Governor School Visits Policy

September 2023

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1. Aims

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow when making visits to the school. Governors do not have an automatic right to enter school. When they do so, they are invited guests.

This policy sets out the procedure which all governors are expected to follow when visiting school and how they are expected to report back on that visit to the Academy Council.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that all governors understand their role and purpose so school visits are a productive and enjoyable event for all involved.

2. Guidance and scope

This policy takes account of best practice and guidance from the Governance Handbook (section 3.4.2).

2.1 Governors are observers

Boards must know their schools in order to maintain robust accountability. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, governors will:

- Observe whether the school is properly implementing school policies, and actions from the school improvement plan
- Observe how those procedures are working in practice
- Have the opportunity to gather the views of pupils and staff

2.2 Governors are not inspectors

Governors:

- Will not assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom
- Will not manage the school or interfere in the day-to-day operations of the school

For those governors who wish to spend time in a classroom, they will make it clear about their purpose in doing so.

3. Visits programme

Governors will carry out regular school visits in order to meet the board's statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness.

There are 2 types of visits:

- **Formal monitoring visits**, where governors discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member
- **Learning walks**, where governors will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area and are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils

Governors will carry out school visits according to the following schedule:

3.1 Governors for health and safety, special educational needs, and safeguarding

These governors will attend:

- A termly 1:1 monitoring visits with corresponding staff leads
- Ad hoc meetings as required or requested on issues specific to their areas of responsibility

3.2 Subject lead governors

Subject lead governors will attend:

- A monitoring visit with the subject lead in September/February/May

- A learning walk in October/March/June

3.3 All governors

All governors will:

- Carry out at least 1 learning walk each term
- Attend at least 1 school assembly in the year
- Attend at least 1 educational visit in the year

4. Before a visit

Governors will:

- Notify the headteacher and the chair before scheduling a visit, even if the headteacher will not be involved in the visit. They should be made aware just as a matter of courtesy
- Schedule an appointment with relevant members of staff in order to avoid friction and ensure visits are scheduled for times that are mutually convenient. Generally, governor visits are more productive when conducted during a school day
- Be sensitive to the numerous demands staff have on their time
- Clarify the purpose of the visit in advance with the chair, the headteacher and/or relevant member of staff ahead of the visit
- Send questions in advance to the staff member so everyone can feel properly prepared
- Be familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures

5. During a visit

Governors should know how to conduct themselves appropriately during visits in order to minimise disruption for staff and pupils and to receive the maximum benefit from the time spent.

Governors will:

- Be on time and meet with the headteacher ahead of the visit
- Always wear a visitor's badge
- Use the agreed recording method for the visit. Photographs and videos are to be avoided unless specifically agreed with the headteacher for a specific purpose
- Remain as observers; they are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them
- Ensure all parties are clear about why a governor wishes to spend time in the classroom, if they wish to do so
- Check with teachers before speaking to pupils
- Pass on any concerns the staff raise with the relevant people
- Be friendly but professional and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils

Governors will not:

- Pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen, judge teaching methods, assess the quality of teaching, or comment on the extent of learning
- Interfere with the day-to-day running of the school
- Behave in a manner than would make staff feel that they are there to inspect, e.g. sit at the back of the classroom with a clipboard

- Raise concerns in the moment. Governors should note down any concerns they may have and raise them with the chair of governors or headteacher after the visit

6. After a visit

Governors will complete a written report as soon as reasonably practicable [using the form attached as Appendix A (monitoring visit) or Appendix B (learning walk)], as appropriate. In completing the report, governors will ensure to:

- Use neutral language at all times
- Remain observational, and describe only what they see
- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role

Once complete, governors will submit their reports to the following people, in the following order:

- A more experienced governor for feedback - if they've been in place for less than
- The relevant staff member, both as a courtesy and to check for accuracy
- The headteacher, as a courtesy
- The chair of the governing board or the relevant committee, as agreed

Appendix 1: Template report for a monitoring visit

Formal monitoring visits are where you discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member. Use this form as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

Part 1: plan the visit	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that have not been agreed with the member of staff.	To discuss the school's new strategy to improve attainment of Key Stage (KS) 2 boys.
Relevant school objective or priority This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.	Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.
Questions to ask Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit. Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.	What is the process for supporting pupils who need extra help? Have teachers had any training to help them put this into practice? Search The Key for School Governors for questions specific to the purpose of your visit. For example, you can search for 'safeguarding questions.'

Part 2: in the meeting
What is the school doing within this area of focus? *Tips:* • *Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where'* • *Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with* • *Remember you are **not** there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them – you remain an observer* • *When writing the report, use neutral language and do not name individual teachers and pupils*

How do you know the school's actions are having an impact? *Remember:* • *Include specific evidence that demonstrates the positive impact the school is having in this area* • *Where a positive impact has not been made yet, note down why that is and what steps are being taken to make progress* • *Add any further evidence you would like to see to help you make a better assessment of the impact*

What successes stood out and why?

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors

Appendix 2: Template report for a learning walk

Learning walks are where you will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area. You are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils. Use this as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

Part 1: plan the walk	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus *Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that have not been agreed with the member of staff.*	To see the implementation of the new strategy to improve attainment of Key Stage (KS) 2 boys.
Relevant school objective or priority *This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.*	Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.
Questions to ask *Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.* *Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.*	Ask staff: what do you do if you think a student needs further support? Ask pupils: if you need help with something, what do you do? Visit our governors' question bank for questions specific to the purpose of your visit.

Part 2: on the walk
General notes from discussions with staff *Tips:* • *Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me…'* • *Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with* • *Remember you are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them* • *When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers*

General notes from discussions with pupils *Remember:* • *Do not ask them for pupils' views on a specific teacher* • *Do not record pupils' names*

General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere *Note:* • *Whether the governors' vision of the school is replicated on the ground* • *Any issues with the school site you see e.g. broken equipment or lack of resources*

What successes stood out on the learning walk and why?

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy Document	Governor School Visits Policy
Lead Member of Staff:	Governance Lead
Authorised by:	BCWCAT Trust Board
Date:	September 2023
Review Date:	September 2026