the pattern look like over a student's whole time in school? Are they able to timetable all their specialist teachers or do they need to make use of non-specialists at certain times? What, if any, subjects is the department timetabled against and does this affect students' choices of options?

Syllabus / Programme of Study: What is the programme from year7 to 11? What G.C.S.E. course is taught and why was it chosen? Have there been any recent changes or developments? What courses are offered in the 6th form?

Assessment: How is assessment carried out (when, how often, what forms)? How is it recorded and disseminated?

Exam/ SAT Results: What are the highlights? What has the trend been like over the last few years? Are there any discernable patterns such as differences in boys and girls performance?