



Governor Visits to School Policy

Berkeley Primary School

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Introduction

Governing Bodies have a statutory duty to promote high standards of educational achievement at their school and to establish and monitor its school policies and the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance. They must monitor the school performance to that end. Governors cannot fulfil their duties unless they know the school well. One way in which Governors can acquire up to date knowledge is to make visits to the school, in addition to attending governor's meetings and school functions.

This policy provides a framework for governors when visiting our school so that Governors can build an effective working relationship with the staff and pupils, as well as have a better understanding of the context of the school. Visits by governors are encouraged to facilitate appropriate challenge by the governing body, timely support and further understanding of Governor roles.

There are two types of "Governor Visit", the formal and informal. The informal visits may involve Governors offering to help run a stall at a fair, attending the Christmas Carol Concert or taking part in a school visit. These help to establish good working relationships with the staff and children. However they should not be regarded as an alternative to the formal visit. **These should be recorded on the School Development Plan (Governor Visits tab).**

The cycle of formal visits should be identified at the full Governing Body meetings and they will usually relate to the priorities identified on the School Improvement Plan. The formal visit should usually last a whole or half a day, in which individual Governors act as the representative of the Governing Body, with the expectation that they will subsequently report back. Some formal visits may be allocated to specific Governors with designated responsibilities, for example Special Educational Needs and Disability, English and Maths.

In some cases it may be appropriate for a governor to observe a lesson though it must be understood that visits are not about making judgments on the quality of individual teachers' work; that is the Headteacher's responsibility. Nor are they about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas. It is worth remembering that "Governors are not there as inspectors or to pass judgements on the work of individual teachers and much will depend upon the sensitivity of the governors to the feelings of the teaching staff about being observed." (A Guide for Governors). All governors are DBS checked.

The Rational for Governors Visiting School

- To enable Governors to fulfil their statutory duties and responsibilities
- To enable Governors to be better informed at Governors' Meetings and to be able to make an informed contribution to the strategic work of the school
- To gain a better understanding of particular areas of school provision
- To understand more about the deployment of school resources
- To be better informed about the implementation of the school's policies
- To get to know staff better
- To talk and listen to the staff and children about their experiences in school



Preparing to Visit

Governors, who are planning on making a visit to school, whether it is formal or informal, need to have made prior arrangements with the Headteacher. They need to be clear about the purpose of the visit and what they will be focussing on. The length of the visit will be agreed beforehand, and any additional information that may be useful will have been circulated in advance. It is important that everyone involved in the visit is prepared for it and that all teachers are aware of the purpose. The Headteacher will approach the teachers concerned before the visit takes place.

During the Visit

Ensure that you are punctual and keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible. Get involved quietly with the children and observe discretely. Don't distract the teacher or support staff from their work but be prepared to talk and show interest; interact, don't interrupt. Governors will respect confidentiality at all times but will also have due regard for safeguarding policy and procedures. Governors must comply with and observe any school rules and routines. Remember why you are there and stay focussed on the purpose of your visit. Make notes while the visit is still fresh in your mind.

Follow up to the Visit

At the end of their time in school the Headteacher will try to meet with Governors to discuss the visit. All visits should be reported back to the full Governing Body. When reporting back it is important to remember that Governor visits should relate to their responsibilities as governors. It is the Headteacher's job to manage the school, in accordance with the aims and objectives and policies approved by the Governing Body. To judge the quality of teaching and learning in the school requires specialist skill, and Governors are not in a position to make those judgments based on short occasional visits. When Governors use visits to gain information to help in them in their role, they do so as observers and not as inspectors.

The report should be written using our school formats (see App A and B below). As a written report, like other papers from the Governing Body, it is open to public inspection, it should avoid naming individuals. It should not be tabled at the meeting, but sent by email to the Headteacher in time for distribution with the agenda.

Governors' Lesson Observations

Although not all the visits by Governors will involve lesson observations, a great deal of time will be spent in classrooms. As well as watching the teaching and learning that takes place, there will also be the opportunity to move around and talk to the pupils about their work, as well as to look at the classroom environment i.e. displays, resources, books, etc. At the end of the lesson, time will be arranged for the Governor and teacher to talk about the lesson and address any questions.

When carrying out lesson observations it is important that all Governors are aware that there are children with special needs in every classroom and teachers use a variety of appropriate strategies for dealing with the behaviour.



Monitoring the Effectiveness of Governor Visits

All Governors are accountable to the Governing Body for the formal visit that the individual has made on their behalf. Reflecting on a visit can make subsequent visits more effective. Governors should always ask themselves:

- were the objectives for the visit clear?
- were they realised and if not why not?
- how can we make our practice even better?
- did you require any additional information to enable you to place the visit in context?

USEFUL NOTES TO AID COMPLETION OF VISIT RECORD

DO:	DON'T
STEP ONE Prepare the report in draft as soon after the visit as possible.	Be lengthy – no more than 2 sides of A4 maximum
STEP TWO Have the report typed.	Do not be over familiar or make written observations about the quality of teaching and learning. If there are any concerns, raise them with the Headteacher verbally.
STEP THREE Discuss the draft with the Headteacher to ensure any mistakes or misunderstandings can be clarified.	Name staff or pupils.
STEP FOUR Share the record with the member of staff.	Hand around the report at the meeting; governors will have had no opportunity to read it and give it proper attention.
STEP FIVE Email a copy of the report to the Headteacher to governors for distribution at next meeting.	Go through your report in detail or read it verbatim. This lengthens meetings unnecessarily.
STEP SIX Come to the meeting prepared to give a short verbal overview and answer any questions.	
STEP SEVEN Think to yourself: what can I do to make future visits more effective?	



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Governor Visit Form Appendix A

Governor Name:	Date:
Purpose of the visit/s:	
Links with the School Improvement Plan:	
Governor Observations and comments:	
Questions and matters arising following your visit to be addressed at next governors meeting (SIC or Full Governors)?	
1.	
2.	



Governor Visit Form Appendix B

Area:	Name of Governor linked:	School Link Person:
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Date of discussion with link	Action (What has the school done?)	Impact (What difference has it made?)	Evidence (Where is the evidence for this?)	Next steps (What does the school plan to do next?)

Questions and matters arising following your visit to be addressed at next governors meeting (SIC or Full Governors)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.