



Gastrells Community Primary School

GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

At Gastrells Community Primary School, our mission is to promote pupil success by inspiring and developing their knowledge, interests, physical and mental wellbeing, and a love of learning in a child-centered, inclusive and empowering environment.

Strategic Review, July 2020

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Last reviewed on: October 2021

Next review due by: October 2023

HEALTH PANDEMIC CAVEAT

During the 2020 health pandemic, and the subsequent Government restrictions on social distancing and entry to schools that may apply at any given time, the practicality of governors physically visiting Gastrells is likely to be limited. The School will issue guidance to governors accordingly; however, the principle of governor engagement with subject leads and attendance at major events remain extant.

INTRODUCTION

The overarching role of the Board of Governors is to manage the school with the aim of providing the best possible education and opportunities for the personal and emotional development for all of its pupils. To fulfil this role, governors have responsibility for the oversight of the conduct and curriculum of the school; they are the people to whom the school is accountable for the way it serves the community.

Whilst the Headteacher provides governors with regular updates about what is going on at the school and there is regular analysis and assessment of academic data, governors also need to fully understand the strengths and challenges of the school. This can only be achieved by governors visiting the school, both through informed and focused meetings with subject leads and classroom visits and also through engagement with staff, parents/carers and pupils at school events.

It is important for governors and staff to appreciate that governors are lay people, not inspectors. Governors are not empowered to intervene directly or to keep a detailed check on the staff's professional competencies, responsibilities or activities. Instead, the intent is for governors to be able to assess performance data in the context of both the National Curriculum requirements and the reality of what happens in the classroom.

Whilst governors are, in principle, welcome to visit the school on any occasion, there is a requirement to adopt a protocol to ensure that the visits do not disrupt the school routine and, equally, do comply with the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This Governor Visits Policy sets out the purpose of, and protocol to be adopted, for school visits.

PURPOSE OF VISITS

The purpose of visits to the school by governors is to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding about the observed subject or activity in particular and the school in general;
- Develop the relationship between staff and governors, and for governors to show support;
- Enable governors to play an informed role in the development of policies and the School Improvement Plan;
- Monitor the implementation of the School Implementation Plan; and

- Determine future strategic priorities in the light of the 2020 Strategic Review and the needs of current and future pupils.

VISIT PRINCIPLES

Governor visits should be positive experiences and can not only make a significant contribution to the development of the School Improvement Plan but are also fundamental to building a healthy and open relationship between governors, staff and parents/carers. However, it is important to recognize that, particularly if not properly planned and conducted, governor curriculum visits may be potentially seen as stressful for teachers, teaching assistants, support staff and governors. Recognising this potential tension, being explicit about the purpose and building professional and trusting relationships are essential factors in ensuring that visits are a valuable experience for all concerned

In addition to curriculum visits, governors are encouraged to visit the school on other occasions. This may involve attending set-piece events (such as assemblies, concerts, plays, sports events and community activities) or providing voluntary assistance in the classroom on a regular or infrequent basis. All visits should normally be planned in advance and governors are expected to inform the Headteacher accordingly.

In sum, It follows that all governor visits need to:

- Be preceded by a discussion with the Headteacher to ensure that the proposed date is suitable and will not cause disruption to school routine;
- Be carefully planned to ensure that staff have adequate time to properly prepare for the visit;
- Fully accord with the School Security and Safeguarding policies; governors therefore must sign the Visitors Book in the school office at the start and end of their visit and wear their identification lanyards and badges whilst on the school premises; and
- In the case of curriculum-related visits, fully comply with the Protocol for Curriculum Visits outlined below.

There may be rare occasions when a no-notice governor visit is warranted; examples could include a surprise check of the Single Central Record of DBS clearances or in a crisis setting. In such instances, governors are expected to inform the Headteacher of their presence on-site at the earliest opportunity.

PROTOCOL FOR GOVERNOR CURRICULUM VISITS

Background

At the start of each academic year, the Chair of Governors appoints governors to be either “subject leads” for specific areas of the National Curriculum or to take lead responsibility for specific functions (such as Safeguarding, EYFS or SEND). Subject leads are responsible, through Standards Committee, to the FGB for providing assurance that subjects are being taught in line with both the National Curriculum and the School Improvement Plan and also that statutory guidelines are being followed in non-subject areas.

Preparation

Governors are not expected to be experts in any particular subject but, before carrying out a formal school visit, should familiarize themselves with the National Curriculum requirements (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>), the School Improvement Plan (available from the Headteacher) and, if available, the last Governor Visit Report. Additionally, it is helpful to arrange an informal meeting with the Staff Subject Lead so that governors have an understanding of how the subject is being taught across the school, how it dovetails with other subject areas on a cross-curricular basis and of any particular successes or challenges the school has experienced. The intent is for the governor to have a reasonable feel for the subject as it taught at primary school level and to be the principal source of advice for the FGB on the subject.

Whilst governor curriculum visits may take place at any time, a Governor Visit Report should be prepared by the relevant Subject Lead at least 7 days in advance of scrutiny by Standards Committee. The planned dates for review of each subject by Standards Committee are promulgated at the start of each academic year. Most subjects are reviewed annually but if Standards Committee consider any aspect requires closer scrutiny, it may ask for more regular formal updates.

Process

Formal Governor Curriculum visits should proceed as follows:

- Governor Subject Lead (GSL) arranges date and time of visit through the Headteacher
- GSL provides Headteacher with Governor Visit Report (template attached) outlining the aims of the visit which should normally be related to the School Improvement Plan. If the Headteacher believes more clarification would be helpful, then this will be sought from the GSL.
- Governor Visit takes place (see separate note on classroom visits below). This will normally involve an hour or so visit during normal school hours and provides an opportunity to discuss the aims, adduce evidence and then, if

practical, classroom visits. Brief oral feedback on what the governor has learned from the visit should be given to the staff subject lead before departing.

- GSL provides Headteacher and staff subject lead with a draft completed GVR with notes relating to the aims and any general comments. Again, if the Headteacher suggests further clarification, then the GVR can be amended by the GSL.
- Finally, the completed GVR should be forwarded by the GSL to the Chair of Standards Committee, Headteacher and the Clerk to the Governors no later than 7 days before the relevant Standards Committee Meeting.

Classroom Visits

Governors are encouraged to enter classrooms as part of the subject review process. However, if they choose to do so, the following principles must apply:

- Classroom visits must invariably be pre-arranged through the staff subject lead;
- Governors must always be accompanied by a member of staff (normally the staff subject lead or the class teacher);
- Governors should be introduced to the pupils by the class teacher and their presence explained;
- Governors are welcome to talk to class staff and children about their experience of learning. However, care must be taken not to disrupt the lesson or to, inadvertently, cause over-excitement or distress; and
- Any request to include the Communication & Interaction Centre (Merlins) must be co-ordinated through the Headteacher and Teacher-in-Charge.

Areas of Immediate Concern

If governors are concerned about anything they have seen on a visit, they should discuss it immediately with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. It is very rare for governor visits to cause angst. However, in such very rare cases, if a situation cannot be resolved on the spot by the Headteacher, then the Chair of Governors is to be informed as soon as practical.

Confidentiality

All governors are expected to maintain confidentiality and must not discuss aspects that arise during governor visits outside the FGB context.

Governor Visit Report (GVR) Template

A template GVR is attached below.

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|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Governor's Name: | Circulation: Members of Standards Committee. |
| Reporting to Standards Committee | |
| Governor Visit Report – [Insert Subject] | |

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|-------------------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------|--|
| Member of staff / class(es) visited: | | Date visit | of | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------|--|

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Aims of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • T | Tick if aim achieved |
| Aim 1. [Insert comments] | |
| Aim 2. [Insert comments] | |
| Aim 3. [Insert comments] | |
| Aim 4. [Insert comments] | |

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| General Comments: |
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|-------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <i>Is the School Improvement Plan on track?</i> | Yes/No |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|