



Governor Protocol for School Visits

July 2024



Introduction

The Governing Body of the school has the following responsibilities:

- To take a **Strategic View** - Values, Mission, Vision.
- To act as a **Critical Friend** - Monitoring and evaluating school improvement
- To **Ensure Accountability** - High Standards, value for money, agreed aims and objectives.

Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that this in turn can increase the Governing Body's first-hand knowledge, so 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 Development Plan.

It may not 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 Development Plan and cover a wide range of school life. Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose.

Being clear in the focus of any visit by the Governing Body is essential. It is also important to consider what does not form part of Governing Body visits. A visit by a Governor is not a form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher or route to understand or make personal gain in view of individuals within the school, a parent Governor seeking additional information regarding their own child during a visit, for example. Governors should arrange these visits with the Headteacher who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

Potential benefits

To the Governing Body

- Recognise and celebrate success,
- Develop relationships with staff,
- Get to know the pupils in the school,
- Recognise different teaching styles and developments,
- Understand the environment in which teachers teach,
- Monitor school policies in action,
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them,
- Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge as a Governor,
- Inform decision making.



To school staff

- Ensure the Governing Body understand the practical logistics and organisation of the school and operation of classrooms,
- Get to know the Governing Body and their own skills and interests,
- Understand better the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body,
- Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion as a critical friend,
- Highlight the need for particular resources and allocation of time.

Roles and responsibilities of Governors, Headteacher and other Staff

The **Governing Body** will, with the help of the Headteacher and Staff, organise an annual schedule of school visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per year. Visits may be conducted in pairs. The **Headteacher** will guide the governing body on the areas of the curriculum; policies and school improvement plan priorities and targets to be covered each term. **Individual Governors or pairs of Governors** will, with the guidance of the whole Governing Body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus on in order deepen their understanding.

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for Governing Body visits,
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan or Area of Learning and Experience Audit? What are the relevant school Policies? Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:
 - Phases or classes,
 - The use made of the building or the site,
 - The condition and maintenance of the premises,
 - Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion,
 - Literacy and Numeracy,
 - Cymraeg,
 - Areas of Learning and Experience,
 - The impact on the school of any changes,
 - Impact of specific targets identified in the School Development Plan,
 - Impact of professional learning for staff.
- Discuss an agenda with the head teacher, and/or Curriculum Leader well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable for all parties,
- Use the Governing Body visits form as a recording tool,
- 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, Estyn report, School Development Plan, AoLE Audit, performance data etc,

- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions and submit to staff in advance if possible.

During the Visit

- Remember whilst 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,
- Be punctual, courteous and considerate at all times, respecting the professional roles of the Headteacher and school staff,
- Decide with school staff how you will be introduced and what your role in the class will be during the visit,
- Get involved with the pupils as much as possible,
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection or opportunity to make judgements on teaching and learning,
- Observe discretely and in a courteous manner,
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson but be prepared to talk and show interest,

Teachers and Support Staff will be courteous and considerate at all times, 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 Appendix A for a list of things which Governors could examine/explore as part of their visit. Whenever practical teachers will invite their Link Governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions linked to their curriculum responsibilities.

Questions will be invited from Governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality. See annex B for examples of questions which could be asked.

After the visit

- Discuss what you have observed with the member of staff. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about,
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved and what emerging themes were found,
- Thank the member of staff for supporting you in your role as a Governor. Be open, honest and positive.



- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind and share the report with the Headteacher for agreement that it is a true reflection of the visit,
- Reflect on the visit, how did it go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have you learnt more about the school and curriculum? Have you gained more confidence in helping the Governing Body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made and will be completed on the Governing Body Learning Walk Form (Appendix C).
- Circulate a draft to the Headteacher and school staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity, strive to achieve a report that is agreed by all those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate Governing Body or committee meeting.

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.

- Chair making a regular visit to the Headteacher,
- Volunteering at school or during school events or visits,
- Obtaining information from the office relating to meetings
- As a parent/ carer, who is a Governor, to speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.

Evaluation & Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team and Governing Body every 3 years.



Appendix A

Examples of Governing Body Visit Foci

Governor Monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil interviews,
- Meeting with relevant members of staff,
- Snapshot of a lesson,
- Learning Walk around the school.

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for an Area of Learning and Experience,
- Understand what pupils like best/least in the school,
- Know the standards of achievement in a particular Area of Learning and Experience,
- Know what steps are being taken to improve standards,
- Know how well strategic policies approved by Governors are working,
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Body.

Observations to make when visiting a classroom:

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and pupils,
- Relationship between pupils,
- Variety of teaching styles and approaches,
- Availability and role of support staff,
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding,
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for,
- Pupil's work,
- Displays and Working Walls,
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions around the class and learning area,
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources,
- Health and safety regulations practiced, for example, are fire exits kept clear?



Appendix B

Questions to ask as part of Governing Body Visits

Questions to ask pupils:

- Tell me about what you are learning today,
- Do you like (select curriculum area being explored)?
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being explored),
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being explored)
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select Area of Learning and Experience)?

To ask Curriculum Leads:

- What is your vision for the Area of Learning and Experience? (AoLE) Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Estyn findings about the AoLE?
- What are the strengths of the AoLE? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this AoLE?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the AoLE?
- What resources does the school have for the AoLE and how are these organised?
- Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this AoLE?

Questions relating to Literacy and Numeracy:

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in relation to Literacy and Numeracy? In relation to the local/ national/ progress? In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- How do our results in Literacy and Numeracy compare with other areas of the curriculum?
- What do pupils find harder or easier as part of their learning?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
 - Girls and boys,
 - Pupils with Additional Learning Needs,
 - Looked After Children,
 - Pupils with English as an additional language and the others,



- The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers,
- In meetings to understand how much pupil progress is being made you could look at:
 - Pupil progress data across each year,
 - The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average,
 - Standardisation and Moderation,
 - Other evidence, Additional Learning Needs
- Management of the provision for Literacy and Numeracy,
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work identified as a priority?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How is it determined how to provide additional support?
- 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?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/ numeracy



Appendix C

Governor Visit Form

Name:	
Date of Visit:	
Focus of Visit:	
Classes/ Staff Visited:	
Summary of activities (observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch etc.)	
What have I learned ?	
Positive comments about my visit.	
Aspects I would like clarified or questions I have.	
Ideas for future visits .	
Any other comments .	



