



St Peter's Brafferton Cof E (VA) Primary School Governor School Visits Policy

Purpose of Policy

The governing body has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the school and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis but all governor visits should be focussed and relate to the priorities in the School Improvement Plan. Governors should report back their findings in writing, thus helping the whole governing body to make more informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the School Development Plan (SDP) and informing strategic decision making.

The Headteacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and SDP to be covered each term or half term, depending on the needs of the school. The policy and protocol for school visits by governors is formulated in consultation with the staff.

Annual programme of visits

The governing body will organise an annual programme of visits with the help of the Headteacher. These should be spread throughout the year, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per half term. In addition, new governors will make a general introductory visit of the school as part of their induction programme.

Purpose of visit

The focus of a visit could relate to any policy in place in the school, e.g. teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, collective worship. It could also focus on particular areas, such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class in relation to progress and attainment.

Potential benefits

to governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff
- To build an effective relationships with the staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work
- To get to know the students
- To familiarise with different teaching styles
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To identify and prioritise resource needs

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 or support

What a visit is not about

- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the Headteacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns

Protocols for visits

Governors should, with the guidance of the whole governing body and head teacher, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus upon. This will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team.

When organising and conducting a visit governors will be courteous and considerate, respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the head and staff, they will confirm in advance with the Headteacher the date, timing and focus of each visit. This will include agreeing what will be observed, whom it would be useful to talk to and agreeing any protocols to be observed whilst in the school. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/ guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit. Governors visiting cannot make personal judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body. They will discuss their observations with the Headteacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body on the visit.

See annex (i) for good practice when visiting a school and annex (ii) for the form to record and report on visits.

- Teachers and support staff will be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.
- They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits to ensure that they are productive, realistic and achievable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors.

Questions will be invited from governors whilst being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See annex (iii) for examples of questions which governors could ask. Although they are focused on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions are relevant to other areas.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact.

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the monthly meeting of the governing body. At the final meeting of each academic year (July) the Link Governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. The Governing Body will evaluate the extent to which visits have informed whole governing body understanding of the school's work. Staff governors will feed back from colleagues and describe the extent to which staff's understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

The governing body can then consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?
- Does evidence demonstrate a commitment by staff to delivering high quality teaching?
- Are opportunities for learning being maximised and developed in line with childrens needs, interests and abilities?

and make changes to the policy and protocol that may be required.

Date established by governing body...Sept 2017.....
Date for full implementation.....Sept 2017.....
Date for next review.....Sept 2020.....

Annex (i)

Formal Governor School Visits - Good Practice

The following sections list examples of good practice.

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 well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, 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 if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely. Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- 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, do not interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Do not lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After the visit

- 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.
- Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the Headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- 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 of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity and also to obtain the staff members signature. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Bring this report to the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting and give a summary of what was monitored and what were the findings and plan for moving forward with next steps.

Annex (ii) GOVERNOR MONITORING VISITS TO ST PETERS BRAFFERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

NAME AND ROLE OF GOVERNOR	
DATE & TIME OF VISIT	DURATION
STAFF/CLASS/AREA VISITED	

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOCUS OF VISIT

Which key priorities of the school are relevant to this visit (Pre-discussion with HT please)

- a)
- b)
- c)

MONITORING FOCUS (INCLUDING SUPPORTING EVIDENCE WHERE POSSIBLE)

What did you see/monitor?

Who did you talk to?

What impressed you?

What do you want to find out more about?

ACTIONS

Who did you discuss your findings/monitoring obs with? (class teacher,HT,other staff members)

Agreed next steps and dates

Signed and dated by Gov and staff involved with monitoring visit

