

Sibsey Free Primary School

Governor Visits



Approved by: Governing Body

Date: 22nd March 2023

Last reviewed on: March 2021

Next review due by: March 2025

Governor Visit Policy

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance.

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms. However, Governors do not automatically have rights of access to the school.

If school and classroom visits are done well they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

Most Governors will have specific responsibilities, e.g. Special Needs, English, Health and Safety, etc. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a reasonably regular basis.

Visits allow Governors to focus on particular areas, e.g.:

- the management of the school's resources;
- the condition of the building and its use;
- the development of teaching and support staff;
- a specific subject area;
- a particular year group or class;
- scrutiny of work.

By visiting school and becoming better informed, Governors will be:

- more aware of the needs of the school;
- more able to approach staff to meet those needs;
- well placed to speak knowledgeably and effectively about the school's priorities, strengths and weaknesses;
- in a good position to support the school in its community;
- monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the School Development/Improvement Plan;
- assisting the Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory duties;

- assist a Governor to fulfil a specialist Governor role.

The Benefits to Governors and Staff

Governors:	Staff:
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff.	To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors.
To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs.	
To recognise and celebrate success.	To feel valued.
To monitor the implementation of the School Development/Improvement Plan.	To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors.
To increase their first hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions.	
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach.	To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school.
To see policies and schemes of work in practice.	
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them.	To highlight the need for further resources.
To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils.	
To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self evaluation process.	
To develop links with a class, year group or subject area.	
To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, Literacy etc.	To share an understanding of the specific area.

Governors' Visits are not about:

Visits are not a form of inspection in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- checking on the progress of Governor's own child or of other known children;
- making any judgements about a pupil's work or behaviour;
- monopolising staff time;
- arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas;
- pursuing personal agendas or issues;
- opportunities for members of staff to raise problems that should properly be resolved by the Leadership Team or to air general staff grievances;
- pursuing issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the Headteacher.

Frequency and Scheduling of Visits

We recommend regular visits to the school for governors. The frequency will depend on specific responsibilities and other factors such as a particular school focus. Governors with specific curriculum responsibilities will also be invited to attend scrutiny of work meetings. The governor visits monitoring calendar sets out a recommended pathway for the academic year and can be updated and altered accordingly. Governor visits will be arranged in consultation with the Headteacher, and in consultation with any relevant member of staff.

Before the Visit

A week before the visit the following should be clarified with the Headteacher or member of staff as appropriate (see Visit Preparation section herein and Appendix 3):

- If visiting a classroom(s), where should the Governor position themselves.
- Agree level of interaction with pupils – e.g. what to do if a pupil asks for help.
- Agree level of involvement in the lesson.
- Clarification of what to do if a pupil is observed to act inappropriately.
- Ensure they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire.

Focus of Visits

The focus of each visit will be agreed with the Governors and the Headteacher prior to the visit taking place. A visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific visit.

Visits may focus on the following:

The School:

- The condition and maintenance of the premises.
- The use made of buildings and premises.
- Security on site.
- Break and lunch times.
- The monitoring of Health and Safety.
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture and subject equipment.
- The impact of class sizes.
- The deployment of support staff.

- Office procedures e.g. budget monitoring.
- To see a class or teacher led assembly.
- To observe extra curricular activities/musical or sporting events/Pupil Committees/Pupil Groups/Day trips/Assessment of School meals.

The Classroom

- Observation of particular curriculum areas i.e. English, Maths, Computing etc.
- The implementation of the curriculum.
- Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment.
- Work scrutiny.
- Assessing a group of pupils working together on a task.
- The impact of educational visits on learning.
- To see the impact of school's close association with St. Margaret's Church.
- Any other focussed visit as agreed from time to time.

Visit Preparation – what should and should not happen:

	Always:	Never:
Before (at least one week prior to the visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review any relevant action points in the School Improvement/ Development Plan. ● Agree the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher. ● Confirm details of the visit. ● Try to visit at different times of the day. ● Headteacher agrees a schedule for the visit: When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? ● Discuss with Headteacher or relevant staff what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be observed and possible involvement. ● Agree level of confidentiality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn up unannounced for a focussed, formal visit. ● Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week. ● Visit during a SATs or other testing week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be prepared, organised and punctual. ● Report to the school office and sign in. ● Introduce yourself. ● Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit. ● Observe school/class guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monopolise Staff. ● Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher while he/she is teaching. ● Behave like an Inspector! ● Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jot down discussion points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make judgements about staff expertise, pupil's work or behaviour.
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils. ● Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit with the member(s) of staff if appropriate. ● Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher. ● Discuss Health and Safety, and Safeguarding issues if relevant. ● Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher (for forwarding to member(s) of staff in appropriate) and Clerk. ● Prepare your own portfolio to include the record of your visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback. ● Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except the Chair) unless given permission.

After the Visit

(See section above and Appendix 3 also refers)

As a Governor, the visit is being made on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. Feedback on a visit or observation is essential, although it is not appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body. Any expression of concern should be shared with the Headteacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety is being compromised (and this should be reported immediately). If a Governor sees something that concerns them, it may be appropriate to discuss this with the member of staff first, before raising this with the Headteacher/Governing Body.

Following a visit, the Governor should give some time and thought to reflection. The Governor should also consider what went well and what did not go so well, and what could be done differently in a future visit.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- The member(s) of staff involved.
- The Headteacher.
- The Governing Body.

Oral feedback should be given to the member(s) of staff at the end of the visit whenever possible.

Governors should agree with the Headteacher the level of details that should be fed back to the member of staff.

Written feedback using the Governor's Visit Form (see Appendix 1) should be completed and copies given to the Headteacher, Member of Staff and Clerk to the Governors.

When Governor's attend a work scrutiny, written feedback should be given using Governor's Scrutiny of Work Visit Form (see Appendix 2) and copies given to the Headteacher, Member of Staff and Clerk to the Governors.

The Reports will be discussed with the Chair of Governors, filed and made available to the appropriate Committee and Governing Body.

Review, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Governor Visit Policy

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Governors. The review will consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified herein.
- Have the visiting Governors increased their knowledge of the school.
- Are the Governors better informed and enabled to make appropriate decisions.
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued, and has a good relationship with staff developed.
- Have the visiting Governors helped the Governing Body to fulfil its duties.
- Can the Governor Visit Policy or practice be improved.

Further Guidance

Further guidance can be obtained by referring to National Governors Association document: Knowing your School – School Visits – Holding your school to account.

Governor Support & Challenge Visit Form

Name:	Governor responsibility:	Date: Duration:
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Area of School/Staff/Class Visited:

Purpose/Focus of Visit:

Link with School Development/Improvement Plan: (Please tick)

- Improvement of writing standards
- Improvement of attendance
- Enhancement of Curriculum Provision



Governor's Comments:
(Including an account of the teaching observed if appropriate)

Key Strengths:

Safeguarding (inc. Health & Safety):

Diversity and evidence of values (see motto statements):

Staff and/or Headteacher Comments:

Key issues arising for Governing Body:

Follow up action required:

Signed:

Governor: _____

Staff Member(s): _____

Headteacher: _____

Appendix 2

Governor's Scrutiny of work Visit Form

Name:	Governor responsibility:	Date:
		Duration:

Subject area Visited:

Purpose/Focus of Visit:

Link with School Development/Improvement Plan: (Please tick)

1. Improvement of writing standards
2. Improvement of attendance

Enhancement of Curriculum Provision



Governor's Comments:

(Including an account of the work observed)

Staff Comments:

Headteacher's Comments:

Key issues arising for Governing Body:

Follow up action required:

Signed:

Governor: _____

Staff Member(s) _____

Headteacher: _____

Date:

Appendix 3

Pre and Post Visit Checklist for School and Governor

School	Governor
Does the School know why the Governor is visiting?	Has a formal appointment been made with the Headteacher?
Does the School know what the Governor is expecting to see?	Is the Governor aware of the specific purpose of the visit?
Is the focus of the visit also a focus in the School Development/Improvement Plan?	Has a time been agreed so that the Governor can arrive punctually?
Has a timetable been drawn up for the visit?	Has the Governor considered how they will approach the teacher in the classroom?
Do individual members of staff know that they are going to be visited?	Has the Governor considered what they will actually do during the lesson?
Have other key/appropriate members of staff been informed?	Has the Governor considered how to give feedback to the staff, Headteacher and Governing Body?
Is the appropriate documentation ready and available?	Has the Governor remembered that what they may see, hear or find out is confidential and not for sharing with other Governors or parents in general?
	How can the Governor build on the visit ready for the next visit?
	How did the Governor address any difficulties that were met during the visit?

	Is the Governor familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire?
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