

Halstead CP School

Governor Visits Policy



Reviewed and approved by the FGB

Signed :
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1. Context of the Policy

“Individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish. However, they do need to be able to visit from time to time to develop their understanding of the school. These visits enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school.

“Governors should arrange their visits with the Head Teacher, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

“The Governing Body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work, and each visit should have a clear purpose. These visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the Head Teacher”.¹

2. Aims of the Policy

To outline the principles involved in Governors visiting the school, to highlight the importance of these visits, to get to know the school, and to gather information on behalf of the full Governing Body in order to enable it to carry out its statutory responsibilities and assist governors in making informed collective decisions. This policy should be read in conjunction with the guidance document on conducting visits to the school.

3. Purpose of Governor Visits

Governors may visit the school for a number of reasons, such as meetings with staff, interview panels, in their rôle monitoring a particular subject, team meetings or full Governing Body meetings, or visits specifically focussed on other areas.

Visits to the school are undertaken by Governors to

- improve governing body knowledge of the school and the people who work in it
- assist the governing body in monitoring the implementation of the School Plan
- assist an individual governor to fulfil a specialist rôle
- assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties
- assist the governing body in making informed decisions.

It is the policy of the Governing Body that Governors do not visit the school to make any judgements about issues relating to the day-to-day responsibilities of the Head Teacher in running the school, or arrive with any personal agenda or inflexible ideas, but instead come with the intention to collect information on behalf of the Governing Body related to school development and school improvement.

¹ A Guide to the Law for School Governors (April 2009): 3⁹⁻¹⁰

4. Planned Programme of Governor Visits

Visits to the school are planned and undertaken as part of monitoring and development programme linked to school improvement; they are formally planned by the governing body or one of its teams, and agreed by the Head Teacher, who arranges the subsequent details of the focussed visit, including involving the SLT and any staff who may need to be consulted, and briefing the governor beforehand.

Each Governor has a role linked to a specific curriculum area, and will aim to make two monitoring visits each academic year related to that area. A monthly schedule of formal governor visits to the school, whether linked to a subject, or a wider aspect of the curriculum, will be agreed at each main meeting of the Governing Body with reference to the priorities in the school plan.

5. Feedback and follow-up of Governor Visits

Following completion of the agreed monitoring visit each Governor will debrief with the Head Teacher. The governor will then report back to the governing body (or relevant Team) by completing a Governor Visit Report form, which will be seen first by the Head Teacher and the member(s) of staff involved.

6. Links to other policies

School policies are available on school website along with Safeguarding Children at HCPS Leaflet which all visitors must acknowledge.

See Appendix 1 - Governor Visits conduct and guidance

7. Consultation & Review

This policy was agreed by the Strategy Team on behalf of the Governing Body, with the Head Teacher, and the staff of Halstead Community Primary School and will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix 1 - Guidance Notes for Governor Visits

Introduction

To perform their role effectively and promote high standards of attainment, Governors need to know their School well. An important way of developing this knowledge is to visit the School. This note provides guidance for visit preparation, the visit itself and for reporting back to the Governing Body.

Preparation

Governor's visits are usually scheduled once or twice a term and must be arranged with the Headteacher, well in advance of the visit date. The visit will normally have a specific focus, agreed by the Governing Body as part of an ongoing programme. Preparation is important and following the steps outlined below will give the basis for a successful visit.

- Agree the date, time, duration and agenda with the Headteacher well in advance of the visit.
- Ensure the objectives are communicated to all Staff prior to the visit, so they are expecting you.
- Be personally prepared, with up-to-date knowledge on the subject of your visit.
- If possible, pre-meet with the Staff so you become aware of any particular circumstances that might cause complications during your visit.
- Remember, the objective of the visit is to observe and learn, it is not an inspection and reporting must not be judgemental.

The Visit

On the day of the visit, arrive on time, sign in (a legal requirement) and collect any necessary badges or passes. Familiarise yourself with the lay out of the School and be aware of Safety and Evacuation procedures. Wear appropriate dress and carry a small pad for discrete recording. Before starting the visit proper, meet the Headteacher to confirm the objectives and that everyone is expecting you.

During the visit:

- Do your best to stick to the agreed programme.
- If possible, start your classroom visits at the beginning of a lesson to avoid distracting the pupils and to minimise disruption. It also gives the Teacher the opportunity to introduce you and set pupils at ease about your role.
- Selecting where to sit will vary according to circumstances and the age group being observed. Generally, the older the group the more formally you can present yourself.
- Avoid making notes in the classroom as it can be distracting for the Staff and suggests inspection. If you need to jot things down, do so discretely and casually.
- Concentrate on the focus of the visit and try not to be judgemental. Remember, you are an observer and are there to learn.

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- If you see something that disturbs you or you don't understand, ensure you discuss it with the member of staff concerned or the Headteacher before the end of the visit. This should not form part of the final report unless it falls within the visit focus. Often, there are ongoing circumstances that might explain the situation, not obvious during a single, short visit.
- If, in the rare eventuality, you feel your presence is making staff uncomfortable or the lesson is clearly going awry, you should discretely withdraw.
- If the opportunity arises for talking to the pupils, be sensitive about distracting them from their tasks but take the opportunity to see the lesson from their perspective. Allow them to talk about their skills knowledge and understanding by asking questions carefully. For example, "Can you tell me what you're learning?" is a much better approach than "What are you doing?"
- Remember, as a stranger and an adult, your presence may easily intimidate a child. When talking to them, come down to their level, either by sitting or crouching down beside them. Respect their space and do not get too close to them or touch them.
- Ensure you thank everyone concerned for their assistance and hospitality.

After the Visit

Before leaving, discuss your impressions with the Headteacher or delegated member of staff. Ask any questions you have at this time, as you should not leave being unsure about anything you have seen. The Headteacher will almost certainly be able to answer your queries. Draft your notes soon after the visit and prepare a report for presentation to the Governing Body. Before presenting the report, let the Headteacher see it to correct any mistakes or misunderstandings.

The report should be prepared using the following guidelines:

- Concentrate on the focus of the visit
- Staff or pupils must not be named in the report, nor should it be written in such a way that their identification is obvious.
- Do not make written observations about the quality of teaching or learning, this is judgemental and suggests inspection.
- Written in a form that is suitable for Public inspection.

Finally, a copy of the report should be sent to the Clerk for the Governing Body, for circulation with the papers for the next full Governors meeting. You should be prepared to discuss it there.