

Woodlands Primary School

Governor Visits and Protocol Policy



Date: September 2023

Review date: September 2025

Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operated so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making. Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the head teacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

Aims of the Policy

This policy sets out how Governors can demonstrate the three key aspects of being a Governor

To offer strategic support, shaping the vision and ethos of the school with senior staff.

Taking the roll of critical friend with all staff with all staff, offering challenge and support to link teacher and Subject Leaders.

Ensuring that all staff are accountable in their role. This includes the quality of teaching and progress that children make in each class, ensuring that the school meets all its statutory duties and that financial decisions are based on the needs of all pupils, in particular the planning and spending of the Pupil Premium Grant.

Purpose of visit

Potential benefits to governors:

- To fully understand and appreciate the demands of the roles within the school setting
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand individuals as learners
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To observe policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

Benefits to Teachers:

- Governors will fully understand the reality of the classroom
- Develop relationships with governors

- Understanding of the governors' roles and responsibilities
- An opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To have a critical friends who will offer challenge and support

What a visit is not about

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

Protocols or ground rules for visit

Governors should at all times observe protocol and be sensitive to the surrounding.

- Consider what should happen and what should not
- Ensure the visits are no longer than 1 hour.

How to feed back after the visit

Consider

- Governors should feed back to the Headteacher in the first instance and then also to the member of staff. A written report for the Governing Body must be available for the next full Governors Meeting.
- Strengths, areas for development, questions and suggestions should all be reported on the report form in annex.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the head teacher and member of staff responsible for the area being monitored/visited.

Monitoring and review of 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?
- Are we strategic, critical friends and holding the school to account?

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governor's visit

- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? What are the relevant School Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Is it strategic, critical friend or holding the school to account?
- Discuss the agenda with the head teacher and class Teacher/Subject Leader well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Use the pro-forma.
- Send the proposed agenda to the staff involved. Ask how they want governors to integrate into the learning walk? It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the Subject Leader 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.

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
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection
- Observe discretely and get involved in what is going on in the classroom.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk to show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After

- 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.
- Submit your report to the head teacher for approval.

- Reflect: how did it go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Write a short summary of what you have learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This will be easier if the visit had a focus.
- You must circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it.
- Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

Visit Focus'

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- The Chair and Vice-Chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher.
- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site.
- The condition and maintenance of the premises.
- Special Educational Needs.
- Gifted and Talented pupils.
- Vulnerable groups of [pupils
- Pupil Premium Grant.
- Children in Care.
- Literacy and Numeracy.
- The use of ICT equipment.
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage.

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 roll.

- To lend a helping hand with a school event.
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting.
- To help in class.
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child.
- Attend a school function or educational visit.



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Dissemination, monitoring, evaluation and review

Governor Monitoring

Governor monitoring can take several forms:

- Pupil interviews
- Meeting with Subject Leader.
- Snapshot of a lesson.
- Walk around the school.

Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment pupils have for the subject.
- To understand what pupils like best/least in the subject.
- To know the standards achieved in the subject.
- To know what steps are being taken to improve the subject area.
- To report main findings back to the full Governing Body.
- To know how particular groups are performing.

*This year we would like to invite governors who are visiting Subject Leaders to participate in a **Learning Walk**. This should take up to 30 minutes. During the Learning Walk, you can expect the Subject Leader to speak with you about areas listed below. Please raise questions if you need clarification or more information. Ideally the Learning walk should take place while the children are in class.*

Pupil Interviews: (suggested questions to ask a small group of children when walking around the classroom). These questions will help you gain an understanding of the pupils attitudes towards the subject.

- Tell me about what you are learning today.
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing (select curriculum area being monitored).
- How do you use your building learning power?
- What have you learnt this term in this subject? Can you show me?

Key questions for subject /learning link governor discussion with Subject Leader.
(Foundation subjects)

- What is your vision for the subject?
- Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the OFSTED findings about the subject? (this question is mainly for English, Maths, Science and ICT. Other subjects may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection).
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep track of standards and progress in the 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 resources needed?
- How do you help develop other teacher's skills in teaching the subject?
- Can you share your SEF with me?



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Record form for a Governor's School Visit

Woodlands Primary School – Governor Visit Pro-forma

Date:

Name of Governor:

Staff seen during visit:

Focus of previous visits (if applicable):

Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):

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

Information gathered during visit:

Strengths:

Areas for development:

Any identified area/s for Governor training:

Date for next visit:

Any other information:



Things to observe when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationship between pupils.
- Variety of teaching styles.
- Understanding Building Learning Power.
- 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 the pupils are grouped.
- How different abilities are catered for/the use of support staff.
- Children's work.
- Displays.
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Dissemination, monitoring, evaluation and review



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Questions for Governors to ask

(Primary English and Mathematics)

The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and numeracy. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in Literacy and Numeracy can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as Literacy/Numeracy governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/Maths across the school. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Achievement and attitudes

What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?

- Compared to similar schools?

- In relation to the national expectations?
- In relation to the national picture in terms of gender, SEN, EAL, PPG?
- What 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 English/Maths compare with those in 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/gifted and talented pupils, PPG, pupils with English as an additional language and the others, the majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
- In meetings with the English/Maths co-ordinator, can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:
 - EYFS, Phonic and Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
 - The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average
 - How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily Literacy/Maths lessons?
 - Have the Provision Plans been adapted to support children in their daily Literacy/Maths lessons?
 - Management of the subject
 - How is the role of the English/Maths Leader 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? (Literacy only) Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using 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 the electronic media) to promote reading, writing and numeracy?

Communication

- How are parents kept informed of progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?