

## **Threemilestone School**

### **Governor Visits Policy 2016**

#### *Safeguarding*

*Threemilestone School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children.  
We expect all our team members to share this commitment.*

## **Developing an Effective Governor Visits Policy**

The governing body has a statutory duty to oversee the policies and direction of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance.

Visiting the school is not a statutory requirement but can be extremely important in learning how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing self evaluation and strategic decision making. It is recognised that the amount of time that a governor can commit to a visit will vary but in general governors should expect to make at least one visit a year.

Governors Visits should generally align to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Plan so that the governing body can monitor how these are progressing. The governing body should develop a plan of visits throughout the year to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose.

Many governors worry about making a visit to school and particularly about visiting a classroom. Therefore, whilst it is not a statutory requirement, it is recommended that the governing body formulate a policy and protocols in consultation with the staff for schoolvisits, which suggest how the visit should be conducted that allows governors and staff to gain the most from the visit

Governors should arrange their visits with the headteacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

The following elements should be considered:

### **Purposes of a visit**

The potential benefits

to governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success

- To get to know the staff
- To show themselves as part of the school
- To improve knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
- To monitor and assess the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan and observe policies in action
- To assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties and demonstrate their role as critical friend
- To develop an understanding of issues facing the school to inform decision making
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

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

### **What a visit is not about**

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

### **Protocols or ground rules for visits**

This policy has been agreed by the governing body after consultation with the staff.

### **Annual programme of visits**

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the headteacher. Visits should be planned on areas of the priorities that have been identified within the school plan. Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to see what areas/activities receive visits and those that do not.

Visits can take the form of

- Meeting with staff
- Pupil interviews
- Looking at pupils work
- Meeting with staff groups
- Reviewing areas and resources of the school

## **Monitoring and review of school visit policy**

The policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

## **Formal School Visits - Good Practice**

The following sections list examples of good practice. The opposite of each, could feature in a 'never' column.

### **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 the agenda with the headteacher well in advance and seek approval for your visit and agree a date that is suitable.
- Discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? Would note taking be allowed? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Arrange to spend some of the visit talking to the relevant school Minister.
- 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/class teacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
- Ensure that you are familiar with health and safety procedures

### **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.
- Remember you are there to learn, it is a visit not an inspection.
- 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.
- 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.
- Listen to staff and pupils, be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

### **After**

- 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, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Complete the visit proforma. Share with the report with the teacher and headteacher and agree factual accuracy before sharing the report with other governors via Merlin or Skydrive.
- Discuss your observations with the headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board. If you are reflecting the views of others in your report this should be clearly stated.
- 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

- Use the governor visit template form to record your visit
- Circulate a draft to the teacher and headteacher as soon as possible after the visit for them to check for accuracy. Be prepared to amend it to correct factual errors. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- The report can then be shared with other governors via Merlin or Skydrive

## Visit Focus'

Visits should be arranged which focus on the school improvement plan priorities to inform on progress. Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Additional educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- Lunch and breaktimes
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture or ICT equipment
- Deployment of staff, e.g. caretaker, office staff, teaching assistants
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

## Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the school. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the headteacher
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- To help in a class
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child
- Attending a school function or educational visit
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor

**Things you might consider when visiting a classroom – relate this to the focus of the visit and in your discussions with the headteacher or member of staff**

Relationship between staff and pupils

Relationships between pupils

Variety of teaching styles

Availability and role of support staff

Behaviour and attitude of pupils — does this match the policy, are they attentive, encouraged, motivated, listening, questioning, responding, rewarded?

Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils

How the pupils are grouped

How different abilities are catered for

Children's work

Displays, is the school attractive

Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)

Environment and working conditions, what is the school like to work in? is this a good place to work and play? What are the good points? What can be improved

Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
Author

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
Headteacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of Governing Body

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of Teaching and Learning Committee

**Ratified at Full Governing Body Meeting:**

**Date of next review:**