



**GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY**

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**Date of Next Review: May 2023**

**Reviewer: Christopher Bennet**

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| Document Control |          |   |
|------------------|----------|---|
| Edition          | Issued   | Changes from previous   |
| 1                | 15/03/17 | New policy  |
| 2                | 21/05/19 | Amended to remove requirement for submission of written reports to LGB following visits |
| 3                | May 2021 | No changes  |

| Policies/Documents referred to in this policy   | Post holders/Persons named in this policy |
|---|---|
| This policy <b>links to other school policies</b> on:<br>Governor code of practice<br>Safeguarding<br>Health and Safety |   |

**Introduction**

The governing body is the 'accountable body' in a school. It is responsible for everything from Health and Safety and Child Protection to the school budget, Teaching and Learning and student 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 Improvement Plan (SIP). Visiting the school in action 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) in the context of an understanding of what happens in the classroom.

It is also important 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 the school in order to:

- Appreciate and understand the work of the staff (teachers and support staff) and how the students are learning;
- Be aware of the response of students to their work and check that the students 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.

**NB** 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;
- Make unannounced visits
- Arrive unduly early for appointments.

### **Confidentiality**

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

Reports to the Governing Board 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 school 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 board. A governor should aim to make a school 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/activities/age-group of the school 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 verbal 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<br>Agree purpose of visit<br>Discuss the context of any lesson to be visited<br>Agree role within the lesson   | Turn up unannounced  |
| <b>During</b> | Keep to the role agreed<br>Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over<br>Please remember confidentiality<br>Stick to the times and purpose agreed<br>Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the students | Assume a different role<br>Walk in with a clipboard<br>Distract the students from their task |
| <b>After</b>  | Thank the teacher and the students<br>-Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience<br>-Feedback to the governing board  | Leave without acknowledgement<br>Break rules of confidentiality                              |

**Purpose**

Visits should be undertaken as part of a 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
- assist the governing board in fulfilling its statutory duties

Before visiting the school the governor(s) should:

- arrange their visits through the Clerk and/or Head Teacher and inform them of the purpose of the visit
- ensure that they are familiar with safeguarding and health and safety procedures, including what to do in the event of a fire

After visiting the school the governor(s) should:

- verbally report back to the governing board, outlining the objectives and results of the visit
- provide constructive feedback as appropriate

It is important that governors remember that the purpose of these visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision or to pursue issues that relate to the day to day management of the school, other than as agreed with the Head teacher.

## Appendix 1

### Protocol for Formal Governor Visits

The following gives guidance on the protocols surrounding formal visits by governors.

#### For Governing Bodies

- Recognise that school visits are primarily for governors to gain first hand knowledge of the school at work
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned
- Ensure that there are agreed timescales for governors' visits, usually giving at least seven days clear notice
- Recognise that any visit can be stressful and disrupt normal classroom working, and that therefore the number of visits should be limited
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or students

#### For Individual Governors

- Negotiate, via the Clerk/ Head Teacher a mutually convenient time with the relevant member of staff for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that staff and governors' time is valuable
- Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned
- Avoid stressful periods such as during, or just before, an Ofsted inspection, or an examination period
- Always wear a name badge
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing board
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or students

#### For Staff

- Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned
- Prepare for the visit of a governor
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for staff and governors alike
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in a lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do
- Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager
- Avoid discussing unrelated issues during the visit