STEP Academy Trust
Governor Visits Policy

March 2016   **Review date: March 2018**

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for STEP governors to make focused visits to their Academies so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work.

Who was consulted

All Trustees

Aims of a Governor Visit

- To gain a deeper understanding of the academy in order to inform the SGB decision making process
- To gain a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of a governor
- To get to know the staff and develop a supportive relationship
- To get to know each academy within the remit of the SGB and to get to know the children
- To focus on their particular area of responsibility or on an agreed aspect of the strategic academy improvement plan
- To monitor the performance of the academy and triangulate the information provided in reports from the senior leadership team, Ofsted, external consultants
- To observe the impact of academy improvement strategies

During the Visit

- Governors will respect confidentiality at all times but will also have due regard for safeguarding policy and procedures
- Governors will remember that they are not visiting the academy in an inspectoral role
- Governors will comply with and observe any academy rules and/or routines

After the visit

- Governors will thank the relevant academy staff
- Governors will discuss their academy visit with the Headteacher
- Governors will respect rules of confidentiality at all times
- Governors will complete the relevant Proforma for their visit
- Governors will circulate and present the report to other members of the Strategic Governing Body at their next full meeting

Annex A: Record of visit

Name	Date
Purpose of visit. (How does the visit relate to a priority in the Academy Improvement Plan and / or an aspect of the Academy's self evaluation document?)	
Governor observations and comments (Eg. what did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)	
Key issues arising for the Strategic Governing Body	
Date shared with the Headteacher (as soon as possible after the visit):	
Date shared with committee/ Strategic Governing Body:	
Action agreed. (Record any action agreed by the Strategic Governing Body with regard to this visit)	

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Annex B. Questions governors could ask

The following questions are based on questions in the National Audit Office publication '*Improving School Performance. A guide for school governors*', and the Ofsted briefing for inspectors '*The quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning*. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Discuss with the headteacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the Academy's strengths and areas for development. Think about what evidence could be provided in relation to each question. For example you wouldn't need to ask if children were proud of their work if you observed them in class, sharing their work with their peers, pointing out where their work is displayed, taking it home to show their parents.

Making learning attractive to children
1. What processes do we have in place to involve pupils in decision making, such as school council or pupil access to the Strategic governing body? How do we know they are effective?
2. To what extent do these processes represent the views of all pupils, including those from minority groups, those with learning difficulties and those who rarely ask or answer questions? How do we know? What have we done in response listening to pupils?
3. Have we carried out subject audits to find out how interested and motivated pupils are in lessons and what particular things they like or dislike about the subject? What were the findings? What action has been taken?
4. Do teaching staff have regular joint planning meetings to discuss what teaching and learning approaches work best across the curriculum to interest and motivate pupils? Have there been any significant changes in practice? If so what impact have they had?
5. How do subject leaders gain access to, and keep up to date with, resources that are proven to involve pupils most effectively in teaching and learning? Are they being used to best effect? Are we achieving value for money?
6. What training do teaching staff have to ensure they understand how information and communications technology such as interactive whiteboards or Ipads can best be used to make learning attractive to pupils? How effective is it?
7. Are pupils engaged, working hard, making a good effort, applying themselves, concentrating and productive?
8. Are pupils happy with their work? Are they proud of it?
9. Are pupils interested in their work and in what they are learning? Or are they easily distracted?
10. Are resources sufficient?

Quality of learning
1. Are pupils making links between previous/new learning?
2. Are pupils working independently? Are they self-reliant?
3. How well do pupils collaborate with each other?
4. How well do pupils follow routines/expectations?

Monitoring pupils' achievements
1. Does the Academy have a culture of high expectations and achievement? How do we know?
2. Are the Academy's targets 'stretching' enough for all pupils? How do we know?
3. Are we meeting, exceeding or not meeting targets? Do we understand why?
4. Are governors and staff understanding and using the various sources of information about the school's performance, including RAISEonline reports? If not how can we improve confidence and competence in data analysis?

5. Are our systems to monitor pupils' achievements effective, both in identifying pupils who are working at relatively low levels as well as more able pupils who could move on more quickly? How do we know?
6. Do we identify subject and year groups' specific strengths and weaknesses and put action plans in place to tackle weaknesses? What impact are these having?
7. What new skills and knowledge are pupils gaining?

Further questions relating to pupils' achievement
- What are children's results in English and mathematics? How do they compare with previous years and with other schools/academies?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups or key stages, and if so, why?
- What percentage of children met their targets/exceeded their targets/failed to meet their targets?
- Are there significant differences in the performance of:
  - children eligible for free school meals
  - girls and boys (NB reading and writing)
  - children in care
  - children eligible for pupil premium funding
  - child carers
  - pupils with special educational needs
  - very able pupils
  - pupils with English as an additional language and the others
  - the majority and any other minority groups, such as travelers?

In meetings with the assessment leader you could explore:
- Key Stage test and teacher assessment results (anonymised).
- The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average (anonymised).
- The impact of assessment and tracking data in identifying pupils in need of targeted support
- The impact of the academy's curriculum focus – eg move towards a mastery approach
- RAISEonline data, Fischer Family Trust and other pupil progress and achievement data.

Special Needs
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into lessons?
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their lessons?

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

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