

Kinsale Infant School

Governor Visits Policy

'If governing bodies are to monitor and evaluate the school's work they need to visit the school. When handled well, these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the schools work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings'

Source: the Office for Standards in Education.

Governing bodies have a statutory responsibility to promote high standards at their school, and must monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in this respect. Through visiting our school governors can get to know it better. The governing body is a corporate body and governors will visit the school as a representative of that body, not as an individual.

An effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding, benefits the whole school community. The policy provides an agreed framework within which governors will plan and carry out their visits.

Governing bodies have three main roles:

- To provide strategic direction
- To act as a 'critical friend'
- To hold the school account for its performance

Visits by governors are one way in which the governing body can increase its knowledge of how the school works. The increased knowledge and understanding gained from well planned, focused visits should enable the governing body to carry out its three main roles effectively.

Visits are important:

- To increase governing bodies' understanding of the strengths and areas of development of the school.
- To show to staff and children that governors are interested in the life, work and achievement of the school.
- To enable governors to see things in the context of the school and to support the school's work.
- To enable governors to see evidence of policies in action.
- As part of the governing body's monitoring role.
- To increase governor understanding of learning in the school.

- To enable the governing body to ask informed questions in governing body meetings by gaining first-hand knowledge of the working school.
- To enable the governing body to see resources being used by the children.

Some visits to the school will be less formal than others. As governors it is important that we maintain a profile at school events - a school fete, play or Christmas performance - to support the children and staff at these enjoyable events. (No governor monitoring form required)

More formal visits to the school will need careful planning. These visits should have a clear focus and be linked to priorities in the School Development Plan (SIDP), and/or any areas of improvement identified by Ofsted if the school has been inspected recently. (Governor monitoring form required)

Other visits will relate to specific responsibilities that governors may have - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or Health & Safety, for example, or where individual governors are attached to other things like attendance.

Visits to school by new governors are an extremely important element of their induction programme. It can be very useful for governors to do a number of shorter visits in their first few terms, to get an overview of many aspects of school life. The school is a very different place in June than it is in December; for example it can be useful to see how formal lessons in classrooms may differ from lessons outdoors.

Governors' visits to school are not just about visiting classrooms. We should familiarise ourselves with other areas in school such as the school grounds and playground. How children and parents act and interact coming into and leaving school at each end of the school day. Shared space around the school - the school hall, library and corridors are useful places to see. Areas used for school administration should also be visited to get an idea of the working lives of the people the school employs.

PLEASE NOTE

Governor visits to classrooms are not about making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in school. That responsibility is with the Headteacher and senior management team, as these judgements are a specialist skill that governors do not have.

Even if we have these skills in our professional lives, these judgements are part of the line-management and performance management process in school. This cannot be undertaken by governors.

The governing body is entitled to have a clear view about the quality of teaching and learning in school. This will be reported to the relevant committee and full governing body by the Headteacher, often with reference to the schools self-evaluation (SEF) process. It may also be reported to governors by the headteacher following visits to the school by other external stakeholders.

The governing body needs to be realistic about governors' availability and the school's capacity. Governors need to fulfil their monitoring role and respond to key issues identified by Ofsted, but must be mindful that the school is a busy, professional learning environment, and that the dynamic of the class can be altered upon the appearance of governors (who may not be particularly well known by the children and staff).

PROCEDURE FOR GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL

Before visits school to school governors will:

- Agree the purpose and focus of the visit with the headteacher and make sure that relevant members of staff have been informed.
- Ensure there is a clear timetable for the visit.
- Prepare by becoming familiar with any relevant documentation, e.g. policies that could be seen 'in practice'.

During visits to school governors will:

- Respect teacher's professional space and be aware that the dynamic of a class can alter when a visitor arrives
- Try to time visits to classes, where possible, to allow a short time to talk to the class teacher before the lesson begins.
- At the start of the visit, agree with the class teacher and/or other member of staff the most appropriate role in the classroom.
- Ensure the agreed governor monitoring form is used. (A or B)

After visits to school governors will:

- Thank everybody involved in the visit and share observations with the class teacher
- Talk to the teacher if there are any further questions
- Email the completed governor monitoring form to the headteacher
- The governor monitoring forms will be shared with governors on Governor Hub and will be on the agenda for the full governing body.

Some gentle reminders:

Report to the office on arrival and when leaving to sign in and out.

Wear a badge to be readily identified as a governor.

Don't speak with any member of school staff while they are teaching; wait for an appropriate opportunity.

Try to speak with the children and other members of staff, where this is appropriate.

Respect confidentiality; details about individual children which you may pick up during a visit are confidential and are not to be discussed outside the school community at any time, with anybody.

Keep your governor 'hat' on. Governors should try to adapt to the circumstances, to what's happening, and should capture this in reports to the governing body. Lots of things can be covered during a visit which aren't necessarily part of the agreed focus.

Visits should be a professional experience for everybody.

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Signed: P Steward Chair of Governors

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