



Governor Visits Policy

Policy Area: Governance

Policy Lead: Director of Governance

Approval By: Board

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. East Sussex College Group recognises the value of Governor visits in developing knowledge about college and bringing the work of the Board to life. Importantly, these visits also raise the profile of Governors with staff and students at the college.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the purpose of Governor visits to the college, along with guidelines for staff and Governors on how they should be conducted. This policy also aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that all Governors are expected to follow when making visits to any of the college campus sites.
- 1.3. This policy aims to ensure that all Governors understand their role and purpose, so that college visits are productive and enjoyable for everyone involved.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. Governor visits are an important mechanism for enabling the Board to fulfil its monitoring role. They are an opportunity for Governors to see the impact of the decisions made by the Board.
- 2.2. They also allow staff to have contact with Governors and help to give Governors a balanced view of how the college works.
- 2.3. Governors should observe as a well-informed lay person, not as a professionally qualified teacher.

3. Planning the visit

- 3.1. The Director of Governance will work with the Senior Leadership Team to identify a range of options for visits. These may include learning walks, deep dive discussions, class visits, Student Council meetings, staff Think Tank events, meeting a Lead Officer that an Ambassador Governor may be linked to, e.g. safeguarding, etc.
- 3.2. Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme, planned by the Board/ Committees and with the approval of the CEO & Principal/Executive team. The CEO & Principal/Executive team should be kept informed of, and agree, the subsequent details of the planned visit.
- 3.3. If the visit is to involve members of staff, then they must be fully involved in planning, in advance of the visit.
- 3.4. It is important that Governors recognise that these visits have no connection with inspection, quality assurance/assessment or the wider functions of operational management. Governors are there to learn and observe, not to assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Governors should take care not to involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of the college.
- 3.5. Governors should notify the Director of Governance and/or the Governance Assistant to confirm their intent to attend a visit, so that a register can be maintained and to ensure that effective support can be put in place.

4. Conducting Governor visits

- 4.1. Staff should:
 - 4.1.1. Remember that Governors come from a broad range of professional backgrounds and may not be fully versed in curriculum and teaching methods, or about how the college is managed at departmental level.
 - 4.1.2. Aim to explain as clearly as possible in the time available the department's aims, processes, achievements and challenges.

- 4.2. Governors should ensure that:
 - 4.2.1. They are aware of and follow the college's safeguarding and health & safety procedures.
 - 4.2.2. They do not intervene in college processes (e.g. by directly engaging all students in a lesson, unless invited). Governors should remember that a visit by a Governor can be stressful for staff and will alter existing dynamics.
 - 4.2.3. They clarify any doubts or questions, whilst ensuring that this is not disruptive normal college operations.
 - 4.2.4. They neither advise staff on matters of management nor offer themselves as advocates for staff with the Executive Team. Governors should take care in expressing personal opinions, which may appear to give a commitment on behalf of the Board. Views and opinions should not be attributable to the Corporation unless that issue has been discussed and a conclusion reached and documented.
 - 4.2.5. They introduce themselves and say something briefly about their role e.g. taking an interest in the college and its activities.
- 4.3. Governors may, with the permission of the staff member concerned, ask students what they are doing, how they are finding the subject. However, Governors should avoid asking questions which could lead to students making an evaluative comment about the teacher or teaching practice.
- 4.4. Governors may be approached by staff who have complaints and concerns about some aspect of the college's affairs. Governors need to listen, but they also need to be aware that the primary responsibility for management rests with the Executive team and senior managers. Staff should always be directed to the most appropriate avenue to voice any areas of concern. Any serious matters should be highlighted to the Director of Governance and the CEO & Principal.

5. Feedback following the visit

- 5.1. To maximise the impact of a visit, Governors should be ready to share any insights or reflections from their visit with the Board or relevant Committee.
- 5.2. If appropriate, Governors may opt to produce a summary report following their visit. If so, this should be reviewed for accuracy with the Lead Officer, CEO & Principal and/or Director of Governance in advance of this being shared more broadly. The report may include:
 - 5.2.1. A statement on the purpose of the visit.
 - 5.2.2. Titles of the members of staff that were met with.
 - 5.2.3. Key observations and insights.
 - 5.2.4. Any priority issues arising for the Board/Committee.
 - 5.2.5. Actions and next steps.
- 5.3. If during a visit, a Governor sees anything that causes them serious concern, they should raise this as soon as possible with the CEO & Principal.

6. Further information

If you would like any further information about governor visits, or this policy, please contact the Director of Governance.