

GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS' VISITS

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1. The School has a system of Link Governors; this system works well and is appreciated by staff and Governors alike.
2. This element of Governors evaluative and monitoring role is important because:
 - a. Governors' statutory responsibilities under the Education Acts now include setting and monitoring progress towards performance targets and indicators and the establishment of effective evaluative and monitoring mechanisms;
 - b. The development of such self-evaluative mechanisms is a clear aim expressed in the School's Strategic Plan;
 - c. OFSTED inspectors are increasingly interested in the degree to which schools have in place mechanisms and structures to enable self-monitoring and self-evaluation;
 - d. It is essential that Governors should not be distant and out of touch with the needs of and increasing pressures on the classroom teacher.
3. In order to aid governors' understanding of the School, the principle of regular day-long visits by individual Governors has been adopted during which they will either conduct a pupil pursuit or, more normally, visit a number of lessons according to a pre-arranged programme.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME OF VISITS

4. Whilst Governors are encouraged to visit the classroom, find out more about the curriculum and monitor what is going on in the School, it is recognised that such visits if unplanned or not carefully agreed and structured in advance can lead to mutual awkwardness and suspicion, and thus have the opposite effect to that which is desired.

WHAT THE VISITS AIM TO ACHIEVE

5. The programme aims to
 - a. Develop mutually supportive and informative relationships between Governors and staff.
 - b. Help Governors get to know the pupil body better.
 - c. Assist Governors in recognising and appreciating different teaching styles.
 - d. Enable Governors to act as researchers for teachers, if required.
 - e. Familiarise Governors with the working environment of the School.
 - f. Help Governors to understand the constraints within which teachers and support staff work.
 - g. Provide the opportunity for Governors to observe the use of and need for practical resources.
 - h. Enable the Governor to observe the implementation of policies and schemes of work.

- i. Ensure more informed decision making by the Governing Body.

WHAT THE VISITS ARE NOT ABOUT

6. Visits are not intended for:
 - a. Making judgements about the quality of teaching.
 - b. Checking on the progress of specific children.
 - c. Pursuing personal agendas and arriving with preconceived ideas.
 - d. Monopolising teachers' and support staff's time.

PROTOCOLS TO BE OBSERVED

7. Where appropriate, the principle of confidentiality must be observed in conversations between Governors and staff and in subsequent feedback.
8. Every visit must have an agreed and published purpose.
9. There must be an opportunity for discussion and feedback with the staff concerned.
10. All class guidelines and school rules must be observed at all times.
11. The visiting governors are to write a summary report of their visit for circulation by the Company Secretary to the remainder of the board.
12. A visit aide memoire is at the annex.

Annex:

Aide Memoire.

SCHOOL VISITS – GOVERNORS AIDE MEMOIRE

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT?

What has prompted my decision to visit?
Who has prompted my decision to visit?
Is the reason specific or general?
What are my/other people's expectations?

HOW SHALL I CARRY IT OUT?

What particular areas of the school am I interested in?
What particular activities am I interested in?
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
What questions should I ask?
Who should I ask?

DID I ACHIEVE MY AIM?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
Which of my questions did I answer?
To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?

IS THERE ANY FOLLOW-UP?

Have I recorded my experiences?
Did I 'report back' to the relevant staff?
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
How can I build on this for the next visit?