

Governor Visits and Protocol Policy



Date Adopted: March 2019

Next review date: March 2020

Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first-hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the Head teacher who has the responsibility of the day to day management of the school.

Purposes of visit

Potential benefits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

To teachers:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- To get to know governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

What is the visit not about

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

Protocols or ground rules for visits

Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surroundings

- Consider what should happen and what should not
- Ensure that visits are no longer than 1 hour

How to feed back after the visit

Consider

- Governors should feed back to the Head teacher in the first instance and then also to the member of staff in writing. A written report for the Governing Body must be available for the next full meeting
- Positive comments, areas of concern, questions and suggestions should all be reported
- Where possible all Governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the Head teacher

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Head teacher and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited.

Monitoring and review of 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 School Improvement 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 coordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the proforma
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the learning walk? It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the coordinator if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, 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.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous and friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After

- 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.
- Submit your visit proforma to the Head teacher for approval
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- You must circulate a draft to the Head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Visit Focus'

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Particular areas of learning or classes
- The use made of the building or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Special educational needs
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes

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. Informal visits will be for such things as:

- The chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher
- Lending a helping hand with a school event
- Getting information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- Helping in a class
- Attending a school function or educational visit

Governor Monitoring

Governor monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with subject/leader
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school

AIMS:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for a particular area of learning
- To know the standards achieved an area of learning
- To know what steps are being taken to improve attainment and progress in an area of learning
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Body

PUPIL INTERVIEWS: (suggested questions to ask a small group of children when walking around the classrooms)

These questions will help you gain an understanding of pupil attitudes toward the subject. Teachers will be notified of the forthcoming interviews.

- Tell me about what you are learning today.
- Tell me what you most like doing
- Is there anything you don't like

Key questions for subject/learning link governor discussion with subject leader (Foundation subjects)

- What is your vision for the curriculum?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the curriculum?
- What are the strengths of the curriculum? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the curriculum?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the curriculum?
- What resources does the school have for different aspects of the curriculum and how are these organised?
- Are there any additional resource needs?

Governor Visit Report

Name:	Date:
Focus of visit	Classes/staff visited
Summary of activities e.g. talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources.	
What have I learned as a result of my visit?	Positive comments about the visit
Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have:	
Ideas for future visits:	
Any other comments:	
Signed _____ (Governor)	Signed _____

Annex C - Things to observe when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How the pupils are grouped
- How are different abilities are catered for
- Children's work
- Displays
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are there high expectations, encouragement, praise?)
- Is equality of opportunity apparent?
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources