

GOVERNOR VISITS



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Ratified by the Governing Body: November 2023

School Visits – an Aide Memoire

What is the purpose of the visit?

What has prompted my decision to visit?

Who has prompted my decision to visit?

Is the reason specific or general?

What are my/other people's expectations?

How can my visit benefit the teacher?

How shall I carry it out?

What particular areas of the school am I interested in?

What particular activities am I interested in?

What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?

Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?

What questions should I ask?

Who should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?

Which of my questions did I answer?

To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?

What difficulties did I meet and why?

Is there any follow up?

Have I recorded my experiences?

Did I report back to the head and staff?

Have I prepared a short report for the next governor's meeting?

How can I build on this for the next visit?

Context

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the Governing Body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. Undertaking visits demonstrates the Governor's role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress. The Governors visiting programme is in integral part of the school's yearly monitoring calendar. Each Governor is encouraged to make at least one visit a year during school time and governors will often monitor an area of the School Development Plan with their visit focussing on the specifics of that chosen area.

Visits enable Governors to:-

- See the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements
- Get to know the staff and demonstrate their commitment to the school.
- Give active support to the staff and the activities of the school.
- Be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning.
- Evaluate resources and discuss with staff further requirements.
- Gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking.
- Work in partnership with the staff.

Before making a visit Governors will:-

- Contact their link member of staff and agree a date, time and focus for the visit.
- Clarify the etiquette, courtesies and expectations for the visit.
- Plan which classes will be visited.
- Draw up a timetable for the visit with their link member of staff.
- Their link member of staff will ensure that all staff are aware of the visit and the expectations on them.

On the day of the visit the Governor will remember to:-

- Arrive on time and clarify the timetable with their link member of staff
- Act as an observer and only participate in the class at the invitation of the teacher
- Respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting but not interfering.
- Be calm and enjoy the visit.

After the visit the Governor will:-

- Remember to thank the teachers and students.
- Meet with the Headteacher to give a verbal report and to raise any issues that arose
- Complete the Governor Visit Proforma, reporting on the focus. The completed form should be given to the Headteacher and then, after any possible alterations, the form will be circulated to the governing body and staff.
- Governors must report without giving opinions and where possible individuals should not be able to be identified.

It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgements should not be made arbitrarily. **The visit is not about:-**

- Inspection
- Making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on your own children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- Arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas

Governors are an important part of the school team and are welcomed into the school by staff. It is important that Governors remember to respect the professionals and the students, support the Headteacher and the staff, and acknowledge that they represent the full Governing Body. If the agreed principles and procedures are followed then Governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the Governing Body, which will contribute to school improvement.

Guidelines for Governors

Advice on conducting
classroom visits



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Rationale

The Governing Body at The Elton High School has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in the classroom. Although their role is strategic, it is important that they have some understanding of the practicalities of the job. Meeting children, talking to staff and seeing lessons underway will help members of the Governing Body to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.

Objectives

The Governing Body should aim to:

- Inform their decision-making by having visited at least one lesson during the year.
- Be aware of the feelings of members of staff and the issues they face by having had a more lengthy discussion with at least one member of staff during the year.
- Read and keep up-to-date with school newsletters and other documents that are set out.
- Keep up-to-date with their area.

Roles and Responsibilities

LINK AREA	LINK GOVERNOR	SCHOOL CONTACT
Arts	Ciara Connell	Greg Thomas
Computing / ICT / Business	Iain MacKay	Waseem Arshad
Design Technology	Health McLean	Rob Murphy
English/Drama	James Frith	Lana Ali
Geography	TBC	Zoe Windsor
Health & Safety	Iain MacKay	Joanna Filkins
History	James Frith	Helen Ryder
Literacy	James Frith	Donna Rooks
Mathematics	Dave Lythgoe	Amanda Butterworth
Modern Foreign Languages	Neil Scruton	Rhian Bardsley
Music	Neil Scruton	Kristen Stopford
Numeracy	Dave Lythgoe	Amanda Butterworth
Physical Education	Mobeen Kashif	Maria Leech
Pupil Premium	Katherine Ashworth	Dave Wilson
RE/PSHE/Citizenship	Michelle Mallalieu	Nicola Parkinson
Safeguarding/Child Protection/Pastoral Care/CYPIC	Ann-Marie Bennett	Kate Johnson
Science	Dave Lythgoe	Simon Yorke-Robinson
SEN Liaison Governor	Ann-Marie Bennett	Dave Wilson
Teaching & Learning		Donna Rooks

Punctuality & Attendance	Neil Scruton	Kate Johnson
Whistleblowing	Ciara Connell	Joanna Filkins
Equalities	Katherine Ashworth	Kate Johnson

The benefits of visiting classrooms

Closer links between Governors and teachers has potential benefits to both.

For Governors these include:

- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice.
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the students.
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names.
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action.
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed.

For teachers these include:

- Opportunity to find out more about the role of the Governor.
- Having a chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice.
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise.
- Opportunity to reflect upon practice through discussion.

What to avoid

It is important for all parties to note that governors' visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve governors making a judgement about teaching in any official capacity. That remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and other educational professionals.

It might be wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. It can cause discomfort for everyone! They should also be aware of 'pursuing personal agendas' and make sure they fulfil the code of conduct as it is outlined here.

Please remember that members of staff are very busy people whose first priority must be the students. There may be times when arrangements have to change or alterations made. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations. No two days are ever the same.

Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changes a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don't expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood. By all means ask questions (preferably at the end of the lesson) but be sensitive to the extra demands of differentiation and inclusion that teachers now face.

Ground Rules

	Always	Never
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange details of visit • Agree purpose of visit • Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed • Agree role within the lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up unannounced
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep to the role agreed • Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over • Please remember confidentiality • Stick to the times and purpose agreed • Be sensitive to the mood of the classroom and expectations of the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume a different role • Walk in with clipboard • Interrupt the teacher • Distract the teacher from their task
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the teacher and students • Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience • Feedback to the governing body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave without acknowledgement • Break the rules of confidentiality

Conducting the observations

After planning your visit with the Head of Subject you might have agreed to:

- Take part in a lesson acting as a classroom helper during your visit.
- Do a formal lesson observation – taking no immediate role other than talking to the children about what they are doing,
- Work with a small group.
- Introduce yourself as link governor for that subject and answer any of their questions.
- Meet with the class teacher or Head of Subject to discuss particular issues or set the context.

- Observe – focussing on an agreed area/issue that the class teacher would like some feedback on e.g. the involvement of a particular group of pupils.

Please remember that observations do not require judgement on the teacher. It might be also useful to clarify some what ifs beforehand. For example:

- What if I see a student misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
- What if a student asks me how to do something?
- What if I have a suggestion to make?

Providing Feedback

It is important that a time is agreed between yourself and the class teacher/ Head of Subject to discuss the lesson you have taken part in or observed. During feedback you might refer to notes you have made. The structure might include:

1. Asking the teacher for further clarification of the lesson or for their views on how it went.
2. Giving your own impressions on what you saw.
3. Providing any positive comment.
4. Raising any issues that appeared to develop.
5. Any further questions you might have.
6. A summary of feedback you will be giving the governing body.

At the end of the feedback both you and the teacher should be clear about what you will be sharing with the governing body – there should be no surprises!

The Governors' visits to classrooms pro-forma should be completed as soon as possible after the visit. It should reflect the discussion you have had with the teacher. The report copied to:

- The Headteacher
- The Head of Subject
- The teacher concerned
- The Clerk to Governors

Policy Review

The policy should be reviewed every two years. The key questions should be:

- Has every Governor visited at least one lesson during the year?
- Has each Governor made links with their allocated subject?
- Has every Governor had a conversation with the Head of Subject they are linked to?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in this policy?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make policy and practice even better?

This policy to be reviewed in November 2024

Governor Visit Full Report

Name:

Date of visit:

Focus of visit:

Classes/staff visited:

Summary of activities:

E.g. observing classes, talking to staff and students, looking at resources, had lunch etc.

What have I learned as a result of my visit

Positive comments about the focus

Aspects I would like clarified/questions I have

Ideas for future visits

Any other comments

Signed:

Date:

Governor

Signed:

Date:

Headteacher