

St Matthew's C.E. Primary School



Policy and Procedure for

Governors' Visits

*Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them,
so that your progress will be evident to all.*

Timothy 4:15

Review date November 2024

St Matthew's CE Primary School **GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY**

Purpose of Policy

Governing Bodies have a statutory responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. We believe that visiting the school is one of the ways in which this can be achieved.

Formal governor visits are focused and relate to the priorities in the School Improvement Plan. Governors report back their findings, thus helping the whole Governing Body and its Committees to make better informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the School Improvement Plan and informing strategic decisions.

The Headteacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day leadership of the school, guides the Governing Body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and the School Improvement Plan to be covered each term.

Potential Benefits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate the successes of pupils and staff
- To build effective relationships with the staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work
- To improve governors' knowledge of the school, the curriculum and its delivery
- To assist the Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory roles
- To assist with understanding the effectiveness of the School Development Plan and help identify priorities for future plans
- To inform decision-making

To staff:

- To get to know governors
- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion

Programme of Visits

There are three aspects to our programme of visits at St Matthews:

- (a) general visits;
- (b) group learning visits; and
- (c) monitoring visits

St Matthew's CE Primary: Policy and Procedures for Governors' Visits

A. Frequency and Timing of General Visits

- All new governors will be offered an introductory visit soon after their appointment to the Governing Body as part of their induction process.
- Governors will receive a copy of the school newsletter, via the School app, which contains notice of events and governors are encouraged to attend so that all events have a governor representative.

B. Frequency, Focus and Format of Group Learning Visits

- Group Learning Visits, or Learning Walks, are generally timetabled once per term. Governors are encouraged to participate in as many of these visits as possible.
- Each 'group learning visit' has an identified focus, as identified by the priorities outlined in the School Development Plan.
- Visits are coordinated between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher
- Governors involved in a 'group learning visit' are directed to observe specific foci
- Serious concerns are discussed with the Headteacher before governors leave the school or at the earliest possible opportunity. Governor should not raise these with the member of staff directly
- Governors record their findings on and subsequently put into a report format – Refer to Annex (i)
- Once the report has been agreed, it is forwarded to the Chair of Governors and Clerk to the Governors so that it can be included as a discussion point at the next Full Governing Body meeting.
- Once reviewed, all Group Learning Visit reports are stored in the governors' monitoring file.

Governors are aware that, when they visit classrooms, it is not appropriate to:

- Make judgements about the quality of teaching
- Check on the progress of their own children
- Pursue personal agendas
- Monopolise the teacher's time
- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas

C. Frequency, Focus and Format of Monitoring Visits

- Monitoring visits are generally timetabled once per term.
- Each visit has an identified focus, as identified by the governor monitoring plan or School Development Plan.
- Individual governors arrange visits to meet with subject leaders or those responsible for the leadership of key areas at the school (such as the Pupil Premium) through the relevant leader, always copying the Headteacher in on e-mail communications and giving at least a two weeks' notice of the intended visit. The intention of the visit is shared with the relevant leader and Headteacher at this same time.

St Matthew's CE Primary: Policy and Procedures for Governors' Visits

- Governors prepare for all visits by researching the focus area, using outcomes from previous meetings as a starting point.
- All governors sign the governors register whenever visiting the school and wear a governor lanyard
- Any notes taken by governors during visits are destroyed following the production of the formal report
- Serious concerns are raised with the Headteacher before the governor leaves the school or at the earliest possible opportunity. The governor should not raise these with the member of staff directly
- Governors record their findings on and subsequently put into a report format – Refer to Annex (i)
- Monitoring reports are shared, initially, with the relevant leader and, subsequently, with the Headteacher.
- Once the report has been agreed, it is forwarded to the Chair of Governors and Clerk to the Governors so that it can be included as a discussion point at the next Teaching and Learning Committee or Full Governing Body meeting, whichever is most appropriate
- Once reviewed, all monitoring visit reports are stored in the governors' monitoring file.

Governors are aware when reporting formally that:

- The purpose of all monitoring visits is **to identify the impact that decisions taken by leaders at the school** (including governors) **is having on pupil progress** for: individual pupils, groups of pupils and cohorts of pupils.
- No personal details are included (ie. names of pupils)
- No judgemental language is used which could be confused with a monitoring report by the HT (eg 'good, requires improvement, or outstanding').
- Remarks, which could be open to misinterpretation, are not used. (eg. 'the teacher made great efforts to control the class'. This comment could be interpreted positively {eg the effort was effective} or negatively {eg the effort was not effective}).

Safeguarding

On each occasion that governors visit the school, they sign the Governors Register and, when visiting during school hours, they wear their 'governor' lanyard and are always directed by a member of staff but they are not always accompanied depending on the activity/reason for visit.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy

At the beginning of each academic year, governors agree a monitoring plan of visits with foci based upon the School Development Plan, requirements for evidence for the SEF and to monitor the progress of particular projects. At the end of the academic year the Governing Body will evaluate the extent to which visits have informed whole Governing Body understanding of the school's work. Staff governors will feedback from colleagues and

St Matthew's CE Primary: Policy and Procedures for Governors' Visits

describe the extent to which staff's understanding of the Governing Body's role has been enhanced.

In order to make any necessary changes to the Governors' Visits Policy, the Governing Body then consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

and make changes to the policy and protocol that may be required.

Annexes:


Annex (i) – St Matthew's Governor Monitoring Report for the form to record and report on visits.

Annex (ii) – Good practice when visiting a school

Annex (iii) – Examples of questions which governors can ask. Although they are focused on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions are relevant to other areas.

Date review: November 2024

Annex (i)

 <p>St Matthew's CE School Governor monitoring Report</p> <p>Form Number</p>		
<p>Name of Governor completing form:</p> <p>Date of visit/email/contact:</p> <p>School Improvement action point being monitored:</p>		
<p>Monitoring activity planned:</p>		
<p>Points noted (to include impact of activity and to be in bullet point form):</p>		
<p>Follow up activity if needed:</p>		
<p>To be presented to (which committee? Date?)</p>		
<p>Signed by:</p> <p><i>Governor</i></p>	<p>Staff involved:</p>	<p>Headteacher signature:</p>

Annex (ii)

Formal School Visits - Good Practice

The following sections list examples of good practice.

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 with the Headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are monitoring/ observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The member of staff may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

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.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, do not interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Do not lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

After

- Thank the member of staff for supporting you in your role as a governor
- Follow the guidance in the policy for reporting.
- 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

- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the Head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. 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.

From the National Training Programme for New Governors

Annex (iii)

Literacy and Maths: Questions for Governors

The Governing Body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and maths. Nominated governors who take a special interest in literacy or maths can help to ensure that these subjects remain on the Governing Body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as literacy/maths governor, as you find out about the teaching of literacy literacy/maths across the school.

Discuss with your Headteacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your job, in partnership with the Headteacher, is to provide a link between your Governing Body, its committees and the staff of your school.

1. Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in literacy/maths?
 - ⇒ Compared to similar schools?
 - ⇒ With the national rates of increase?
 - ⇒ With the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups and if so why?
- How do our results in literacy/maths compare with those in other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy/hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
 - ⇒ Girls and boys
 - ⇒ Pupils with special educational needs
 - ⇒ Very able pupils
 - ⇒ Pupils with Literacy as an additional language
 - ⇒ Any other groups (eg. traveller families)
- In meetings with the literacy/maths leader can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:
 - ⇒ Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - ⇒ A range of pupils' work - average, below average and above average
 - ⇒ Other evidence.

2. Special Needs

- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy lessons?

St Matthew's CE Primary: Policy and Procedures for Governors' Visits

- How have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) been adapted to support children in their daily literacy/maths lessons?

3. Leadership of the subject.

- How is the role of the literacy/maths leader developing?
- Does the school development plan match the identified needs?
- What is the allocation of funding to literacy and maths for this financial year?
- How has it or will it be spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- What further training do teachers and support staff need?
- How much additional adult support does each class have?
- What was the outcome of the local authority's literacy/numeracy monitoring visit?
- Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using the library? What links does the school have with the local library? (Literacy).
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

4. Communication

- How are parents kept informed about pupil progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?
- How are governors kept informed about standards and progress of pupils?
- How do governors celebrate the school's success when things go well?

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