

West Exmoor Federation



Policy for Governors Visiting Schools within the Federation

June 2007

West Exmoor Federation – Policy for Governors Visiting Schools Within the Federation

Rational

Personal observations made on school visits are a major source of information. The experience involves teamwork which is directed towards a common goal and founded upon good relationships with the professionals within the Federation. There must be trust. Visiting the schools increases understanding and assists informed judgement; it can improve the quality of decision-making.

Purpose

All visits need a clear purpose which is agreed by the governing body, the headteachers and school staff. Purposes might include:

- knowing more about the work and organisation of the schools;
- keeping up to date with developments;
- offering visible support;
- implementation of the school improvement plans, or reviewing their success.

Visiting is also a function of the governing body as a whole. All governors should decide on the structure and pattern of visiting by individual members. It is crucially important to make clear in advance the status of a visit to school when undertaken on behalf of the governing body. Governors are not inspectors or advisers; it is not their job to assess the professional competence of individual school staff.

Guidance

Good visiting practice will:

- include clear objectives and intentions shared and agreed beforehand with the headteachers and school staff;
- take into account that a visitor's presence may affect proceedings within the schools;
- give visitors a chance to get a feel for the schools.

Confidentiality

When visiting the schools governors should observe complete confidentiality, especially in relation to matters concerning individual pupils or staff. Governors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussions of a potentially contentious issues arise outside of the governing body.

Checklist for Visiting the School

For governing bodies

Do:

- have an agreed system for reporting back
- plan a timetable of visits so that every governor has the opportunity to visit during the year

- agree an explicit purpose and plan for each visit which has been communicated to all parties
- consider different styles of visits, for example paired visits where an experienced governor partners a less experienced one

For individual governors

Do:

- negotiate a mutually convenient time with the necessary parties to ensure that the visit is expected
- look at the possibilities for developing links with a class or year group
- thank the teacher, headteacher, etc at the end of the visit
- give praise where it is due
- make a point of listening rather than talking
- dress appropriately and follow the normal school rules
- include a 'debriefing' session with a member of the senior management team
- discuss any concerns the visit may raise with the headteachers
- be polite, tactful and sensitive
- avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection, SATs, the first and last weeks of term, etc, unless specifically requested to attend
- visit at different times of the day, term, year
- try to attend any special occasions, especially if regular daytime visits are difficult
- try to attend when you have been specifically invited
- go in as a helper where appropriate and possible

Try not to

- go in like an inspector
- sit at the back, writing notes
- go in unannounced
- interfere with the organisation of the class
- talk to the teacher while they are teaching - wait until the end of the session
- criticise the performance of a teacher, even in a constructive manner, during your visit
- make promises to staff on behalf of the governing body

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