

Hindley J and I School



Governor Visits Policy

Written: November 2016

_____ Signed on behalf of the school _____ date

_____ Signed on behalf of the governors _____ date

Introduction

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies, and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to leaders, staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and in the classrooms.

If school visits are done well they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

WHY VISIT?

A Governing Body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and to be held accountable for its conduct and performance.

Visits should be undertaken as:

A Part of the strategic programme to-

Improve Governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses;

Monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the school development plan;

Help the Governing Body fulfil its statutory duties;

Acquire knowledge to enable the Governing Body to challenge as appropriate.

B. Critical Friend –

Monitoring, and evaluating plans, budgets, standards of education and achievement.

C. Accountability-

Annual reports and meetings, publication of minutes, surveys of parental views.

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF GOVERNOR VISITS

A Governor visits school to:

- ✚ Learn so that you can increase the Governing Body's first-hand knowledge base;
- ✚ Experience the impact and progress of the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies;
- ✚ Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously;
- ✚ Establish and develop good professional relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with your individual area of responsibility, e.g. English, Maths, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or Health and Safety;
- ✚ See in context some of the monitoring systems employed by the school;
- ✚ Demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process
- ✚ Show support and encouragement to staff and children

WHAT ARE GOVERNORS' VISITS NOT ABOUT?

The main point to emphasise is that Governors' visits to classrooms 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 school visit is also not about:

- ✚ Checking on the progress of your own or known children;
- ✚ Monopolising staff time;
- ✚ Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas;
- ✚ Pursuing personal agendas or issues.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I VISIT?

This will essentially depend on the number of Governors available to take on the responsibility and the size of the school staff.

WHO SCHEDULES THE VISITS?

Visits should always be agreed with the Headteacher or a member of the leadership team.

VISIT PREPARATION

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply *'the ground rules'*.

It is essential that a disproportionate amount of time should not be spent on planning and arranging visits. If you plan in advance what should always and never happen before, during and after a visit, the ground rules will be firmly established and should avoid any problems and hopefully make the visit more beneficial and enjoyable.

THE FOCUS OF THE VISIT

Remember a visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific focus visit. Visits can focus on the following:

The School in Operation

- ✚ The condition and maintenance of the premises;
- ✚ The use made of buildings and premises;
- ✚ Security on site;
- ✚ Break and lunch times;
- ✚ The monitoring of Health and Safety;
- ✚ Office procedures e.g. budget monitoring;
- ✚ To see a class or teacher led assembly (to see how well information is provided);
- ✚ Pupil behaviour around the school.

The Classroom Visit

- ✚ Observation of particular curriculum areas i.e. English, Mathematics, Science, Computing, Design Technology (DT), History, Geography, Religious Education, Art and Design, Music or Physical Education.
- ✚ The implementation of the curriculum;
- ✚ Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment;
- ✚ The deployment of support staff;
- ✚ To see a class or teacher led assembly (to consider SMSC).

School Improvement Focus (SIF)

School Improvement Focus visits will be based around the following questions:

- # How well leaders, managers and pursue excellence, modelling professional standards in all of their work?
- # What is the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation?
- # How does the school use performance management and effectiveness of strategies for improving teaching, including the extent to which the school takes account of the Teachers' Standards'
- # How well leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum raises outcomes for children?
- # How well leaders and managers demonstrate the capacity to bring about further improvement?
- # What is the impact of middle leadership and what is the extent to which schools are adequately developing their middle leadership / succession planning and the development of future leaders in the school
- # What is the impact of governance?
- # How effectively does school promote the confidence and engagement of parents, including by encouraging the use of Parent View
- # What is the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to ensure that there is safe recruitment and that all pupils are safe?

Learning Walks

The Governing Body oversees the strategic operation of the school so it is important that its members have a clear understanding of how the school works and how children are learning. To do this, it is suggested that governors undertake Learning Walks. These should be planned beforehand, be part of an annual schedule and be integral to the monitoring and evaluation calendar. Confidentiality should be emphasised and maintained at all times e.g. during the planning, the implementation and in any follow-up discussions.

The purposes of Learning Walks are to;

- # Increase Governors' knowledge and understanding of the school through seeing at first-hand how it operates;
- # Experience the impact of plans and policies;
- # Demonstrate to the school community that Governors are taking their roles and responsibilities seriously;
- # Establish and develop good working relationships;
- # Be able to contribute effectively to the school's self-evaluation;
- # Show support and encouragement and be able to celebrate successes and achievements;
- # See evidence of work matching the individual needs of pupils;
- # Be able to see that resources and the learning environment are adapted to meets the needs as appropriate.

There are different types of Learning Walks which should be tailored to the priorities of the school.

General

Often a first visit/ new Governor E.g.

- ✚ Introductory sessions, viewing the entrance and reception areas along with corridors and administrative areas;
- ✚ To see the playground in operation;
- ✚ To visit classrooms and look at displays and 'Learning Walls';
- ✚ To talk with children.

Specific subject focus

E.g. focus on

- ✚ A specific priority or strand within the School Improvement Plan;
- ✚ How children learn maths; how children learn in English; how well a particular programme is working or how children use Computing to learn etc.;
- ✚ Displays, resources and equipment used in that subject area;
- ✚ Teachers subject leadership of a curriculum area.

Specific aspect

E.g. focus on

- ✚ How Health and Safety is carried out and how policies are adhered to;
- ✚ How the school ensures that it complies with all the requirements regarding Statutory Assessments (SATs, Teacher Assessment, returning papers);
- ✚ Behaviour;
- ✚ Pupil Premium and its impact;
- ✚ Inclusion and Disadvantaged Pupils;
- ✚ Use of support staff to support children's learning;
- ✚ Lunchtimes and break times;
- ✚ Breakfast Club or after school activities;
- ✚ How the school develops children's thinking skills.

AFTER THE VISIT

We all need feedback after we have been visited or observed. This can be a sensitive area but it is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed. Remember as a Governor you are making the visit on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body.

Staff should also realise that Governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management. Any expression of concern should be shared with the Headteacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety is being compromised. This should always be reported immediately.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- ✚ The member(s) of staff involved;
- ✚ The Headteacher;
- ✚ The appropriate Committee or Governing Body.

Brief feedback should be given to the member(s) of staff at the end of the visit. Governors should agree with the Headteacher the level of detail that should be fed back to the member of staff.

Written feedback using the Governor's Visit Form (see Appendix 1) should be completed as soon as possible and copies given to the Headteacher who would make a copy available to the member of staff. The reports will be discussed with the appropriate Committee and/or Governing Body and made available as required.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE GOVERNING BODY'S POLICY

The appropriate Committee will review this policy in line with its agreed cycle/procedures and report back to the Governing Body. The review will consider:

- ✚ Are we doing what we set out to do?
- ✚ Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- ✚ Have I learned more about the school?
- ✚ Are we better informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- ✚ Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- ✚ Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- ✚ Have I helped the Governing Body fulfil its duties?
- ✚ Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- ✚ How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Governor's Visit Form

Name:	Governor Responsibility:	Date: Duration:
Area of School/Staff/Class visited:		
Purpose of visit linked to School Improvement Plan (if appropriate):		
Governor's comments:		
Staff comments:		

--

Headteacher comments:

Signed:

Governor: _____

Staff Member (s): _____

Headteacher: _____

Date: _____