



# Governor Visits to School Policy



Stour Federation

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy was written and agreed in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, the Governing Body and the staff of The Stour Federation.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Federated Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its policies and evaluate the effectiveness of each school and its curricula. Governors are also held to account for their own school performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.
- 2.2 One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms. If school and classroom visits are done well they will add to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.
- 2.3 This policy has drawn on other schools' policies and on recommendations from Headteachers and Governors. It also includes a sample Governors' Visits report pro-forma which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OFSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It will not, however, form part of any other evidence base, e.g. a member of staff's Performance Management.
- 2.4 Visits will be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to assist the Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory duties, its role in monitoring and evaluation and to improve its understanding of the school to ensure informed decision making.

## **3. AIMS OF THE POLICY**

- 3.1 The policy aims to ensure: -
- That Governors are fully conversant with their duties in relation to School Visits;
  - That teachers fully understand the purpose of Governor Visits;
  - That all involved understand how these visits fit into the statutory and strategic purpose of the Governing Body;
  - That all involved fully understand what a Governor will and will not do;
  - That all involved know what will happen following a Governor visit and how information will be used;
  - That all involved will understand how the success of this policy will be measured.

## **4. PURPOSE OF GOVERNOR VISITS**

- 4.1 Visits are undertaken to: -
- Improve Governing Body knowledge of the school and the people that work in it;
  - Assist the Governing Body in monitoring the implementation of each school's Learning Improvement Plan (LIP);
  - Assist a Governor to fulfill a specialist Governor role such as SEN;
  - Assist the Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory duties including monitoring and evaluation;
  - Assist the Governing Body in making informed decisions.
- 4.2 Governors will not pursue and personal agendas or arrive with inflexible preconceived ideas.
- 4.3 Governors will not just visit their own child's class on official Governor visits.
- 4.4 Governors will not make any judgements about pupil's 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 Senior Leadership Team.

## **5. PLANNING THE VISIT**

- 5.1 Visits will be undertaken as part of a strategic programme formally organised by the Governing Body or one of its committees and with approval of the Executive Headteacher. Frequency of visits will depend on the complexity of the areas of responsibility allocated to them and the availability of appropriate staff and timetabling.
- 5.2 The Executive Headteacher and Associate Headteachers will be kept informed of, and agree, the subsequent details of the planned visit. At least one week's notice of a visit will be provided to teachers.
- 5.3 If the visit is to involve any member of staff, then that member of staff will be fully involved in the planning through the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 5.4 The Governor(s) making the visit will make themselves fully acquainted with Health and Safety procedures, including fire safety, prior to the visit.

## **6. DURING THE VISIT**

- 6.1 Governors will at all times report to reception upon arrival and follow the procedure for visitors in order to provide a good example for other visitors.
- 6.2 If visiting a classroom, the Governor will arrive at the time planned to avoid disrupting the learning and follow the agreed purpose of the visit.

- 6.3 Governors must be aware that some teachers may feel nervous or stressful about having a visitor in the classroom.
- 6.4 At the end of the visit Governors will thank everyone concerned, including the children.
- 6.5 Governors should be aware of their behaviour and avoid any implication that they are inspecting, such as by using a clipboard.

## **7. FOLLOWING THE VISIT**

- 7.1 After visiting the school the Governor(s) will: -
1. Give some time and thought to reflection;
  2. Write a note of thanks to all staff visited;
  3. Consider what went well and what did not go so well with respect to their involvement in the visit;
  4. Consider what they would do differently in a future visit;
  5. Using the pro-forma, draft a brief description commentating on what was seen in the session relative to the agreed purpose- and agree the contents of this with the staff involved, prior to passing onto the Executive Headteacher or Associate Headteacher;
  6. Document shared with Senior Leadership Team;
  7. Monitoring of outcomes shared with Governors.
- 7.2 Following completion of the agreed monitoring programme the Governor will report back to the Governing Body or committee as appropriate.

## **8. MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE POLICY**

- 8.1 The success of this policy will be measured by the following:

The extent to which: -

- Governors become involved in visits to each school;
- Governors make more informed decisions;
- Staff feel comfortable with Governors' involvement in each school;
- Governors feel more involved in each school;
- Governors can demonstrate an enhanced understanding of each school's strengths and weaknesses, needs and priorities.

## Guidelines for Visits

Governors visit their school to enhance their understanding of the school's work and to help fulfill their responsibilities of monitoring and evaluating the school.

The purpose of each visits by Governors to the school will reflect the priorities in the Learning Improvement Plan (LIP) and the specific interests and responsibilities of Governors. Commentaries from visits will be kept together for reference purposes in the Associate Headteacher's office and not kept privately by members of the Governing Body.

	ALWAYS	NEVER
<b>BEFORE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree purpose of visit.</li> <li>• Agree how much time (a timetable is a good idea).</li> <li>• Agree when you will discuss the visit with the member of staff.</li> <li>• Consider practicalities (dress, parking, time of arrival, who to report to, signing in procedure, how to make notes, breaks and lunch)</li> <li>• Find out how each teacher wants you to contribute (or not) e.g. Do you join in the lesson?</li> <li>• Share your pro-forma and checklist with the teacher and explain how you will use it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn up unannounced or late.</li> <li>• Fail to sign in.</li> <li>• Insist on a visit if a member of staff states that it is inconvenient.</li> </ul>
<b>DURING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree how you will introduce yourself to staff and pupils with the teacher (but be concise).</li> <li>• Agree with the teacher how s/he wants to use you in the classroom e.g. helping a child who has difficulty etc.</li> <li>• Agree when/how you will ask questions to increase understanding.</li> <li>• Remain focused on the purpose of the visit.</li> <li>• Respect teachers' rights to take a break.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk in with a clipboard.</li> <li>• Arrive with preconceived ideas.</li> <li>• Interrupt the teacher.</li> <li>• Make professional judgements about staff expertise (Governors are not inspectors).</li> <li>• Pursue your own personal agenda/focus on the progress of your own child or others known to you.</li> <li>• Monopolise the children's or the staff's time.</li> <li>• Never enter the staff room uninvited.</li> </ul>
<b>AFTER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the teacher and pupils.</li> <li>• Discuss visit with the teacher and share any insights.</li> <li>• Write a thank you note to the teacher and pupils.</li> <li>• Draft a commentary (using the pro-forma)</li> <li>• Share the report with the teacher, Associate Headteacher and Executive Headteacher</li> <li>• Prepare to provide a verbal report at the Governing Body should this be necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass on your commentary without discussing it with the teacher.</li> <li>• Leave without a word.</li> <li>• Raise issues with others before discussing with the teacher involved.</li> </ul>

**Governor Visits Checklist**

This will be dependent on the purpose of the visit but the following could be considered: -

**Relationships**

- Is there a pleasant and purposeful learning atmosphere?
- Are the children engaged and motivated?
- Is there an atmosphere of mutual respect where self-esteem is promoted?
- Are all learners valued?
- Are effective behaviour strategies implemented, e.g. praise, rewards, house points?

**Learning**

- Is the lesson interactive with the children as active rather than passive learners? (examples include the use of questioning from teacher and pupils, talk partners, role play, interactive games etc.)
- Is there a range of activities - differentiated for different groups?
- Are there sufficient and appropriate resources?
- Are Teaching Assistants and other adults used effectively?
- Does classroom organisation promote independence? (examples include organising their own equipment).

**Learning Environment**

- Is the classroom organised so that all children can be involved in the lesson? (e.g. Can all see the screen and whiteboard, teacher etc?)
- Is equipment easily accessible for the children?
- Is the noise level appropriate to the activity?
- Are the displays attractive and useful for the learner? (Ask "Do they move the learning forward?") N.B. Wall displays are primarily to promote learning, not to celebrate work produced earlier. This is done mostly in the corridors, class books shared spaces. More children's work will be on display in Reception and Key Stage 1 classrooms than in Key Stage 2.
- You may wish to consider health and safety and the state of cleanliness/decoration.

**LIP Targets**

The following may be observable: -

- Target groups working with the teacher or other adult.
- Use of Assessment for Learning, e.g. self and peer assessment.
- Use of split screen objectives- Learning Intention, Success Criteria, Learning Muscle to be stretched.

Governor Visits Record Pro-Forma

GOVERNOR COMMENTARY ON SCHOOL VISIT

GOVERNOR:

STAFF/CLASS VISITED:

PURPOSE OF VISIT: (agreed with the Governing Body and Leadership Team)

LINKS WITH LIP:

GOVERNOR OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS:

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT:

ACTIONS OR QUESTIONS ARISING:

Governor Signature..... Date.....
Copies to.....