

Governor Visits Guidance

Ofsted states*: *'If governors are to monitor and evaluate the school's work they need to visit the school. When handled well these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the school's work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings. The visits to school by governors work well when the focus of the visit is agreed in advance and understood by all involved.'*

Regular planned visits give governors an insight and understanding about their school and help to strengthen the governing body's strategic and monitoring role. There are two kinds of governors' visits - **formal** and **informal**. This guidance is concerned with formal visits in which governors act as representatives of the governing body which has a corporate responsibility for the overall conduct of the school.

Formal Visits

Governors have the right to make a formal visit to the school provided they do so in connection with their responsibilities as governors, and the visit is on behalf of, or has been sanctioned by, the governing body. They should have a clear focus, ideally linked to priorities in the School Development Plan. They should 'add value' both to the school and to the effectiveness of the whole governing body. Governors' school visits should not be confined to the classroom. Ideally governors should consider a series of different types of visits, some of which are focused on the classroom but others might include, for example, the playground, the school environment, health and safety, parents'/carers' consultation evenings, meetings with senior staff; shadowing staff and/or pupils; looking at a sample of pupils' work (more able, average, less able) in a particular subject area; attending a school assembly or reporting on the school's extra-curricular activities.

Purpose of Visit

There could be a number of reasons for a governor visit. Some of these are listed below:

- to fulfil the governing body's legal duty " **to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.**" (Section 21, Education Act 2002);
- to develop governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- to support the school's work;
- to *contribute* to the governing body's monitoring role (visits are only one of the ways in which governors fulfil this role);
- to enable individual governors to ask informed and challenging questions at governing body meetings;
- to help governors understand the teaching and learning process;
- to see policies in action;
- to demonstrate to staff and pupils that governors are interested in what goes on in school;
- to give governors an enhanced sense of identity with school and the people who work in it;

Teaching and Learning

Governors do not undertake formal visits to judge the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Governors should have a clear view about the quality of teaching in school through information provided by the headteacher.

Subject Governor's Guidance

(Guidance list for making visits to the school for subject monitoring)

1. Read around your subject. You can find out information from the following websites, or ask for a copy of the National Curriculum from the school.
www.dfes.gov.uk/standards
www.governornet.co.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk
2. Identify where your subject fits in to the Curriculum Review Cycle. Also identify other events, such as off-site visits or visitors to school, which may apply to your subject area.
3. Introduce yourself to the Subject Co-ordinator.
4. Book a mutually convenient time for a visit to school and at that time establish the focus for the visit with the Subject Co-ordinator. You will also need to agree what will be available to be seen, as timetables and set routines should not be disrupted by a Governor's visit.
5. Carry out a visit. This should end with a meeting with the co-ordinator where you both agree further steps. These will then provide the focus for the next visit.
6. Complete written report and send a copy to the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee will then forward the report to the clerk to the Governors for it to be put on the agenda for the next full Governor's Meeting.
7. Be prepared to discuss the report at the next full Governor's Meeting.