

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Worcester

'Following Jesus in all we do'

Governor Visits Policy

Contact Details

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ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, WORCESTER

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GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

Re adopted September 2015; to be reviewed September 2016

Governors have the right to make a formal visit to the school provided they do so in connection with their responsibilities as governors, and the visit is on behalf of, or has been sanctioned by, the governing body.

Formal visits should have a clear focus, linked to priorities in the School Development Plan. Governors have limited time, so time spent on governors' visits should 'add value' both to the school and to the effectiveness of the whole governing body.

Lay People

Governors visit schools as lay people, not as inspectors, even where they have personal professional expertise in the particular subject area.

Purpose of governors' visits

- to fulfil the governing body's legal duty " to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement." (Section 21, Education Act 2002);
- to develop governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- to support the school's work;
- to contribute to the governing body's monitoring role (visits are only one of the ways in which governors fulfil this role);
- to enable individual governors to ask informed and challenging questions at governing body meetings;
- to help governors understand the teaching and learning process;
- to see policies in action;
- to demonstrate to staff and pupils that governors are interested in what goes on in school;
- to give governors an enhanced sense of identity with their school and the people who work in it;

Our Protocol for Governors' Visits

General Principles

- The governors will plan a realistic timetable of different types of visits for the year that dovetails with the governing body's schedule of meetings.
- Governors will agree the purpose and timescale of each visit as well as the governor/s who will undertake the visits.
- Governors can go into classes when invited to do so by the teacher.
- Governors can talk to pupils in class only when invited to do so by the teacher.
- Governors can attend key stage or staff meetings when invited to do so.
- Members of staff invite governors into the staff room if they wish.
- Governors will not go into the staff room unless they are invited.
- Governors will always make an appointment when they want to come into school, not just drop in.
- Members of staff are always free to say that it is not convenient for a governor to come in at any particular time.
- These informal contacts should not be used to raise individual problems that should properly be resolved by the Senior Leadership Team.
- If governors see something that worries them, they will discuss this first with the headteacher.

Before a Visit

- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with the headteacher or SMT member or other appropriate member of staff.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. It should be linked to the School Development Plan/Ofsted Action Plan priorities.
- Discuss an agenda with the headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable for the purpose identified.
- Time permitting, agree level of participation by governor/s during school visits with any staff involved; especially visits to classrooms; involvement with pupils. Decide with the

teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.

- 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 head teacher if any relevant supporting information is available - OfSTED report, School Development Plan, performance data.

During a Visit

- Be punctual and keep to the agreed timetable, but be flexible.
- Don't lose sight of the purpose of the visit
- Be courteous, friendly not critical
- Look relaxed. Blend in. Avoid being conspicuous. Get involved if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly, take minimal notes only.. Remember that note-taking can be off-putting.
- Listen - don't distract the teacher from their work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Get involved with activities, if you are invited but otherwise don't intervene
- Never comment to the teacher concerned on the conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils
- Thank staff and pupils at the end of the visit

After the Visit

- Briefly 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?
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.

- Discuss your observations, including any concerns with the headteacher, SLT member or other appropriate member of staff. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Draft a short written report using the agreed pro forma as soon as possible, while the visit is still fresh in your mind, and circulate a draft to the headteacher, so that they can check its accuracy and advise on potential sensitivities. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved. Reports should be cleared with the headteacher before being circulated to other governors. Reports should give an honest account of what was seen and learned and what issues, if any, need to be considered by the governing body.
- Maintain absolute anonymity and confidentiality about specific children in particular; do not breach the privileges of such opportunities. Remind other governors of confidentiality in any reports that may for instance identify a teacher in our small school.
- In your report, never make judgements on teachers or individual staff and pupils
- Agree with the headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Reflect on how well the visit went so you can do better next time
- If any issues remain unresolved, discuss them with the chair of governors.

Annual Review

The governors will review how the visits' policy is working at the start of each academic year. Teacher governors will be asked to feed back staff comments on governors' visits, what staff felt worked well and what could be improved.

The key questions to be considered are:

1) Have the governors' visits made a difference to

The Governing Body?

Staff?

Pupils?

2) What does the governing body need to do to make the policy and practice even better?

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Governor Visit Record

Name:

Date of report:

Visit on:

Classes / Person visited:

Purpose of visit

Previously agreed by the governing body with the headteacher

Aspect of Monitoring (Please tick)

- Observation
- Work Scrutiny
- Scrutiny of Planning
- Scrutiny of Assessments
- Scrutiny of Resources
- Discussion
- Pupil Interviews

Links with the School Development Plan

How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Development Plan?

Governor observations and comments

e.g. What did you see? What were the strengths/ areas for development? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?

Any key issues arising for the governing body / Areas for development

e.g. The way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy.

Action following governing body meeting

Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit

Signed: