

Bushey Heath Primary School Governor Visits and Protocol Policy

Introduction

The governing body is responsible for the:

Strategic View	Values, Mission, Vision
Critical Friend	Monitoring and evaluating school improvement
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 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.

Four types of Governor visits 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

Potential Benefits

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

Many Governing Bodies link Governors to subjects, classes or year groups as a way of monitoring the curriculum and also to the school priorities. This will involve individual Governors visiting the school and classrooms and taking the opportunity to discuss issues with the Headteacher and relevant subject co-ordinator.

A number of Governors have specific responsibilities e.g. Safeguarding, Special Needs, Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Safety, Race Equality and Looked After Children. This reinforces the need to visit not just the school but the classroom on a reasonably regular basis.

It also allows Governors, however, to focus on 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

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- 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

To governors

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

To teachers

- Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Get to know governors
- Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- Highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Roles and responsibilities of governors, head teacher and other staff

The **governing body** will, with the help of the head teacher 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 **head teacher** 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 governor 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.

Monitoring and review of governors' school visit policy

This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.

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

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- 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?
- Discuss an agenda with the head teacher, and or subject leader/co-ordinator well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the school visits pro forma

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

What Should I Do?

A week before a classroom visit there are some questions you should clarify with the Headteacher or teacher:

- When I come into the classroom, where would you like me to sit?
- What should I do if a pupil asks for help?
- Would you like me to be involved in the lesson?
- Do you mind me asking pertinent questions if I'm not sure about detail when helping e.g. If I'm not sure about the spelling policy, the methods used for calculations, how to help pupils read unknown words?
- What should I do if I see a pupil behaving inappropriately?
- What should I do if the teacher has problems controlling the class?

During the Visit

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

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 annex B 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.

After the visit

- 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?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- 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.

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- 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?

Reporting your visit

- 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.
- 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.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate meeting.

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 in Church schools
 - 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 subcommittee 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?

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- 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)

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- 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

Following Learning Walks it is vital that there is feedback to key staff and that a record of the visit is completed and shared with the Governing Body. Examples of Learning Walk checklists can be found at Appendix D and E.

The list is by no means exclusive or exhaustive.

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 head teacher
- Volunteering at school events/trips/in the class
- Obtaining information from the office relating to meetings
- As a parent to speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.

Appendix A

Monitoring

Governor Monitoring can take several forms

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with subject leaders/head of year/house/support staff
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for a subject
- Understand what pupils like best/least in the school
- Know the standards of achievement in a subject area
- 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
- 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
- Children's work
- Displays

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- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and safety regulations practiced i.e. fire exits kept clear

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE GOVERNING BODY'S POLICY

The appropriate Committee will review this policy in line with its agreed cycle/procedures and report back to the Governing Body. The review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Have I learned more about the school?
- Are we better informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have I helped the Governing Body fulfil its duties?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Appendix B

Questions

To ask pupils

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)

To ask subject leaders/co-ordinators

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

Questions about teaching English/Maths

Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?
 - Compared with similar schools?
 - In relation to the national rates of increase?
 - In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?

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- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- How do our results in English/math's compare with other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between?
 - Girls and boys
 - Pupils with special educational needs
 - Very able pupils
 - 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
 - Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - Pupil progress data across each year
 - The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average
 - Other evidence, Special Needs
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/math's lessons
- Management of the subject?
- How is the role of the English/math's co-ordinator developing?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (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?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

In the classroom

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	
What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?	ICT – access to computers Use of library Classroom library Use of basics like pens and pencils. Good labelling Borrowed resources	

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How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?	Boys v. girls Most able/ SEN English as an Additional Language Badly Behaved Disabled	
How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?	Ability groups Mixed or single age groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities	
How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning?	Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters Diaries	

Communication

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

Annex C

Record form for a governor's school visit.

NAME:	Date:
Governor Responsibility:	Staff seen during visit
Focus of previous visit (if applicable);	
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):	
Links with School Improvement Plan	

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Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with Head/teacher, LA focus)

**Information gathered during visit:
(e.g. What you saw, what you learned, would you would like clarified. How long the visit lasted)**

**Any key issues arising for the governing body
(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)**

**Action following governing body meeting
(record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit e.g. training for governors)**

Pre and Post Visit Checklist for School and Governor – Appendix C

School	Governor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know why the Governor is visiting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I made a formal appointment with the Headteacher?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know what the Governor is expecting to see? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I know the specific purpose of the visit?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the focus of the visit also a focus in our school development/improvement plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I arranged my time so that I can be sure to be punctual?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we drawn up a timetable for the visit? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I thought about how I will approach the teacher in the classroom?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do individual members of staff know that they are going to be visited? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I thought about what I will actually do during the lesson?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <input type="checkbox"/> Have other key members of staff been informed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will I give feedback to the staff, Headteacher and Governing Body?

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<p>☐</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the appropriate documentation ready and available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have I remembered that what I see or hear or might find out is confidential and not for sharing with other Governors or parents in general?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can I build on this for the next visit?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did I address any difficulties I met?

WRITING LEARNING WALK - Appendix D

Is there a WRITING rich environment? Are aspects of learning promoted? Is challenge evident? Is writing celebrated? Targets visible?

Displays/Resources/Other	Corridors	Entrance Hall / Hall	Library areas	Classrooms	Other	Comments
Suitable mix of celebratory, attainment and aspirational examples.						
Children's work, Targets Marking Levels Types of						
Learning objectives Planning						
Learning walls – progress across and within year groups.						
Promoting writing– community involvement, parents, workshops.						
Cross curricular themes.						
Extra curricular – writing clubs, out of school events publicised.						
In-class accessible, labelled. Pens, paper, IT etc.						
Additional, e.g. puzzles and activities for quick finishers.						
Dedicated writing areas in classrooms.						

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Displays/Resources/Other	Corridors	Entrance Hall / Hall	Library areas	Classrooms	Other	Comments
Books in classrooms – dictionaries Thesaurus Literature						
IT in use, whiteboards, computer suite, programmes, audio and visual.						

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MATHS LEARNING WALK - Appendix E

	Corridors	Entrance Hall / Hall	Library areas	Classrooms	Other	Comments
Suitable mix of celebratory, attainment and aspirational displays						
Children's work, informative, handwritten and printed. Presentation good						
<u>Assessment for Learning (AfL)</u> Learning objectives or intentions Targets Corrections Differentiation						
Learning walls – progress across and within year groups.						
Cross curricular themes – SMSC?						
Resources – In class accessible, labelled. Practical equipment available, in use.						
Number lines, grids, charts.						
Dedicated maths areas in classrooms. Vocabulary, definitions.						
Additional, e.g. puzzles and games for quick finishers.						

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	Corridors	Entrance Hall / Hall	Library areas	Classrooms	Other	Comments
Central resources area. – known by all staff?						
Library maths area, books. Books in classrooms – maths dictionaries.						
Experiential areas Investigative work Problem -solving						
IT in use, whiteboards, computer suite, programmes, audio and visual.						
Extra-curricular – maths clubs, out of school events publicised.						
Promoting maths – community involvement, parents, workshops.						

- Is there a maths-rich environment?
- Is challenge evident?
- What is the focus in Maths
- Is it a School Improvement Priority?
- Which aspects of learning are being promoted?
- What are standards like – how do you know and where is the evidence?
- Where is best practice and how is this shared?