

Governor Visits



Part of the Governor Services *Introduction to Governance* Series

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**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

The role of governors

Every governing board has the important role of agreeing the vision for their school and then planning how to use its available resources (including the school staff, finances, community and estate) to realise this vision.

In this way, every school feeds into an ongoing system called **the school improvement cycle** to ensure that schools provides high quality education relevant to the needs of the children the school serves, within a set budget.

Throughout the year, **monitoring information** will be needed so that the board can evaluate the impact of the school improvement plans and any statutory responsibilities.

The evidence from any monitoring will form part of the board's paperwork and will influence the decisions of the board going forward.



More information about **Vision and The School Improvement Cycle** is available in this Bitesize series.



Thinking space

How do you currently monitor the progress of your school towards its agreed priorities?

Make a list of the approaches your board uses so that it can monitor the school's progress. You may need to look at the board's papers from the past few meetings or discuss this with your chair or governor mentor.

Your list might include any meetings with key staff; questionnaires; pupil voice information; reports received; regular performance data received; staff presentations, summary quality of education information; benchmarking data; Ofsted reports; budget monitoring or governor visit monitoring reports.



Governor monitoring

Ideally, the board will need to monitor a **range of good quality evidence** from **a variety of sources** across the school year.

Using a range of evidence from different sources:

- Ensures the board has **access to information** from the whole school community
- Encourages the **consideration of all evidence**, both internal and external to the school
- Allows the board to link or **triangulate** evidence to ensure it has an accurate picture of the school. In this way the school can effectively be held to account.



Why monitoring visits?

Governor visits can provide a really useful addition to the monitoring programme as they allow governors to:

- **Contribute to the monitoring and self evaluation** of the school, recognising strengths and weaknesses
- Provide **first hand evidence** for the board and create **time for reflection**
- **Develop their understanding** of the way the school operates and its particular circumstances
- **Experience the ethos, values, culture and policies** of the school at first hand
- **Build relationships with the school**, its staff and others in the school community

While there is no requirement for governors to visit the school during the school day, this would be considered best practice.



Types of visit

Some governors may visit the school regularly to monitor **statutory aspects of the school's work** around, for example, finance, safeguarding or special educational needs provision.

These may not involve specific visits to classrooms at all.

Other visits will be linked to **the school improvement plan**. These visits might include seeing first hand the behaviour policy in action, finding out about the wider curriculum or looking at the learning environment across the school.

These will often involve classroom visits and there may be some opportunity to talk to the children about their understanding of school and its processes.



Preparing to visit

To ensure visits are as productive as possible, both governors and staff should have a shared understanding of what will happen before, during and after the monitoring visit.

The Governor Visits policy sets out these expectations. This policy is not statutory but ensures that all governors follow the agreed protocols and reporting systems, so that the board has the information it needs to evaluate the impact of its work and to hold the school to account.

Does your school have a Governor Visits policy in place?

**Read through your school policy.
Does this raise any questions for you?**

If you are not familiar with this policy, or have any questions, ask your chair or clerk who will be able to provide you with more information.



Remember

Consider what the Governance Handbook says about school visits. Click on the link below and look at paragraph 3.4.2.

**Governance
Handbook**

Governors aren't inspectors and shouldn't make judgements about the quality of teaching or learning in individual classes.

Remember too that:

- Governors are strategic so shouldn't focus on individuals or pursue any personal agendas or issues
- Governors shouldn't disrupt teaching and learning



Preparation

Governors should prepare for any visit by:

- **Knowing** the area or aspect they are to monitor
- **Reading** any appropriate policies or paperwork linked to this area in advance
- **Confirming** details with the head well in advance of the visit

Where possible, governors should **consider monitoring in small groups** as this creates a shared understanding of what governors see, hear and experience. While each governor may have a different focus (such as behaviour, the learning environment or health and safety), this does not stop governors noticing and contributing to the feedback around other areas too.

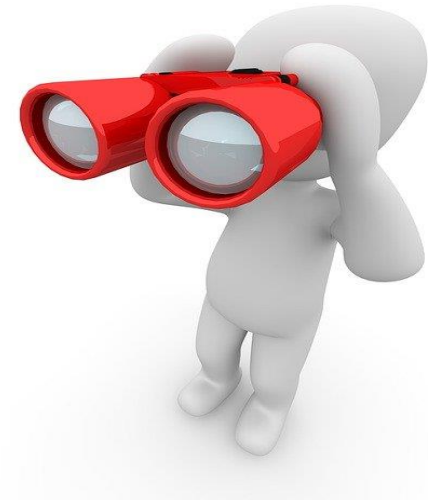


What is involved?

There are a range of activities that governors might undertake depending of the focus of their school visit.

These could include:

- Looking around
- Listening
- Comparing
- Checking
- Questioning
- Interacting with children
- Seeing children's work



Some of these activities may not be useful for the focus of your visit, or you may use all of them. For example, monitoring the behaviour policy might require you to look and question but wouldn't necessarily involve seeing children's work.



Planning a visit

- Be clear about why you are visiting
- Be clear of expectations
- Share information about the visit with staff and other governors in advance, including any pre-reading that governors will need to complete
- Provide a draft timetable for the visit that can be agreed and populated by the head then shared with staff
- Consider how much time you need in class to collect your evidence. Keep this as short as possible
- Consider what governors need to think about or ask during the visit and add prompts to any recording sheets you use



Example planning

- This is one example of a simple planning document. It allows the aims of the visit to be shared with the headteacher and staff so everyone is clear about the expectations of the visit.
- Alongside this planning document, you can also include an **information collection sheet** with the questions you would like answered. This can be shared so staff are aware of the questions you may ask or the evidence you may wish to see. This also provides a simple way of keeping governors focused.

Date: Friday 30 September 2022 09:15- 11:00
Governors involved: Aisha Mogahed and Aaron Sanderson

Focus of the visit linked to the School Improvement Plan and Ofsted outcomes

To collect information and evidence about safeguarding through observation and discussions with staff about:

1. The current child protection recording system for the school. *Is the recording of safeguarding effective and impacting on the quality of safeguarding provision across the school?*
2. The safeguarding risks affecting the school community identified through analysis of the records. *Which issues are of most concern to our school? How do we know?*
3. The progress of the safeguarding action plan and the ESAT Safeguarding Review Report actions. *Which items are outstanding and why?*
4. Review of staff training around safeguarding. *Is all statutory and best practice training in place?*
5. Review of the Single Central Record. *Is it complete and compliant?*
6. Are all staff confident of the safeguarding policies and procedures?

Overview of the visit

Governor will visit the school and meet with **the DSL or Deputy DSL**, and the **staff member who upkeeps the single central record**.

If it is convenient, they will **visit classes and talk to staff** to find out their knowledge and understanding of:

- the safeguarding procedures following a concern
- what to do if an allegation is received
- what Prevent is

They will **report verbally to the Headteacher** before leaving, with a written report following within 2 days.

Relevant documents and policies include: safeguarding policies, ESAT safeguarding report and the school vision statement.

Reflection

Timetable of visit

Start Time	Length	Location	Comments
09:15	30 mins	Head's Office	Child Protection recording process and records (including how these are used) Discussion around current risks in school Action Plan updates from last ESAT visit
09:45	15 mins	Office	Review of the single central record
10:00	10 mins	Office	Review of training record for staff and governors (safeguarding)
10:15	5 mins	Classes	Discussion with staff if possible
10:50	15 mins	Feedback to Head	Share findings with Head and finalise form for sharing with the GB

Reflection

Reflection after each class visit or activity allows time to process and note the information received.

If a small group of governors is present, this opportunity for reflection and discussions allows governors the chance to form a shared view of what they saw, heard and felt in each rooms.

- These discussions can be led by the governor organising the visit (if more than one governor is attending)
- They concentrate on the focus areas of the visit (linked to the school improvement plan or statutory responsibility) but may including other areas if appropriate
- They can be recorded as a summary view. In this way you can compare different aspects across the school rather than just discussing an individual class

Reflect on:

- What did we see or hear?
- What might this suggest?
- Any questions we have?
- Any improvements seen?
Where was the evidence?
- Any areas to look at again?



Reporting back to the board

Governance is corporate so all governors need to be aware of key information and indicators when evaluating impact and making decisions. Some form of monitoring record should be added to the board paperwork to support this shared approach. An example template can be found here: [Oxfordshire Governor Services Toolkit | Schools](#)

Completing a monitoring form:

- Allows time for governors to reflect on what they have learnt
- Provides an opportunity to feed back to the head
- Records the evidence governors found on their visit
- Promotes conversations around school improvement
- Can encourage the regular reporting on safeguarding if prompted by the form



Example monitoring report

- This is an extract from a governor monitoring form. It is closely linked to the planning and is written to demonstrate the evidence available to support the board's evaluation. It also includes questions that were not answered during the visit or may need following up.
- This information would be shared with the headteacher verbally before leaving the school, and the form would be shared with the Chair and Headteacher shortly afterwards to check that no pupil or staff member is directly identified and that the facts are accurate.

Name of governor/s	Rosie Eng, Marc Carpenter and Rachel McDougal
Date of visit	Monday 26 September 2022 13:30-15:00
Purpose/ agreed focus	To collect information and evidence about the curriculum offer through visiting classrooms and speaking with children.
Link to any priorities (SIP or statutory)	Ofsted actions, School Improvement plan and Governor Monitoring plan
Staff member(s) involved	Staff in classes visited
Activities undertaken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visit to Reception, Year 1, Year 3 and Year 5 to see the learning environment 2. Talking and listening to children about their experience of the curriculum and extra-curriculum
What we found out	<p>Visiting classrooms</p> <p>1. Is the curriculum broad and balanced? What evidence can we see of subjects being taught across the school?</p> <p>There was an extensive range of evidence to demonstrate the breadth of the curriculum taught across the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays within classes and in the outside areas showed evidence of maths, writing, science, history, geography and art. • Learning activities seen demonstrated PE, history, geography, design and technology and multiple opportunities from the seven areas of learning in the EYFS. In many cases, the subjects were linked, so art and drama were used to support historic understanding, and the story of Paddington Bear supported geography learning. <p><i>Questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some children had not had any science lessons this term. Is this expected? • There was no evidence seen of RE in the classes visited. How and when is RE taught across the school? <p>2. Are pupils engaged with their work and behaving well?</p> <p>In every class visited, the children were engaged and behaving well. There was a buzz of activity across the school, and it felt like everyone knew what they were doing and why.</p> <p><i>Questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The jump from EYFS to Year 1 is quite marked. How is the transition from the EYFS framework to the national curriculum managed to allow time for the children to adapt? What more could we do to support this transition and help pupils thrive? <p>3. How are books and reading linked to the wider curriculum?</p> <p>There are lots of books on display around the classes that supported the topic in that classroom, for example, in the older class Anne Frank's Diary</p>



Summary

Governor visits form a useful part of the wider governor monitoring process, allowing boards to know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of their school and to evaluate the impact their improvement plans are having. Visits also allow the abstract information from a board meeting to have a specific context as governors begin to know their schools better.

Governor visits are most useful when:

- They are **planned in advance**
- They are **linked to the school improvement plan** or the board's statutory responsibilities
- There are **clear processes and protocols** linked to governor visits
- A **monitoring form is completed**, agreed by the head and shared with the board after each visit
- The **information is used to evaluate** impact of the board's plans



Additional support

Further information about governor visits in your school will be available from your Chair or your governor mentor. *Please ask for a copy of the **Governor Visits policy** if you have not seen this already. Check you understand your role in the process.*

Consider any other training needs you have. There may be other modules in this series that would help you in your governor role or you may benefit from joining one of our face to face training sessions. *Details of these are available from the **GovernorHub website** (www.GovernorHub.com) under the training tab.*

If you have additional questions, do get in touch with Oxfordshire County Council Governor Services, who will be happy to support you:

Email: GovernorServices@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Phone: 03300 249046



GOVERNOR
SERVICES

Quiz and feedback

We hope you found this introduction to **Governor Visits** helpful.

Please use the link below to access the quiz and feedback form. You will be able to request your certificate from here too.

[Quiz](#)

Thank you for completing this training and for your valuable feedback.

