

Rowlands Gill Primary School

Governors' Visiting Policy

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Ratified by Governors: November 2020

Re-adopted by Governors: November 2023

Next review date: October 2026



Policy review dates:

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date Shared
27.10.23	General updates including Governor visit day	LC	14.11.23

Governors' Visiting Policy

Rationale:

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor school policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for the school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will test this assumption during a school inspection.

Policy Aims:

To enable Governors to:

- Gain insight into the life of the school;
- Create and develop relationships with staff, children and where appropriate parents;
- Better understand the Governors' roles in raising standards;
- Have a better understanding of the school's current performance, practice, strengths and areas for further development, thus enabling them to provide more targeted and effective challenge and support.

Overarching Principles:

The Governors of Rowlands Gill Primary School recognise that one of the best and most effective ways they can get to know their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work. To this end the Governors undertake official 'monitoring visits' to the school to review and explore a specific aspect of practice. These visits are not an inspection, but a 'fact finding' and observational opportunity and a platform to help Governors ask questions and understand practice. (Examples of questions to ask are included in Appendix 4).

To further support the effectiveness of their work the Governing Body also appoint link Governors to key areas of the school practice, such as SEND, Safeguarding etc.

This policy includes a sample Governors' Visit report form, which will help guide discussion on the issues raised and provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base, e.g. a member of staff's performance management.

What are Governor visits about? (The main purposes)

A Governor visits school to:

- Increase the Governing Body's first-hand knowledge about the school and its daily operation; thus helping to inform ongoing and future strategic discussion and decision making.
- Keep under review the way in which the school is operating and performing and what it is doing to manage areas requiring further development.
- Experience the impact and progress resulting from the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies.
- Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously.
- Establish and develop good professional working relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with an individual area of responsibility, e.g. Special Educational Needs or Health and Safety.
- Demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process.

- Show support and encouragement to staff and children.

What are Governor visits not about?

Governors' visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of their own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues

Setting up the Visits

All visits to the school are to be agreed with the Headteacher at least 2 weeks' in advance and focus on ensuring the aims outlined above are fulfilled.

- Dates of the 'Governor monitoring' visits will be agreed with the headteacher and shared with all relevant stakeholders.
- Each year a Governor Visit Day is identified on the calendar. This is a planned opportunity for curriculum-related or class-based visits. By planning a day in this way, we are ensuring that staff wellbeing and workload is considered and fully supported.
- Agree the purpose and protocols with staff so that mutual trust and respect are established and to clarify the key differences between the evaluation roles of senior leaders and governors.
- To support the visit Governors will receive a copy of any relevant plans or documentation.
- When Governors make visits to classrooms, this should be undertaken individually or in pairs. If larger groups are required, this should be approved in advance by the headteacher to ensure it doesn't lead to unnecessary disruption to the children or daily operation of the school.

Undertaking the visit:

- Governors will arrive in good time for their visit.
- Governors should allow enough time for an informal briefing and debriefing after the visit activity has taken place.
- Brief notes may be taken; however copies of these will be made available to staff, if required.
- Governors will **concentrate on the agreed focus of the visit which has been pre-arranged with the Headteacher.**
- If in the rare eventuality, a Governor feels that their presence is making a member of staff feel uncomfortable or the lesson is clearly going awry for some reason, the Governor will judge whether to withdraw. If a major problem arises in any classroom during a visit, a member of the SLT should be informed before leaving the school.
- During the lesson, opportunities may arise for the Governor to talk to pupils; however care should be taken to ensure this doesn't affect the delivery or flow of the lesson.
- Whilst Governors should be sensitive about distracting pupils from their tasks, they should use the opportunity to see the lesson from the pupils' perspective by asking questions. For example, Can you tell me what you are learning? What do you do if you get stuck? How do you know how well you are doing? What is your best piece of work and why? What helps you learn best?

When in school Governors will be expected to follow our 'Code of Conduct' (see Appendix 1) and behave in an appropriate manner at all times showing courtesy to all adults and children.

At the end of the visit:

- Any monitoring visit or activity should be discussed with a member of the SLT at the end of the visit and a written record made by the governor/s concerned. (See Appendix 2). If the visit was a learning walk, the agreed format should be completed (see Appendix 3). This should be sent to the Headteacher within two weeks of the visit, then once agreed with the Head, should be sent to the Chair and presented at the next full governors meeting.
- Governor(s) must NOT make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governor(s) may ask questions to help clarify their understanding of things seen, heard or told.
- Governor(s) will share with staff what they have learned from their visit.
- Records made or written summaries completed will be subsequently made available to both relevant staff and the full Governing body.

Examples of Activities to Include in Monitoring:

- Statutory compliance audits
- Safeguarding audits
- Engagement with stakeholder (parents/carers, pupils) questionnaires – distribution/analysis/next steps
- Focused discussions with children about their learning (pupil voice activities)
- ‘Learning walks’ with an agreed focus
- Directed observations of aspects of school life – eg behaviour, parents’ evenings, playtime
- Regular data analysis – RAISE online, FFT, internal tracking (eg 3x per year) so that interventions and resources can be strategically targeted
- Reports from/meetings with subject leaders

Roles and responsibilities:

The governing body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Rowlands Gill Primary School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, children and parents are aware of this policy and that it is fully implemented.

Policy monitoring and evaluation:

The Governing Body will review this policy at least once every 3 years or sooner if necessary. This review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we more able to make informed decisions?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Appendix 1**Summary Visit Protocol Sheet (Code of Conduct)**

	Always	Never
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Before	✓ Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher. This includes considering which actions of the School Improvement Plan to review or the context of lessons being visited. ✓ Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. Arrange and plan the details of the visit with the Headteacher/relevant member of staff, drawing up a schedule for the visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? ✓ Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available. E.g. Ofsted report, improvement plan, scheme of work etc. ✓ Try to visit at different times of the day. ✓ Agree the level of confidentiality.	• Turn up unannounced for a focused / formal visit. • Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement • Visit during a SATs week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
During	✓ Be prepared, organised and punctual. ✓ Report to the school office and sign in. ✓ Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit. ✓ Observe school / class guidelines. ✓ Jot down discussion points to consider later at the feedback session. ✓ Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit. ✓ Listen to staff and pupils.	• Monopolise staff time. • Interrupt teaching or talk to the teacher while he / she is teaching. • Behave like an Inspector! • Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes. • Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body. It is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on their behalf.
After	✓ Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils. ✓ Discuss what you have observed with the teacher or staff lead as soon as possible after the visit. Use the opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about. ✓ Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher / relevant SLT member. <i>(Refer to the purpose of the visit, considering together whether it has been achieved.)</i> ✓ Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant. ✓ Complete a Visit Form within 72 hours and give a copy to the Headteacher, (unless a group feedback sheet has been completed during the feedback session.) ✓ Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit.	• Leave without a word of thanks. • Leave the school without giving some feedback. • Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors, (except the Chair) unless given permission to do so.

Appendix 2

Record of Governor's Visit

Governor's Name:	Date of Visit:	Timetable: (when, what, who with?)
Focus of visit:		
Areas/classes visited:		
Sources of information: <i>e.g.: Headteacher, class teacher, display work, exercise books, pupil conferencing</i>		
General comments:		
Summary of what was learned:	Aspects I would like clarified / questions that I have:	
Points to take forward for discussion at the governing body meeting:		
Signed:	Date:	
Received and discussed with Headteacher:	Received by the Governing Body:	

Appendix 3

School Governor Visit Self Evaluation: Recording Sheet

Governor: _____ Class Teacher: _____

e.g. I noticed... I saw... I heard... (reported after each classroom visit)

Discussions with teacher: (I heard)

Discussions with pupil: (I saw)

Examination of evidence:

(I saw, I heard, I noticed) **The Learning Environment and arrangement of the classroom and pupils resource books/ stimulus material.**

What did you see that informed the children on what they were learning today?

Golden Nugget? (I noticed, saw, heard some special aspect)

Pending question for Head or teacher?

Staff Information About Governor Visits / Learning Walks

The purpose of a Governors' learning walk is to support the Governing Body in carrying out its key responsibility on monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

It does this by;

- Having a clear and transparent framework informing staff on the focus of the learning walk.
- Informing staff on all questions that will be asked in advance.
- Being non-judgemental, Governors are only collecting evidence on what they see and hear.
- Ensuring the approach is the same in every classroom.
- Collating the evidence and presenting this to the Leadership team and the School Improvement Partner.

How is a learning walk implemented?

- Governors will receive a briefing prior to starting the walk.
- Staff will see the brief at least 24 hours before the walk.
- Staff are requested to provide no more than 8 books which demonstrate children's work from across the ability range in their classroom.
- How a learning walk is implemented will vary according to what is being looked at and who is available. Staff will be made aware of the implementation plan as part of the brief.
- When the Governors have visited all classrooms they will meet together for a debrief and discuss the main learning points for them as individuals and for the school. This is then collated in to the final report. The format for this feedback is very strictly facilitated and there will be no judgements made.
- The SLT will collate all the information and the key messages which will be shared with all staff at a later date as appropriate.

The Governors wish to thank all the staff for supporting the undertaking of these important learning walks.

Appendix 4

Key Questions for Governors

What you as governors need to know/ask:

- Are standards at the end of KS1/2 declining or improving?
- Are the outcomes different for different subjects/groups of children?
- Are the right priorities identified in the improvement plan?
- What are the key actions/programmes/interventions planned to address these? (e.g. Better Reading Partnership, 1:1 tuition)
- How will impact be monitored/by whom/when?
- Do we need to make changes to current provision/resource deployment given the needs within each year group? Is spending correctly prioritised?
- What is the profile of the quality of teaching across the school? How do you know?
- What steps will be taken to secure at least 'good' teaching in all classrooms?
- How reliable/accurate is assessment data which is used to track individual progress? Are there inconsistencies? If so, what will be done to tackle these?
- Which are our vulnerable groups and what additional steps are being taken to 'close the gap'?

General:

- How well are the children/young people in each year group progressing towards end of year targets/expectations? How do you know?
- What are our Expected Outcomes at the end of each Key Stage this year? How do these compare with our targets? If there is a shortfall, what is being done to address this?
- What else do we need to do to secure accelerated improvement this year? How can governors help?

Pupil Progress:

- How and when are the children/young people assessed? How do SLT make sure that these assessments are reliable? How are outcomes used to inform teacher planning?
- To what extent are children/young people engaged in assessing their own work? What is the impact of this?
- How is each child/young person's progress tracked through the school? How is this information used?
- How do SLT make sure that underachieving children/young people are identified early and correctly? What interventions are put in place to accelerate progress? How is the impact of these evaluated?
- When are progress meetings held with staff? How are outcomes used to improve learning?
- How might governors contribute more effectively to assessment/data analysis processes within the school?

Quality of Provision:

- How good is the quality of teaching in our school? How do SLT know? What happening to make it even better?
- How well do our curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? What is being done to improve/enhance our children/young people's learning experiences?

- How can the governors contribute more widely to the educational provision for our children/young people?

Attendance

Children in Care

- How many children in care do we have in school?
- How is the attendance of children in care monitored and what contact is there with ECLAS (Education for Children Looked After Service) or social workers, or with the Local Authority virtual head teacher for children in care?
- How many days absence have individual children in care in the school had? What are the reasons for the absences?
- Is there an action plan in place with the social worker and or Carer to address concerns about attendance?

Attendance data and processes

- How are we using attendance data in school?
- Do we as a school use data supplied from the LA through the LA database?
- How many children do we have at the moment who fall into the persistent absence category (those children with below 90% attendance) and what action are we taking with each individual to improve attendance?
- What time do we close our register? Is it within 1/2hr of the end of registration as set out in the DCSF guidance?
- What does the ASP data say about our school attendance? How does our school compare to other schools in different parts of the country with similar free school meal levels?
- How does the attendance of specific groups in the school (Black and Minority Ethnic group, children with a Special Educational Need, Children in Care or children on free school meals) compare to others in the school population? What are we doing to address any identified issues and how are we 'closing the gap'?

Targets

- What are the absence targets for the current year, and what actions are we taking to ensure that we meet them? (It is important to note that attendance targets are expressed as the % of absence. This means that 96% attendance is the same as 4% absence – this is DCSF terminology but can cause some confusion.)

Workforce

- Who is the attendance officer in school and how much time do they spend during the week on attendance issues?
- Who is the senior member of staff responsible for improving attendance and reducing persistent absence?
- Do we use penalty notices for unauthorised absences? And does the school understand the guidance issued by the local authority?