

THE BATH AND MENDIP PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Governors and Trustees Schools Visit Policy

Review Due:	September 2021
Last Review	September 2018
Applicable to:	All Trust Schools
Reviewed By:	SD

The Bath and Mendip Partnership Trust have agreed this policy therefore this policy applies to all schools within The Bath and Mendip Partnership Trust.

Throughout this Policy 'Governor' refers to Governors from the Local Governing Body as well as Trustees from The Bath and Mendip Trust Board.

Rationale

Paragraph 1.4.3 of the Governors' Handbook says:

Governors need to know their school. Many Governors find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out about the school. Visits can also be an important part of robust school accountability.

Through pre-arranged visits, Governors can check that the school is implementing the policies and improvement plans they have signed off, and see for themselves how their vision and plans for the school are working in practice.

Visits also provide an opportunity to arrange meetings with pupils, staff and parents about what they think of the school and how it is changing.

Visits can also be an important part of robust school accountability

While it may be helpful to see classes at work, Governors are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching.

They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of the Headteacher.

A Guide to the Law for School Governors' says:

"Individual Governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish. But they need to be able to visit from time to time in order to develop their understanding of the school to enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibility for the conduct of the school. Governors should arrange their visits with the Headteacher, who has responsibility for the day - to - day management of the school. It is often useful to draw up a policy on Governors visits to cover things such as giving notice, constructive feedback and handling concerns. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should have a clear purpose. Visits by Governors can be useful and informative. They do not replace professional inspection or the monitoring and evaluation carried out by the Headteacher". '

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Context

1. In order to be effective, Governors need to know their 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 body which will include progress reports on the implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

2. Members of the Local Governing Body make at least one focus visit each year to the school during the school day within their role as Governors. All visits are agreed and planned within Governor meetings. It is important for individual Governors to remember that when they visit the school, they act as representatives of the governing body, which has corporate responsibility for the overall leadership of the school.

Purposes of Governor Visits :

3. 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 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.

4. 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. Without such first-hand impressions, the picture of the school that Governors carry in their minds is liable to be based on their own schooldays rather than current reality. What Governors learn from visiting the school should add to what the governing body as a whole knows about the school.

5. 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.

6. Governors must remember that visits should relate to their responsibilities as Governors. It is a part of the Head'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 body. 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.

7. 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.

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Protocols for Governor Visits to The Bath and Mendip Partnership Trust Schools:

8. All Governors will make at least one formal visit per year to the school on behalf of the governing body. This will not include induction visits for new Governors.
9. Visits will have a clear focus linked to a curriculum subject, a school policy, an aspect of the School Improvement Plan, the induction of a new Governor or some other specific area of the management of the school.
10. In order to undertake their role with objectivity, ideally, Governors will not monitor classes containing their own children nor will they begin monitoring until they have received suitable training as part of their induction course.
11. The governing body will decide on a programme of visits. The focuses will be clearly identified. Then the date and timing of specific visits will be arranged by the Governor concerned, in consultation with the Headteacher and other staff involved.
12. 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.
13. Governors should understand that their visits do not replace professional inspections or the monitoring role of the Headteacher.
14. After visits, Governors should discuss their impressions and any concerns they may have with the Headteacher and then report back to the next meeting of the governing body or of the committee by completing a written report. (See profoma below).
15. The report should be a summary of main points from the visit rather than a long narrative.
16. The report should be shown to the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors before the meeting at which it is to be presented to Governors. Once it has been agreed the Governor should then send a copy to the clerk for distribution before the next meeting.
17. 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

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- 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 body
- When Governors visit the school it is important that they do not make judgments on the quality of teaching they see. The Headteacher is 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 body?

18. If Governors have any concerns as a result of their visit, they must always raise them with the Headteacher without delay.

19. The Bath and Mendip Partnership Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers working in the school and having contact with children have had the appropriate supervision and level of checks including DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check if necessary. All Governors will hold an enhanced DBS clearance.