



Governor Visits Protocol

**Agreed by Governors: Autumn 2019
To be reviewed: Autumn 2022**

Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the strategic direction 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 first-hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan and Raising Attainment Plan. 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 through the school office.

Aims of the policy

This policy sets out how Governors can demonstrate the three key aspects of being a Governor

- To offer **Strategic Support**, helping shape the vision and ethos of the school with senior staff.
- Being a **Critical Friend** to all staff, offering challenge and support to link teachers and Subject Leaders.
- Ensuring that all staff are **Accountable** in their role. This should include: the quality of teaching, the progress of the children, ensuring that the school meets its statutory duties and that financial decisions are based on the needs of the pupils in particular relating to the Pupil Premium Grant.

Purposes of visit

Potential benefits to governors:

- To fully understand and appreciate the demands of the roles within the school setting
- To check out what the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team are telling them about the school
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand individuals as learners
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To observe policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

Benefits to teachers:

- Governors will fully understand where the school is and what more it needs to do
- Develop relationships with governors
- Understanding of governors' roles and responsibilities

- An opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To have critical friends who will offer challenge and support

What a visit is not about

- A form of inspection to make judgments about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Protocols or ground rules for visits

Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surroundings

- Consider what should happen and what should not
- Ensure that visits are within the agreed timelines

How to feed back after the visit

Consider

- Governors should feed back to the full governing body. A written report to the Governing Body may be appropriate in some instances.
- Strengths, areas for development, questions and suggestions should all be reported on the report form.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the head teacher and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed regularly to agree:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?
- Are we strategic, critical friends and holding the school to account?

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?
- Is it a strategic, critical friend or holding the school to account?
- Discuss an agenda with the head teacher and Class Teacher/Subject Leader well in advance.
- Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the proforma included in the policy

- 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.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.

If the visit is within a classroom:

- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely and get involved in what is going on in the classroom.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- 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

- Write a short summary of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- Agree this with the staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it.
- Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate governing body meeting.

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.

- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a meeting

- To support in a class
- Attend a school function or educational visit

Dissemination, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Governor Monitoring

Governor monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with Subject Leader
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school
- Looking at pupil books
- Looking at the outcomes of internal monitoring
- To review external validation

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for the subject
- To understand what pupils like best/least in the subject
- To know the standards achieved in the subject
- To know what steps are being taken to improve the subject area
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Body.
- To know how particular groups are performing

Learning Walks

Pupil Interviews: (suggested questions to ask a small group of children when walking around the classrooms)

These questions will help you gain an understanding of pupil attitudes toward the subject.

- 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)
- What have you learnt this term in this subject? Can you show me?
- What can you do now that you couldn't do a few months ago?

Key questions for subject/learning link governor discussion with Subject Leader (Foundation subjects)

- 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 English, Maths, Science and Computing. Other subjects 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 in the 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 the subject?
- Can you share your Self Evaluation Form with me?
- Can you share the current policy / scheme of work with me?

Signed.....Date.....
(Head teacher)

Signed.....Date.....
(Chair of Governors)

Record Form for a Governor's School Visit
Dothill Primary School – Governor Visit Proforma

Date:

Name of Governor:

Governor responsibility:

Staff seen during visit:

Focus of previous visits (if applicable):

Reason for Visit (ie routine monitoring, specific focus):

Preparation/background to visit (eg reading policy, discussion with Head, LA focus etc):

Information gathered during visit:

Strengths:

Areas for development:

Any identified area/s for Governor training:

Date for next visit:

Any other information:

Things to observe when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships 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 the pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for/the use of support staff
- Children's work
- Displays
- Ethos — the atmosphere and 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
- Dissemination, monitoring, evaluation and review

Questions for Governors to Ask

English and Mathematics

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of English and Maths. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in English or Maths can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as you find out about the teaching of English/Maths across the school. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits — it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Achievements and attitudes

What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?

- In relation to the national expectations?
- In relation to the national picture in terms of gender, SEN, EAL, PPG?
- 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/Maths compare with those in 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/Gifted and Talented Pupils, PPG, pupils with English as an additional language and the others, the majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
- In meetings with the English/Maths Leaders can you tell how much progress pupils are making?
For example, you could look at:
 - EYFS, Phonic and Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - the work of a range of pupils — average, below average and above average
 - How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily English/Maths lessons?
 - How have Provision Plans been adapted to support children in their daily English/Maths lessons?
 - How is the role of the English/Maths Leader 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?
Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using 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?

