

St. Joseph's In The Park



Policy Title Governor Visits	Date Summer 2023
Owner Head Karen Tidiman	Date for review Summer 2025 (Finance & General Purposes Committee)

This policy is for whole school including EYFS.

Introduction

It is the governors' function to have responsibility for the long-term success and viability of the school. The Governing Body is responsible for determining the aims and overall conduct of the school. It sets and reviews the policies, plans and procedures that will ensure the best possible education for present and future pupils of the school, including the proper control of its finances. As part of its role in understanding the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum, governors need to know what progress is being made towards targets set out in the School Development Plan (SDP). Visiting the classroom can help support this process.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate assumes that governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This depends on governors assessing performance data presented to them by the Senior Management Team (SMT), and through the Education Committee in the context of an understanding of what happens in the classroom.

St Joseph's In The Park acknowledges the importance of governors visiting school as a vital tool in ensuring that the governing body can evaluate the impact of their plans and policies on the day-to-day operation of the school, raise their awareness of life in the classroom and develop positive relationships between teachers and governors, encouraging a sense of partnership.

It is also important to ISI that the Governing Body makes an impact on school improvement and visiting school to see it in operation, and to be aware of standards and progress are important aspects of this crucial role.

Governors are not qualified to assess standards but they need to visit lessons in order to:

- Appreciate and understand the work of the staff (teachers and support staff) and how the pupils are learning;
- Be aware of the response of pupils to their work and check that the pupils are aware of what they are learning;
- Be aware of resource issues;
- Be able to ask appropriate questions and hold sensible discussions with the professionals;
- Understand as fully as possible the meaning of the results of monitoring reported to them.

Governors are not inspectors and are visiting to gain knowledge or to monitor the development of items on the School Development or Improvement Plan. They are not present in a lesson to make judgements about the professional expertise of teachers. That remains a task for the Head and/or other educational professionals.

It would be inappropriate, therefore, for governors to:

- Make judgements about the quality of teaching;
- Report on the progress of individual children;
- Pursue personal agendas;
- Monopolise teachers' time;
- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

Governors are asked to record their visit as evidence for any subsequent ISI Inspections on the sheet in Appendix 1.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding classroom visits. Observations and comments should be shared with the teacher concerned, and with the Head/Assistant Head, but not with other staff or with parents. The approach of a governor should be to ask for explanations of anything not understood, not to make assumptions.

Reports to the Governing Body should not identify individuals in a critical manner: this is not the role of a governor.

Minimum commitment

Individual governors have differing amounts of time to commit to an exercise such as classroom visits. It is important, however, that all governors should try to make visits at some time, beyond that initial general visit to the school when one is newly appointed to the governing body. A governor should aim to make a class visit *at least* once a year.

Three steps to a visit

1. Before the visit agree with the Head the focus of the visit.
2. Arrange a time to visit with class teacher - informing him/her of the focus of the visit. It is helpful to meet the teacher prior to entering the lesson.
3. Ask if there is any information that should be read prior to the visit.

The visit may be focussed on an action from the School Improvement Plan or be a general visit to learn about your specific curriculum or year group link. A visit may also be a chance for the Governor to familiarise themselves with the working of the school.

Governors Handy Hints...what you might like to appreciate when spending time in school

Caution..this is not a check list. It would be inappropriate to take notes during the visit

In the classroom

Teacher's enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject
Engagement with the class
Involvement of the children
Teacher's use of equipment
Children's enjoyment and concentration
Children's personal organisation (desks, books)
Children's ability to express themselves
Children's ability to work independently and in groups
Relationship with their teacher
All children (from brightest to least able) are challenged

Around the school

Children's behaviour towards each other
Their manners

Other areas

Pastoral care
Resources
Curriculum

Governors with a teaching background might be aware of:

Opportunities for children to be assessed
Children's application of their skills and knowledge
Children taking responsibility for their own learning

Procedures in the event of concern

Where concerns exist, it is vital that they are discussed immediately with the Head/Assistant Head.

And finally....

Enjoy your visits to school

Encourage other governors to visit

Remember that as well as being a duty and a pleasure it is a privilege to go into a school

You may observe children's work, health or they may innocently reveal things about their home life – it must remain confidential

A good reputation is very hard to gain and very easy to lose. As a governor, you are part of the team aiming to build this good reputation. It can be extremely damaging if concerns are expressed to the community.

Review

The guidelines should be reviewed by the Governing Body each academic year. We would need to ask:

- o *Are our visits proving useful?*

Have there been benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, from our visits?

Appendix 1

Governor Visit Report	
Name:	Date:
Focus of visit	Class/staff visited
Focus of visit e.g. talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch, linked to school improvement plan etc.	
What have I learned as a result of my visit?	Positive comments about the visit
Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have:	
Ideas for future visits:	
Any other comments:	
Signed _____ (Governor)	Signed _____