

Bordon Junior School

Policy for Governors' Visits to School

Introduction

It is often difficult for busy governors to find time to be in school while it is in session, but it is essential that they are able to do this. National surveys show that most heads and staff are encouraged by governors visiting the school, provided the governors come to learn and help rather than to inspect.

Aims of Governors' Visits to the School

Visits to see the school in action provide governors with an opportunity to :

- understand better the work being done by pupils and all staff
- enable pupils and staff to get to know governors
- demonstrate their interest in the school
- have a wider understanding when making decisions affecting the school
- be better informed advocates, able to speak up for the school from personal knowledge
- share their skills and expertise as appropriate
- more efficiently carry out their responsibilities for monitoring the quality of education being provided for the pupils in the school. However, this does NOT involve making judgements of individual teachers and their work.

Principles

- The governing body is a corporate body and every governor will visit the school as a member of that body, not as an individual.
- Governors visit the school as guests not as officials, they will come to learn, and help, not inspect.
- An effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding benefits the whole school community.
- The governing body is responsible for the general oversight of the school; it is not concerned with the day-to-day management of the school, which is the responsibility of the Head teacher.
- The governing body will plan a programme of governor visits as part of their strategic management of the school, avoiding exceptionally busy times of the school year.
- Visits may link to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and support national/local initiatives such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and SEN.
- Governors must recognise and respect the confidentiality of what they see and hear during a visit.

Code of Practice for Visiting

Focus of Visit

One or more of the following will provide a focus for a visit, with the agreement of the relevant personnel:

- links with the school improvement or action plan
- links with class or year group
- extra-curriculum activities
- joining assembly or worship
- the school's policies and practices in a particular area
- looking at the use of information technology in school
- looking at provision for special needs (including gifted and talented); looking at the premises, health and safety and learning environment
- the organisation of classes and teaching groups
- lunch-time arrangements, including sharing a meal with pupils or staff
- pastoral care of pupils and staff
- links with parents and the local community
- sharing skills and expertise with pupils / the school

Before a Visit

It is good practise and courtesy to liaise with the school before any intended visit. Please contact Louise or the Head teacher in advance to arrange a mutually suitable date and to agree the purpose of the visit and how best to achieve this on the day. i.e. what or who you would like to see and what questions you might like to ask.

Particularly in relation to Monitoring of the School Improvement Plan it will be helpful to:

- be clear what you are monitoring and how best to go about that
- agree dates, times, people, information, documentation etc that will be required
- prepare for the visit by completing the top of the Governor Monitoring Report (the rest should be completed shortly after the visit).

During a Visit

It is necessary for governors to emphasise that they are coming to learn and understand with no hint of inspection.

Observation

In addition to any special focus to a visit other areas may be observed, such as:

- facilities for staff
- pupil movement on site
- displays in open areas and classrooms
- relationships between pupil/pupil, able pupil/less able pupil, pupil/staff, staff/staff
- storage and accessibility of resources, books, equipment and pictures
- classroom facilities, lighting, storage, layout, furniture and décor
- storage and cloakroom facilities

Notes

If any notes are made during the visit these should be made unobtrusively. These notes should inform the final writing of any report.

After a Visit

- thank any members of staff involved, or whose class was involved, and verbally share any positive impressions of the visit
- complete the Governor Monitoring Report, preferably in an electronic format such as Microsoft Word and email it to Louise, who will pass it on to the Head teacher for signature. Head teacher will also ensure reports are shared with staff and any follow up actions completed
- Once the report has been signed off, Louise will distribute an electronic copy to all Governors and the report originator should be prepared to discuss their visit and answer any questions at the next FGB meeting
- ensure a paper copy of the report is placed in the governor visits file in the front office

It is quite possible that after a visit has been completed follow up actions may be required and if so these should be recorded on the Governor Monitoring Follow Up Actions Form. The Governor should check after a suitable interval that these actions have been fully and successfully implemented.

Visiting Tips

DO

- drop into school but don't automatically assume that staff will be available to talk to you
- always sign in and out and wear a name badge
- remember governors have a strategic overview and are not responsible for managing the school
- listen carefully, concentrate and show interest
- begin and end your visit in a positive way, finding some things to genuinely praise
- be punctual, polite and sensitive
- do your homework before you visit and be gentle but persistent with any questions you wish to ask
- avoid times when staff are particularly busy, such as the first and last week of terms, SATs weeks, and during OFSTED
- always reply to special invitations to attend and make an effort to be there – this does much to encourage pupils and staff
- earn the respect and confidence of staff by not talking about your visit except to the Head teacher or members of staff connected to the visit and when reporting to governors (*this is very important*)
- leave pupils and staff hoping you will come again soon
- Smile

DON'T

- destroy confidence, it is a fragile commodity
 - talk too much – you have come to learn
 - remain silent, this can send negative messages
 - get involved in discussion of personal staffing matters
 - sit at the back of the class making excessive pages of notes
 - always expect immediate answers
 - behave like an inspector
 - say “when I was at school we didn’t do it that way” this is not helpful
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This policy is reviewed annually in line with the policy review schedule.