



The Wolds Federation

POLICY FOR GOVERNORS VISITS TO SCHOOLS

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:	
APPROVED:	DATE:
SIGNED:	ROLE:
TO BE REVIEWED:	

GOVERNORS' VISITS TO SCHOOLS

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance.

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.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms.

If school and classroom visits are done well they will add immeasurably to Governors' understanding of their school, its staff and its pupils.

Four types of Governor visit are suggested

Type of Visit	Governors Involved	Staff Involved	Frequency	Responsible for Organising
The School in Operation	All Governors on a rota basis and linked to their sub committee	Teaching Staff Business Manager Caretaker	3 times a year	Chair of committees and relevant staff
The Classroom Visit	Named Governors, e.g. EYFS/Maths/literacy etc.	Subject Leaders Phase Leaders	3 times a year	Named Governors and Subject / Phase Leaders
School Improvement Focus (SIF)	Committee responsible for Curriculum and Standards	Senior School Leaders	3 times a year	Chair of the Committee, other Governors as required and Headteacher
Learning Walk	All Governors	All relevant Staff	3 times a year	Any relevant Governor in liaison with the school

WHY VISIT?

A Governing Body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and to be held accountable for its conduct and performance.

Visits should be undertaken as:

A. Part of the 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
- Help the Governing Body fulfil its statutory duties.
- Acquire knowledge to enable the Governing Body to challenge as appropriate

B. Critical Friend

- Monitoring, and evaluating plans, budgets, standards of education and achievement

C. Accountability

- Annual reports and meetings, publication of minutes, surveys of parental views

It also allows Governors, however, to focus on particular areas, e.g.:

- The management of the school's resources
- The condition of the building and its use
- The development of teaching and support staff
- A specific subject area
- A particular year group or class

By visiting school and becoming better informed Governors will be:

- More aware of the needs of the school
- More able to approach staff to meet those needs
- Well placed to bring to the Local Authority or Diocese any matters of concern
- In a good position to support the school in its community

The Main Purpose of School Visits

A Governor visits school to:

- Learn so that you can increase the Governing Body's first-hand knowledge base, informing strategic decision making
Keep under review the way in which the school is operating
- Experience the impact and progress of the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies
- Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously

- Establish and develop good professional relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with your individual area of responsibility, e.g. literacy, numeracy, Special Needs or Health and Safety.
- See in context some of the monitoring systems employed by the school
- Demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process
- Show support and encouragement to staff and children

WHAT ARE GOVERNORS' VISITS NOT ABOUT?

The main point to emphasise is that Governors' visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of your own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues.

THE FOCUS OF THE VISIT

Remember a visit can be either to see the school generally in operation or a specific classroom visit.

Visits can focus on the following:

The School in Operation

- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- The use made of buildings and premises
- Security on site
- Break and lunch times
- The monitoring of Health and Safety
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture and subject equipment
- Office procedures e.g. budget monitoring
- To see a class or teacher led assembly (to see how well information is provided)
- Pupil behaviour around the school

The Classroom Visit

- Observation of particular curriculum areas i.e. English/Literacy, Mathematics/Numeracy, Science, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Design Technology (DT), History, Geography, Religious Education, Art and Design, Music, Physical Education or Literacy/Numeracy.
- The implementation of the curriculum
- Gain an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts and their attainment
- Assessing a group of pupils working together on a task
 - The impact of learning on educational visits
 - To see the impact of the religious characteristics
 - The impact of class sizes
 - The deployment of support staff
 - To see a class or teacher led assembly (to consider SMSC)
 - Pupil Voice
 - Behaviour for Learning
 - Work Scrutiny

School Improvement Focus (SIF)

School Improvement Focus meetings will be lengthy discussions and visits by the Strategy sub-committee and the senior leadership of the School. These visits will be based around the following questions:

- How well leaders, managers and pursue excellence, modelling professional standards in all of their work?
- What is the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation?
- How does the school use performance management and effectiveness of strategies for improving teaching, including the extent to which the school takes account of the 'Teachers' Standards'?
- How well leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum raises outcomes for children?
- How well leaders and managers demonstrate the capacity to bring about further improvement?
- What is the impact of middle leadership and what is the extent to which schools are adequately developing their middle leadership / succession planning and the development of future leaders in the school
- What is the impact of governance?
- How effectively does school promote the confidence and engagement of parents, including by encouraging the use of Parent View
- What is the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to ensure that there is safe recruitment and that all pupils are safe?

Learning Walks

The Governing Body oversees the strategic operation of the school so it is important that its members have a clear understanding of how the school works and how children are learning. To do this, it is suggested that governors undertake Learning Walks. These should be planned beforehand, be part of an annual schedule and be integral to the monitoring and evaluation calendar. Confidentiality should be emphasised and maintained at all times e.g. during the planning, the implementation and in any follow-up discussions.

The purposes of Learning Walks are to;

- Increase Governors' knowledge and understanding of the school through seeing at first-hand how it operates.
- Experience the impact of plans and policies
- Demonstrate to the school community that Governors are taking their roles and responsibilities seriously
- Establish and develop good working relationships
- Be able to contribute effectively to the school's self-evaluation
- Show support and encouragement and be able to celebrate successes and achievements
- See evidence of work matching the individual needs of pupils
- Be able to see that resources and the learning environment are adapted to meet the needs as appropriate.

There are different types of Learning Walks which should be tailored to the priorities of the school.

General

Often a first visit/ new Governor e.g.

- Introductory sessions, viewing the entrance and reception areas along with corridors and administrative areas
- To see the playground in operation
- To visit classrooms and look at displays and 'Learning Walls'
- To talk with children

Specific Subject Focus

e.g. focus on

- A specific priority or strand within the School Development / Improvement Plan
- How children learn maths; how children learn in literacy; how well a particular programme is working or how children use ICT to learn etc.
- Displays, resources and equipment used in that subject area
- Staff's contribution to that subject area

Specific Aspect

e.g. focus on

- How Health and Safety is carried out and how policies are adhered to
- How the school ensures that it complies with all the requirements regarding Statutory Assessments (SATs, Teacher Assessment, returning papers)
- Behaviour
- Pupil Premium and its impact
- Inclusion and Disadvantaged Pupils
- Use of support staff to support children's learning
- Lunchtimes and break times
- Breakfast Club or after school activities
- How the school develops children's thinking skills