

Governor Visits to School

Making the most of governor visits
and getting to know your school

- Welcome



**achieving
for children**

Aims of this session

- To consider why governor visits to the school are important
- To discuss how having a **governor visit protocol** helps make visits more effective
- To look at using **governor visit reports** to
 - inform the governing board's next steps
 - provide evidence of governor impact

Why governor visits?

Governor visits:

- Enable governors to see for themselves the school's policies, procedures, strategies and initiatives being carried out in the day-to-day life of the school - this helps governors 'get to know the school' as part of the governing board's strategic oversight role.
- Demonstrate that the governors are interested in the life, work and achievements of the school.

What about attending school events?

Governors are often invited to school events (eg school productions) and attending these is great for evidencing the governing board's support of - and interest in - the school's activities and achievements.

But it is a different remit for **governor visits to school**. These are when the governing board commissions – and the school invites – individual or small groups of governors to visit the school, with a defined focus for their visit. The governor(s) must write a report on their visit, to inform the governing board's strategic activity.

The focus of governor visits

Every governor visit should have a clear focus, and usually this will be linked to one or more of the **key improvement priorities in the school's development plan**.

Governor visits are part of the school's self-evaluation process and provide the opportunity for governors to see the school's policies and strategies in action.

Governor visits may also focus on how the school's vision, values and ethos impact on the daily life and activities of those in the school community.

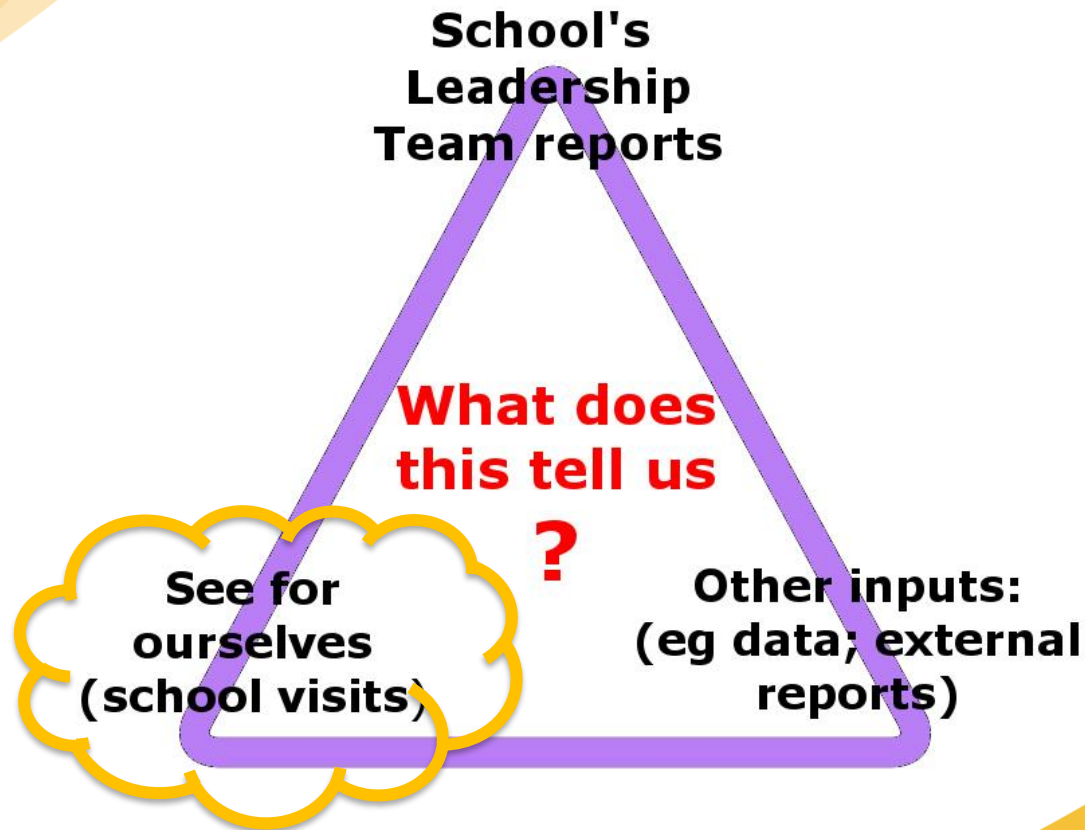
A point to note...

Governor visits do NOT involve making judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.

It's the headteacher's /executive leadership's remit to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

The governing board does of course need to know about the Quality of Education at the school – and the impact of the school's improvement strategies. The board does this by building a picture of the school's progress in the key priority areas via the headteacher's reports, subject lead reports, both school and benchmarking data, external reports etc. Governor visit reports *are* part of this triangulation.

Triangulation of information



Governing board - planning governor visits

The governing board should consider - at the start of the academic year and in line with the priorities on the school development plan:

- **How are we going to use our governor visits this year to support our monitoring of these current key priorities?**

Taking an example...

For example...

Our Key Priority 1: to improve Maths across the school.

The headteacher and Maths subject lead report to the GB...

“...to do this we have changed the time-tabling of Maths. We’ve rolled out some daily Maths exercises and we’ve introduced some additional targeted interventions. There has been a whole-staff training on lesson planning for Maths. We’ve also bought a lot of new Maths resources to use in class and during intervention sessions...”

What governor visits could we plan across the year?

Taking an example...

Some possible governor visits could be:

- Maths link governor to meet with the Maths subject lead

What could be discussed?

- SEND governor to meet with the SENCo.

What could be discussed?

- Governors undertaking class visits during Maths lessons

Seeing the Maths curriculum & strategies “in action”

Governing board - planning governor visits

- How many visits – and at what points in the year?
- How will new governors be inducted in how to undertake governor visits?
- How can we use governor visits to engage with the pupils (pupil voice) relating to key priorities?
- Are there common themes or aspects the board would like all governors to include in their visits?
- **e.g monitoring the school's safeguarding culture**
- Do all our governors and the staff know our GB's governor visits to school protocol?

Governor visits to school protocol

PROTOCOL FOR GOVERNOR VISITS TO [SCHOOL NAME]

The purpose of governor visits:

The governing board holds strategic overall accountability for the school's educational performance. [School name]'s governors visit the school when they are commissioned by the governing board to see for themselves the work that the school is doing. By undertaking school visits, governors can experience the ethos of the school and directly observe its achievements and school improvement strategies in action, which helps the board build of a clear picture of the school's strengths and of the challenges it faces.

This protocol provides a framework for governors to use when planning and undertaking their visits to the school.

The protocol is kept constantly under review and is shared with the school community. Feedback from staff and governors is highly appreciated and will be taken on-board to review the protocol as required.

General points on governor visits to [school name]:

- The governing board (which includes the headteacher) will decide annually which aspects of the school development plan will be the focus for the year's governor visits. Typically, each focus area will involve two or three visits over the year, so that the school's strategies improvement can be seen over-time.
- Governors with lead roles – for example the safeguarding governor and SEND governor – will meet with the relevant school lead once every long term.
- All governors of [name of school] commit through the GB's code of conduct to visiting the school as part of their governance role. The expectation is that each governor visits at least twice a year.
- Governors may visit individually or in pairs (for example a new governor may accompany a longer-serving governor as part of their induction). If there are several governors visiting school at the same time (for example if the school has set up a 'governors in school day') governors will separate into individuals / pairs [or specify... eg no more than groups of three] when visiting any class.
- Governors recognised they are being invited into the school when they visit, and will arrange their visits to fit in with the school's time-table.
- Governor visits will be scheduled well in advance, to ensure that both the governors and the staff helping facilitate visit have time to plan to best achieve the visit's objectives.
- Governor visits will be time-focussed, typically lasting no more than [specify eg one hour].

Planning the school visit:

- **Example 1:** The governor arranging the visit will email the relevant member of staff as their starting point for planning the visit. This email will be cc'd to the Headteacher. **OR**
- **Example 2:** The headteacher will introduce the governor to the relevant member of staff so that the visit can be planned.
- A part of the planning, the governor and member of staff helping to facilitate the visit will discuss ideas for how the visit objective could be best seen during the visit.
- If the school visit includes visiting a class or classes, the governor will (where possible) speak to each class teacher before the visit. Governors are mindful to take all possible steps to minimise their impact when visiting a lesson and will seek advice from the class teacher on this before the visit.

Each class teacher will keep other staff who may be in class during the upcoming visit in the loop, back to the governor, if there are any questions.

Governors to see for themselves how the school is key that all participants understand that governor visits.

Bring any documentation supplied in advance.

Wear a visitor's badge, or their governor lanyard).

Follow all school policies and procedures including those set out in the

Arrive to meet with the class teacher before the lesson to discuss the visit or in case there are any questions.

The governor will staff and will let them know what are the next steps

When the visit finishes mid-way through a lesson [specify] the governor will arrange to meet with the class teacher at

When the visit can be written, the governor will seek to obtain this information at the end of their visit.

Before the visit, the governor will have a short de-briefing meeting with the relevant school lead at the end of their visit.

For each visit, generally using the attached proforma (see the safeguarding governor visits) the governor will use a form added as Appendices).

When visiting to see for themselves the activities of the school (ie relating to the improvement priority). It is the purpose of the visit to assess the quality of teaching and learning.

Names will not be identified from what is written in their visit reports by name as this improves clarity for the reader.

Include in a report they will first seek advice from the chair of governors / their governor mentor.

Initially with the member of staff who facilitated their visit. The headteacher has confirmed they are happy for it to be passed on to the clerk - for circulation to the board.

Visit reports being shared with the school staff body.

Findings as set out in their visit report to the governing board to inform the overall governance discussion of the school, as identified in the school development plan.

What do you think should be the key points to include in a governor visits protocol??

Governor visits to school protocol

The document could...

- clarify the purpose of governor visits – helping us all to get the most out of them and in line with key priorities.
- communicate expectations around how to plan and participate in school visits; to help both the governors and the staff who are facilitating the governors' visits

It should be shared with governors and staff.

A starter-for-10 model document is available on Leadership Update. [And see handout.](#)

Considerations when planning a visit

- **Which** staff can help us plan this visit?
- If we are visiting a class – or more than one class - **How** can we best liaise with the class teacher(s) before the visit? (ask...)
- **What** can this visit include - to help us see [key priority] in action for ourselves? (ask...)
- Do we want to use this visit to see anything else? And if so, how could this be incorporated? (ask...)

During the visit

- Remember to follow the school's procedures and protocols / staff & volunteers code of conduct.
+ safeguarding awareness
- If visiting a class - be mindful that your presence is likely to alter the dynamics. ... ask the teacher beforehand where they would like you to be
- Write down your recollections as soon as possible afterwards, to help you with writing your report.

At the end of the visit

- Thank all those who hosted your visit!
- If possible, have a short debrief meeting with the headteacher/staff member who helped plan your visit.
- WRITE A VISIT REPORT for the governing board.
How could you involve staff in writing the draft report?

The governor visit report

This should be a summary of the key findings in relation to the objectives set for the visit.

Keeping the focus on the key priorities.

APPENDIX 1 – Governor Visit Report proforma

Governor Name:	Date:
Objective of the visit: <i>(How does this visit relate to a key priority in the School Development Plan?)</i>	
Outline of visit: <i>(What did the visit comprise of)</i>	
Governor observations and comments: <i>(ie what did you see and learn about how the school is addressing that improvement priority)</i>	
Next steps: <i>(ie what would you like the purpose of the next visit to be)</i>	
Next visit to be [date/term]: <i>(ie governor visits monitor the improvement priority over a period of time)</i>	

Support in writing the visit report

- If you are new to school visits – you could ask the chair, or another experienced governor, to support you with writing your first governor visit report.
- *If you are unsure about whether something should go in the report - or if you're not sure how to include something in the report - what would you do?*
- Typical protocol for sharing the draft report is:
 - shared first with the member of staff you visited
 - shared next with the headteacher
 - once the headteacher has confirmed they're happy for its wider circulation, sent to the clerk (as final version).

Next steps

Would it be useful to schedule a follow-up visit
for a few months' time?

**Strategies can of course take time to embed
and show a positive impact!**

Reporting at governor meetings

- Visit reports should be circulated with the agenda (ie they are part of the papers of the meeting).
- Board discussion should be to **triangulate** the information it receives from governor visits with the other information it receives

What does all this information tell us about the progress being made in that key priority area?

Quiz (part 1)

When undertaking a school visit, should governors

	Question	Do	Don't	Maybe
1.	Arrive unannounced?			
2.	Agree the purpose of the visit with the governing board and Headteacher – and communicate this to the staff you are visiting?			
3.	Prepare carefully?			
4.	Take notes during the visit?			
5.	Talk to the teacher while they are teaching?			
6.	Leave the lesson without making any comment?			

Quiz (part 2)

When undertaking a school visit, should governors

	Question	Do	Don't	Maybe
7.	Meet with pupils and other staff during the visit?			
8.	Discuss any issues that arise with the Headteacher?			
9.	Try to attend special functions?			
10.	Involve the staff you worked with (and possibly others) when drafting your school visit report?			
11.	Develop links with a subject lead or a class / year group?			

ANY QUESTIONS?