

St William of York Catholic Primary School



Governor Visits Policy

Signed *G Prendergast* Chair of Governors

M Murphy Head Teacher

Date: 27th November 2025

Review date: November 2027

Introduction

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance. Visiting the school is the best way to learn how it functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that you can increase the governing body's first hand knowledge, informing strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the Headteacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

Purposes of visit

Potential benefits

to governors:

- To recognise and celebrate success
- To develop relationships with the staff
- To get to know the children
- To recognise different teaching styles
- To understand the environment in which teachers teach
- To monitor policies in action
- To inform decision making
- To find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

to teachers:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- To get to know governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

What a visit is not about

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

How to feed back after the visit

- Governors should feedback to the Headteacher verbally on the day & complete the feedback form (Appendix 1)
- Positive comments, suggestions for improvement and any questions should be included in the feedback

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits should be planned and spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Headteacher.

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

The policy should be monitored and reviewed every 2 years.

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

Formal School Visits - Good Practice

The following sections list examples of good practice. The opposite of each, could feature in a 'never' column.

Preparing for a visit

- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan?
- Discuss an agenda with the Headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable.
- Time permitting; discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance.
- Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

During the Visit

- See Appendix 2 for ideas of what to look for during the visit
- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body; it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Be punctual.
- 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.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly. Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

After the visit

- 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?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.

- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the Headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the Headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting your visit

- Discuss the visit with the Headteacher on the day.
- Complete the visit Feedback Form as soon after the visit as possible and pass to the Headteacher.
- Report details of the visit to the Governing body at the next meeting.

Visit Focus

- Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-
- Particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Special educational needs
- Literacy and numeracy
- Impact of the religious character
- Lunch and breaktimes
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture or ICT equipment
- Deployment of staff, e.g. caretaker, office staff, teaching assistants
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- To help in a class
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child
- Attend a school function or educational visit
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor

Governor visit Feedback Form

NAME	DATE
Purpose of visit <i>(Previously agreed by the governing body with the Headteacher)</i>	
Links with the school improvement plan <i>(How does the visit relate to a priority in the school improvement plan?)</i>	
Observations and comments by the governor <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned; what you would like clarified; how long the visit lasted)</i>	
Any key issues arising for the governing body <i>(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)</i>	
Action following governing body meeting <i>(Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)</i>	

Things to observe when visiting a classroom

Relationship between staff and pupils

Relationships between pupils

Variety of teaching styles

Availability and role of support staff

Behaviour and attitude of pupils — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?

Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils

How the pupils are grouped

How different abilities are catered for

Children's work

Displays

Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)

Use of space and working conditions

Quality and quantity of equipment and resources