



Governor School Visits Policy

Written / reviewed by	R Hill
Date written / reviewed	September 2023
Date of next review	September 2026
Headteacher	<i>R Hill</i>
Chair of Governors	<i>J Goodwin</i>

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor school policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for the school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will test this assumption during a school inspection.

Visits to / with the school can be enormously useful in facilitating this and help Governors to carry out their role. That role is largely strategic, not operational, and includes ensuring vision is being turned into reality, ethos is being embedded and progress is being made against the strategic plan.

There are numerous ways the Governing Board can know their school, for example, through analysing pupil data; receiving feedback from the Headteacher and seeking the views of parents, staff, and pupils. However, actually visiting the school in person or attending a school trip / event, provides a valuable insight into how the school operates as well as an opportunity to put other information in context.

This policy includes the current Governors' Visit report form, which will help guide discussion on the issues identified and provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base, e.g. a member of staff's appraisal.

Policy Aims:

To enable Governors to:

- Gain insight into the life of the school.
- Create and develop relationships with staff, children and where appropriate parents.
- Better understand the Governors' roles in raising standards.
- Have a better understanding of the school's current performance, practice, strengths and areas for further development, to enable/identify them to provide more targeted and effective challenge and support.

Overarching principles:

The Governors of Friezland Primary School recognise that one of the best and most effective ways in which to get to know the school is to visit during the school day and see it at work. To enable this, the Governors undertake regular visits to the school to review and explore a specific aspect of practice. (These visits are not an inspection, but a 'fact finding' and observational opportunity and a platform to help Governors ask questions and understand practice.)

To further support the effectiveness of their work the Governing Body also appoint a link Governor to key areas of the school practice, such as SEND, EAL and Sport Premium. We review other areas of practice through the use of Governor sub committees including:

- Standards Committee
- Resource and Environment Committee (Including H&S and Finance)
- Headteacher Appraisal
- Safeguarding Committee

Every visit should have a clear, prearranged focus. This is important because it helps those governing use their time, as well as that of school staff, productively. The focus of the visit will generally relate to the Governing Board's monitoring of the school strategy or to developing a rounded understanding of the school's strengths

and areas for development. Visits to the school are agreed with the Headteacher in advance and focus on ensuring the aims are outlined are fulfilled.

A Governor visits school to:

- Increase the Governing Board’s first-hand knowledge about the school and its daily operations; thus, helping to inform ongoing and future strategic decision making.
- Keep under review the way in which the school is operating and performing and what it is doing to manage areas requiring further development.
- Experience the impact and progress resulting from the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies.
- Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Board takes its responsibilities very seriously.
- Establish and develop good professional working relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with an individual area of responsibility, e.g. Special Educational Needs or Health and Safety.
- See in context, some of the monitoring systems employed by the school.
- Demonstrate that the Governing Board is contributing to the school’s self-evaluation process.
- Show support and encouragement to staff and children.

Governors’ visits to classrooms are not a form of inspection in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching. Governors should not use visits to:

- Check on the progress of their own or known children
- Manipulate staff time
- Explore inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursue personal agendas or issues

Benefits of Governor visits to school:

Potential Benefits to Governors	Potential Benefits to Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have a greater understanding of pupils’ needs. • To recognise and celebrate success. • To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff. • To monitor the implementation of the School Development Plan (SDP). • To increase their first-hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions. • To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach. • To recognise different teaching styles and understand the environment in which teacher teach. • To see policies and schemes of work in practice. • To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and priorities them. • To get to know the children. • To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils. • To demonstrate that the Governing board is contributing to the school’s self-evaluation process (SEF). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand better the Governors’ roles and responsibilities. • To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion. • To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors. • To feel valued. • To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors. • To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school. • To highlight the need for further resources. • To share an understanding of the specific area.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. SEND, Safeguarding etc. • To inform future decision making. | |
|--|--|

Setting up the visits:

- Governors are regularly invited to visit school and support events. Weekly newsletters highlight forthcoming events and Governors are asked to request and interest/offer of support.
- Dates of the termly 'Governors in Action' visits are agreed with the Headteacher at the start of the year and shared with all relevant stakeholders. To organise other visits, the visiting Governor(s) should contact the appropriate member of staff, (by telephone, email or in person) to negotiate dates/times and to agree the focus of the visit.
- To support the visit Governors will receive a copy of any relevant plans or documentation.
- When Governors make visits to classrooms, this should be undertaken individually or in pairs. If larger groups are required, this should be approved in advance by either the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher to ensure it doesn't lead to unnecessary disruption to the children or daily operation of the school.

Undertaking the visit:

- Governors will arrive in good time for their visit.
- Particularly for 'Workshop' visits, Governors should allow enough time for an informal briefing and debriefing after the visit activity have taken place.
- Brief notes may be taken in the classroom; however, copies of these could be made available to staff, if required.
- Governors will concentrate on the agreed focus of the visit.
- If in the rare eventuality, a Governor feels that their presence is making a member of staff feel uncomfortable or the visit is clearly going awry for some reason, the Governor will judge whether to withdraw. If a major problem arises in any classroom during a visit, a member of the SLT should be informed before leaving the school.
- During the lesson, opportunities may arise for the Governor to talk to pupils; however, care should be taken to ensure this doesn't affect the delivery or flow of the lesson.
- Whilst Governors should be sensitive about distracting pupils from their tasks, they should use the opportunity to see the lesson from the pupils' perspective by asking questions. For example, can you tell me what you are learning, what do you do if you get stuck? How do you know how well you are doing? What is your best piece of work and why? What helps you learn best?

When in school, Governors will be expected to follow our school 'Code of Conduct' and behave in an appropriate manner at all times showing courtesy to all adults and children.

At the end of the visit:

- Any monitoring visit or activity should be discussed with the Headteacher at the end of the visit and a written record made.
- Governor(s) will avoid being drawn into judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governor(s) may ask questions to help clarify their understanding of things seen, hear or told.
- Governor(s) will share with staff what they have learned from their visit.
- Records made or written summaries completed will be subsequently made available to both relevant staff and the full Governing board.

See Appendix 3 for the pro forma to record visits.

Roles and responsibilities:

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Friezland Primary School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, children and parents are aware of this policy and that it is fully implemented.

Policy monitoring and evaluation:

The Governing Board will review this policy at least once every 3 years or sooner if necessary. This review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we more able to make informed decisions?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Appendix 1

What if..... (questions that may arise)

What if I see children not meeting the Friezland Expectations when the teacher doesn't? It depends how serious the observation is and how frequently it happens. The occasional incident should probably be overlooked, but if the teacher is consistently failing to notice, it is something which should be taken up after the lesson.

You could ask the teacher if they noticed a particular incident, for example, and what they would have done about it had it been noticed, or whether they chose to ignore it?

If you still have major concerns you may need to talk to the Headteacher or member of the SLT about it, in confidence. The Headteacher should find a way of following it up without suggesting in any way that you have reported a concern.

What if a pupil asks me how to do something?

It depends what it is. If it is something the teacher has already explained in the lesson, you can reinforce the teacher's message by explaining it again to the pupil. Otherwise, unless it is a trivial thing, you should ask the teacher on the pupil's behalf or encourage them to ask the teacher directly. You might also be able to ask a teaching assistant, if one is present.

What if the teacher has problems managing the class and their behaviour?

It depends on the level of poor control. Maintaining perfect class control at all times is not easy, especially in practical activities, so some leeway should be given. Also, a certain level of noise might just be a sign of enthusiastic participation in an activity.

Usually, if a teacher is really struggling, the Headteacher would know about it anyway and not encourage a Governor to visit in the first place. There will be some kind of support available for the teacher, possibly from a more senior colleague; but if control is obviously seriously lacking, then the Headteacher needs to be informed.

Appendix 2

Summary Visit protocol sheet

	Do	Don't
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team. This includes considering which actions of the School Development Plan to review or the context of lessons being visited.• Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. Arrange and plan the details of the visit with the Headteacher/relevant member of staff, drawing up a schedule for the visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback?• Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available. E.g. Ofsted report, improvement plan, scheme of work etc.• Try to visit at different times of the day.• Agree the level of confidentiality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn up unannounced for a focused / formal visit.• Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement or a recommended minimum notice of one week.• Visit during a SATs week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be prepared, organised and punctual.• Report to the school office and sign in.• Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit.• Observe school / class guidelines.• Jot down discussion points to consider later at the feedback session.• Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.• Listen to staff and pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monopolise staff time.• Interrupt teaching or talk to the teacher while he / she is teaching.• Behave like an Inspector!• Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes.• Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body. It is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on their behalf.• Assume a different role to that agreed.• Express personal opinions if pressed on a controversial issue – individuals should keep on mind that they are representing the Governing Board as a whole.• Make assumptions – always ask for explanations of what you don't understand.• Put yourself in a situation where you're unaccompanied with children.
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils.• Discuss what you have observed with the teacher or staff lead as soon as possible after the visit. Use the opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about.• Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher. (Refer to the purpose of the visit, considering together whether it has been achieved.)• Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant.• Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher, (unless a group feedback sheet has been completed during the feedback session).• Treat your visit with confidentiality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leave without a word of thanks.• Leave the school without giving some feedback.• Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors, (except the Chair) unless given permission to do so.• Make comments about a teacher's teaching skills or a pupil's academic ability.• Refer to individual teachers or pupils in your report (the Class / Year group can be noted).

Appendix 3

SCHOOL GOVERNOR VISIT RECORD



Name:

Date:

Time of visit:

1 Purpose of visit

2 Summary of activities

3 Did this visit link with any School Development Plan 22-23 Priorities or Ofsted 2016 recommendations (please tick)?

SDP 1: Pupils' speech, language and communication skills are enhanced through carefully planned, scaffolded activities, across the curriculum, which maximises progress in Early Years and Key Stage One.

SDP 2: Teachers plan and provide opportunities to extend and deepen children's learning so that outcomes for children working at Greater Depth continues to improve in Key Stage Two.

SDP 3: The school is led effectively by the new Senior Leadership Team and new Governors, who build strong partnerships within and beyond school, maintaining the high standards and achievements of Friezland pupils.

SDP 4: Subject Leaders, who are new to role, are supported and take opportunities to develop their subject knowledge and experiences, in order to lead their subjects effectively and have a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

SDP 5: The school culture and curriculum promote respectful and collaborative behaviour between pupils, whose teamwork skills have a positive impact on their learning - inside and beyond the classroom.

SDP 6: The school culture and curriculum develop pupils' confidence and resilience so that they are mentally healthy, enjoy learning and have an 'I can' attitude.

OFSTED 1: Improve leadership and management, by further developing the skills of subject leaders so that they can improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility.

OFSTED 2: Build upon the recent improvements in pupils' writing, so that they can write at length, and for different purposes and audiences.

OFSTED 3: Improve the quality of teaching, by ensuring that staff plan activities which provide greater challenge for the most able pupils.

OFSTED 4: Improve the effectiveness of the early years, by further developing the outdoor provision so that it contains rich and imaginative opportunities more closely linked to areas of learning.

4 Governor observations: What did you see?

5 Governor reflections: What did you learn?

6 Governor reflections: How will this support your work as a Governor in the future?

7 Any actions / questions to report back at a Governing Board/Committee Meeting:

Signed (Governor):

Signed (Headteacher):

Data Protection Statement

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our Data Protection Policy. All data will be handled in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

Data Audit for the Governor School Visits Policy					
What?	Probable Content	Why?	Who?	Where?	When?
Lesson, pupil and staff information seen and recorded.	Personal reflections No names used but Class / subject recorded and initials used where required	For the Governing Board to see what how the school operates.	All Staff Pupils Governors (as necessary)	Governor records will be stored correctly. Data is deleted / shredded as necessary.	Held on File until a review takes place.

As such, our assessment is that this policy:

Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements	Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements	Has a High Level of Data Compliance Requirements
	✓	

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation / school systems change.