

## **Governors' visits to school.**

### ***Purpose***

To provide a framework for governors to make focused visits to schools so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work. Governors will observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees to make better-informed judgments about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school improvement plan. This process will enable the governing body to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff and to identify further areas for development.

***It is not about*** making judgments on the quality of teaching, that is the head teacher's responsibility. Nor is it about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas.

Teachers will contribute to the production of this policy and will be consulted at least annually on its impact.

### ***Other relevant policies***

The focus of a visit could be on any policy in place in the school e.g. teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, collective worship, race equality.

***The governing body will***, with the help of the head teacher and staff, organise a schedule of visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per term. Visits may be conducted in pairs. The head teacher will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and school improvement plan priorities and targets to be covered each term.

***Individual governors/pairs of governors*** will, with the guidance of the whole governing body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus upon. This will enable individual governors to develop a deeper understanding of a subject, a policy or policies, or a year group. They will focus on areas where they have an interest or expertise. The aim will be for them to get to know an aspect of the school really well, increasing their confidence and knowledge. It will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team.

See annex (i) for a possible format to record governors' 'specialisms'.

When organising and conducting a visit they will be courteous and considerate, at all times respecting the professional roles of the head teacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the head and staff, they will confirm with the head teacher the date, timing and focus of each visit at least one week in advance. This will include agreeing what will be observed and whom it would be

useful to talk to. 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. They will discuss their observations with the head teacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body on the visit.

See annex (ii) for a possible format for recording and reporting on visits.

**Teachers and support staff** will at all times 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 and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors.

See annex (iii) for a list of things which governors could examine/explore.

Relevant national and local guidance for their specialist area(s), for example the national material prepared for literacy and numeracy governors, any LEA guidance for the ICT governor etc., will be shared with their link governor. Whenever practical they will invite their link governors to relevant staff meetings and INSETs.

Questions will be invited from governors whilst being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See annex (iv) for examples of questions which could be asked. 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 termly meeting of the governing body. At the final meeting of each academic year the Link Governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. By reviewing the minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed, the Governing Body will judge the extent to which the information gathered informed whole governing body understanding of progress towards priorities and targets. Teacher governors will feed back from colleagues. They will identify what worked well and what if anything needs to be reconsidered. They will be asked to describe the extent to which their understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

Date established by governing body.....  
Date for full implementation.....  
Date for next review.....

**Annex (i) Specialist Roles for Governors.**

<b>Governor (s)</b>	<b>Role</b>
	Numeracy
	Literacy
	Science
	ICT
	PSHE/citizenship
	Other curriculum areas (specify)
	SEN
	Early Years
	Target setting, tracking pupil progress
	Home-school partnership Home-school agreement
	Pupil welfare
	Inclusion
	Link Governor –Induction and support of governors

## Annex (ii) Record of Governor's Visit to School.

Name	Date
Purpose of visit (Previously agreed by the governing body with the head teacher)	
Links with the School Development Plan (How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Development Plan?)	
Governor observations and comments (Eg. what did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)	
Any key issues arising for the governing body (Eg. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy)	
Action following governing body meeting (Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)	

Contributed to the National Training Programme for New Governors by the Advisory and Inspection Service, West Sussex County Council.

## **Annex (iii) When visiting a classroom**

### **Governors could observe:**

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils – attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm – 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 (high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

Based on guidance produced by Gloucestershire Governor Training Section

## **Annex (iv) English and Maths: Questions for Governors**

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and numeracy. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in literacy or numeracy can help to ensure that literacy issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as Literacy/Numeracy Governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/maths across the school.

Discuss with your head teacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your job, in partnership with the head teacher, is to provide a link between your governing body, its committees and the staff of your school.

### ***Achievements and attitudes***

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/maths?
  - ⇒ Compared to similar schools?
  - ⇒ With the national rates of increase?
  - ⇒ With 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/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
  - ⇒ Any other groups e.g. traveller families
- 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
  - ⇒ A range of pupils' work - average, below average and above average
  - ⇒ Other evidence.

### **Special Needs**

- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy lessons?
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their daily literacy/maths lessons?

### **Management of the subject.**

- How is the role of the English/maths coordinator developing?
- Does the school development plan match the identified needs?
- What is the allocation of funding to English for this financial year?
- How has it or will it be spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- What further training do teachers and support staff need?
- How much additional adult support does each class have?
- What was the outcome of the local authority's literacy/numeracy monitoring visit?
- 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? (English).
- How does the school use all its resources ( books, materials and displays as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

### **Communication**

- How are parents kept informed about pupil progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?
- How are governors kept informed about standards and progress of pupils?
- How do governors celebrate the school's success when things go well?

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