

Newton Tony CE VC Primary School

Governor Visits Policy

Policy agreed

April 2017

Policy review

April 2018

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One of the key roles and responsibilities for the Governing Body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. Undertaking visits which focus on an aspect of the School Improvement Plan or one of the Governors' statutory duties demonstrates the Governors' role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress. Each Governor is encouraged to make at least one visit a year during school time and governors will often monitor an area of the School Development Plan in pairs in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Visits enable Governors to:

- See the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements
- Get to know the staff and demonstrate their commitment to the school
- Give active support to the staff and the activities of the school
- Be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning
- Evaluate resources and discuss with staff further requirements
- Gain first hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking
- Work in partnership with the staff

Before making a visit Governors will:

- Contact the Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher
- 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 Headteacher to give a verbal report, and to raise any issues that arose
- Complete the Governor Visit Proforma, reporting on the focus. The completed form should be given to the Headteacher and then, after any possible alterations, the form will be circulated to the governing body and staff
- Governors must report without giving opinions and where possible individuals should not be able to be identified.

It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgements should not be made arbitrarily. The visit is not about:

- Inspection
- Making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on your own children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- Arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas

Governors are an important part of the school team and are welcomed into the school by staff. It is important that Governors remember to respect the professionals and the children, support the Headteacher and the staff, and acknowledge that they represent the full Governing Body. If the

agreed principles and procedures are followed then Governor Visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the Governing Body, which will contribute to school improvement.

Points to Consider:

What is the purpose of the visit?
What has prompted my decision to visit?
Who has prompted my decision to visit?
Is the reason specific or general?
What are my/other people's expectations?
How can my visit benefit the teacher?

How shall I carry it out?
What particular areas of the school am I interested in?
What particular activities am I interested in?
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
What questions should I ask?
Who should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?
To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
Which of my questions did I answer?
To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?

Is there any follow-up?
Have I recorded my experiences?
Did I 'report back' to the head and staff?
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
How can I build on this for the next visit?

Providing feedback

It is important that a time is agreed between yourself and the class teacher to discuss the lesson you have taken part in or observed. During this feedback you might refer to notes you have made. The structure might include:

1. Asking the teacher for any further clarification of the lesson or for their views on how it went.
2. Giving your own impressions on what you saw
3. Providing any positive comment.
4. Raising any issues that appeared to develop.
5. Any further questions you might have
6. A summary of the feedback you will be giving to the governing body.

At the end of the feedback both you and the teacher should be clear about what you will be sharing with the governing body- there should be no surprises!

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Governor Visit Report

Name	
Date of Visit	
Focus of Visit	
Classes / Staff Visited	
Summary of activities, e.g. observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch, etc.	
What I learned as a result of my visit	
Positive comments about the focus	
Aspects I would like clarified / questions I have	
Ideas for future visits	
Any other comments	

Monitoring the School Improvement Plan

Focus Area in SIP:	
Source of evidence of progress:	Comment and impact

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Guidance

The Governing Body at Newton Tony Primary School, has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in the classroom. Although their role is strategic, it is important that they have some understanding of the practicalities of the job. Meeting children, talking to staff and seeing lessons underway will help members of the Governing Body to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.

Objectives

The Governing Body should aim to:

- Inform their decision-making by having visited at least one lesson during the year.
- Be aware of the feelings of members of staff and the issues they face by having had a more lengthy discussion with at least one member of staff during the year.
- Read and keep up-to-date with school newsletters and other documents that are sent out.
- Keep up-to-date with their nominated class, introduce themselves and spend time discussing the school with some of the children from the class.

The key questions should be:

- Has every Governor visited at least one lesson during the year?
- Has each Governor made links with their allocated class?
- Has every Governor had a conversation with the subject leader they are linked to?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in this policy?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make policy and practice even better?

The benefits of visiting classrooms

Closer links between Governors and teachers has potential benefits to both.

For governors these include:-

- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice.
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children.
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names.
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed.

For Teachers these include:-

- Opportunity to find out more about the role of the Governor.
- Having chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice.
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise.
- Opportunity to reflect upon practice through discussion.

What to avoid

It is important for all parties to note that governors' visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve governors making a judgement about teaching in any official capacity. That remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and other education professionals. It might be wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. It can cause discomfort for everyone. They should also be aware of 'pursuing personal agendas' and make sure they fulfil the code of conduct as it is outlined here.

Please remember that members of staff are busy and first priority must be the children. There may be times when arrangements have to be changed or alterations made. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations. No two days are ever the same. Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don't expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood. By all means ask questions (preferably at the end of the lesson) but be sensitive to the extra demands of differentiation and inclusion that teachers now face.

Ground Rules

	Always	Never
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange details of visit. • Agree purpose of visit • Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed. • Agree role within the lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up unannounced
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep to the role agreed • Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over • Please remember confidentiality • Stick to the times and purpose agreed • Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume a different role • Walk in with a clipboard • Interrupt the teacher • Distract the pupils from their task
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the teacher and the pupils • Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience • Feedback to the governing body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave without acknowledgement • Break rules of confidentiality

Conducting the observations

After planning your visit with the class teacher or subject coordinator you might have agreed to:

- take part in a lesson acting as classroom helper during your visit
- do a formal observation - taking no immediate role other than talking to the children about what they are doing
- work with a small group
- introduce yourself to your linked class and answer any of their questions
- meet with the class teacher or coordinator to discuss particular issues or set the context
- observe - focussing on an agreed area/issue that the class teacher would like some feedback on e.g. the involvement of a particular group of pupils.

Please remember that observations do not require judgement on the teacher. It might also be useful to clarify some 'what ifs' beforehand. For example:-

- What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
- What if a pupil asks me how to do something?
- What if I have a suggestion to make?

The Governors' visits to classrooms pro forma should be completed as soon as possible after the visit. It should reflect the discussion you have had with the teacher. The report should be copied to:

- The Headteacher
- The subject leader
- The teacher concerned
- The clerk to the governors