

Governor Visits to school

Context

The governing body of St. Peter's CE school recognises that its members should, in seeking to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively, make efforts to visit the school in order to gain awareness and understanding which helps them in their strategic role. Whilst individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish, they do, however, need to be able to visit from time to time to develop their understanding of the school. When Governors visit school they are invited guests. It is expected that all governors should visit the school at least once a year. Governors should arrange their visits with the Head Teacher, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

This policy will be made clear to all new governors through inclusion in our induction process.

The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should have a clear purpose. They do not replace professional inspection or the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the headteacher (see appendix 3).

Purpose of the visit

Visits are undertaken to:

- Improve governing body knowledge of the ethos of the school and build on links with staff, pupils and parents
- An awareness of the work of the curriculum
- Assist the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school development plan
- Assist a governor to fulfil a specialist governor role such as Special Educational Needs
- Assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties
- Assist the governing body in making informed decisions e.g.; identifying priorities for future school development plans, highlight the need for particular resources.

Governors should not pursue any personal agendas or arrive with inflexible preconceived ideas. Governors are not to make any judgements about pupil's work, behaviour, any teacher's classroom practice or issues relating to the day to day running of the school. Governors will also not observe individual teachers as a focus. Those are the responsibility of the Head Teacher. Governors must remember to respect school staff and pupils, support the Head Teacher and acknowledge that they represent the full Governing Body.

For the purpose of monitoring and evaluating school effectiveness (see appendix 1)

A culture of collaboration is essential to ensure our aims are met and visits to school should be seen as a positive means of support and development. At the same time, the whole school community needs to recognise that accountability has to be a focus of school effectiveness. There must also be an understanding of the roles, experiences and perspectives of the various people who work at or are associated with the school.

Planning the visit (see appendix 3)

Visits should be undertaken only as part of a strategic programme formally organised by the governing body or one of its committees and with approval of the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher should be kept informed of, and agree, the subsequent details of the planned visit. If the visit is to involve any member of staff, then that member of staff must be fully involved in the planning through the appropriate member of the leadership group, taking into consideration the needs of all concerned, their availability and important other elements of the school day such as assemblies, staff meetings, cover arrangements. The

governor(s) making the visit should make themselves fully acquainted with health and safety procedures, including fire safety, prior to making the visit.

Framework of visits

Visits by governors need to be conducted in a positive and supportive way, whilst giving the governor an opportunity to ask questions about a particular aspect of school life. For these visits to be informative and useful to all concerned, **it is necessary for the protocol of visiting to be observed (see appendix 2)**. It needs to be acknowledged that governor visits are not to inspect the school, make judgements about the quality of teaching or an opportunity to question pupils unless this is a pre-agreed aspect of the visit.

The Head teacher and staff will actively support extending Governor's knowledge and understanding of education and school development by:

- Welcoming them into school
- Reporting on school development work
- Encouraging governor's involvement in professional development and school development through training and their involvement in appropriate staff meetings.

Protocol of visit (see appendix 2)

Governors will at all times report to the school reception office upon arrival and follow the procedure for visitors in order to provide a good example for other visitors. Governors will avoid visiting classrooms where their children are present.

If visiting a classroom, the governor must arrive at the time planned to avoid disrupting the learning process, and follow the agreed purpose of the visit. Governors must be aware that some teachers may feel nervous or stressful about having a visitor in the classroom.

At the end of the visit thank everyone concerned including the children. Governors should be aware of their behaviour and avoid any implication that they are inspecting, such as by using a clipboard.

Governors should remember:

- they are representing the GB
- they will respect rules of confidentiality at all times
- as an individual governor they are a guest of the school
- all staff and pupils should be treated with respect as should Governors.
- they should always knock before entering a classroom
- teacher's should be addressed - Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms and surname when speaking to them in front of children
- to ask the teacher's permission before speaking to the children. Do not disturb the flow of the lesson.
- not to at any time undermine the authority of the staff. If you are unsure about something, ask the member of staff, but remember, they are the teaching professionals.
- to sign in and out at the school offices.
- it is possible to have a roaming governor, if the governor so wishes.

Focus for the visit – a clear focus should be decided well in advance of the visit.

The plan of the visit

- It will be the governor's responsibility to contact the teacher/s for a pre-visit discussion
- Details of the visit should be clarified at this discussion (preferably linked to the school development plan) and outcomes agreed.
- If possible the visit should follow a broad plan or agenda that also refers to school protocol and health and safety issues that must be observed.
- Be sensitive to the numerous demands staff have on their time

The visit

- Governors should arrive in good time, keep to the agreed framework, actively participate and show interest and enthusiasm.
- Governors should make rigorous observations during their visit but it is acknowledged that **no professional teaching judgements** should be made.
- Governors are encouraged to recognise good practice and give praise wherever possible.
- Notes should be made and these should be recorded by the Governor as data for future development and school improvement.
- Questions to the staff concerned should not interfere with teaching but be noted until an appropriate time for discussion.

Preparing a report (see appendix 4)

After visiting the school, the governor(s) should:

- Be prepared to provide feedback to the Head Teacher and relevant member of staff as well as for their colleagues on the GB:
- Give some time and thought to reflection
- Write a note of thanks to all staff visited
- Complete a visit report outlining the purpose and results of the visit (the visit report will be shared with all appropriate staff involved)
- Raise any concerns sensitively with the Head Teacher
- Consider what went well and what did not go so well with respect to your involvement in the visit
- Consider what you would do differently in a future visit
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A copy of the visiting report will be held in the GB file in school and will be available to share with SMT, staff, other governors and all those to whom the governors are accountable. Feedback from visits will be tabled as an agenda item at the next full GB meeting.

Outcomes of visits

With the help and support of the governors the school will be able to:

- Identify strengths and plan strategies to not just maintain but build on these
- Identify areas for school improvement, prioritise these and build them into a development plan with timescales and budgetary constraints.

Visits to discuss specific issues or concerns

Governors wishing to visit school to discuss specific issues or concerns that fall outside of this general visits policy should respect the school by observing the same procedures and protocols that exist for parents and members of the public wishing to raise specific issues or concerns. In particular governors should ensure that these visits are made by appointment with the Head teacher or member of staff.

Governors will need to recognise, and make clear to parents upon hearing concerns or receiving complaints, that particular issues should be firstly addressed by the school staff and the headteacher. If these avenues fail to resolve an issue of concern, complaints should be addressed to the Chair of Governors to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed.

Appendix 1 - Definition and purpose of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring -

Through the teachings of God we
Love Others Value Everyone

To assess the progress that the school is making towards meeting it's identified development priorities, in order to raise standards of achievement and the quality of education.

Monitoring should provide some evidence for evaluation, but the two processes have discreet elements.

Monitoring should:

- Check targets are being implemented
- Collect evidence
- Give objective analysis
- Ensure staff are fulfilling their responsibilities
- Ensure funds are efficiently managed and applied to meet the targets
- Ensure progress is moving towards the success criteria
- Develop an informed view

It is important to note that the person responsible for implementing a plan should not be solely responsible for monitoring its progress.

Monitoring should provide hard evidence about the progress being made. It should also identify where timescales etc are not realistic.

Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation:

- To judge the effect of the action taken on pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of education (effect and outcome, intention and impact)
- Use monitoring evidence
- Review success criteria
- Make decisions
- Set priorities
- Challenge not merely review

Clarity of relationship between success criteria, monitoring and evaluation:

Success criteria – what is the intended outcome?

Monitoring – who is checking the success criteria, how and when?

Evaluation – evidence of effectiveness

Effective evaluation relies upon having precise/measurable success criteria

Evaluation should be ongoing and at regular intervals. Timing will relate closely to the specific development. It will always be after action has taken place.

Main roles of the GB in monitoring and evaluating

- **To provide a strategic view** – help to set, and keep under review, the broad framework within which the Head teacher and staff should run the school. Keep focussed on the key issues of raising standards of achievement, establishing high expectations and promoting effective teaching and learning.
- **To act as a critical friend** – provide support, advice and information to the Head teacher and staff, drawing on its members' knowledge, experiences and observations.

Critical – in the sense of its responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness, asking challenging questions and pressing for improvement

Friend – to support and promote the interests of the school, the law and the parents and most importantly its pupils.

- **To ensure accountability** – responsible for ensuring good quality education in the school. A right to discuss, question and refine proposals – whilst always respecting the professional roles of the Head teacher and other staff, and their responsibilities for the management of the school.

In its turn, the GB answers for its actions to the Government and Local Authority but above all to parents and the wider local community for the school's overall performance.

Appendix 2 – Protocol for visits

Governors visit their school to enhance their understanding of the school's work and to help fulfil their responsibilities of monitoring and evaluating the school.

We have an agreed schedule of governors' visits to the school, reflecting the priorities in the school development plan and the specific interests and responsibilities of governors, and we keep a file of visit reports.

	ALWAYS	NEVER
BEFORE	Agree purpose of visit. Agree how much time (a timetable is a good idea). Agree when you will discuss the visit with the headteacher. Consider practicalities (dress, parking, time of arrival, who to report to, how to make notes, breaks and lunch). Find out how each teacher wants you to contribute (or not).	Turn up unannounced.
DURING	Introduce yourself to staff and pupils. Note and praise the positive. Ask questions to increase understanding. Remain focused on the purpose of the visit.	Walk in with a clipboard. Arrive with preconceived ideas. Interrupt the teacher. Make professional judgements about staff expertise (governors are not inspectors). Pursue your own personal agenda/focus on the progress of your own child. Monopolise the children's or the staff's time.
AFTER	Thank the teacher and pupils. Discuss visit with the teacher. Write a thank you note to teacher and pupils. Compile a report (use framework if appropriate). Raise any concerns sensitively with the headteacher.	Leave without a word.

Appendix 3 - Monitoring calendar -

Agreed and approved at start of year between Governors and headteacher

Academic Year...

	Focus of Visit (SDP link)	How? Meeting? Lesson obs? Other?	Who?	Where?
September				
October				
November				
December				
January				
February				
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				

Agreed by:

..... (Role)

Date.....

..... (Role)

Date.....

Appendix 4 -**Visits report form**

Visit purpose approved by...

Through the teachings of God we
Love Others Value Everyone

Date.....

Report on the visit made by.....on.....

Purpose of Visit

Links with SDP

Observations made during the visit

Comments – any key issues or recommendations arising for the GB in relation to the focus of the SDP?

Action following GB meeting

Please return this and discuss with the Head at the end of your visit.

Signed