

PROMOTING POSITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

BRIGHSTONE C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL



Governor Visit Policy

Date Agreed: 6th December 2016

Review Date: December 2019

Signed: Mrs Diana Nicholson

Chair Board of Governors

Revision record

Revision No	Date issued	Prepared by	Approved by	Comment
1	6 th December 2016	JW	FGB	

All the governors and staff of Brighstone CE Primary School are committed to sharing a common objective to help keep the children and staff of the school community safe. We ensure that consistent effective safeguarding procedures are in place in order to support families, children and staff of the school.

Rationale

The Governing Body at Brighstone CE Primary School has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in school. Although their role is strategic, it is important that they have some understanding of the practicalities of the job. Meeting children, talking to staff and seeing lessons underway help members of the Governing Body to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.

Each governor has an area of the school's work that they are linked to, and also a class. Governors are expected to make at least one visit a term during school time and will often monitor an area of the School Improvement Plan, sometimes in pairs, in accordance with the agreed school monitoring calendar. It is important that on any visit governors understand that they represent the full Governing Body.

For governors, school visits give the opportunity to:

- see the school at work and gain a more informed understanding of classroom life and practice
- note progress made in the School Improvement Plan
- meet and talk with pupils
- meet class teachers and show active support to all staff and the activities of the school
- see policies and schemes of work in action
- find out what resources are being used and what are needed
- gain first-hand information to assist with policy-making and decision-taking

For teachers the benefits of governor visits include the opportunity to:

- get to know the governors and find out more about the role of governor
- share their school improvement responsibilities and progress with the governing body
- ask questions and discuss any issues with the governing body
- reflect upon their teaching and learning practice through discussion.

Before making a visit governors will:

- contact the Headteacher and the teacher concerned via the main school email address to agree a date, time and focus for the visit
- clarify the expectations for the visit and ensure that all staff are aware of the visit
- plan which class(es) will be visited and draw up a timetable for the visit with the teacher coordinating the visit.

On the day of the visit the governor will remember to:

- be prompt and clarify the timetable with the Headteacher/subject coordinator
- act as an observer and only participate in the class at the invitation of the teacher
- respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting but not interfering
- be calm and enjoy the visit.

After the visit the governor will:

- thank the teachers and children
- meet with the Headteacher to give a brief verbal report, and raise any issues that arose
- complete the Governor Visit form (Appendix 2/3) and send to the teacher for any comments. The form will then be given to the Headteacher and later placed in the Governor School Visits File kept by the clerk to the governing body.
- governors' reports should note their observations and any useful points made in conversation but avoid opinions and identifying individual pupils.

N.B. It goes without saying that a governor's visit is not about: inspection; making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher; pursuing a personal interest, etc. It is wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. See Appendix 1

Governors need to remember there may be times when arrangements have to be changed or alterations made. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and be flexible in your expectations. No two days are ever the same in a school!

The **Governors' school visits proforma** should be completed as soon as possible after the visit.

Governor links/portfolios

Some of our Governors are linked to a particular subject/area of the school's work. These are:

- Arts
- EYFS
- Finance
- H & S
- Humanities
- ICT
- Inclusion (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Pupil Premium, Looked After Children, Free School Meals, Service Children)
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- PE
- PSHCE
- RE, Collective Worship
- Safeguarding
- Science

In addition to this, we link some governors to a particular class.

Governor links to classes

We also believe it is important and useful if governors take a particular interest in one class and follow them through the school. A governor can provide a useful audience for pupils' writing and presentations, etc. It is the responsibility of each governor to introduce themselves to the teacher and class and make themselves available according to the demands of the timetable and school year.

In planning a visit to the class, governors might agree to:

- take part in a lesson acting as classroom helper during their visit
- work with a small group

- demonstrate a particular craft or skill they have
- introduce themselves and answer pupils' questions about their role as governor
- observe the class - focussing on an agreed area/issue that the class teacher would like some feedback on, e.g. the involvement of a particular group of pupils.

Policy Review

This policy should be reviewed every year, asking whether:

- every governor has visited the school at least three times during the year?
- each governor has made a variety of links with their link class?
- every governor linked to a curriculum or school improvement area has had a conversation with the coordinator?
- we can make policy and practice even better?

Appendix 1

BRIGHSTONE SCHOOL GOVERNOR VISITS

I think that in our enthusiasm to improve our Governing body we are in danger of stepping over the boundaries from strategic advice into operational areas, and are putting the staff under stress that our visits are more like inspections or class observations which of course should only be carried out by professionals.

We are all busy people and so must make sure our visits are pertinent.

Going forward, we should ensure the following best practice is adopted.

- Plan a termly timetable of visits through the Headteacher.
- Governor Visit questions, which are of course essential to our monitoring, should be approved by the Headteacher first.
- We must be mindful that if we are talking to staff, this directly impacts on their time. Twenty minutes is fine, but an hour too much.
- All reports must be written in a non-judgmental and non-subjective way, and signed off by the Headteacher before being shared with other governors or clerk. TAs and other staff should not be named, just the person being visited. Staff are unlikely to challenge a Governors report even if they feel it is not a true reflection, and we need to remember these documents will end up in the public domain.
- We are also overdoing the number of class/subject link visits – see below. In future we should only visit each class once per term and subject link visits will also be limited to once per term and dovetailed with reports to Governors.
- Governors are encouraged to visit the school in a multitude of ways, e.g. school plays, celebrations, worships, assemblies, invitations to attend class events, e.g. science experiments, accompanying a class on a school trip, community and other events. All of these activities are really good ways of getting to know the school. A brief report should be written up after each event.

NGA guidance link:

<https://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/NGA-Guidance-on-school-visits.aspx>

Excerpts taken from above:

The role is largely strategic, not operational, and includes ensuring vision is being turned into reality, ethos is being embedded and progress is being made against the strategic plan. At the heart of this is one of NGA's eight elements of effective governance: knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children and the community.

During any visit to the school it is important to remember that the role of those governing is strategic, not operational. Visits by members of the governing board should not be confused with inspections.

A common pitfall: "I'm here to observe the lesson"

It can be easy to fall into the trap of referring to a school visit as a chance to "observe" teaching and learning – but by doing so; you could be causing unnecessary confusion and stress. "Lesson observation" has a specific meaning in a school context: it is an activity undertaken by school leaders in order to collect evidence about teachers' performance for the purposes of appraisal. This is, of course, a professional task

and should be carried out by the headteacher or appropriate line managers. Most members of governing boards do not have the expertise to do this and, even if they do, it is not within their remit. **It is important for those governing to avoid giving the impression that they are there to judge or inspect teachers' performance. As the Governance Handbook states: "Governors are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning".**

How often should I visit?

There is no need for those governing to be in school every week – as the Governance Handbook states, those visiting “should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school”. It can therefore be useful for the governing board to set a minimum and maximum number of visits that individuals should make each school year. **NGA recommends that each individual board member visits the school at least once a year but no more than once a term.** This not only keeps visits to a sustainable and pragmatic level, but will also ensure that those visits are spread out over the academic year. (Even 12 linked visits – class and subject –even if we just go three times annually is 36 visits per year, the equivalent nearly a week's teaching time.)

Each member of staff who will be involved in the visit should also know the purpose of the visit and what to expect. **This should be coordinated directly through the headteacher who will confirm details of the visit with the staff member themselves.**

Examples of what a visit could focus on include:

- The use of resources such as how the premises are utilised, a new teaching resource in action or a demonstration of an IT system)
- Monitoring the implementation of a particular policy for example safeguarding, homework, lesson planning
- Monitoring progress towards specific targets from the school/academy development plan for example meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement and learning about the strategy adopted and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning
- Gaining an understanding of a particular curriculum area or year group
- Gaining an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts
- Gaining an understanding of how a particular issue (e.g. provision of ICT, boys' achievement, literacy) is dealt with on a day-to-day basis.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the headteacher or senior or middle leader with who the visit was arranged but not with other staff or with parents. **Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) should not be identified in school visit reports.**

Appendix 2

Governor visits for events e.g. Worship			
Governor's name			
Date of Visit			
Context of visit <i>e.g. sports day/school trip/worship</i>			
Member(s) of staff or area visited			
Governor brief comments to provide evidence why the box is ticked			
Signed _____ Signed _____ (Governor) (Headteacher)			
Purpose of Visit (please tick as appropriate)			
Observe behaviours for learning and achievements of pupils.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand the views and values of pupils and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate use of resources and the environment of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gain first-hand information to assist in policy and decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observe the operation of agreed policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring distinctive Christian ethos	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure governors are known and demonstrate their commitment to the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Give personal support to the activities of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrate being a critical friend/supportive colleague of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Be aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 3

Governor visit form for monitoring class or area of responsibility	
Governor's name	
Date of Visit	
Agreed focus for visit <i>e.g. an aspect of the School Improvement Plan (SIP);</i>	
Member(s) of staff met	
Questions to ask relevant to: Teaching and Learning Policy impact Getting to Good Plan	
Activities undertaken and evidence seen <i>E.g.: visiting classes, display work, looking at pupil's books, talking to pupils, looking at resources, discussions with Headteacher, curriculum coordinator, class teacher</i>	
Notes <i>If your focus is an aspect of the curriculum, teaching or assessment, you will want to comment on one or more of: Standards and Progress; Teaching; Assessment; Resources; Displays</i> <i>If your question is about Policy you will want to comment on the impact of the policy.</i> <i>If your focus is an aspect of the SIP you will want to comment on the impact and progress of improvement work so far.</i>	
Points to take to governing body meeting	
Signed _____ Signed _____ (Teacher / Coordinator) (Governor)	
Signed _____ (Headteacher) Date _____	

An aide memoire for governors on their school visits:

What is the purpose of the visit?

- What or who has prompted my decision to visit?
- Is the focus specific or general?
- How can my visit benefit the teacher(s)/school?

How shall I carry it out?

- What particular areas/activities of the school am I interested in?
- What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
- Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
- What questions should I ask? of whom?

Did I achieve my aim?

- To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
- Which of my questions did I answer?
- What difficulties did I experience and why?

Is there any follow-up?

- Have I recorded my experiences?
- Did I give feedback on my visit to the head and staff?
- Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
- How can I build on this for the next visit?