



Governor Visits Policy & Procedure 2025-28

Reviewed January 2025

Policy Context

The Governing Body has a statutory duty to oversee the policies and direction of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance.

The governance handbook states on the role of governor school visits:

Governing Bodies need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many Governing Bodies find that visiting their school(s), particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school, its staff and students. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the Governing Body can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views; though are unlikely to be sufficient for these purposes.

Governing Bodies are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. 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 executive leaders. If Governing Bodies wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.

Understanding of the role of governors in the circle model governance structure.

For the circle model, the governor monitoring visits, performed by the skillset appointed statutory and delegated governor roles (including monitoring pairs), are replacing the committee agenda items, challenge and support which would have taken place within the committee meetings. Therefore, to be able to fulfil its core functions collectively, the Governing Body will need to ensure a robust policy, procedure and practice for governor delegated monitoring is in place to enable constructive challenge to the Leadership of the school.

These visits will hold the school to account for its functions and areas of strengths and weaknesses, thereby increasing the Governing Body's collective first-hand challenge and knowledge, informing self-evaluation, holding to account and strategic decision making. Governors will need to ensure they are asking the questions a committee would have asked during their visits as well as seeing the school policies and procedures in action.

Governor written reports will need to contain the questions asked and answers received to enable the Governing Body to ask follow up questions for evidence of deeper questioning and impact. It is recognised that the amount of time that a governor can commit to a visit will vary but in general governors, in their delegated and pair monitoring roles, should undertake **3** visits a year, aligned with the monitoring schedule and Governing Body agendas, unless the school circumstances necessitate differently i.e. school category of RI or inadequate. If governors cannot undertake this commitment, they should question whether they can make a realistic and valuable contribution as a governor in line with the Governing Body Code of Conduct. Whole Governing Body days in school alongside delegated monitoring may also be an additional valuable tool in knowing your school with a planned focus and feedback.

The National Governance Association and governance handbook both note references to not interfering in the day-to-day operational running of the school and the impact too many governor visits may have on the operational school day.

This policy sets out the protocol and procedures for a governor visit which have been shared with staff. It sets out how governor visits should be conducted to allow both governors and staff to gain the most from the visit and enable evidence of impact.

Governor delegated monitoring roles (as opposed to the statutory) should align to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Plan, with an agreed monitoring visit schedule that is timely to the school and Governing Body meetings, and reported back with Governing Body minute evidencing documented questions and discussion; this will enable impact of the visit and collective understanding in replacement of a committee at the Governing Body meeting.

The monitoring schedule should also offer provision for the statutory delegated governor monitoring roles of safeguarding, health and safety and SEND.

Each monitoring visit should have an agreed clear purpose. Role descriptors would aid governors in their understanding and expectations in carrying out their monitoring visits.

Governors should arrange their planned visits in advance with the Head of School who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school. The Governing Body should review their school visits policy, protocols and procedure annually to ensure its effectiveness with the approved policy circulated to all staff.

Governing Body Circle Monitoring Visits Policy

A breach of this policy is a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Introduction

This policy applies to school visits made for the purpose of governance, where committees have been replaced by Governing Body meetings or any other governor visit. It does not apply to visits to the school site that any individual may make in another capacity e.g. as parents, priests, professional advisers, volunteers or members of staff.

Purpose

All school visits will:

- Have a clear focus, linked to strategic priorities and delegated governor roles, be timely and planned against the Governing Body approved monitoring schedule and Governing Body meetings.
- Be arranged with adequate notice through the Head of School who will agree it with the relevant members of staff.
- Be of value to the Governing Body in collectively holding the school to account in replacement of committees and demonstrably evidenced to outside agencies e.g. Ofsted and the Local Authority

It is not the role of those governing to form judgements about the performance of school staff during visits and individuals should make every effort to avoid this impression.

Governor Conduct

Governors undertaking visits will comply with the school and Governing Body codes of conduct and the standards of presentation expected of staff. They will be mindful that they are representing the whole Governing Body through their words and actions. The Governing Body code of conduct will contain reference to the governor monitoring visits policy.

Training

Governors should ensure they understand their monitoring remit, undertaking relevant training to keep up to date with best practice and latest statutory and legislative requirements. Role descriptors may aid governors in their understanding, expectations and preparation for carrying out their monitoring visits.

Governor reports following visit

Governors undertaking their visits will have the opportunity to discuss the visit, including any concerns, with the Head of School or Executive Headteacher immediately or soon after the visit.

The attached 'Delegated Governor Report' will be completed after each visit, containing the questions and answers as would be expected of a committee agenda item as well as questions to be raised at the Governing Body meeting. A draft will be shared with the Headteacher for any comments concerning factual accuracy; a final version will be sent to the clerk to be included in the agenda and as a supporting paper for collective discussion and further questioning in the next Governing Body meeting.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the Head of School with whom the visit was arranged but not with other staff or with parents. Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) should not be identified in school visit reports.

Frequency of Visits

Governors will undertake visits as agreed in their approved monitoring schedule with no more than three visits per academic year unless the school circumstance necessitates.

Review

This policy, protocol and procedure should be reviewed by the Governing Body every academic year alongside the code of conduct.

This Policy will be circulated to all new governors upon appointment

Purposes of a circle model governor visit

The benefits to governors within their individual delegated monitoring roles:

- To assist the Governing Body, including the statutory delegated governor roles of safeguarding, health and safety and SEND to hold leaders to account within their delegated area of responsibility, collectively fulfilling its statutory duties and demonstrating accountability and constructive challenge in their delegated role in replacement of committees.
- To see the strategies in action as outlined in the school improvement plan e.g. meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement, seeing first-hand, questioning and learning about the impact of the adopted strategy and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning.
- To challenge, support and improve knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses within the governor delegated area of responsibility and collectively prevent overreliance on Head of School information.
- To hold the school leaders to account for the impact of specialist funding i.e. pupil premium, sports premium.
- To develop an understanding of issues facing the school and how they are dealt with on a day to day basis to inform collective strategic decision making.
- To observe and monitor the impact of policies in action e.g. safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety, SEND.
-

The benefits to governors within general monitoring e.g. focussed or whole Governing Body days:

- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum or a curriculum subject area as relevant.
- To see the use of resources and how the premises are utilised, understanding the environment for teachers and pupils.
- To recognise and celebrate success.
- To evidence the Governing Body's approved ethos, vision and values in action.
- To show themselves as part of the school and to gain stakeholder engagement with pupil, parents, staff or the wider community e.g. Pupil voice, school council, parent forum, parent evenings.

The potential benefits to staff:

- To ensure governors understand how school priority strategies are embedded in practice, understanding the reality of the classroom and environment.
- To enhance the continuous professional development of middle and subject leads.
- To get to know and build positive relationships with governors.
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities including the responsibility to work with executive leaders to address unnecessary teacher workload
- To feel valued and to know that staff wellbeing is considered.
- To have an opportunity to reflect on the impact of policies and procedures through discussion
- To highlight the need for/impact of particular resources.

The potential benefits to students:

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom environment, broad curriculum and school life
- To get to know governors
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities
- To give feedback about the school and their views of the impact of policies to the governors

The potential benefits to parents:

- To ensure governors understand the issues that parents may face
- To have mechanisms for enabling the Governing Body to listen, understand and respond to the voices of parents/carers, particularly to ensure transparency of decision-making.
- To get to know governors
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities
- To give feedback about the school to the governors

What a visit is not about

- Visiting classrooms to observe a lesson, unless as part of an accompanied learning walk against a specific school improvement priority. This prevents any confusion on a class visit being confused as a form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of a teacher.
- Undertaking a staff operational role e.g. touring the school undertaking health and safety checks as the health and safety governor, even if professionally qualified in this area.
- Checking on progress or receiving information on individual children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- An opportunity to tackle staff about specific issues not related to the delegated role

Protocols or ground rules for visits

- Ensure the visit has a clear focus linked to the school improvement plan and/or area of governor responsibility.
- Governors individually understand the Governing Body's and their delegated area of responsibility, enabling preparation to ensure they provide the supportive/constructive challenge required.
- Governors to remember that during any visit their role is strategic not operational.

- Governors to ensure in preparation for their visit they have undertaken relevant training and read any relevant policy or supporting documentation.
- The Head of School will liaise with the member of staff responsible for the school/priority/policy objective to arrange the date and schedule of the meeting.
- Staff should have the opportunity to explain the context of any lesson on the rare occasion that a governor visits a classroom.
- Governors will not interrupt lessons by asking teachers questions on the rare occasion that they may visit the classroom.
- Governors may talk to students during learning walk visits to lessons, about their understanding and learning journeys, but must not ask questions about the teacher's conduct of the lesson.
- Governors will ensure that they are familiar with the school's code of conduct as well as that of the Governing Body, with expectation that they follow the same behaviours to understand how they will be addressed and how to address others as well as appropriate dress code as outlined within both code of conducts.
- Governors will have a clear understanding that a breach of the governor monitoring visit policy will be dealt with as a breach of the Governing Body's code of conduct.
- Governors will formally write reports on their delegated monitoring using the approved templates; ensuring that draft reports are sent to the Head of School for factual accuracy comments prior to the final report being produced.
- Delegated governor monitoring reports will be circulated in advance, via the clerk, for the Governing Body meeting to enable discussion, evaluation, triangulation and key questions to be raised; with minute evidence documented to show the impact of the monitoring in replacement of the challenge at a committee.

Annual programme of visits

A programme of visits (audit programme/monitoring schedule) should be planned, using the school improvement plan, Governing Body meeting timetable and subsequent allocation of delegated roles by school priority and skillset as well as the statutory delegated monitoring governor roles. Visits should be spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Head of School.

Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to ensure they are monitoring, evaluating and triangulating against the current school priorities and statutory areas and reporting back to the Governing Body in replacement of a committee. This enables the Governing Body to know the school in terms of being able to describe to Ofsted or other outside agencies and to evidence constructive challenge and impact.

The number of visits required to be undertaken by each delegated governor role is six in one academic a year, unless the school situation necessitates otherwise.

Examples of delegated governor monitoring visits in which key questions are asked to the headteacher or relevant staff lead can also for example include:

- Learning walks with members of staff
- Pupil voice in the class or interviews in groups
- Looking at pupils' work against the marking policy
- Monitoring implementation of a policy e.g. behaviour, equality, safeguarding
- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum, or particular area

- Gaining an understanding of the impact of spend of funding, including specialist funding, with spending leads
- Ensuring monitoring and processes are in place
- Seeing in action deployment of staff and impact of any change e.g. reduced class sizes/ split classes
- Reviewing the environment, the condition and maintenance, use made of the buildings or the site and resources of the school

Whole governing body days or general monitoring in school can for example include:

- Visiting break and lunchtimes with staff and pupils
- Pupil voice and their understanding of how they are receiving a quality education
- School council
- Parent forum
- Monitoring the culture, ethos and values against agreed expectations.
- Parental engagement at the start; end or during parental events in school.
- Monitoring British values
- Monitoring preparation for the next stage of education

Monitoring and review of the school visit policy

The policy should be monitored and reviewed annually alongside the code of conduct.

Areas we should consider when reviewing are:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified? Are we fulfilling our core functions?
- Are our individual reports containing the challenge and answers appropriate to committee item minutes?
- Do our discussions at meetings from the reports enable the collectiveness in holding to account achieved by committees and is evidenced in minutes?
- Are our visits timely against the school improvement plan?
- Do we have the right governor monitoring roles against the current school priorities?
- Are our delegated governors aware of their responsibilities in replacement of committees? Do they understand their role? Do we have role descriptors?
- Are governors appointed to their delegated roles due to skillset? Are they keeping up to date with best practice and latest statutory/ legislative requirements?
- Are we better informed and can evidence the accuracy of Headteacher and SLT reports?
- Have we engaged with stakeholders to understand their views to use as part of informed strategic decision making?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better? Is there anything we need to change in how visits are conducted from feedback from stakeholders?

Governor Visits - Good Practice

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy and schedule for governors' monitoring visits
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to visit, within the monitoring schedule and Governing Body meeting window, with the Head of School.
- Discuss the visit and agreed timetable with the Head of School to ensure that any member of staff who will be involved in the visit, understands the arrangements.

- Clarify the purpose of the visit as outlined within the monitoring schedule and undertake any background preparation reading required. Understand your strategic delegated monitoring role and responsibility including completing relevant training. Do you have a role descriptor explaining your responsibilities?
- Review the milestones and action points in the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school policies associated to this area? What questions do I want to ask?
- Discuss with the Head of School/staff lead if any new supporting information is available, e.g. Ofsted report, updated improvement plan, note of visit, staff lead report, performance data.
- Ensure that you are familiar with safeguarding and health and safety procedures
- Read the Governing Body code of conduct and staff code of conduct to ensure understanding of the professional behaviours required.

During the Visit

- 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, reporting to reception and signing in as a governor. Wear a badge to identify yourself as a governor. Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible to the school needs.
- Decide with the headteacher how you will be introduced and how you will address staff and pupils
- Be courteous and professional throughout the visit, friendly not critical, including thanking members of staff before leaving.
- Remember you are there to learn, fact find, ask the questions in replacement of a committee and gain answers, it is a monitoring visit not an inspection.
- Keep to the role/focus agreed; only talk to students if invited/ agreed to do so.
- Observe discretely. Depending on the context of the visit, excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection, though recording needs to be balanced with being able to capture the questions and answers.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Respect confidentiality
- Meet the headteacher at the end of the visit and discuss what you have seen, including any issues or concerns you may have. Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Ensure that you have signed out

After

- Share any concerns with the Head of School, Executive Headteacher and Chair, however trivial. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Thank the staff by email via the Head of School for contributing to the success of the visit and for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, and positive.
- Make more notes as soon as possible after your meeting and any observations while it is still fresh in your mind.
- When drafting the report ensure individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) are not identified in school visit reports.
- Send the draft to the Head of School and once you have taken their comments into account send the final written report to the clerk for circulation at the next Governing Body meeting.
- Ensure that your visit is included as an agenda item at the next Governing Body meeting.
- Complete the agreed visit template proforma in time for the headteacher to comment on and sending to the clerk for sending out 7 days in advance of the Governing Body

meeting. Ensure that all the questions and answers are captured, with key questions added following evaluation of the visit to be raised at the next Governing Body meeting. (see appendix A).

- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the Governing Body collectively fulfil its duties by ensuring challenge and collective understanding of my delegated area? Are there actions the Governing Body will want the next visit to follow up/ focus on following discussion. Do I need to undertake training to increase my skillset to fulfil the monitoring role effectively? How has this visit had impact at the Governing Body meeting?

Informal or outside of delegated role visits

Outside of delegated monitoring, visits may also take place to gain stakeholder view, to focus whole day visits on a specialised area or to monitor the Governing Body's ethos, vision and values. These can be documented using the approved formal visits template (Appendix A) or as a Governing Body day with specific documented feedback. Visits may also take place in an informal capacity for less formal occasions such as school events, plays, sports day, and celebration events. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the school. Visiting governors should ensure that they follow the governor visits protocols as appropriate and consider how they will feedback to the Governing Body.

There will also be times when a governor visits the school and a report is not required. For example,

- The chair making a regular planned visit to see the Head of School or Executive Headteacher
- To get information from the school office relating to a meeting
- New governor tour of the school
- Attending working groups or Governing Body meetings
- Invited to attend prize giving or celebration events

Areas not considered as a governor monitoring visit

It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse their roles when they wear more than one hat within the context of the school.

For example, times when governors may be visiting the school **NOT** as a governor.

- To help in a class as a volunteer
- To lend a helping hand with a school event or educational visit as a volunteer
- To speak to a teacher/ Headteacher in relation to your own child
- Attending a school function as a parent/ relative/ invitee
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest, councillor, member of staff, or providing commissioned or uncommissioned support (which needs to be declared) in your professional capacity. E.g. advising on finance, amending/ devising the school website.



NAME:	DATE:
NAME OF SCHOOL:	
To be reported at LGB meeting on:	
Name of member of staff involved: •	
Purpose of visit •	
Links with the school improvement plan •	
Observations and comments by the governors •	
Observations on children's emotional wellbeing and behaviour •	
Observations and comments on attendance: what impact has attendance had on the topic you are monitoring? •	
Any key issues arising for the governing body •	
Action following governing body meeting •	
Signed:	