



## CHURCH COWLEY ST. JAMES C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Head Teacher: Steve Dew

## Governor Visits Policy

Church Cowley St James C of E Primary School adopted the attached policy at the Full Governing Body Meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

The Governor Visits Policy was produced by the school. The Governing Body will review this policy every two years.

Reviewed: July 2017

Approved: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Signed:  ..... Chair of Governors

Next Review: July 2019



# GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Every school has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum.

Governors are also held to account for their own school's 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 an inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which Governors can get to know about the 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 immeasurably to our understanding of the school, its staff and its pupils.

This policy includes a Governor Visits report pro-forma which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OfSTED of Governors structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base eg a member of staff's performance management.

## 2. Why Should Governors Visit the school?

The Governing Body of Church Cowley St James Primary School appoints individual Governors to be Link Governors to subjects and year groups as a way of monitoring the curriculum. This involves individual Governors visiting the academy and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss issues with the Headteacher.

A number of Governors have specific responsibilities eg Finance, Literacy, Numeracy or Health and Safety. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a reasonably regular basis.

It also allows Governors, however, to focus on particular areas, eg:

- the management of the schools resources
- the condition of the building and its use
- the development of teaching and support staff
- a specific subject area
- a particular year group

By visiting school and becoming better informed governors will be:

- more aware of the needs of the school
- in a good position to support the school in its community

### 3. Benefits of Visits to Governors and Staff

Governors	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff	To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors
To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs	
To recognise and celebrate success	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the school Development Plan	To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors
To increase their first hand knowledge of the school, which will inform strategic decisions	
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach	To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the academy
To see policies and schemes of work in practice	
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them.	To highlight the need for further resources
To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils	
To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the schools self-evaluation process	
To develop links with a class, year group or subject areas	
To develop individual Governor roles in terms of their specific responsibilities eg: SEN, Literacy etc	To share an understanding of the specific area

### 4. What are Governor Visits Not About?

The main point to emphasise is that Governor visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of your own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues.

***How often should Governors Visit?***

This will essentially depend on the number of Governors available to take on the responsibility and the size of the school staff.

### **Who Schedules the Visits?**

Visits should always be agreed with the Headteacher.

### **Preparation for the Visit**

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply 'the ground rules'.

It is essential that a disproportionate amount of time should not be spent on planning and arranging visits. If you plan in advance what should always and never happen before, during and after a visit, the ground rules will be firmly established and should avoid any problems and hopefully make the visit more beneficial and enjoyable.

The Governor Visit Form attached to this policy at Appendix 1 can be partially completed at this stage and reference should be made throughout the process to the 'Preparation Checklist' which is attached at Appendix 2.

## **5. What Should and Should Not Happen?**

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>Before (at least one week prior to the visit)</b>	Review the action points in the school Development Plan. Agree the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher. Arrange details of the visit. Try to visit at different times of the day. Headteacher draws up a schedule for the visit – When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? Discuss with the Headteacher or SLT what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be observed and possible involvement Agree level of confidentiality	Turn up unannounced for a focused, formal visit Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week. Visit during a SATs week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher.
<b>During</b>	Be prepared, organised and punctual. Report to the school office and sign in. Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit. Observe school/class guidelines	Monopolise staff Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher when he/she is teaching. Behave like an inspector!

	Jot down discussion points	Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes
<b>After</b>	<p>Thank the members of staff and pupils</p> <p>Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit</p> <p>Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher</p> <p>Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant</p> <p>Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher</p> <p>Prepare your own portfolio to include records of your visit</p>	<p>Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback.</p> <p>Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except the Chair) unless given permission.</p>

## 6 What should I do?

A week before a classroom visit there are some questions you should clarify with the Headteacher or teacher:

- When I come into the classroom, where would you like me to sit?
- What should I do if a pupil asks for help?
- Would you like me to be involved in the lesson?
- Do you mind me asking pertinent questions if I'm not sure about detail when helping eg If I'm not sure about the spelling policy, the methods used for calculations, how to help pupils read unknown words?
- What should I do if I see a pupil behaving inappropriately?
- What should I do if the teacher has problems controlling the class?

### *The Focus of the Visit*

Remember that a visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific classroom visit.

Visits can focus on the following:

### *The school*

- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- The use made of buildings and premises
- Security on site
- Break and lunch times
- The monitoring of Health and Safety
- The use and condition of resources eg furniture and subject equipment
- The impact of class sizes
- The deployment of support staff
- Office procedures eg budget monitoring
- To see a class or teacher led assembly

### ***The Classroom***

- Gaining an understanding of curriculum areas ie English/Literacy, Mathematics/Numeracy, Science, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Design Technology (DT), History, Geography, Religious Education, Art and Design, Music, Physical Education or Literacy/Numeracy.
- The implementation of the curriculum
- Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment
- Observing how pupils working together on a task
- The impact on learning of educational visits
- To see the impact of the religious characteristics of our school

The list is by no means exclusive or exhaustive.

### ***After the Visit***

We all need feedback after we have been visited or observed. This can be a sensitive area but it is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed.

Remember as a Governor you are making the visit on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body.

Staff should also realise that Governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

Any expression of concern should be shared with the Headteacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety is being compromised. This should always be reported immediately.

Oral and/or written feedback should be given to:

- The Headteacher
- The Chair of the Governing Body

Governors should agree with the Headteacher the level of detail that should be fed back to the member of staff.

Written feedback using the Governors Visit Form (see Appendix 1) should be completed with the member of staff present and copies given to the Headteacher and member(s) of staff.

The reports will be discussed with the Chair of the Governing Body and kept in the Governors Visits File.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation of this Policy.**

The Governing Body will review this policy on a bi-annual basis and report back to the Full Governing Body in the Spring term. The review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Have I learned more about the school?
- Are we better-informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do the staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have I helped the school fulfil its duties?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Church Cowley St James Primary School  
GOVERNOR VISIT FORM

Name:	Governor's responsibility:	Date:  Duration
Area of school/staff/class visited:		
Purpose of visit: (Objectives)		
Governor's Comments:		



Staff comments:

Headteacher's comments:

Signed:

Governor \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Headteacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre and Post Visit Checklist for Governors

School	Governor
Do we know why the Governor is visiting?	Have I made a formal appointment with the Headteacher?
Do we know what the Governor is expecting to see?	Do I know the specific purpose of the visit?
Is the focus of the visit also a focus in our school development plan?	Have I arranged my time so that I can be sure to be punctual?
Have we drawn up a timetable for the visit?	Have I thought about how I will approach the teacher in the classroom?
Do individual members of staff know that they are going to be visited?	Have I thought about what I will actually do during the lesson?
Have other key members of staff been informed?	How will I give feedback to the staff, Headteacher and Governing Body?
Is the appropriate documentation ready and available?	Have I remembered that what I see or hear or might find out is confidential and not for sharing with other Governors or parents in general?
	How can I build on this for the next visit?
	How did I address any difficulties I met?