

BEAVER ROAD ACADEMY TRUST GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY AND GUIDANCE: DRAFT January 2015

Purpose of Policy

The governing body has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the academy and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting the academy is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis but all governor visits should be focussed and relate to the academy's priorities for action. Governors should report back their findings, thus helping the full governing body and its sub-committees to make better informed judgements about the progress being made towards the academy's priorities for action and informing future strategic decision making.

The head teacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the academy, will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and the academy's priorities for action. The policy and protocol for academy visits is formulated in consultation with the staff.

Annual programme of visits

The governing body will organise a programme of visits with the help of the head teacher and through the Curriculum sub-committee. These will be spread throughout the year and across the phases of the academy, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit to each phase per year. In addition, new governors will make a general introductory visit of the academy as part of their induction programme.

Purpose of governor visit

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

Purpose of Phase visit

The focus of a governor visit to a specific phase of the academy will be linked to (but not limited to) the relevant school priorities for action.

The school priorities for action for 2014/2105 are:

- Introduction and development of the Learning Challenge Curriculum
- Introduction and development of new assessment procedures
- Introduction and development of computational thinking
- Dyslexia Quality Mark accreditation
- Establishment of the new 90 place school nursery

The Phase link governor will conduct the visit for each phase and will liaise with the head teacher and the relevant phase leader, agreeing the focus of the visit beforehand.

Purpose of SEN visit

The focus of a SEN governor visit will be linked to (but not limited to) the SEN priorities for development.

SEN Priorities for Development 2014/2015

- Class discussions looking at carer issues/siblings with disabilities
- Charity work
- Sport
- Community links – speaking to our local community about access and issues around mobility

The SEN link governor will conduct the visit for each phase and will liaise with the head teacher and the SENCO, agreeing the focus of the visit beforehand.

Potential benefits of governor visits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff
- To build an 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

What a visit is not about

- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the head teacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns
- Monopolising academy/teacher time

Protocols for visits

Governors should, with the guidance of the whole governing body and head teacher, identify an aspect of the academy's work to focus upon during the visit. This will help to maximise the effectiveness of the visit.

When organising and conducting a visit, governors will be courteous and considerate, respecting the professional roles of the head teacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the head, staff and governing body, they will confirm in advance with the head teacher 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 academy. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/ guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor will discuss what they have observed with the relevant staff 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. They will discuss their observations with the head teacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body on the visit.

See Appendix (i) for good practice when visiting the academy and Appendix (ii) for the form to record and report on visits.

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

Questions will be invited from governors whilst being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See Appendix (iii) for examples of questions, which governors could ask. Although they are focused on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions are relevant to other areas of the curriculum.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing body. At the final meeting of each academic year the link governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. The full governing body will evaluate the extent to which visits have informed the governing body's understanding of the academy's work. Staff governors will feed back from colleagues and describe the extent to which staff understanding of the governing body's role has been enhanced.

The governing body can then 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.

Date established by governing body

Date for full implementation

Date for next review

Appendix i

Formal Academy 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 and the appendices for guidance, question prompts and visit pro-forma
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the academy's priorities for action/development? What are the relevant academy policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the head teacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- 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 head teacher 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 discretely. 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 the visit

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. 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 and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the head teacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the head teacher 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 academy? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit has a focus.
- Circulate a draft summary to the head 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.

**Taken from the National Training Programme for New Governors*

Record form for a governor's academy visit

Name	Date
Purpose of visit (Previously agreed by the governing body with the head teacher)	
Links with the academy's priorities (How does the visit relate to the academy's priorities for action/development?)	
Governor 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 (E.g. Progress in implementing a key policy, the way the academy communicates)	
Action following governing body meeting (Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)	

Questions for Governors

Discuss with your head teacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Your job, in partnership with the head teacher, is to provide a link between your governing body, its committees and the staff of your academy.

1. Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the achievement of the visited phase or area?
 - ⇒ Compared to similar academies and schools?
 - ⇒ With the national rates of increase?
 - ⇒ With the national picture in terms of gender?
 - ⇒ With the national picture in terms of specific cohort (i.e. SEN, EAL, Pupil Premium)
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups within a phase and if so why?
- How do our results in English/Maths compare with those in other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy/hard?
- Are there significant differences in progress:
 - ⇒ Girls and boys
 - ⇒ Pupils with special educational needs
 - ⇒ Very able pupils
 - ⇒ Pupils with English as an additional language
 - ⇒ Pupil Premium pupils
- Can you tell how much progress pupils/cohorts are making? For example, you could look at:
 - ⇒ Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - ⇒ A range of pupils' work - average, below average and above average
 - ⇒ Other evidence

2. Special Needs*

- How are pupils with special educational needs included within each phase?
- How are pupils with special educational needs supported within the classroom and across the curriculum?
- How does the progress of pupils with special educational needs compare against those pupils with no special educational needs and nationally?

3. Communication

- How are parents kept informed about pupil progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home?
- How are governors kept informed about standards and progress of pupils?
- How do governors celebrate the academy's success when things go well?

**Note: These questions can equally be applied to other cohorts inc. EAL and PP pupils*

BEAVER ROAD LEADERSHIP TEAM - PHASES

PHASE ONE – FOUNDATION STAGE

JULIE-ANNE SHAUGHNESSY (RS)

Assistant Head: Foundation Stage

Nursery – Reception

Governor Link: Patricia Holmes

PHASE TWO – KEY STAGE 1

JOANNA BURROWS (2B)

Assistant Head: KS1

Year 1; Year 2

Governor Link: Eileen Garry

PHASE THREE – LOWER KEY STAGE 2

VICTORIA JACKSON (4J)

Assistant Head: Lower KS2

Year 3; Year 4

Governor Link: Helen Chilton

PHASE FOUR – UPPER KEY STAGE 2

SARAH TURNER (6T)

Assistant Head: Upper KS2

Year 5; Year 6

Governor Link: Sarah Turner

EMMA EASMON

School SENCO

Governor Link: Pauline Black

The original version of this policy contributed to the National Training Programme for New Governors by Advisory and Inspection Service, West Sussex County Council and was developed by the Westminster governing body services, <http://webfronter.com/westminster/governors/>