

# Thomas Willingale School



## Governor Visits and Monitoring Policy

Reviewed Jan 2022

## **Why do governors visit the school?**

Ofsted states: "If governors are to monitor and evaluate the school's work, they need to visit the school. When handled well, these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the school's work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings. The visits to school by governors work well when the focus of the visit is agreed in advance and understood by all involved".

Visiting school is a valuable opportunity for governors and should be a regular event where possible. It is important that the purpose of the visit is clearly identified and pre-planned where appropriate.

All governors should try to visit school during the working day so that they are able to learn more about the school, to contribute to the governing body's monitoring role and to show those employed at the school and the children that they are interested.

Although they are not a statutory requirement of the individual governor, visits to school provide an opportunity to:

- See the school in action and gain first hand information and understanding;
- Talk to, listen and ask questions of the pupils and staff;
- Raise the profile of the governing body so that governors are known and recognised as part of the school community, carrying out their role of critical friend;
- Observe policies and decisions in action and develop an understanding of issues (and challenges) facing the school;
- Celebrate the successes of the pupils and the staff at the school.

### **Visits are not about:**

- A form of inspection;
- Making judgements about the professional expertise of the staff
- Checking on your own children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- Arriving with preconceived ideas

## **Protocol**

It is important that governors play a positive role in monitoring, recognising excellence and enjoyment. All governors must have read and signed the Code of Conduct.

- Our role is to gain an overview and not to assess or judge the quality of teaching. That is a matter for professionals – the Headteacher, staff and advisers.
- Discuss focus of your visit with the teacher before you come in.

- Introduce yourself before any observation, walkabout or discussion.
- In classrooms, talk to the children about what they are doing and why they are doing a particular activity. Keep to facts and avoid personal interpretations.
- Talk to the children about what they have learned.
- Discussions with staff are useful but speak to staff at appropriate times and be sensitive of any pupil presence when doing so.
- After the session, thank the teacher and leave the classroom to take time to think about what you have seen and learned.
- You will need to produce a written report in an agreed format to feed back information to the governing body. The report will first be given to the Headteacher. A sample of the report form can be found within this policy document.
- If you have any concerns, discuss them with the Headteacher and not with the teacher.
- Remember that you are representing the governing body and are a guest of the school.
- Governors do not visit to make judgements but to gain an understanding of the school, the issues affecting it and importantly to note the conditions in which pupils and staff work to ensure a good learning environment.

## **Procedures**

- The purpose of the visit will be clearly defined, as agreed with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- Dates and times for the visits will be agreed with the Headteacher and staff involved.
- Preparation for the visit should be thorough, for example, by reading any appropriate policy documents and guidance.
- When you arrive for the visit, you will meet first with the Headteacher and they will discuss details with you.
- Visits will be timed, where possible, to allow governors a short time with the class teacher and/or subject leader before the lesson begins.
- If possible, governors will report back to the class teacher. If not, the Headteacher will do so on the governor's behalf.
- Governors will produce a written report in the agreed format.

It is sometimes difficult to know what you should be looking at and what **questions you need to consider** when making a visit. The following list offers guidance:

## **The Classroom**

- Watch how pupils enter the classroom.
- Was there an established routine to starting the lesson?

- How long does it take for them to settle down to work?
- How is the lesson ended?
- Are the children aware of what they should be doing and why?
- Do pupils have the necessary tools for the task in hand?
- Do pupils appear to take pride in their work and are they working purposefully?
- Is the general standard of behaviour good?
- Are the pupils friendly and polite to each other and to adults?
- Are pupils with learning difficulties identified and helped?
- Are the more able identified and catered for appropriately?
- Is there evidence of visits and/or visitors being used to enhance the curriculum?
- Do members of staff appear to feel positive about their working environment, their jobs and the relationships within the school?

### **The Environment**

- Do displays demonstrate pupils are receiving a broad and balanced curriculum?
- Do displays celebrate all ability levels?
- Are there sufficient text books and resources? Are they well cared for?
- Is there sufficient storage for books and equipment?
- Are classrooms neat and tidy and the floor free from obstruction?
- Is it too warm or cold for learning?
- Can all the pupils see work written on the board/screen by the teacher?
- Is the light good?
- Do pupils show respect for the physical environment?

## **Governor visits and school improvement**

The governing body has particular roles to play in school improvement. Through governor visits, we can work towards the fulfilment of our strategic role in monitoring and evaluation. Governors have a **steering** role to contribute to policy direction and planning. In the **monitoring** role governors assess the success of the governing body's plans; School Development Plan, Action Plan etc. In a **supporting** role, they promote a culture of improvement.

The following have been identified as criteria that need to be in place in a school for it to be working effectively and continuing to improve.

An improving school will:

- Focus on teaching and learning.
- Enhance pupil outcomes.
- Be able to manage change regardless of its source.
- Define its' own direction.
- Work to develop a positive ethos.
- Have strategies in place to achieve its goals.
- Monitor, evaluate and review the success of the processes chosen to achieve its' goals.
- Focus on the conditions necessary to achieve positive change/improvement.
- Maintain pace and direction during periods of uncertainty.

**Working together, governors, staff, pupils and parents make a difference. We aim for excellence and together we can achieve it.**