

Bentham CP School
Governor School Visits Policy

Accepted by the Governing Body
March 2023

To be reviewed 2 yearly
May 2025

RATIONALE

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its school's policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for their own school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and will test that assumption during a school inspection.

One of the best and most effective ways in which a Governor can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work. The Governing Body has appointed link governors to facilitate the liaison between the governing body and some specific subject/curriculum areas or aspects of the work of the school.

The role of a link governor is a source of support to the school and a source of information for the governing body. An integral part of a link governor role is to view lessons in particular areas and to learn about the general running of the school. It is not an inspection but a fact finding and observational opportunity.

This policy includes a sample Governors' Visits report form which will help guide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OfSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base e.g. a member of staff's performance management.

It is good practice to establish a yearly programme of governor visits to the school, focused on gathering evidence to support school self-evaluation and progress against the school development plan (see school monitoring timetable). The information gathered during these visits will enable governors to:

- shape the direction of the school in partnership with senior leaders
- have an enhanced understanding of areas of strength and weakness so that governors can support and hold to account senior leaders effectively
- improve pupil outcomes
- secure statutory compliance

PROTOCOLS

All visits are to be made by prior arrangement with the Headteacher who will arrange the visit with the staff concerned. Feedback, either verbal or written, will be given to the Headteacher following the visit. A copy will then be given and shared with the member of staff and also be shared with the Governing Body.

	Always	Never
Before (at least one week prior to visit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the action points in the School Improvement Plan• Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team• Arrange details of the visit• Try to visit at different times of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn up unannounced for a focused, formal visit• Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and a recommended minimum notice of one week• Visit during a SATs week without

	<p>day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher/relevant member of staff draws up a schedule for visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? • Discuss with the Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team what is to be visited in school or the context of the lesson to be visited and possible involvement • Agree level of confidentiality 	<p>the visit being authorised by the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared, organised and punctual • Report to the school office and sign in • Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit • Observe school/class guidelines • Jot down discussion points • Report something that concerns you by speaking to the Headteacher • Adhere to the school's child protection policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monopolise Staff • Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher while he/she is teaching • Take the role of an Inspector! • Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils • Discuss observations as soon as possible after the visit • Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher • Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant • Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher and the Clerk • Send a copy of the Visit Form to the member of staff involved, if requested • Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave without a word of thanks and giving some feedback • Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors (except the Chair) unless given permission

All governors are encourage to attend ad hoc events through the school year. Some examples of these events are:

- Assemblies
- School productions
- Sports Day
- Fundraising events
- School Trips

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The governing body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Bentham CP School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, children and parents are aware of the policy and that the policy is fully implemented. The views of staff on Governor presence within school will be sought as part of the review process. There must be an effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding and trust, which benefits the whole school community.

By being proactively engaged in this way, governors:

- become more involved in the day to day life of the school
- have a deeper understanding of how well the school is doing
- increase their knowledge of the school's successes and challenges
- contribute to school improvement planning and SEF
- are effective partners in strategic leadership
- are able to provide more effective support to staff and pupils
- have greater confidence in providing appropriate, well-informed challenges to senior leaders
- find their role more fulfilling

Monitoring undertaken should result in the school SEF including statements such as:

“As a result of governors...the school now...and the impact has been...as evidenced by...”

“As a result of governors...pupils now...as evidenced by...”

“As a result of governors...more/fewer pupils are now...as evidenced by...”

The outcomes from governor monitoring and evaluation will feed into:

- SIP Visits
- SEF Reviews
- School development planning

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE POLICY

The Governing Body will review this policy bi-annually. The review will consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we better-informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Have we developed a further method of direct communication with staff?
- Do the staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Governor Visits procedures

Appendix 2 - Record Of Governor's Visit

Appendix 3 – Example Key Questions for Governors

Appendix 4 – Extract from Governance Handbook

APPENDIX 1

GOVERNOR VISITS OBJECTIVES

To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff
To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs
To recognise and celebrate success
To monitor the implementation of the School Development Plan
To increase first hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach
To see policies and schemes of learning in practice
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed.
To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils
To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process
To develop links with a class, year group or subject area
To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, Maths etc

APPENDIX 2

RECORD OF GOVERNOR'S VISIT

Governor's Name:	Date of Visit:
Focus of visit:	
Link(s) with School Development Plan:	
Areas/classes visited:	
Sources of information: <i>e.g.: Headteacher, class teacher, display work, children's workbooks, looking at resources</i>	
Pupil Voice:	
Comments:	
Points to take forward for discussion at the governing body meeting:	
Pending Question:	
Signed:	Date:
Received and discussed with Headteacher:	
Received by the Governing Body:	

EXAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS FOR GOVERNORS

General:

- How well are the pupils in each year group progressing towards end of year targets/expectations? How do you know?
- What are our Expected Outcomes at the end of each Key Stage this year? How do these compare with our targets? If there is a shortfall, what is being done to address this?
- What else do we need to do to secure accelerated improvement this year? How can governors help?

Pupil Progress:

- How and when are the pupils assessed? How do the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) make sure that these assessments are reliable? How are outcomes used to inform teacher planning?
- To what extent are pupils engaged in assessing their own work? What is the impact of this?
- How is each pupil's progress tracked through the school? How is this information used?
- How do the SLT make sure that underachieving pupils are identified early and correctly? What interventions are put in place to accelerate progress? How is the impact of these evaluated?
- When are progress meetings held with staff? How are outcomes used to improve learning?
- How might governors contribute more effectively to assessment/data analysis processes within the school?

Quality of Provision:

- How good is the quality of teaching in our school? How do the SLT know? What is happening to make it even better?
- How well does our curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? What is being done to improve/enhance our pupil's learning experiences?
- How can the governors contribute more widely to the educational provision for our pupils?

Questions for Governors - Attendance

Children in Care

- How many children in care do we have in school?
- How is the attendance of children in care monitored and what contact is there with social workers, or with the Local Authority virtual head teacher for children in care?
- How many days absence have individual children in care in the school had? What are the reasons for the absences?
- Is there an action plan in place with the social worker and/or Carer to address concerns about attendance?

Attendance data and processes

- How are we using attendance data in school?
- Do we as a school use data supplied from the LA?
- How many children do we have presently who fall into the persistent absence category (those children with below 90% attendance) and what actions are we taking with each individual to improve attendance?
- What time do we close our register? Is it within 1/2hr of the end of registration as set out in the DCSF guidance?
- What does ASP data say about our school attendance? How does our school compare to other schools in different parts of the country with similar pupil premium levels?
- How does the attendance of specific groups in the school (Black and Minority Ethnic groups, children with a Special Educational Needs, Children in Care, or children on free school meals) compare to others in the school population? What are we doing to address any identified issues and how are we 'closing the gap'?

Targets

- What are the absence targets for the current year, and what actions are we taking to ensure that we meet them? (It is important to note that attendance targets are expressed as the % of absence. This means that 95% attendance is the same as 5% absence – this is DCSF terminology but can cause some confusion.)

Workforce

- Who is the senior member of staff responsible for improving attendance and reducing persistent absence?
- Do we use penalty notices for unauthorised absences? And does the school understand the guidance issued by the local authority?

EXTRACT FROM GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

3.3.2 School visits

31. Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the board can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views; though are unlikely to be sufficient for these purposes.

32. Boards are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of executive leaders. If boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.