

# Dean Valley Community Primary School



*Success and  
Fulfilment for all*

## Protocol for Governors' Visits

**SPECIALIST GOVERNOR, CLASS GOVERNOR AND CURRICULUM LINK  
GOVERNOR VISITS**

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# **Governor Visits to School**

## **Introduction**

Governing Bodies have a statutory duty to promote high standards of educational achievement at their school and they must monitor the school performance to that end. Governors can not do this unless they know the school well. One way in which Governors can acquire up to date knowledge is to make periodic visits to the school, in addition to attending governor's meetings and school functions.

There are two types of "Governor Visit" the formal and informal. The informal visits may involve Governors offering to help run a stall at a major fundraising event, attending the Christmas Carol Concert or taking part in a school visit. All these are valuable at earning the good will of the staff, as well as helping to establish good working relationships with the staff and pupils. However they should not be regarded as an alternative to the formal visit.

The cycle of formal visits should be identified at the full Governing Body meetings and they will usually relate to the priorities identified on the School Improvement Plan. The formal visit should usually last a whole or half a day, in which individual Governors act as the representative at the Governing Body, with the expectation that they will subsequently report back. Some formal visits may be allocated to specific Governors with designated responsibilities, for example Special Educational Needs, Premises, Literacy and Numeracy.

## **The Rational for Governors Visiting School**

- To enable Governors to fulfil their statutory duties and responsibilities
- To enable Governors to be better informed at Governors' Meetings and to be able to make an informed contribution to the strategic work of the school
- To gain a better understanding of particular areas of school provision
- To understand more about the deployment of school resources
- To be better informed about the implementation of the school's policies
- To get to know staff better
- To talk to the staff and pupils about their experiences in school
- To listen to the voice of the child

- To be able to demonstrate that the Governing Body of the school take their responsibilities seriously

It is worth remembering that “Governors are not there as inspectors or to pass judgements on the work of individual teachers and much will depend upon the sensitivity of the governors to the feelings of the teaching staff about being observed.”  
(A Guide for Governors)

### **Pupil’s Expectations**

Pupils were interviewed in order to gain their perception of the value of governor’s visits to school. The children view the visits as a positive way to improve the school. They believe there are a number of ways in which governors can become more involved in the life and work of the school for example:

- Eco Team meetings
- School Council Meetings
- Visits to talk to children about their learning
- Visits to school to help the children with their work
- Visits to the classrooms
- Assemblies
- Lunchtimes – to share a meal
- Performances/activities/celebrations

The children d thought governors needed to be mindful of the following when they made their visits. Governors:

- Must not be too critical
- Need to understand how the school works - for example the new marking scheme
- Needed to respect confidentiality
- Need to celebrate good work
- Need to listen seriously to what children say about the school and try to do something to improve the school

### **Preparing to Visit**

Governors, who are planning on making a visit to school, whether it is formal or informal, need to have made prior arrangements with the Headteacher. They need to be clear about the purpose of the visit and what they will be focussing on. The length of the visit will be agreed before hand, and any additional information that may be useful will have been circulated before hand.

It is important that everyone involved in the visit is prepared for it, and that all teachers are aware of the purpose. The Headteacher will approach the teachers concerned before the visit takes place.

## Follow up to the Visit

At the end of their time in school the Headteacher will try to meet with Governors to discuss the visit.

All formal visits should be reported back to the full Governing Body. When reporting back it is important to remember that Governor visit should relate to their responsibilities as governors. It is the Head Teacher's job to manage the school, in accordance with the aims and objectives and policies approved by the Governing Body. To judge the quality of teaching and learning in the school requires specialist skill, and Governors are not in a position to make those judgments based on short occasional visits. When Governors use visits to gain information to help in them in their role, they do so as observers and not as inspectors.

The report should be written. A **brief** written report serves better than an oral report in that it helps to clarify the issues for discussion or suggestions for further action. However as a written report, like other papers from the Governing Body, it is open to public inspection, **it should avoid naming individuals.**

It should not be tabled at the meeting, but given to the Clerk in time for distribution with the agenda. The report should also be discussed with the Head teacher and the Chair of Governors in advance of the meeting.

## Governors' Lesson Observations

Although not all the visits by Governors will involve lesson observations, a great deal of time will be spent in classrooms. As well as watching the teaching and learning that takes place, there will also be the opportunity to move around and talk to the pupils about their work, as well as the look at the classroom environment i.e. displays, resources, books labelled equipment etc. At the end of the lesson, time will be arranged for the Governor and teacher to talk about the lesson and address any questions.

When carrying out lesson observations it is important that all Governors are aware that there are children with special needs in every classroom and teachers use a variety of appropriate strategies for dealing with the behaviour.

## Monitoring the Effectiveness of Governor Visits

All Governors are accountable to the Governing Body for the formal visit that the individual has made on their behalf. The visit will always contribute to the relationship between the Governing Body and the staff. Reflecting on a visit can make subsequent visits for effective. Governors should always ask themselves:

- Were the objectives for the visit clear?
- Were they realised and if not why not?
- What if anything could have been done to make the visit more useful?
- Did you require any additional information to enable you to place the visit in context?

**All Governors are welcome to visit the school, in the belief that they will help to keep the Governing Body better informed about the work of the staff, pupils, and parents. It is our intention that this policy should support the development of a good working relationship with the Governing Body and the staff, so that we all work together on planning how best to support the aims and objectives of the school.**

## Class Link Governor Visits

### Purpose

**At Dean Valley the governing body agreed to create the role of a class link governor. The role of the class link governor is more 'informal' than the specialist governor role. It is not a monitoring role but does provide an opportunity to 'get to know the school' through the eyes of a particular cohort as they move through school.**

Where possible the Class Link Governor may visit the children in school for the following activities:

- **Class Assemblies**
- **Trips out of school**
- **Parties/special occasions/special visitors**
- **To spend some time with them in school to find out what they are doing**

Governors are NOT required to produce a report for this type of visit. If questions arise as a result of the above visits they MUST be shared with the class teacher and or Headteacher.

The Governing Body also agreed that the Class Link Governor may be asked to meet with a group of children from their allocated year group to discuss an agreed topic or focus. The topic is usually selected by the Headteacher and is linked to a school improvement priority for example, provision for more able children. The Headteacher, or a member of staff, will prepare a list of questions relating to this focus for governors to use when they meet with the children. Governors are asked to prepare a SHORT written report when they complete this activity.



## Protocol for Visiting Governors

### Before the Visit

Governors will each identify a particular area of responsibility or interest which will be the focus of their visits, for example:

- A Strategic School Development Plan priority
- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Curriculum areas including Literacy and Numeracy
- Premises and Health and Safety

**Governors will always make prior arrangements for the visit, with both the Headteacher and the teachers/staff involved.**

### Aims of the Visit

The main aims of the visit will be:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the school in order to inform the GB decision making process
- To gain a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of a governor
- To get to know the staff and develop a supportive relationship
- To get to know the school and to get to know the children
- To focus on their particular area of responsibility or on an agreed aspect of the strategic school development plan
- To monitor the performance of the school and triangulate the information provided in reports from the senior leadership team, Ofsted, external consultants
- To observe the impact of school improvement strategies

### During the Visit

- Governors will respect confidentiality at all times but will also have due regard for safeguarding policy and procedures
- Governors will remember that they are not visiting the school in an inspectoral role
- Governors will comply with and observe any school rules and/or routines

### After the visit

- Governors will thank the relevant school staff
- Governors will discuss their school visit with the Headteacher
- Governors will respect rules of confidentiality at all times
- Governors will complete the relevant Proforma for their visit
- Governors will circulate and present the report to other members of the Governing Body at their next full meeting

Ratified by governors on .....



## Appendix 1 Cycle of Governor Visits

**GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL 20xx/20xx**

Please enter Diary Dates for your visits to school

GOVERNOR	YEAR GROUP	Date	SUBJECT LINK	Date	PUPIL VOICE FOCUS Visit	Date	Class Link Visit Informal	Dates	Specialist Role	Dates		
										1	2	3
Miss E Davies	Y1		RE						SEN			
Mr A Roberts	Y5		Maths						Chair of Finance Committee			
Mrs L Picken	Y3		Safeguarding						Safeguarding			
Mrs M Swindells	School Council		Foundation Stage						Chair of Governors			
Mr P Watts	N/A		PE/Arts						Pupil Premium			
Mr T Penny	Y2		IT						Training			
Mrs Watson	FS		Science						SEN			
Mr D Mitchard	Y4		Humanities									
Miss H Simpson	N/A								Health and Safety			
Miss C Hough	N/A											
Mrs E Healey	Y6		English						Transition Y6/Y7			
Miss Emily Smith	N/A											

## CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL AND GOVERNORS FOR BEFORE AND AFTER VISIT

School	Governor
What is the purpose of the visit?	Has formal appointment been made with Headteacher to discuss visit?
What is governor is expecting to see?	Do I know the purpose of the visit?
Is the visit linked to an area of the School Development Plan/	How will I provide feedback to staff member, headteacher, governors?
Has a timetable been drawn up for the visit? (if required)	How will I build on this visit for next visit?
Do appropriate members know of the time and purpose of the visit?	How did I address any difficulties I met, and how can I learn from this for future visits?

## EXAMPLE Dean Valley Primary School Governor Record of Visits Proforma

<b>Name of governor</b>	Maggie Swindells
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2013
<b>Purpose: Link with Subject Leader, Specialist Role, Class Governor visit</b>	Class Link Governor Visit - Foundation Stage Leader
<b>Involving: Name(s) of staff</b>	Alex Greenwood
<b>Link with the school development plan priority?</b>	Premises Plan

### Questions:

- Is the current outdoor provision for the Early Years fit for purpose?
- Do we have a long term COSTED plan for improving the FS Outdoor Provision?
- If we make improvements what do we expect the impact to be?

Whilst recognising that the staff do their very best to provide a rich and engaging range of learning opportunities the Foundation Stage Leader discussed the challenges the current outdoor learning posed for the children and the staff:

- Storage – lack of suitable storage to enable children to easily access resources and take responsibility for putting them away in the right place
- Space – limited space for children to develop their gross motor skills – balls/bikes/etc without hampering quieter more reflective activities
- Equipment – in need of refreshing and due to poor storage it is difficult to provide a ‘cycle of resources’ linked to a ‘theme’ or area of interest
- The ‘wind breaks’ are an issue and the area can be damaged at playtimes and lunchtimes by footballs games on the main playground
- Lack of investment over time has resulted in the outdoor learning area comparing poorly with similar spaces in similar size primary schools.

The Foundation Stage Leader had worked with the children to develop a ‘story board’ with ideas for improvements which would result in an improved outdoor learning environment for the children. The improvements needed could be split into achievable actions for example improved storage and into larger projects which could be considered as part of a remodelling of the whole FS area and other areas of the school which also need to be improved – for example the staffroom and PE cupboard which backs onto part of the FS outdoor area.

The following actions were agreed:

- MS to raise the improvements needed in the next GB Finance Committee
- Alex to identify some ‘quick wins’ items which could be relatively low cost and achievable
- MS to discuss with Emily, and the Gobs Finance and Premises committee, an option to commission an architect to come up with a costed plan for redesigning the FS area, staffroom, caretakers room and the link into the hall through the PE store
- MS to ask the HT for funding for iPad software for FS staff to capture ‘learning journey’ evidence electronically – this had been agreed by the previous HT

Headteacher	Emily Smith	
Staff involved	Alex Greenwood	
Governor	Maggie Swindells	<i>Maggie Swindells</i>

**Dean Valley Primary School Governor Record of Visits Proforma**

<b>Name of governor</b>	
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	
<b>Purpose of the visit e.g. Link with Subject Leader, Specialist Role, Class Governor Visit.</b>	
<b>Involving:</b>	
<b>Link with the school development plan</b>	

What did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified? How long did the visit last?

What are the standards like in this subject/aspect and how do you know?

**Resource Implications:**  
**TIME, MONEY, TRAINING, RESOURCES**

**The following actions were agreed/discussed:**

**Implications for the Governing Body**

Headteacher		
Staff involved		
Governor		

## USEFUL NOTES TO AID COMPLETION OF VISIT RECORD

DO:	DON'T
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP ONE</b></p> <p>Prepare the report in draft as soon after the visit as possible.</p>	<p>Be lengthy – no more than 2 sides of A4 Maximum</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP TWO</b></p> <p>Have the report typed if possible.</p>	<p>Do not be over familiar or make written observations about the quality of teaching and learning. If there are any concerns, raise them with the Headteacher verbally.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP THREE</b></p> <p>Discuss the draft with the headteacher to ensure any mistakes or misunderstandings can be clarified.</p>	<p>Name staff or pupils.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP FOUR</b></p> <p>Share the record with the member of staff.</p>	<p>Hand around the report at the meeting; governors will have had no opportunity to read it and give it proper attention.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP FIVE</b></p> <p>Give a copy of the report to the clerk to governors for distribution at next meeting.</p>	<p>Go through your report in detail or read it verbatim. This lengthens meetings unnecessarily.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP SIX</b></p> <p>Come to the meeting prepared to give a short verbal introduction and answer any questions.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STEP SEVEN</b></p> <p>Think to yourself: what can I do to make future meetings more effective?</p>	

## Dean Valley Community School

### Curriculum Link Governor and Subject Leader Visits

#### Suggested Questions

##### To ask pupils

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- ☒ Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)

##### To ask subject leaders

- What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject? (This questions is mainly for English, maths, science and ICT. Other subject may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection)
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

##### Questions about teaching English/Maths

##### Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?
  - Compared with similar schools?
  - In relation to the national rates of increase?

- In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- How do our results in English/math's compare with other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
  - Girls and boys
  - Pupils with special educational needs
  - Very able pupils
  - Pupils with English as an additional language and the others
  - The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
- In meetings to understand how much pupil progress is being made you could

**look at**

- The Early Years – how is achievement measured
- Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
- Pupil progress data across each year
- The work of a range of pupils – average, below average and above average
- Other evidence, Special Needs
- Pupils on FSM
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily English/math's lessons
- Management of the subject?
- How is the role of the English/math's subject leader developing – can you see evidence of impact?
- **Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?**
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (English only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books are available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys?



- How well do pupils use the library? What links does the school have with the local library?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/maths?

**Aid Memoir for Governors – A Learning Walk Check List – can be used as individual sections for a key priority**

<b>Checklist for a Learning Walk</b>			
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
<b>Learning Environment</b>	Are: Targets displayed? Key learning Objectives evident? Success criteria on display? Aid memoirs for learning in place? Labels used to encourage independence? Working walls in use and are children adding to them? Learning walls in place? Clear areas for learning demarcated? Different subjects displayed? Room set out for easy access? Children able to access good quality learning resources? Is the room light and well ventilated?		
<b>Classroom environment</b>	Is the classroom tidy? Is the classroom an attractive place to learn? Does the classroom have interactive displays which encourage the children to learn? Are book shelves tidy with books in the right places? Is the equipment tidy/does it have a designated place? Are displays well-presented with no torn/ ripped paper/edges? Do children tidy up well and leave the classroom as they would wish to find it? Are children's books/papers kept in a well-placed and tidy space? Is equipment well cared for – not broken or beyond its useful life?		
<b>Who is doing the talking?</b>	Do all pupils get the opportunity to get actively involved?		

<b>Checklist for a Learning Walk</b>			
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
Is there opportunity for interaction?	Can the pupils work together in pairs, groups? Do they know how to work together?		
Is the setting appropriate for that style of lesson?	Are pupils sitting in groups, Working in pairs. Can they all see what is going on?		
Are all pupils on task?	Are they engaged and actively involved in the task? Can they work independently without constantly asking their teacher for help?		
Do the pupils know what they are learning as opposed to what they are doing?	Can they say what they are learning and why?		
Is there differentiation?	Can all pupils access the lesson at their level?		
Questioning	Does the teacher use questions that challenge all pupils? What kinds of questions are being used? Are they open ended? Is any time given for reflection?		
Modelling and Demonstrating	Do the pupils know what the aim of the lesson is - the final picture? Does the teacher demonstrate how to get there in clear easy steps?		
Problem-solving	Are the pupils given opportunities that challenge their thinking? Can they work together to develop solutions?		
Planning	Does the lesson follow the planning? Are layered targets evident in the teaching? Does the teacher audit previous learning?		

Checklist for a Learning Walk			
Focus	Example	Observation	Next Steps
	Is there a plenary – a time at the end of the lesson to share the outcomes and what has been achieved?		
Support Staff	How are they deployed? Do they only work with SEN children?		
Assessment	Who is working with the target group and what are they focusing on? Are the children on task? Are the pupils involved in their own assessments? Do children know what they have to do next to reach the next level?		
Marking	Are the children's books marked? Are they marked using the school policy? Are children responding to the teachers marking? Do the children understand the marking policy and how it can help them improve their learning?		
ICT	Are the children and the teacher making effective use of ICT?		
Progress	Can the children demonstrate that they know more by the end of the lesson than they did at the beginning?		
Enjoyment	Do the children enjoy the lesson? Is the teacher/TA enjoying the lesson?		
Behaviour	Are the children well behaved? Is any inappropriate Behaviour dealt with quickly and positively?		
Any other aspects worth noting?			