



Woodlane High School

achieving success in a nurturing environment

Governor Visits Policy

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Woodlane High School – Governor Visits

Purpose

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the governing body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. **Well managed governor visits help demonstrate that the governing body holds the school to account and evaluates its progress.**

It is important that governor visits focus on an aspect of the school development plan or one of the governors' statutory duties. **The focus should be agreed with the headteacher during governor meetings.**

Why are visits important?

- To increase the governing body's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- To show staff, pupils and parents that they are interested in the work and achievement of the school.
- To support the school's work.
- To enable governors to see evidence of the policies in action.
- To develop the governing body's monitoring role.
- To increase the governors' understanding of the teaching and learning process.
- To observe the use of resources and what is required.
- To enable the governing body to ask informed questions in the governing body meetings by gaining first-hand knowledge of the working of the school.

Types of visit

Informal

It is important that the governing body keeps a high profile and attends school events, for example, end of term activities, theme days etc. This will provide the opportunity to praise staff and pupils for the work they have done and show interest in the school.

Governors are encouraged to briefly comment on their visit using the 'governor informal visit form' (appendix 1).

However, more formal visits to the school need more careful planning.

Formal

Formal visits should have a clear focus and should be linked to the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation and to see policies in action.

Focus of visit

The focus of any visit will be agreed in advance with the headteacher and discussed during governor meetings. Governors may request a particular focus but this must be agreed in advance with the headteacher.

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Frequency of visit

Representatives from the curriculum and finance committees should make both informal and formal visits during the academic year. Ideally formal visits will take place in pairs.

At least one formal visit should take place each term.

Classroom visits

Visits to the classroom are not about making judgments on the quality of teaching and learning in the school, that is the responsibility of the headteacher and senior managers. Even if a member of the governing body does have the necessary skills in their professional lives, judgements of this nature are part of the school's performance management process and should not be undertaken by the governors.

To avoid a conflict of interest parent governors should avoid observing their own child's class.

Whatever the focus of the visit it should increase the collective knowledge and understanding of the whole governing body.

Visit Protocol

Before the visit

- Governors should familiarise themselves with this policy.
- Governors should ensure they are clear on the focus of the visit.
- Governors should consider 'important questions' (appendix 2).
- Governors should ensure they attend on the agreed time and date.
- Governors and staff should keep to the agreed time scale of the visit.
- Governors should prepare for the visit by reading relevant documentation e.g. policies etc.
- The headteacher will ensure that the relevant staff are clear on the arrangements and focus of the visit.
- Staff should ensure they are prepared for the visit and to offer relevant information.
- Staff should be prepared to answer questions about the focus of the visit.
- Governors should ensure that the initial 3 sections of the governor report are completed before the visit.

During the visit

- Governors should arrive in good time for the start of the visit.
- The visit should begin with a quick meeting with a member of the senior management team who will then introduce the governor to the relevant staff/pupils.
- Governors should be calm and friendly.
- Staff should be welcoming.
- Governors are able to take notes during visits.
- Governors are encouraged to ask questions but should be mindful of the appropriate moment to do so, particularly during classroom observations.
- Governors should ensure confidentially procedures are followed.
- Governors should thank the staff and pupils for their time.
- Governors should ensure that at the end of the visit any questions are discussed with a senior manager.

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- Governors should remember why they are there and not lose sight of the purpose of visit.

Be aware that any visitor entering the class will alter the dynamic of the classroom.

In the unlikely event that anything should concern you during the visit, please take your concern to the headteacher/deputy rather than the teacher.

After the visit

- It is recommended that the 'governor formal visit report' (appendix 3) is completed as soon as possible after each formal visit.
- If the visit has been made by more than one governor, only one formal report is required. However, the contribution of all governors in attendance must be made.
- **The report should be emailed to the headteacher within one week of the visit.**
- The headteacher will ensure the report does not contain any mistakes or misunderstandings that need to be clarified. Amendments may be required at this stage.
- **The report must be agreed with the headteacher before it is shared with the governing body.**
- The report should be typed and no longer than one-two A4 sheets, it is important the report is succinct (see appendix 3 for example report).
- The senior managers will issue and discuss the report with staff in teacher/teaching assistant meetings.
- The senior managers will share relevant information with pupils in assembly.
- Governor visits will be an agenda item at the termly full governing body meeting.
- All items for discussion in the full governing body meeting **must** be detailed on the report.
- Governors will be expected to feedback on the visit and report during the meeting.

Woodlane High School – Governor Visits

Appendix 1 – Governor Informal Visit Record (blank form)

Name	
Date of Visit	
Reason for Visit	

Comments

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Appendix 2 – Governor Visit Important Questions

What is the purpose of the visit?

What has prompted the visit?

Is the reason specific or general?

What are my/other people's expectations?

How can my visit benefit the pupils/teacher/school?

How can my visit raise the knowledge of the governing body?

How shall I carry out the visit?

Are there any questions that can be answered during my visit?

What questions should I ask?

Who should I ask my questions?

If observing in a group or pair, who will ask which questions?

Did I achieve the purpose of my visit?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?

Which of my questions am I able to answer?

Which of my questions remain unanswered?

What challenges did I encounter, how could these be avoided during the next visit?

Has my visit enhanced relationships?

Is there any follow-up required?

Have I recorded my experiences effectively?

Have I emailed my report to the headteacher?

Am I prepared to feedback during the next governor meeting?

Has the visit given me ideas for future visits?

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Appendix 3 – Governor Formal Visit Report (blank report form)

Name	
Date of Visit	
Focus of Visit	

Link to school improvement plan

Sources of information <i>e.g. observing classes/break, talking to staff/pupils, joining lunch, display, books, educational visit etc.</i>

What I have learnt as a result of my visit

Positive comments about the focus

Aspects I would like clarified/questions I have/challenge points

Items to be raised with governing body

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Appendix 4 – Governor Formal Visit Report (example completed report)

Name	Mr Smith
Date of Visit	07/07/23
Focus of Visit	Quality of marking.

Link to school improvement plan

Page 5. The school is aiming to improve the quality of its marking to raise the progress of pupils.

Sources of information e.g. *observing classes/break, talking to staff/pupils, joining lunch, display, books, educational visit etc.*

Meeting with assessment coordinator (30 minutes)/meeting with pupils from various key stages (15 minutes)/observe Book Look (45 minutes)/brief room observation (5 minutes).

What I have learnt as a result of my visit

- Book Look takes place on a termly basis. Views of the pupils are always taken and form part of the assessment/feedback.
- Teachers and TAs are aware of the Book Look criteria and focus.
- Teachers use blue pens to state what the pupils have done well and green to state areas for improvement or write an extension question.
- Pupils are taught to self and peer assess.
- A simplified version of the criteria is displayed in all classrooms.

Positive comments about the focus

- Pupils are clear on the school's marking criteria.
- Most teachers use the school's marking policy effectively.
- The feedback in *subject* and *subject* appear particularly effective.
- *Subject* uses GCSE level criteria which appears highly supportive.

Aspects I would like clarified/questions I have/challenge points

- What happens if a teacher does not use the school's marking criteria effectively? – It was explained that teachers are given targets and support and are 're-observed'. If improvements are not made, targets will form part of the teacher's performance management.
- How is effective practice shared? – The assessment coordinator stated that excellent practice is shared through staff meetings, INSET and peer mentoring.
- How are higher ability pupils challenged? – It was explained that this is through differentiation and extension activities.
- Some pupils mentioned that they would like higher level work, could they be challenged further? – The headteacher explained that consideration must be given to the pupil's perception of their own ability. In some cases this may be higher or lower than their actual ability, this is often the case for pupils with ASD. It was also stated that the level of set work is assessed through Book Look and learning walks.

Items to be raised with governing body

- Briefly issue and detail the Book Look criteria.
- Clarify the pupil perception of their levels, as detailed above.
- Possible further visit – classroom observation to see the policy in action, observing pupils using the feedback.