



**Wrightington
Mossy Lea
Primary School**



ST. GEORGE'S
Church of England
Primary School



From tiny acorns, mighty oaks grow

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Guidelines for Governor Visits to Classes

This guidance relates to visits in which individual governors act as the representatives of the governing body in the expectation that they will subsequently report to the governing body.

A visit is a significant act which affects the governing body's relationship with staff and pupils. Therefore there is a need to agree guidance and take into account everyone's views.

The governing body has responsibility for determining, monitoring and reviewing the policies, plans and procedures of the school. Visiting the school as a governor can be a very effective way of learning more about the school and showing your support for the hard work of the pupils and staff, as well as gaining a greater insight into the running of the school, which will enhance their ability to govern the school. It is important to remember that even though you are a Governor, you are a guest in the school and that you are not there to inspect, or judge lessons.

Under no circumstances must you offer advice on a lesson, or comment on the quality of learning.

That is the role of the professionals working in the school.

One of the most difficult areas for both governors and staff is that of the governor's visit to the school. In this document I aim to offer guidelines on how to make the day, not only a success and useful, but actually enjoyable – for staff, Governors.... And let's not forget the children.



"Be determined and confident as God will be with you", inspiring you to "learn, care and share through work, play and prayer". Deuteronomy 31:6



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May I remind governors that they do not have a right of entry to the school, as for all adults the right to enter school lies with the Headteacher.

Teachers and other school staff have very varied reactions to being visited by governors. Try to put yourself in their place: how would you react if 14 or 15 people outside your firm/workplace were able to watch you working? Would you be annoyed, nervous, defensive, behave differently from your normal self? How would you prefer your visitor to behave? Answer these questions honestly and you will understand the feelings of all school staff, and so be able to meet their anxieties half way. When they do agree to you coming make sure you acknowledge openly what a valuable gesture this is.

Why should governors visit?

- Mainly to get to know the school - what is learnt from visiting the school should add to what the governing body as a whole knows about the school;
- To demonstrate to staff that responsibilities are taken seriously and governors are interested in what they do.
- To build positive, honest and constructive relationships with staff.

First principle

Visits should relate to responsibilities as governors and capacities as individuals. When visits are used to gain information and impressions to help in the task as governors, it is done as observers, not as inspectors. Governors should avoid making judgments about what they see/find, but should instead ask questions of the Headteacher for clarification or to set matters in context.

Second principle

Governors visiting the school do so in connection with their responsibilities as governors, and the visit is on behalf of, or has been sanctioned by, the governing body and head teacher

Visits are planned and conducted so as to respect the operational needs of the school and the courtesies of the governor/staff relationship; they work well and everyone benefits.

Third Principle

Relationships between staff and governors need to be open, honest and supportive. Governors have a crucial role to play in raising staff morale, and supporting staff – not just me – when times are tough – you’ve had plenty of opportunity to do so over the last 20 months. And you’ve done great, so thank you. And also, please don’t feel guilty if you haven’t made it in as regularly as you would like – I know some of you are having your own difficulties out there as well.

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Are you in the right position to be able to fulfill this role. All committee members are crucial, but if you have a senior role eg chair of a committee etc, does your current life balance allow you to dedicate enough time to this enhanced governor role, or would you be able to fulfill the role more as a governor, with less pressure? Reflect on your current constantly changing lives to check we're getting the best from you, and that you can give your best to us.

During the visit

On arrival, call in at the office and/or Headteacher and collect the programme/badge

Most visits take governors into a classroom. It is usually best to go in at the start of a lesson, but this will depend on the pattern agreed with staff.

The relationship that school staff have with pupils has developed over a period of time and governors should take care to ensure their presence does not disrupt it.

Governors are no longer linked to classes

Here are some do's and don't's:

Do:

- ✚ make an appointment before going on your visit, after checking the convenience of your visit initially with a member of SLT
- ✚ if necessary clarify the purpose of your visit
- ✚ prepare carefully by reading any relevant documentation before your visit
- ✚ agree how you will be introduced to the children
- ✚ get involved with the children's activities – but don't interfere
- ✚ observe discreetly to improve your knowledge of the school as a Governor
- ✚ relax and enjoy your visit
- ✚ make brief notes about what you have discovered, and any questions you may have at governor level when you get home
- ✚ remember to observe confidentiality following your visit

Don't

- ✚ comment on the teacher's conduct of the lesson
- ✚ allow yourself to become an instrument for advancing particular issues
- ✚ express personal views on controversial issues
- ✚ make notes
- ✚ interrupt the flow of the lesson
- ✚ comment on what you have seen to other parents.

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..... visiting the school, and the classes should enhance your knowledge and, in following these do's and don'ts, your visit should be an enjoyable and informative one.

Some thoughts for staff:

- Do talk to your children about the governor.
- Give the governors a specific job to do whenever this is appropriate
- Make use of any special talents or experiences which the governors have to offer
- It will be good if the children can actually invite their governor to special occasions in their class

And finally some important guidance on safeguarding:

Keeping Who Safe?

Adults visiting or working on a school site play an important part in the life of a school, whether helping to build or maintain the building or visiting as part of the school's wider community.

We can all play a part in keeping **children** safe whilst working on or visiting a school site. This is whether you are directly employed by the school, or working as a contractor or sub-contractor.



Keeping children safe is covered by Government Guidance (DfES Safeguarding Children in Education guidance 2007).

Our actions can sometimes be perceived in a way that was not intended. We want to promote safe working practices for everyone on a school site, whatever your job.

We must also take steps to keep **ourselves** safe. To keep yourself safe from possible allegations, please follow this advice.....

Don't....

- ⊗ Instigate verbal or physical contact with pupils (this applies both on and off site) **unless it is appropriate and a part of an agreed reason for your visit.**
- ⊗ Respond to verbal or physical contact from pupils. If this occurs, or you have any other concerns about pupil behaviour then report it immediately to your Foreman or to someone in the school office ;
- ⊗ Give any personal information to any pupil, for example your name, address, telephone or mobile number or email address ;
- ⊗ Do not accept or respond to a pupil attempting to give you personal information, for example their name, address, telephone or mobile number or email address ;
- ⊗ Accept physical or verbal abuse from a pupil. **DO NOT** respond yourself, but report it immediately to your Foreman or to someone in the school office ;

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Do.....

- ✓ Be aware that verbal interaction with pupils may be interpreted by them as offensive or as harassment. Even if this was not your intention ;
- ✓ Report any unacceptable behaviour from a pupil ;
- ✓ Be aware that contact made outside of the school environment as a result of you coming into contact with a pupil whilst you are on a school site, may have an impact on your employment ;
- ✓ Ask your supervisor whilst visiting the school about the Child Protection Procedures
- ✓ Read the safety information on your visitors badge.
- ✓ **Please, follow the advice in this leaflet, and keep yourself and our children safe!**