



1. AIMS

1. Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:
 - improve governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
 - monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the development plan
 - assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties.
1. Before visiting the school the governor(s) should:
 - inform the school of the visit and seek approval from the Headteacher of the arrangements
 - ensure that they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire.
2. After visiting the school the governor(s) should:
 - complete a visit report outlining the objectives and results of the visit
 - report back to the committee or governing body as appropriate
 - provide constructive feedback as appropriate.

2. OVERVIEW

Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing **strategic** decision making. Through visits governors will have the opportunity to observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees make well-informed judgements about progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school improvement plan. It may not though be possible for every governor to be available during the day - this will depend on personal and work commitments. However, **all** governors should do **some** visits; the frequency and type of visit will vary according to availability and role.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan and cover a wide range of schoolwork. Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose.

Governors should arrange these visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.



3. GOVERNOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing body is responsible for the:

1. Strategic View - Values, Mission, Vision
2. Critical Friend - Monitoring and evaluating school improvement
3. Ensure Accountability - High Standards, value for money, agreed aims and objectives

4. GOVERNOR RIGHTS

Governors do not have any rights of access to the school.

5. GOVERNOR VISITS ARE NOT:

1. A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
2. An opportunity to check on the progress of own children
3. An opportunity to pursue a personal agenda
4. An opportunity to monopolise school/teacher time
5. An opportunity to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the Headteacher or SMT.

6. PREPARING FOR A VISIT

1. Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
2. Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
3. Discuss an agenda with the head teacher, and or subject leader/co ordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
4. Use the school visits pro forma
5. Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the lesson or learning walk? It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the co ordinator if any supporting information is available, Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
6. Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions and submit to staff in advance.

7. DURING THE VISIT

1. Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.



2. Be punctual, courteous and considerate at all times, respecting the professional roles of the head teacher and staff.
3. Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the class will be.
4. Get involved with the children.
5. Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
6. Observe discretely.
7. Don't distract the teacher during the lesson but be prepared to talk and show interest.
8. Interact, don't interrupt.
9. Listen to staff and pupils.

8. TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

Teachers and support staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.

They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits so as to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors. See Annex A for a list of things which governors could examine/explore. Whenever practical they will invite their link/curriculum governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions.

Questions will be invited from governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See section 13 for examples of questions which could be asked. Although these focus on literacy, numeracy and SEN, many of the questions can easily be adapted to other areas of the curriculum.

9. AFTER THE VISIT

1. Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
2. Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved
3. Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.



4. Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind and share the report with the Head Teacher for agreement that it is a true reflection of the visit.
5. Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learnt more about the school? Have I gained more confidence in helping the governing body fulfil its duties?

10. REPORTING YOUR VISIT

1. Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus. See Appendix C for a report format.
2. You must circulate a draft to the head teacher and staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by all those involved.
3. Circulate this at the next appropriate meeting.

11. VISIT FOCUS

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

1. Particular subjects, key stages or classes
2. The use made of the building or the site
3. The condition and maintenance of the premises
4. Special educational needs
5. Literacy and numeracy
6. The use of ICT equipment
7. The impact on the school of any changes, e.g. reduced classes in key stage
8. Impact of specific targets identified in the School Improvement Plan
9. Impact of Staff Development Training

12. INFORMAL VISITS

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

1. Chair making a regular visit to the head teacher
2. Volunteering at school events/trips/in the class
3. Obtaining information from the office relating to meetings
4. As a parent to speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.



13. MEETINGS WITH SUBJECT LEADERS

To ask subject leaders/co ordinators

1. What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
2. What were the Ofsted findings about the subject? (This question is mainly for Literacy, maths, science and ICT. Other subject may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection)
3. What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
4. How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
5. What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
6. What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
7. How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

Questions about teaching English/Maths

Achievements and attitudes

8. What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?
 - a. Compared with similar schools?
 - b. In relation to the national rates of increase?
 - c. In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
9. Where have we improved? Do we know why?
10. Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
11. How do our results in English/math's compare with other subjects?
12. What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
13. Are there significant differences in reading, writing or maths between?
 - a. Girls and boys
 - b. Pupils with special educational needs
 - c. Very able pupils
 - d. Pupils with English as an additional language and the others
 - e. The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
 - f. The majority and Pupil Premium pupils
14. In meetings to understand how much pupil progress is being made you could **look at**



- a. Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - b. Pupil progress data across each year
 - c. The work of a range of pupils - average, below average and above average
 - d. Other evidence, Special Needs
15. How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/math's lessons
16. Management of the subject?
17. How is the role of the English/math's co ordinator developing?
18. Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
19. How has the budget for this area been spent?
20. Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
21. How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
22. (Literacy only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books are available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? How well do pupils use the library? What links does the school have with the local library?
23. How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
Help me to understand how you plan your lessons: how do you get from the National Curriculum to deciding what Karen or Tom will be doing in Science today?	National Curriculum Key stage plan Scheme of Work Year/termly/weekly/daily plans Individual plans	
How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress?	Questioning in lessons Marking Assessments, including tests SATs Target-setting and achieving Value-added data	



<p>What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?</p>	<p>ICT - access to computers Use of library Classroom library Use of basics like pens and pencils. Good labelling Borrowed resources</p>	
<p>How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?</p>	<p>Boys v. girls Most able/ SEN English as an Additional Languet Badly Behaved Disabled</p>	
<p>How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?</p>	<p>Ability groups Mixed or single age groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities</p>	
<p>How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning?</p>	<p>Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters Diaries</p>	

Communication

1. How are parents kept informed of progress?
2. How do you gather parents views?
3. What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading/writing at home?



14. ATTENDING STAFF MEETINGS

It is not appropriate for *Governors* to attend staff meetings, apart from in exceptional circumstances. Discussion in staff meetings should not be constrained by having an observer. *Governors* are able to talk to the Subject leaders about the staff meetings relevant to their subjects.

15. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

To governors

1. Recognise and celebrate success
2. Develop relationships with staff
3. Get to know the children
4. Recognise different teaching styles
5. Understand the environment in which teachers teach
6. Monitor policies in action
7. Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them
8. Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge
9. Inform decision making

To teachers

1. Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
2. Get to know governors
3. Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
4. Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
5. Highlight the need for particular resources (including human resources)

16. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF GOVERNORS' SCHOOL VISIT POLICY

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually at the Summer Term *Governors' Scrutiny Committee Meeting*.

1. Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
2. Have there been any unexpected benefits?
3. How can we make our practice even better?



17. VISIT RECORDING FORM

GOVERNOR VISIT

Governor:	Staff/Areas Visited
Date:	
Focus of Visit	
To discuss	
Discussions/Observations/Questions	
Conclusions/Action/Areas for Development	