

# Date Valley School

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## Date Valley School Governor Visits Policy

### **Context:**

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the governing body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. Undertaking visits which focus on an aspect of the school development plan (SDP) or one of the governors' statutory duties demonstrates the governors' role in the strategic management of the school by helping to hold the school to account and evaluate its progress. Each governor is encouraged to make at least one visit a year during school time and governors will often monitor an area of the school development plan in accordance with an agreed timetable.

### **Visits enable governors to:**

- See the school at work and observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements
- Get to know the staff and demonstrate their commitment to the school
- Give active support to the staff and the activities of the school
- Be aware of the effect of change and different approaches to teaching and learning
- Evaluate resources and discuss further requirements with the school
- Gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking
- Work in partnership with the school

### **Before making a visit, governors will:**

- Contact the headteacher and/or managing director to agree a date, time and focus for the visit
- Draw up a timetable for the visit liaising with the headteacher and/or managing director
- Head teacher and/or managing director will ensure that all staff are aware of the visit

### **On the day of the visit the governor will remember to:**

- Be punctual and well prepared
- Act as an observer and participate in the class at the invitation of the teacher
- Respect the professionalism of the teacher, supporting without interfering
- Complete the Governor Visit Proforma (appendix 1) during the visit
- Enjoy the visit

### **After the visit, the governor will:**

- Remember to thank the staff and children
- Arrange feedback with the headteacher and/or managing director to give a verbal report supported with a written account (Governor Visit Proforma - appendix 1), and to raise any issues that arose. A proforma per class visit may be more effective
- Complete the Governor Visit Report (appendix 2), reporting on the focus. The completed form should be shared with the headteacher and/or managing director and after any possible alterations/ clarifications, the report will be circulated to the governing body initiating discussions required at board meetings
- Governors' reports must be objective and where possible individuals should not be able to be identified
- Conscientiously maintain confidentiality and will not discuss the content of governors visits outside of the school and board environment

It is important to remember that visits are a snapshot in time, and judgements should not be made arbitrarily.

### **The visit is about:**

- Monitoring
- Supporting
- Getting to know the school
- Recognising the professional expertise of the school staff

Governors are an important part of the school team and are welcomed by staff. It is important that governors respect the professionals, the children, support the management team and staff and acknowledge that they represent the full governing body. If the agreed principles and procedures are followed governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the governing body, which will contribute to school improvement.

It is important for staff and governors to be aware that governors are there ultimately to help the school and visits should be looked upon positively. We are working towards the same goal of making Date Valley a success with the help of Allaah. To this end, any questions or enquiries should be taken in this spirit of collaboration.

## **School Visits – Points to consider**

### **What is the purpose of the visit?**

What has prompted my decision to visit?  
Who has prompted my decision to visit?  
Is the reason specific or general?  
What are my/other people's expectations?  
How can my visit benefit the staff?

### **How shall I carry it out?**

What particular areas of the school am I interested in?  
What particular activities am I interested in?  
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?  
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?  
What questions should I ask?  
Who should I ask?

### **Did I achieve my aim?**

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?  
Which of my questions did I answer?  
To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?  
What difficulties did I meet and why?

### **Is there any follow-up?**

Have I recorded my experiences?  
Did I 'report back' to the head / MD?  
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?  
How can I build on this for the next visit?

## **Advice on conducting classroom visits**

### **Rationale:**

The governing body at Date Valley School has a responsibility to keep in touch with what is happening in school. Although their role is strategic, it is important that they have some understanding of the practicalities of the job. Meeting children, talking to staff and observing school activities will aid governors to understand some of the issues they are required to discuss and make decisions about with greater clarity.

### **Objectives:**

The governing body should aim to:

- Inform their decision-making by having visited the school as a governor at least once a year
- Be aware of the feelings of members of staff and the issues they face by liaising with the staff representative
- Read and keep up-to-date with school correspondences

### **Key questions:**

- Has every Governor visited in their capacity as a governor at least once during the year?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in this guidance?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make policies and practice even better?
- Are we using visits and the full skill set of the governors to maintain a full strategic overview of the school, staff, pupils, premises and practices? Can we tailor visits to suit the specific skill sets?

### **The benefits of visiting classrooms:**

Closer links between governors and teachers has potential benefits to both.

For governors, these include:

- Informed understanding of classroom life and practice
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action
- Finding out what resources are being utilised and what are required

For teachers, these include

- An opportunity to find out more about the role of the governor
- An opportunity to illustrate the theory and policies in practice
- An opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise

### **What to avoid:**

It is important for all parties to note that governors' visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve governors making a judgement about teaching in any official capacity. That remains the responsibility of the headteacher and other education professionals.

It might be wise for governors to avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. It can cause discomfort for everyone. They should also be aware of 'pursuing personal agendas' and adhere to guidelines stipulated in this policy.

### **Ground Rules:**

Before:

- Arrange details of visit
- Agree purpose of visit
- Discuss the context of what is to be observed
- If applicable agree a role within the classroom
- Pre-arrange all visits

During:

- Keep to the role agreed
- Remember confidentiality
- Adhere to the times and purpose agreed
- Be sensitive to the mood in the school and the expectations of the children
- Ensure your visit doesn't interfere or interrupt the teacher or children

After:

- Thank the teacher and the children
- Discuss the visit with the headteacher and/or managing director at their convenience
- Feedback to the governing body

### **Possible governor activities:**

- Take part in a lesson, acting as a classroom helper
- Formal observation - taking no immediate role other than talking to the children about what they are doing
- Learning walks - with a predetermined focus
- Scheduled Governor's Day visits - accompanied with an itinerary of the day
- Sharing and/or evaluating practice by meeting with members of the management team and/or subject coordinators, delivering training sessions and being available in an advisory role

### **Providing feedback:**

It is important initial feedback to the headteacher and/or managing director is supported by a written account by completing the During Visit - Governor Visit Proforma (appendix 1). The headteacher and/or managing director will share this feedback with staff members concerned.

The Governor Visit Report (appendix 2) should be completed as soon as possible after the visit. It should be reflective of discussions with the headteacher and/or managing director. The report should be shared with the headteacher, managing director and the governing board.

## Policy Review

This policy was shared with Governors in January 2017.

**This policy has been read and approved for Date Valley School, by the governing board, headteacher and the Date Valley Trust Policy Committee.**

**Date: July 2017**

### Version Control:

Author	Change	Version	Date
Naheed Mughal	Original	1.0	January 2017
Neena Lone, Irum Khan, Mohammad Abdus-Samee, Kamran Sheikh and Tahira Khan	Various amendments and additions to content, removing repetitions, rewording key points and proof reading.	1.1	April 2017 - June 2017

**Date Valley School**  
**During Visit - Governor Visit Proforma**

**Governor's name:**

**Date of visit:**

**Focus of visit:**

**Classes visited:**

**Sources of information:**

*e.g.: Headteacher, class teacher, display work, children's workbooks, talking to children, looking at resources*

**General comments:**

**Summary of what was learned:**

**Points to take forward for discussion at the governing body meeting:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Received and discussed with headteacher / managing director:**

**Date Valley School  
Governor Visit Report**

Name	
Date of Visit	
Focus of Visit	
Classes / Staff Visited	
Summary of activities, e.g. observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch, etc.	
What I learned as a result of my visit	
Positive comments about the focus	
Aspects I would like clarified / questions I have	
What evidence did you gather that all pupils have equal opportunities in our school? <i>e.g.: relating to gender, race, ethnicity, Special Educational Needs, socio-economic deprivation/Free School Meals, disability etc. In the curriculum/effective differentiation in lessons/opportunities for assessing the wider curriculum (clubs, trips, visits, sports etc)/accessible premises etc</i>	
Ideas for future visits	
Any other comments	
Signed (governor):	Date: