

Governor Visits Policy

1. Introduction

In order to be effective, Governors need to know their school, if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Governors are therefore encouraged to visit the school. Visiting the school during the school day is just one way Governors can gain information. Other ways include reading policies, receiving information/data and receiving the Headteacher's termly report to the Governing Body which will include progress reports on the implementation of the School Development Plan (SDP).

Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views.

It is important for individual Governors to remember that when they visit the school, they act as representatives of the Governing Body, which has corporate responsibility for the overall leadership of the school.

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.

In order to ensure a work life balance for both staff and Governors, a maximum commitment should be a half day equivalent in each academic year to make a visit, meet staff and produce a report.

2. Purposes of a Visit

- Mainly to get to know more about the school, so that the Governing Body can carry out its responsibilities including the role it has in monitoring the progress of the SDP. First-hand impressions of what the school is like and what goes on give Governors a context and background for discussions at Governors' meetings - something of the feel of the school and the flavour of its work that they cannot otherwise obtain. Without such first-hand impressions, the picture of the school that Governors carry in their minds is liable to be based on their own schooldays rather than current reality. What Governors learn from visiting the school should add to what the Governing Body as a whole knows about the school.
- A subsidiary, but important purpose of visiting the school is to demonstrate to staff that Governors' responsibilities are taken seriously and that Governors are interested in what staff do. Governors have extensive powers which affect staff, and staff can reasonably expect Governors to exercise these powers with a good understanding of their work and clear evidence of goodwill.
- Some formal visits are undertaken as part of a specific assignment from the Governing Body to a particular Governor. For example, Governors who have been given specific responsibilities in relation to the premises, or to an area of the curriculum, or

to special educational needs, may wish to inform themselves more fully by means of a visit.

- It is important to remember that visits should relate to members' responsibilities as Governors and capacities as individuals, and should not go beyond either. It is a part of the Headteacher's responsibility to manage the school day to day and to supervise staff, in accordance with the aims, objectives and policies approved by the Governing Body. Moreover, to judge the quality of teaching and learning in a school is a specialist skill which non-specialists cannot exercise on the basis of a short, occasional visit. When using visits to gain information and impressions to help in the role of Governor, Governors do so as observers, not as inspectors.

A visit gives only a glimpse or snapshot of what goes on. It should not be assumed that what is learnt at one, or even several visits gives a full and balanced picture. Conclusions may be entirely valid as far as they go and Governors should not reject the evidence of their own eyes and ears; but both may need to be checked with others and revised in the light of further evidence.

In summary it is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time - the visit is not about:

- Inspection.
- Making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher.
- Checking on your own children.
- Pursuing a personal agenda.
- Arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

There are potential benefits to both Governors and staff of effective Governor visits. These include:

Benefits to Governors: -

- recognise and celebrate success.
- develop relationships with the staff.
- get to know the children.
- recognise different teaching styles.
- understand the environment in which teachers and other staff work.
- see policies and schemes of learning in action.
- inform decision-making.
- find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.

Benefits to staff: -

- help Governors understand the reality of the classroom.
- get to know the Governors.
- understand better the Governors' roles and responsibilities.
- have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion.
- act as a 'fact-finder' for the teacher.
- highlight the need for particular resources.

3. Key Points to observe when making a visit

- Confirm the visit before arriving
- Read in advance any relevant information sent to them by the Governance Professional to the Governing Body, which should include:
 - Previous curriculum report
 - Curriculum report template
 - Curriculum subject policy
- Have a clear focus and share the focus with the staff concerned
- Be attentive
- Observe confidentiality
- Observe the school policy for visitors
- Establish with staff what is expected of the Governor
- Talk and share the experience with the Curriculum Leader and Headteacher
- Be prepared to give written and verbal feedback to the Governing Body
- When Governors visit the school it is important that they do not make judgements on the quality of teaching they see. The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring teaching in the school
- Discuss the subject action plan
- Evaluate the visit by asking the following questions:
 - were the objectives of the visit fulfilled?
 - was everyone involved properly prepared?
 - did the Governor see what they wanted to see?
 - what would they do differently next time?
 - were there areas they would like to know more about?
 - what effect has the visit had on them, the school and the Governing body?

If they have any concerns as a result of their visit, they should always raise them with the Headteacher without delay

4. The Report

1. Governors should produce a written report, in comic sans font, on their visits and this should be approved by the Headteacher and Curriculum Leader before submission as an item for the next Business Meeting.
2. Governors are able to use a laptop or tablet device during the visit, however, there is a strict 'no mobile phone' policy within all areas of the school.
3. The Governance Professional of the Governing Body is available to support finalising a report if adequate notes are submitted to the Governance Professional.

The report should be forwarded to the Governance Professional of the Governing Body within two weeks of the visit and at least two weeks prior to the Business Meeting.

A written report should not include children's names.

5. Guidance on report writing

Governors' reports should cover the following areas:

- Date of visit.
- Name of Curriculum Leader.
- Names of visiting Governor.
- Detail any in-service training undertaken by the Curriculum Leader.
- Note any communications to parents on the subject area e.g. curriculum newsletters, open evenings, etc.
- Outline any visits or visitors which support the curriculum area.
- If the teaching programmes are free of indoctrinations (where appropriate)
- Equal opportunities legislation is being complied with.
- Steps taken to address targets in subject action plan and identify possible future targets for the subject

The report should also cover the organisation of the subject i.e.

- How the National Curriculum is covered - either in blocks at specific times of the year or as a continuous programme?
- Is teaching whole class, groups or individual?
- How does planning meet the needs of children with differing abilities?
- Are children organised in mixed ability groups or ability groups?
- Is there 'setting' across the year group?
- How are the needs of the children with Special Needs met?
- Time allocation?
- Assessment and record-keeping.
- Standards of achievement.
- Children's attitude to the subject.

6. Programme of visits

As a Governing Body we have decided that:

- All Governors will have an area of responsibility within the school
- All Governors will visit the school at least annually with regard to their delegated area of responsibility
- Governors are encouraged to focus on the current issue identified within their delegated curriculum area
- Governors will provide a written report which they need to present to the rest of the Governing Body

The report should be forwarded to the Governance Professional of the Governing Body within two weeks of the visit and at least two weeks prior to the Business Meeting.

At the beginning of the autumn term, the Governing Body via the Curriculum, Pupil Welfare and Admissions Committee will review the programme of visits for the following year, including the current issues faced by the areas being visited. Then during the autumn term, the date and timing of specific visits will be arranged by the Governors themselves in liaison with the Curriculum Leaders and other appropriate school staff and details of visits should be notified to the Governance Professional.

7. Internal Audits

Internal Audits are carried out on an annual basis. We have external auditors who carry out some of our internal audits as well as internal audits which are completed by Governors. They form part of our reliance testing for our external auditors and from December 2019 they are a requirement by the Department for Education (DfE) and are essential to enable the school to produce an Internal Scrutiny Report which is submitted to the DfE on an annual basis. All internal audits are to be carried out and completed within the academic year and presented to the Finance and Audit Committee so they can be agreed and signed.

The current schedule runs from 1st January to 22nd May and our current annual internal audits are:

- External auditors carry out our internal financial audits on an annual basis in May/June
- The following internal audits are completed by Governors:
 - Cyber Security
 - Personnel
 - Safeguarding
 - Health and Safety
 - Safer Recruitment
 - Website

All internal audits are allocated to Governors with the necessary skills and/or experience at the start of the new academic year. The Governance Professional of the Governing Body will liaise with the relevant staff member and Governor to enable the audits to be booked in and completed within the timescale required.

Every year the audits will be carried out by a Governor with the relevant skills and/or experience. Once the internal audit has been booked, the relevant Governor is issued with the previous year's completed internal audit, the Governors Visits Policy and a blank template to complete for the current year.

The completed audit should be forwarded to the Governance Professional of the Governing Body within two weeks of the visit and at least two weeks prior to the Business Meeting.



Governor Visit Report

Governor:

Member of Staff:

Date of Visit:

Governor visits contribute to school improvement by enabling Governors to discuss with staff the implementation of school improvement and to monitor progress made towards reaching school targets.

1. PURPOSE OF VISIT	
2. SUMMARY: Key points from discussion.	
3. OBSERVATIONS: <i>How does the subject support children with SEN? How does the subject support children who are more able? What do children say about the subject? Any comments about work seen?</i>	
4. RESOURCES: Effective use of resources with respect to School Development Plan.	
5. PROGRESS: Progress made by staff, children and students in relation to OFSTED Action Plan/School Development Plan.	
6. SAFEGUARDING ISSUES: Discuss any safeguarding issues in relation to the subject area. Has the member of staff had Prevent training? Identify safe evacuation routes for fire drill. Ask children if they feel safe in school	
7. ACTION POINTS: To include aspects for clarification/ outstanding questions, ideas for future visits and general comments	



School Visits – an Aide Memoire

What is the purpose of the 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 teacher?

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?
- It might also be useful to clarify some 'what ifs' beforehand. For example:-
What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
What if a pupil asks me how to do something?
What if I have a suggestion to make?

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 Headteacher and staff?
- Have I prepared a short report for the next Governors' meeting?
- How can I build on this for the next visit?

Please remember to be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations.

No two days are ever the same.

Keep an open mind about what you see.

Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don't expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood.

By all means ask questions preferably at the end of the lesson.



Ground Rules

	Always	Never
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange details of visit• Agree purpose of visit• Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed• Agree role within the lesson• Agree level of confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn up unannounced
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assume a different role• Walk in with a clipboard• Interrupt the teacher• Distract the children from their task• Judge the quality of teaching
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thank the teacher and the children• Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience• Feedback to the Governing Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leave without acknowledgement• Break rules of confidentiality

Approved: April 2025

Next Review Due: April 2026

AUDIT: DATE

REVIEWED BY:	FINDINGS	* TO BE DISCUSSED AT FINANCE MEETING	LIST OF ANY ACTION THAT IS REQUIRED	ACTION COMPLETED
GOVERNOR - DATE:				
FINANCE MANAGER - DATE:				
HEADTEACHER - Rebecca Sawford DATE:				
FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - CHAIR DATE:				

PREVIOUS REPORT READ YES/NO

DATE OF VISIT:
CARRIED OUT BY:

Objective	Checks Carried Out	Details of Selected Records	Comments