



St Mary's Hampton

Church of England Primary School

GOVERNORS & STAFF WORKING TOGETHER PROTOCOL

Review Frequency: Annual
Next Review: Autumn Term 2017
Review by: Co-Chair of Governors with Headteacher

At the Governing Board meeting on 15 December 2016, governors AGREED the professional conduct principles contained in this Protocol continued to apply.

Signed:

(Acting Headteacher)

Signed:

(Co-Chair of Governors)

Roles and Responsibilities

The *Governance Handbook (November 2015)* defines the role of the governor as:

- a. **Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;**
- b. **Holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;** and
- c. **Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.**

This applies to all those elected as a school governor at St Mary's School. The Governing Board is accountable to the Department of Education, the local community, all the parents, staff and children at the school and Ofsted.

Ofsted looks for the impact that the Governors make on school improvement, by visiting their school, knowing their school and be aware of the standards and the school's progress. Governors are 'the strategic leaders of the school' (2013: 6). Part of their duty is explained as follows:

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on governing bodies of maintained schools to promote wellbeing. 'Wellbeing' is defined in the Children Act 2004 as:

- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- protection from harm and neglect;
- education, training and recreation;
- the contribution children make to society; and
- social and economic wellbeing.

Several governors have specific roles such as taking a lead in safeguarding, shared with the head teacher, and health and safety, SEN, finance and performance management, with the headteacher. They oversee but they are not responsible for the day to day running of the school.

Staff and Parent Governors

The role of these governors is exactly the same as any other governor of the school. They bring different sets of skills and expertise that the Governing Board may call upon. They are governors in their own right and are not there to do the bidding of those who elect them. However, if they want to inform the Governing Board of issues that are pertinent to other staff/ teachers or parents then they are at liberty to inform accordingly. The same standards of confidentiality and accountability apply to all governors.

There is a table giving an overview of Governing Board key activities in *Governance Handbook 2015*.

At St Mary's School, Hampton the responsibilities are shared by three committees: Resources, Personnel and Pastoral Care and School Evaluation and Development. These three committees meet on average twice a term and report back to the full Governing Board, which meets at least once a term.

The governors are expected to understand their role, be answerable to Ofsted and receive training, in order to ask challenging questions about the overall strategy for development, improvement and financial health.

Confidentiality

Adherence to confidentiality is important, all observations and comments should be shared with the teacher concerned and with the head teacher, **but not with other staff or parents**. The approach of a governor should be to ask for explanations of anything not understood, not to make assumptions or judgements. Any written reports to the Governing Board should not identify individuals in a critical manner: this is not the role of a governor.

Visiting school

The Governing Board is invited to attend events such as the Birthday of the school – Sept 24th, Harvest, Christmas and Easter activities and other general invitations to school activities, such as the Sharing Assembly, and as individuals within their specific responsibility. As individual governors are representatives of the full Governing Board they are required to set a good role model to all parents, staff, children and other invited guests. They are the school's ambassadors.

When in school, governors are guests, even though they are ultimately responsible for the school's efficiency and effectiveness. They need to conform to the school's policies and procedures regarding Safeguarding and Health and Safety, recognise and follow the school ethos and add not detract from the school ambience and staff duties. ID badges need to be worn when in school grounds or buildings and governors need to be aware that the children are learning, so other staff might not be free to talk or spend time with individual governors. Governors need to be aware of timing and appropriateness of expressing opinions or ideas and should be conscious of their role as 'critical friends'. During school visits it would not be appropriate to engage staff members in conversation outside the purpose of the visit.

Personal opinions, ideas, concerns or suggestions

No decisions can be taken unilaterally either amongst themselves, as governors or with an individual member of staff. However, if a member of staff seeks advice or help, from a governor then whatever is suggested by the individual governor must be referred to the head teacher. No governor can make a judgement about children, staff, classroom, teaching quality, or method without reference to the head teacher. Similarly, no member of staff can act upon decisions discussed with individual governors where these impact on any school policy, procedure or general running of the school. Such 'decisions' would need to be discussed with the head teacher who would decide on the practical outcome. If the head teacher deems there is any issue after being approached by a governor, then the head teacher would discuss this with the Chair of Governors. Together, they can decide if the issue/ idea/ suggestion needs to be referred to the appropriate committee.

Teacher and staff governors

All schools should have staff representation on the Governing Board. It is an important role as spokesperson for other school staff and provides the opportunity for staff to be involved with strategic decisions. Staff governors are often some of the most valuable members of the Governing Board because of their knowledge, insight and ability to explain and understand educational issues. Teachers and staff have a direct input into the development of the school as members of the Governing Board. However, the task is extra to the duties for which they are employed within the school, being a staff or teacher governor is a voluntary role, in keeping with the other governors. It requires a commitment to the school family, including the other governors and the local community; it calls upon levels of professionalism in the way issues and decisions are handled and communicated, both in and out of governor meetings.

The school holds a copy of the latest Governance Handbook (2015), on which this document is based.

Visits

There are basically two kinds of visits – informal and formal. It is important that each type of visit by governors is identified clearly at the outset.

Governor informal visits: As stated above, there are specific times when the school welcomes visitors, which includes governors. These times will be to celebrate, to share in a specific activity, meet with other visitors, look at new equipment or other acquisitions, topic projects or seasonal events, such as harvest, Advent, Christmas, Easter and summer celebrations and Open Days. Some of these activities may not even take place within school, but in the church, but governors should always be aware that they are present as ambassadors. A programme of these types of visits will be published for the school term or in some cases for the year. They will generally be advertised in the school newsletter, on the web.

Observations on such occasions will add colour to the more theoretical flavour of school documentation. These are likely to be applied to the wide range of activities in which the school engages its parents and wider community.

In advance of the visit:

- The governor will use the checklist of 'do's and don'ts' (see p 5).
- Governors, together with the Headteacher, will identify which events will be recorded on informal visits. This will usually be done in committees once the termly events' calendar is available for the forthcoming term.
- Additional informal visits may be arranged with the headteacher outside of the published programme. In this case the appendix 1 for informal visits will be used to plan and record observations.
- The date, time and the specific focus would be arranged in advance with the head teacher and relevant staff. Governors and headteacher will agree the focus / focuses in advance of the visit. This will usually fall within the identified priorities of the school

development plan.

- The headteacher will inform members of staff that governors will be attending the event in their capacity as governors (as opposed to volunteers).
- The headteacher will manage the number of visits to ensure that a reasonable expectation upon staff is maintained.

Governor formal visits

The second type of visits are more formal and form part of specific roles and responsibilities that governors hold. These visits will have a particular agenda and will have been agreed or been planned into the school year. Visits will therefore be regularly made by the governors with responsibility for Safeguarding, Health and Safety, SEN, Early Years and areas of the curriculum, including Religious Education. These visits will have a negotiated agenda with the governor, the head teacher and any other member of staff that might be involved.

- The points under informal visits above should be observed.
- The governor would attend the lesson / learning walk and use the proforma (see Appendix 2). The governor would have been given sufficient background and context prior to the lesson.
- The governor might have three specific aspects to focus on, but these would not be the quality of teaching and learning, behaviour or class management, though these areas may have been approached by the teacher prior to entering the classroom. Instead they might be on the use of equipment, the subject content or another negotiated aspect.
- On the proforma the governor would complete the three questions and list up to a possible three other questions to discuss after the lesson away from the class, if necessary.
- Whilst in the classroom the governor may observe, mingle and talk with children if this fits in with the class teacher's organisation.

Other types of formal visits may involve data analysis, financial reporting where the governor may not be visiting a classroom, but sitting in an office. Regular Health and Safety visits will be made which would involve visiting the entire or a designated part of the school building or school grounds. All formal visits will be recorded and entered into the governors' visits file. Some governor responsibilities use a specific template for recording purposes as already agreed (eg Health and Safety governors).

The regular head and chair meetings are recorded on a specific template and stored in the head's office.

Identifying the focus of the visit can be a two way communication process, so a member of staff, in collaboration with the headteacher, could write in the issues that he/she would like the designated governor to focus upon at their next formal visit. Similarly, an issue arising from one of the governor committee meetings might be added to the designated governor's remit for their next visit. The emphasis throughout this is on partnership, supporting the leadership of the school, but asking questions in order that the governor is informed – knows

the school and is accountable to the rest of the Governing Board, the head teacher, the staff, pupils, parents and external inspections.

After the visit

- The Governor(s) will complete the record of the visit using the attached template.
- The intention will be for the school as a whole, including the Governing Board, to receive a constructive criticism; to confirm that agreed policies and procedures and actions are being followed, to evaluate their effectiveness once seeing them “in action” and /or to help identify further areas of development.
- There should always be a debriefing session between the governor, teacher and senior leader where possible when the governor’s questions might be answered, and any clarifications sought by the teaching staff.
- The completed proforma will be shared initially only with the Headteacher and with her agreement be loaded on the shared drive. The Headteacher will share the content with the staff member prior to publication. Any further comments by the staff member will be added at this point. It will be placed on the appropriate committee agenda “for note”. A hard copy will be filed in the governors’ visits file and be available for Ofsted.
- The committee will use the observations to record ongoing evaluations against the appropriate actions of the SDP.

Frequency of Visits

While the school is still small there cannot be formal class-based visits from every governor each year. The maximum governor class visits per academic year to a single class should be 3. There are other opportunities for formal governor visits to the school (not class visits); to focus on an aspect of the school, for example school meals, the outdoor learning environment or the library. It is expected that every governor should make one formal visit in the year. The headteacher will manage all visits from governors acting in their governing role to the school.

Some basic rules for visits

	Always	Never
Before	Arrange details of visit Agree purpose of visit Discuss context of lesson Agree role when in the class	Turn up unannounced
During	Keep to the agreed role Keep questions for the teacher until the end of lesson Remember confidentiality Keep to times and purpose agreed Be sensitive to the mood in the class and the expectations of the children	Assume a different role Go where you are not expected Distract the children or the teacher from their tasks
After	Thank the teacher and the children Discuss the visit with the Headteacher first, then with the teacher when convenient Send report to Headteacher Feedback to Governing Board	Leave without acknowledgement Break rules of confidentiality

Checklist

What is the purpose of the visit?
Who and what prompted my decision to visit?
Specific or general reasons
What are my expectations?
What are others' expectations
How can my visit benefit the teacher/ school?
How shall I carry out my visit?
Have I defined what I am interested in?
Age group?
Activities?
Questions to ask
Questions answered by observation
Did I achieve my aim?
Which questions were answered?
To what extent did I achieve my / others' expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?
Was the purpose of the visit met?
Follow up
Have I recorded my experiences?
Have I reported back to all appropriate persons?
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
How can I use this experience to develop the value of my next visit?

Appendix 1



Governor informal visit feedback

Date and nature of event:	
Governor(s) Attending:	
SDP ref:	Agreed focus / focuses (where appropriate):
Observations:	

Points for further development (if appropriate):	
Governor signature:	Date:
Headteacher signature:	Date:
Date of next committee meeting where relevant:	

Appendix 2

Record of formal governor visit	
Name of Governor(s):	Responsibility :
Date and time:	Location
Purpose and focus of negotiated visit :	
Questions to ask : 1 2 3 4	Answers/ aspects for clarification
Summary of activities	
Comments / what I have learned 1 2 3	Positive comments continued
Next steps :	Personnel :
Signed :	Signed :
Governor _____	_____

Please use space overleaf for any further comment