

**Governors Visits**

**Policy**

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| School Staff were consulted on this document and it was accepted by the standards and performance committee on : | **October 2017** |
| It was ratified by the Governing Body on : | **December 2017** |

**Introduction**

Governors have a responsibility to spend some time in School each year, either alone or as part of the team.

Teams of Governors visit for a full day at least once a term and follow a programme of activities which will enable them to monitor School life and identify evidence that supports the Head’s reports to Governors on progress against the School Improvement Plan. This might include observing lessons, talking to individual members of staff and meeting student groups.

All Governors are expected to attend at least one of these visits a year.

Other visits might include those undertaken by the Governor with responsibility for Health and Safety to review the premises or the Safeguarding Governor to review safeguarding processes and records.

Governors are encouraged to attend awards’ ceremonies, performing arts events, exhibitions and key sports fixtures, which constitute less formal visits to the School but are very valuable in terms of the visibility of support they demonstrate and the opportunity they provide to see the School working in different contexts.

**Governor visits should:**

* contribute towards the development of a deep and accurate understanding of the School’s performance and of staff and students’ skills and attributes
* increase the Governing Body’s knowledge of how the School works to enable it to provide strategic oversight, to act as a ‘critical friend’ and to hold the School to account for its performance
* provide the Governing Body with an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the School and to undertake its statutory responsibility to promote high standards at the School
* provide an opportunity to develop an effective partnership between Governors and staff
* have a clear focus and be linked to priorities in the School Improvement Plan and/or any areas for improvement identified by Ofsted during their last visit.

The Governing Body is a corporate body and Governors visit the School as a representative of that body, not as an individual.

‘If governing bodies are to monitor and evaluate the School’s work they need to visit the School. When handled well, these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the Governing Body, and they allow Governors to monitor the School’s work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings.’

Source: the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

**Further aims of a visit:**

* To show to staff and students that Governors are interested in the life, work and achievements of the School.
* To increase Governors understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the School.
* To enable Governors to see things in the context of the School and to support the School’s work.
* To enable Governors to see evidence of policies in action.
* To increase Governors’ understanding of the teaching and learning process.
* To enable the Governing Body to ask informed questions in Governing Body meetings by gaining first-hand knowledge of the working of the School.
* To enable Governors to see resources purchased by the budget being used by the School community – particularly the students.
* To ‘take the temperature’ of any aspect of the School by speaking to specified staff, students and/or parents.

**Visits**

The key priorities in the School Improvement Plan will guide the content of the formal visits. In addition, the first visit of the academic year will usually focus on any action taken to respond to any concerns emanating from the previous summer’s exam results. Any new initiatives introduced – for example, new management information systems or homework policies - will be monitored during one of the other day visits. Governors may ask for a specific topic or area to be included in a visit plan, if there is something in particular they wish to learn more about.

There will be a minimum of one formal visit per term and all Governors, excluding the staff Governors, should attend at least one visit per year. Dates are set at the beginning of the academic year and Governors will be asked to confirm which visit(s) they will attend at that time.

**Visit Procedure**

**Before the visit:**

* The Chair of Governors or appropriate other senior Governor will agree the topics/areas to be visited with the Head and will ensure there is a clear timetable for the visit, beginning and ending with a short meeting with the Head and/or relevant member(s) of the Senior Leadership Team
* Members of the visit team will prepare by familiarising themselves with any relevant documentation, e.g. policies that they may be about to view in practice.

**During visits Governors will:**

* Respect teachers’ professional space, and be aware that the dynamic of a class can alter when a visitor arrives.
* At the start of the visit, if that visit involves seeing a lesson or lessons being delivered, agree with the class teacher and/or other member of staff the most appropriate role for the visitors.
* Not make notes while viewing the delivery of a lesson; be relaxed and interested.

**After visits Governors will:**

* Thank everybody involved in the visit.
* Feedback to the Head and/or other relevant members of the SLT, reflecting where Governors saw positive evidence of School Improvement in action, discussing any areas of concern and seeking clarification on any issues that they did not understood or did not talk with staff about.
* Agree which member of the visit team will write up a note of the visit. The note should follow the chronology of the visit, summarising what was seen and heard in each session, concluding with a resume of the feedback to the Head or SLT member, and any agreed action to be taken. A draft of the note should be cleared with other members of the visit team and the Head or SLT member (the latter to check for factual accuracy) before the final version is circulated to all Governors.
* Issues of concern arising from visits will be followed up by the Standards and Performance Committee.
* Visit reports will become a matter of record at the subsequent FGB meeting.

[Please see Appendix 1 for further guidance on conducting visits]

**Appendix 1: Governor Visits Policy**

**Some gentle reminders**

Think about the purpose of the visit; about questions you might like to ask.

Dress appropriately as professional members of the School body and wear your identity badge

Respect confidentiality; details about individual students which you may pick up during a visit are confidential and are not be discussed outside the School community at any time, with anybody.

Keep your Governor ‘hat’ on: we should try to adapt to the circumstances, to what’s happening around us, and should capture this in our reports – lots of things can be covered during a visit and which weren’t necessarily part of the agreed focus.

Visits should be an enjoyable experience for everybody – smile!

We must be mindful that the School is a busy, professional learning environment, and that the dynamic of a class can alter upon the appearance of Governors (who may not be particularly well known by the students and staff).

Our visits to classrooms are notabout making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in the School. That responsibility is the preserve of the Headteacher and senior staff, as these judgements are a specialist skill that many Governors are unlikely to have.

Governors’ visits to School are not just about visiting classrooms. We should familiarise ourselves with other areas in School like the School grounds, the playground and sports facilities; how students and parents act and interact coming into and leaving School at each end of the School day. Shared space around the School – the School hall, the learning resource area/library and corridors are also useful places to see. Areas used for School administration should also be visited to get an idea of the working lives of those people the School employs. Governors should also make regular visits to those areas of the School that support disadvantaged students and also vulnerable students, but do so mindful of the reason why the School provides such areas – including the BLUE Room, the Vocational Centre and the Oasis Centre.