

GOVERNOR/TRUSTEE VISITS POLICY

Purpose of Policy

The Governance Board has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the school/academy and is accountable for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school/academy is an excellent way to observe how it operates on a day-to-day basis, but all visits should be focussed and relate to the priorities in the School/Academy Development/Improvement Plan (S/ADP). Governors/Trustees should report back their findings, thus helping the whole board and its committees to make better informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the S/ADP and informing strategic decision making.

The Headteacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school/academy, will guide the Board on the areas of the curriculum, policies and S/ADP to be covered each term. The policy and protocol for school/academy visits is formulated in consultation with the staff.

Annual programme of visits

The Governance Board will organise a programme of visits with the help of the Headteacher. These should be spread throughout the year, with the aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per term. In addition, new governors/trustees will make a general introductory visit of the school/academy as part of their induction programme.

Purpose of visit

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

Potential benefits

to governors/trustees:

- 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 students
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

to teachers:

- To ensure governors/trustees understand the reality of the classroom
- To get to know governors/trustees
- To understand better the governors/trustees' roles and responsibilities

- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

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 Headteacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Protocols for visits

Governors/trustees should, with the guidance of the whole Board and Head teacher, identify an aspect of the school/academy's priority within the S/ADP to focus upon. This will help to maximise the effectiveness of the Governance Board team.

When organising and conducting a visit governors/trustees will be courteous and considerate, respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed with the Head and staff, they will confirm in advance with the Headteacher the date, timing and focus of each visit. This will include agreeing what will be observed, whom it would be useful to talk to and agreeing any protocols to be observed whilst in the school/academy. If time permits, they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor/trustee will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit. Governors/trustees visiting cannot make personal judgements or promises on behalf of the Governance Board. They will discuss their observations with the Headteacher and agree how and when they will report to the Board on the visit.

See appendix 1 for a checklist regarding governor/trustee visits when visiting a school and appendix 2 for the form to record and report on visits to the Board.

Teachers and support staff will be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the Governance Board to the school/academy. They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors/trustees' visits to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with the Board.

Questions will be invited from governors/trustees whilst being sensitive to issues of confidentiality.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact.

Governors/trustees' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the Board. At the final meeting of each academic year the Link Governor will report the number of visits conducted and the areas of focus. The Board will evaluate the extent to which visits have informed whole Board understanding of the school's work. Staff Governors/Trustees will feedback from colleagues and describe the extent to which staff's understanding of the Board's role has been enhanced.

The Board can then consider:

- Are the visits achieving the potential benefits identified?
- What worked well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

and make changes to the policy and protocol that may be required.

Date established by Governing Body.....

Date for full implementation.....

Date for next review.....

Formal School Visits - Good Practice

Appendix 1 sets out a checklist for questions to be asked in preparation, during and after the visit.

Reporting your visit- Appendix 2 is a suggested format for a form to report back to the Board

- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor/trustee' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the Head and any 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 committee/Board meeting.

Checklist for governor/trustee visits to school/academy			
A = always S = sometimes N = never			
Before	A	S	N
Is there a policy for governors/trustees' visits which has been shared with staff?			
Is the purpose of the visit clear?			
Is it linked to the School/Academy Development/improvement plan or Ofsted Action plan?			
Has the agenda been discussed with the Headteacher well in advance?			
Is there a prompt/checklist agreed by governors/trustees and relevant members of staff to guide the visit?			
Have arrangements been agreed with any staff involved?			
Are governors/trustees clear about the purpose of the visit?			
Has the Headteacher or relevant member of staff been asked about whether any supporting information is available such as performance data, lesson plan, action plan etc.?			
During	A	S	N
Are visits punctual?			
Is the agreed timetable followed, though flexible where necessary?			
Are members of staff clear about the purpose of the visit?			
Do governors/trustees with prior agreement from the teachers get involved with the children i.e. asking about their understanding of the lesson, what they have learnt etc.?			
Is everyone clear that these visits are for information/learning and not for inspection?			
Is the visit disrupting the lesson?			
Are governors showing interest?			
Are visits courteous, friendly and non-judgemental?			
Is the purpose of the visit kept in mind?			
After	A	S	N
Is what you have learnt discussed with the teachers?			
Are any unclear points discussed?			
Do governors and members of staff who are involved consider whether the purpose of the visit has been achieved?			
Is the feedback form/report completed as soon as possible after the visit while thoughts are still fresh?			
Are observations discussed with the Headteacher?			
Is the feedback form/report circulated to the Headteacher and staff involved? Can they add comments or amend as necessary?			
Is the feedback form/report shared with the rest of the Board?			

Appendix 2

Governor/Trustee Visit Monitoring Report	
Date of visit:	
Name of governor or trustee:	
Name of class teacher	
S/ADP (School/Academy Development Plan) Priority	
Purpose of visit (i.e. which element of the S/ADP Priority are you finding out about)	
The learning environment	
My discussions with staff	
My discussions with pupils	
What I have learned from the visit	
Questions that I have	
Actions for the Board to consider	
Teacher comments:	
Headteacher/subject leader comments:	
Signed Governor or Trustee / Subject Leader/Class Teacher / Headteacher or Principal	