



29 May 2017

Governor Visits Procedure Slimbridge School

The governing body is responsible for the following areas.

- Strategic view – values, vision and ethos
- Critical friend – monitoring and evaluating school improvement
- Ensuring agreement and accountability – high standards, value for money, agreed aims and objectives.

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. Through visits, governors will have the opportunity to see policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees make well-informed judgements about progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school improvement plan. It may not though be possible for every governor to be available during the day – this will depend on personal and work commitments. However, **all** governors should do **some** visits; the frequency and type of visit will vary according to availability and role.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan and cover a wide range of schoolwork. Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange these visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

Potential benefits

To governors

- Recognise and celebrate success
- Develop relationships with staff
- Get to know the children
- Recognise different teaching styles
- Understand the environment in which teachers teach
- Monitor policies in action
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them
- Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge
- Inform decision making

To teachers

- Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Get to know governors
- Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- Highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not

- 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

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Roles and responsibilities of governors, head teacher and other staff

The **governing body** will, with the help of the head teacher and staff, organise an annual schedule of school visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per year. Visits may be conducted in pairs. The **head teacher** will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum; policies and school improvement plan priorities and targets to be covered each term. **Individual governor or pairs of governors** will, with the guidance of the whole governing body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus on in order to deepen their understanding.

Monitoring and review of governors' school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

- Are our 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 Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the head teacher, and or subject leader/coordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the school visits pro forma
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the lesson or learning walk? 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, courteous and considerate at all times, respecting the professional roles of the head teacher and staff.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the class will be
- Get involved with the children
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection
- Watch discretely
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson but be prepared to talk and show interest
- Interact, don't interrupt
- Listen to staff and pupils

Teachers and support staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school. They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits so as to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors. See

Annex A for a list of things which governors could examine/explore. Whenever practical they will invite their link/curriculum governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions.

Questions will be invited from governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See annex B for examples of questions which could be asked. Although these focus on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions can easily be adapted to other areas of the curriculum.

After the visit

- Discuss what you have seen 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 visit while it is still fresh in your mind and
- share the report with the Head Teacher for agreement that it is a true reflection of the visit.
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learnt more about the school? Have I gained more confidence in helping 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. See Appendix C for a report format.
- You must circulate a draft to the head teacher and staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by all those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate meeting.

Visit focus'

Although not an exhaustive list, visits may focus on:

- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the building 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, e.g. reduced classes in key stage
- Impact of specific targets identified in the School Improvement Plan
- Impact of Staff Development Training

Informal visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- Chair making a regular visit to the head teacher
- Volunteering at school events/trips/in the class
- Obtaining information from the office relating to meetings
- As a parent to speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.

Appendix A: Monitoring

Monitoring

Governor monitoring can take several forms

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with subject leaders/head of year/house/support staff
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school

Aims

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for a subject
- Understand what pupils like best/least in the school
- Know the standards of achievement in a subject area
- Know what steps are being taken to improve standards
- Know how well strategic policies approved by governors are working
- To report main findings back to the full governing body

To consider when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and pupils
- Relationship between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children's work
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and safety regulations practiced i.e. fire exits kept clear

Appendix B: Questions

To ask pupils

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)

To ask subject leaders/coordinators

- What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject? (This question is mainly for Literacy, maths, science and ICT. Other subject may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection)
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

About teaching English/Maths

Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?
 - Compared with similar schools?
 - In relation to the national rates of increase?
 - In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- How do our results in English/math's compare with other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between?
 - Girls and boys
 - Pupils with special educational needs
 - Very able pupils
 - Pupils with English as an additional language and the others
 - The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
- In meetings, to understand how much pupil progress is being made, you could **look at**
 - Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - Pupil progress data across each year
 - The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average
 - Other evidence, Special Needs
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/maths lessons
- Management of the subject?
- How is the role of the English/math's coordinator developing?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?

- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (Literacy only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? How well do pupils use the library? What links does the school have with the local library?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

In the classroom

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help me to understand how you plan your lessons • How do you get from the National Curriculum to deciding what Karen or Tom will be doing in Science today? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum • Key stage plan • Scheme of work • Year/termly/weekly/daily plans • Individual plans 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning in lessons • Marking • Assessments, including tests • SATs • Target-setting and achieving • Value-added data 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT – access to computers • Use of library • Classroom library • Use of basics like pens and pencils. • Good labelling • Borrowed resources 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you cope with the needs of different pupils? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys v. girls • Most able/ SEN • English as an Additional Language • Badly Behaved • Disabled 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? • Does it ever vary and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability groups • Mixed or single age groups • Boy-girl patterns • Different for different activities 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact • Reports • Parent evenings • Letters • Diaries 	

Communication

- How are parents kept informed of progress?
- How do you gather parents views?
- What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading/writing at home?

Annex C: Record form for a governor's school visit

Name	Date
Governor responsibility	Staff seen during visit
Focus of previous visit (if applicable)	
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus)	
Links with School Improvement Plan	
Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with Head/teacher, LA focus)	
Information gathered during visit (e.g. What you saw, what you learned, would you would like clarified; how long the visit lasted)	
Any key issues arising for the governing body (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)	
Action following governing body meeting (record any action agreed by the governing body regarding this visit e.g. training for governors)	