

# Governors' Visits Policy

Northgate Primary School



**Approved by:** Amanda Harrison

**Date:** May 2022

**Created by:**

**Governor:**

**Last reviewed on:**

May 2022

**Next review due by:** May 2023

## **Rationale**

This policy has been written by Governors in consultation with school staff, in order to help Governors carry out their strategic and monitoring role.

## **Purpose of Governors' visits**

- For Governors to gain knowledge of how the school runs
- To help Governors understand the teaching and learning process
- To get to know the school and all its staff
- To fulfil their monitoring role
- To give support and encouragement to staff
- To provide a link between school and parents
- To enable Governors to make informed contributions at Governors' meetings
- To meet the children
- To fulfil the Governors legal duty "to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement"
- For all Governors to have the opportunity to experience all areas of school life

## **Governors' Visits**

There are two types of visits: formal and informal.

### **1. Formal Visits**

During formal visits the Governor acts as a representative of the Governing Body, which has a corporate responsibility for the overall conduct of the school.

Formal visits:

- Must be pre-arranged with the Head Teacher
- Must have an agreed purpose
- Should ideally be linked to the School Improvement Plan
- Should provide added value to the effectiveness of the Governing Body
- Could include attendance at INSET days
- Could be classroom / office / playground based
- Might involve working with agencies associated with the school
- Include school or Governors' working parties
- May be made by a single Governor or a pair of Governors
- Could include shadowing a member of staff or pupil
- Will probably have a timed meeting with a subject leader or teacher
- Must be fed back to the Full Governing Body

### **2. Informal Visits**

Informal visits are those made by Governors in a more personal capacity, much as a parent might do. This must still be with knowledge and approval of the Head Teacher. Such visits add to the individual Governors' knowledge and understanding of the school

and can strengthen relationships and foster trust and respect between Governors and staff.

Informal visits can take many forms: for example, attendance at school events and activities, both in and out of school hours; coming into school to help; contributing to school activities and learning through assemblies, talking to groups of children about the local area and its history.

Informal visits are generally easier than formal visits. However they should be seen as a complement to formal visits and not as an alternative.

## **Protocols for Governors' Visits**

The following protocols for Governors' visits have been agreed.

### **Before the Visit**

#### GOVERNORS SHOULD

- Have a clear idea of where, why and how long the visit will last
- Agree in advance a mutually convenient time for the visit with the Head Teacher and member of staff concerned
- Negotiate with the Head Teacher and staff member the focus of the visit
- Ensure staff are comfortable with the visit
- Be provided with relevant planning or paperwork
- All visits should be on the Governor monitor visit summary sheet

#### GOVERNORS SHOULD NOT

- Turn up unannounced
- Plan to visit their own child's classroom

### **During the Visit**

#### GOVERNORS SHOULD

- Put aside any preconceived ideas and conduct the visit with an open mind
- Be punctual
- Sign in and wear a visitors' badge
- Help if possible
- Be guided by the class teacher / member of staff
- Be polite, tactful and sensitive and adhere to dress code
- Listen
- Call staff by their title
- Be prepared to answer questions from the children

#### GOVERNORS SHOULD NOT

- Be judgmental
- Disrupt lessons
- Make comments or undermine in lessons
- Interfere with the organization / management of the class
- Home in on children they know

- Talk to the teacher / member of the staff whilst they are teaching

## **After the Visit**

### GOVERNORS SHOULD

- Sign out
- Thank staff and children; say what they learnt and enjoyed
- Debrief the Head Teacher
- Complete the visit report and send to the member of staff for approval and then to the Head Teacher
- Feedback to the Governing Body
- Give an approved copy of the visit report to the member of staff to keep as evidence of professional development and effectiveness

### GOVERNORS SHOULD NOT

- Give individual feedback
- Identify pupils / staff / parents by name
- Make promises to staff on behalf of the Governing Body, e.g. lobby for more resources
- Criticize performance, not even constructively
- Offer criticisms but may raise important strategic issues after consultation with the Head Teacher

## **Timetable of Governors' Visits**

Governors, like school staff, have limited time. Therefore Governors' visit should 'add value' both to the school and to the effectiveness of the whole Governing Body.

At the first full Governors' meeting of each year Governors should:

- plan a timetable of visits linked to specific areas of development in the School Improvement Plan / Ofsted Action Plan and the Governing Body's schedule of meetings
- agree a realistic target for the number of formal visits
- identify the individual Governors who will undertake the visits. This will allow all Governors, particularly those in work or with childcare responsibilities, to make adequate arrangements well in advance. Consider pairs of Governors, for example an experienced Governor might work alongside a newly appointed Governor

*Subject Governors (literacy, numeracy and SEN) should meet with the subject leader each term and make at least one class based visit per year.*

New governors will have an introductory visit with either the Link Governor or the Head Teacher and will be allocated a Governor mentor from within the Governing Body.

## **Governors' Visit Report**

Governor Visit Reports should be completed, using the agreed format, within five days after the visit. They should give a brief, honest account of the Governor's understanding of the focus, the things they learnt and enjoyed, highlighting any issues that need to be considered by the Governing Body.

The report should be copied to the Head Teacher and member of staff involved in the visit for approval prior to distribution to the Full Governing Body via the Clerk.

The master copy should be signed and handed to the Clerk for inclusion in the public records files.

Governors' written reports provide useful evidence for Ofsted inspections of how the Governors have fulfilled their monitoring role, as well as providing evidence for staff in support of their professional portfolio of their wider professional effectiveness.

The Governing Body should actively encourage staff Governors to become involved in helping to ensure the visits policy works well. Arrangements should be made for staff Governors to share staff comments and feedback on what worked well and what could be improved during a Governor visit at the meeting where the visit report is discussed.

## **Annual Review**

The Governing Body should review how the visits policy is working at the school at the end of each academic year. The key questions to consider are:

- Have the Governors' visits made a difference to
  - The Governing Body?
  - Staff?
  - Pupils?
- What action does the Governing Body need to initiate to make the policy and practice better?

## **Conclusion**

Governors' visit the school as lay people and not as inspectors, even when they have a personal professional expertise in a particular area. A visit will only provide a snapshot of what goes on. It may not always give full and balanced picture of the real situation and this is why it is important that the information and impressions gained are checked and reviewed with the Head Teacher.

## Governors' Visit Record

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Purpose of Visit</b> (previously agreed by the Governing Body with the Head Teacher)	
<b>Link with the School Improvement Plan</b> (How does this visit relate to priorities within the plan?)	
<b>Governor observations and comments</b> (e.g. What did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did your visit last?)	
<b>Any key issues arising for the Governing Body</b> (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)	
<b>Action following Governing Body meeting</b> (Record any actions agreed by the Governing Body with regard to this visit)	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Governor      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Head Teacher      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This report should be copied to the Head Teacher, member of staff and Chair of Governors. The master should be handed to the Clerk for filing in the records of Governors' meetings.

**Appendix 2**

## Governors' Informal Visit Record

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Purpose of Visit</b>	

**Please use this sheet to note any observations / impressions during your visit to school, particularly in relation to the criteria below.**

<b>Environment</b>	
<b>Communications</b>	
<b>Relationships</b>	
<b>Behaviour</b>	
<b>Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural (SMSC) opportunities*</b>	
<b>Other comments</b>	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Governor      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 3**

**Opportunities for pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development might include ...**

<p><b>Spiritual</b> (non-faith, i.e. opportunities for reflection)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lying on your back in the sandpit watching clouds</li> <li>• Watching eggs hatch</li> <li>• Listening to music</li> <li>• Listening to poetry</li> <li>• Studying a piece of artwork</li> <li>• Celebrating others' achievements (sporting, academic, attendance etc)</li> <li>• Thinking about charities and their purpose</li> <li>• Helping others in community (e.g. old people etc)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moral</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Golden Rules</i> negotiated in each class room</li> <li>• Expectations and the way they are met re: behaviour</li> <li>• Pupils supportive of each other</li> <li>• Attitudes to bullying</li> <li>• Attitudes to equality ( all protected characteristics, homophobic etc)</li> <li>• Relationships with adults esp. senior citizens</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strength of relationships pupil:pupil and pupil:adult</li> <li>• Building self-esteem / self-confidence</li> <li>• Use of sport, drama, Circle Time etc</li> <li>• Promotion of speaking and listening</li> <li>• Organised play (EYFS, KS1 &amp; 2 mainly)</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities (suggest useful for Pupil Premium esp. Forces Families)</li> <li>• Enrichment activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrations of British culture and traditions (St George's Day, Jubilee celebrations, maypole dancing etc)</li> <li>• International Food week</li> <li>• Black History Week</li> <li>• Holocaust Day</li> <li>• Charity (Local, National and International) e.g. relevant now, what are food banks for in our schools?</li> <li>• Art, music, literature from other cultures (i.e. in the curriculum) (e.g. Aboriginal art, Japanese Haiku etc)</li> </ul>