

Newport Infant School

Governing Body Monitoring Policy and Visiting School Guidelines

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Policy Lead	Governing Body
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Purpose of Policy

The governing body has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the school and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis and by undertaking visits demonstrates the Governors' role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress.

It is important that Governors remember to respect the professionals and the children, support the Headteacher and the staff, and acknowledge that they represent the full Governing Body. If the agreed principles and procedures are followed then Governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the Governing Body, which will contribute to school improvement.

Value of a Policy

- To demonstrate the importance of being a critical friend of the school.
- To hold the school to account and evaluating its progress.

Introduction

As Governors of Newport Infant School we need to:-

- understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the [quality of teaching](#) .
- understand and take sufficient account of pupil data, or whether they are misled by headlines.
- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- be aware of the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects and year groups.
- be challenging and supporting leadership in equal measure.
- understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression.
- rigorously performance-manage the Headteacher.
- have clear oversight of safeguarding, financial planning and our statutory duties.

As a Governing Body we need to ensure we have a secure knowledge of the strengths of our school which will include a good understanding of progress and attainment data, the impact of pupil premium funding, performance management of all staff and how to link this to salary progression

We can do this through monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring: means gathering evidence to show what progress has been made towards strategic priorities and targets and the implementation of policies

Monitoring is a key aspect of our Governor remit; it is necessary so that we can carry out our strategic function effectively, and is central to our role as a critical friend. Monitoring enables us to know the situation in our school, keeping track of how initiatives and schemes are progressing.

Evaluation: means making judgements about the results.

Different ways of monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school and ensuring our effectiveness as a Governing Body:-

- Discussion of School Development Plan (or post OFSTED plan - whichever is most appropriate) as a regular item on meeting agendas
- Head teacher reports to Governing Body
- presentations/ reports to Governing Body or a committee from teachers about their subject or other areas of responsibility
- through Governor links with class/year or group - pupil premium
- links to aspects of the curriculum - link Governors
- formal and informal Governor visits to school and subsequent reporting back to Governing Body
- by asking appropriate questions that help us make judgements
- exploring pupil view
- exploring the parent view

We believe as a Governing Body we will be most effective if we build in a plan of monitoring and evaluation linked to SDP (or post OFSTED plan - whichever is most appropriate) that incorporates as many of the above as possible.

Along with our regular Governor meetings our plan could include:-

- talking to children about their learning
- a planned learning walk
- attending a pupil progress meeting
- taking part in pupil interviews/surveys
- participating in a scrutiny of work
- joining a class visit
- discussing with class teachers how a tracking system works
- attending professional development meetings (staff meeting)
- inviting different staff to Governors' meetings
- discussions with appropriate members of teaching staff for some Governors who will have specific monitoring roles for example:
 - ◆ SEN Governor.
 - ◆ Literacy Governor.
 - ◆ Numeracy Governor.
 - ◆ ICT Governor.
 - ◆ Health & Safety.
 - ◆ EAL Pupils' Governor.
 - ◆ Pupil Premium.

Annual programme of visits

The governing body should organise a programme of visits with the help of the Headteacher. These should be spread throughout the year, with the aim of making one visit per term which would focus on an aspect of the School Development Plan or one of the Governors statutory duties. *For example, the focus of a visit could be on any policy in place in the school, teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, or on particular areas such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class.*

As part of our induction programme, new Governors will make a general introductory visit to the school during the working day wherever possible.

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the Governing Body. At the final meeting of each academic year, the Link Governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. The Governing Body will evaluate the extent to which visits have improved the whole Governing Body's understanding of the school's work. Staff Governors will be able to provide feedback from their work colleagues about their view of the visits and how they have helped improve their understanding of the Governing Body's role and efficiency of the visit undertaken.

The Governing Body can consider the effectiveness and positive impact their visits have had on the continual development of the school together with any action that should be taken to sustain this effectiveness.

The following issues could be taken into account during the review:

- Has each Governor been able to make links with their allocated year group?
- Has every Governor had a conversation with the subject leader they are linked to?
- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- What did not work well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?
- Should changes be made to the policy and protocol?

Purpose of visit

The focus of a visit could be on any policy in place in the school, e.g., teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour. It could also focus on particular areas, such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class.

Visits to the school are essential if we as Governors are to monitor and evaluate the school's work. As a Governing Body we recognise that not all Governors are able to visit school on a regular basis.

There is a genuine need to know and understand the school much better, from the point of view of its performance and development priorities. At the same time, all governors have other commitments, and many are unable to give as much attention to the school as they would like, especially during the working day.

The benefits of visiting classrooms

Closer links between *Governors* and teachers has potential benefits to both.

For *Governors* these include:-

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff.
- To build an effective relationship with staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work.
- To recognise different teaching styles and be aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning.
- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice.
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children.
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names.
- To see the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behaviours and achievements of the children.
- To understand and appreciate the views and values of the staff and children.
- To gain first-hand information to assist policy making and decision making.
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action.
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed.
- To evaluate the environment of the school.
- To give active support to the activities of the school.
- *Governors* are visible and known, and demonstrate their commitment to the school.

For *Teachers* these include:-

- To understand better the *Governors'* roles and responsibilities.
- To ensure *Governors* understand the reality of the classroom.
- To get to know *Governors*.
- Having chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice.
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise.
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion.
- To highlight the need for particular resources.

What a visit is not about

- Inspection.
- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, **this is the role of the Headteacher.**
- Checking on progress of individual children or your own child.
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns.
- Monopolising school/teacher time.
- Arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

Hints and tips to help make your visit to school effective and run smoothly

Before – preparing for a visit

- Contact the Headteacher and agree a date, time and focus for the visit.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Make sure that the date chosen is suitable for the purpose identified.
- Find out if there is a prompt sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and Governors, to guide Governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want Governors to integrate into the lesson? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The Headteacher may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available - Ofsted report, school development plan, performance data.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the visit and the expectations on them.
- 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?

During

- 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 and clarify the timetable with the person you are seeing.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection
- Observe discreetly. Remember that note-taking can be disconcerting!
- Don't distract the teacher from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly, not critical,
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.
- Be interested and enthusiastic.
- Be supportive of the Head and all the staff.
- Be calm.
- Ask questions: What? Why? How? Where?
- Beware of giving opinions.
- Acknowledge that you represent the full governing body. As an individual Governor, you are a guest of the school.

After

- Remember to thank the teachers and the children.
- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about for example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observation with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board and to raise any issues that arose.
- Agree with the Headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Update the appropriate section in the Governor Impact folder in the school office detailing your visit.
- 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

- Complete a Record of a Governor's School Visit form, reporting on your visit. These can be found in the back of the Governor Impact folder held in the school office or are available electronically.
- Governors must report with clear reflections of the visit using facts as evidence. Where possible individuals should not be able to be identified.
- It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgements should not be made arbitrarily.
- Once complete, the form should be given to the Headteacher and then, after any possible alterations, the form is to be circulated to staff as appropriate and a hard copy filed at the back of the Governor Impact folder.
- Information on the visit is then to be shared at the next appropriate governing body meeting.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact

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The governing body can consider the effectiveness and positive impact their visits have had on the continual development of the school together with any action that should be taken to sustain this effectiveness.

The following issues should be taken into account during the review:

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Newport Infant School - Record of a Governor's Visit		
Name:		
Date:		Time:
Governor with responsibility for:		
Purpose of visit/focus (previously agreed with Headteacher/Learning Leader)		
Links with the School Development Plan (how does the visit relate to a priority?)		
Governor observations and comments (what did you see? what did you learn? what would you like clarified?)		
Impact on teaching/learning		
Any key issues arising for the Governing Body (e.g. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy)		
How has this informed me? Think about the strategic direction and possible next steps		
Action to be taken at the next Governing Body meeting? Yes / No		



Please share this form with the Headteacher so that your comments can be fed to the staff concerned and then file it within the Governor Impact folder held in the school office - Thank you.