

GOVERNORS' VISITS INTO SCHOOL POLICY

Questions governors should ask of this draft policy (which should be amended to fit each specific school):

- Do we already have a policy which is fit for purpose?
- Does this policy make clear to all governors, future new governors, school staff the importance of visiting the school and the procedures to follow?
- Have you considered and included in the policy, informal opportunities to visit 'know the school'?
- Is there agreement for how the informal visits are to be documented/minuted?
- Have you considered and included other types of formal school visits other than a classroom visit?
- Is there agreement for how the formal visits, non-classroom based, are to be documented/minuted?
- Is this policy to be included in the school's New Governor Induction Pack?
- Is this policy to be published on the school website to inform parents of another aspect of your role as a governor?

SCHOOL

GOVERNORS' VISITS INTO SCHOOL

Rationale

Visits to school by members of the governing body enable governors to increase their knowledge of the working of the school. This knowledge and understanding better enables the governing body to carry out its roles of:

- Strategic leadership
- monitoring and evaluation
- holding the school to account for its performance.

The governing body is a corporate body and every governor visits as a representative member of that body and not as an individual. It is a delegated responsibility and named as 'Link Governor'. The link governor is a source of support to the school and a source of information for the governing body.

An effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding, benefits the whole community. This policy provides an agreed framework within which governors should plan and carry out their school visits.

Aims of the Policy

The policy aims to ensure: -

- that governors are fully conversant with their duties in relation to school visits;
- that teachers fully understand the purpose of governor visits;
- that all involved understand how these visits fit into the statutory and strategic purpose of the governing body;
- that all involved fully understand what a governor will and will not do;
- that all involved know what will happen following a governor visit and how information will be used;
- that all involved will understand how the success of this policy will be evaluated

Visits are important

- to increase the governing body's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- by providing a valuable opportunity for governors to take a more active part in the school self-evaluation process.
- to show to staff, pupils, parents and the community that governors are interested in the life, work and achievement of the school.
- to support the school.

- to enable governors to see evidence of the policies and the School Development Plan in action.
- as part of the governing body's monitoring role.
- to increase governors' understanding of the teaching and learning process.
- to enable the governing body to ask informed questions in governing body meetings by gaining first hand knowledge of the working of the school.
- to see resources purchased by the budget being used by the school community – particularly the pupils.

Roles and responsibilities of head teacher, other staff, governors

The governing body will, with the help of the head teacher and staff, organise a schedule of visits throughout the 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 governors or pairs of governors will, with the guidance of the whole governing body and the head teacher, identify an aspect of the school and the work of the school, to focus on. This will enable individual governors to deepen their understanding by focusing on areas where they have an interest or expertise. The aim will be for them to explore an aspect in some detail, increasing their confidence and knowledge. In turn this will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body team and to enrich discussions about the school's performance

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing body.

Below is a quotation from the Governors' Handbook:

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 whether the school is implementing the policies and improvement plans they have signed off and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views.

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 governors wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.

Types of School Visits

- Informal e.g. attending a parents' information evening, going on an out of school class visit
- Formal e.g. class visit, meeting with the subject/phase leader
- Specific Responsibilities e.g. SEN, Health and Safety
- Induction Programme for New Governors

Governors' Visits are NOT:

- a form of inspection in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.
- a check on the progress of known children
- monopolising staff time
- arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- pursuing personal agendas or issues.
- interrupting, giving ideas or suggestions during teaching time
- replacing the responsibility of the head teacher/ senior leaders

Governing Body Protocol for Visits

This agreed protocol outlines what should happen before, during and after the visit. **(Appendix 1)**

Reporting of Visit

Link governors to complete Governor School Visit Pro-forma **(Appendix 2)**

Confidentiality

Remember that what governors see and hear should remain confidential within the school, and once the report is written, confidential to the governing body.

Who has been consulted?

Staff and pupils contributed to this policy and will be consulted at least annually on its impact

Governors will reflect on the impact of this policy through their annual self-review.

Date of Policy Adoption by Head teacher and Staff	
Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body	
Date of Policy Review	

Procedures- ‘Visiting the School’ – a class visit

Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check to see if there is a policy for governor visits. ▪ Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the school? ▪ Development/Improvement Plan? ▪ Discuss the agenda with the headteacher in advance. Make sure the date chosen is suitable for the purpose identified. ▪ Check to see if the date is still convenient. If not reschedule. ▪ Find out if there is a prompt sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits. ▪ Time permitting; discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate in the lesson? ▪ Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing/ what is the focus. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this. ▪ Discuss with the headteacher if any supporting information is available –Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate. ▪ Remember it is a visit not an inspection. You are observing, finding out and learning. ▪ Observe discretely. Note taking can be disconcerting. ▪ Make a mental note of questions you would like to ask teacher at end of lesson. ▪ Don't distract the teacher from his/her work, but be prepared to talk and show interest. ▪ Interact, don't interrupt. ▪ Remember why you are there, the focus of the visit. ▪ Be sensitive to the mood of the class. ▪ Listen to the teacher and if time at the end of the lesson talk to the teacher. ▪ Be interested and enthusiastic. ▪ Be courteous, friendly, positive, give praise when due, not critical.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remember not only a means of teaching you about your link area; it is also important in forging positive relationships between governors and staff. ▪ Thank the teacher and class for allowing you to visit.
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect confidentiality arising from any aspect of the visit. ▪ Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about or ask questions. ▪ Consider whether the purpose of the visit has been achieved. Brief discussion with headteacher, ▪ Thank the teacher for supporting your role as a governor. ▪ Make any notes as soon as possible after visit. ▪ Complete a 'Governor Visit into School Pro-forma.' Show to headteacher/ member of staff. ▪ Hand to headteacher/ school administrator to circulate to governors for next full governor body meeting. Alternatively or in addition to, file in the Governor Visit file kept in school. ▪ Feedback main findings and any pertinent issues for planning, at full governor body meeting either written or verbal. ▪ Use findings to support school self-evaluation, school improvement cycle and school development/improvement plan. ▪ Reflect back on your visit.

School Visit Record**(Appendix 2)**

Name of governor	Date
Purpose of visit <i>(Previously agreed by the governing body with the headteacher)</i>	
Links with the School Development Plan <i>(How does this visit relate to a priority in the SDP?)</i>	
Governor observations and comments <i>(e.g. What did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)</i>	
Any key issues arising for the governing body? <i>(e.g allocation of resources, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing key policy)</i>	
Action following governing body meeting <i>(Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)</i>	

Examples of some specific focus areas which link governors could have, with examples of questions to be asked

Examples of a Specific focus related to SDP/SIP – success criteria, expected outcome after actions have been implemented and monitored.	<u>Class Visit-</u> questions to ask which could be answered through observation and directed to the teacher /pupils BUT questioning should not disrupt the work of the teacher/pupils within designated teaching and learning time.
Assessment is accurate and outcomes are being used to secure good differentiation, with an appropriate match of tasks and activities to pupils' learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there differentiation? How?</i> • <i>Are there different lesson objectives/success criteria/expected outcomes for the different groups of pupils?</i> • <i>Are pupils motivated and on task?</i> • <i>How are the support staff and the class teacher working with the different groups of pupils?</i> • <i>Would more support/resources be welcomed? In what form?</i> • <i>How is pupil learning evaluated and recorded to inform the next lesson?</i>
Pitch and expectation within all lessons in mathematics and literacy are secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Does the class teacher make the objectives of learning tasks clear and success criteria are known not only by the teacher, teaching support staff but by the pupils as well?</i> • <i>Are the activities differentiated, motivating and challenging so that all pupils are on task?</i> • <i>Are there extension activities for those pupils who have completed their task with some time to spare?</i> • <i>Do some pupils finish very quickly?</i> • <i>Do some pupils struggle with the activity even if they have been focused on their work? Are these pupils supported- by peers or an adult?</i>
Teachers and Support Staff use a range of questions within the classroom to develop pupil learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Are questions opened or closed? Are pupils given time to work in pairs to consider an answer? Are pupils encouraged to ask questions in return to generate a discussion/clarification/explanation?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are questions directed at groups, individuals? • Are questions differentiated to cater for all the needs of pupils within the class? • How are all pupils encouraged to participate?
Approaches to marking and feedback are consistent across the school	<p>(opportunity to speak to pupils)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do pupils understand what they are doing well and what the next steps in learning are? • Are pupils able to confidently discuss their work, know what they need to do to improve and are able to build on clear guidance offered to them by teachers? • How are pupils given opportunity to read feedback given and do they do so? What impact is good marking and feedback having?
Teachers ensure there is planned and incidental use of the outdoor learning environment to secure improved practises for independent learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the difference between planned and incidental learning? • How are the pupils using the outdoor environment? • Have some of the activities been planned, structured to allow pupils to learn independently either alone, paired, small group? • How is learning achieved through incidental use of the outdoor experience, assessed and recorded to inform future planning?

Visit/Discussion with subject leaders. Focus to find out more about the implementation of their role and school improvement.	Questions to ask. Analysis of data and documents
Has the subject leader support for teachers impacted on teaching and learning resulting in improved pupil progress and attainment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what form has this support been given so far? Is more support intended to be given? • Has the support given by the subject leaders had any impact? • What evidence is there to support impact? What has been attained

	<p><i>and what progress has been made over the term/2 terms by the different groups of pupils? (need to see data)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>What further directed support is needed? (individual teachers/classes)</i><i>Is knowledge gained by subject leaders being imparted to school teams? (either resulting from own cpd or analysis of monitoring carried out within school)</i><i>Are targets set being met or on track to be met?</i><i>Do they need to be more challenging?</i><i>Why are they not being met?</i><i>What is the next step in their role to improve pupil progress and attainment?</i>
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