

SCHOOL VISIT POLICY FOR GOVERNORS

Barkisland CE (VA) Primary School Governing Body has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in the classroom/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 will help members of the Governing Body to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.



Objectives

The Governing Body should aim to:

- Inform their decision-making by having visited school as per their role (see table of responsibilities).
- Be aware of the feelings of members of staff and the issues they face by having a more lengthy discussion with at least one member of staff during the year.
- Read and keep up-to-date with school newsletters and other documents that are set out.
- Keep up-to-date with their nominated class or subject leader (where applicable), introduce themselves and spend time discussing the school with some of the children from the class or becoming familiar with the subject across the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Some of our Governors are already linked to a particular topic area. We aim to link Governors to a subject they have a particular interest in. This does not mean that their visits should be exclusively geared to that subject. However, it is anticipated that at some point during the year they will take time to talk to the subject leader.

The benefits of visiting classrooms

Closer links between Governors, staff and pupils has potential benefits to all parties.

For governors these include:-

- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children
- Opportunity to meet class based staff and put faces to names
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action
- Seeing elements of the School Development Plan in action
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed

For staff these include:-

- Opportunity to find out more about the role of the Governor
- Having chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise
- Opportunity to reflect upon practice through discussion

- Feel supported by Governors in school

For children these include:-

- Heightened awareness of Link Governors and their roles
- Feel supported by Governors in school.

What to Avoid

It is important for all parties to note that Governors’ visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve governors making a judgement about teaching in any official capacity. That remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and other education professionals. It might be wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. It can cause discomfort for everyone! They should also be aware of ‘pursuing personal agendas’ and make sure they fulfil the code of conduct as it is outlined here.

Please remember that members of staff are very busy people whose first priority must be the children. There may be times when arrangements have to be changed or alterations made. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations. No two days are ever the same. Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don’t expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood. By all means ask questions (preferably at the end of the lesson) but be sensitive to the extra demands of differentiation and inclusion that teachers now face.

Ground Rules for Classroom Visits

	Always	Never
Before	-Arrange details of visit. -Agree purpose of visit -Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed. -Agree role within the lesson	-Turn up unannounced
During	-Keep to the role agreed -Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over -Please remember confidentiality -Stick to the times and purpose agreed -Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the children.	-Assume a different role -Walk in with a clipboard -Interrupt the teacher -Distract the pupils from their task
After	-Thank the teacher and the pupils -Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience - Governor visit comment sheets to be completed and shared with the	-Leave without acknowledgement -Break rules of confidentiality

	Headteacher who will share with the staff member/s involved Comments to the governing body	
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Conducting the visit

After planning your visit with the class teacher or subject leader you might have agreed to :

- take part in a lesson acting as classroom helper during your visit
- talk to the children about what their learning and experiences in school
- work with a small group
- introduce yourself to your linked class and answer any of their questions
- meet with the class teacher or leader to discuss particular issues or set the context

Please remember that the visits do not require judgement on the teacher or learning activities taking place

It might also be useful to clarify some 'what ifs' beforehand. For example:

- What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
- What if a pupil asks me how to do something?
- What if I have a suggestion to make?

Comments on the visit

It is important that a time is agreed between yourself and the class teacher to discuss the visit you have made . During conversation, you might refer to notes you have made. The structure might include:

- Asking the teacher for any further clarification of the lesson or for their views on how it went
- Providing any positive comment
- Any further questions you might have
- A summary of the comments you will be giving to the Headteacher / Governing Body

At the end of the feedback both you and the teacher should be clear about what you will be sharing with the Headteacher and Governing Body - there should be no surprises! The **Governors' Visits to School** pro forma should be completed as soon as possible after the visit. It should reflect the discussion you have had with the teacher. The report should be copied to:

- The Headteacher – who will then forward it on to the relevant staff member.
- The clerk to the governor

Policy Review

The policy should be reviewed every two years. The key questions should be:

- Has every Governor visited school as expected, in-line with their specific role?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in this policy?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?

- How can we make policy and practice even better?

This policy last reviewed in November 2021, March 2023