

White Laith Primary School

GOVERNORS' VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY

Approved by Governors: September 2021

Review date: September 2024

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.

Our policy has drawn on other schools' policies and on recommendations from Headteachers and Governors. It also includes a sample Governors' Visits report pro-forma which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base eg a member of staff's performance management.

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	All and named Governors, eg. EYFS/Maths/literacy etc	Subject Leaders Phase Leaders	3 times a Year	Named Governors and Subject / Phase Leaders

School Improvement Focus (SIF)	Committees responsible for Teaching and Learning and Resources.	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

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 eg 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 particular areas, eg:

- 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 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 Governor visits not about?

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.

What are the benefits to Governors and Staff?

Governors	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff	To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors
To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs	
To recognise and celebrate success	To feel valued
To monitor the implementation of the School Development/Improvement Plan	To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors
To increase their first hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions	
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach	To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school
To see policies and schemes of work in practice	
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them	To highlight the need for further resources
To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils	
To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self- evaluation process	

To develop links with a class, year group or subject area	
To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities eg Special Needs, Literacy etc	To share an understanding of the specific area.

How often should I visit?

This will essentially depend on the number of Governors available to take on the responsibility and the size of the school staff.

Who schedules the visits?

Visits should always be agreed with the Headteacher, a member of the senior leadership team or a member of staff.

Visit preparation

An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the protocols that are to be observed or more simply 'the ground rules'. It is essential that a disproportionate amount of time should not be spent on planning and arranging visits. If you plan in advance what should always and never happen before, during and after a visit, the ground rules will be firmly established and should avoid any problems and hopefully make the visit more beneficial and enjoyable. Our Governor's Visit Forms have the SDP priorities written on them to support governors in their visit preparation.

What should and should not happen?

	Always	Never
Before (at least one week prior to visit)	<p>Review the action points in the School Improvement/ Development Plan</p> <p>Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team</p> <p>Arrange details of the visit</p>	<p>Turn up unannounced for a focused, formal visit</p> <p>Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week</p> <p>Visit during a SATs or examinations week without the visit being authorised</p>

	<p>Try to visit at different times of the day</p> <p>Headteacher or relevant member of staff draws up a schedule for visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback?</p> <p>Discuss with the Headteacher or Senior Management Team what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be visited and possible involvement</p> <p>Agree level of confidentiality</p>	<p>by the Headteacher or member of the senior leadership team</p>
During	<p>Be prepared, organised and punctual</p> <p>Report to the school office and sign in</p> <p>Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit</p> <p>Observe school/class guidelines</p> <p>Jot down discussion points</p>	<p>Monopolise Staff</p> <p>Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher while he/she is teaching</p> <p>Behave like an Inspector!</p> <p>Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes</p>
After	<p>Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils</p> <p>Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher</p> <p>Discuss Health and Safety Issues if relevant</p> <p>Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher</p> <p>Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit</p>	<p>Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback</p> <p>Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except the Chair) unless given permission</p>

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 eg 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?

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 eg furniture and subject equipment
- Office procedures eg 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 ie 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
- 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 including visits from individual governors or by 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

Following Learning Walks it is vital that there is feedback to key staff and that a record of the visit is completed and share with the Governing Body.

After the visit

We all need feedback after we have been visited or observed. This can be a sensitive area but it is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed.

Remember as a Governor you are making the visit on behalf of the Governing Body and not in a personal capacity. It isn't appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the Governing Body.

Staff should also realise that Governors are not able to address everyday matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

Any expression of concern should be shared with the Headteacher as soon as possible. Comments should be limited to the focus of the visit unless health and safety is being compromised. This should always be reported immediately.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- The member(s) of staff involved
- The Headteacher
- The appropriate Committee or Governing Body

Brief feedback should be given to the member(s) of staff at the end of the visit. Governors should agree with the Headteacher the level of detail that should be fed back to the member of staff. Written feedback using the Governor's Visit Form should be completed as soon as possible and copies given to the Headteacher who will make a copy available to the member of staff. The reports will be discussed with the appropriate Committee and/or Governing Body and made available as required.

Monitoring and evaluation

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?

White Laith Primary School - Governor Visit Form 2018-19

Name:	Date:
Purpose of visit:	
<u>School Development Plan priorities 2018/19</u> <u>SDP 1- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management</u> 1.1 Consistency of provision and practice across school. 1.2 Accurate understanding of progress and attainment of pupil groups- boys, pupil premium, more able and SEND.1.3 Governor visits used effectively to support monitoring and evaluation. <u>SDP 2- Teaching Learning and Assessment</u> 2.1 Embed new approaches in reading and maths. 2.2 Use editing, feedback and ongoing assessment more effectively to improve writing. 2.3 Refine approaches to assessment in Science and Foundation subjects. <u>SDP 3- Outcomes</u> 3.1 Raise attainment in reading, writing and maths for all groups- boys, pupil premium, more able and SEND. 3.2 Demonstrate good progress from different starting points. <u>SDP 4- Personal Development , behaviour and welfare</u> 4.1 Improve well being of pupils by developing provision for SEMH. 4.2 Revalidate Healthy Schools Award Status. 4.3 Improve attendance in line with national, reduce gap for PP pupils and reduce PA. In relation to the above, governors may find it helpful to refer to the termly qualitative and quantitative milestones to support evaluation outlined in the SDP.	
Governor observations and comments: (e.g. What did you see? How long did the visit last? What did you learn? What would you like clarified?)	
Any key issues arising from the governing body: (e.g. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy, evidence of the impact of the governing body's work on pupils' achievement)	
Action following governing body meeting: (Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)	