

LUCKINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL **SCHOOL VISITS PROTOCOL & POLICY**

Governors are required to monitor and evaluate the progress that the school is making towards the priorities and targets set out in the school improvement plan. The governor's role is that of critical friend, not as an inspector. By observing pupils and mixing with teaching and support staff, a governor can begin to know the school. A carefully planned visit by a governor can generate evidence that will inform decision-making by the whole governing body or its committees. It is essential that governors and staff are clear about the reasons for such visits and have agreed the way in which they should be conducted. This is very important in such a small school, where staff and governors must be particularly sensitive to issues of confidentiality.

Governing Bodies should have a policy on the management of governor visits as part of their monitoring role.

Here are some suggestions for a Governors Visit:-

Before the Visit

- Decide on a focus for the visit. This may be suggested by the governing body's monitoring of the development plan, by suggestions from the Headteacher or by discussions within the governing body;
- Agree with the Headteacher the final visit focus and an appropriate time which suits both the governor and the member(s) of staff who will be involved;
- Meet the responsible member of staff outside teaching hours before the visit to discuss the focus;
- Agree how you will be introduced to the pupils and be involved in the lesson or activity you are observing;
- Read any appropriate policy documents and/or curriculum guidance.

During the Visit

- Try to relax and enjoy yourself
- Observe discreetly
- Get involved with the pupils' activities when invited, but do not intervene;
- Show an interest and ask questions, but do not monopolise the teacher's time;
- Avoid commenting on the teacher's conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils' achievement.
- Remain as objective as you can.

After the Visit

- Discuss your observations with the relevant member of staff as soon as possible.
- Make notes while the visit is still fresh in your mind.
- Never include comments about individual children – if you have concerns, discuss them privately with the teacher and the headteacher.
- Remember that monitoring the performance of staff is the role of the Headteacher, not the governors. It is a professional matter.
- Prepare a draft report of your observations and share it with the member of staff and the headteacher.
- Taking their comments into account, prepare a final written report to be circulated to the governing body before the next meeting.

Preparing a Report to the Governing Body

This is most important as the report will be evidence of the monitoring role of the governing body. The report need not be long and it is better in note form than in a long essay.

Things to observe when visiting a classroom

Relationship between staff and pupils.

Relationships between pupils.

Variety of teaching styles.

Availability and role of support staff.

Behaviour and attitude of pupils – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?

Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils.

How the pupils are grouped.

How different abilities are catered for.

Children's work.

Displays.

Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)

Use of space and working conditions.

Quality and Quantity of equipment and resources.

SCHOOL VISITS – A POLICY FOR LUCKINGTON SCHOOL

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused visits to schools so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work. Governors will observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees make well-informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school improvement plan. This process will enable the governing body to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff and to identify further areas for development.

Visits are not about making judgements on the quality of teaching - that is the headteacher's responsibility. Nor are they about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas.

The focus of a visit could be on one or more of many of the policies in place in the school, especially assessment, collective worship, pupil discipline, race equality, and teaching and learning.

The type of visit will vary as governors can use different ways of gathering evidence, for example:

- Classroom observations
- 'Learning walks'
- Pupil interviews
- Work sampling (anonymous samples)

Roles and Responsibilities of the Headteacher, other Staff, Governors

The **governing body** will, with the help of the headteacher and staff, organise a schedule of visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per year. Visits may be conducted in pairs. The **headteacher** will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and school improvement plan priorities and targets to be covered each term.

Individual Governors or Pairs of Governors will, with the guidance of the whole governing body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus on. This will enable individual governors to develop a deeper understanding of a subject, a policy or policies, or a year group. They will focus on areas where they have an interest or expertise. The aim will be for them to get to know an aspect of the school really well, increasing their confidence and knowledge. It will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team.

When organising and conducting a visit governors will be courteous and considerate, at all times respecting the professional roles of the headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the headteacher and staff, they will confirm with the headteacher the date, timing and focus of each visit at least one week in advance. This will include agreeing what will be observed and to whom it would be useful to talk. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved.

They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor(s) will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. They will discuss their observations with the headteacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body.

Teachers and Support Staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.

They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits so as to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors. Whenever practical they will invite their link/curriculum governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing body. At the final meeting of each academic year the link governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. By reviewing the minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed, the governing body will judge the extent to which the information gathered informed the whole governing body's understanding of the progress made towards meeting priorities and targets. Teacher Governors will feed back from colleagues. They will be asked to identify what worked well and what if anything needs to be reconsidered. They will also be asked to describe the extent to which their understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

Date established by the governing body:

Date for review:

Luckington School

Governors' Evidence & Observation Record

Date: _____ What is being observed?

What is the focus of this observation?

Are the resources available, appropriate and ready?

Are the children ready to listen/ begin to learn?

Are the children well-behaved?

What happens if a child misbehaves?

Do children stay on task?

Are the children working hard?

Do they understand what they have to do?

Are the children praised and encouraged?

Are the children enthusiastic about their learning?

Are some children given harder or easier tasks?

What is the teacher's role throughout the lesson?

How are other adults used?

Questions that I would like to ask about what I have seen:

Notes from my discussion with the class teacher:

Signed: