

St. Theresa's Catholic Primary School

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Catholic Primary School



GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

"We learn together, we play together, we pray together, we grow together in the love of God"

St. Theresa's
Catholic Primary School



Validation Grid

Title	Governor Visits Policy
Author	Barbara Costa
Associate Author	N/A
Committee	Wellbeing
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Headteacher

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Chair of Governors

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Seamus McKenna

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1. Purpose of Policy

The governing body has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the school and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting St. Theresa's Catholic Primary School (St. Theresa's / we / school) is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis but all governor visits should be focused and relate to the priorities in the School Improvement Plan. Governors should report back their findings, thus helping the whole governing body and its committees, as well as the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, to make better informed judgments about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the School Improvement Plan and informing strategic decision making.

The Headteacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and School Improvement Plan to be covered each term. The policy and protocol for school visits is formulated in consultation with the staff.

2. Annual Programme of Visits

The governing body will organise a programme of visits with the help of the Headteacher. These should be agreed in the autumn term by the Governing Body. These should be spread throughout the year, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per term. In addition, new governors will make a general introductory visit to the school as part of their induction programme within six months of joining.

Governors may visit the school on other occasions such as assemblies, Masses, sports days etc.

3. Purpose of visit

The focus of a visit could be on any policy in place in the school, e.g., teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, collective worship. It could also focus on particular areas, such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class.

4. Potential Benefits of Governors' Visits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff.
- To build effective relationships with the staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work.
- To get to know the students.
- To recognise different teaching styles.
- To monitor policies in action.
- To inform decision making.
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.

To teachers:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom.
- To get to know governors.
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities.
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion.
- To highlight the need for particular resources.

5. What a visit is not about

- Making judgments on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the Headteacher.
- Checking on progress of individual children.
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns.
- Monopolising school / teacher time.

6. Protocols for Visits

Governors should, with the guidance of the whole governing body and Headteacher, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus upon. This will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team.

When organising and conducting a visit, governors will be courteous and considerate, respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the Headteacher and staff, they will confirm in advance with the Headteacher the date, timing and focus of each visit. This will include agreeing what will be observed, whom it would be useful to talk to and agreeing any protocols to be observed whilst in the school. If time permits, they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation / guidance supplied by the Headteacher / teacher if unavailable directly from the Governors or St. Theresa's website.

At the end of each visit, the governor will discuss what they have observed with the Headteacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit. Governors visiting cannot make personal judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.

The governor will document observations from the visit using the attached proforma as a guide (Appendix 2) and share the insights gained at the relevant committee meeting.

See Appendix 1 for good practice when visiting a school and Appendix 2 for the form to record and report on visits if appropriate.

Teachers and support staff will be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.

They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors.

7. Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact.

Governors' visits will be fed back to the appropriate committees and included in their minutes.

The governing body can consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

and make changes to the policy and protocol that may be required.

Appendix 1

Formal School Visits - Good Practice

The following sections list examples of good practice. The opposite of each, could feature in a '**never**' column.

Preparing for a Visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the Headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Find out if there is a prompt / question sheet / checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Be punctual.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly. (Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection).
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his / her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.

- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, do not interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Do not lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After

- Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the Headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Reflect: How did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the Headteacher and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee / governing body meeting.

Appendix 2

St. Theresa's Catholic Primary School - Record form for a governor's school visit

Governor's Name: -----	Date: -----	Time: -----
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Purpose of Visit:

Staff Members Seen:

Links with the School Development Plan:

Governor's observations and comments: (e.g. what did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)

Any key issues arising for the Governing Body to consider: (e.g. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy)