



BRIDGE & PATRICKBOURNE CEP SCHOOL

GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Key Personnel

Headteacher: James Tibbles

Chair of Governors: Matthew Jones

Key Dates

Ratified by FGB: October 2020

Date of next review: October 2023

Individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish. But they need to be able to visit from time to time in order to develop their understanding of the school to enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school. Governors should arrange their visits with the headteacher, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. It is often useful to draw up a policy on governors visits to cover things such as giving notice, constructive feedback and handling concerns. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should have a clear purpose. Visits by governors can be useful and informative. They do not replace professional inspection or the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the headteacher”.

‘A Guide to the Law for School Governors’

In order to be effective, governors need to know their school and how it works. Visiting the school during the school day is just one way governors can gain information. Other ways include reading policies, receiving information/data and of course receiving the headteacher’s reports to the governing body which will include progress reports on the implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

At Bridge & Patricxbourne CE Primary School all governors make at least one focus visit each year to the school during the school day within their role as governors. All visits are agreed and planned within governor meetings. It is important for individual governors to remember that when they visit the school, they act as representatives of the governing body, which has corporate responsibility for the overall leadership of the school.

Purposes of Governor Visits

The main purpose of any governor visit to the school is to undertake monitoring of an agreed aspect of the school. This focused monitoring is planned in advance within governor meetings and agreed by the headteacher, who is able to support effective monitoring by governors by advising on the type of monitoring activities they will undertake during their visit e.g. observation, ‘Learning Walk’, talking to pupils, talking to staff, pupil work scrutiny etc.

Visits to the school also give governors a first-hand impression of what the school is like and what goes on there and therefore give governors a context and background for discussions at governors’ meetings – something of the feel of the school and the flavour of its work that they cannot otherwise obtain. Without such first-hand impressions, the picture of the school that governors carry in their minds is liable to be based on their own schooldays rather than current reality. What governors learn from visiting the school should add to what the governing body as a whole knows about the school.

A subsidiary, but important purpose of visiting the school, is to demonstrate to staff that governors’ responsibilities are taken seriously and that governors are interested in the school and how it works during the school day. Governors have extensive powers which affect staff, and staff can reasonably expect governors to exercise these powers with a good understanding of their work and clear evidence of goodwill.

Governors must remember that visits should relate to their responsibilities as governors and capacities as individuals, and should not go beyond either. It is a part of the Head’s responsibility to manage the school from day to day and to supervise staff, in accordance with the aims, objectives and policies approved by the governing body. Moreover, to judge the quality of teaching and learning in a school is a specialist skill which non-specialists cannot exercise on the basis of a short, occasional visit. When using visits to gain information and impressions to help in the role of governor, governors do so as observers, not as inspectors. A visit gives only a glimpse or snapshot of what goes on. Governors should not assume that what is learnt at one or even several visits gives a full and balanced picture. Conclusions may be entirely valid as far as they go and governors should not reject the evidence of their own eyes and ears; but both may need to be checked with others and revised in the light of further evidence.

Governor Visits at Bridge & Patricxbourne CE Primary School

- all governors, including the staff governors, will make at least one formal visit per year to the school on behalf of the governing body. This will not include induction visits for new governors
- governors will be given the opportunity to see the school in action and monitor priorities and SMSC at the end of term 2 and term 4/5. This will include a learning walk and pupil interviews
- visits will have a clear focus linked to a curriculum subject, a school policy, an aspect of the School Development Plan, the induction of a new governor or some other specific area of the management of the school
- in the Autumn Term, the governing body will decide on a programme of visits for the following year. This will be done at committee level. The focuses will be clearly identified. Then the date and timing of specific visits will be arranged by the governor concerned, in consultation with the headteacher and other staff involved
- if a governor is going to spend time in a classroom this will be discussed with the class teacher so that both are clear how long the governor is coming for, what they are going to look at and what they are going to do
- governors should understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the headteacher
- after visits, governors should discuss their impressions and clarify any queries they may have with the headteacher and email to the headteacher, chair of governors and clerk to governors within two weeks. This will be reported back to the next meeting of the governing body or of the committee by completing a written report. The report should be a summary of main points from the visit rather than a commentary. It should also link to priorities for improvement
- the report should be shown to the headteacher and the Leader of the Governor Group before the meeting at which it is to be presented to governors. Once it has been agreed the governor should then send a copy to the clerk for distribution before the next meeting
- over the course of the year, questions from subject leaders can be asked by email and responses clarified. Please copy in the headteacher and clerk to governors when you have these communications

Key points for governors to observe when making a visit

- confirm your visit before you arrive
- gather and read in advance any relevant information
- have a clear focus and share your focus with the staff concerned. Come with at least three questions which you would like answered. Focus on school priorities (including safeguarding), aims and ethos
- be attentive
- observe confidentiality
- observe the school policy for visitors and wear a 'visitors' badge available when signing in at reception
- establish with staff what is expected of you
- talk and share your experience with the teacher and headteacher
- be prepared to give written feedback to the governing body
- when governors visit the school it is important that they do not make judgments on the quality of teaching they see and is to gain an understanding of how the school is working. The headteacher and leadership team is responsible for monitoring teaching in the school. The governors' role is to have an overview
- if any governor is unsure of any practices, procedures and educational language, then they need to ask the headteacher/deputy headteacher/relevant staff. They will direct governors to the policies which will outline the practice and define any misconceptions which may arise
- evaluate the visit yourself by asking the following questions:
 - were the objectives of the visit fulfilled?
 - was everyone involved properly prepared?
 - did you see what you wanted to see?

- what would you do differently next time?
- were there areas you would like to know more about?
- what effect has the visit had on you, the school and the governing body?

If governors have any concerns as a result of their visit, they must always raise them with the headteacher without delay.

Safeguarding Bridge & Patrixbourne Church of England Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers working in the school and having contact with children have had the appropriate supervision and level of checks including DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check if necessary. Governors who are regular visitors to school and who are not under the supervision of a member of staff who holds a full DBS Check will need to have a DBS check.

BRIDGE & PATRIBOURNE CEP SCHOOL GOVERNOR MONITORING VISIT



Name:	Date:
Purpose of Visit:	
Link to School Improvement Plan:	
Staff visited:	
Observations:	
Progress made against School Improvement Plan:	
Next Steps:	
Comments:	