



Signed by Chair of Governors .....

Date approved by Governors ...March 2018.....

Review Date .....March 2022.....

## **Trowse Primary School**

### **Guidance for Governors on Visits to Schools and Monitoring**

#### **Section A: Visits to Schools**

Visits to school by governors during the time that the school is in operation gives them important insights that they can gain in no other way. If governors are to carry out their role they need to have an understanding of the way schools work and a feel for the dynamics of their particular school. There is no better way of gaining this information than by visiting the school at work. However, although school visits are important for many reasons they form only one part of the governors' wider role.

The main reasons for governors to make visits are:

- to learn about the school
- to enable the governing body to fulfil its monitoring role
- to show those employed in the school that they are interested.

Governors are a part of the school community, but they nevertheless need to agree any visits to the classroom with the headteacher.

#### **Protocol for Classroom Visits**

The following gives guidance on the protocols surrounding visits to the classroom by governors.

#### **For Governing Bodies**

- Ensure that the policy on governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff.
- Recognise that classroom visits are primarily for governors to gain first hand knowledge of the school at work.

- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned.
- Ensure that there are agreed timescales for governors' visits, usually giving at least seven days clear notice.
- Recognise the right for teachers to invite governors into school for specific purposes if they so wish.
- The headteacher should provide members of the governing body with the relevant background information, i.e. staff names, responsibilities and timetables.
- Recognise that any visit to the classroom can be stressful and disrupts normal classroom working and that therefore the number of visits should be limited.
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.

### **For Individual Governors**

- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with the headteacher and class teacher for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that teachers' and governors' time is valuable.
- Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned.
- Avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection or examinations.
- Always wear a name badge.
- Avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with the pupils during the lesson.
- Avoid notetaking or acting in any way like an inspector.
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing body.
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.
- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate for you to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst.

### **For Teachers**

- Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient.
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus which have been agreed by all concerned.
- Prepare your class for the visit of a governor.
- Welcome the governor when they arrive in your class.
- Have a seat ready for the governor and tell them where it is.
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for staff and governors alike.
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson and what it would be helpful for them to do.
- Don't leave your governor alone with the class, even if they are willing.
- Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager or headteacher.
- Avoid discussing unrelated issues during the lesson.

## **Section B: Monitoring**

*'The governing body shall conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement at the school'*

School Standards and Framework Act 1998

*'The purpose of the governing body is to help ensure the best possible education for its pupils. To do this effectively they should have a strategic view of their main function – which is to help raise standards – and clear arrangements for monitoring progress against targets.'* DfEE 1997

For governing bodies to exercise their strategic role, as well as their function of accountability, an essential skill is for them to be able to monitor. However, expectations as to what monitoring actually involves and what areas will be monitored are often unclear amongst both governors and school staff.

Monitoring is an ongoing process of gathering information, according to identified criteria, in order to assist the governing body in its tasks of:

- providing a sense of direction to the school
- supporting the school as a critical friend
- holding the school to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves.

To undertake these tasks, governors need information. They also need to be able to identify what information they require and the sources from which they can get it.

It is important to note that most governor monitoring will involve the receipt of information, statistical and otherwise, together with the recognition that most monitoring in school will be undertaken by the headteacher and professional staff. Certainly the governors' role does not include direct monitoring the quality of teachers. This is the headteacher's role. School visits are important for many reasons but form only one part of the governors' wider role.

The key function of governors is therefore to monitor the monitoring that already goes on in school. They need to be sure that they are in receipt of the monitoring data to enable them to fulfil their role, together with the ability to interpret it. This will enable governors to fulfil their 'critical friend' role by asking relevant questions about standards in the school, and linking these with the target setting process.

Governors will receive monitoring information from a variety of sources, including

- reports and presentations from the headteacher and other staff
- information from the LA and Ofsted

- work of committees
- performance data e.g. LA Key data pages, ASP (DFE)
- School Improvement and Development Plan
- School Self Review
- First hand contact with staff, pupils, parents and community through social events and school visits.

### **School Self Review**

Governing bodies need to monitor progress but they are not necessarily responsible for collecting the monitoring data themselves. For this, they should make appropriate arrangements with the headteacher, or other appropriate members of staff. As part of this monitoring process, governors should be involved in the self evaluation process. Working strategically, they should use any monitoring evidence to review and evaluate progress against targets set, or to see whether a policy is working or needs changing. The self evaluation framework provides governors with a system to help check that monitoring is taking place and that they are receiving appropriate monitoring data. The aim is to bolster a school's capacity to generate its own improvement, with the headteacher and governors taking the initiative, drawing on help and advice from the LA as appropriate.