Governor Visit Protocol

| Committee with oversight for this policy – Achievement for All |  |
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RAVENOR PRIMARY SCHOOL
GOVERNOR VISIT PROTOCOL

Introduction
The Governing Body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance.

Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the Governing Body’s firsthand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Governors are inducted into their role and the associated protocols. These are clearly explained in the induction document which clarifies expectations re Child Protection and Safeguarding, appropriate dress and conduct for all on the school site.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Development Plan. The Governing Body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

Purposes of visit
Potential benefits to governors:
• To recognise and celebrate success
• To develop relationships with the staff
• To get to know the children
• To recognise different teaching styles
• To understand the environment in which teachers teach
• To monitor policies in action
• To inform decision making
• 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

What a visit is not about
• A form of inspection to make judgments about professional expertise of the Teacher
• Checking on progress of own children
• Pursuing personal agenda
• Monopolising school/teacher time

**Protocols or ground rules for visits**
Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surroundings
• Consider what should happen and what should not
• Ensure that visits are no longer than 1 hour

**How to feed back after the visit: See Appendix A**
• Governors should feed back to the Head teacher in the first instance and the Head will pass comments on to the member of Staff. A brief report for the Governing Body must be available for the next appropriate committee meeting
• Positive comments, areas of concern, questions and suggestions should all be reported to the Headteacher
• Where possible all Governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the Head teacher

**Annual program of visits**
A program of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the head teacher and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited.

**Monitoring and review of school visit policy**
This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.
• Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
• Have there been any unexpected benefits?
• How can we make our practice even better?

**Preparing for a visit**
• Check the agreed policy for Governors’ visits
• Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities
• I am interested in?
• Discuss an agenda with the Head teacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
• Use the proforma
• Discuss the proposed agenda with the Headteacher who will co-ordinate with the staff involved.

• Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, development plan, performance data.

• Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Use the agreed questions and structure agreed by Governors

**During the Visit (See Appendices B and C)**

• Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, **it is not appropriate to make judgments or promises on behalf of the governing body.**

• Be punctual.

• Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.

• Decide with the Headteacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.

• Get involved with the children

• Remember it is a visit not an inspection.

• Observe discretely.

• Don’t distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.

• Be courteous, friendly not critical.

• Interact, don’t interrupt.

• Remember why you are there. Don’t lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

• Listen to staff and pupils.

**After**

• Discuss what you have observed with the Headteacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?

• Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.

• Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.

• Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.

• Submit your report to the head teacher for approval
• Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfill its duties?

**Reporting your visit**
• Compile 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.

**Focus of visit: See Appendix D**
Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

• Particular subjects, key stages or classes
• The condition and maintenance of the premises
• Special educational needs
• Literacy and numeracy
• The use of ICT equipment
• The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
• The questions and responses by the teacher to and from individuals and group

**Informal Visits**
Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

In Governor role:
• The Chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher
• To lend a helping hand with a school event
• To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
• To help in a class
• Attend a school function or educational visit

Not in Governor role:
• To speak to a teacher/ member of staff in relation to a specific child
• To request information/ data about a specific child

**Governor Monitoring: See Appendix B:**
Governor monitoring can take several forms:

• Pupil interviews
• Meeting with subject/leader
• Snapshot of a lesson
• Walk around the school

AIMS:
• To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for the subject
• To understand what pupils like best/least in the subject
• To know the standards achieved in the subject
• To know what steps are being taken to improve the subject area
• To report main findings back to the full Governing Body.

**Pupil Interviews:** (suggested questions to ask a small group of children when walking around the classrooms)
These questions will help you gain an understanding of pupil attitudes toward the subject.
• Tell me about what you are learning today.
• Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)?
• Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)?
• Is there anything you don’t like in (select curriculum area being monitored)?

Key questions for subject/learning link governor discussion with subject leader (Foundation subjects)
• What is your vision for the subject?
• Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
• What were the OFSTED findings about the subject? (This question is mainly for Literacy, maths, science and ICT. Other subjects may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection.)
• What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
• How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the subject?
• What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
• What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised?
• Are there any additional resource needs?
• How do you help develop other teachers’ skills in teaching the subject?
Appendix A: Record form for a governor’s school visit

Ravenor Primary School – Governor Visit Proforma

Date of visit:

Name of Governor:

Gov. responsibility:

Staff seen during visit:

Focus of previous visits (if applicable):

Reason for Visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):

Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with Head, LA focus etc):

Information gathered during visit:

Things I liked:

Things I need clarified:

Any identified area/s for Governor training:

Date for next visit:

Any other information:

Date report discussed with HT/DHT
Appendix C. Things to observe when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How the pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children’s work
- Displays
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
Appendix D. Questions for governors to ask

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and numeracy. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in literacy or numeracy can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing body’s agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as literacy/numeracy governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/Math’s across the school. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits — it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Achievements and attitudes
What are the broad trends in the school’s achievement in English/Math’s?

- Compared to similar schools?
- In relation to the national rates of increase?
- In relation to 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 English/math’s compare with those in other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between?
  - Girls and boys
  - 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 travelers?

In meetings with the English/Math’s coordinator can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:

- Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
- The work of a range of pupils — average, below average and above average
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily Literacy/Math’s lessons?
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their daily literacy/maths lessons?
Management of the subject
- How is the role of the English/Maths coordinator developing?
- Does the school development plan match the identified needs?
- (Literacy only) 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?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

Communication
- How are parent’s kept informed of progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?