GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY
(including protocol)

Status	Current	**Approval**	FGB
Review frequency	Annually	**Author (role)**	Headteacher
Date first written	February 2016	**Date last approved**	November 2026
Date of next review	November 2028	**Date withdrawn**	N/A

Introduction
The governing body is responsible for:
- **Values, Mission, Vision.** Governors must have a strategic view of the school
- **Monitoring and evaluating school improvement.** Governors must be a critical friend to the school
- **High Standards, value for money, agreed aims and objectives**. Governors must ensure accountability of the school

The expectation is that all governors carry out some school visits.

Purpose of school visits
- increase governor's first-hand knowledge and confidence about the school (how it functions)
- observe policies and action plans being implemented
- monitor the impact of school improvement initiatives on children's learning.

Findings from the above should help governors to
- make well-informed judgements about progress being made towards school improvement priorities.
- Identify next steps (strategic decisions)

For transparency, the focus of each visit should link to the School Improvement Plan and be in accordance with the school's monitoring timetable.
Sometimes, visits can be in response to matters arising throughout the year or in responses to key changes and/or developments.

Operational vs strategic
It is important to note that the Headteacher has day-to-day responsibility for the running of the school. Governors maintain a strategic view when visiting the school and it is important that they must not:
- visit the school to assess the quality of teaching provision or to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school,
- arrange a visit to the school without the consent of the Headteacher.

A governor school visit is not:
- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Checking on the behaviour of individuals or groups of children
- To pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Potential benefits
To governors
- Monitor policies in action
- Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge
- Inform decision making
- Recognise and celebrate success
- Develop relationships with staff
- Build familiarisation- help staff get know governors

- Get to know the children
- Understand the environment in which teachers teach
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

To staff
- Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Get to know governors
- Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- Highlight the need for particular resources
- To discuss well-being

Additional Visit Foci
In addition to governor monitoring, visits may also focus on:
- Particular subjects, Phases or classes
- The use made of the building or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises (H&S walk, ref F&R committee)
- Special educational needs
- The use of IT resources
- The impact on the school of any changes, e.g. reduced classes in key stage
- Impact of specific targets identified in the School Improvement Plan
- Impact of Continuous Professional Development for staff.
- Staff and pupils well-being

Informal Visits
Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.
- Chair making a regular visit to the Headteacher
- Volunteering at school as a reader, for events, trips, or other support in the class.

Handling concerns arising from visit
If a governor has a concern about anything that they have seen or heard during their visit, they must address this to the Headteacher.

Monitoring and review of governors' school visit policy
This policy should be monitored and reviewed annually.
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better?

Reporting the visit
- Governors should write a short summary in the governor comments section of the monitoring form, summarising the visit and your overall impression
- Circulate a draft of the feedback to the Headteacher
- Feedback the outcomes of the visit at the next FGB meeting

Appendix A

PROCESS OF A VISIT

BEFORE the visit

Identify the purpose of the visit

- The purpose of the visit will be clear on the school's self- evaluation timetable and will link with the Headteachers school review
- All governors will be emailed in advance, a copy of the governor monitoring week form they are expected to complete during their visit
- Governors will be made aware of key focus groups and questions to ask children and teachers
- The monitoring form will focus on a key area of school improvement

Preparing for a visit

- Familiarise yourself with the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Read through the governor monitoring form and direct questions or concerns to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors prior to your visit
- Use the governor monitoring week pro-forma to record your observations and children's/teachers responses
- Consider if there are any supporting documents or information to support your visit- Ofsted report, improvement plan, Subject Leader Action Plans and Annual Report to Governors, performance data and request these in advance
- Familiarise yourself with the health and safety procedures, including what to do in the event of a fire.

DURING the Visit

GOVERNORS

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body, **it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body**.
- Be punctual, courteous and considerate at all times, respecting the professional roles of the head teacher and staff.
- If entering classrooms, decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the class will be
- Get involved with the children
- Have a friendly approach. Remember, it is a visit not an inspection
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson but be prepared to talk and show interest
- Interact, don't interrupt
- Listen to staff and pupils

TEACHER and SUPPORT STAFF

- Be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing body to the school.
- Familarise yourself with the governor monitoring form prior to governor monitoring week so that you know what to expect from governors and you are clear over the purpose of the visit
- Talk to governors
- Answer their questions on the governor monitoring form

AFTER the visit

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Clarify any issues you are unclear about.
- Refer to questions on the governor monitoring form and evaluate if the areas identified have been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Share the report with the Head Teacher
- Reflect on your visit: how did it go? Has it enhanced relationships? What have I learned about the school? Have I gained more confidence in helping the governing body fulfil its duties?

Reporting the visit

- Write a short summary in the governor comments section of the monitoring form, summarising the visit and your overall impression
- Circulate a draft of the feedback to the Headteacher
- Feedback the outcomes of the visit at the next FGB meeting

Appendix B

Monitoring of strategic aspects of the school

Governor Monitoring can take several forms. It can face-to-face or virtual and examples include:

- Pupil interviews
- Staff questionnaires (well-being, work-life balance, working environments, ethos of the school)
- Meeting with subject leaders/teaching and learning leaders
- Snapshot of a lesson/ videos of lessons
- Walk around the school
- The type of monitoring you are expected to undertake will be specified on the governor monitoring form
- Virtual monitoring- attending meetings, observing pupil conferencing, live streaming of lessons, hearing children read, observing children reason and solve problems, asking questions of leaders

Observations to make when visiting a classroom or observing virtually (where applicable to the visit focus)

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and pupils
- Relationship between pupils
- Availability and role of support staff
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How different abilities are catered for, (if applicable to the focus of the visit)
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and safety regulations practiced i.e. fire exits kept clear

Appendix C

Questions for additional visits or when questions are not pre-determined

1. To ask children

- Tell me about what you are learning today
- Do you like ..?(select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me about what you learned last year in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)

2. To ask Subject Leaders (all subjects)

- Ensure all subject leaders can clearly articulate the intentions for their subject: why is it sequenced and planned in the way that it is? (why this, why now?).
- Ensure all SL's can describe what their subject looks like across the curriculum and year groups: how does your subject start in EYFS and develop across KS1 and/or KS2. Where are the opportunities for children to revisit previous knowledge? How are revisiting opportunities different? It what ways are children encouraged to apply their knowledge in new ways?
- Ensure all SL can describe progression in children's knowledge acquisition and thinking in their subject: to what extent have children remembered crucial knowledge and how do you know? (Evidence from book reviews, discussions with children). Being able to describe what children can do with their knowledge: (progress in books, progress in their understanding of a concept within your subject, monitoring opportunities)

Current school improvement plan target (September 2022) related to subject leadership:

To deepen subject leader expertise to ensure that pupil's work across the curriculum is consistently high quality so that all pupils, particularly disadvantaged and SEND achieve exceptionally well. A question to ask to assess this would be:

- As a subject leader, how are you equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to support colleagues in designing applied Pop tasks for all children?
- Describe how you assess greater depth learning in the subject you lead?
- For a child who finds learning in your subject difficult, describe what provision is place for them? (different to and additional from)

Other general questions for Subject Leaders

Note: much of this is covered in the Annual Report to Governors, so the Governor must ensure they are familiar with the report before asking the question

- What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject and what has been your response to it? (This questions is mainly for English, maths, science and ICT. Other subject may have been the focus of a curriculum inspection)
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the school have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?
- How are parents kept informed of progress?
- How do you gather parents views?
- What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading/writing at home?

3. Questions for Core Subject Leaders (English, Maths and Science)

Achievements and attitudes

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?
- How does this compare to other schools and nationally?
- How well are PP pupils doing in this subject?
- Are there any gaps in attainment for specific pupil groups in this subject?
- Where has the school improved? why?
- Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?
- What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?
- Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
  - Girls and boys?
  - Pupils with special educational needs?
  - Pupils working at Greater Depth?
  - Pupils with English as an additional language?
  - The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?
  - The work of a range of pupils (e.g. working below, at, or above expected)
- How are pupils with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/math's lessons
- How is the role of the English/math's leader developing?
- Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (English only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books are available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys?
- How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

4. Questions to ask the teacher: In the classroom

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
Help me to understand how you plan your lessons: how do you get from the National Curriculum to deciding what each child will be doing in projects?	National Curriculum Long term planning Project planning Learning values Year/termly/weekly/daily plans Individual plans	
How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress?	Questioning in lessons Marking Assessments, including benchmarking Target-setting and achieving Value-added data Pupil progress meetings	

What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?	ICT – access to computers Book corners Use of library Use of basics like pens and pencils. Good labelling Prompt boards Learning walls Learning videos	
How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?	Boys v. girls Most able/ SEN English as an Additional Language Poor choices of behaviour Disabled	
How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?	No fixed ability groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities Assessment of children's learning (daily) Learning walls and steps	
How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning?	Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters Diaries	

Appendix D

Generic record form for a governor's school visit.

NAME:	**Date:**
Governor Responsibility:	**Staff seen during visit**
Focus of previous visit (if applicable);	
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):	
Links with School Development Plan	
Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with Head/teacher, LA Focus	
Information gathered during visit: (e.g. What you saw, what you learned, you what would you would like clarified. Duration of visit	
Any key issues arising for the governing body (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy). These must be referred to the Headteacher first.	
Action following governing body meeting (record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit e.g. training for governors)	

Governor Monitoring Forms

Governor monitoring forms will be emailed in advance of governor monitoring week. The forms will be co-written by the Headteacher and chair of governors and will have a specific focus to support governors in judging specific aspects of school improvement.

The DfE states that the policy on governor visits to the school should include the following:

- Governors do not have any rights of access to the school.

- Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:
    - improve governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
    - monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the development plan
    - assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties.
- Before visiting the school the governor(s) should:
    - inform the school of the visit and seek approval of the arrangements
    - ensure that they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire.
- After visiting the school the governor(s) should:
    - complete a visit report outlining the objectives and results of the visit
    - report back to the committee or governing body as appropriate
    - provide constructive feedback as appropriate.

It is important that governors remember the purpose of governor visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision or to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the headteacher or SLT.