



FOUR MARKS CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR GOVERNOR VISITS

Headteacher: Veronica Stoodley	Chair of Governors: Mike Smith
Date Policy First Adopted: June 2020	Reviewed: June 2023 Next Review Date: June 2026
Summary of Changes:	

Our policies reflect our Christian ethos and follow the statutory requirements for safeguarding.

Overall Aim:

- 'Monitoring visits' are where individual governors go into the school to see how specific aspects of the school work in practice.
- Visits allow governors to ask, and witness, whether the things people say are happening are actually happening.
- They might involve a 'learning walk' (see Appendix 2), where governors are accompanied around the school to chat to staff and pupils, or a sit-down meeting with a relevant staff member.
- They are not for governors to inspect the school, judge individual staff members, children or interfere with the day-to-day running of the school.

Category of visits:

Two categories of governor visit are defined, informal and focused.

Informal:

These may include class visits, attendance at a concert, sporting events, hearing readers, attending a parents' evening/day as a governor or helping on a school trip. Governors are not required to provide a written record of these visits but it is helpful to record the time/ purpose of the visit in the Governor visit book located next to the Governor mailboxes.

All governors are encouraged to ask a safeguarding question to a member of staff and note this in the Safeguarding questions book also located next to the Governor mailbox. Questions are pre-prepared for Governors.

Focused:

These visits are to look specifically at one or more areas of the School Improvement Plan. On the focused visits, the governor should be working alongside the Class Teacher or Subject Leader to observe how areas of priority within the SIP are being addressed, finding out any evidence linked to the area and discussing the findings with the member of staff.

Procedure for visits:

Before the visit:

- Contact the school to arrange a time to meet with the appropriate member of staff (usually the staff member with lead responsibility for this area).
- Agree with the Headteacher and staff member what the focus of the visit should be.
- If you will be speaking to children as part of your visit, send questions in advance

to the staff member you are liaising with so you can discuss and agree the language of the questions to ensure that these are appropriate and that age-appropriate language and terminology is used. A staff member will work alongside you to conduct these interviews.

If you have specific questions that you want to ask the member of staff you are liaising with, again it is best practice to send these before the meeting so that time is utilised effectively.

During your visit

Do

- Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where'.
- Ask to see evidence for the information you're told by staff, or ask what evidence they've used to make a judgement.
- Clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with and ask for further information about why and how the school is working (policies and procedures) if you are not sure.
- Stay observational: you are not there to pass judgement on staff, children, or inspect them.
- If you are going to spend time in a classroom, all parties need to be very clear about why you're there.
- Check with staff before asking pupils questions. If you are taking part in pupil conferencing ask for guidance and agree the phrasing of questions to ensure that the language and terminology is appropriate
- Should staff raise concerns with you, explain that you will pass these on to the relevant people. This helps build trust and demonstrates that you are there to work in partnership.
- Remember that you are representing the governors. Be friendly but professional, and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress you set for teachers and pupils.
- Discuss your impressions and findings with the Headteacher or lead member of staff to ensure that clarification can be given prior to you writing your report.
- Ensure that you follow all school Safeguarding policies and procedures.

Don't

- Pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen to staff or children. You are not there to inspect the school, and it is not your role to judge teaching methods, behaviour, assess the quality of teaching, or comment on the extent of learning.
- Interfere with the day-to-day running of the school. You are not school managers.
- Sit at the back of the classroom with a clipboard. Be friendly, engaging and interactive.
- Raise concerns in the moment. If you have concerns about anything you have seen or been told, you should raise these with the Headteacher in the first instance at the end of the visit so that clarification can be sought or to ensure that school staff can follow these up appropriately (in line with school policies and procedures). Advice

and concerns should be raised with the Chair of Governors if they relate to the Headteacher (in line with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures).

After your visit:

Recording:

Governors should provide a report/record of evidence seen against the appropriate School Improvement/ Statutory duty focus. The agreed report format is included in the appendix 1. Once your draft report has been agreed this should be circulated to all Governors and filed in the schools Governors Hub. Other 'incidental' visits to school should be recorded in the 'Governor Visits' book located next to the Governor Mailboxes in school.

Writing a constructive report that remains within governors' strategic remit:

Do:

- Use neutral language at all times.
- Remain observational, and summarise your key findings and next steps that have been discussed with the school and lead staff member.
- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role.
- Send your draft report to the relevant staff member to check for accuracy, language etc. There should be no surprises for the school in your visit report.
- If you are new to the role, it is a good idea to send your draft report to an experienced governor for feedback and to check for balance and appropriateness.

Don't:

- Make qualitative judgements, particularly about any specific incidents, including behaviour, that you see or hear when observing teaching and learning practice or talking to children.
- Give your personal opinion on what you think school staff and children should do/ change.
- Name any individual teachers and pupils
- Get distracted and talk about other issues that are not related to the focus of the visit.

Once the draft report has been finalised and shared with the school, file on the Governor Hub and note points to raise at the next Governing Body meetings.

The above information and advice is based on the purpose of visits set out in the Governance Handbook and advice from Governance experts, Jackie Beard and Nicky Odgers*.

**Jackie Beard is a governance consultant and former national leader of governance.*

**Nicky Odgers is a governance consultant and national leader of governance.*

Appendix 1

RECORD OF FOCUSED GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL

Name	Area (responsibility)	Date
Staff/Class visited:		
Purpose for visit:		
Sources of information:		
Brief notes		
Three Positive comments		
Next Steps		
Summary/ Key Points to take forward for discussion at the governing body meeting		
Signed		
Governor	Headteacher	

Appendix 2:

Governor's learning walk: Plan and aide-memoire

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 and member(s) of staff who will accompany you.	
Agreed focus <i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that haven't been agreed with the member of staff.</i>	E.g. To see the implementation of the new strategy to improve the attainment of Key Stage (KS) 2 boys.
Relevant school objective or priority <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.</i>	Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.
Questions to ask <i>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're visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	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?
Part 2: on the walk	
General notes from discussions with staff <i>Tips:</i> - Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me ...' - Don't be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with - Remember you're 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:

- *Don't ask pupils for their views on a specific teacher*
- *Don't 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

--