

# **Ashton West End Primary Academy Governor Monitoring Visits Policy**



Approved by the Full Governing Body on the 17th June 2021

Review Date: June 2023



## Introduction

This policy applies to the monitoring visits made by governors and sets out the specific principles, responsibilities and actions that governors have agreed in order to fulfil the requirements of informing the governing body of the work of the school.

This policy does not apply to visits made for other purposes. Whilst providing governors with valuable experience of the school during working days or through discussions with staff at any time, general visits do not fulfil the specific role of monitoring. Governors are welcome to comment on their experiences from any visit provided they are consistent with the principles set out in this policy and should therefore consider reviewing this policy before reporting on outcomes of visits at a governors' meeting.

This policy applies to monitoring activities both in school and outside and can cover one or more governors working with one or more members of staff.

Visits to school by governors during the time that the school is in operation give them important insights that they can gain in no other way. If governors are to carry out their role effectively, they need to have an understanding of the way schools work and a feel for the dynamics of their particular school. There is no better way of gaining this information than by visiting the school at work. However, although school visits are important for many reasons, they form only one part of the governors' wider role.

## Policy

The aims of governors' monitoring visits are:

- To learn about the school.
- To show those employed in the school that they are interested.
- To reinforce good relationships between governors and staff.
- To help fulfil the statutory obligations and accountability role of the governing body to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the School Development Plan.
- To allow governors to view performance data in the context of an understanding of what happens in the classroom.
- To recognise and celebrate success.
- To get to know the children of the school.
- To see policies and scheme of work in action.
- To achieve an understanding of what resources are needed.

The aims of the monitoring visits are **not** about:

- Making judgements about the quality of teaching.
- Checking on progress of own children.
- Pursuing personal agendas.
- Monopolising teachers' time.
- Arriving with inflexible, preconceived ideas on outcomes.

Governors are a part of the school community, but they nevertheless need to agree any visits to the classroom with the Principal.

Governors monitoring visits must have a purpose, and an outcome in written record form to be shared with those involved and once agreed in that forum, to be shared with all governors. Given the governing body's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018, the written outcome can be released unedited to appropriate third parties unless the full governing body acts to make the report



confidential and agrees a form for release. In such circumstances, the balance between the rights to privacy of individuals is considered against a right of access of information.

The key objective of a monitoring visit is to share the knowledge gained from the visit with all governors.

The expectation is that each governor will attend at least one of the two monitoring sessions per term.

An equality of time served in monitoring is not a goal of this governing body, however where a commitment is made by a governor to visit and report their findings, all other governors share a responsibility to review the report and when appropriate discuss the matter in an appropriate forum.

### **Roles**

The governing body believes that the corporate responsibility it holds should be discharged fairly amongst all governors. Governors with specific monitoring roles are agreed by the governing body each Autumn term.

### **Format of Visits**

The format of monitoring visits varies according to purpose. Examples are listed for guidance.

1. Monitoring specific aspects of the School Development Plan. This could involve meeting with members of staff, observing lessons, talking to children or work scrutiny. When undertaking tasks such as work scrutiny, governors are ordinarily paired with members of the teaching staff to assist with the process.
2. Consultancy. This could be where a governor meets with a subject leader to ask questions and note answers. This provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of issues covered.
3. To audit resources. This would happen in a particular curriculum area in order to investigate the use and adequacy of the resources for that area, (books, equipment, practical aids, visual aids, etc). It may include a review of deployment of resources other than those used in the classroom, for example teacher's training aids, a training programme schedule, etc.
4. Specific focus visits e.g. SEND or Health and Safety.
5. Year Group visits. It would be particularly useful for a visit to be made in order to focus on issues to do with progress of pupils towards the key stage SATs. Other class visits could also greatly enhance the governors' understanding of the curriculum in operation.
6. Specific Purpose visits. A visit could be made for a particular purpose when discussion at a governors meeting shows that there is a need for a follow up.

### **Process**

What a governor should do before conducting a monitoring visit:

1. Acquaint themselves with the environment they can expect to be in during the visit, where appropriate research previous visit reports to establish a history of similar monitoring outcomes.



2. Agree with a group (or individual) that will be monitored what the purpose of the visit will be and agree a convenient time and duration.
3. For class visits, ask the teacher to explain the context at the outset, i.e. what are the learning objectives, any specific challenges or outcomes anticipated, and how the teacher would like you to engage with the children. (Appendix 2 Visit Report Form)
4. For curriculum visits to see teaching in practice, obtain a copy of the relevant policy document.
5. For any other visit, ensure preparatory papers are reviewed before attending. It may prove difficult to obtain copies on the day.

**What a governor should do during a monitoring visit:**

1. Avoid sitting on the periphery of activities in a manner similar to inspectors.
2. Join in activities if invited to do so by the responsible person.
3. Be friendly to children and take an interest in their work.
4. Make positive comments if appropriate to children who are engaged in their work.
5. Refrain from making any negative comments to children.
6. Further guidance is listed in Appendix 1 – Protocol for Visits

**What a governor should do after a monitoring visit:**

1. Thank the staff for allowing you conduct the visit. If a class visit, make sure to comment on enjoyable aspects of the lesson.
2. With the staff that have been involved, review the purpose of the visit (set previously) to enable agreement on how the visit should be recorded. If matters arise outside the originally agreed purpose, note them as issues for a future monitoring exercise or governor follow up.
3. Complete a monitoring report pro-forma and email an electronic copy to the Principal as soon as possible after the monitoring visit. The Principal will then distribute the report to governors and the Clerk of the Governing Body.

**Monitoring and Review**

Policy Date: June 2021

Review Date: June 2023



## Appendix 1

### Protocol for Classroom Visits

The following gives guidance on the protocols surrounding visits to the classroom by governors.

- Ensure that the policy on governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff.
- Recognise that classroom visits are primarily for governors to gain first-hand knowledge of the school at work.
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned.
- Ensure that there are agreed timescales for governors' visits, usually giving at least seven days clear notice.
- Recognise the right for teachers, with the agreement of the Principal, to invite governors into school for specific purposes if they so wish.
- The Principal should provide members of the governing body with the relevant background information, i.e. staff names, responsibilities and timetables.
- Recognise that any visit to the classroom can be stressful and disrupts normal classroom working, and that therefore the number of visits should be limited.
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.

### For Individual Governors

- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with the Principal and class teacher for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that teachers' and governors' time is valuable.
- Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned.
- Avoid stressful periods such as during or just before an Ofsted inspection or examinations.
- Always wear a name badge.
- Avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with the pupils during the lesson.
- Avoid note taking or acting in any way like an inspector or asking unrelated questions. Be aware that your role is that of an observer. Most governors are not qualified to make educational judgements.
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing body.

Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular



issues surrounding named staff or pupils.

- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate for you to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst.
- Raise any concerns over the visit with the Principal.

#### **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 have been agreed by all concerned.
- Prepare your 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.
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do.
- Don't leave your governor alone with the class, even if they are willing to do so.
- Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager or Principal.



**Appendix 2**

**Ashton West End Primary Academy  
Governor Visit Report**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date of Visit</b>	
<b>Focus of Visit</b>	
<b>Classes/ staff visited</b>	
<b>Summary of activities</b> e.g. observing, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch etc.	
<b>What I have learned as a result of my visit</b>	
<b>Positive comments about the focus</b>	
<b>Aspects I would like clarified/ questions I have</b>	
<b>Ideas for future visits</b>	
<b>Any other comments</b>	

Signed..... (Governor)

Signed ..... (Principal)



### **Appendix 3**

## **ASHTON WEST END PRIMARY ACADEMY**

### **GOVERNOR'S VISIT REPORT FORM**

**Name:**

**Date of visit:**

**Duration of visit:**

**What elements were included in this visit? (Please list all that apply)**

Classroom Visit/ Talking to children/Attending Assembly/Talking to Class Teacher/ Looking at Pupils Work/ Looking at displays/Talking to other staff//Meeting with HT/ Meeting with Subject Leader/ Looking at resources/ Attending lunchtime/Other – please specify

**Focus of visit:**

**How does this link with the School Development Plan?**

**EBIs/Action Points from previous visits:**

**Discussions prior to visit with teacher/Headteacher/subject leader:**

**Monitoring findings:**

**WWW (What Went Well):**

**EBI (Even Better If):**





**Summary – with reference to focus of visit:**

Signed:

Date

Please email a copy of this report, when completed, to the Principal within 14 working days of the visit.



**Appendix 4**

**Ashton West End Primary Academy  
Governor Monitoring of the School Development Plan**

<b>Focus Area in SDP:</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Comment and Impact</b>

Signed ..... (Governor)

Signed ..... (Principal)



## Appendix 5

### Ashton West End Primary Academy

#### Governor's learning walk

Learning walks are where you will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area. You are 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	
<b>Name and role of governor(s)</b>	
<b>Name and role of staff member(s)</b>	
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	
<b>Agreed focus</b> <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>	E.g. To see the implementation of the new strategy to improve attainment of Key Stage (KS) 2 boys.
<b>Relevant school objective or priority</b> <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.</i>	Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.
<b>Questions to ask</b> <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</i>  <i>Share these questions with the staff member you're visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	Ask staff: what do you do if you think a student needs further support?  Ask pupils: if you need help with something, what do you do?



## 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?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing responses to the question above.

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

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing responses to the question above.