

Governor Visits September 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 The core strategic functions of a Governing Board include a) ensuring that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school is clearly defined; b) ensuring that the head teacher performs his or her responsibilities for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and c) ensuring the sound, proper and effective use of the school's financial resources.

1.2 The Governing Board, as a corporate body, has additional responsibilities in relation to areas such as Health and Safety and Child Protection. Additionally, it has an important role in monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum and understanding the progress that is being made towards targets set out in the School Development Plan (SDP).

1.3 Visiting the classrooms and School Leads is one way in which this can be achieved. Governors are an important and integral part of the school community and are welcome in school. Governors are expected to be involved in a formal way through their governorship and are also encouraged to be involved in an informal way.

2. Background

2.1 It is essential that governors see classes at work and be familiar with the life of the school during the working day. This enables governors to be good ambassadors of the school and increases their knowledge base, so that they can make wise decisions and provide effective support and challenge at Governing Board meetings.

2.2 In addition to visiting the school and attending meetings, governors should ensure that they undertake appropriate training to support them in their role.

2.3 Governors have no automatic right as individuals to visit the school and it is crucial that governors and the staff understand the governors' role – in particular that governors do not have an inspectorial role and have no right to go into school without notice.

2.4 The Governing Board is a corporate body which means that no governor can act on her/his own without proper authority from the full governing board; all governors carry equal responsibility for decisions made and the overriding concern of all governors is the welfare of the school as a whole.

2.5 Everyone concerned should understand that governors go into school primarily to learn and not to judge. Most visits occur because the GB has decided it can be an important way for governors to measure success and understand the progress of activities and priorities identified in the School Development Plan (SDP).

3. Formal Visits

3.1 Governors attached to class or Curriculum Area should arrange an appointment to discuss how to proceed with the link arrangement. The Headteacher should always be made aware of this appointment.

3.2 It is inappropriate for a governor to come into school or visit pupils engaged in Intervention activities without an appointment and approval of the Headteacher.

3.3 Time will be made available at Governor visits to enable visits to focus on measuring success against school priorities. 3.4 The reason for the visit should be outlined e.g. curriculum area; SDP area of focus etc.

3.5 The visit should promote both educational awareness and goodwill.

3.6 The visiting governor should be both sensitive and positive towards staff, pupils and the school environment.

3.7 Governors are not inspectors and will not make professional judgements about teaching and learning.

3.8 Governors should be aware of the need for confidentiality and be familiar with the Safeguarding Policy

4. Frequency

4.1 Each governor should make one class visit a term (3rd week of each 2nd half term, after the half term break. These days are published at the first FGB meeting of each academic year) and aim to make at least one other visit per school year.

4.2 Visits should be arranged so that at least one visit takes place each term from a member of the Governing Board.

4.3 In order for governors and staff to use their time effectively, whenever possible, governors are encouraged to use the Governor visits to carry out their named governor responsibilities.

4.4 Governor visits will be held termly and will each have a core focus along with an opportunity to observe how elements of the school development plan are being implemented.

5. Reporting

5.1 A Governor Visit Report should be completed for each visit. (Appendix 2). Before the visit, the sections relating to the purpose of the visit, the staff to visit and potential activities should be agreed between the governor, Headteacher and member of staff. After the visit, governors should update the activities section along with other sections as to what has been learned, comments and ideas for future visits. The report should be sent to the class teacher and the Headteacher for them to include their comments, before circulation.

5.2 In the unlikely event that there is any aspect of the visit that concerns you, please take it to the Headteacher first, rather than the class teacher.

5.3 The report will then be shared with the relevant Committee (if any) and the full Governing Board.

6. Visit Guidelines

6.1 All visits will be conducted in accordance with the protocol for Governor Visits – appendix 1.

6.2 Agree in advance with the teacher your role in the classroom (observer, participation, involvement with pupils, etc)

6.3 Remember you are there in a supportive role

6.4 Remember to complete the visit form before and after your visit.

6.5 If you see something you don't understand or need clarification on, this should be discussed afterwards with the class teacher if at all possible.

Appendix One

Protocol for Governor Visits

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. What are the relevant parts of the School Development Plan that relate to my visit? What are the relevant school Policies? What am I looking to understand as part of my delegated named governor role? How does this determine the activities I am interested in? • Discuss the purpose of the visit and an agenda with the Headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Complete the Governor Visit checklist, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting; discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. If appropriate, consider how they want governors to integrate into the lesson
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. 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, scheme of work.

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing board, it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing board.
- 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.
- Observe discreetly. Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, 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 or staff lead. 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, positive.
 - Complete the Governor Visits Form as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
 - Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board and amend your report if appropriate.
 - Agree with the Headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
 - 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? Has it given me any ideas for future visits?
- Reporting your visit
- After completing your Governor Visit Form ensure it is sent to the relevant member of staff and Headteacher in order for them to check for accuracy and include their comments.
 - Ensure the clerk to the Governing Board has a copy of your visit for the files.
 - Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing board meeting.

Appendix Two

Governor Visit Report

Name: (name of governor)	Date of Visit: (date of visits)
Area of responsibility/link class: (named governor role)	
Classes/staff visited: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (names and title of staff visited) 	Purpose of visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (description of purpose of visit) • (reference to SDP, delegated responsibilities, etc)
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary of activities (talking to staff & pupils, looking at resources, had lunch etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (summary of activities that you would like to do / have done as part of your visit) 	
What have I learned as a result of my visit? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (summary of the key facts you have learned, impressions formed as a result of your visit) 	Positive comments about the visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (summary of the positive comments about your visit)
Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (anything you were unsure about or did not understand) • (anything you forgot to ask or questions that your visit has raised) 	
Ideas for future visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (How you would like to follow up your visit (if appropriate)) 	
Other comments (Governor): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (other comments you may have related to your visit) 	
Staff and Headteacher comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (any comments the staff member or Headteacher have in relation to your visit, your findings, your questions, etc) 	
Signed (Governor) _____ Date _____	
Signed (Teacher/Designated Lead/Headteacher) _____ Date _____	

Key	Completed prior to visit	Completed prior to and post visit	Completed post visit
------------	---------------------------------	--	-----------------------------