



Trustees Visiting the School

The King's School
Cadhay Lane
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Devon
EX11 1RA

POLICY STATEMENT ON TRUSTEE VISITS TO THE SCHOOL

Every Board of Trustees has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Trustees are also held to account for their own school's performance.

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that trustees 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 trustee can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and students and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms. Trustees are encouraged to attend off-site educational trips and visits when invited to do so.

If school and classroom visits are conducted effectively, they will add to trustees' understanding of their school, its staff and its students.

Rationale

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

A number of trustees have specific responsibilities e.g., Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, Gifted & Talented (G&T) provision, Health and Safety. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a reasonably regular basis.

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

- understanding the department's/functional area's self-evaluation process
- understanding the department's progress on, and challenges it is facing, implementing its development plan
- understanding the department's immediate and longer-term needs
- 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
- off-site educational visits and field trips.

By visiting the school, and becoming better informed, trustees 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 Board any matters of concern
- in a good position to support the school in its community.

It is important to note that a trustee's visit to a classroom is 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 trustees in carrying out visits:

Trustees	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff	To build a positive relationship with trustees
To have a greater understanding of students' needs	To have confidence that trustees understand students' challenges and opportunities
To recognise and celebrate success	Staff feel valued
To demonstrate that the Board of Trustees understands and is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process	Staff understand trustees' strategic role to monitor progress and achievement
To monitor the implementation of the School/Departmental Development Plan	To understand the role and responsibilities of all trustees
To increase their first-hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions	To have confidence that the Board of Trustees has accurate and current information to inform its decision making
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach	To ensure trustees understand the reality of the classroom and the school and any physical limitations the environment may place on delivering Development Plans
To understand the impact of staff resourcing and availability on the delivery of the curriculum	To ensure trustees understand the impact of their resource policy decisions on the school in terms of student learning and staff members responsible for delivering learning.
To see (1) policies and (2) schemes of work in practice	1. To understand the effectiveness of a board policy a trustee would need to gain feedback and/or observe it in action. 2. To know that trustees have observed the learning process in action.
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them, so as to inform proposals to the Board and any decisions it may take to help	To highlight the need and priority for resources
To develop links with a class, year group or subject area	To have confidence that trustees understand the reality of the classroom and the school
To develop individual trustees' roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g., Special Educational Needs, Gifted & Talented provision etc.	To share an understanding of the specific area of learning

Frequency

The aim is that a link trustee will visit their linked department/area on a termly basis and at least twice a year. It is recommended that one of the visits should coincide with the presentation of the department's Self Evaluation Form (SEF). The frequency of the visits will depend on the availability of the trustees and the member of staff concerned and can also be determined by key policy or curriculum changes.

Conduct for Visits

Trustees are making the visit on behalf of the Board of Trustees and not in a personal capacity. It is not appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

Staff should be aware that trustees are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out through the usual channels within the School.

A visit can take place in person or virtually via MS Teams. An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or to put it more simply, the "ground rules". Appendix 2 provides some prompts for possible discussion points and questions for department representatives.

Before making a visit, trustees 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
- Draw up a timetable for the visit with the appropriate member of staff including which classes/teaching areas will be visited

On the day of the visit the trustee will remember to:

- Arrive on time and confirm 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

After the visit the trustee will:

- Remember to thank the teachers and students
- Meet with the relevant staff member to give a verbal report, and to raise any issues that are pertinent
- Complete the Trustee Visit Proforma, reporting on the focus of the visit (Appendix 1). The completed draft form should be sent to the host staff member and Head Teacher and then, after any agreed amendments, the form should be sent to the Clerk of the Board who will notify the Board of Trustees and publish it on the School website.

Appendix 1:

THE KING'S SCHOOL TRUSTEE VISIT REPORT

Name of Trustee		Member of Staff & Role Title	
Date of Visit		Class / Year / Group	
Link Department or School Function			

Purpose of Visit:

Visit Notes

Summary:

Signed:	Copies to: Clerk to Trustees Headteacher Chair of C&Q	Chair of Trustees Head of Department Chair of Resources
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Appendix 2:

LINK TRUSTEE / HOD MEETINGS

If you have not already had a meeting with your linked Head of Department/Functional Lead, 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 HOD 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 HOD a little about yourself, your background and any relevant expertise you have. The exercise is also about possible help and support as much as gaining information.

SEF: What process do you follow to prepare your department's/functional area's SEF? How do you prepare your development plan? What are your department's strengths and priorities for development? How do you know that your SEF is accurate and your development plan feasible?

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? Are their sufficient qualified and suitably experienced staff available to deliver the curriculum effectively – teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff? Are staff absences an issue/have they affected lesson planning and delivery? How effectively are supply teachers used?

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 Years 7 to 11? What GCSE course is taught and why was it chosen? What courses are offered in the 6th form and why were they chosen? Have there been any recent changes or developments?

Assessment: How is assessment carried out (when, how often, in what forms)? How is it recorded and disseminated? What are the challenges facing the subject area?

Exam Results: What are the highlights? What has the trend been like over the last few years? Are there any discernible patterns such as differences: in boys' and girls' performance, the performance of students eligible for Pupil Premium etc.?

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND): What are the challenges supporting the needs of these students?