



Governor Visits Policy

Date reviewed	November 2016
Next review date	November 2020

Context

The governing body is the 'accountable body' in a school – accountable to parents, pupils, the local authority, the Diocesan Board of Education and central government through Ofsted. Governors need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many governors find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, governors can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views.

Ofsted inspection assumes that governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This depends on governors assessing performance data presented to them by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in the context of an understanding of what happens in the classroom. It is also important to Ofsted that the governing body makes an impact on school improvement and visiting school to see it in operation, and to be aware of standards and progress are important aspects of this role. This may also include gathering evidence for the school Self Evaluation report.

However, governors are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of the headteacher. If the governing body wishes governors to spend time within a classroom, it must be made very clear why they are doing so.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Ensure the approach taken by governors is clear, open and consistent
- Ensure that governors develop visits and reviews capable of contributing to school improvement.

Minimum commitment

Individual governors have differing amounts of time to commit to school visits. It is important, however, that all governors should make visits at some time, beyond the initial general visit to the school when newly appointed to the governing body. A governor should aim to make an informal school visit at least twice a year and to make two formal visits a year focusing on an agreed area of school improvement.

Informal Visits

Some visits to the school will be less formal than others. Examples of informal visits include:

- Helping at a school event
- Help in a class at the invitation of the teacher
- Attend a school function or educational visit

- Visit in relation to a governor’s role as a priest, minister or local councillor.

Regular or short informal visits are recorded on a log sheet kept in the front of the Governor Visit folder. Other informal visits may be recorded using the governor visit record form. These are not expected to be in as much detail as for formal visits.

Formal Visits

Formal visits should have a clear focus agreed by the governing body and be linked to priorities in the school’s Raising Attainment Plan, to key aspects of school self-evaluation or to monitoring policies in action. They enable the governing body to see how the school’s values, vision and moral purpose impact on the daily life and work of those in the school community. Formal visits are arranged with a member of the SLT, a phase or subject leader. Governors make formal visits relating to their agreed areas of responsibility. These areas are taken either from the School Raising Attainment Plan or to the school self-evaluation/Ofsted areas. These formal visits happen at least twice each academic year.

Autumn Term	Review priorities and action plans
Other visits as required	Review progress
Summer Term	Evaluate evidence of progress made against action plan.

Classroom visits

Governors are not authorised to assess standards but may visit lessons as part of a plan of visits agreed by the governing body in order to:

- Appreciate and understand the work of the staff (teachers and support staff) and how the pupils are learning;
- Be aware of the response of pupils to their work and check that the pupils are aware of what they are learning;
- Be aware of resource issues;
- Be able to ask appropriate questions and hold appropriate discussions with the professionals;
- Understand as fully as possible the meaning of the results of monitoring reported to them.

N.B. Governors are not inspectors and are not present in a lesson to make judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher. That remains a task for the head and/or other education professionals. Governors may not:

- Make judgements about the quality of teaching;
- Report on the progress of individual children;
- Pursue personal agendas;
- Monopolize teachers’ time;
- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding classroom visits. The approach of a governor should be to ask for explanations of anything not understood, not to make assumptions. Observations and comments should be shared with the teacher concerned, and with the headteacher, but not with other staff or with parents. Reports to the Governing Body should not identify individuals in a critical manner: this is not the role of a governor.

Review

This policy and the guidelines will be reviewed by the Governing Body on a triennial basis and will consider the following questions:

- Are the visits proving useful?
- Are visits contributing to governors' knowledge of the school?
- Are visits supporting good relationships between staff and governors?
- Do they enable governors to challenge the school more effectively in their role as critical friend?
- Have there been benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, from the visits?

Aide-memoire for planning a school visit

What is the purpose of the visit?

Is this a formal or informal visit?
What has prompted my decision to visit?
Who has prompted my decision to visit?
Is the reason specific or general?
What are my/other people's expectations?
How can my visit benefit the school?

How shall I carry it out?

What particular areas of the school am I interested in?
What particular activities am I interested in?
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
What questions should I ask?
Who should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
Which of my questions did I answer?
To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?

Is there any follow-up?

Have I recorded my experiences?
Did I report back to the head and staff?
Did I thank the head and staff for supporting the visit?
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
How can I build on this for the next visit?

Governor Visits Policy

	Always	Never
Before	Arrange details of visit Agree purpose of visit Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed Agree role within the lesson	Turn up unannounced
During	Keep to the role agreed Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over Please remember confidentiality Stick to the times and purpose agreed Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the children	Assume a different role Walk in with a clipboard Distract the pupils from their task
After	Thank the teacher and the pupils Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience Raise any queries or concerns with the Headteacher Complete a visit record sheet Feedback to the governing body	Leave without Acknowledgement Break rules of confidentiality

St Mary and All Saints Primary School Record of Governor Visit

Name(s):	Date:
Focus of visit (include classes/staff visited)	
Summary of activities (e.g. talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, lunch etc.)	
What I have learnt during my visit / The strengths I have identified	
Questions and challenge I have shared/ have to share as a consequence of my visit	
Ideas for future visits:	
Any other comments:	
Signed _____ (Governors)	