

Governor Visits Policy

“Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News!”

Mark 16, 15



'Feeding Hearts and Minds'

The peace, joy and love of Christ is at the heart of all that we do in our school. Through religious education, school policy and, primarily, our culture of prayerfulness, charity and joy, we seek to share the Gospel with our families, our parish, our community and the wider world.

Using the example of Jesus Christ, we cultivate the skills of heart and mind that allow us to develop our talents and take a shared responsibility for ourselves, each other and the world He gave us. We profess our faith proudly and recognise that we are called to a loving relationship with God through the sacraments, scripture and prayer.

Our school is animated by love and our shared faith and clear values drive our behaviour and our relationships; we are tolerant and respectful of the unique value of each person. Our individual needs and talents are recognised and nurtured in a warm, inclusive environment where we are able to use our gifts for the glory of God and in loving service of others.

We have excellent role models who empower us to believe in ourselves and provide us with an outstanding education and a wide range of opportunities – our aspirations for the future are high and we believe that through God's grace we can grow, learn and realise our full potential.

INTRODUCTION

Governing boards have a statutory responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. 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 board's first-hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making. This policy will ensure that governor visits into our school and classrooms are constructive and effective and welcomed by staff and pupils.

Visits should generally relate to the responsibilities of each Governor and the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing board 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 head teacher who has the responsibility of the day to day management of the school. As a guide – visits should be planned to be an hour long.

During the restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic, 'visits' to school may be carried out remotely.

GOVERNOR VISITS INCLUDE:

- Annual departmental visits by linked governors. These may or may not include time in a classroom.
- Group or Committee visits to learn about particular aspects of the school and/or the curriculum. Again, these may include time in classrooms.
- Ad hoc meetings with staff to discuss particular issues

OTHER WAYS OF GETTING TO KNOW SCHOOL CAN INCLUDE:

- Attending school assemblies
- Attending parents' meetings and open evenings
- Talking to students informally whenever opportunities arise
- Attending staff meetings and INSET days.
- Helping with careers activities
- Helping with learning support
- Attending extra curricular concerts, drama productions, exhibitions and sporting events

PURPOSES OF VISIT

Visits are undertaken to:

- improve governing board knowledge of the school and the people that work in it
- assist the governing board in monitoring the implementation of the school development plan
- assist a governor to fulfil a specialist governor role such as inclusion assist the governing board in fulfilling its statutory duties
- assist the governing board in making informed decisions

Governors should not pursue any personal agendas or arrive with inflexible preconceived ideas.

Governors are not to make any judgements about pupils' work, behaviour, any teacher's classroom practice or issues relating to the day to day running of the school. Those are the responsibility of the headteacher.

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 reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

WHAT THE 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 FEED BACK AFTER THE VISIT

Consider:

- Governors should feed back to the head teacher in the first instance and then also to the member of staff in writing. A written report for the Governing Board must be available for the next full meeting, or committee meeting as appropriate.
- Positive comments, Areas of concern, Questions and suggestions should all be reported.
- Where possible all Governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the Head Teacher/attached to this policy.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

If there is any aspect of the visit that is worrying, you should raise it with the Headteacher first. If not satisfied with the response, it should be shared with the Chair of Governors.

ANNUAL PROGRAMME OF VISITS

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

Link governors should endeavour to visit their department at least once per year. In meeting the Head of Department it is helpful to explore:

- Recent subject performance in public examinations and pupil progress across all year groups and any issues arising, referring to published results and school assessment data as appropriate
- Current staffing and planned CPD
- Content of & progress against the current departmental improvement plan and how this contributes to the wider school agenda

- Any resource issues that impact on learning
- Any other highlights/events/successes

PREPARING FOR A VISIT

- Clarify the purpose of 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 head teacher 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 learning walk? 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 board; **it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing board.**
- 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 discreetly.
- 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.

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 and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Submit your report to the head teacher for approval.
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing board fulfil its duties?

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

- English and Maths
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

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 head teacher.
- 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.

MONITORING OF VISITS

In order to be able to share information with other governors and ensure an evidence trail for inspection purposes, governors are expected to write a report on any formal visits. Essentially, a report should simply cover the purpose, key findings and any outstanding questions or issues and would normally not be more than one side of A4 This should be agreed with those involved, and headteacher before wider circulation. Care should be taken not to include value judgements that cannot be substantiated or comments about other departments without their involvement. A pro forma is attached to this policy.

In the case of more informal visits, governors may use their discretion as to whether a report is appropriate. However, the respect and courtesy outlined in the attached guidelines should apply to all visits.

At the end of the academic year, the clerk to governors will check that all departmental visits have been completed and recorded in order to ensure that no one has been missed. Any gaps will be picked up when governor link roles are agreed for the following year.

EVALUATION OF VISITS

This will be done in a number of ways.

- Individual governors or committees involved in specific visits should evaluate if the visit achieved its objectives and was time well spent and adjust future visits accordingly
- As a governing board, the overall value of visits should be reviewed at the start of the academic year and changes made to the plans for the new year The full governing board should ask these key questions:
 - Are our visits helping us achieve our priorities?
 - Have there been any unexpected benefits?
 - Are there any repeated concerns/issues that need to be addressed?
 - How can we make the policy and practice even better?
- Governor visits should be reflected in the school self evaluation process as evidence of governor involvement and a contributor to their informed evaluation of the school.

APPENDIX A

GOVERNOR MONITORING

Governor monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with subject leader
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school

AIMS:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for the subject
- To understand what pupils like best/least in the subject
- To know the standards achieved in the subject
- To know what steps are being taken to improve the subject area
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Board

This year we would like to invite governors who are visiting subject leaders to participate in a Learning Walk. This should take up to 30 minutes.

During the Learning Walk you can expect the subject leader to speak with you about areas listed below.

Please raise questions if you need clarification or more information. Ideally the Learning Walk should take place while the children are in class.

Pupil interviews: (suggested questions to ask a small group of children when walking around the classroom/s). These questions will help you gain an understanding of pupil attitudes toward the subject.

- 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 doing in (select curriculum area being monitored).

Key questions for discussion with subject leader (Foundation Subjects)

- What is your vision for the subject?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the subject?(This question is mainly for English, maths, science and ICT. Other subjects may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection).
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the 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?
- Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching the subject?

APPENDIX B.

THINGS TO OBSERVE WHEN VISITING A CLASSROOM

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships 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 the pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children’s work
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise,
- Equality of opportunity apparent?
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR GOVERNORS TO ASK (ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS)

The full governing board retains the responsibility for raising standards of English and Maths. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in English or maths can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing board's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as English/maths governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/maths across the school. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on a school visit – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/maths?
 - Compared to similar schools?
 - In relation to the national rates of increase?
 - In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- How do our results in English/maths compare with those in other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between?
 - Girls and boys
 - Pupils with special educational needs
 - Very able pupils
 - Pupils with English as an additional language and the others
 - The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

In meetings with the English/maths coordinator can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:

- Key stage 1 and 2 test results
- The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average
- Other evidence – special needs
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily English/maths lessons?
- How have Individual Provision Mapping plans been adapted to support children in their daily English/maths lessons?

Management of the subject

- How is the role of the English/maths coordinator developing?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have?
- (English) Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using the library? What links does the school have with the local library?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/mathematics?

Communication

- How are parents kept informed of progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?

APPENDIX D

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
RECORD OF A DELEGATED GOVERNOR VISIT TO THE SCHOOL - FORMAL



NAME:	
DATE:	
DELAGATED GOVERNOR ROLE:	
FOCUS OF VISIT, LINKS WITH THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
AREAS AND SUMMARY OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES. INCLUDING DEPARTMENTS OR AREAS OF SCHOOL VISITED, STAFF AND PUPILS THAT THE GOVERNOR MET DURING THE VISIT:	
OBSERVATIONS, COMMENTS, QUESTIONS ASKED, AND ANSWERS REPORTED TO THE GOVERNOR: (ensure this section contains the constructive challenge and accountability against the required governance statutory responsibilities and functions.)	
COMMENTS ON SAFEGUARDING CULTURE OBSERVED DURING VISIT: (e.g. in relation to KCSIE part 2 and Child Protection policy)	
QUESTIONS I WOULD LIKE TO RAISE AT THE BOARD MEETING: (Max. 3)	
ACTIONS FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER OR CLARIFICATIONS NEEDED:	
IMPACT OF THE VISIT AND FOLLOW UP NEXT VISIT PLANNED FOCUS:	
SIGNED:	
MEETING TO BE CONSIDERED AT:	

APPENDIX E

**THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
RECORD OF A DELEGATED GOVERNOR VISIT TO THE SCHOOL - INFORMAL**



NAME:	
DATE:	
FOCUS OF VISIT: (Event, celebration, parents evening, function)	
OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS BY GOVERNOR: (e.g. what you saw; what you learned, behaviour, stakeholder interaction / engagement, safeguarding)	
HOW WILL THIS REPORT BE CONSIDERED AT THE BOARD MEETING? (e.g. verbal feedback, raised as a question)	
SIGNED:	



Governor Visits Policy

March 2021

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by Kelly Hannah in consultation with The Governing Board

This policy will be reviewed as appropriate by The Governing Board.

Intended Policy Review Date – March 2023

Approved by: _____ (Headteacher)

Date: _____

Approved by: _____ (Governor)

Date: _____