



St Wilfrid's CE Primary School  
Governor visits policy

Approved:	
Next Review:	

## **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 firsthand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Development Plan (SDP). 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 or teacher with leadership responsibility for the subject of the visit.

### **Potential benefits to governors:**

- To improve governor knowledge of the ethos of the school
- To assess the effectiveness of the SDP
- To improve understanding of intent, implementation and impact of curriculum areas
- To monitor and understand achievements and goals for specific curriculum subjects
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To support and develop relationships with the staff and children
- To understand the environment in which adults and children work
- To be informed about a particular area of the school site
- To monitor policies in action and contribute effectively to the governing body's monitoring role
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

### **Potential benefits 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 reflect on practice through discussion
- To have an opportunity to share elements and features of the curriculum
- 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, to comment on their teaching or classroom management
- Checking on progress of own children or that of any other
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

## **Annual programme of visits**

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year

and subject visits will happen on a 3 year cycle, unless it is deemed necessary to report to the governing body on the area yearly (for example safeguarding).

### **Preparing for a visit**

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the SDP? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the activities you are interested in?
- Discuss the format and agenda with the Headteacher and or subject co coordinator, well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable. Try to keep to the date agreed. Teachers will have planned for your visit.
- Use the Governor Visit Report Form
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate? It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the co-ordinator if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data, leadership report.
- Be clear beforehand about 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 or the Headteacher**
- Be punctual and keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible

### **If visit involves a lesson observations or meeting pupils**

- Decide with the staff how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be
- Don't distract the staff during the lesson from their work but be prepared to talk and show interest
- Be courteous, friendly not critical
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit
- Listen to staff and pupils.
- Talk with the children alongside a member of school staff

### **Possible questions:**

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like (curriculum area being monitored)?
- Tell me what you most like doing in (curriculum area being monitored)
- What helps you with your learning in (curriculum area being monitored)?
- Is there anything you don't like in (curriculum area being monitored)?
- What would make you like this (curriculum area being monitored) more?
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection
- Observe discreetly, interact when appropriate, don't interrupt

## **Things to look for when visiting a classroom**

- Relationships between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- 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 different abilities are catered for
- Purpose/relevance of lessons
- Coherence of the curriculum/connection between subjects
- Displays and use of these
- Ethos — the atmosphere and Learning Values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

## **Curriculum Subject Visits**

If your visit involves monitoring a subject area you may be asked to participate in a Learning Walk. This should take around 30/45 minutes. During the Learning Walk you can expect the subject leader to speak with you about areas listed below. Please raise questions if you need clarification or more information. Ideally the Learning Walk should take place while the children are in lessons. Make use of the learning walk to understand what happens in school and lessons.

## **Possible questions for subject coordinators when monitoring a particular subject area**

- How does the SDP reference the subject and do you feed into this?
- What is your vision for the subject?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the subject?
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the subject?
- What differences (if any) are obvious between specific groups of pupils?
- What professional development has been actioned this year?
- 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?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other staff's skills in teaching the subject?
- How do you know the subject promotes the vision and values of the school?
- How does the teaching of this subject differ to that in other schools?

## **After your visit**

- 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, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- 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**

- Complete the visit form of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- Do not name children
- You must circulate a draft to the Head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to discuss and amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Upload your report to Governor Hub in the governor visits folder

### **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.

- 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