

Governor Visits to Classrooms and Protocol Policy



Wheatley Hill Community Primary School

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Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Development Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the headteacher who has the responsibility of the day to day management of the school.

Purposes of Visit

Potential benefits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

To teachers:

- To 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 reflection 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 progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Protocols or ground rules for visits

Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surroundings.

- Consider what should happen and what should not
- Ensure that visits are no longer than 1 hour

How to feedback after the 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, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Submit your report to the headteacher for approval.
- 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 '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.
- You must circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Visit Focus'

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
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- The use of ICT equipment
- The impact on the school of any changes eg reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls
- Enjoyment of pupils
- Behaviour
- Resources
- Safety

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity, although notification should be given to the school in advance if a Governor wishes to visit the school as it may not be a suitable time due to events in school etc. 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
- Attend a school function or educational visit
- Positive comments, Areas that need clarification. Questions should all be reported
- Where possible all governors should use the agreed proforma which is available from the headteacher.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the headteacher and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited.

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

- Are your visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the headteacher and or subject coordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the proforma.
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the visit. It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the coordinator if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions and submit to staff in advance.

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.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

Prompts for Governors when visiting classrooms.

Governors and staff may wish to select foci from what is below

Area	Aspect	Features
Organisation	Cleanliness and tidiness	Tidy Clean Organised Table and chairs arranged Tables and chairs graffiti free Books neatly stored Book covers clean and well labelled Evidence of children being taught good work habits e.g. putting things away carefully, looking after resources. Floor litter free Storage for equipment is appropriate and used
Safety		Good storage of potentially dangerous equipment Good routines established Safe movement around the classroom and school and to and from lessons Rules are clear Psychological atmosphere feels safe It is OK to get things wrong Pupils know what to do if they are bullied Safety procedures are taught including e-safety Safe decision making is taught Calm atmosphere
Resources	Use of resources	Organisation Accessibility Use of display Balance between commercial, teacher produced and pupil produced display. Presentation of items of interest Sufficiency Range Suitability Quality and use of ICT resources Use of space and working conditions
	Use of time	High level of time on tasks Balance between teacher activity and pupils' activity Amount of children's work produced Use of homework to reinforce /extend organisation
	Support staff	Availability Use of time Which children they are working with Interaction with children (see prompts for Relationships).
Organisation of pupils and behaviour	Manage pupils well	Grouping Good behaviour: attentive, motivated, listening, questioning responding Independence Clear understanding of rules etc Redirection of off task behaviour Management of disruptive behaviour
Meeting pupil needs	Tasks/activities	Pupils success rate Assessment to inform planning Identification of pupils need Pace / challenge appropriate to need How are different abilities catered for?
	Teaching strategies	Appropriate targets set Variety in teaching methods High expectations of all pupils

Relationships	Teacher pupil relationships	Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils. Use of encouragement Providing support Addressing problems Importance given to creative / critical thinking / imagination
	Valuing contributions	Praise Invitations for further contributions Correcting misunderstandings Feedback on performance Using pupils ideas Handling inappropriate responses
	Questioning skills	Multiple questioning of the same child Checking understanding Challenging assumptions Use of open ended questions Challenging assumptions Asking for recall, evidence, conclusions Posing problems Control of question and answer sessions Questions which build upon pupils' responses
	Involvement of all pupils	Talk in varied contexts Co-operation Collaboration Use of presentations to teacher / class group Strategies to include all pupils Equal responses from boys and girls, and other groups
	Dealing with learning difficulties	Appropriate intervention Repeating or providing alternatives Identification of source of problem Use of additional adults

Knowledge	Secure understanding of the subject	Correct information Correct terminology and vocabulary Lesson clarity Instructional variety Good expectations Work pitched at the appropriate levels
Assessment methods	Marking	Consistent Tool for learning use of encouragement Form of dialogue with child Flag up next step in learning
	Recording	Records of pupils progress Monitoring for success / failure Summaries of performance
	Pupils involvement	Pupils views on progress valued Value placed upon individual achievement Regular information provided on progress Next steps discussed
Planning	Effective	Concise clear expectations Take into account National and local guidelines Part of the whole school approach Activities planned to make good use of time Differentiated work