



Governance Visits Policy

Together we **Exceed**



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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 One of the key roles and responsibilities for the Local Advisory Board is to monitor the quality of education at the school. Undertaking visits demonstrates the Governors' role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress.
- 1.2 Each Governor is encouraged to make at least one visit per academic year, during school time, with a focus on an aspect of the School's Continuous Improvement Plan or one of the Governors' statutory duties. Governor visits to school will assist in building an understanding of the schools' practices and procedures, allow opportunities to speak to pupils and staff, and allow Governors to gain greater awareness of the school's curriculum and improvement priorities.
- 1.3 Monitoring visits enable Governors to:
- See the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements.
 - Get to know the staff and demonstrate their commitment to the school.
 - Give active support to the staff and the activities of the school.
 - Further develop awareness of curriculum implementation.
 - Be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning.
 - Evaluate resources and discuss with staff further requirements.
 - Gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking.
 - Work in partnership with the staff.
 - Gain more understanding of initiatives / projects / programmes / activities undertaken by the school to address priorities.
- 1.4 Monitoring visits enable staff to:
- Get to know and build relationships with Governors.
 - Feel valued.
 - Appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of Governors.
 - Ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school.
 - Feel supported by the Local Advisory Board.
 - Share an understanding of their specific area.
- 1.5 Governors must:
- Remember to respect school staff and pupils.
 - Be supportive of the Headteacher.
 - Be mindful that they are representing the Local Advisory Board.
- 1.6 By following the agreed principles and procedures, Governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved and will significantly contribute towards the effective performance of the Local Advisory Board.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Governors are responsible for:

- Meeting their target of at least one visit per academic year.
- Developing their understanding of the school through discussions with the Headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Raising any concerns as a result of their visit with the Headteacher without delay.
- Completing the agreed 'Governor Visit Report' and providing a copy to the governance professional for circulation to the full Local Advisory Board.

2.2 The Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Facilitating governor visits.
- Discussing completed visits with Governors, prior to a report being made to the LAB.

2.3 The LAB may determine any link roles it wishes, such as class/year group links or SDP links, but as a minimum, the LAB will allocate the following link roles to governors:

- Safeguarding.
- Inclusion.
- Curriculum & Teaching.

Please refer to the Link Governor Handbook for further information and guidance.

3. Procedures for Governor monitoring visits

3.1 In order to ensure visits are carried out effectively and there is a mutual trust between staff and Governors, it is recommended that Governors:

| | Always | Never |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Before a visit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange details of visit with staff (via Headteacher if an introduction is required) and ensure that they are aware that the visit is to fulfil the governors' strategic role and not to observe performance*. • Agree purpose/focus of visit. • Try to avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection, SATs/Exams, first and last weeks of term, unless specifically requested to attend. • Dress appropriately. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up unannounced. • Approach staff directly without the approval of the Headteacher. |

| | Always | Never |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| During a visit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe any school/class guidelines/rules e.g. don't chew gum! • Be polite, tactful and sensitive. • Fulfil agreed purpose. • Thank the teacher and children before you leave. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go in like an inspector / walk in with a clipboard. • Sit at the back, writing notes. • Interrupt the teacher. • Interfere with the organisation of the class. • Leave without acknowledgement. |
| After a visit | <p>Complete a Governor Visit Report, reporting on the focus. It is best practice for Governors to identify any link to school improvement objectives and include measurable outcomes where possible in their Governor Visit Report.</p> <p>The completed report should be submitted to the Headteacher and/or Chair and then, after any possible alterations, the report will be circulated to the local advisory board and staff.</p> <p>Follow up discussion with the Headteacher or link staff member if required.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticise the performance of a teacher, even in a constructive manner. • Gossip about your visit – what you have seen should be treated with the same level of confidentiality as any other local advisory board business. |

* Governors are not inspectors and are not present in a lesson to make judgements about the professional expertise of the teachers (even if qualified through professional experience). That remains a task for the Headteacher and 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.
- Check on their own child.
- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

4. Schedule of monitoring visits

4.1 The Local Advisory Board will endeavour to put a schedule of monitoring visits in place at the start of each academic year, as this enables Governors to make plans to ensure they can carry out a visit. However, it is recognised that it may be difficult for some Governors to commit too far in advance due to their work commitments.

5. Things for Governors to consider

5.1 There are some things that governors will need to consider relating to their visits, some of which may need to be clarified with staff before/at the beginning of a visit.

5.2 Type of Visit

- Focused visit: Looking into specific areas such as safeguarding, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), pupil premium, etc. Visits should ideally align with priorities in the SDP wherever possible.
- General observation: Observing particular classes or subjects across year groups linked to a specific SDP priority.
- Data review visit: Meetings with key staff to understand and review school data, such as attainment and progress, attendance or the single central record.
- Learning walk: Visits that involve walking through the school to gain a broad overview of a particular focus such as learning practices, classroom environments or pupil engagement.
- Other visits: Less formal visits or support such as attending an assembly or school event or offering support like listening to readers or assisting on an educational visit. Governors should always be mindful that they are representing the LAB and conduct themselves accordingly.

5.3 Arrangements

- Where should I go on arrival at the school?
- Who will meet me and introduce me to the relevant staff member?
- How should I be referred to in school in front of pupils i.e. by first name or Ms/Mr X?
- How should I address staff i.e. by first name or Ms/Mr X?

5.4 Preparation

Governors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the relevant section of the Continuous Improvement Plan (School Development Plan) and any associated policies or data in advance.

- What is the purpose of the visit?
- How should the visit be carried out?
- Are there any particular areas of the school that need to be seen?
- Do any particular activities need to be taking place during the visit?
- Does the purpose of the visit require that a particular age-group is seen?
- Are there any questions that can be answered simply by watching something in action?
- What questions should be asked and to who?

5.5 Reflection

- Was the purpose/aim of the visit achieved?
- Were all questions answered?
- Is a further visit required?
- Were any difficulties encountered and why?

5.6 Follow-up

- Is there anything to follow-up?
- Has feedback been given to the Headteacher and staff?
- Has a Governor Visit Report been completed?
- Can any feedback be provided that will improve future monitoring visits for all Governors?

6. Conducting a classroom visit

- 6.1 When planning a visit that involves going into a classroom, Governors will consider and agree with the Headteacher and/or staff whether they are going to:
- Solely focus on a specific development/improvement priority/action and talk to the children about what they are doing directly related to the specific area;
 - get involved in a lesson acting as a classroom helper, as well as monitoring;
 - work with a small group to be able to see a specific intervention/policy/initiative in practice;
 - introduce themselves to their linked class and answer any of the children's questions;
 - meet with the class teacher or coordinator to discuss particular issues or set the context;
 - only be in the classroom for a short period and how to cause the least disruption.
- 6.2 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 question for the whole class?

7. Informal visits

- 7.1 There are other occasions when Governors are encouraged to visit school. These include:
- Whole school assemblies
 - School productions
 - Open evenings
 - Parents' evenings
 - Church events
 - Sporting events

8. Conduct and Confidentiality

- 8.1 Governors will comply with the Local advisory board's agreed code of conduct. They will be mindful that they are representing the whole Local advisory board through their words and actions; during a visit they will not express personal opinions if pressed on a controversial issue.
- 8.2 Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the Headteacher or member of staff with who the visit was arranged but not with other staff or with parents. Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) should not be identified in school visit reports.

9. Attachments

9.1 Attached to this policy are the following documents:

- Appendix A: Governor Visit Report Template
- Appendix B: Example Governor Monitoring Schedule
- Appendix C: Ideas for questions you may wish to ask children during a classroom visit /
Questions to consider when visiting with a non-curriculum focus

Appendix 'A': [Governor Visit Report Template](#)

Governor Visit Report

School Name

Name of Governor

Date of Visit

Focus of Visit

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SEND | <input type="checkbox"/> Careers | <input type="checkbox"/> General Monitoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil Premium | <input type="checkbox"/> Filtering & Monitoring | <input type="checkbox"/> School Improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability | Priority |

Type of Visit

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Review |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Visit | <input type="checkbox"/> Assembly/Event Attendance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Walk | <input type="checkbox"/> Other... |

Visit Context and Preparation

- Purpose of the Visit: (Why was this visit conducted? E.g., to see a new initiative in practice, conduct a safeguarding walk, etc.) (Were there specific questions you were seeking to answer?)
- Preparation: (What took place before the visit? E.g., meeting with Headteacher, reviewing data, staff presentation, *review of relevant policies*)

Observations and Findings

- Overview of the Visit / Summary of Activities: (Description of what you saw and did - avoid judgments on teaching quality) (did you review any data/documentation/work samples e.g. SCR, workbooks, CIP/SDP)

Outcomes and Impact

- Outcome(s) / Impact on Governance: (What did you learn? How does it inform your role?)
- Link to Continuous Improvement Plan (*School Development Plan*) (if applicable):
- Areas of Strength: (What is working well?)
- Areas for Development: (What could be improved?)

Reflection and Follow-Up

- Follow-up Actions Required: (If any, who is responsible, and by when?)
 - Reflection on the Visit: (What went well? What could be improved in the visit process in the future?)
-

Other Comments

- Any Other Comments: (For any other relevant information)
-

Appendix 'B': Example Governor Monitoring Schedule

| | Focus of Monitoring | SIP / Link Area | Method of Monitoring | Governor(s) Responsible | Date Monitoring / Report Completed |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| AUTUMN TERM | Boys' Writing To see standard of writing at this time of year and actions and initiatives implemented. | | Learning Walk / Classroom visit / discussion with Writing Lead and children | Curriculum & Teaching Link Governor | |
| | SEND Review of SEND information including actions/priorities. | | Meet with SENDCo / Learning Walk / classroom visit | Inclusion Link Governor | |
| | Pupil Premium Review Pupil Premium Action Plan and milestones. See any actions already being implemented. | | Meet with Head or other leader / Learning Walk | Inclusion Link Governor | |
| SPRING TERM | KS2 Maths See new initiatives in Maths lessons. Observe Greater Depth work with children. | | Meet with Maths Lead / Classroom visit | Achievement Link Governor | |
| | Safeguarding & Child Protection Review safeguarding audit. Review single central record. | | Meet with safeguarding lead / Learning Walk | Safeguarding Link Governor | |
| | Attendance Look at current attendance figures. Review work being done to improve attendance. | | Meet with Head or Learning Mentor / speak to parents & children | Attendance & Behaviour Link Governor | |
| SUMMER TERM | Boys' Writing To see standard of writing at this time of year (can improvements be seen?) Are actions having a positive impact? Are children enjoying writing? | | Learning Walk / Classroom visit / discussion with Writing Lead and children | Curriculum & Teaching Link Governor | |
| | SEND Review progress of SEND children. | | Meet with SENDCo / Learning Walk | Inclusion Link Governor | |
| | Pupil Premium Review progress of Pupil Premium children. Review Action Plan. | | Meet with Head or other leader / Learning Walk | Inclusion Link Governor | |

Appendix 'C': Example questions to ask children during a classroom visit

The following is some guidance on the sorts of questions and discussions with pupils that might help governors get the best value from their time in classes. The questions mainly relate to primary school children but may help secondary governors think about the types of things they may wish to ask students.

The best times to talk with children are in the portions of lessons when they are working in table groups. This will usually be on work arranged in age / ability groups and based on the whole class work the teacher has just covered. Typically, the teacher will be with one group, support staff (TA or HLTA) with another, and the rest of the tables will be working on their own. Join one of these other tables. Start with 'what are you learning today?' to check whether children understand that learning is the key focus and can explain what they are learning and how they will know if they have learnt it.

The following questions should give some starting points and the general idea about what you are trying to find out. Don't feel you need to ask them all!

- What have you been learning about in this subject during the last few lessons?
- What's the best / most interesting topic you've looked at this year?
- What do you like about this subject?
- Have you got your workbook? Can you show me your best/favourite piece of work you've done in this subject this year? Can you tell me about it?
- Do you know what you have to do right now? How can you check what you are doing is correct?
- Do you know what you need to do to improve your work?
- What is the hardest thing you've had to do in this subject? What made it so hard?
- Have you been on any visits away from school to do with this subject? Can you tell me about them? What did you learn?

Questions to consider when visiting with a non-curriculum focus

- The environment – what is the school like to work in? Is this a good place to work and play? What are the good points? Is the school clean, tidy and safe? Is it attractive? What can be improved? How much of the budget should be put to improvements?
- The relationships and climate. Does the ethos of the school live up to the aims and objectives that governors have for the school? Examples of where they think it does, and where they think it doesn't.
- Behaviour. Does this match what our policy says? When children behave well, are they recognised, encouraged and rewarded? When they misbehave, or disrespect other children or adults, are they clear about how they can make amends and how they should behave? Are those pupils who misbehave dealt fairly? Are children clear about what is expected of them? Do they know the school's expectations and routines?