

GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

1. Terms of Reference

1.1 For all governors of School Development Boards (SDB) of Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust (CBAT).

1.2 Definitions:

“Headteacher” also refers to any other title used to identify the Headteacher, where appropriate, or other senior manager delegated to deal with the matter by the Headteacher.

“Governing Body” refers to the School Development Board (SDB) of the academy school who are responsible for implementing the policy within their setting. The Governing Body may refer to the Trustees if appropriate.

“Academy school” refers to any academy or school within Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust (CBAT).

2. Purpose of Governor Visits

Individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter a school whenever they wish. However, it is valuable for governors to visit, as invited guests, in order to learn more about their school. Visiting during the school day, and finding out more about the opportunities for learning that the school offers, can be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of being a school governor. Please remember that governors are there to learn about the school, not inspect.

SDBs have a delegated responsibility within CBAT to promote high standards at their school, and to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in this respect (see Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation). Well planned governor visits will support the SDB in discharging this duty and support the senior leadership team to evaluate their work at the school. Impressions and observations gained will help governors in their role but governors should be mindful that it is the Headteacher’s responsibility to manage the school and the staff.

Governors’ school visits provide an excellent opportunity to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of how the school works, the teaching and learning process and of different learning and teaching styles.
- Build stronger relationships with the school community, based on trust and respect.
- Demonstrate to staff that governors take their role seriously, are interested in and value the work of the school.
- Recognise and celebrate staff and pupil achievement.
- Monitor the implementation of school policies in action, and assist the governing body to evaluate their impact.
- Collect evidence to contribute to the monitoring of progress of elements within the school’s improvement plan and assist the governing body to evaluate their impact.
- Enable individual governors to ask informed and challenging questions at governing body meetings and to inform collective decision making.
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.

3. Level of Commitment

In addition to attending SDB meetings and any sub-committee or working party meetings, responding to email communication (which may include decision making, and supporting school events, governors are asked to provide a minimum of one full day or two half days of school visits during an academic year although they may wish to provide more support if available, especially within any given specialist role e.g. safeguarding or SEND governor.

4. Organisation of School Visits

Dates for school visits may be arranged at the start of the academic year or ongoing throughout the year. For each visit the Headteacher will agree a bespoke programme that supports delivery or self-evaluation of school improvement plan and in some cases this will be tailored to the skills of the individual governors. For those governors with a specialist role e.g. SEND governor it may include elements related to the annual cycle of activities within that specialism. The visits may include, but not be limited to, any of the following:

- Pupil, staff or parent voice.
- Work scrutiny.
- Lesson visits.
- Observing school activities/events.
- Attending meetings.

It might be agreed that an activity is overseen by a member of the senior leadership to add context to the findings. Note, that in any lesson visit the governor is not assessing the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning but may be looking at behaviour and attitudes of the pupils, a sample of pupils' work or how the curriculum is being implemented or assessed. The purpose and parameters of the visits should be discussed and agreed with the Headteacher in advance.

5. Before the Visit

- Agree a mutually convenient time to talk to the Headteacher.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit and agree this with the Headteacher and/or relevant staff. Agree together how best to approach the identified focus to make effective use of everyone's time.
- Agree how you will be introduced to the pupils and the extent to which you will be involved in any activity or lesson.
- Agree a convenient time to discuss your feedback with the Headteacher. This will also be your opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about.
- Prepare for your visit by reading any relevant documents.

6. During the Visits

- **Remember this is a visit, not an inspection.** Governors are visiting to learn more about the school and to gather information to inform decision making by the governing body. It is not the governors' role to judge the quality of the teaching. Monitoring staff performance and the quality of teaching and learning is the job of the Headteacher.
- Remember that you are an invited guest.
- Be punctual, sign in and wear a name badge.
- Try hard not to disrupt the normal working of the school by keeping to time.
- Smile and listen. Try to relax and enjoy yourself.
- Think carefully about what you say and do. Remember that a visit by a governor can be stressful for staff. Be courteous, tactful, positive and interested. Avoid criticism e.g. Never make a comment on the teacher's conduct of the lesson or on individual pupils.
- Try not to draw too much attention to yourself. Consider how you take notes. If suitable avoid taking notes to concentrate on eye contact and write down your thoughts as soon afterwards as is practical.
- Remember that you are representing the governing body. Governors should be prepared to explain policies, but should avoid giving personal opinions which could be misinterpreted as the views of the governing body.
- Remember that the views you hear do not necessarily represent the views of others and must be taken in the context of the activity and audience and provide a source of discussion with the Headteacher and SDB.

- Avoid making promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Only go into the staffroom if you are invited to do so.
- Adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Observe previously agreed levels of confidentiality.
- Remember to thank the staff for supporting you in your role as governor.

7. After the Visit

- Discuss your visit with the Headteacher. Share any concerns and the context of any feedback.
- After each visit, the governor should complete a report using the format shown in Appendix A. A draft should be shared with the Headteacher for agreement and to add any explanatory notes, and a final version circulated to governors via the clerk and discussed at the next available meeting.

Appendix A

Name of Governor:	Date of Visit:
SIP Foci for Visit:	
List of Activities and objective e.g. 1. Meeting with group of 6 new staff: Evaluate staff experience and wellbeing 2. Meeting with Pastoral Staff: Discuss how well new behaviour policy is working Etc.	
Activity 1: Notes: Summary points to share with SDB:	
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Etc.	