

BURTON BRADSTOCK SCHOOL

Governors' Visits to School Policy and Protocol

Introduction

Visits to the school are conducted in the context of the role of governing bodies as defined by the Department for Education (2013):

In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- b. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
- c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

Governors are required to monitor and evaluate the progress that the school is making towards agreed priorities and targets. These are often set out in the School Development Plan. The Headteacher and staff will provide professional advice and information to the governors. The governors will visit the school to collect information on the impact of policies and plans on the school's performance. The information will help the governing body make the best decisions.

Individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school but they do need to be able to visit from time to time in order to develop their understanding of how the school works to enable them better to fulfil their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school.

It is important that the school has a framework and a clear purpose for any visit. Visits are not about judging the quality of teaching - this is the responsibility of the Headteacher - nor are they about pursuing a personal agenda or related to individual children. **All visits should relate to an agreed planned programme.**

Being a school governor is a major commitment and school recognises that not all governors have the time to come into school. Governors should arrange their visits in consultation with the Headteacher, who has responsibility for the day to day management of the school, and the appropriate teacher or subject leader.

Visits may be to classes (to see particular aspects of the school in action), or to members of staff (to update on progress in a particular subject area or monitor an aspect of the SDP). Governors may also attend staff meetings on a pre-arranged basis, to explore particular aspects of the School's work. Sometimes a 'learning walk' with the headteacher or member of staff may be appropriate. In addition, the governing body may, in agreement with staff, appoint Class Link Governors who visit a particular class, by prior agreement on a regular basis, generally providing agreed support or following up a particular theme.

Visit Aims

- To be informed by discussion with the Headteacher, staff and pupils of matters that affect the running of the School.
- To update/increase awareness of school practice particularly in a curriculum area that is the individual governor's responsibility or in relation to an aspect of the work of the School.

- To monitor and evaluate progress towards key issues in the School Development Plan (SDP).
- To celebrate the success of individual pupils, groups and the school in general.
- To provide agreed support (Class Link Governors)

For formal/one-off visits, governors will

Agree the focus of a visit in line with SDP and with agreement of Governing Body

Arrange the date(s) and time(s) of visits by negotiation with Head or teacher well in advance

As far as possible, the following procedures should apply:

□ Before the visit

- Discuss the proposed agenda and purpose with any staff involved, eg how do they want you to integrate into the lesson/meeting?
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this. Be clear about what you want to find out about and why.
- Discuss what to do if the visit is to a class – whether the teacher wants you to contribute to the lesson, take an active part, talk to the children or to sit aside and be a quiet observer.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available - Ofsted report, School Development Plan, Performance Data, and so on.
- If you would like to make notes, discuss this with the teacher before the visit.
- Agree how to report back to the teacher after the visit, if there will be time to ask questions and to find out more.

□ During the visit

- Ensure that you arrive promptly at the agreed time - the school may have had to make adjustments to the timetable to support your visit.
- In the case of a class visit, the class teacher will introduce you to the children and explain what your role in the classroom will be.
- Try to avoid being conspicuous. You do not want to be a distraction to the children. Agree where it is best for you to sit.
- Get involved if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remain focused on the purpose of your visit – don't get distracted.
- In the case of visits to staff, listen carefully to the member of staff and check your understanding of what is being discussed. Ensure any comments you make are encouraging and not critical.
- Take time to consider if there are any implications that might affect future decisions of the governing body (eg with regard to policies or resourcing) and any questions that your visit raises for further discussion.

□ After the visit

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher/Headteacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about.
- If you didn't make notes during your visit, make them as soon as possible after your visit, while it is still fresh in your mind.
- You should complete a short, written report to the governing body about your visit. The Headteacher and teacher with whom you have been working should receive a copy of

the draft report before it is circulated to the governing body so that they can agree the content and make any additional comments.

In the case of regular visits conducted by Class Link Governors, it may be appropriate for feedback to be provided to the governing body if requested. This should generally be discussed and agreed with the member of staff beforehand. However, the experience of the governor in this context will, almost inevitably, influence comments made during governing body meetings. Governors should be careful of making comments that might cause embarrassment or damage trust between staff and governors.

General guidance notes for all visits:

- You are going into school to learn, not to inspect or interrogate!
- You are not inspecting the quality of teaching (this is for the HT to do), your focus is on the pupils learning and their attitude to learning.
- Members of staff are always free to say that it is not convenient for a governor to come in at a particular time.
- Consideration should be given for new governors to accompany an experienced governor before they carry out their first visit with the agreement of the teacher.
- Governors and staff will be courteous and considerate at all times.
- Aspects to observe in the school might include; attitude of children, relationships between pupils and staff, behaviour, ethos, work on display, resources and condition of buildings, children's work, support staff contribution, enjoyment of learning and teaching, how different abilities are supported etc.
- If you have any concerns arising out of your visit you should discuss them as soon as possible with the teacher but, if governors still have concerns the should discuss them discretely with the Headteacher.
- Governor's visits are in the role of a Governor and *not* a parent and should follow guidelines as set out.
- You can contact the teacher to discuss or arrange a visit at the school gate at the end of the day or email the teacher using the school office email address.
- All visits to the school should be carried out in accordance with the school's Safeguarding policy.

**Burton Bradstock School
Record of Formal Governor Visit**

Governor name:	Date of visit:
Area(s) of interest / responsibility:	
Class visited:	Teacher:
Focus of visit	
Brief notes	
Governors comments / new understandings	
Questions	
Teachers comments	
Signed/Agreed	(Governor)
Signed/Agreed	(Teacher)
Seen by Headteacher	date:
Feedback to Committee of FGB:	
Oral report or via copy of this form	date:
Impact/thoughts for future policy/practice:	