



Windsor Park C.E. Middle School

Governors Monitoring Visits Policy

Department:

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Context

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the Governing Body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. Undertaking visits demonstrates the Governors' role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress. The Governors visiting programme is an integral part of the school's yearly monitoring calendar. At the Full Governors meeting held on 1st July it was agreed that there would be a governor visit each month which would focus on an aspect of the School Development Plan or one of the Governors' statutory duties. Each Governor is encouraged to make at least one visit a year during school time and governors will often monitor an area of the School Development Plan in pairs in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Visits enable Governors to:-

- See the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behavior and achievements
- Get to know the staff and demonstrate their commitment to the school
- Give active support to the staff and the activities of the school
- Be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning
- Evaluate resources and discuss with staff further requirements
- Gain first hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking
- Work in partnership with the staff

Before making a visit Governors will

- Contact the Head teacher and agree a date, time and focus for the visit
- Clarify the etiquette, courtesies and expectations for the visit
- Plan which classes will be visited
- Draw up a timetable for the visit with the Assistant Head teacher or subject-coordinator
- Assistant Head teacher and/or the subject coordinator ensure that all staff are aware of the visit and the expectations on them.

On the day of the visit the Governor will remember to:-

- Arrive on time and clarify the timetable with the Assistant Head teacher/subject coordinator
- Act as an observer and only participate in the class at the invitation of the teacher
- Respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting but not interfering
- Be calm and enjoy the visit

After the visit the Governor will:-

- Remember to thank the teachers and children
- Meet with the Head teacher to give a verbal report, and to raise any issues that arose
- Complete the Governor Visit Proforma, reporting on the focus. The completed form should be given to the Head teacher and then, after any possible alterations, the form will be circulated to the governing body and staff
- Governors must report without giving opinions and where possible individuals should not be able to be identified.

It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgments should not be made arbitrarily. **The visit is not about:-**

- Inspection
- Making judgments about the professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on your own children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- Arriving with inflexible pre-conceived ideas

Governors are an important part of the school team and are welcomed into the school by staff. It is important that Governors remember to respect the professionals and the children, support the Head teacher and the staff, and acknowledge that they represent the full Governing Body. If the agreed principles and procedures are followed then Governor Visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the Governing Body, which will contribute to school improvement.

Guidelines for Governors

Advice on conducting classroom visits

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Governors Visits and Monitoring

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Rationale

The Governing Body at Windsor Park Middle School has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in the classroom. Although their role is strategic, it is important that they have some understanding of the practicalities of the job. Meeting children, talking to staff and seeing lessons underway will help members of the Governing Body to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.

Objectives

The Governing Body should aim to:

- Inform their decision-making by having visited at least one lesson during the year.
- Be aware of the feelings of members of staff and the issues they face by having had a more lengthy discussion with at least one member of staff during the year.
- Read and keep up-to-date with school newsletters and other documents that are set out.
- Keep up-to-date with their nominated class, introduce themselves and spend time discussing the school with some of the children from the class.

Roles and Responsibilities

Some of our Governors are already linked to a particular subject. They are:

English	Mr I Johnstone
Maths	Mr D Thompson-Smith
Computer Science	Mrs C Ford
SEN	Mrs C Hollins and Mrs C Ford

In addition to this, we aim to link most Governors to a subject they have a particular interest in. This does not mean that their visits should be exclusively geared to that subject. However, it is anticipated that at some point during the year they will take time to talk to the subject leader. Additional governors linked to a subject area include:

It is the responsibility of each Governor to introduce themselves to the teacher and class and make

themselves available according to the demands of the timetable and school year.

Science	Mrs J North
MFL	Mrs L Toyn
RE	Mrs C Hollins and Rev E Whittaker
PE	Mrs L Toyn and Mr S Finnie
Art	Mrs C Ford
Music	Rev E Whittaker
Geog & Hist	Mrs C Hollins
D&T	Mr S Finnie
PSHCEE	Mrs C Hollins
Safeguarding	Mr I Johnstone and Mrs J North
New Governor Mentor	Mr I Johnstone
H&S	Mrs A Chidlow
Prevention	Mr I Johnstone
Behaviour & Safety	Mrs A Chidlow
Disability	Mrs A Chidlow
Pupil Premium	Mrs J North

The Benefits of Visiting the Classroom

Closer links between Governors and teachers has potential benefits to

both. **For governors these include:-**

- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice.
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children.
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names.
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed.

For Teachers these include:-

- Opportunity to find out more about the role of the Governor.
- Having chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice.
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise.
- Opportunity to reflect upon practice through discussion.

What to Avoid

It is important for all parties to note that governors' visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve governors making a judgment about teaching in any official capacity. That remains the responsibility of the Head teacher and other education professionals.

It might be wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. It can cause discomfort for everyone! They should also be aware of 'pursuing personal agendas' and make sure they fulfill the code of conduct as it is outlined here.

Please remember that members of staff are very busy people whose first priority must be the children. There may be times when arrangements have to be changed or alterations made. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations. No two days are ever the same.

Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don't expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood. By all means ask questions (preferably at the end of the lesson) but be sensitive to the extra demands of differentiation and inclusion that teachers now face.

Ground Rules

	Always	Never
Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Arrange details of visit.-Agree purpose of visit-Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed.-Agree role within the lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Turn up unannounced
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Keep to the role agreed-Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over-Please remember confidentiality-Stick to the times and purpose agreed-Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Assume a different role-Walk in with a clipboard-Interrupt the teacher-Distract the pupils from their task

After	-Thank the teacher and the pupils -Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience -Feedback to the governing body	-Leave without acknowledgement -Break rules of confidentiality
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Conducting the Observations

After planning your visit with the class teacher or subject coordinator you might have agreed to-

- take part in a lesson acting as classroom helper during your visit
- do a formal observation-taking no immediate role other than talking to the children about what they are doing
- work with a small group
- introduce yourself to your linked class and answer any of their questions
- meet with the class teacher or coordinator to discuss particular issues or set the context
- Observe - focusing on an agreed area/issue that the class teacher would like some feedback on e.g. the involvement of a particular group of pupils.

Please remember that observations do not require judgment on the teacher. It might also be useful to clarify some 'what ifs' beforehand. For example:-

- What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
- What if a pupil asks me how to do something?
- What if I have a suggestion to make?

Providing Feedback

It is important that a time is agreed between yourself and the class teacher to discuss the lesson you have taken part in or observed. During this feedback you might refer to notes you have made. The structure might include:

1. Asking the teacher for any further clarification of the lesson or for their views on how it went.
2. Giving your own impressions on what you saw
3. Providing any positive comment.
4. Raising any issues that appeared to develop.
5. Any further questions you might have
6. A summary of the feedback you will be giving to the governing body.

At the end of the feedback both you and the teacher should be clear about what you will be sharing with the governing body- there should be no surprises!

The **Governors' visits to classrooms** pro forma should be completed as soon as possible after the visit. It should reflect the discussion you have had with the teacher. The report should be copied to:

- The Head teacher

- The subject leader

- The teacher concerned

- The clerk to the governors

Policy Review

The policy should be reviewed every year. The key questions should be:

- Has every Governor visited at least one lesson during the year?
- Has each Governor made links with their allocated class?
- Has every Governor had a conversation with the subject leader they are linked to?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in this policy?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make policy and practice even better?

APPENDIX 1

Windsor Park Middle School

Governor visits' monitoring and evaluation record

Date, time, length of visit		
Name of Governor*		
Responsibility area*		
Staff member(s) involved*		
Purpose of visit*		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Every Child Matters Link	Post Ofsted Action Plan Link*	School Improvement Plan Link*
Planned activities*		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Outcome of visit		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Issues for the Governing Body		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Teachers / Head teachers comments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Follow-up actions / suggested focus for future visits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Signed Governor		
Signed Head teacher		

* To be completed before visit

APPENDIX 2

Windsor Park Middle School

Governor Visit Report

Monitoring the School Development Plan

Focus Area in SDP:	
Source of evidence of progress	Comment and impact

Evaluation and Impact (SO WHAT?!)

Signed _____

(Governor)

Signed _____

(Head teacher / Coordinator)

School Visits – an Aide Memoire

What is the purpose of the visit?

What has prompted my decision to visit? Who has prompted my decision to visit? Is the reason specific or general?
What are my/other people's expectations? How can my visit benefit the teacher?

How shall I carry it out?

What particular areas of the school am I interested in? What particular activities am I interested in?
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation? What questions should I ask?
Who should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
Which of my questions did I answer?
To what extent did I fulfill my own/other people's expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?

Is there any follow-up?

Have I recorded my experiences?

Did I 'report back' to the head and staff?

Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting? How can I build on this for the next visit?

APPENDIX 3

Guidance for governor visits to school

This is a short handout which offers governors guidance on planning their visit into school and includes some sample questions that governors may like to ask.

The list is not exhaustive and the questions may need adjusting to be both relevant and appropriate to each individual visit.

It is good initially to focus on what the governor visit should and should not be and so the following may be helpful.

Governor visits should:

- be pre-arranged with the relevant teacher and head teacher
- be an opportunity to be positive about the school
- have a clear focus
- be a positive experience for all involved
- provide an opportunity for exchange of information
- provide an opportunity to build relationships with staff and pupils

Governor visits are not:

- to inspect the school
- to make judgments on the quality of teaching
- unannounced and unplanned
- an opportunity to quiz pupils
- unfocused

Questions to ask.....

No such thing as a silly question!

Please remember that there is no such thing as a silly question.

This may be a silly question, but ...

I don't understand, could you explain that again for me?

Open questions

Ask open questions as these give more room for discussion.

Be careful not to ask too many questions. As a guide there should be a maximum of three questions recorded on the governor visits form, although on the visit feel free to ask lots of questions as part of the general discussion.

All discussion should take place during your visit, not before or after, as the teachers will be teaching before the visit begins and will need to revert back to teaching as soon as the visit is completed.

Subject linked

Subject link governors could consider some of these questions.

How do you think this aspect of the School Development Plan is going?

What's been happening in the last 12 months?

What's planned for the next 12 months?

What have been the main challenges?

What is working well?

What is not working well?

How can we help this develop further?

What further help and support do you require?

Is further training for teachers and support staff needed?

What is the current state of resources for the subject?

Is there a need for additional resources?

Children's work

During your visit make sure you look at the children's work and talk to the teacher about how this fits in with what's being looked at.

Follow-up meeting

If you think it would be beneficial to feedback to the teacher whose class you visited, please arrange a time to do so when planning your visit. It may not be possible to do this immediately after the visit, as the teacher will need to revert back to teaching.

A quick reference handbook (QRH)

The following questions might help leaders quickly identify strengths, and areas for development. A key indicator of overall high quality provision is consistency of these judgments for each class, and for every teacher.

- What is the quality of teaching and the achievement and progress of all groups of pupils, including those for those for whom the Pupil Premium provides support?
- Do teachers know how well pupils are progressing and then act effectively on that information to plan lessons?
- Do pupils know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve further?
- Are well-focused improvement plans, based on robust self-evaluation, rigorously implemented?
- Are policies and procedures, in particular in relation to reading, writing and numeracy, consistently applied?
- Is respect and courtesy shown by staff towards each other and pupils?
- Is underperformance tackled?
- How coherent and effective is the programmed of professional development, and the opportunities provided for promotion for teachers?
- Is the best teaching practice accurately identified, modeled and shared, including the development of specific enquiry skills?
- Does the curriculum meet the needs, aptitudes and interest of all groups of pupils, including equality of opportunity for girls and boys to study?
- Do lessons promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils?
- Is achievement rising over time or are high outcomes being maintained?
- Is teaching improving over time or staying at least good?

- Do governors ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction?
- Does Windsor Park Middle School use the Pupil Premium and other resources to overcome barriers to learning effectively, including reading, writing and mathematics?
- Does Windsor Park Middle School help pupils to prepare for life in modern Britain and a global society, and to prevent extremist behavior?
- Do staff work in partnership with other schools, external agencies and the community, including business, to improve science, extend the curriculum and increase the range and quality of learning opportunities for pupils?
- Do safeguarding arrangements in Windsor Park Middle School promote safe practices and a culture of safety, including e-safety?

APPENDIX 3

Meeting 1) Review and Targets for the coming year (July/September)

What levels of attainment were achieved last year? Versus Target?

What improvements have been made in the last year?

What have been the challenges/difficulties in the last year?

How have these judgments been made? (Observations, assessment etc)

How have the children achieved in the different year groups?

How are children progressing throughout their time at the school?

Are there any groups making particularly good/slow progress? What can be learned from these?

Can you explain your subject area skills ladder? Do you feel you have a good understanding of it?

What do you want to achieve for your subject area next year?

How can governors help?

APPENDIX 3

Meeting 2) (February/March)

Review progress against targets discussed in Meeting 1)

Discuss plans for the subject moving forward, both in relation to the review and also new developments and opportunities

How can governors help?

APPENDIX 4

For Teachers

- Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient.
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which has been agreed by all concerned.
- Prepare the class for the visit of a governor.
- Welcome the governor when they arrive in your class.
- Have a seat ready for the governor and tell them where it is.
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for staff and governors alike.
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in your lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do.
- Don't leave your governor alone in the class, even if they are willing to do so.
- Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager or Head teacher.