
The Role of Link Governor

PART 1 – OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE

The role of the Link Governor is to provide a link between the Governing Body and the school. When Link Governors visit the school and report back to the Governing Body they help to deepen all governors' understanding of how the school operates, how the strategic objectives are being pursued, how financial resources are being used and what extra support the school may need to meet its objectives.

Without Link Governors, the Governing Body is totally reliant on the Head Teacher, or other staff governors, for their understanding of the school. The presence of Link Governors provides an additional source of evidence upon which governing decisions can be made. This additional evidence should enable the Governing Body to better challenge information presented by the school and also better support the school to meet its strategic objectives.

At Longstone School we seek to agree our link areas and nominate governors at the first meeting of the academic year. This should be promptly followed up with an agreed timetable for visits. Once the agreement has been reached as to appropriate links it should be made clear what is expected and activities identified. A record of any visit or activity should be kept by the Head Teacher and the Clerk to Governors. (Or in the absence of the clerk, the Chair of Governors)

WHY DO WE HAVE LINK GOVERNORS?

- They allow governors to see first-hand the resources used in school, the fabric of the building etc, so that they can make informed decisions about future budget allocations
- They constitute part of a strategy to monitor and evaluate regularly the progress of the School Improvement Plan
- They are a means to build up relationships, based on mutual trust and respect
- They provide OFSTED with concrete evidence about the involvement of the governors in the school
- They contribute to inform the schools self-evaluation process.

Perhaps the most important thing required for the links to work is goodwill both on the part of teachers, who have no contractual obligation to liaise with individual governors, and on the part of governors, who, as volunteers, have no contractual obligation at all (but do need to fulfill their monitoring and evaluating roles).

Governing bodies that have established effective link roles will have an improved understanding of how the school works, its strengths and weaknesses and will improve their effectiveness in addressing school improvement issues. Ofsted will work on the assumption that governors know the strengths and weaknesses and will 'test' that assumption during the inspection.

WHAT DOES A ENGLISH/MATHS GOVERNOR DO?

As a link Governor for these subjects you might:

- meet termly with the Maths/ English subject leader
- try to attend some of the in service training or staff meetings devoted to Maths/English
- use termly visits to view parts of daily Maths/ English lessons in the classroom

- ask about resources allocated to Maths/ English from the school budget
- include a section on the school website on the school's approach to Maths/ English.
- be involved in the school's attempt to inform parents and involve them in their children's learning of the subject.
- Be involved in the review and drafting of the SES and School Improvement Plan

You should always remember that you are not acting as a teacher or an inspector but as a source of support and challenge to the school leaders. If you are going to visit a Maths/ English lesson, don't forget the possible apprehension some teachers feel if someone watches their lesson.

The role of the 'Link Governor' is not to supervise or line manage school staff; this is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and senior staff.

Activities and purpose will clearly not be the same for all Link Governors but might include:

- Establishing regular contact with person(s) within the school with responsibility for the governor's 'link' area. This should be a minimum of twice per year for most links; three times for safeguarding, English and Maths.
- Making visits to school with a clear focus which has been agreed with the Head Teacher/subject leader prior to the visit
- Providing support and encouragement and a listening ear for staff member with whom they are linked
- Talking to the member of staff about the condition and availability of subject resources
- To be aware of how effectively the subject caters for all learners, for example SEND pupils.
- Attending relevant training, including relevant INSET days/staff meetings (PDM)
- Exploring specific aspects within the link area to gain deeper understanding of relevant issues. These will doubtless change over time.
- Talking to pupils about their experience and opinions in regard to the link area
- Carrying out learning walks which may be general or focused on a particular aspect.
- Reporting back, following visit, making recommendations as appropriate either via committees or full governing body meetings
- Being involved with establishing/monitoring/evaluating relevant policies within their chosen link area
- Considering ways to encourage parental involvement if appropriate
- Participating, as agreed, with subject leaders/Head Teacher in the review of the Self Evaluation Schedule
- Becoming familiar with relevant areas within School Improvement Plan
- Keeping abreast of most up to date legislation (mainly Ofsted and DfE)
- Being informed of any local and/or national issues impacting upon the link area
- Consider how information about the link area is communicated to parents, in particular on the school website.

PART 2 - VISITING THE SCHOOL

In the main, this section covers the structured visits for monitoring and evaluating. However, governors may also visit informally to attend or participate in assemblies, sports days, celebration events, school council meetings or assisting in areas in which they may be skilled e.g. reading. These visits will be arranged via an invitation. In all cases governors should make it clear when visiting if they are there as a visitor, parent, helper etc., or if it is a more formal 'link role' visit.

The Guide to the Law states that;

'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 Head Teacher, 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 Head Teacher'.

Preparing to visit the school

Planning for visits avoids wasted time and misunderstandings. Before you arrive ask yourself these questions:

What is the purpose of the visit? *What* has prompted my decision to visit? Is the reason specific or general? *Who* has prompted my decision to visit? What are my/other people's expectations?

How shall I carry it out? What particular areas of the school am I interested in? What particular activities of the school am I interested in? What particular age group(s) am I interested in? What questions should I ask? Who should I ask? Are there any questions that can be answered by observation? What evidence is there to support the agreed School Development Plan? What strategies could a visiting governor adopt in order not to get in the way and yet get a whole picture of what is going on?

Is there any follow up? Have I recorded my experiences? Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting? How can I build on this the next time I visit?

Useful questions to ask when meeting with a subject coordinator

- How is the subject taught in different year groups?
- Are there any broad trends compared to similar schools, national rates and national picture?
- Do children of different ability do the same work, or do they work in groups?
- How are children with SEND taught?
- How is the work assessed?
- How are the children performing?
- Do the children have any out-of-school visits?
- Are there any future developments planned, nationally, or in school?
- Are the resources for teaching the subject adequate?
- What are the teachers' views and aspirations for this subject area?
- Could you offer any practical help? (e.g. liaise with a person/agency in the community to arrange an appropriate event or school visit)
- Would teachers be happy for you to arrange a time in the future to come into a class, and gain some practical experience of the subject?

Make sure that staff members understand the purpose of the visit. You are there to gain information. **Your job is to monitor, to get a view of the big picture, and not to inspect.** Express interest in the subject, and show that you have 'done your homework'. Staff will value your interest and be pleased to share further information with you.

Schools are a working environment and very busy and it is likely it is very different from when governors themselves were at school! Whilst staff will welcome the interest of governors' and fully understand their statutory responsibilities, governors must be careful not to interrupt the fundamental business of the school and the children's education, and finally, remember that teachers often work to a strict timetable and may not always have time to talk to a governor when they are teaching.

School Visit Record

Name of Governor:

Date of visit:

Purpose of visit

Links with the School Improvement Plan

Governor comments

General Outcomes

Issues I would like clarified or questions arising from the visit – to be discussed with the Head Teacher

Any key issues arising for the governing body

Action following governing body meeting

Signature of Governor:

Date: