

ST JOHN'S Highbury Vale C of E School

Governors' Visits to School Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 It is important that governors visit the school on a regular basis for a number of reasons:

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- To gain a wider understanding of the way the school operates, and of the ethos and character of the school, which will enable them to make more informed decisions
 - To be able to carry out their responsibility for monitoring the quality of education provided for the pupils more effectively
 - To gain a better understanding of the work being done by pupils and staff, and of the curriculum
 - To find out more about any areas they have particular responsibility for, as a link governor or member of a particular committee

1.3 It should be remembered that governors are visiting the school in order to learn, not to inspect. Governors are not qualified or permitted to make judgements on the quality of teaching. Nonetheless, governors can learn a great deal through informal observation and through talking with staff members. It should be hoped that, through visits, governors and staff can develop an effective partnership based on mutual understanding. Such a partnership will benefit the whole school community.

2.0 Aims of governors visits

2.1 The general aims of governors' visits are as set out above. However, a visit will be more effective if it has a particular focus, e.g. for a Curriculum Link Governor to observe a lesson in their particular subject and to meet with the subject leader in order to monitor the relevant section of the School Development Plan. Prior to or at the start of their visit, the governor visiting should discuss the particular aims of that visit with the member of staff they are visiting.

3.0 Arrangements for linking

3.1 At St. John's, link governors are appointed to cover a number of areas of responsibility.

3.2 Most governor visits are likely to be made by a link governor in order to liaise with the staff member responsible for the link governor's particular area of responsibility.

4.0 Frequency of visits

4.1 All link governors are encouraged to visit the appropriate staff member at least once per year. The date, time and duration of the visit should be agreed with the relevant staff

member and with the Head Teacher in advance.

4.2 However, in addition to these “formal” visits, all governors are encouraged to visit the school on “special occasions”, for example:

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- plays and concerts
 - Sports Day
 - services of worship on special occasions, e.g. Harvest Festival, Christmas, Easter
 - special assemblies such as the Year 6 Leavers’ service

4.3 The Head Teacher will inform governors at the start of each term of the events to which they are invited. On occasions such as these, governors will be attending as guests of the school and are there to observe only, unless they have been specifically asked to participate. They should be aware that on occasions such as these the staff will be very busy and will be unlikely to have time to interact with governors.

5.0 Protocol for visits to school

5.1 You will get more out of your visit if you plan it in advance. Be sure you understand what the purpose of your visit is and what you hope to achieve/ learn from it and discuss this with the Head Teacher or relevant member of staff prior to your visit.

5.2 During your visit, remember that you are coming to learn and find out more about the school, not to inspect or make judgements.

5.3 It may be that you learn things during your visit which need to be followed up; for example, the purpose of your visit may have been to find out more about a particular subject, so that you could take the lead in reviewing a policy on that subject or monitoring a particular section of the School Development Plan.. In this case, you may need to follow up your visit by a further meeting with the Head Teacher and / or appropriate staff members.

Governors should report, in writing, to the Governing Body on their visit at the next Governing Body meeting.

Governors should be aware that they may be given information about, for example, the progress of particular pupils during a visit. Any such information is confidential and should not be discussed outside the context of the Governing Body. When reporting to the Governing Body, any information on, for example, pupil progress should be anonymised.

5.4 The LDBS publication – “Governors’ visits to schools” (*last updated in September 2006*) has lots of useful advice on the “dos and don’ts” of visits and on what to do before, during and after a visit. This publication forms an annex to this policy on governors’ visits to schools and should be read in conjunction with it.

6.0 Governors’ Days

6.1 As well as visits made by individual governors, a Governors’ Day is usually held once per term, when governors are invited to come into the school, usually for a morning, for a visit with a particular focus. This will usually be a curriculum area and governors may be invited to visit a lesson to observe this area of the curriculum being taught and to attend a presentation given by the subject leader. Governors’ Days might also include observing an assembly or meeting with the School Council. Sometimes, governor training will be included as part of a Governors’ Day.

7.0 Safeguarding

- 7.1 All governors must report to the School Office at the start of any visit. They must sign in the governors' visit book at the start of the visit and sign out when they leave the school. During their visit, they should wear a governor lanyard. All governors must have a current DBS check.

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