



# Governor Visits Protocol

**Agreed by Governors: Autumn 2022**

**Reviewed: Autumn 2024**

**(Updated based on NGA Policy)**

## **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. This will increase the governing body's first-hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should relate to the priorities determined by the School Development Plan and Self Evaluation Form. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school workings, 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, 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.

## Purpose of visits

Visiting school on a planned, regular basis is of benefit to governors in the following ways:

- better understand their school's strengths and areas for development
- determine if agreed policies and procedures are working in practice
- identify how resources are being used
- show staff and pupils that they are interested in the life, work and achievements of a school
- experience the culture and ethos of the school

Monitoring visits should focus on the following:

- strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the governing board
- the evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening actually happening?
- seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met (such as safeguarding and SEND)

## Frequency of visits

The frequency of governance visits should be in accordance with the schedule established by the governing board and agreed with school leaders and relevant staff. Visits should be scheduled to allow governors/trustees to see relevant activities and strategic milestones.

## Arranging and preparing for visits

Visits should be arranged through the headteacher, with adequate notice, and agreed with the relevant members of staff.

Due regard should be given to:

- how the visit fits with the schedule of board and committee meetings, to allow for timely feedback and discussion
- how to avoid visits clashing with important events and/or busy periods in school life
- the workload implications for staff who are likely to be involved in the visits

Governors/trustees are encouraged to prepare for their visit. This may include:

- reading and familiarising yourself with the protocol for visits and the expected conduct
- reading and familiarising yourself with the school's policy for visitors (this is different from the governor visits policy) that includes relevant health, safety and safeguarding instructions
- reading the background information relating to the focus of the visit, such as relevant section(s) of the strategic plan, performance data, policies, stakeholder information
- clarifying the purpose of the visit with the head teacher and or relevant member of staff e.g. link to the School Development Plan, relevant school policies, checking health and safety guidelines etc.
- confirming the visit schedule and activities – it is worth preparing an agenda and questions you would like answered with the head teacher / subject leader well in advance.

## **Conduct on visits**

When visiting the school in a governing capacity, you should remember the following:

- arrive in good time and follow the school's procedures (such as signing in and producing identification)
- adopt a friendly approach that puts everyone at ease
- be respectful of the school at work and if you wish to take notes, check that those you are with are comfortable with this
- if you are taking notes, be clear with everyone that this is for feedback purposes and that you are not recording judgements (for example on the quality of their teaching)
- ask relevant questions that are closely linked to the purpose of your visit
- acknowledge the staff and pupils you meet

Governors/ trustees are also expected to behave in line with the governing board's code of conduct, being aware of the need to maintain confidentiality.

If you are visiting a classroom, the following guidance will be helpful to support your visit:

- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be
- Get involved with the children, observing discretely and interact with them
- Ensure you are not distracting from the purpose of the teaching and learning.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.

## **Expectations following a visit**

**Following a visit to school, you may wish to:**

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

- Send a follow up message thanking everyone involved in supporting your visit for their time and assistance.
- 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?
- Emphasise the positive aspects (such as the behaviour of the pupils, welcoming atmosphere) with the headteacher and or relevant member of staff who acted as your guide.

### **Reporting your visit**

A report should be completed as soon as possible after each visit. There is a Governor Report Template to support with this (see Appendix 1).

The report includes focus for the visit, and other points to consider. Governors should feedback strengths, areas for development, questions and suggestions on this form.

A draft will be shared with the headteacher, and any other members of staff involved in the visit and, when agreed, a final version will be included in the papers for discussion in the next governing board meeting (this may be the full governing board or a committee, as appropriate).

### **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 support with a school event or in class
- Attend a school function or educational visit
- To get information from the office relating to a meeting

These visits do not require notes of visit, but it is very helpful to have record of these visits to strengthen the links between school and governors. Emailing short feedback and points of note will be supportive.

### **Other forms of Governor Monitoring**

Governor monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil voice and pupil book looks: to know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for the subject and the pride they take in their work
- Meeting with Subject Leader: to understand the standards that should be achieved in the subject monitored and what steps are being taken to improve the subject area
- Learning walks and lesson visits: to gain a snapshot of environments and teaching and learning
- Reviewing outcomes of internal monitoring and data collection: to understand how particular groups are performing
- Reviewing external validation e.g. School Improvement Notes of Visit, Local Authority Notes of Visit, Ofsted reports: to report main findings back to the full Governing Body

## Appendix 1

### Dothill Primary School Governor Note of Visit



This form is to guide your reporting back to the governing board on what you have learned and observed during a monitoring visit.

Please use in conjunction with the Governor Visits Protocol / Policy.

Record of governor visits to school	
Name of governor:	Governor with responsibility for:
Visiting:	Date:
Focus of the visit e.g. <i>strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the governing board</i> <i>the evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening, actually happening?</i> <i>seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met</i>	
Links to the Vision Statement of Dothill Primary School:	
Summary of activities e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>meeting staff with responsibility for specific areas (such as safeguarding or SEND)</li><li>talking to staff and pupils / seeing examples of pupil work</li><li>lesson visits (getting to know the school, rather than making judgements about quality of teaching)</li></ul>	
How has this informed me? <i>Think about the strategic direction and possible next steps.</i>	

Please return this form to the Headteacher - thank you

## **Our Vision – without quotes and strategies**



We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, in which each member of the school community feels nurtured, valued and secure. We ensure that our pupils are listened to by all stakeholders.

We are committed to delivering a fun, engaging curriculum, rich in experiences, that empowers children to become curious life-long learners with dreams and aspirations.

We hold high expectations for everyone, whatever their starting point, and seek to ensure each child can feel fulfilled and proud of themselves and their achievements.

We embrace diversity, celebrating our British Values, and regarding every child as an individual who harnesses their own strengths, ideas and interests and whose personal experiences contribute to and enhance our school.

We teach our children to be able to make choices which have a positive impact on their physical and mental health, and to be able to face challenges without fear of failure.

To facilitate all this, we aim to build trust and communication with our wider community, sharing in our goal to develop confident, kind, and happy children who love coming to school.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Learning Walks**

#### **Things to observe when visiting a classroom**

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils including in their books: are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How are pupils are grouped?
- How different abilities are catered for (adaptive teaching) /the use of support staff
- Classroom environment: displays, organisation etc.
- 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

#### **Pupil Voice Questions**

Suggested questions to 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?

## Appendix 3

### Key questions for Governors to ask Subject Leaders in Foundation subjects

- Can you share the current policy / scheme of work with me?
- Can you share your progression documents with me?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress in the subject?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching the subject?
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- 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 is your vision for 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?

### Key Questions for Governors to Ask in 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 core subjects 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 these groups and the rest of their peers: girls and boys; pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with EAL; and any other minority groups?
- In meetings with the English/maths leaders, can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:
  - statutory data from the Early Learning Goals, Year 1 Phonics Screening Check results, Year 4 Multiplication Check, Key Stage 2 SAT results
  - the work of a range of pupils: average, below average and above average
  - how pupils with SEND are integrated into the daily English/maths lessons and how lessons have been adapted to support them
  - how the role of the English/maths leader is developing
  - whether the school development plan (SDP) matches the identified needs
  - how the budget for relevant curriculum areas has been spent
  - whether there is there a need for additional resources
  - how much additional adult support each class has
  - whether the school offers a wide enough range of reading books that cater 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 the school uses all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy