



# The Kingfisher Schools Federation

## Governor Visits Policy

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Visits to school by governors, during the time that the school is in operation, gives them important insights that they can gain in no other way. If governors are to carry out their role they need to have an understanding of the way schools work and a feel for the dynamics of their particular school.

There is no better way of gaining this information than by visiting the school at work. However, although school visits are important for many reasons they form only one part of the governors' wider role.

The main reasons for governors to make visits are:

- To learn about the school;
- To enable the governing body to fulfil its accountability role;
- To show those employed in the school that they are interested;

Governors are a part of the school community, but they nevertheless need to agree any visits to the classroom with the Head Teacher.

It is important that governors remember that the purpose of governors' visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision, nor to pursue issues that relate to the day to day management of the school other than as agreed with the Head Teacher.

### 2. PROTOCOLS FOR CLASSROOM VISITS

The following gives guidance on the protocols surrounding visits to the classroom by governors.



### **For Governing Bodies**

- Ensure that the policy on governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff;
- Recognise that classroom visits are primarily for governors to gain first hand knowledge of the school at work;
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned;
- Ensure that there are agreed timescales for governors' visits, usually giving at least seven days clear notice;
- Recognise the right for teachers to invite governors into school for specific purposes if they so wish;
- The Head Teacher should provide members of the governing body with the relevant background information, i.e. staff names, responsibilities and timetables;
- Recognise that any visit to the classroom can be stressful and disrupts normal classroom working, and that therefore the number of visits should be limited;
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils;

### **For Individual Governors**

- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with the Head Teacher and class teacher for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that teachers' and governors' time is valuable;
- Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned;
- Avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection or examinations;
- Always wear a name badge/sticker;
- Avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with the pupils during the lesson;
- Avoid note taking or acting in any way like an inspector;
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing body;
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils;
- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate for you to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst;
- Always let the Head Teacher or school secretary know that you are leaving the building;



## For Teachers

- Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient;
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned;
- Prepare your class for the visit of a governor;
- Welcome the governor when they arrive in your class;
- Have a seat ready for the governor and tell them where it is;
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for staff and governors alike;
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do;
- Raise any concerns over the visit with the Head Teacher;
- Avoid discussing unrelated issues during the lesson;

Schools are busy work places and nobody can expect to just turn up, be shown around, or even wander around on one's own. The visit must fit in with the school and needs of the pupils

The code of practice, and any changes to it, will be agreed with staff before it is implemented, so that everyone participating in visits has the same expectations of them.

Here are some ideas and tips for school governors to put into practice when making a school visit.

## The Critical Friend

- Recognises and celebrates the achievements of the school;
- Knows where the school is not achieving as well as it could;
- Provides support and encouragement when strategies to bring about improvement are being explored;

## Teamwork

- Be clear about what the team is trying to achieve. Ensure that the policy on governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff;
- Consider how you might use your personal and professional strengths and interests to support the work of the governing body;
- It's not necessary to know everything about all aspects of governance work to make a visit;



### **What can you do as a Critical Friend?**

- Attend school events;
- Visit the school;
- Attend training sessions;
- Be attached to a particular teaching subject;
- Provide a governors noticeboard;
- Participate in school outings and social events;
- Invite staff to give presentations to the governing body;

### **Why should we monitor?**

- To check if the School Improvement and Development Plan is being implemented and what progress is being made;
- To identify and share good practice;
- To clarify what still needs to be improved;
- To ensure accountability;

### **3. GOVERNOR SCHOOL VISIT RECORD**

The visit should be recorded in a short report (i.e. a statement of what was observed). Governors may also find it useful when undertaking classroom visits to consider the following:

- What the lesson was about;
- What the children learned (ask the children what they are learning about);
- Were the children actively involved?
- Did the children enjoy what they were doing?
- Is the children's work on display to celebrate achievement?

### **Consideration should be given to the following areas:**

- Make notes while the visit is still fresh in your mind;
- Never include comments about individual children - if you have concerns, discuss them privately with the Head Teacher;
- Remember that monitoring the performance of staff is the role of the Head Teacher, not the governors. It is a professional matter;
- Draft a short report of your visit and share it with the Head Teacher who will circulate it to the staff member;
- At the next governing body meeting, be prepared to give an oral account of the visit;



## MONITORING & EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed and updated at regular intervals and when deemed appropriate and necessary.

- The policy will be reviewed as part of the schools monitoring cycle.
- The Head teacher has responsibility for monitoring this policy.
- **This Policy is due for Review in June 2016.**

## IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be formally implemented with effect from September 2014.

This policy was adopted at a Meeting of the full Governing Body on \_\_\_\_\_.

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**Mr John Beckett**  
**Chair of Governors**

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**Mrs Ruth Nixon**  
**Head Teacher**