



GOVERNOR VISIT POLICY

Committee Responsible:	Teaching and Learning Committee
Person Responsible:	Headteacher
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Signed.....

Date.....



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1. Introduction

Visiting the school is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis. All governor visits should be planned and focus on the School Improvement Plan. Governors should summarise findings in a report, helping the governing body to make informed judgements about the progress of priorities and targets.

The Head Teacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and School Improvement Plan that should be covered each term. The policy and protocol for governor visits is formulated in consultation with school staff and pupils and is reviewed regularly as with all school policies.

2. Annual Programme of Visits

The governing body will organise a programme of visits with input from the Head Teacher. These will be scheduled throughout the year, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per term. In addition, new governors may make an introductory general visit of the school as part of their induction programme. Governors are welcome to visit the school to attend assembly by prior arrangement with the Head Teacher and make pre-arranged individual visits as long as this policy and the protocols are observed.



3. Purpose of Visit

The focus of a visit will be on a particular policy in place in the school, e.g. teaching and learning, assessment, behaviour, collective worship. It could also focus on particular areas, such as the management of the school's resources, the condition of the buildings, safeguarding, a particular year group or class or a particular area of the curriculum.

4. Potential Benefits

To governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success of pupils and staff
- To build an effective relationship with the staff and a better understanding of the context in which they work
- To get to know the children
- 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 reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

5. What a Visit is not About

- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the Head Teacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns
- Monopolising school/teacher time

6. Governor School Visits - Good Practice

6.1 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 well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you plan to observe.



- Discuss with the Head Teacher whether any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

6.2 During The Visit

- Be punctual.
- 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.
- 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.
- If the teacher has agreed that it would be appropriate get involved with the children.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly. Excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection however notes will help for a factual report and gives good evidence.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work however be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous and friendly, although not critical.
- Interact, do not interrupt. Listen to staff and to pupils.
- Remember why you are there. Do not lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Thank staff and pupils at the end of your visit.

6.3 After A 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 and report as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the Head Teacher, preferably before leaving the school.
- Agree with the Head Teacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body. This will usually be via the report form and may be discussed at the next Full Governing Body meeting.
- 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?



7. Reporting your Visit

- Write a short summary, using the report form, of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made.
- Check back to other historical governor visit reports, are we seeing any trends either in a positive or a negative direction?
- Show your draft report to the Head Teacher and any staff involved for them to check for accuracy and on potential sensitivities. Be prepared to amend your report.
- Send your report to all governors.
- Visits by governors may, when necessary, be discussed at Full Governing Body meetings.
- All reports must be stored centrally by the Clerk to the Governors for easy future reference.

8. Document Templates

The following are linked to this policy, attached as Appendices:

- Monitoring during your governor visit
- Reporting after your governor visit



Appendix 1: Reporting After Your Visit

Governor Name	Date of Visit
Purpose of visit (Previously agreed by the governing body with the Head Teacher)	
Links with the School Improvement Plan (How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Improvement Plan?)	
Governor observations and comments (Eg. what did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?)	
Any key issues arising for the governing body (Eg. 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 with regard to this visit)	



Appendix 2: Monitoring During Your Visit



Governor Learning Walk



Governor Name	
Date of Visit	
Key Objective for Visit today	
Classes/Staff visited	



Key to Statements	
Statements	Key
No Evidence/No opportunity	NE/NO
Limited Evidence	LE
Evidence	E
Strong Evidence	SE

Governor Learning Walks

Classroom observations/learning walks must be agreed with the Head Teacher and teaching staff ahead of time, these should be scheduled and structured according to the St James' Policy for Governor Visits.

Benefits to Governors:

- Develop a more informed understanding of classroom life and practice
- An opportunity to meet and chat with the children and to better understand their perceptions of school
- An opportunity to meet with class teachers, teaching assistants and other adults who work in the school, and to put faces to names
- Experience the curriculum in action
- Find out how resources are used and perhaps identify additional resource needs

Benefits for teachers and others working in the school:

- To put faces to names and better understand the role of the Governors
- Illustrate 'theory into practice' and share some of the challenges that they face
- An opportunity to reflect on practice through questions and discussion
- To feel properly supported and valued

What to Avoid:

- Governor visits are not a form of inspection and Governors should not make judgements about teaching in any capacity.
- Governors should be aware of and avoid 'pursuing personal agendas'
- Governors should not be fixed in expectations. Remember that members of staff are very busy and that their first priority must be the children. Circumstances can change quickly and unexpectedly.
- Please don't be late, please don't interrupt and please don't overstay

And Remember:

- Teachers are professionals.
- Teachers will expect positive feedback and questions at the earliest opportunity after your visit.
- Please complete your visit report and return to the Headteacher.



- Please be sensitive to issues of confidentiality both during and after your visit.

Working Environment

First Impressions	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
The children seem settled in their classroom				
The children are familiar with classroom routines				
The classroom has a positive working atmosphere				
The teacher and children are approachable and welcoming				
The children and teacher appear happy				
Examples of evidence:				

Does the working environment appear to be a safe place for children and adults?	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
The classroom has adequate lighting				
There are no obstructions limiting movement around the classroom				
The temperature in the classroom is comfortable				
Resources and structures within the room/school are in good working order				
Examples of evidence:				

Is their evidence to suggest the children feel safe and valued?	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
Teachers praise the children				
Teachers reward children				
Displays reflect the progress of children and their achievements				
The children are encouraged to respect themselves and each other				
The children are confident to share their feelings with the teacher/peers				
Examples of evidence:				



Behaviour and Engagement

Impressions of behaviour and engagement of the children	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
Children are engaged with the task set				
The children respond positively to teacher intervention				
The children engage positively with their peers				
The children support each other in their learning				
The children can talk about their work and identify their targets				
The children understand and can explain consequences for unwanted behaviour				
The teacher and children enjoy mutual respect				
The children are keen to answer questions and engage in their learning				
Examples of evidence:				

Displays

Displays	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
Displays are eye – catching, interesting and informative				
Children refer to displays and are keen and excited to show their work				
Children recognize how their displays fit into the bigger picture				
The displays support the learning with reference and information				
Class rules are displayed giving clear boundaries				
There are examples of rewards and sanctions				
Displays are clearly labeled to indicate what they are about and are easy to follow				
Displays have a question/challenge to prompt a thoughtful response from the viewer				
Examples of evidence:				



RESOURCES

Resources	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
Resources are clearly labeled and stored tidily so that children can access them				
Resources are inspirational and inviting				
The children are excited about the opportunity to use resources				
The children know where to gain access to resources to support their literacy and numeracy				
The children can explain how the resource supports their learning				
The teacher uses a range of resources				
Examples of evidence:				

Books

Books/Written pieces of work	NE/NO	LE	E	SE
Children indicate a clear understanding about their task and how it fits into their learning				
Children can discuss their past and present work and in some cases what they are about to do				
Teacher comments in books are formative indicating what children have done well and how to improve				
There is clear guidance for children on how to improve				
Children have opportunities to respond to the teachers comments				
Children have followed guidance from teacher to improve their work (this may be seen through a trail of improvement through the book)				
There is evidence of increased challenge as the child progresses				
Children can explain the marking codes used by the teacher				
Children have opportunities to mark and reflect on their own work				
Children have opportunities to comment on the work of others (this may be observed verbally)				
Children are rewarded for work				
Examples of evidence:				