



Hemingford Grey SCHOOL

GOVERNORS' VISITS

Date policy was last reviewed and approved: **May 2017**

1. Introduction

Governing bodies have a statutory duty to promote high standards of educational achievement at their school and to monitor the school's performance. The governors and staff of Hemingford Grey Primary School (the School) recognise that one important way for governors to acquire and update their knowledge of the School is to visit it, and believe all governors should do so in a structured way. The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for governors' visits which encourages consistency whilst still allowing individual governors and staff members the flexibility to agree an appropriate format together

The governing body has a Governors' Code of Practice, which all governors are expected to follow.

At Hemingford Grey there are two types of governor visits:

- Informal Visits
- Formal Visits

2. Informal Visits

At Hemingford Grey, we believe governors should be invited to, and visit, the school on an informal basis whenever possible. We believe such visits offer a valuable complement to formal visits, but are not an alternative to them. They add to governors' knowledge and understanding and can foster trust and goodwill between the governing body and staff. Informal visits also offer an ideal opportunity to mix with other members of the School community and help governors meet their responsibilities towards those outside the School.

Informal visits include, for example, being invited to attend plays, open days, assemblies, etc, or to help at school events or attend school trips. Governors may also offer to help in the classroom, and the headteacher should encourage staff wishing such help to make contact with the governor(s) concerned. Governors should note that such visits should be by prior arrangement only with the headteacher and staff concerned.

Governors attending an informal visit should report back verbally at the next committee or full governing body meeting, as appropriate. 'Governor visit reports' is a standing agenda item for the full governing body and at relevant times on the Curriculum Committee meeting agendas.

3. Formal Visits

At Hemingford Grey, we believe formal visits should enrich the governing body's, as well as the visiting governor's, understanding of the work of the School. During formal visits, individual governors of the School act as representatives of the governing body, which has corporate responsibility for the overall management of the School. Visits relate solely to their responsibilities as governors and their capacities as individuals. The main reason for visiting is for governors to gain a first-hand impression of what the School is like and what goes on there, thus providing a valuable context and background – which might otherwise be unobtainable – for the discussions that take place during governing body meetings.

When using visits to gain information and impressions to help them in their policy-making, decision-taking and monitoring roles, governors act as observers not inspectors, i.e. they make factual observations, not judgements, about the effectiveness of teaching. Governors will respect the professionalism of the teachers and respect the children.

Governors will form views from their visits about matters which bear on the performance of the School and are relevant to the governing body's responsibilities, such as:

- the ethos and atmosphere of the School

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- the character of the curriculum
- the operation of policies and implementation of the National Curriculum
- how pupils relate to the staff and other pupils and how staff relate to pupils and each other
- the morale of the staff
- the motivation, behaviour and attainment of the pupils
- the adequacy and availability of various kinds of resources
- the condition and suitability of the premises
- how far the School relates to the outside world
- how well the school makes the curriculum and other school activities accessible to all pupils, regardless of any disability or other difficulties those pupils may face

This information is then set in context by other background information (e.g. national tests (SATs), statutory teacher assessments, OfSTED Reports) provided by the teacher, headteacher or Local Authority.

Through visiting the School, governors can also keep abreast of changes and of different approaches to teaching and learning, get to know staff and pupils and demonstrate their commitment to the School.

4. Arrangements

Formal visits will have a clear focus, a mutually agreed and understood purpose, and are linked to the School Improvement Plan, particularly developments planned for the current year. Plans for the governor visit will be made in advance at governing body meetings so that the focus is clearly established. Any useful documents for governors to refer to will be identified beforehand. Generally a small group of governors will take part in a formal visit. It would be useful to ensure that new Governors are accompanied by more experienced Governors on their first formal visit. It is an expectation that all governors will undertake one formal governor visit per academic year.

Dates for formal visits will be agreed annually by the Full Governing Body in consultation with the headteacher and staff, and distributed to all concerned via the governing body calendar. Wherever possible, and when appropriate, governors' visits should be planned to link to school events, such as musical performances, sports days, etc.

Governors may wish to stay for school lunch, and if so they should make any necessary payment arrangements with the school administrator.

5. During Formal Visits

Governors should observe the School's rules for visitors, which includes signing in and out of the visitors' book and wearing a governor badge/lanyard. They should be sensitive to any unforeseen issues that may arise during their visit and be prepared to shorten their stay if necessary. A formal visit usually lasts half a school day and includes observing a range of classes. Ideally governors should not sit at the back of the room but get involved without being obstructive. Having observed learning in classrooms/learning zones, governors then usually spend time scrutinising children's work, in accordance with the focus of the visit and with a member of staff. Governors should share their experiences afterwards with the relevant member(s) of staff and/or the headteacher and the headteacher should, whenever possible, provide staff with the opportunity to participate in this process.

Any concerns which staff have with regard to governors' visits should be discussed with the teacher or staff governor, who should bring it to the attention of the governing body after consultation with the headteacher if s/he feels it necessary.

Any governor concerns should be brought first to the attention of the headteacher and chair of governors; and only after they have had the opportunity to respond to the governing body.

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6. Reporting back on Formal Visits

Governors should report back orally at the next committee or full governing body meeting as appropriate and provide a written report using the Governor Visit Proforma. Such reports should respect the confidentiality of those involved and it is recognised that some points may be more appropriately raised orally. At all times, a draft report will be provided to the headteacher for comment before circulation. Copies of all written reports will be filed in a Governors' Visits File. The Governor Visit Proforma is given in Appendix 1.

Governors should evaluate the success of their visit: did it achieve its purpose; has it increased governors' knowledge; is any further action needed?

Appendix 1: Hemingford Grey Primary School Governor Visit Report Form

NB: A draft copy of this report should be provided to the headteacher for comment before circulation

Governor's name/s:	
Date and time of visit:	
Purpose/main theme of visit:	
Staff involved in visit:	

1. General comments on the visit including initial discussions with/background provided by the teacher(s)
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2. Visit checklist – use this checklist as a guide on what to observe and feedback on:

School climate

- Are the children respectful, polite, demonstrating good manners and can you see the golden rules in action?
- Is there a 'feel' to the school – does it seem a happy and exciting place to be?
- What do children say about their lessons? Are they able to tell you what they are learning and why and what they need to do to achieve the objective of the lesson? Can they tell you what they can do well and what they need to focus on next to improve their learning? Can they tell you about the enrichment activities and clubs, golden time, golden rules and behaviour? *Record comments made by the children as appropriate*
- How do staff talk to children? Is there a mutual respect?
- Do the above continue at playtime/lunch times?
- How do adults relate to children outside?

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Curriculum

- Can you observe opportunities for children to investigate, observe, enquire and explore?
- Have you observed the learning zones in action?
- In the learning zone, what evidence is there of extension and support?
- Can you observe children working collaboratively and alone?
- Is there a degree of independence given to the children?
- What evidence is there that children are articulate about what and how they are learning?
- Are children being considerate to each other in lessons?

Environment

- Are there displays of children's work?
- Is display work marked?
- Are displays labelled?
- Are there 'learning walls' to support the children, plus vocabulary banks and numeracy banks?
- Is a mind map, highlighting the big picture, visible?
- Are classrooms/learning zones tidy with accessible resources for children?
- Can children talk about how they use the classroom/learning zone to help them with their learning?
- Do children know how to get to resources and what to use to help them?
- Are the resources appealing and well cared for?
- What do corridor areas say about our school? (Are they tidy, organised, displays, informative.)

Multicultural/anti-racist education (do we need to expand this to include diversity/equality?)

- What evidence is there in school that we are an inclusive community? (Displays / resources reflecting the world in which we live).
- What evidence is there that other cultures are celebrated in our school? (Displays, planning, children talking).
- What evidence is there that children are aware of other cultures?"*
- The following question to be discussed only if it is appropriate to do so (eg if being discussed in class.) Do children understand why it is important that racist comments and racism is unacceptable? (Range of questioning about this will need to be clarified, ie, a question to reception or year 1 may be 'Why is name calling wrong?', but in year 5/6 the question would be more focussed, e.g 'Why is it wrong to call someone names because of the colour of their skin/their religion/their way of life?')*

Children's learning portfolios (topic folders)

- Is there a range of work in the portfolio reflecting a varied learning experience?
- What differences are seen between different ability portfolios?
- Are children encouraged to present their work in a variety of ways?

- What evidence of progression throughout the school and within a year can be found by looking at a range of portfolios?
- What evidence is there in the portfolios that children are responding to the marking and feedback policy

Staff knowledge of child protection procedures

- Do staff members know who the designated members of staff for child protection are?
- Do staff members know what procedures to follow if they have a child protection concern?
- Do staff members know how to record a child protection concern?
- Is the child protection flowchart visible on the core board in each learning area?
- Are staff aware of safeguarding procedures?

3. Evaluation

What was achieved:
Knowledge gained:
Suggested further action: