



Policy for Governor Visits

October 2021

As a governing committee we have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates. To achieve this, we work very closely with the Principal and the strategic leadership team. The strategic function of our Governing Committee can be summarised as:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. Holding the Principal to account for the educational performance of the school and its students, and the performance management of staff, and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The OfSTED Inspection Framework sets out that:

275. Inspectors will explore how governors carry out each of these functions. For example, the clarity of the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction will have a significant impact on the decisions that leaders make about the curriculum. Inspectors will consider whether the work of governors in this respect is supporting the school to provide a high-quality education for its students.

276. In addition, those with governance/oversight are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding. Please note that, when inspectors consider whether governors are fulfilling this responsibility, they are not expected to construct or review a list of duties.

Executed well, Academy visits by Governors will add to understanding of their Academy, its staff and students.

This policy draws on model policies and best practice in some settings. It includes a Governors' visit pro-forma, which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record of the governors' structured and systematic involvement in the work and life of the Academy.

**It must not, however, form part of any other evidence base (e.g. Performance Management / Appraisal).**

This policy is agreed between staff and governors in order to ensure there is a clear understanding of the process. It should be read in conjunction with the *Academy's Governor Quality Assurance Framework*.

### Why visit?

The purpose of the Governor visit is to allow them to gather independently the evidence that will allow them to hold leaders to account for the provision on offer within the Academy. It is to allow Governors to develop fluency in their knowledge and understanding of the Academy's strengths and Areas for Development. In line with the Governor Quality Assurance Framework, visits may take a different focus and involve different members of the Academy staff. Visits may be more frequent in line with the Academy's priorities for improvement and dependent upon an area of the academy provision's context.

A number of governors may have specific responsibilities, for example safeguarding, health & safety or SEN(D). This is identified in the Governor's quality Assurance Framework.

Developing the role of link governor allows the governing body to focus in more depth on particular areas of school life:

- The management of the school's resources
- The condition of the building and its use
- The development of teaching and support staff
- A specific subject area or a particular year group or subject area

By visiting a school and becoming better informed, governors will be:

- More aware of the needs of the school
- More able to approach staff to meet those needs
- In a good position to support the school within the community.

What are the benefits to governors and staff?

Governors	Staff
To establish and develop effective relationships with staff	To get to know and build positive relationships with governors
To have a greater understanding of student's needs	To feel valued
To recognise and celebrate success	To demonstrate progress against actions in the development plan
To monitor the implementation of the school development plan	To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom and school
To increase knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions	To highlight the need for further resources
To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach	To demonstrate that the school is working in partnership with governors
To see policies and the curriculum in practice	To share an understanding of the specific area
To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them	

To show support and encouragement to staff and students	
To demonstrate that the governing body is contributing to the school's self evaluation process	
To develop individual governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities	

### What are governor visits NOT about?

Governors should be aware that visits to the classroom are not a form of inspection. It is not the remit of governors to make judgements about the professional expertise of staff or the quality of teaching and learning. A school visit is also **not** about:

- Checking on the progress of your own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or preconceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues

### How often should link governors make visits?

This is set out in the Governor Quality Assurance Framework. A suggested timeline of visits is provided here but this is designed to have an element of flexibility.

### Who schedules the visit?

Visits should be arranged between the Governor and member of staff leading the area to be visited. Visits should be arranged via email, using the academy designated email address @gaa.org.uk

### Visit Preparation

There should be an agreed focus of the visit, which should be in line with the Governor Quality Assurance Framework. There may be occasions when the focus of the visit is not in line with the framework, but it must be pre-agreed whilst arranging the visit.

### What should and shouldn't happen

	Always	Never
<b>Before</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review action points in the Academy Development Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn up unannounced for a focused, formal visit</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree the purpose of the visit with the Principal or link teacher</li> <li>• Arrange details of the visit</li> <li>• Try to visit at different times of day over the year</li> <li>• Discuss with the Principal the focus for the visit and the nature of the link governor involvement</li> <li>• Agree level of confidentiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement and reasonable notice</li> <li>• Visit during an examination week</li> </ul>
<b>During</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared, organised and punctual</li> <li>• Sign in via reception and wear your Governor lanyard at all times</li> <li>• Fulfil the purpose of the visit</li> <li>• Observe school guidelines</li> <li>• Jot down discussion points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monopolise staff</li> <li>• Interrupt the teaching or talk to the teacher while he/she is teaching</li> <li>• Behave like an Inspector!</li> <li>• Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes</li> </ul>
<b>After</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the member(s) of staff and students</li> <li>• Discuss your visit experience as soon as possible after the visit</li> <li>• Feedback appropriately to the Principal</li> <li>• Discuss Health &amp; safety issues if relevant</li> <li>• Complete the visit form and give a copy to the Principal / copy to lead link governor</li> <li>• Keep the record of your visit to refer to before your next visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave without a word of thanks and without giving feedback</li> <li>• Discuss observation with other members of staff, parents or individual governors (except the chair) unless given permission.</li> </ul>

#### What should I do if you are visiting a classroom?

Before visiting there are some questions you should clarify with the Principal, subject Leader or teacher

- When I come into the classroom where would you like me to sit?
- What should I do if students ask for help?
- Would you like me to be involved in the lesson?
- What should I do if I see a student behaving inappropriately?

#### Focus of the visit

A visit can be to see the school generally, to attend a meeting with the coordinator or other adults and students or a specific subject area visit. Visits can focus on:

- The condition and maintenance of the premises/ use made of buildings and premises
- Safeguarding procedures
- Security on site / monitoring of health and safety
- School systems – eg Assembly, Break and lunchtimes, Morning Mood
- The use and condition of resources / environment and use of displays
- The deployment of support staff / specific intervention programs
- To see a class or teacher lead an Assembly / to attend a performance or special event / Join a class or year group on an educational visit
- Extra-curricular activities of training courses delivered at the school
- Attending Parents' Evening or Open Evening – available to talk with parents and carers / gather views and promote the work of the school

This list is not exhaustive, but covers the main purpose of school governor visits.

#### After the visit

It is essential that warm thanks are given and a comment on the focus agreed. Remember that as a governor you are visiting on behalf of the governing board and not in a personal capacity. It is not appropriate to make either judgements or promises on behalf of the governing board. Staff should also realise that governors are not able to address every day matters that would normally be resolved through line management.

Any expression of concern should be shared with the Principal / Senior Leader as soon as possible.

Oral and written feedback should be given to:

- The member of staff involved
- The Principal
- The appropriate committee or lead link governor

It would be best if written feedback could be completed with the member of staff present or, out of courtesy, shared with the member of staff to be checked for accuracy.

The written reports should be discussed with the Chair of governors, filed and made available to the appropriate committee or whole governing board.

#### Monitoring and evaluation of the governing board's policy

Governors should review this policy annually, alongside the Governor Quality Assurance Framework.

The review should consider:

- Are we doing what we set out to do? Are we achieving the benefits outlined in the policy?
- Have I learned more about the School?
- Are we better informed and able to make good decisions?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued as a result of increased governor involvement?
- Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties? Is it helping us to review academy development priorities?

- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

Pre and post-visit checklist for the academy and governor

School	Governor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we know why the governor is visiting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I made a formal appointment with the Principal / Strategic Leadership Team?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we know what the governor is expecting to see?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I know the specific purpose of the visit?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the focus for the visit also a focus in our Academy Development Plan?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I arranged my time so that I can be sure to be punctual?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we drawn up a timetable for the visit?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I thought about how I will approach the teacher in the classroom or the subject lead?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do individual members of staff know when they are going to be visited?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I thought about what I will actually do while I am in the academy?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have other key members of staff been informed?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will I give feedback to staff, Principal and Governing Board?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the appropriate documentation ready and available?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I remembered that what I see or hear or might find out is confidential and not for sharing with other Governors or parents in general?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I build on this for the next visit?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did I address any difficulties I met?</li> </ul>

## Governor Visit Record

<b>Governor:</b>		<b>Governor Responsibility:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Area of school /staff visited:</b>					
<b>Purpose of visit:</b>					
<b>Link with Academy Development Plan / SEF / Faculty Development Plan:</b>					
Brief notes:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					
Link Teacher / Leader Comments:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					
Emerging issues for the governing board:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					
Focus for next visit:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>					
<b>Signed</b>					
<b>Governor</b>					
<b>Staff Member</b>					
<b>Principal</b>					



## Safeguarding Report to Governors

Period Covered	
Governor	
Names of Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)	
Training Record (of staff at all levels), and the effectiveness of training	
Audit of relevant policies and review dates	
Number of initial referrals made and accepted (so far this academic year):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional abuse: (made) / (accepted by social care etc.)</li> <li>• neglect:</li> <li>• physical abuse:</li> <li>• sexual abuse:</li> <li>• child sexual exploitation:</li> <li>• any Prevent/Channel referrals;</li> <li>• FGM referrals:</li> <li>• children missing education:</li> <li>• CAMHS:</li> <li>• other:</li> </ul>
Total number of pupils subject to a Child Protection Plan (break down as above if required):	

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Number of Meetings Attended by type by academy staff:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Child Protection Conference:</li> <li>• Professionals' Strategy meeting:</li> <li>• Child Protection Review Conference:</li> <li>• Core Group Meeting:</li> <li>• Common Assessment Framework – CAF:</li> <li>• Other:</li> </ul>
Number of 'Looked After Children' (LAC/CLA) (Separate report should also be included)	
Number of allegations made against staff referred to LADO / number of case LADO continued involvement	
Whether the Single Central Record is compliant and up-to- date (see audit)	<p>Fully / Partly</p> <p>Actions to make fully compliant must be deemed urgent.</p>
Other comments on safeguarding issues or concerns raised from the audit or other means?.	
Comparison information from previous reports	
Trends and impact of any new legislation or guidance	