



All Saints Carshalton, Church of England Primary School

Policy for Governors' Visits to the School

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GENERAL ADVICE ON GOVERNORS' VISITS

Visits to school by governors during the time that the school is in operation give them insights that they can acquire in no other way. If governors are to carry out their strategic, monitoring, executive and accountability roles they need to have an understanding of the way schools work and a feel for the dynamics of their particular school. There is no better way of gaining this information than by visiting the working school. Governors visit their schools in many different guises. These range from the informal to more formal visits taken on behalf of the governing body. The advice below refers, in the main, to the latter.

INTRODUCTION

All governors, whether appointed by the Church, the local authority, or Academy Trust, elected by the parents or the staff of a school, or co-opted by the governing body, bring a particular and valid perspective to the role of governor. It is important to ground an individual's perspective in a sound knowledge of the school as a whole. Reading the school prospectus/website and other information and statistics is a useful starting point, but cannot be a substitute for first-hand knowledge; that is, a visit to the school during "working" hours. School visits are a vital component of being an effective school governor and should be planned in accordance with the School's agreed policy or protocol.

CONDUCT OF VISITS

The main reasons for governors to make visits are:

- to learn about the school
- to contribute to the governing body's monitoring role
- to show those employed at the school that they are interested.

Although governors are a part of the school community, they nevertheless visit schools as guests. It is therefore important to remember to observe normal courtesy, not only out of politeness but so as not to cause a nuisance to those who are engaged in their jobs.

A visit may have a specific focus. For example, a link governor may centre their visit around one of the following areas:

- a particular Year Group or Key Stage
- a particular curriculum area
- a particular aspect of the building
- an administrative function.

A brief feedback to the governing body on any visits would be a useful way of ensuring that governors have a broad understanding of different areas of school life.

WAYS OF ORGANISING A VISIT

INITIAL VISITS

The governing body should expect all new governors to undertake an initial visit to the school to meet the headteacher, some of the staff and become familiar with the building. They should be introduced to their link class and teacher. For many governors this may be the first time they have been inside a school since their own school days. They should be accompanied either by the head or an experienced governor.

SUBSEQUENT VISITS

To gain the maximum benefits, visits should have a purpose, be planned systematically and be reported back briefly to the whole Governing Body.

At All Saints, governors are linked to a subject area or class. This builds effective links between the School and Governing Body and helps governors, to understand the process of Teaching and Learning more effectively.

SCHOOL VISITS - AN AIDE MEMOIRE

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 teacher and staff?
What will be my feedback for the next Governing Body?
How can I build on this for the next visit?

CHECKLIST FOR VISITING YOUR SCHOOL

Do:

- negotiate a mutually convenient time with the linked teacher who will pass the date on to the Head teacher
- thank the teacher, Head teacher etc. at the end of the visit
- give praise where it is due
- make a point of listening rather than talking
- dress appropriately
- include a 'debriefing' session with the Head teacher or member of the senior management team if there are any concerns that arise from your visit
- be polite, tactful and sensitive
- avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an OFSTED inspection, SATs, the first and last weeks of term, unless specifically requested to attend
- visit at different times of the day, term, year
- try to attend any special occasions, especially if regular daytime visits are difficult
- try to attend when you have been specifically invited
- go in as a helper where appropriate and possible
- do remember you are there to learn and not to judge

Don't:

- go in like an inspector
- sit at the back, writing notes
- go in unannounced
- interfere with the organisation of the class
- try to talk to the teacher while they are teaching - wait until the end of the session
- criticise the performance of a teacher, even in a constructive manner, during your visit
- make promises to staff on behalf of the governing body

GOVERNOR VISITS FORM

Name:	Date of visit:
Purpose of visit:	
Links with the School Improvement Plan/OFSTED actions/School's self-evaluation:	
Governor observations and comments:	
Key issues arising for the governing body: (Discussions, actions, further evidence required, clarification of policy, implications for future visits)	
Action following governing body meeting: (Record any actions agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)	