

GOVERNOR VISITS AND PROTOCOL POLICY



Date Approved By Governing Body

Review Date

Introduction

The governing body is responsible for the:

Strategic View	Values, Mission, Vision
Critical Friend	Monitoring and evaluating school improvement
Ensure Accountability	High Standards, value for money, agreed aims and objectives.

Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that the Governing Body can build and develop their firsthand knowledge, further informing strategic decision making. Through visits Governors will have the opportunity to observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole Governing Body and its committees make well-informed judgements about progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school improvement plan. It may not though be possible for every Governor to be available during the day – this will depend on personal and work commitments. However, all Governors should undertake some visits if possible; the frequency and type of visit will vary according to availability and role.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the Strategic Development Plan/SEF and cover a wide range of areas. Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange these visits with the Head Teacher who has the overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

Potential benefits

To governors

- Recognise and celebrate success
- Develop relationships with staff
- Get to know the pupils
- Recognise different teaching styles
- Understand the environment in which teachers teach
- Monitor policies in action
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them
- Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge
- Inform decision making

To teachers

- Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Get to know governors
- Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- Highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not

- A form of inspection to make judgements re professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher/staff time

Roles and responsibilities of Governors, Head Teacher and other staff

The Governing Body will, with the help of the Head Teacher and staff, organise an annual schedule of school visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per year. Visits may be conducted in pairs. The Head Teacher will guide the Governing Body on the areas of the curriculum; policies and school improvement plan priorities and targets to be covered each term. Individual governor or pairs of governors will, with the guidance of the whole Governing Body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus on in order deepen their understanding.

Monitoring and review of Governors' school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?
- Preparing for a visit
- Check the agreed policy for Governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the Strategic Development Plan/SEF/Action Plan? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the Head Teacher, and or subject leader/ teacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the school visits pro forma
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want Governors to integrate into the lesson or learning walk? It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the, for example, teacher if any supporting information is available; e.g. Ofsted report, improvement plan, and performance data.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions and submit to staff in advance.

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, courteous and considerate at all times, respecting the professional roles of the Head Teacher and staff.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced & what your role in the class will be
- Get involved with the pupils (if appropriate & only if enhanced DBS cleared)
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection
- Observe discretely
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson but be prepared to talk and show interest
- Interact, don't interrupt
- Listen to staff and pupils

Teachers and support staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the Governing Body to the school.

They will make practical suggestions on the focus for Governors' visits so as to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with Governors.

See Appendix A for a list of things which Governors could examine/explore. Whenever practical staff should invite their link/curriculum Governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions. Questions will be invited from Governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See Appendix B for examples of questions which could be asked. Although these focus on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions can easily be adapted to other areas of the curriculum.

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 and share the report with the Head Teacher for agreement that it is a true reflection of the visit.
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learnt more about the school? Have I gained more confidence in helping the Governing Body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- See Appendix C for an example report format.
- You should circulate a draft of your report to the Head Teacher and staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by all those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate Governing Body meeting.

Visit Focus

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the building or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes, e.g. reduced classes in key stage
- Impact of specific targets identified in the Strategic Development Plan
- Impact of Staff Training & other CPD opportunities
- Safeguarding
- Target pupil groups, e.g. Pupil Premium/Year 7 Catch Up

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- Chair of Governors making a regular visit to the Head Teacher
- Volunteering at school events/trips/in class or area support
- Obtaining information from the school office relating to meetings
- As a parent to speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.

Appendix A

Monitoring

Governor Monitoring can take several forms

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with Leadership team members/ subject leaders/College Director/support staff etc.
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school – ‘Learning Walk’

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for a subject
- Understand what pupils like best/least in the school
- Know the standards of achievement in a subject area
- Know what steps are being taken to improve standards
- Know how well strategic policies approved by Governors are working
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Body

Observations to make when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and pupils
- Relationship between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of any support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Pupils’ work
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and Safety regulations practiced i.e. fire exits kept clear, certificates and inspections up to date

Appendix B

Questions

To ask pupils

- Can you talk to me about what you are learning today?
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- How could the school be improved?
- What are the best things about this school?

To ask subject leaders/ teachers

- What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject? Subjects may also have been the focus of a HMI curriculum inspection
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

Questions about the teaching of English, Maths & Science

Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement?
Compared with similar schools?
In relation to the national rates of increase and progress?

In relation to the national picture in terms of gender/disadvantage etc.?

- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- What are the differences between the achievement of different groups and why?
- How do our results in English/math's compare with other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?

- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between?
Girls and boys
Pupils with special educational needs
Very able pupils
Pupils with English as an additional language
The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

In meetings to understand how much pupil progress is being made you could look at Key Stage 3 or end of key stage scores and Key Stage 4 examination/mock results.

- Pupil progress data across each year
- The work of a range of pupils – below average (Lower Attainers)
average (Middle Attainers) and above average (Higher Attainers)

Other evidence, Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)

- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/math's lessons? And into other subject areas?
- How are the roles of the English/math's leaders developing progress and success?
- Does the school development plan/SEF match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (Literacy only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books are available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? How well do pupils use the library? What links does the school have with the local library?

In the classroom

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
Help me to understand how you plan your lessons: how do you decide what individual pupils will be doing in Science today?	Curriculum specifications and guidelines Key stage plan Scheme of Work and/or Learning Lesson Plan Marking Year/termly/weekly/daily plans Individual plans Assessments	
How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress?	Questioning in lessons Marking Assessments, including tests SATs and/or CATS scores (for Year 7's) Target-setting and achieving Value-added data (VA) Progress data	
What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?	ICT – access to computers & internet, ICT application & software Use of school library Use of basics like pens and pencils.	
How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?	Boys v. girls Most Able, Least Able & SEND pupils English as an Additional Language Disruptive Pupils	
How do you decide to seat pupils and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?	Ability groups Mixed or single age groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities	
How do you encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning?	Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters & Phone calls home Pupil Planners & Show my Homework	

Communication

- How are parents kept informed of progress & How do you gather parents views?
- What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their child in reading/writing at home?

Appendix C/1

Sample record form for a governor's school visit

NAME:	Date:
Governor Responsibility:	Staff seen during visit
Focus of previous visit (if applicable);	
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):	
Links with Strategic Development Plan	
Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with Head Teacher /Subject leader or teacher, Local Authority or DfE/Ofsted focus area	
Information gathered during visit: (e.g. What you saw, what you learned, what would you would like clarified. How long the visit lasted)	
Any key issues arising for the Governing Body (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)	
Action following Governing Body meeting (record any action agreed by the Governing Body with regard to this visit e.g. training for Governors)	

Record of a Governor’s visit to School



Name:		Date:	
Governor Responsibility:		Staff seen during visit:	
Focus of previous visit:		Reason for visit:	
Links with Strategic Development Plan:		Preparation/background to visit:	
Information gathered during visit:			
Action following Governing Body meeting:			