

# Hafod Y Wern

## Governor School Visits Protocol & Governor Code of Conduct



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## 1. Introduction

A governor is someone who:-

- is a volunteer
- cares about teaching, learning and children
- represents those people with a key interest in the school
- is part of a team which accepts responsibility for everything a school does
- has time to commit to meetings and other occasions when needed
- is willing to learn
- is able to act as a critical friend who supports the school but also challenges and asks questions about how the school works and the standards it achieves
- acts as a link between parents, the local community, the Local Authority and the school.

The role of a governor is vast and carries a great deal of responsibility.

The governing body together with the headteacher set the strategic direction of the school. This includes agreeing the School Development Plan (SDP), monitoring and evaluating progress against priorities set and contributing to the School Self-Evaluation Report.

Before setting the long term goals for the school, governors must have a full understanding of the school, its strengths and the challenges it faces. This can be done through a variety of methods, receiving reports from the headteacher, analysis of statistical data, receiving presentations from staff etc. One of the most effective ways of understanding your school is spend some time there during the school day. However, individual governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school whenever they wish and visits should always be arranged with the headteacher using the protocols for governor visits.

To fulfil its role governors are expected to:

**‘Visit the school so that they can get first-hand experience of what happens in the classroom i.e. teaching and learning and the conduct of pupils’**

Governor Wales Handbook Part 1:

<http://www.governorswales.org.uk/handbook/>

Visits to school enable governors to:

- see the school at work
- observe the range of attitudes, behaviour and achievements of pupils
- get to know the staff and work in partnership with the staff and pupils
- demonstrate their commitment to the school
- give active support to the staff and activities in the school
- understand how decisions taken at governing body meetings (e.g. allocation of funding) directly impacts on the daily life of the school
- be aware of current approaches used by the school to promote effective teaching and learning evaluate resources and discuss with staff any further requirements
- gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking

Having an understanding of school life will assist the governing body in making informed decisions which staff can act upon; it also supports effective and practical policy development.

Every governor is not expected to have an in depth knowledge of every aspect of the schools' work, and should share the workload effectively by assigning individual governors to particular aspects of school life, this role is commonly called the link governor.

There are also ways, other than visits to the classroom, in which link governors and the governing body can have a better understanding and knowledge of the school, these include:

- learning walks
- book scrutiny
- after school meetings with individual relevant staff / headteacher / departments
- staff or pupil presentations given at a committee

## **2. Whole Governing Body Activities**

It is not always easy for every governor to set aside the time to visit school during the school day or commit to the role of a link governor. However, the importance of governors getting to know their school cannot be understated. To overcome the difficulties of work life balance and effective use of time, for both staff and governors, the following activities, or variations of, could be undertaken by the governing body to gain a fuller understanding of school.

- curriculum presentation
- tour of the school
- school events activities
- meeting with staff
- attending in service training – INSET days

## **3. What are link governors?**

One of the key roles and responsibilities for the governing body is to monitor the progress and performance of the school. In many schools, individual governors, known as link governors, take responsibility for one aspect of the school's work. He or she then becomes the governing body's 'expert' in that area in much the same way as a cabinet secretary would in government.

The link governor can play a significant role in developing the effectiveness of the governing body in a specific area. The link governor provides a link between the governing body, its committees and the staff on questions relating to their link area. Many members of staff will be delighted to meet a link governor who is showing a genuine interest in their work and that of their pupils. Reports from the link governor will not only help the governing body understand what happens in school but also helps the governor to fulfil their strategic role.

The number of link governor roles is for the governing body to determine (based on the needs of the school). It is common practice for a governor to be linked to each of the school's current priorities.

The governing body must nominate a link governor for the following:

- special educational needs
- child protection

## **4. What are Learning Walks?**

A learning walk is a simple way for leaders and managers to gain an overview of current practice in school. Two or three individuals - possibly the headteacher, a senior manager, the school's Challenge Advisor would walk around the school, spending no longer than around 10 minutes in each class. During this time they would take some very brief notes about the activities taking place, what the teacher/teaching assistant and pupils were doing, the ethos or vibe in the class etc. They will watch

and chat with the children wherever they are learning indoors or outside and they get a picture of the learning and teaching.

Joining a learning walk is a good way for a governor to be part of this monitoring process and learn more about the schools' progress. A learning walk will always have a specific focus which is usually linked to the school's priorities for that year. So, for example, if the school is working to develop Welsh and bilingualism as part of their School Development Plan, the link governor for that priority may be invited to join the school's Welsh Co-ordinator and the Local Authority's Welsh Advisory Teacher to conduct a learning walk, where Welsh displays, teachers/support staff and pupils' confidence in using Welsh would be monitored.

At the end of the learning walk, the observers would all discuss and agree the main findings and the headteacher or a senior leader would normally feedback to staff, identifying targets or next steps that need to be taken. The link governor could also provide feedback to fellow governors, which would support the governing body to monitor the school's progress against the School Development Plan priorities. A follow-up learning walk will usually take place later in the school year in order to monitor whether further progress has been made.

### **5. What is a Book Scrutiny?**

Another method of monitoring current practice and progress is book scrutiny, which simply means looking through pupils' work. When head teachers and senior managers do this they are able to see if the standard of work produced by the children is at the level expected for that age group and whether all pupils have made progress in their learning during that academic year. As with learning walks, book scrutiny will very often have a focus linked to the school's current priorities as detailed in the School Development Plan. Senior leaders would look through a selection of pupil books to gain an overview of current practice with regards to; for example, teacher's marking and feedback to learners, or pupils' use of numeracy skills in subjects other than maths. The selection of books would normally include pupils from across the range of ability to monitor whether provision was appropriately supportive and challenging.

Similar to learning walks, at the end of the book scrutiny the group would all discuss and agree the main findings and the headteacher or a senior leader would normally feedback to staff, noting the strengths observed and the areas for further development. A follow-up book scrutiny would normally be planned for later in the academic year to monitor progress.

### **6. What is Listening to Learners?**

Listening to learners simply means talking with the pupils about their work. By listening to learners, you will give pupils the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding of their work, how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

A listening to learner session, like a book scrutiny, will usually focus on a particular area identified through the School Development Plan. The headteacher or senior teacher may lead the session and the link governor can observe; or in agreement with the staff and if the governor feels confident enough, the governor can talk and listen with the pupils directly.

The emphasis of listening to learners should be on enabling the pupil to talk and then listening carefully to the learner's point of view. To do this the style of communication must be suitable for the age, ability and language of the pupil.

#### Governor visits to school

After listening to learners, the staff and governor would discuss and agree the main findings. The headteacher or senior leader would feedback to staff and the governor can feedback to the governing body or appropriate committee.

## **7. Pupil Voice**

The most important people in any school are the pupils. Governors volunteer because they want the very best for the children at their school, and it is important that pupils have the opportunity to share their ideas and views with the governing body.

The governing body should consider the following to ensure pupils have a voice:

- have school council business as a standing item on governing body meetings via reports, minutes or presentations
- have a 'pupil voice' link governor
- have a governor which attends school council meetings once per year
- consider how pupil groups can play a meaningful role in planning, implementing and reviewing policies which affect them – including the School Development Plan.

Often, associate pupil governors (secondary schools only) are actively involved in governors meetings and can access support from the school and the Local Authority on their roles and responsibilities.

## **8. PROTOCOL FOR ALL GOVERNOR VISITS**

**All governor visits to school should be arranged in advance.**

Normally the purpose and timing of these visits will have been agreed at a full governing body meeting and will be part of the school's calendared events. Once the date of your visit is arranged, try not to change it, but if a postponement is necessary, then let the school know as soon as possible. Your appointment may not always be with the headteacher, it could be with the special education needs coordinator (ALNCo), a head of department, or a teacher, but the headteacher should always be aware of your visit.

If you are a governor, but also have a child in the school, you are probably a frequent visitor to the school in your role as a parent. If this is the case, it is especially important that both the headteacher and staff of the school can clearly distinguish between your 'official' visits as a governor of the school and those in your capacity as a parent.

On arriving at the school for your visit, you must first report to the school office and sign in. This is not only courteous to the headteacher and the staff but also contributes to the security of the school.

Always wear your visitor's badge if provided with one by the school.

**All visits should be in line with the Governor Code of Conduct.**

It is a common misconception that governors are required to carry out 'classroom observations'. A governor's role is to observe the school in its daily routine, monitoring the ethos and overall environment, it is not to inspect classroom teaching. Governors are not inspectors and governors should not behave as you think inspectors behave.

### **9.1 Things not to do on your governor visit:**

- intervening in the teaching of individual pupils (if a parent approaches you with a complaint or problem, encourage them to talk to the headteacher)
- attending meetings with individual parents or taking part in discussions concerning individual pupils
- making judgements about the professional expertise of the teacher / headteacher
- checking on your own children

- pursuing a personal agenda

## **8.2 Protocol for Classroom Visits (link governor or learning walk)**

Both the governor and staff member should be fully aware of the protocol and reason for the meeting beforehand. The frequency of your contact with the member of staff should be mutually agreeable and of benefit to the school and governing body.

The aim is to establish a wider knowledge of how the focus area is progressing, celebrate the strengths and acknowledge the challenges. Take the opportunity to listen to what staff and pupils think and feel.

### For Governing Bodies

- Ensure that the policy on governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff.
- Recognise that classroom visits are primarily for governors to gain first-hand knowledge of the school at work.
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which has been agreed at a full governing body meeting in advance of the visit.
- Ensure that there are agreed timescales for governors' visits, usually agreed at a full governing body or a committee meeting well in advance of the visit.
- Recognise the right for teachers to invite governors into school for specific purposes if they so wish.
- The headteacher should provide members of the governing body with the relevant background information, i.e. staff names, responsibilities and timetables.
- Recognise that any visit to the classroom can be stressful and disrupts normal classroom working, and that therefore the number of visits should be within what has been agreed by the full governing body.
- Respect the normal conventions of governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.

### For Individual Governors

- Negotiate a mutually convenient time with the headteacher and class teacher for the visit and discussion afterwards, recognising that teachers' and governors' time is valuable.
- Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned.
- Avoid busy or stressful periods such as during or just before an ESTYN inspection or examinations.
- Avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with the pupils during the lesson.
- Avoid acting in any way like an inspector.
- Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing body
- Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate for you to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst.
- Recognise that staff will be teaching, therefore minimise the impact of the visit.
- At the end of the lesson or when you are leaving, the governor should thank the teacher and the class for their visit.

### For Teachers

- Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient.
- Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned.

## Governor visits to school

- Prepare your class for the visit of a governor.
- Welcome the governor when they arrive in your class and introduce them to the pupils.
- Have a seat ready for the governor and tell them where it is.
- Be aware that a visit can be stressful for staff and governors alike.
- Inform the governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do.
- Don't leave your governor alone with the class, even if they are willing to do so.
- Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager / headteacher.
- The governor should endeavour to arrive at the class at a time least likely to cause disruption.
- Throughout the visit, the governor should intrude as little as possible on the work of the class. *However, pupils, particularly younger ones, often like and respond to attention by a governor, and there is no doubt that a governor will gain a greater knowledge of their school and what it does by talking to pupils. Consequently, at an appropriate time and with the teacher's permission the governor might speak to individual pupils about their work.*
- Governors should be aware that some topics lend themselves to group or paired work and that some activities involve pupils moving around the room. Inevitably, at such times, noise levels will be higher than usual.

### After the visit

As soon as possible, and ideally on the same day, the governor and headteacher and/or class teacher could discuss the visit to clarify any outstanding questions the governor may have from the visit and identify next steps.

Governors should remember to sign out of school before leaving.

**If governors have a concern arising from the visit, they should take care that the matter is handled sensitively and raise the issue with the headteacher (as appropriate) rather than comment directly to staff members or pupils.**

### **8.3 Reporting the Visit**

Although some governors may feel happier giving a verbal report only to the governing body it is a much better idea to produce a short written report. There are a number of reasons for this:

- A written report can be circulated to governors before a governing body meeting, thereby allowing them time to consider the report and reflect on any points they may wish to discuss.
- If there is a long time between the visit and the next governing body meeting, a governor might forget details of the visit.

**At no point in the report should any pupils be mentioned by name, nor should any judgements be made about the teaching.**

It would be a good idea to produce the report to the governing body under a number of agreed headings. There are a couple of reasons for this:

- a common format means that all link governor reports will focus on a number of the same things
- will provide a framework for those governors who might be uneasy about producing a written report

Below are some suggested headings under which a link governor's report might be written.

#### Governor visits to school

date of visit, name of teacher, age of class, number of pupils in class and gender balance, time of governor's arrival at class, length of time spent with class, topic or area studied, resources used, what happened in the lesson, the biggest impression(s) my visit made on me, other observations

The last three points are the most important for the governing body to gain an understanding of what was seen so these should make up the bulk of the report.

Appendix one (page 9) has the Governor Wales model governor visit report template.

**If the agreed protocols are followed, then governor visits will be an enjoyable experience for all involved, and will result in effective monitoring by the governing body, which will contribute to school improvement.**

Appendix 1  
**Governor Visit Report**

Name of governor:		
Name of teacher:		
Age group of class:		
Number of pupils:	Male:	Female:
Date of visit:	Start time:	Finish time:
<b>Topic or area studied</b>		
<b>Summary of activities</b> (e.g. observing classes, talking to staff / pupils, looking at resources etc.)		
<b>What have I learned as a result of my visit?</b>		

<b>The biggest impression the visit made?</b>
<b>Positive comments about the focus</b>
<b>Aspects I would like clarified / questions I have</b>
<b>Any other comments</b>

Signed .....

(Governor)

Signed .....

(Headteacher / teacher)

**Monitoring the School Development Plan**

<b>Name of governor:</b>	
<b>Name of teacher:</b>	
<b>Age group:</b>	
<b>Focus area in the School Development Plan</b>	
<b>Source of evidence in progress</b>	<b>Comment and impact</b>

Signed .....  
(Governor)

Signed .....  
(Headteacher / teacher)



# Governor Code of Conduct & Role of Governing Body

Governors of schools in Wales are responsible for the conduct of the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.

## **The role of the Governing Body is:**

- To provide a strategic view of where the school is heading
- To act as a critical friend by providing support and advice to the school
- To hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of the education it provides

## **Hafod Y Wern will fulfil its role by:-**

- Agreeing the aims and values of the school
- Agreeing policies relating to the aims, purpose and practices of the school
- Influencing and approving the School Improvement Plan
- Monitoring the allocation and expenditure of the school budget
- Supporting, challenging and improving proposals
- Ensuring that the national curriculum is taught
- Monitoring and reviewing the schools progress in educational standards
- Ensuring individual pupils' needs are met
- Recruitment and selection of senior staff
- Giving parents information about the school
- Producing action plans for improvement following school inspections
- Establishing and maintaining positive links with local business community and the wider community
- Supporting the day to day operational decisions taken by the Headteacher
- Promoting the effectiveness of the governing body

### **Governors Code of Conduct**

Hafod Y Wern recognise that governors give their time and experience to make a positive contribution to shape the quality of learning at the school.

The code of conduct sets out the standards which the school expects of its governors to observe.

Governors will:-

- Be aware that all governors are equal
- Attend governing body meetings regularly
- Focus their contribution upon what is in the best interests of pupils in helping each child develop their full potential
- Ensure that their actions and decisions reflect the considered, best interests of the school and its pupils
- Have the right to speak and express their view whilst respecting the views of others accordingly
- Acknowledge that when a majority decision of the governing body prevails, it will be accepted and supported by all
- Demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity reflected in principle, policy and practice
- Be a member of a corporate team and not act alone
- In responding to criticism or complaints relating to the school, will refer to the school's 'Complaints Procedure' for the correct procedure to be followed and advise the complainant accordingly.
- Involve themselves actively in the work of the governing body and accept a fair share of the responsibilities, including service on committees.
- Get to know the school well and take opportunities to visit it and become involved in school activities.
- Respect the responsibility of the headteacher for the day-to-day decisions for the management of the school
- Observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the governing body, especially in relation to matters concerning individual staff, pupils or parents.
- Not be entitled to identify the views expressed by individual named governors.
- Declare openly and immediately any conflict of interest
- Attend statutory governor training
- Take or seek opportunities to enhance his/her effectiveness as a governor through participation in training, development programmes and increasing his/her own knowledge of the school.

Governor visits to school