



Governor Visits Policy and Protocol

Ratification Date: - March 2022
Review Date: - March 2024

RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

When Was the Plan last Updated?		
Date	Name	Detail (changes made)
March 2022	Laura Gillespie	Reviewed, no amendments made

Context

The Department for Education's Governance Handbook states that:

"Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, boards can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvements plans and how they are working in practice."

The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will test that assumption during a school inspection. If school and classroom visits are done well, they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

This policy outlines the Bents Green School Governing Board's position regarding Governor visits to schools and includes guidance to governors regarding the planning and conduct of these visits.

Purpose of Governor Visits:

- To increase the Governing Board's knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses;

- To show staff and pupils that those governing are interested in the life, work and achievement of the school;
- To enable those governing to see the impact and progress of the implementation of the School Development Plan;
- Help the Governing Board fulfil its statutory role;
- Acquire knowledge to enable the Governing Board to challenge as appropriate.

During any visit to the school it is important to remember that the role of those governing is strategic, not operational.

A Governor Visit is not an inspection. For example, if the focus of the visit is the Health and Safety policy, acceptable activities would be to seek an understanding of how the policy is managed, how staff are made aware of the policy, and any issues and how they have been dealt with, what lessons have been learned when things go wrong, how health and safety is audited and how the findings are acted upon. It is *not* within the remit of the governing board for individual members of the board to tour the school carrying out health and safety checks (even if the board member has expertise through their paid employment).

A Governor Visit is not a lesson observation. Lesson observation has a specific meaning in a school context and is a professional task which should only be undertaken by the school's senior leaders. It is *not* within the remit of the members of the governing board to carry out such an exercise, and they should avoid giving the impression that they are there to judge or inspect teachers' performance or the quality of teaching.

It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgements should not be made arbitrarily. Governors will at all times remember to respect the professionals and the children, support the Executive 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.

There may also be visits to the school for less formal occasions such as school plays or celebration events and Governors may be invited by the Executive Headteacher to attend these events as a representative of the Governing Board. In addition, parent governors will visit the school in relation to their child's education, staff governors for their jobs, and other governing board members may volunteer in the school in other ways. It is important to keep these roles separate from that of governing and to be clear about when you are visiting in a governance capacity. As such, it would be wise for Governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present.

Visit Programme:

In September of each school year the Governing Board will agree a visit programme for the following year. Every visit will have a clear, pre-arranged focus, i.e. they will have been "commissioned" by the Governing Board. The focus of the visit will generally relate to an aspect of the School Development Plan (SDP), one of the Governor's statutory duties, or to assist a governor in developing a rounded understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Visits will typically involve the member of staff responsible for the SDP objective or initiative lead meeting with the member of the Governing Board in order to provide background information, context, showing the initiative in action, and if possible providing the opportunity for the Governor to speak to children or staff members who are affected by it.

Each Governor is expected to visit the school during school time at least once a year, but no more than once per term.

Types of Governor Visits:

At Bents Green School there are four types of Governor visits:

Type of Visit	Purpose of Visit	Governors involved	Staff involved	Frequency
The School in Operation	To review e.g. the condition and maintenance of the premises, or pupil behaviour around school.	All Governors on a rota basis and linked to their sub committee	Teaching staff Business Manager Caretaker	3 times per year
The Classroom Visit	Observation of a particular curriculum area or to gain an understanding of the process of assessment.	Link Governors	Subject Leaders Phase Leaders	3 times per year
School Development Plan Focus	To review progress against a specific aspect of the SDP e.g. promotion of student wellbeing	All Governors on a rota basis and linked to their sub committee	Senior School Leaders	3 times per year
Learning Walk	To gain an understanding of how the school operates and how children are learning. These must be part of the monitoring and evaluation calendar. These may be general (e.g. for a new Governor), subject specific (e.g. specific focus on how children learn maths) or with a specific aspect (e.g. how the school develops children's thinking skills).	All Governors	All relevant staff	3 times per year

A number of governors are linked to specific responsibilities. These links are as follows:

Safeguarding	Natalie Brownall
Finances	John Plant
Pupil Premium	Mark Rayner
Preparation for Adulthood	Mark Rayner
Health & Safety	Ray Gardener
Curriculum - English	Natalie Brownell
Curriculum - Maths	Tom Sier
Wellbeing	Lorna Branton

Review:

This policy will be formally reviewed bi-annually by the Full Governing Board. On an annual basis the Executive Headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Board will review the success of the Governor Visits, taking into account:

- Whether every governor has visited at least once during the school year
- Whether every link governor has made links with the allocated subject/class
- Whether the visits are achieving the desired outcome
- What worked well
- What did not work well
- Whether there have been any unexpected benefits
- How practice can be improved

APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for Governors

Protocols for conducting school visits

Before the Visit:

- Ensure that you are clear on the purpose and focus of the visit;
- Familiarise yourself with any relevant documentation, including the actions points from the SDP;
- Make contact with the Executive Headteacher to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the visit. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will take forward all arrangements for planning the visit and will ensure all staff are aware of the visit and the expectations on them;
- Clarify the etiquette, courtesies and expectations of the visit, e.g. who you are meeting, where, what time the visit will start and finish, who else you will meet during the visit, in the presence of pupils how you will be referred to and how you will refer to other members of staff.

Governors are not permitted to turn up at the school unannounced or to approach staff directly without the approval of the Executive Headteacher.

During the Visit:

- Arrive in good time, report to reception and follow the procedures for visitors;
- The visit should start with a short meeting with the lead member of staff for you to agree on the protocols to be followed (e.g. if you will make notes during the visit or afterwards; whether it is acceptable to look at pupils' work and discuss it with them; what your role will be within a lesson)
- Only enter classrooms and other areas of the school (including the staffroom) following invitation by a member of staff;
- Keep to the role agreed; only talk to students if invited to do so by the teacher and be sensitive to the needs of the pupils;
- Follow Safeguarding guidelines;
- Be flexible if something urgent crops up which means the arranged tasks cannot take place – always keep in mind that the education of the students is of overriding importance;
- Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different;
- Be courteous and professional throughout the visit, including thanking members of staff before leaving.

Governors are reminded that throughout the visit they are representing the whole Governing Board with their words and actions.

After the Visit:

- Share any concerns, however trivial, with the Board Chair and the Executive Headteacher;
- Complete the Governor Visit Report (template in Appendix 2), sharing a draft with any relevant members of staff and the Executive Headteacher, allowing for the Executive Headteacher to include any additional comments to the report. A final version of the report should be submitted to the Clerk for consideration at the next Governing Board (or relevant committee) meeting;
- Send a thank you email to those that contributed to the success of the visit.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Feedback or comments (written or oral) should be limited to the Executive Headteacher or senior or middle leader with who the visit was arranged, but not with other staff or with parents. Individual children or staff members should not be identified in school visit reports.

APPENDIX 2

Bents Green School
Governor Visit Report

Name	
Date of Visit	
Type of Visit	
Focus of Visit (including relevant reference to the SDP)	
Summary of activities, e.g. observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch, etc	
General comments	
Summary of what was learned as a result of the visit (ensure this is linked back to the focus of the visit)	
Points to take forward for discussion at the Governing Board meeting	
Feedback on Governor Visits Protocol	
Any other comments	
Executive Headteacher comments	

Received by the Governing Body on xxxxxx

Governors can also access this form on Governor Hub