

Horizon Community College Governor Visits to College Policy



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GOVERNOR VISITS TO COLLEGE POLICY

CONTENTS

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----------|
| Section 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| Section 2 | Purpose of Visits and The Visit | 4 |
| Section 3 | The Visit | 5 |
| | Before the Visit | 5 |
| | During the Visit | 6 |
| | After the Visit | 7 |
| | Reporting the Visit | 9 |
| Link | Governor's Protocol | 10 |
| Link | Governor Report Form | 11 |

Section 1 Introduction

The Governing Body of the College has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the College and its curriculum. The Governing Body is also held to account for the College's performance.

Whilst there is no requirement for governors to visit the school during the College day, it is recognised that such visits constitute good practice.

In order to avoid misunderstandings that could arise from governors' visits into College, it is recommended that the Governing Body have an approved Policy/Protocol for governors' visits. It is important that any Policy/Protocol is shared with staff so that they understand the purpose of the visits in the context of College governance.

Trust between staff and governors is very important to ensure the visits achieve a satisfactory outcome to both parties. Governors' visits must always be non-threatening and be undertaken in the context of gaining knowledge of how the College operates during the working day.

If College visits are done in the spirit of partnership, they will add immeasurably to governors' understanding of the College, its staff and its students.

COVID 19 Addendum

Governors and trustees can go into the college if essential. They should comply with the college risk assessment in order to protect the health and safety of staff and students. They should NOT visit if they have symptoms of Covid-19 or if they have been asked to self-isolate. The wearing of face coverings is compulsory.

Section 2 Purpose of Visits

The main purposes for visiting the College are to:

- Fulfil the Governing Body's duty 'to induct the College with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement'
- Develop Governors' understanding of the College's strengths and weaknesses
- Contribute to the Governing Body's monitoring role (visits are one of a number of ways in which governors fulfil this role)
- Enable individual Governors to ask informed and challenging questions at Governing Body meetings
- Help Governors understand the Teaching and Learning process
- See Policies in action
- Give Governors an enhanced sense of identity with the College and the people who work in it
- Monitor the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Policy
- Understand how the curriculum is differentiated for students of different ability
- Offer visible support to staff and the College's priorities
- Assist in reviewing key aspects of the College Development Plan

The benefits to the staff should be to:

- Get to know and build positive relationships with Governors
- Feel valued
- Appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of the Governing Body
- Ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Observing the use of resources
- Share an understanding of Teaching and Learning

What are Governors' visits NOT about?

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

Furthermore, visits must never be concerned with checking on the progress of individual students or pursuing personal agendas or issues.

Where Governors go into College to support Teaching and Learning, these are not Governors' visits and should be covered by a separate Policy/Protocol.

Section 3 The Visit

The following is a suggested format for managing Governors' visits.

Before the Visit:

- Arrange details of the visit with the Principal or another member of the Senior Leadership Team – never turn up unannounced
- Agree the level of confidentiality
- Agree the purpose of the visit and read the considerations for commenting on the learning environment which follow
- Ensure the enhanced DBS check is up to date

Key Question – What is the purpose of my visit?

- What has prompted my decision to visit?
- Who has promoted my decision to visit?
- Is the reason specific or general?
- What are my/other people's expectations?
- How can my visit benefit the students/teacher/Governing Body?

During the visit:

Fulfil the agreed purpose – this can be by developing links with a class, year group or subject area, but remember:

- Arrive on time
- Use the agreed recording format
- Do not conduct a lesson observation and make judgements on teaching
- Never interrupt the teacher during a lesson and avoid taking on a teaching role or discussing irrelevant issues with students
- Always wear your Governor Identity Badge
- Don't make visits during a College Ofsted inspection or during main examination periods
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the Governing Body
- Respect confidentiality
- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst
- Meet the Principal or member of the Senior Leadership Team at the end of the visit and discuss what you have seen and any issues or concerns you may have

Key Questions – What areas to visit?

- What particular areas of the College am I interested in?
- What particular areas are highlighted in the College Development Plan/SEF?
- What particular activities am I interested in?
- What particular age group(s) am I interested in?
- Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
- What questions should I ask?
- Whom should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?

- To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
- Which of my questions did I answer?
- To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations
- What difficulties did I meet and why?

After the Visit:

- Thank the teacher and students
- Never leave without a word

Considerations for the learning environment:

Below are a few considerations to bear in mind when commenting on classrooms and the learning that takes place in them.

- The range of activities that students engage in/experience
- The students' engagement with the task; they are active – not passive; asking and responding to questions and listening to each other
- Displays use students' work and are creative, celebrate achievement and mainly relate to current work
- Utilisation of the space in the classroom
- How is the classroom organised?
- Quantity, quality and appropriateness of resources in the classroom
- Motivation and self-esteem
- Behaviour
- Are staff actively participating within the sessions and know what they are doing?

The following are examples of things a Governor might observe when visiting a classroom:

- Relationship between staff and students
- Relationships between students
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of students – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- How are students grouped?
- How different abilities are catered for
- Students' work
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of spaces and working conditions
- Quality and use of equipment and resources

Always remember . . .

- Governors are visiting the College as representatives of the Governing Body and have no individual power or status
- If you see anything you feel is not appropriate, discuss this first with the Principal
- Never criticise or appear to criticise the College in any respect in front of staff or students

REPORTING THE VISIT:

The Governing Body may wish to prepare a schedule of Governors' visits for the year in which agreement has been reached regarding what areas/classes are to be visited and by whom.

Visiting the College as a representative of the Governing Body would usually involve some type of report-back to the Governing Body.

It is for the Governing Body to determine its own arrangements for reporting back. The usual methods are:

- Oral report at a Governing Body meeting
- Presenting a report at the Governing Body meeting
- Circulating a report to Governors outside of the meeting

An example of a report proforma is attached

The Governing Body should consider what arrangements will need to be in place to report back to staff on the visit.

Horizon Community College
Link Governor's
Protocol

The role of the link governor is quality assurance and monitoring. It is a strategic role, rather than operational. The intention is to work in partnership with staff, to learn and move forward.

The purpose is to know their link areas in depth and to demonstrate evidence of support and challenge in these areas.

Link governors are matched with a senior leader in the college. They will meet together and look at their area of focus in the context of knowing the overall strengths and weaknesses of the college and the college's strategic priorities.

Link governors will examine appropriate data and policies and ensure that their area of focus is complying with the vision and ethos of the college and delivering value for money (see Governance Handbook).

Link governors will monitor and evaluate impact and outcomes.

Link governors will report back to the GB in writing (on the attached proforma) and will be prepared to answer questions from other governors.

These reports will be an addition to the Principal's report and will provide evidence of in-depth enquiry by governors into all aspects of the college.

Process

- Link governors will meet together to discuss how they would like to carry out their role and to coordinate their approach
- Link governors will contact the named senior leader(s) to arrange a convenient meeting and will ask, at this point, for any particular data or to visit a classroom, meet with other staff etc.
- Link governors will write a summary of their enquiries, **when completed**, on the attached proforma and share this with the senior leader for comments before reporting to GB.
- Link governors must make a judgement about how frequently they meet with senior leaders and negotiate the frequency and length of meetings. Usually, meetings would be once a term, but each meeting may have a different emphasis, for example looking at relevant policies; participating in a focus group with students; examining data.
- Governors should ensure they are familiar with the governor visits policy whenever they are in college.

Link Governor Report for Governing Body

Themed Area: _____ Governor/s Involved: _____

College Staff Involved: _____

| What's Working Well? (Headlines about strengths, achievements etc) | What are we Worried About? (weaknesses, areas of concern, areas for development) | What needs to happen? (opportunities, actions to address concerns, what support is needed/in place?) |
|--|--|--|
| | | |

Governing body feedback/recommendations: _____
