

## The role of Link Governors and Visiting School

Governors have a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the progress of their school and contribute to the school self evaluation process. This can be done through a variety of methods including reports from the Head Teacher and senior staff, analysis of data and through first-hand observation.

Feedback from focussed governor visits to school enables the governing body to make informed decisions around the process of school improvement. For such visits to be positive and supportive, they must be planned in a way that enhances the governing body's understanding of an aspect of the school's work. Therefore, it is important that a protocol for visiting the school is agreed and observed between the governors and the Head Teacher.

### Link governors

Governing bodies have a general responsibility for standards of education in their schools. This means that they need to keep themselves informed about what and how things are happening in school. One way of handling this is to delegate the responsibility for specific areas to different individual link governors and expect them to report back to the governing body. Link governors do not have to know all about the subjects they take on. In fact, it can be an advantage not to know; it means the governor can ask important basic questions. Areas of focus may include: Reading, Writing, Maths, Inclusion, Child Protection, Safeguarding, Pupil Premium, Communications. It is good practice that Link governor positions are reviewed annually, are in line with key school priorities and identified in the School Development Plan. Link governor positions should be agreed at a full governing body meeting at the beginning of the academic year.

### What advantage is there in having link governors?

- It helps individual governors to get to know one area of the school very well.
- Reports from link governors enable the governing body to learn more about the school, which supports strategic planning.
- It is encouraging to teachers to know that governors are interested in their subject and that governing bodies will therefore be better informed about the work of the school.
- It can help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body and to enrich discussions about the school's performance.
- It can partly fulfil the governing body's requirement to monitor progress.

### What are link governors expected to do?

- Act as a link between their special subject and the governing body.
- Visit the school to talk to the teacher(s) responsible for their special subject.

- Understand/review the policy which guides this subject/area.
- Occasionally visit a class working in that subject.
- Ask questions, listen and learn but not inspect.
- Plan visits in advance with the Head Teacher and staff concerned, and within the governing body's policy on visits, observing the usual courtesies such as reporting to the Head Teacher when they arrive and thanking staff when they leave.
- Prepare a written report on their visit (Appendix One). Share the report with the staff concerned in their visit and give them a chance to add to the report, if they wish.
- Ensure that the report is put on the next agenda of the governing body or committee.
- Link Governor Reports should be a standing item on the termly full governing body agenda.

Governors' visits should have an agreed focus. Link governors will observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis. Their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees to make well-informed judgments about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school development plan.

#### **As an example, what might a 'job description' for the maths link governor look like?**

- Meet the maths co-ordinator once a term to discuss how maths is progressing.
- Find out what the policy for teaching maths is, and how it works in practice.
- Visit school during the working day to see maths lessons in practice.
- Understand the school's performance data and targets for attainment and progress in maths.
- Report to governing body regarding maths and school performance in relation to targets around maths.

#### **Procedure for school visits**

It is good practice for governing bodies to have a policy or written protocol for school visits, agreed between staff and governors (Appendix Two). The purpose of the policy is:

- to clarify procedures, and thus minimise uncertainty, embarrassment or annoyance.
- to make clear what the focus of visits might be.
- to suggest ways in which meaningful liaison can develop between link governors and appropriate members of staff with a specific area of responsibility.



## **Governors' Visit Report Form**

**Name:**

**Date of visit:**

**Focus of visit:**

**Issues discussed:**

**Staff met:**

**Observations on focus of visit:**

**Follow up action:**



## Policy for School Visits by Governors

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused visits to the school so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work. Governors will observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis. Their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees make well-informed judgments about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the school development plan. This process will enable the governing body to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff and to identify further areas for development.

Visits are not about making judgments on the quality of teaching; that is the Head Teacher's responsibility. Nor are they about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas.

### Roles and responsibilities of Head Teacher, Staff and Governors

The **governing body** will, with the help of the Head Teacher and staff, organise a schedule of visits throughout the year. The aim will be to achieve a minimum of one visit per governor per year.

**Governors** will, with the guidance of the whole governing body, identify an aspect of the school's work to focus on. This will enable individual governors to deepen their understanding by focusing on areas where they have an interest or expertise. The aim will be for them to explore an aspect of the school in some detail, increasing their confidence and knowledge. In turn this will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing body and to enrich discussions about the school's performance.

When organising and conducting a visit, governors will be courteous and considerate, at all times respecting the professional roles of the Head Teacher and staff. Working to the schedule **agreed with the Head Teacher** and staff, they will confirm with the Head Teacher the date, timing and focus of each visit at least one week in advance. This will include agreeing what will be observed and to whom it would be useful to talk. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor(s) will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. They will discuss their observations with the Head Teacher and agree how and when they will report to the governing body. See Appendix One for a suggested format for recording and reporting on visits.



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**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. Whenever practical they will invite their link governors to relevant staff meetings and training sessions. Questions will be invited from governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Governors' link visits will be a standing agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing body. By reviewing the minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed, the governing body will judge the extent to which the information gathered informed the whole governing body's understanding of the progress made towards meeting priorities and targets. Link governor reports will play a key role in monitoring progress against key school priorities. Outcomes will be fed into the School Development Plan during the mid and end of year reviews.