

Featherstone High School



Governors Visits Policy

Prepared by:
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Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge to help inform strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

Purposes of visit

Although not an exhaustive list visits should normally be linked to an area of the School Improvement Plan and may focus on:-

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant School Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda well in advance with the Headteacher and or SMT member with Line Management responsibility for that area (the Headteacher will advise you of this). Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the Appendices A,B & C to help guide your visit
- Send the proposed agenda to the appropriate member of SMT who will copy to staff involved. Try to prepare any questions and submit to staff in advance

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, **it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.**
- Be punctual.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- The teacher will introduce you as a Governor who has come to learn a little about the work in that subject area
- Observe discretely. Feel free to talk to the children but be careful not to interrupt the flow of the lesson. Use Appendix A as guidance

- Suggested questions for children:
 - Tell me about what you are learning today
 - Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
 - Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
 - Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Listen to staff and pupils. Be courteous and friendly not critical - **remember it is a visit not an inspection.**
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

After

- Thank the teacher and acknowledge a positive aspect of the lesson or visit that you have observed
- Remember that the teacher may well be teaching straight afterwards but if possible spend a little time, no longer than 20 minutes, with the teacher to:- Discuss what you have observed and to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind in line with Appendix B.
- Submit your draft report in line with Appendix B to the Headteacher for discussion and approval
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- The written report in line with Appendix B should be available for the next full meeting of the Governing Body and should reflect the draft previously agreed with the Headteacher
- You should circulate the report to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity at least two weeks before the Full Governing Body meeting. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the head teacher
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- Attend a school function or educational visit

Appendix A

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

Appendix B

Featherstone High School – Governor Visit Report Proforma

Date:

Name of Governor:

Gov. responsibility:

Purpose of Visit:

Staff/classes seen during visit:

Preparation/background to visit (eg reading policy, discussion with Head, etc):

Information gathered during visit:

Things I liked:

Things I questioned or need clarified:

Any identified area/s for Governor training:

Any other information:

Appendix C

Suggested questions for governors to ask subject leaders

- What is your vision for the subject?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the subject?
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching the subject?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?