



Governor and Associate Members Visits Policy

**Ratified by S&A Committee: 16 May 2016
Reviewed and updated Leadership Group February 2021
Reviewed Spring 2023
Next Review Spring 2025**

Introduction

In order to be effective, governors and associate members need to know the schools and services well. They need to know in detail how the Federation schools and services work and have an effective monitoring programme in place. This will enable the Governing Board to give an appropriate balance of support and challenge in holding senior leaders to account for the effective leadership and management of the Federation schools and services.

Visiting the Federation schools and services during the day is just one way governors and associate members can gain information and detailed knowledge about how the schools deliver the curriculum and help children and young people (CYP) make progress. . Other ways include reading policies, receiving information/data and of course receiving the Executive Headteacher's reports and reports from other Federation senior staff to the Governing Board. This will include; presentations, progress reports on the implementation of the Federation Development Plan, Schools and Service Development Plans.

Governors and associate members of the Federation of Westminster Special Schools and Bi-Borough Inclusion Service are expected to take an active part in the life of the Federation as part of their role as governors or associate members. This will take various forms, including visits to schools and services during the school day, attendance at staff or parent forums, or other federation activities. All visits must be agreed and planned prior to the visits taking place, and the focus of visits must be agreed by the Governing Board in consultation with the EHT when they approve the annual programme of visits. It is important for individual governors and associate members to remember that when they visit the schools and services they act as representatives of the Governing Board, which has corporate responsibility for the overall leadership and management of the Federation schools and services.

There may be exceptional reasons such as a pandemic when visits will not be able to take place. However, other aspects of the monitoring programme will continue so that the Governing Board will always be in a position to discharge its responsibilities and duties.

1. Purposes of Governor and Associate Member Visits

The main purpose of any governor and associate member visit to the schools and services is to undertake monitoring of an agreed aspect of the Federation, schools or services. This focused monitoring is planned and agreed in advance by the Governing Board in liaison with the Executive

Headteacher who is able to support effective monitoring by governors and associate members by advising on the type of monitoring activities they could undertake during their visit.

Visits to the schools and services also give governors and associate members a first-hand experience of what the schools and services are like and what goes on there and therefore gives governors and associate members a context and background for discussions at governors' meetings. What governors and associate members learn from visiting the schools and services should add to what the Governing Board as a whole knows about the schools and Services

A subsidiary, but important purpose of visiting the schools and services is to demonstrate to staff that governors and associate members' responsibilities are taken seriously and that governors and associate members are interested in the schools and services and how they work during the day. The Governing Board has 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 and associate members must remember that visits should relate to their role as a governor or associate member and should not go beyond their stated responsibilities. It is a part of the Executive Headteacher's, Federation Headteachers' and Head of the Bi-Borough Inclusion Service responsibilities to manage the schools and services on a daily basis 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 experience to help in the role of governor or associate member, governors and associate members do so as observers, not as inspectors.

A visit gives only a glimpse or snapshot of what goes on. Governors and associate members 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 and associate members 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 and information.

3. Governor and Associate Member Visits

1. All governors and associate members, including the staff governor, will take part each year in a planned programme of visits on behalf of the Governing Board focused around different schools, service and federation activities. This may include attendance at staff or parent forums, meetings with specified staff, observing activities and meetings, attendance as a Link Governor/Associate member but will not include induction visits for new governors and associate members,
 2. Visits will have a clear focus linked to a school policy, an aspect of the Federation Development Plan, School and Service Development Plans or some other specific area linked to the leadership and management of the Federation, its schools. services and activities.
- ❖ The Summer term meeting of the Governing Board will usually decide on a programme of visits for the coming academic year,
 - ❖ The foci will be clearly identified and defined. Then the date and timing of specific visits will be arranged by the governor/associate member concerned, in consultation with the school Headteachers and other staff involved
 - ❖ If a governor/associate member 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/associate member is coming for, what they are going to look at and what they are going to do
 - ❖ Governors/associate members should remember and understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the Senior Management Team.
 - ❖ Following visits, governors/associate members should discuss their impressions and any concerns they may have with the school Headteacher and then report back to the Chair/Co-Chair or nominated governor 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/Co-Chair or nominated governor will provide the report to the School headteacher, the Executive Headteacher and as appropriate chair(s) of committee. The Committee chair should consider the report and decide whether the report should be discussed at the next committee meeting. At each full governing board meeting the Chair /Co-Chair or nominated governor will provide an overview summary report on governor/associate member visits over the last term, Visit reports will be circulated on Governorhub which all governors/associate members should read.

4 Key points for governors/associate members 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 and use your security pass 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/associate members visit the schools and services it is important that they do not make judgments on the quality of teaching and learning they see. The Federation senior management Team are responsible for monitoring teaching and learning in the schools
- 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?
 - Did you ask all the questions you planned to ask?
 - Did you receive all the information you wanted from your visit?
 - 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/service and the Governing Board?

If governors/associate members have any queries before their visit or concerns as a result of their visit, they must immediately contact Chair/ Co-Chair who will advise on next steps and if necessary the School Headteacher and or Executive Headteacher will be contacted without delay if the matter needs to be brought to their attention.

Safeguarding

The Federation of Westminster Special Schools and Bi-Borough Inclusion Service are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff, governors/associate members and volunteers to share this commitment. The Federation school headteachers are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers/ people working in the school and having contact with pupils have the appropriate supervision and the correct level of checks including DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check if necessary.



Federation of
Westminster Special Schools
& Bi-Borough Inclusion Service

Governor/Associate Member Visit Report

Name

Date of Visit

Focus of Visit

Visit planning discussion before the visit

Summary of Activities linked to the focus of the visit [observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, learning walks, observing activities, attending and observing meetings 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

Please send to Chair/ Co-Chair of Governors