

EARLSMEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Governor Visits Policy



SUCCESS *for* ALL

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| Written by | B.Graham |
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MISSION STATEMENT

At Earlsmead Primary School we encourage all members of our school community to strive to be the best they can be and develop new skills that empower them for life- long learning in order to become confident, valuable, members of society.

We create an inclusive, supportive, safe and challenging environment where all contributions are valued.

Learning is motivating and independence is encouraged hence all become reflective, self-learning team members with a positive sense of wellbeing and a love of learning.

OUR VISION

Working in partnership with children, parents, staff and Governors as a community we will achieve *Success for All* through:

***S**ecuring resilience*

***U**nderstanding values and respecting others*

***C**ommitting to our learning*

***C**ommunity involvement*

***E**quality for all*

***S**triving to do our very best*

***S**etting high expectations*

AIMS OF THIS POLICY

The governing body will identify the aims of Governor visits and the potential benefits to Governors and staff. The policy provides a collectively agreed framework within which Governors will plan and carry out their School visits.

This policy has been produced by consultation with staff and Governors. For the purpose of this policy, all linked Governor activities including visits and meetings will be referred to as 'visits'.

RATIONALE

Governing bodies have a statutory responsibility to promote high standards at their School, establish and monitor its School's policies and evaluate its effectiveness in this respect. Well planned Governor visits will support governing bodies in discharging this duty. Impressions and observations gained will help Governors in their role. However, Governors should be mindful that it is part of the Headteacher's responsibility to manage the School and the staff in accordance with the aims, objectives and policies which have been approved by the governing body.

Governors are held to account for their own School's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the School, and will test that assumption during a School inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know their School is to visit during the School day and see it at work. This can include virtual visits and meetings held online.

The Governing Body has appointed link Governors to facilitate the liaison between the governing body and specific subject/curriculum areas or aspects of the work of the School.

The role of a link Governor is a source of support to the School and a source of information for the governing body. An integral part of the link Governor role is to learn about the general running of the School. It is not an inspection but a fact finding and observational opportunity and a way to satisfy Governors that they are fulfilling their statutory obligations. It enables them to effectively act as critical friends when probing and enquiring about how effectively the School is making continuous improvement.

This document includes a sample Governors' visits report form which will help guide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for any external reviewers of Governor's structured involvement in the work and life of the School. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base e.g. a member of staff's performance appraisal.

Visiting during the School day, and finding out more about the opportunities for learning that the School offers, can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of being a School Governor.
Governors visit to learn, not to inspect.

PROTOCOLS

All visits will be brokered through the Chair of Governors / the Headteacher. Link Governors will then be able to arrange their visits with the staff member concerned. Feedback, either verbal or written, should be given to the member of staff and the Headteacher following the visit.

Visit Programmes:

The programme of visits will be organised through discussion of the main School development priorities (as outlined on the School Development Plan) by the Headteacher and the chair of Governors. This will be clarified with Governors who will draw up a schedule of activities which may include in-School visits, meetings with stakeholders (i.e. key groups of staff and / or students). As a guide, it is helpful that Governors commit to at least one visit or activity per term although this would be subject to the nature of the area being monitored and the availability of staff and Governors according to the School calendar of activities.

New Governors are always encouraged to join an area to monitor and may do this alongside a more experienced Governor as required and where this is possible.

A list of suggested questions will be drawn to support Governors with their activity. These questions will be drawn from the Governors, the Headteacher or other Senior Leaders and on occasion the leads of specific areas of the School.

Where the views of pupils are sought, Governors will be able to meet with children in small groups with a specific focus. Students will always be briefed about the nature of the meeting prior to this taking place.

Every visit must link to an aspect of School development.

Parent Governors must make themselves known to any class teachers in advance if they are going to visit their child's class and steps will be taken to ensure that the Governor visit does not have an adverse effect on the student or staff.

Governors will need to remain confidential at all times and the names of pupils who have been spoken to or whose work has been seen must not be written on any documentation. Children must only be identified by use of year group, (e.g a year 4 pupil).

STAFF INVOLVEMENT

It is important that the staff feel ready and prepared to enable Governors to fulfil their role. All staff will be informed of Governor-in-School visits. Staff who are due to be involved in any activity will be part of the planning process for the Governor visit/activity after an initial discussion with the Headteacher or chair of Governors.

Governors will be welcomed by the lead member of staff for any meetings or visits and supported to ensure that they fully benefit from the visit.

REPORTING

Following a visit or activity, it is good practice for any verbal feedback to be given to the Headteacher directly. This also allows for the Headteacher to clarify any areas which may seem unclear or address any areas which may need to be addressed soon afterwards.

The notes taken by the Governors should be on the agreed proforma (**Appendix 2**) and Governors may wish to redraft these if they are not in an immediately legible format.

All reports should be shared with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher prior to distribution to the whole governing body and staff. Subsequently, a final report will be circulated by the clerk to the governing body and the Headteacher will circulate the report to any staff who have been involved in

the visit or activity. There may be occasions where a summary of a report is shared with the whole staff for example, via the confidential staff bulletin.

Governor visits will be an agenda item at the subsequent governing body meeting. Normally, a short verbal response to the Governor-in-School visit would be provided. Reports will be stored in the Governors' area on SharePoint or on the Staff Shared Drive, with other materials shared at the relevant governing body meeting.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Earlsmead Primary School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, students and parents are aware of the policy and that the policy is fully implemented.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the chair of Governors and the Headteacher and be reported back to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will consider if Governor visits are contributing to the information that the Governing Body has about progress towards meeting priorities and targets identified in the School Development Plan.

The review will consider the following questions:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we better-informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do the staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Governor Visits Objectives, Procedures and Code of Conduct

Appendix 2 - Record of Governor's Visit

Appendix 3: Suggestions for the Focus of a Governor Visit/Activity

Appendix 4: Governor visits – Guidance for Staff

Appendix 5: Possible Questions for Governors

Appendix 6: The Ofsted Inspection Framework 2019

Appendix 1: Governor Visits Objectives, Procedures and Code of Conduct

- To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff.
- To gain a deeper understanding of students' needs.
- To recognise and celebrate success.
- To monitor the implementation of the School Development Plan.
- To increase Governors' first-hand knowledge of the School, to ask informed and challenging questions, and to inform strategic decisions.
- To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach.
- To see policies and schemes of learning in practice.
- To find out what resources are used, what resources are required.
- To show support and encouragement and build a stronger relationship with the School community.
- To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the School's self-evaluation process.
- To develop links with a class, year group or subject areas.
- To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, English etc.

Before the visit Governors should:

- Agree a mutually convenient time to visit with the Headteacher/ relevant staff member. Care should be taken to avoid stressful or busy periods in the School calendar.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit (see suggestions in the Appendix) and agree this with the Headteacher and relevant staff. Agree together how best to approach the identified focus to make effective use of everyone's time.
- Agree how you will be introduced to the students and the extent to which you will be involved in any activity or lesson.
- Agree a convenient time to discuss your lesson visit with the class or subject teacher. This will also be your opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about (in the case of lessons visited).
- Prepare for the visit by reading any relevant document in advance. It may be useful to prepare some questions in advance and even share them with the relevant staff. It could enhance the quality of the visit.
- Ensure that they are aware of the core principles underlying the Governor visits at the School and abide by them.

During the Visit

- **Remember this is a visit, not an inspection.** Governors are visiting to learn more about the School and to gather information to inform strategic decision making by the governing body. It is not the Governors' role to judge the quality of the teaching. Monitoring staff performance and the quality of teaching and learning is the job of the Headteacher.
- Remember that you are an invited guest.
- Be punctual, sign in and wear an identity badge.
- Try hard not to disrupt the normal working of the School by monopolising the teacher's time.
- Smile and listen. Try to relax and enjoy yourself.
- Think carefully about what you say and do. Remember that a visit by a Governor can be stressful for staff. Be courteous, tactful, positive and interested. Avoid criticism e.g. never make a comment on the teacher's conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils.
- Try not to draw too much attention to yourself. Avoid overtly making notes as this can be disconcerting. Instead, write down your thoughts as soon afterwards as is practical.
- Remember that you are representing the governing body. Governors should be prepared to explain policies, but should avoid giving personal opinions which could be misinterpreted as the views of the governing body.
- Avoid making promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Only go into the staffroom if you are invited to do so.
- Adhere to Child Protection policies and procedures and report any concerns to the Headteacher.
- Observe previously agreed levels of confidentiality.
- Remember to thank the staff for supporting you in your role as Governor.

After the Visit

- If you have seen something that worries you, you would normally discuss this first with the Headteacher.
- Discuss your visit with the Headteacher and agree a draft of any written report with the Headteacher, and with staff, as appropriate. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board before you circulate your report to Governors and the clerk.
- Send a note to thank the relevant staff and students. Be open and honest; recognise and celebrate achievement.

Reflect upon your visit. Your views will inform the review of the policies and procedures.

Code of Conduct for Visiting Governors

- A. Governors will not make judgements about the effectiveness of the teaching they observe;
- B. Governors will not pursue a personal agenda or seek to take advantage of their position;

- C. Governors will express their gratitude, and any positive feedback to staff (and students) as soon as possible and provide informal verbal feedback to the Headteacher at the conclusion of each visit.
- D. Governors will provide a written report for file with the Clerk; (see sample report form below)
- E. Governors and staff will respect confidentiality arising from any aspect of the visit;
- F. Any action points arising from the visit will be discussed and agreed by appropriate parties.

Appendix 2: Governors' Record of Monitoring Visit

| Part 1: plan the visit | |
|---|--|
| Name and role of Governor(s) | |
| Name and role of staff member(s) | |
| Date and time of visit | |
| Agreed focus <i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that haven't been agreed with the member of staff.</i> | |
| Relevant School objective or priority <i>This might be taken from the School improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the School's overarching vision.</i> | |
| Questions to ask <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</i> <i>Share these questions with the staff member you're visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i> | |

Part 2: In the meeting

What is the School doing within this area of focus?

How do you know the School's actions are having an impact?

What successes stood out and why?

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the Headteacher or chair of Governors

Feedback to the Headteacher to consider:

Appendix 3: Suggestions for the Focus of a Governor Visit /Activity

One or more of the following will provide a focus for a visit, with the agreement of the relevant staff:

- The implementation and impact of a key policy.
- Progress in an aspect of the School Development Plan.
- Progress on areas identified during an Ofsted inspection.
- Provision for identified groups e.g. BME students, Travellers.
- Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs or more able learners.
- How the cultural capital activities are promoted.
- Particular subjects, key stages or classes, Cross-curricular areas e.g. Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.
- The use made of the buildings, the site or Resources e.g. Interactive Whiteboards.
- The condition and maintenance of the premises.
- Health and safety.
- Extended Services including Extra-Curricular activities.
- Professional development days or sessions, staff or departmental meetings, as appropriate.
- Student participation e.g. attend a School council meeting.
- Impact of the SMSC /fundamental British values.
- Deployment of staff.
- The impact on the School of any key changes e.g. impact of increased staffing in Support roles.
- Educational Visits – provision and impact.
- Collective Worship.

In addition to any special focus to a visit, Governors may learn more about some of the following areas:

- The variety of teaching and learning styles.
- Availability, deployment and role of support staff.
- Behaviour and attitudes of students — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Relationships.
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and students.
- How the students are grouped.
- How different abilities are catered for with differentiated tasks.
- Examples of students' work, written and oral.
- Displays in open areas and classrooms e.g. learning walls, reflection of community in images round the School.
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions.
- Classroom facilities: lighting, layout, storage, furniture and décor.
- Facilities for outdoor play and learning outside the classroom.
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources and associated storage.

Appendix 4: Governor visits – Guidance for Staff

Visits to the School are valuable in enabling Governors to carry out their monitoring and evaluating role, and their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the School. Governors will not be making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, as most are not trained to do so. Visits are an excellent way for Governors to understand how teaching and learning takes place in the School and to deepen their knowledge of the School and the curriculum. Individual Governors do not have the automatic right to enter the School whenever they wish - they are the School's invited guests.

The most effective visits will be well planned.

- The date of a visit should be mutually agreed, and have an explicit focus and purpose agreed in advance by all concerned.
- Agree a convenient time to talk to the Governor about what they have seen and to answer any questions that they may have. You have an important part to play in raising the Governors' awareness of what happens in our School and why.
- Feel free to say that it is not convenient for a Governor to come into your classroom at a particular time.
- Do raise any concerns about the visits with your line manager or the Headteacher.
- Prepare your class for the visit of a Governor and agree how you will introduce them.
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for Governors and staff alike.
- Inform the Governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do.
- Do not leave a Governor alone with the class, even if they are willing for you to do so.

Appendix 5: Possible Questions for Governors

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards. A nominated Governor who takes a special interest in a curriculum area or areas can help to ensure that this issue remains high profile on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help Governors as they find out about teaching and learning across the School. The following questions are not meant to be exhaustive and are provided to act as a guide in a meetings or on School visits – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

It is advisable that Governors discuss with the Headteacher how best to use these or any other questions to help gradually build up a picture of the School's strengths and areas for development. They are organised into some of the key areas of School improvement and fall in the categories of the Ofsted framework 2019: Quality of education including teaching, learning and achievement; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; achievement and outcomes and the sixth form.

A separate document holds a bank of questions for Governors to draw from across a variety of areas and can be found here: [Key questions for Governors.](#)

For the core subjects:

1. What are the broad trends in the School's achievement in English/Phonics/Science/Maths compared to national averages? Are these trends going up or down over three years?
2. How do these results compare with other subjects?
3. What Schemes of work (if any) are used? Why were these chosen? How much fidelity is there to this scheme of work?
4. What are the next steps for developing teaching and learning in this subject?
5. How are parents involved in the learning for this subject e.g. How is home reading monitored?
6. Are there significant differences in the performance of:
 - girls and boys?
 - looked after children?
 - child carers?
 - students with special educational needs?
 - gifted & talented students?
 - students with English as an additional language?
 - the majority and any other minority ethnic groups, such as travellers?

For all subjects:

1. How is spaced retrieval built into this subject?
2. How does the curriculum for this subject show sequence, cohesion and progression?
3. What are standards like in this subject? How do you know?
4. Where have we improved? Do we know why?
5. Are there differences between the achievement of different groups, and if so, why?
6. What aspects of the subject do students find easy and which hard?
7. What are the next steps for this subject?
8. Are there significant differences in the performance of:
 - girls and boys?

- looked after children?
- child carers?
- students with special educational needs?
- gifted & talented students?
- students with English as an additional language?
- the majority and any other minority ethnic groups, such as travellers?

In meetings with the subject co-ordinator can you tell how much progress students are making? For example you could look at:

- Key Stage test results, teacher assessments or other data.
- The work of a range of students – average, below average and above average.
- Photographic or folio evidence of the wider curriculum.
- Pupil voice outcomes.
- Other evidence.

Special Needs

1. How are mainstream SEND pupils catered for in lessons?
2. How are pupils in the ARP supported into mainstream classes?
3. Are SEND pupils making appropriate progress?
4. How are students with SEN integrated into lessons?
5. How have Edukey Targets been adapted to support children in their lessons?

Management of the Subject

1. How is the role of the co-ordinator developing?
2. Does the School Development Plan address the identified needs?
3. What is the allocation of funding to the subject for this financial year?
4. How has it or will it be spent?
5. Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
6. What further training to teachers and support staff need?
7. How much additional support does each class have?
8. How is the support used and what impact does it have?
9. (Literacy only) Does the School offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are students using the library? What links does the School have with the local library?
10. How does the School use all its resources (ICT, books, materials and displays) to promote reading and writing or Numeracy?

Communication

1. How are parents kept informed about childrens' progress?
2. What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children's learning?
3. How are Governors kept informed about standards and the progress of students?
4. How does the school celebrate the Schools achievements and successes?

Appendix 6: The Ofsted Inspection Framework 2019

