

**HARESTOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY**  
**SCHOOL POLICY**

**Date:** Autumn term 2017

**Review Date:** Autumn term 2020

### **Importance of Governor Visits**

Governor visits to the School are an important part of ensuring that Governors know, understand, support and challenge the School. They also contribute to ensuring that Governors develop and maintain the knowledge and experience necessary to fulfill their duties as Governors.

Governors must comply with the School's Safeguarding policies and procedures when carrying out Governor Visits.

### **Background**

Individual governors do not have automatic rights to enter the school. However the DfE considers governor visits to be an essential part of the governance process and a means of confirming that the school is doing what the governing body has agreed the school should be doing. The DfE further recommends that the school should have a clear policy on such visits, drawn up by the head teacher and governors.

The aim of this policy is to set out some guidelines for Harestock governors to follow when visiting the school. Informal visits to join in social or child-centered activities are included here, although they would not require formal guidelines to be explicitly applied.

### **Types of Governor Visits**

there are different types of Governor Visits, including:

- An orientation/induction visit

Soon after a new Governor is appointed, they should be invited into school to meet the Head Teacher and key staff as part of their 'induction' to the school. This initial visit should allow the Governor to start to get to know the school and to build a friendly working relationship with the staff.

- Formal (Strategic) Governor Visits

These visits are to monitor and assess the curriculum, implementation of policies, and school improvement activities as outlined in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). These are carried out in accordance with the Governing Body Annual Plan or Subcommittee scheme of work. A Visit Plan is completed in advance, and then a report to the FGB circulated afterwards. Examples include: Safeguarding, SMSC, SIP, subjects (i.e. Maths or English), Able Child, SEN;

- Staff recruitment

Assisting with staff interviews as requested by the HT from time to time;

- Subcommittee-related work

This includes visits to carry out the SFVS, Health & Safety "walk arounds", budget planning, SIP planning;

- Role-specific & statutory visits

Governors with specific or statutory roles within the Governing Body, such as Chairs, TLG, Safeguarding Governor and the SEN Governor, will need to meet with relevant staff and understand operations in order to fulfill their duties. These visits assist the school in fulfilling its statutory duties: Health and Safety etc;

- Raising awareness

The Governing Body seeks to raise the awareness of parents/carers, pupils and staff of the role of the Governing Body and how people can engage with it. From time to time the FGB may agree activities which Governors will undertake in order to facilitate this;

- Informal Governor visits

Governors have an open, standing, invitation to all school events. Attending these events, such as school plays, special events and assemblies, improve governor knowledge of the school and help build relationships with staff, parents/carers and pupils.

**Frequency of Visits:**

Governors are expected to make at least the following number of Governor visits:

- One **orientation** visit soon as possible after the Governor has joined the board.
- One half day **formal/strategic** visit per term. Each governor should aim to make at least one 'strategic' infant or junior visit per year;
- The frequency of **Staff recruitment support** depend upon the Head Teacher's requirements;
- The frequency of **Subcommittee-related work** will be determined by the scheme of work decided by the relevant Subcommittee;
- The frequency of **role-specific meetings & statutory visits** will be determined by law, school policy and by the individuals directly involved;
- A minimum of one **raising awareness visit** per governor per year;
- A minimum of one **informal** visit to a **school event** per governor per year.

**Timing of Governor Visits**

The Chair of Governors, Chairs of Subcommittees and Head Teacher will discuss and plan in advance a timetable of strategic visits across the school year for inclusion in the Governing Body Annual Plan. This will initially fix dates and propose the subject matter of a visit, with details to be decided in the half term preceding that visit.

The Head Teacher will try to notify governors about **school events** well in advance, so that Governors have the chance to keep these dates free. Information about school events is also available to Governors via the school website and school newsletters.

Specific **individual or working party visits** will be arranged directly with the relevant member of staff at a mutually convenient time.

**Orientation visits** will be arranged directly with the Head Teacher at a mutually convenient time.

**Statutory visits** will be arranged directly with the relevant member of staff at a mutually convenient time.

In all cases the Head Teacher will be informed of the forthcoming visit, with Formal/Strategic visits being planned in conjunction with the Head Teacher and relevant Subcommittee or FGB Chair.

## Planning Governor Visits

Before visiting the school the governor(s) should:

1. Prepare a draft Governor Visit Plan using the template at Appendix 1 of this policy (also available as a separate document). This includes:
  - making the necessary arrangements to ensure that the member(s) of staff/pupil focus groups they wish to see will be free;
  - discuss with the Head Teacher to see if there is any supporting documentation that will add value to the visit, getting as much context for the visit as possible;
  - Clarify beforehand exactly what will be observed and what questions will be asked during the visit.
2. Send the draft Governor Visit Plan to the Chair of Governors/Chair of relevant Subcommittee and Head Teacher for consideration, feedback, amendment and approval;
3. Contact the Head Teacher one week before to confirm the visit by phone or email. (Admin email address is: [adminoffice@harestock.hants.sch.uk](mailto:adminoffice@harestock.hants.sch.uk) and phone number is 01962 881575);
4. Ensure that they are familiar with Safeguarding and Health & Safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire or lockdown;

Governors carrying out their first visit may find it helpful to arrange to plan, carry out and review their first visit with another, more experienced Governor.

### During the visit governor(s) should:

Arrive in good time for the visit and ensure they sign in at the office and wear their yellow Governor badge stating name, title and role (e.g. 'Mrs White - Governor'). If there is a timetable for the visit, governors should try to stick to it but also be prepared to be flexible.

Try to look relaxed and 'blend in'. Get involved but avoid being conspicuous.

Observe discreetly. Obvious note taking can be disconcerting for everyone – staff, pupils and governors.

Talk with the teacher and pupils at appropriate times, show interest and when appropriate, ask questions.

Keep focused on the purpose and theme of the visit.

Try to take time during the visit to talk with staff and to reflect on what has been observed (but not during actual teaching time).

Thank all involved in the visit.

### After visiting the school the governor(s) should:

For **strategic visits** - before leaving the school, discuss initial thoughts with a member of the SLT. If a member of the SLT is unavailable this can be done by phone or email. When appropriate the SLT will feed back to the teachers when necessary.

For specific **individual visits** - discuss initial thoughts with the person met.

Write up any notes as soon as possible while fresh in the mind.

Complete a draft copy of the visit report and provide a copy for the Head Teacher and staff involved during the visit to amend appropriately. (A draft proforma is attached at Appendix 2). The completed form should be retained in school in the Governor Visits file as a record of monitoring.

Report back to the FGB and/or Subcommittee as appropriate.

Provide constructive feedback as appropriate.

Ensure that follow up points are included in subsequent FGB or committee agendas.

### **Conclusion**

It is important that Governors remember that the purpose of governors' visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision, which is a matter for the Head Teacher, but is to provide assurance about the delivery of the subject as part of the school's agreed strategic and curriculum plans. Visits should not pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school, other than as agreed with the head teacher or the leadership team (eg as part of performance management work, or a premises audit).

Visits provide a very positive way for governors and staff to share good practice and celebrate achievement. Unlike OFSTED inspections, where there is a particular agenda and process, governor visits should be seen as a natural way of working together for the benefit of all pupils. The points outlined above should help in sustaining the positive relationship between governors and staff that is essential for a well-managed school.

A visit to school can be rewarding for both parties and should not overlook an opportunity to celebrate success.

Staff consultation: May 2012

Approved by GB: updated version approved at May 2016 FGB, subject to minor amendments to the Governor Visit Plan template

## APPENDIX 1

### HARESTOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR VISIT PLAN

<b>Name of Governor:</b>	<b>Role or special interest area:</b>	<b>Date of Visit:</b>
<b>Subject of visit:</b>		
<b>SIP link:</b>	<b>Curriculum link:</b>	<b>Ofsted report link:</b>
<b>Objectives of visit (including SIP link):</b>		
<b>Preparatory reading (i.e. SIP, guidance, report):</b>		
<b>Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Make a list from the preparatory reading of things you are looking for to show implementation of the policies;</li><li>○ List any questions which arise for you as you complete the reading so you can ask the relevant member of staff.</li></ul>		
<b>Learning walk &amp; classroom visits:</b> <p>Do a learning walk to look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ related displays</li><li>○ related behaviours</li><li>○ related teaching</li><li>○ anything you have identified from your reading which should be identifiable via a learning walk</li></ul>		
<b>Staff meetings:</b> <p>Speak with staff about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ their experience and understanding of the relevant area</li><li>○ any training they have received</li><li>○ how they approach the relevant area</li><li>○ how they think the school approaches it (strengths and weaknesses)</li><li>○ any other thoughts they have in relation to it</li></ul>		
<b>Pupils conferencing:</b>		
<b>Feedback</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ discuss your observations with a member of the SLT (depending upon who is available when you finish)</li><li>○ prepare your visit form including identifying up to four key points to mention in the next FGB and/or to report back to the relevant committee meeting.</li></ul>		

**APPENDIX 2**  
**HARESTOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR VISIT REPORT FORM**

<b>Name of Governor:</b>	<b>Area:</b>	<b>Date of Visit:</b>
<b>Member(s) of staff met with:</b> <b>Pupil conferencing carried out:</b> <b>Classes visited:</b>		
<b>Objectives of visit:</b>		
<b>Relevant visit plan followed? YES/NO (please attach visit plan)</b>		
<b>Notes:</b>		
<b>Discussion with HT (or, in absence of HT, with DHT or SENCo) following visit:</b>		
<b>Follow up points agreed with HT/DHT/JC:</b>		
Entire form will be circulated to governors and placed in the "visits" folder. A short verbal update will also be given.  <b>Please note here up to four points for verbal feedback at next FGB:</b>		