

DIY Guide

Guidance for School Governors

VISITING YOUR SCHOOL

If a visit is being undertaken to enhance the governing body's understanding of an aspect of the school's work, it should be planned carefully. Ideally the governing body will have agreed a schedule for governors' visits to the school. This should reflect the priorities in the school development plan and the specific interests and responsibilities of governors.

Why?

- To know more about the work and organisation of the school.
- To keep up to date.
- To offer visible support.
- To inform your planning and policy making.
- To monitor implementation of the school development plan or to review its success.
- To learn.

Before

- Clarify the purpose of the visit.
What or who has prompted your decision to visit? Is the reason specific or general? What are your/other people's expectations? Is it linked to the School Development Plan? How does this determine your timetable or itinerary?
- Discuss a visit plan with the head teacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable for the purpose identified.
- Find out if there is a prompt sheet / checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed visit plan with any staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson?
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The headteacher may be able to guide you on this. Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
- Discuss with the head teacher the supporting information available – OfSTED report, development plan, performance data.

During

- 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.
- Look relaxed. Blend in. Avoid being conspicuous. Get involved if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly. Remember that note-taking can be disconcerting.
- Don't distract the teacher from his / her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, not critical.
- Be quick to praise and slow to make judgements
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Remember that teaching and learning will have changed since your own days at school

After

Consider:

- Did you achieve your aim?
- To what extent did you fulfil expectations?
- Which of your questions did they answer?
- What difficulties did you meet?
- 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?
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the head teacher in case there are mistakes or misunderstandings that need to be clarified. (A visit can only be a snapshot of the school or a class at a particular time). Be prepared to take the comments of others on board

- Do not write like an inspector (even if you are one), and don't make written observations about the quality of teaching and learning. If there are concerns, raise them with the head teacher if you are unsure.
- Agree with the head teacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Write your report and circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved. Keep it short (one side of A4 or use a proforma such as the model attached). Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Do not name staff or pupils except in exceptional circumstances (eg when in a teacher's class for a lengthy period of time). Check with the head teacher if you are unsure.
- Give a copy to the clerk to the governors, to circulate with the papers for the relevant meeting, following which (like other governing body papers) it will be available for public inspection.
- Come to the meeting prepared to make a short verbal introduction to the report and answer any questions other governors may have. Do not go through your report in full detail, or read it out verbatim
- How can you build on your experiences the next time you visit to make sure it is even more effective?

School Visit Record

Name

Date

Purpose of visit

Previously agreed by the governing body with the head teacher

Links with the School Development Plan

How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Development Plan?

Governor observations and comments

eg what did you see? what did you learn? what would you like clarified? how long did the visit last?

Any key issues arising from the governing body

eg the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy

Action following governing body meeting

Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit
