



# Governors School Visit Policy

## Version 3

*“Individual governors do not have an automatic right to visit the school. But they do need to be able to visit from time to time in order to develop their understanding of how the school works to enable them to better fulfil their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school.”*

(from ‘A Guide to the Law for School Governors’)

- All governors should visit the school.
- The date and timing of the visit must be arranged in advance with the Head teacher.
- Visits should have a clear focus linked to a curriculum subject, a school policy, an aspect of the School Improvement Plan or some other specific area of the management of the school, or as an Induction visit, or as part of a Governors’ Day.
- If a Governor is going to spend time in a classroom this should be discussed with the class teacher so that both are clear how long the governor is coming for, what they are going to look at and what they are going to do.
- Governors should understand that their visits are not professional inspections or the monitoring role of the Head teacher. Governors should not voice any judgements they may make about the effectiveness of the teaching that they see, rather they should pose questions for the Head Teacher / Senior Leadership Team that may warrant further investigation or monitoring.
- After visits, governors should discuss their impressions and any comments they may have with the Head teacher and then report back in writing, using the agreed governors’ monitoring visit report template and inviting relevant school staff to add their comments. This should be sent to the clerk to the governors for circulation to all governors

### **Possible focuses for visits**

- A National Curriculum subject
- A school policy, for example for pupil behaviour, religious worship, special needs
- A target from the School Development Plan.
- Enrichment activities
- Ethos
- Other focus agreed with the Headteacher

## **General questions**

- What, if any, are your barriers to success?
- What are your next steps?
- What can we do, as governors, to support your project / subject / area of the school?

## **Questions governors might ask Subject Leaders / SLT relating to curriculum subjects**

- Is the subject adequately represented on the timetable? i.e. do the pupils receive sufficient teaching of it?
- Are the staff who teach the subject properly qualified, experienced and trained?
- Are there sufficient resources and equipment available for the staff to teach the subject adequately?
- Do the pupils enjoy the subject? Do they appear to be working hard at it and learning and what do you need to learn next??
- Are there any outstanding issues with regard to the subject that staff would like the governors to be aware of?

## **Questions governors might ask relating to policies**

- Are all staff (or the relevant staff) aware of the policy and supportive of it?
- Generally speaking, is the policy being implemented? Give relevant details about how this is being achieved
- When was the policy last reviewed? Is a date for its next review fixed? Does it need to be looked at before this date?
- Are there any outstanding issues regarding the implementation of the policy that governors need to be aware of or take action over?
- Has the policy been created or reviewed with staff well being and workload considered.

## **Questions governors might ask relating to targets on the SDP**

- Are the action-points listed in the SDP being implemented? Are they on schedule or has there been slippage? If so what are the reasons?

## **Questions governors might ask relating to ethos**

- Are reception and security arrangements working well?
- Are visitors made to feel welcome when they arrive?
- Is the atmosphere of the school relaxed and hard working?
- Do pupils and staff show respect towards each other?
- Are the pupils generally happy?
- How are incidents dealt with?
- Are victims and perpetrators both dealt with and supported?

- Does the school's discipline policy stress praise and positive encouragement as much as sanctions and punishment?
- Is there clear evidence of a genuine partnership between the parents and the school?
- Is staff morale high?

### **Reporting back**

- When governors visit the school, they do so on behalf of the whole governing body. It is therefore important that all the governors should benefit from any information or impressions gathered.
- Following each visit a written report should be provided using the agreed template as a guide. The report should:
  - be brief and mainly factual
  - not include personal judgements in areas such as the quality of teaching, that governors are not required to make
  - ask questions to challenge the school to improve its implementation of policies
  - When feedback is to be given to the governing body, this should be discussed with the Head teacher beforehand to make sure that it does not contain inaccuracies or matters that could be appropriately dealt with by the Head teacher.
  - A record of governors' visits should be kept in the minutes of the full governing body and recorded on Governor documentation such as Governors' Monitoring Calendar / Governors' Development Plan.

## Appendix 1



### Governor Monitoring Contact Report Form

<b>School Development Plan Strand / other link or purpose of contact</b>	
<b>Governor/s:</b>	
<b>Member of staff:</b>	
<b>Date and duration of visit/contact:</b>	
<b>Method of contact:</b>	

(Please use questions for governors to ask from NGA/The Key, if required )

Description of observation	
If SDP monitoring:	
Discussion of challenges, identifying any which are proving particularly difficult, and why, and solutions (relate to SDP if relevant)	
What are the next steps/priorities?	
How can governors support you in your role/with this project?	

Governor's summary of monitoring visit, including positive aspects:	
Aspects to clarify/questions to ask/ other comments to draw to attention of governors?	
Comments/response from MOS/HT/ COG	

**Remember:**

Governors are not qualified to assess standards, therefore it would be inappropriate for governors to:

1. **Make judgements on the quality of teaching**
2. **Report on the progress of individuals**
3. **Pursue personal agendas**
4. **Monopolize teachers' time**
5. **Arrive with inflexible preconceived ideas**

**CONFIDENTIALITY MUST be adhered to**

## Appendix 2

### Classroom Visits: Guidelines

#### Preamble

The governing body is the 'accountable body' in a school – accountable to parents, pupils, the local authority and Central Government through Ofsted. It is responsible for everything from Health and Safety and Child Protection to the school budget, Teaching and Learning and pupil progress. Because governing bodies have a statutory responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum, governors need to know what progress is being made towards targets set out in the School Development Plan (SDP). Visiting the classroom can help to support this process.

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), and through the Strategy Committee 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 crucial role.

Governors are not qualified to assess standards but they need to visit lessons 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 sensible 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 teachers. That remains a task for the head and/or other education professionals. It would be inappropriate, therefore, for governors to:

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

#### Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding classroom visits. Observations and comments should be shared with the teacher concerned, and with the headteacher, but not with other staff or with parents. And the approach of a governor should be to ask for explanations of anything not understood, not to make assumptions.

Reports to the Governing Body should not identify individuals in a critical manner: this is not the role of a governor.

## Minimum commitment

Individual governors have differing amounts of time to commit to an exercise such as classroom visits. It is important, however, that all governors should try to make visits at some time, beyond that initial general visit to the school when one is newly appointed to the governing body. A governor should aim to make a class visit *at least* once a year.

## Ground rules

It is useful to follow some basic rules in planning visits.

## 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?

### 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?  
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?  
How can I build on this for the next visit?

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>Before</b>	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
<b>During</b>	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
<b>After</b>	Thank the teacher and the pupils -Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience -Feedback to the governing body	Leave without acknowledgement Break rules of confidentiality

## Review

*The guidelines should be reviewed by the Governing Body each academic year. We would need to ask:*

- *Are our visits proving useful?*
- *Have there been benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, from our visits?*