



Governor Visits Policy



Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor
Sept 2020	Sept 2021	Chair of the Governors	Rachel Bain

Headteacher:	Pamela Acheson	Date:	Sept 2020
Responsible Governor:	Rachel Bain	Date:	Sept 2020

Status of Policy:

The Governing Body of the Federation of Grewelthorpe and Fountains C of E Primary Schools adopted this policy in September 2020. It will be reviewed in September 2021.

1. Background

The Governing Body has appointed governors to act as the liaison between the governing body and specific subject/curriculum areas or aspect of the work of the school. The role of the governor is as a source of support to the school and a source of information for the governing body. An integral part of the governor role is to visit the schools and view lessons in particular subject/curriculum areas and to learn about the general running of the schools.

It is important that visits are conducted in an appropriate way and the purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for visits with the following objectives:

- To enable all participants to make the most effective use of the visit;
- To help the school community to get to know the governors;
- To ensure that visits are conducted properly;
- To contribute to school improvement;
- To enable the Governing Body to carry out its statutory duty to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

2. Format of Visits

- a) The Governing Body, acting in consultation with the headteacher, will approve a schedule of governor visits annually to take place throughout the school year. The number of visits will be based on an average of two (or such number as is felt appropriate) visits per term.
- b) All staff will be provided with a copy of the schedule;
- c) Each visit will have a clear focus, linked to a particular subject/curriculum area/school development plan.
- d) It is the responsibility of the visiting governor to arrange the date and time of their visit with the headteacher in advance and agree the purpose of the visit;
- e) The headteacher will notify all appropriate staff of the date, time and purpose of the visit and arrange for any relevant information to be available for the visit;

3. Aspects for consideration during the visit

- ✓ General ethos and atmosphere of the area/s visited;
- ✓ Attractiveness or otherwise of the area/s visited;
- ✓ Availability of resources;
- ✓ Health and Safety (where appropriate)
- ✓ Pupil/Student behaviour and attitudes;
- ✓ Pupil/Student engagement in lessons;
- ✓ Relationships observed

4. Responsibilities of visiting Governors and staff

- a) Visiting Governors and staff will be courteous and considerate at all times and respect the role that each has to fulfil;
- b) Governors will not make judgements about the effectiveness of the teaching they observe;
- c) Governors will not pursue personal agenda or seek to take advantage of their position;
- d) Governors will express their gratitude, and any immediate positive feedback to staff (and pupils) and provide verbal feedback to the headteacher at the conclusion of each visit;
- e) The Headteacher will provide feedback to appropriate staff as soon as possible after each visit;
- f) Governors will record their visits and observations (non-judgementally) in a written report for consideration at the next meeting of the governing body (or curriculum committee if appropriate). (See sample report form below)
- g) All parties will agree any appropriate follow-up action;
- h) Governors and staff will respect confidentiality arising from any aspect of the visit.

Appendices

General questions to ask

These are general questions that you can ask regardless of the subject.

1. Can I see your action plan?

This is a good place to start, as an action plan gives you a solid roadmap for the rest of the meeting. It might also be called a department development plan or similar.

Ideally, this should naturally stimulate conversation about:

- Where the subject sits in the wider curriculum
- Whether there's a school policy on this subject and how it's implemented
- How much time each week is devoted to the subject
- How pupil progress is monitored and recorded
- What measures are in place to ensure all pupils can participate fully in the subject
- Where the subject's strengths and weaknesses are across the school (e.g. is the quality of teaching weaker in Key Stage 2 than the other phases? Is progress in this subject below national standards across the school?)
- What timescales exist, so you can set dates to re-examine progress on specific issues (e.g. "90% of pupils will achieve the age-related expectation in this subject by the end of the year, 30% at greater depth")

Otherwise, take the initiative to ask about these points yourself.

If there isn't an action plan, ask why this is. This isn't necessarily a problem - it might be that they have this information included in their performance objectives, or they just refer to the school improvement plan for their targets and strategy. If not, discuss this with the headteacher.

2. What does this action plan look like in practice day-to-day?

As a governor, you're not the expert. You need to ask the subject leader what the items on the plan actually mean in practice, so you know what to look out for on the visit.

For example, if the plan mentions "shared reading" - ask what this is, and what are the signs of it being done successfully.

3. How do you know you're making progress towards the plan?

The subject leader should be able to point to a variety of evidence that can prove how effectively the subject's delivered, including:

- Pupil books
- Internal and/or external data
- Lesson observation forms
- Pupil surveys
- Speaking to teachers and pupils

4. What challenges are you facing this year?

This question will help you decide what governors need to prioritise to make sure that this subject is delivered effectively. You want to know:

- What barriers are there to the successful delivery of the subject?
- What's going well and how can we make sure that it continues?
- How good is the quality of teaching is on this subject?

Usually, subject leaders aren't just experts in that specific subject, they're meant to hold their peers to account in the delivery of the subject. If the subject leader can't speak knowledgeably to the quality of teaching across the school, then they might be only doing half their job.

5. What support do you have as subject leader?

You want to know that the subject leader's feeling supported. If they aren't, you need to find out what additional support they need. Ask:

- Do you need specific training?
- Do you get enough time to execute your duties as subject leader?
- Do you have the budget and resources as subject leader to be effective?

The answer to this question, together with other governors' reports, might help your governing board identify that support needs to be improved not just across that subject but maybe across whole phases, or even school-wide.

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Governor's learning walk

Learning walks are where you'll go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area. You're likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils. Use this as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask



Part 1: plan the walk	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus <i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that haven't been agreed with the member of staff.</i>	
Relevant school objective or priority <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.</i>	
Questions to ask <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit. Share these questions with the staff member you're visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	



Part 2: on the walk

General notes from discussions with staff

Tips:

Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me...'

Don't be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with

Remember you're not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them

When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers

General notes from discussions with pupils

Remember:

Don't ask them for pupils' views on a specific teacher

Don't record pupils' names

General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere

Note:

Whether the governors' vision of the school is replicated on the ground

Any issues with the school site you see e.g. broken equipment or lack of resources

What successes stood out on the learning walk and why?

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors

Policy:	Governor Visits Policy
Signed Chair of Governors:	<i>R Bain</i>
Date Signed:	September 2020
Governors Meeting Ratified:	September 2020
Review Date:	Autumn 2021
Review schedule	Annually