



# Walkwood

Church of England  Middle School

## Governor Visits Policy

Governing Body Committee responsible:	Full Board		
Approval granted:	2 December 2019	Review date:	Autumn Term 2022



“God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and a mind with broad interests.”

1 Kings 4:29

“The wisdom of the past will teach you. The experience of others will speak to you...”

Job 8:10

“Church of England Schools have at their heart a belief that all children are loved by God, are individually unique and that the school has a mission to help each pupil to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their personhood: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually. Schools have a duty to try to remove any factor that might represent a hindrance to a child’s fulfilment. We want all pupils to want to engage in learning in a safe and welcoming ethos.”

“The core purpose of any Church school is to maximise the learning potential of every pupil within the love of God.”

SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) 2012



## Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to consider its standards and hold accountable its conduct and performance. 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.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Development 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 Principal who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

## Rationale for the Policy

- We firmly believe that examining, evaluating and reviewing are key to the working of any school if it is to continually develop and progress.
- Visits will be conducted in an atmosphere of professional support, mentoring and, if needed, coaching.
- The aim of our examining, evaluating and reviewing is to praise, help staff improve and achieve the best for our pupils.
- A pattern of different types of examining, evaluating and reviewing are established throughout the school, with middle leaders being held to account for their departments.
- Examining, evaluating and reviewing informs the target setting process and feeds into our school priorities, SEF and SDP.
- To establish a realistic picture of staff performance standards.

## Purposes of visit

### For governors, the benefits are:

- To recognise and celebrate success;
- To develop relationships with the staff;
- To get to know the children;
- To recognise different teaching styles;
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach;
- To monitor policies in action;
- To inform decision making;
- To find out about resources.

### For teachers, the benefits are:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom.
- To get to know governors.
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities.
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion.
- To highlight the need for particular resources.

### What a visit is not about

- 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.

## Protocols for visits

### Meeting Guidelines

- The Governor should arrange a mutually convenient date and time to meet the relevant Head of Department, College Leader or Senior Leadership Team member. The initial 1:1 meeting will be to discuss the curriculum, planning and anything else the leader feels the Governing Body should be made aware of. Reference to the subject's development plan is essential.
- The Subject Governor should then arrange a mutually convenient date and time to visit a lesson via the head of department. The visit should be coordinated with the school's calendar which notes the reviewing and auditing activities across the year.
- Consideration should be given to the total number of lesson visits that can take place in a given period without disrupting the work of the school.
- New Governors may prefer a settling in period before volunteering or being offered a subject responsibility. New Governors will be offered a Mentor Governor when they assume a responsibility to make introductions to the staff and pass on best practice as required.

### Lesson Visit Guidelines

The focus of the visits will be to ensure the governors understand how the curriculum is delivered. They may also be in conjunction with the School Development Plans and in line with what has been discussed at the 1:1 meeting.

Governors visit to learn more about the school and to gather information to inform the governing body's decision making. It is not a Governor's role to judge directly the quality of teaching: staff performance is the responsibility of middle and senior leaders. However, it will be helpful for governors to visit lessons in the company of the middle or senior leaders. This process will allow governors to gain valuable experience in recognising the quality of teaching when placing their own experience of the lesson alongside the monitoring by school leaders.

On arrival at the school, governors need to be punctual, sign in and wear the name badge. On arrival in the classroom the governor will be discreet: the teacher will introduce you when ready. If possible, we encourage participation rather than observation from the back of the room. Governors will need to think carefully about what they say and do during the lesson. Be courteous, tactful, positive and interested. Avoid criticism and never make a comment on the teacher's conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils.

Governors will remember that they are a representative of all the governors: what is said and done will be understood by the staff to be the views of the governing body as a whole.

It is recommended that making promises on behalf of the governors should not be given, but rather there is an offer to take comments, questions or requests from staff and pupils to the Principal and the next relevant governors' meeting.

Aim to keep note-taking to a minimum and ensure that you make a record of your visit as soon as possible afterwards.

If governors witness something that concerns them, then discretion should be used; asking the teacher at an appropriate point, or talking with the middle or senior leader later on.

There is no specific protocol about parent governors visiting their own child's class as this may be inevitable. However please ensure that all classes are equally visited.

Confidentiality is paramount and nothing that is viewed within the classroom should be discussed outside the remit of the Governing Body.

Be aware of, and adhere to, the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Before governors leave, it is suggested that thanks are extended to staff for supporting the role of governor.

### Reporting Guidelines

- A draft of the Visit Report should be forwarded to the Principal and the Head of Department / Senior Leader who supported the visit.
- The draft should be open to amendments that are offered by staff. A final draft is agreed with the middle or senior leader.
- Each visit record should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors who will place a copy in the Report to Governors.
- The Record Visit template must be used to report the visit. It is to be completed electronically and emailed it to the Clerk.

## Biennial programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year. Each subject and specific areas are considered over a two-year cycle.

## Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan or the same for a subject area? What are the relevant school policies? How does this determine the areas I am interested in?
- Discuss an agenda with the Heads of middle or subject leader well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- It might be possible for you to see a copy of any documents beforehand. Discuss with the middle or subject leader if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, development plan, performance data.
- Be aware of the school's forms for the recording of monitoring activities (see appendices).
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are looking for. Try to prepare questions in advance.
- If there are specific questions or things a Governor wants to look at on the visit, these should be sent to the coordinating school leader so can both feel more prepared.

## During the Visit



- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, it is not appropriate to make judgements regarding the quality of teaching and learning or to make 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.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and 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.

### Things to observe when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between staff and pupils.
- Relationships 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 the pupils are grouped.
- How different abilities are catered for.
- 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.

### Possible questions for leader / governor discussion

These are given as Appendix 2

### After the visit

- Discuss what you have observed with the middle or senior leader. 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.
- Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Submit your 'Record of Governor Visit' to the middle or senior leader for approval.



- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties with regards to challenge and accountability?

### Reporting your visit – completing your ‘Record of Governor Visit’

- Write a short summary of what you 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 middle or senior leader for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved, doing so within two weeks of the visit.
- Provide this report to the clerk not later than 20 school days after the visit for circulation within the next Report to the Governors.

## Visit Focus

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:

- Particular key stage, year, specific pupil groups.
- The use made of the buildings or the site.
- Special educational needs.
- Literacy and Maths.
- The use of ICT equipment.
- The impact on the school of any recent changes.
- Behaviour.
- Implementation of particular policies.

## 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.

The chair and vice-chair making a regular visit to see the Principal.

To lend a helping hand with a school event.

To get information from the clerk relating to a committee meeting.

To help in a class.

Attend a school function or educational visit.



# Appendix 1

## Record of Governor Visits

Name of Governor:

Date:

Which key priorities of the school were relevant to this visit?	Refer to the school's Development Priorities and the subject's Department Action Plan.
Your role today:	
What did you see?	E.g. Lesson visit, concert, sports day, meeting with head of department, conversations with pupils, discussions with teachers.
With whom did you talk?	
How clear was the school's ethos / curriculum intent?	Consider how <i>Love to Learn; Learn to Live; Live to Love</i> is demonstrated, and how the Fruits of Faith are in evidence.
What did you gather about the implementation of the curriculum?	
What did you learn about the standards (impact) within the subject?	Refer to information shared, such as the progress data collected within the subject, and any audits or review reports.
What justification was given and by whom?	
What impressed you?	E.g. Achievements of the children, the level of parental engagement, the learning environment, the use of resources, the interest of the children.
Do your observations agree with the data and information already considered by the school? Please explain.	Giving reasons why is helpful, and referring to the internal data, or to internal audits or external reviews is useful.
Who did you share the observations of this visit with?	
What do you want to find out more about?	E.g. Any clarification needed, concerns to be raised, development opportunities for the school, things you would like to have seen, exciting new ideas.



## Appendix 2

### Possible questions for leader / governor discussion

Questions for teachers	
How do you assess how well pupils are learning and making progress?	
What support do you put in place to ensure the needs of different pupils are met?	
What resources are available to your pupils to help them learn effectively?	
What continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities have you been part of?	
Questions for the head of department	
What's your intent for the subject and how are you putting this into practice?	
What is the strength of learning within your subject and how do you know? (Implementation)	
How do you track standards and progress in the subject? (Impact)	
What is the quality of teaching of your subject like and how do you know? (Implementation)	
What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know? (Impact)	
What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?	
How does the subject contribute to the school's ethos? (Implementation)	
How do you support teachers to develop their subject knowledge and teaching practice?	
Is your subject well-resourced? If not, what else do you need to support teaching and learning?	