



"Where children come first"

Governor Visit Policy

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Governor Visit Policy

Aims

All governing bodies have a statutory responsibility to oversee the policies and direction of schools, to monitor standards and be held to account for conduct and performance.

Although visiting the school is not a statutory requirement it is extremely important in helping Governors learn how the school functions, and to keep under review how it operates. Thereby increasing the governing body's first-hand knowledge, informing self-evaluation and strategic decision making. It is recognised that the amount of time that a governor can commit to a visit will vary but in general governors should expect to make at least one visit a year. If governors cannot make this commitment they should question whether they can make a realistic and valuable contribution to being a governor.

Governors Visits are generally aligned to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Plan so that the governing body can monitor how these are progressing. The governing body develops a plan of visits throughout the year to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Visits are the responsibility of the governor team linked to specific areas of school improvement, to organise. Governors should arrange their visits with the Headteacher or the school lead in the area of development.

The following elements should be considered.

Purposes of a visit

The potential benefits to governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success
- To monitor and assess the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan and observe policies in action
- To get to know the staff
- To show themselves as part of the school
- To improve knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
- To assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties and demonstrate their role as critical friend
- To develop an understanding of issues facing the school to inform decision making
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

The potential benefits to teachers:

- To share work completed in areas identified in the school development plan.
- ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- To get to know governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not about

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on the progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

How to feed back after the visit

Time should be given at the end of the visit to talk through observations made with either the lead for school improvement or the Headteacher.

Confidentiality is very important. Any observations and comments should be shared with the Headteacher and the teaching staff involved and with no-one else.

A written report should be completed within one week of a visit and should be emailed or sent to the school. Reports should be factual not judgemental. They are shared with the Full Governing Body at the next full governing body meeting.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Headteacher. Visits should be planned on areas of the priorities that have been identified within the school plan. Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to see what areas/activities receive visits and those that do not.

Visits can take the form of

- Meeting with staff
- Pupil interviews
- Looking at pupils work
- Meeting with staff groups
- Reviewing areas and resources of the school
- Monitoring and review of school visit policy

Monitoring

The Governor Visits policy should be reviewed annually

Formal School Visits - Good Practice Guide

The following sections list examples of good practice.

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss the agenda with the Headteacher well in advance and seek approval for your visit and agree a date that is suitable.
- Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? Would note taking be allowed? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- 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/class teacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
- Ensure that you are familiar with health and safety procedures

During the Visit

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Be punctual, keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Remember you are there to learn, it is a visit not an inspection. Dress 'smart casual' so as not to be intimidating
- 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.
- Observe discretely. 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.
- Listen to staff and pupils, be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

After

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. 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, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Complete the agreed visit proforma, once you have shared and agreed this with the Headteacher pass to the clerk for circulation to the governing body.
- Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- 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?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary (see example Appendix A) 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved as soon as possible after the visit for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Send the report to the clerk for circulation to the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Visit Focus'

Visits should be arranged which focus on the school improvement plan priorities to inform on progress. Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Additional educational needs
- Literacy and mathematics
- Lunch and break times
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture or ICT equipment
- Deployment of staff, e.g. caretaker, office staff, teaching assistants
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the school. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- To help in a class
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child
- Attending a school function or educational visit
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor

Record of Governor's Visit to Aylesham Primary School

Name of Governor: and School:		Date:	
Specific Purpose of Visit	Visiting: Ofsted Area of Governor To Discuss: Responsibility		
Link with the School Improvement Plan Priorities	Priority __: (number and list specific priority)		
What questions do I have for the visit. Is there anything particular I would like to see or discuss?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • 		
Observations and comments (what you did, what you saw etc)			
What did you observe or discuss that you found particularly interesting or positive?			
Did you see anything that you did not understand or that concerned you? Remember to raise this with the headteacher before you leave.			

What will you report back to the governing body?			
What is the use and impact of Pupil Premium Funding in this particular area.			
How does this visit relate to the Social, Moral, Spiritual & Cultural dynamics of school life. Evidence of British Values.			
For the Report co-ordinating Governor:			
Record any issues arising for the Governing Body that require further investigation or discussion.			
Which meeting will the issues will be raised at?		Date:	
Record any actions to be followed up on the next visit or at the next meeting:			
Has the action solved the problem, or is further action required?			
Confirmed by: (Name & signature)		Date:	

Things you might consider when visiting a classroom – relate this to the focus of the visit and in your discussions with the Headteacher or member of staff

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils — does this match the policy, are they attentive, encouraged, motivated, listening, questioning, responding, rewarded?
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How the pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children's work
- Displays, is the school attractive
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Environment and working conditions, what is the school like to work in? is this a good place to work and play? What are the good points? What can be improved
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources