



The world in a school
learning together

NORBURY SCHOOL GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRC Article 2: The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

CRC Article 28: All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free.

Headteacher's Signature: *Ms. L. Browning*

Chair of Governors' Signature: *Ms. W. Bennett*

Reviewing Committee: *Full Governing Body Meeting*

Date reviewed: 16 May 2019

Term of Review: *2 yearly*

Date of next review: *Summer 2021*

*** This policy has regard to the changes in working patterns due to the Covid-19 Pandemic since March 2020**

Purpose

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance. The office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.

This policy provides a framework for governors when visiting to school so that Governors can build an effective working relationship with the staff and pupils, as well as have a better understanding of the context of the school. Visits by governors are encouraged to facilitate appropriate challenge by the governing body, timely support and further understanding of Governor roles, e.g.: Safeguarding.

Governors will be able to observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees to make well-informed judgments about their relevance and impact. These visits compliment the presentations by leaders across Norbury to the Governors' Committees.

In some cases it may be appropriate for a governor to observe a lesson though it must be understood that visits **are not about making judgments on the quality of individual teachers' work**; that is the head teacher's responsibility. Nor are they about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas.

Protocols

All visits are to be made by prior arrangement with the Headteacher who will arrange the visit with the concerned staff. Feedback from the governor, either written or verbal, is to be given to the Headteacher following the visit. * **The Covid-19 Pandemic and social distancing guidelines mean that Governors are no longer able to visit the school physically. Safeguarding Governor meetings have been arranged online until further notice.**

Relationship to other policies

The **focus** of a visit could be on one or more of below:

- **the policies in place in the school,**
- an element of the curriculum,
- a specific aspect of the **school development plan or SEF.**
- a school celebration

Roles and responsibilities of Headteacher, other staff, governors

There will be, where appropriate and pertinent, a **schedule of visits** throughout the year or possible opportunities. The **Headteacher** will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies, SEF, school improvement plan priorities, targets to be covered and celebrations each term.

Individual governors or pairs of governors will, with the guidance of their committee/ whole governing body, identify which of those aspects to focus on. Choice of focus will be informed by the terms of reference for each committee and the 'specialism's of each governor.

The aim will be for governors to **explore an aspect of the school** in some detail, increasing their confidence and knowledge and generating evidence to help the governing body to evaluate the school's performance and reported back to the next Full Governing Body meeting.

The Visit

All Governors are DBS checked in line with the Governors Code of Conduct. When organising and conducting a visit, governors will be courteous and considerate, at all times respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the Headteacher and staff, they will confirm with the Headteacher the **date, timing and focus** of each visit at least one week in advance. This will include agreeing **what will be observed** and to **whom it would be useful to talk**. *(NB: Once the initial schedule has been drawn up, the Headteacher may prefer governors to liaise directly with the staff concerned).*

The governor will discuss the proposed agenda with staff involved. The governor will seek suggestions from staff about what it would be appropriate to look for. ***On a visit focused on fostering children's independence as learners, for example, it would be wise to ask the teacher what children will be seen to be doing if they are becoming more independent in their learning.*** There may be a list of criteria that could be given to the governor. The governor will prepare by reading relevant documentation/guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor(s) will discuss what they have observed with the Headteacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. They will jointly agree key points to report to the governing body. ***See Annex A for a format of recording and reporting visits.***

Teachers and support staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school. The teachers will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits so as to ensure that they are **productive and enjoyable for all concerned**. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors. Whenever practical they will be proactive in fostering the working relationship ***for example by inviting their link governor to relevant staff meetings and training sessions.***

Annex B provides examples of questions which could be asked/issues that could be a focus. See also the National Audit Office Guidance 'Improving School Performance. Guidance for Governors'. Governors need to be sensitive to issues relating to confidentiality. Governors' should not expect to study data about specific named children. While staff should take every care to anonymise any information or examples of work it may be possible for governors to identify individuals in discussions of progress and attainment of children in vulnerable or underperforming groups *e.g. children with special needs or looked-after children*. **Governors will be committed to absolute confidentiality in such circumstances.**

Monitoring and evaluation

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at Full Governing Body meetings.

Staff governors will feed back from colleagues. They will be asked to identify what worked well and what if anything needs to be reconsidered. They will also be asked to describe the extent to which their colleagues' understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

**ANNEX A
RECORD OF GOVERNOR'S VISIT**

Governor's Name	Date of Visit
Focus of Visit	
Areas/Classes Visited	
Sources of Information <i>(E.g. Headteacher, class teacher, display work, students' workbooks, talking to students, looking at resources)</i>	
General Comments	
Summary of what was learned	
Points to take forward for discussion at the Governing Body meeting	
Signed	Date
Received and discussed with Headteacher	
Received by the Governing Body	

ANNEX B

QUESTIONS GOVERNORS COULD ASK

The following questions are based on questions in the National Audit Office (NAO) publication *‘Improving School Performance. A guide for school governors’*, and the Ofsted briefing for inspectors *‘The quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning’*. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Discuss with the Headteacher how **best to use these questions** to help you gradually build up a picture of the school’s strengths and areas for development. Think about what evidence could be provided in relation to each question. ***For example you wouldn’t need to ask if children were proud of their work if you observed them in class, sharing their work with their peers, pointing out where their work is displayed, taking it home to show their parents.***

Making learning attractive to children

1. **What processes** do we have in place to involve students in decision making, such as school council or pupil access to the governing body? How do we know they are effective?
2. **To what extent do these processes represent the views** of all pupils, including those from minority groups, those with learning difficulties and those who rarely ask or answer questions? How do we know? What have we done in response listening to pupils?
3. **Have we carried out subject audits** to find out how interested and motivated pupils are in lessons and what particular things they like or dislike about the subject? What were the findings? What action has been taken?
4. **Do teaching staff have regular joint planning meetings** to discuss what teaching and learning approaches work best across the curriculum to interest and motivate pupils? Have there been any significant changes in practice? If so what impact have they had?
5. **How do subject coordinators gain access to, and keep up to date with, resources** that are proven to involve pupils most effectively in teaching and learning? Are they being used to best effect? Are we achieving value for money?
6. **What training do teaching staff have** to ensure they understand how information and communications technology such as interactive whiteboards can best be used to make learning attractive to pupils? How effective is it?
7. **Are pupils engaged, working hard**, making a good effort, applying themselves, concentrating and productive?
8. **Are pupils happy with their work?** Are they proud of it?
9. **Are pupils interested in their work and in what they are learning?** Or are they easily distracted?
10. **Are resources sufficient?**

Quality of learning

1. **Are pupils making links** between previous/new learning?
2. **Are pupils working independently?** Are they self-reliant?
3. **How well do pupils collaborate with each other?**
4. **How well do pupils follow routines/expectations?**

Monitoring pupils’ achievements

1. **Does our school have a culture of high expectations and achievement?** How do we know?
2. **Are our school’s targets**, which we have agreed with the LA, ‘stretching’ enough for all pupils? How do we know?
3. **Are we meeting, exceeding or not meeting targets?** Do we understand why?

4. **Are governors and staff understanding and using** the various sources of information about the school's performance, including Raiseonline reports? If not how can we improve confidence and competence in data analysis?
5. **Are our systems to monitor pupils' achievements effective, both in** identifying pupils who are working at relatively low levels as well as more able pupils who could move on more quickly? How do we know?
6. **Do we as a school identify subject and year groups' specific strengths** and weaknesses and put action plans in place to tackle weaknesses? What impact are these having?
7. **What new skills and knowledge are pupils gaining?**

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Pupils' achievement

- **How do children's results in English/maths/science compare?** How do they compare with other schools?
- **Where have we improved?** Do we know why?
- **Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups or key stages, and if so, why?**
- **What percentage of children met their targets/exceeded their targets/failed to meet their targets?**
- **Are there significant differences in the performance of:**
 - children eligible for free school meals
 - girls and boys (NB reading and writing)
 - children in care
 - child carers
 - pupils with special educational needs
 - very able pupils
 - pupils with English as an additional language and the others
 - the majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

In meetings with the assessment coordinator you could explore:

- **Key Stage test and teacher assessment results** (*anonymised*)
- the work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average (*anonymised*)
- Raise Online data, Fischer Family Trust and other pupil progress and achievement data.

Special Needs

- **How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into lessons?**
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their lessons?

Communication

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