



BIRCHINGTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY FOR GOVERNOR VISITS AND MONITORING

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.

Governors monitor the school in a number of ways including:

- ⤴ Visits as outlined in this policy
- ⤴ Presentations by Core Leaders to the various committees
- ⤴ Questioning of Senior Leaders, including the Headteacher, during visits, meetings and in committees
- ⤴ Reviewing the Headteacher's report
- ⤴ Review of the school policies. This is carried out in line with the 'Policy Review Timetable' which indicates at which meetings the Policies will be reviewed and ratified.
- ⤴ Regular review of data through visits and committees
- ⤴ Review of the School Plan
- ⤴ Finance Monitoring as outlined in the Finance Policy
- ⤴ Performance Management of the Headteacher and Deputy Head
- ⤴ Interviews with Pupils and Staff
- ⤴ Attendance at Self Review Meetings
- ⤴ Reviewing benchmarking with other schools.

The rest of this policy is concerned with planning, conducting and reporting visits to the school. It is expected that at all times Governors adhere to the Governor Code of Conduct and the Confidentiality Policy.

Governor Visits

Visiting the school is not a statutory requirement but can be extremely important in learning how it functions, and for keeping under review how it operates so that the governing body's first hand knowledge is increased, and for 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. If governors cannot make this commitment they should question whether they can make a realistic and valuable contribution to being a governor.

Each Governor when making a visit should follow this policy.

There are a number of reasons to for governors to make formal visits to the school. These 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

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
- Impact of the religious character (in church schools)
- Lunch and break times
- 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

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role. Such visits maybe:

- 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

It is important in all cases that visits are conducted correctly. Appendix 3 gives a Good Practice Guide for formal visits to schools. This should be used in conjunction with the process described below.

PREPARATION

- Visits to the school must always be agreed in advance with the Headteacher and the member of staff being visited. This includes:
- Clarifying the purpose of the visit.
- Identifying the school policies relevant to the visit and determining the activities to be undertaken during the visit
- The programme and an agenda for the visit must be agreed prior to the visit with the Headteacher and staff involved.
- Agree any specific areas of focus for the visit.
- Agree any specific areas to be visited e.g. classroom observations.
- Obtain a blank copy of the questions for governors to ask (Appendix 1). If there are any specific questions then these should be planned beforehand.
- Ensure that you are familiar with health and safety procedures

DURING THE VISIT

- During the visit the Governor must stay within the remit agreed for the visit and no judgements or promises should be made on behalf of the governing body
- The Governor should be punctual and aim to stay on the timetable agreed where possible.
- A verbal feedback should be provided at the end of the visit to the member(s) of staff involved in the visit and Headteacher (if appropriate)
- Decide with the teacher on introductions and what the governor's role in the classroom will be.

AFTER THE VISIT

Feedback from the visit will be provided in a timely manner after the visit on the appropriate form. This is shown in Appendix 1.

- The report must be agreed with the Headteacher and the member of Staff being visited before it is issued to the Governing Body
- When issuing the report an electronic copy should be sent to the Chair of the relevant committee and the Clerk.
- The report will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting of the relevant committee.

It is important that the following is avoided during visits:

- 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

ANNUAL PROGRAMME OF VISITS

A programme of visits will be planned to occur evenly across the school year. This will be done in committee meetings of

the Governing Body and agreed with the Headteacher. Visits will be planned so that they support monitoring of the areas that have been identified as the priorities within the school plan.

At each meeting progress against this plan will be reviewed.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF SCHOOL VISIT POLICY

The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the individual committees. This review of the visit policy will be conducted at the last committee meeting of the school year.

The visit programme will be reviewed at the relevant committees to:

- review progress,
- review the outcomes of the monitoring visits
- review progress of any follow up that was identified
- identify those areas/activities receive visits and those that do not.
- ensure the programme meeting it's aims
- identify areas for improvement
- identify areas where it works well

APPENDIX 1

GOVERNOR'S VISIT REPORT FORM

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BIRCHINGTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Record Form For A Governor's School Visit

(Dissemination, monitoring, evaluation and review)

Name of Governor:		Date of visit:	
Purpose of visit:			
Links with the school plan:			
Observations and comments by the governor:			
Any key issues arising for the governing body:			
Action following governing body meeting:			
Signed by Headteacher:		Date:	
Signed by Governor:		Date:	

APPENDIX 2

FORMAL SCHOOL VISITS - GOOD PRACTICE

The following sections list examples of good practice.

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.
- Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- 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.
- 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. Dress 'smart casual' so as not to be intimidating
- 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 THE VISIT

- 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 agreed visit proforma, once you have shared and agreed this with the Headteacher pass to the clerk for circulation to the governing body.
- Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- 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

- Write a short summary (see example Appendix A) 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved as soon as possible after the visit for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Send the report to the clerk and chair of the relevant committee for circulation to the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

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

Chair of Governors – October 2011

To be reviewed – October 2012