



**Federation of
Westminster
Special Schools**
Training & Outreach

Governor Visits Policy

Ratified by S&A Committee: 16 May 2016

Reviewed: May 2018

Next Review: May 2020

1. Introduction

In order to be effective, governors need to know the school and how it works. Visiting the school during the school day is just one way governors can gain information. Other ways include reading policies, receiving information/data and of course receiving the Headteacher's reports to the governing board which will include progress reports on the implementation of the Federation Development Plan (SDP).

Governors of the Federation of Westminster Special Schools, Training and Outreach Service are expected to take an active part in the life of the Federation as part of their role as governors. This will take various forms, including visits to school during the school day, attendance at staff or parent forums, or other federation activities. All visits should be agreed and planned within governor meetings prior to the visits taking place, and the focus of visits should be agreed by the Governing Board. It is important for individual governors to remember that when they visit the school, they act as representatives of the governing board, which has corporate responsibility for the overall leadership of the school.

2. Purposes of Governor Visits

The main purpose of any governor visit to the school is to undertake monitoring of an agreed aspect of the school. This focused monitoring is planned in advance within governor meetings and agreed by the Executive Headteacher who is able to support effective monitoring by governors by advising on the type of monitoring activities they will undertake during their visit e.g. observation, 'Learning Walk', talking to pupils, talking to staff, pupil work scrutiny etc.

Visits to the school also give governors a first-hand impression of what the school is like and what goes on there and therefore give governors a context and background for discussions at governors' meetings – something of the feel of the school and the flavour of its work that they cannot otherwise obtain. What governors learn from visiting the school should add to what the governing board as a whole knows about the school.

A subsidiary, but important purpose of visiting the school is to demonstrate to staff that governors' responsibilities are taken seriously and that governors are interested in the school and how it works during the school day.

Governors have extensive powers which affect staff, and staff can reasonably expect governors to exercise these powers with a good understanding of their work and clear evidence of goodwill.

Governors must remember that visits should relate to their responsibilities as governors and capacities as individuals, and should not go beyond either. It is a part of the Head of School's responsibility to manage the school from day to day and to supervise staff, in accordance with the aims, objectives and

policies approved by the governing board. Moreover, to judge the quality of teaching and learning in a school is a specialist skill, which non-specialists cannot exercise on the basis of a short, occasional visit. When using visits to gain information and impressions to help in the role of governor, governors do so as observers, not as inspectors.

A visit gives only a glimpse or snapshot of what goes on. Governors should not assume that what is learnt at one, or even several, visits gives a full and balanced picture. Conclusions may be entirely valid as far as they go and governors should not reject the evidence of their own eyes and ears; but both may need to be checked with others and revised in the light of further evidence.

3. Governor Visits at Westminster Special Schools, Outreach and Training

- All governors, including the staff governors, will take part each year in a planned programme of visits on behalf of the governing board focused around different school and federation activities. This may include attendance at staff or parent forums, attendance as a Link Governor but will not include induction visits for new governors.
- Visits will have a clear focus linked to a curriculum subject, a school policy, an aspect of the School Development Plan, the induction of a new governor or some other specific area of the management of the school
- In the Autumn Term, the standards and achievement committee will decide on a programme of visits for the following year, for approval by the full governing board. The foci will be clearly identified. Then the date and timing of specific visits will be arranged by the governor concerned, in consultation with the Head of School and other staff involved
- If a governor is going to spend time in a classroom this will be discussed with the class teacher so that both are clear how long the governor is coming for, what they are going to look at and what they are going to do
- Governors should understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the Senior Management Team.
- Following visits, governors should discuss their impressions and any concerns they may have with the Head of School and then report back to the chair of the standards and achievement committee by completing a written report within 14 days of the visit. (See proforma below). The report should be a summary of main points from the visit rather than a commentary.
- The chair of the standards and achievement committee will provide the

report to the Head of School, the Executive Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors. At each full governing board the chair of the standards and achievement committee will provide an overview report on governor visits over the last term, including circulation to all members of the governing board of governor visit reports from the preceding term.

4. Key points for governors to observe when making a visit

- Confirm your visit before you arrive
- Gather and read in advance any relevant information
- Have a clear focus and share your focus with the staff concerned
- Be attentive
- Observe confidentiality
- Observe the school policy for visitors and wear a 'visitors' badge available when signing in at Reception
- Establish with staff what is expected of you
- Talk and share your experience with the teacher and headteacher
- Be prepared to give written feedback to the governing board
- When governors visit the school it is important that they do not make judgments on the quality of teaching they see. The senior management Team are responsible for monitoring teaching in the school
- Evaluate the visit yourself by asking the following questions:
 - Were the objectives of the visit fulfilled?
 - Was everyone involved 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 board?

If governors have any concerns as a result of their visit, they must always raise them with the Head of School or Executive Headteacher without delay.

5. Safeguarding

Westminster Special Schools, Training and Outreach Service are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The Heads of Schools are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers working in the school and having contact with children have the appropriate supervision and the correct level of checks including DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check if necessary.

**Federation of Westminster Special Schools
Training and Outreach Services**

Governor Visit Report

Name

Date of Visit

Focus of Visit

Class/Staff Visited and planning discussion before the visit

**Summary of Activities [observing classes, talking to staff and pupils,
looking at resources, Learning Walks, Other Monitoring visits]**

What I have learnt as a result of my visit

Comments about the visit
Ideas for future visits
Any other comments
Signed
Dated

Signed:

Committee Chair

Dated: