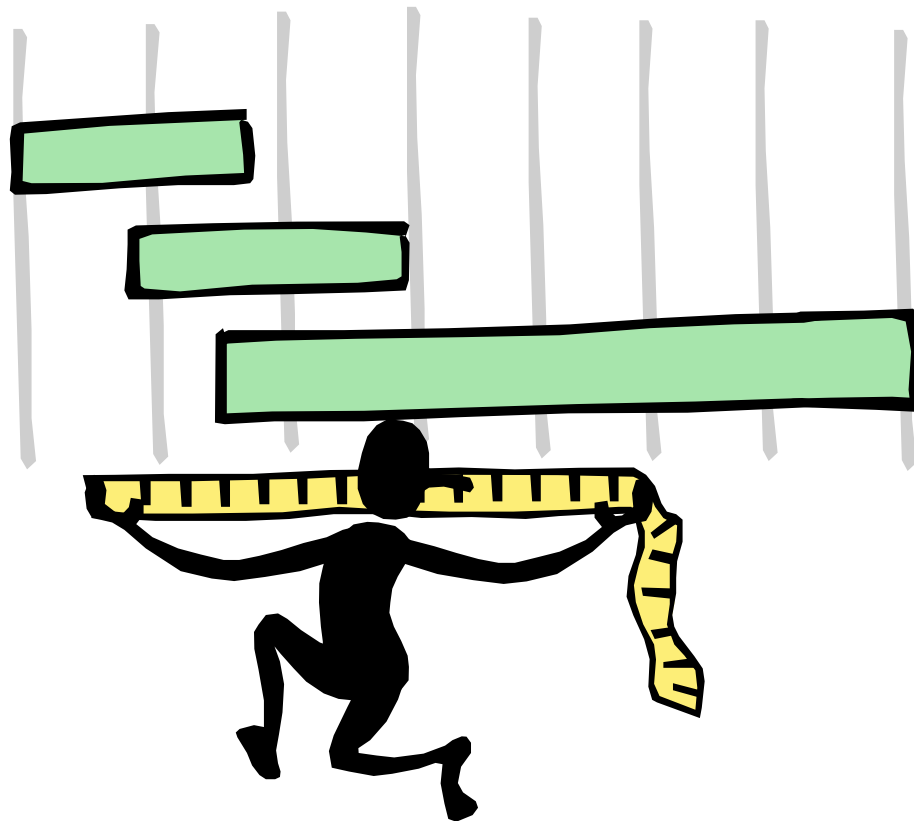


St. Andrew's CEVC Primary School, Great Yeldham

# GOVERNORS' GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL VISITS



Reviewed by Maria Trappitt  
(January 2011)

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## Introduction

Visiting the school is an essential part of being an effective school governor. Governors do not have an automatic right of entry to the school, however, in order to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and understand how the school works they will need to make regular visits.

Governors will recognise at all times that they have a strategic role and that the governing body acts as a unit. They will respect the professional roles of staff and will raise any issues appropriately at meetings of the governing body or one of its committees. It is important that governors are not seen to be acting as 'inspectors'. Visits to school by governors should, wherever possible, help to inform the strategic role of the governing body.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused visits to the school so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and understand better the context in which they work.

Governors will observe policies being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and will try to measure the impact. Their findings should help the whole governing body and its committees to make better informed judgements about the progress being made towards the targets in the School Improvement Plan (ScIP). They will provide valuable evidence to help the governing body to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff as well as to identify further areas for development.

Clearly both governors and the school staff want to maximise the opportunities that a visit offers, however it is best to have a clear purpose for any visit so that its success is obvious to all parties.

**It is not about making judgements on the quality of teaching;** that is the head teacher's responsibility. Nor is it about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas. The purpose of the visit should be previously agreed with the head teacher, member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) or Curriculum Subject Leader.

## Procedure

Governors need to be clear that the purpose of the visit is a supportive and not judgemental exercise. Ideally governors would make at least two visits a year.

Visits can take many forms such as an induction visit for new governors, individual visits, or going in pairs to share experiences, shadowing a pupil or member of staff, looking at a particular aspect of the school, joining in an INSET day, talking to young people and staff or just an open walkabout. Choose a method that suits both you and the school. Of course governors should attend as many social occasions as they can.

## Good Practice

During the visit remember to introduce yourself to members of staff and children, to note and praise the positive and always to thank everyone concerned before you leave. Follow up should include discussion with the head teacher, again don't forget to emphasise the good things you have seen.

## Preparing for the Visit

Before the visit it is often helpful to look again at any policies or papers relevant to the topic chosen. The School Prospectus, the School Profile and the last Head's report to governors as well as the School Improvement Plan also add context to the visit.

Think about whether you want to spend time in the classroom and talk to pupils, to see samples of work, discuss what you have seen with staff. If so find out if it will be convenient to do so.

## During the Visit

Some general observations and queries governors might make on a visit:

### Getting to know your school

- Are there clear signs of welcome?
- Am I encouraged to see all parts of the school?

- What are my first impressions?

### **Curriculum**

- Is some of the children's work on show?
- Does the work seen in the classroom show evidence of a range of subjects as well as the core subjects of Language, Mathematics, Science and Art?
- Am I encouraged to see examples of children's work?
- If I talk to a teacher, am I told about the progress of the class?
- Is there a reading scheme?
- What games and sports take place?
- What music is played in the school?

### **Behaviour**

- Is there an absence of shouting and violent behaviour at break?
- Do the staff express enthusiasm for their jobs?

### **Evaluate the visit by asking yourself:**

- Were you clear about the reasons for your visit and were they met – if not why not?
- Were you and everyone concerned properly prepared?
- Did you see what you wanted to see?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Were there areas you would like to know more about?
- What effect has the visit had on you, the school and the Governing Body?
- Has it given you ideas for future visits?

### **Addressing concerns:**

If there is any aspect that worries you after a visit take it to the head teacher first. If you are not satisfied with the response, share it with the Chair of Governors. Only when neither can offer a reasonable explanation nor are prepared to act should you take the matter to the Governing Body.

### **Evidence of the Visit:**

A written report should be given to the head teacher at the end of the visit or within one week of the visit, a copy of which will be kept on file in the governors' monitoring section of the School's Monitoring File.

There is a 'Record of Governor's Visit to School' proforma, attached to this policy which should be used to record the visit (see appendix 1 ).

## Reporting of Visits

Not all governors are able to visit schools during the day because of their work, so it is important to share experiences of visits with the rest of the Governing Body. You should consider how you will present your information to the Governing Body, good practice being in written form and circulated to everyone in advance of the next Full Governing Body Meeting (FGB), see appendix 1. An appraisal should then be written for inclusion in the Governors Termly Report to Parents (Newsletter), to be sent as soon as possible to the Chair of Governors.

The reports will remain confidential and be held by the visiting governor, the relevant staff member and the head teacher. Governors' visits will be an agenda item at each FGB Meeting.

Revised by M Trappitt – **January 2011**

Shared with staff - **January 2011**

Shared with Governors - **February 2011**

Review date – **January 2011**

# St Andrew's CEVC Primary School, Great Yeldham

## Record of Governor's Visit to School (1)

Name .....	Date .....	Duration.....
<b>1. Focus of visit</b> (Previously agreed with the head teacher, member of the SMT and/or Curriculum Subject Leader)		
<b>2. Links with the School Improvement Plan</b> (How does the visit relate to a priority in the ScIP?)		
<b>3. Governor observations and comments</b> (e.g. What did you learn? What would you like clarified?)		
<b>4. Any key issues arising for the head, chair of governors</b> (e.g. resources, progress with policies, ScIP progress, etc.)		

Signed by: .....

Date: .....