

Towards a School Policy Statement on: Governors Visiting the School

Rationale

Personal observations made on school visits are a major source of information. The experience involves teamwork, directed towards a common goal, founded upon good relationships with the professionals. There must be trust.

Visiting increases understanding and assists informed judgement; it can improve the quality of decision making.

Purpose

All visits need a clear purpose which forms a part of a policy agreed by the governing body, the Headteacher/Principal and teachers. Purposes might include:

- knowing more about the work and organisation of the school
- keeping up to date with developments
- offering visible support
- implementation of the school improvement plan, or reviewing its success

Visiting is also a function of the governing body as a whole. All governors should decide on the structure and pattern of visiting by individual members.

It is crucially important to make clear in advance the status of a visit to school, when undertaken on behalf of the governing body.

Governors are not inspectors or advisers; it is not their job to assess the professional competence of individual teachers.

Guidelines

Good visiting practice will:

- include clear objectives and intentions shared and agreed beforehand with the headteacher
 - take into account that a visitor's presence may affect proceedings
 - give visitors a chance to get a feel for the school.
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Checklist for Visiting Your School

The following checklist of do s and don'ts may be useful.

For governing bodies

Do:

- have an agreed policy (written or verbal) and a system for reporting back
- plan a timetable of visits so that every governor has the opportunity to visit during the year
- agree an explicit purpose and plan for each visit which has been communicated to all parties
- consider different styles of visit, for example paired visits where an experienced governor partners a less experienced one

For individual governors

Do:

- negotiate a mutually convenient time with the headteacher, teacher etc to ensure that the visit is expected
- look at the possibilities for developing links with a class, year group, subject department
- thank the teacher, headteacher, etc at the end of the visit
- give praise where it is due
- make a point of listening rather than talking
- dress appropriately and follow the normal school rules - for example, don't chew gum!
- include a 'debriefing' session with a member of the senior management team
- discuss any concerns the visit may raise with the headteacher/line manager
- be polite, tactful and sensitive
- avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection, SATs, the first and last weeks of term, unless specifically requested to attend
- visit at different times of the day, term, year
- try to attend any special occasions, especially if regular daytime visits are difficult
- try to attend when you have been specifically invited
- go in as a helper where appropriate and possible

Don't

- go in like an inspector
- sit at the back, writing notes
- go in unannounced
- interfere with the organisation of the class
- try to talk to the teacher while they are teaching - wait until the end of the session
- criticise the performance of a teacher, even in a constructive manner, during your visit
- make promises to staff on behalf of the governing body