


GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

(referred to in Governing Body Terms of Reference)

**TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOL'S
COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT**

Date of Policy Issue/Review	Reviewed November 2019
Policy approved/date	By FGB at their meeting on 21 st September 2020
Signature of Governing Body	
Next review	September 2021 (in conjunction with the GB Terms of Reference)



‘Governors need to know their school if accountability is to be robust’

The Full Governing Body (FGB) accepts the following principles and procedures. The Headteacher is responsible for the day to day management of the school, the implementation of policy and the operation of the curriculum. The FGB has three main roles:

- To provide a strategic view of where the school is heading,
- To provide support and appropriate challenge to the school,
- To hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves and the quality of the education it provides.

Governors have a responsibility for ensuring the monitoring and review of all the policies, plans and procedures within which the school operates. The FGB and Headteacher will respect each others’ roles and maintain a professional and open relationship, acknowledging the skills and contributions of all, supporting each other and recognising each other’s respective responsibilities, so as to form a good working partnership. This FGB is committed to providing equal opportunities for all.

This FGB is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils. All Governors will require a satisfactory enhanced DBS (previously CRB) disclosure to hold office.

For further information about the roles and responsibilities of a Governing Body readers should refer to Chapter 3, of the A Guide to the Law for School Governors, produced by the DfES (This document can be downloaded from www.governornet.co.uk.)

AIMS

The over-riding purpose of the FGB is to help the school provide the best possible education for its pupils. In order to help fulfil this duty this code of conduct aims to set out the principles under which the business of the Governing Body should be conducted. We will encourage open and transparent governance and should be seen to do so.

The FGB is constituted according to the current Instrument of Governance, and this will always ensure suitable representation across all areas of our learning community.

COMMITMENT

All Governors are encouraged to spend time in the school during normal school hours in order to gain knowledge and understanding about the workings of the school, its policies and self-evaluation activities, and build relationships with school stakeholders.

We acknowledge the need to commit time and energy to being an effective Governor.

We should involve ourselves actively in the work of the FGB and accept a fair share of the responsibilities, including service on committees and working groups.

We will be expected to regularly attend meetings of the FGB, committees and working groups. Regular non attendance at FGB meetings can lead to eventual disqualification, unless apologies have been received in advance and accepted by the FGB.

In planning the frequency and timing of meetings the Governing Body will have regard to the equality of opportunity to serve as governors.

We will consider our training needs for development as Governors.

RELATIONSHIPS

We accept that all Governors have equal status.

We will strive to work as a team, and abide by all the decisions of the Governing Body whether we agree as individuals or not.

We will seek to develop effective working relationships with our HT, staff, parents, the Local Authority and the school's wider community.

The Headteacher expects the FGB to both challenge and support the school.

In so far as we have, or share, responsibility for the employment of staff, we should fulfil all reasonable expectations of a good employer.

CONDUCT

The Governing Body will, in the way it conducts its business, always have regard to the need for the Headteacher, Staff and Governors to maintain a reasonable work/life balance.

We will accept collective responsibility for all decisions.

We will be mindful of how our conduct maintains, develops and supports the ethos and reputation of the school. Our actions within the school community should reflect this.

We will not communicate our individual opinions outside of meetings.

Any pecuniary interest that a Governor may have in connection with the GB business must be recorded in the register of pecuniary interests and at the beginning of any meeting if an agenda item represents a conflict of interests. Where an interest is declared, the governor must leave the meeting while the item is under discussion.

We will conduct ourselves in meetings as outlined in the following meetings' charter:

CONFIDENTIALITY & COMMUNICATIONS

Once approved, the minutes of the FGB are publicly available with the exception of confidential items.

Matters discussed at governing body meetings are confidential.

We must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so.

We must treat all electronic and paper communications with utmost care and dispose of them in an appropriate manner.

We must exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the GB.

We must encourage parents to communicate with the Headteacher in the first instance for any school matters and not directly with any Governors

In responding to criticism or complaints relating to the school, we should refer to the School's "Complaints Policy" for the correct procedure to be followed at all times and advise the complainant accordingly.

We understand that we have no authority to act or speak individually unless the FGB or sub-committee has given any individual Governor the delegated authority to do so, it is legally permissible, and it has been recorded in the appropriate minutes.

The proper place for discussions is at FGB and Committee meetings.

Discussions and communications between Governors outside of formal meetings need to be limited to allocated actions, tasks, information and administrative purposes.

We should consider carefully how our own decisions might affect other schools.

MEETINGS' CHARTER

As a Governor I expect:

- To attend meetings regularly and be punctual
- An agenda and relevant documents to reach me at least seven days before the meeting
- An agenda that makes clear the purpose of each item
- A chair of a committee who keeps to the agenda, paces the meeting so that time is given to each matter in proportion to its importance, ensures that its strategic responsibilities are properly addressed, encourages all members to make contributions and keeps discussions to the point
- The decision making process to be quite clear, with all outcomes and actions to be clearly recorded
- Governors to work together
- Governors to take collective responsibility for decisions
- Minutes that summarise views succinctly, record decisions accurately and are made available, in draft form, as soon as possible after each meeting, within 14 days and before the next Full Governing Body meeting.

Others can expect me to:

- Apologise in advance if unable to attend
- Attend regularly and be punctual
- Read the agenda, minutes and other papers before the meeting and note any questions or comments where necessary
- Bring relevant papers to the meeting in paper or electronic form
- Make relevant and positive contributions
- Have completed, or be able to report the progress of, action points given to me at a previous meeting
- Listen respectfully to other people and consider what they want to say
- Accept my share of collective responsibility, even for those decisions that I do not personally agree with.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

We all agree that governor training and development is important. Therefore we will undergo regular training and self evaluation to further our individual interests within the GB body and the work of the GB as a whole.

We will liaise with the Governor responsible for training and maintain a training summary.

We will ensure that there is an appropriate induction procedure for all new Governors and appoint a “buddy” to each new Governor to assist in their understanding of the governing body and its role.

We will ensure that all new Governors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with all committees in conjunction with the relevant training.

VISITING THE SCHOOL

All visits to the school by Governors will have a clear purpose (see below), and will be agreed in advance with the Head Teacher.

Governors will conduct themselves as observers and not inspectors. Governors are not there to comment on the teaching ability of an individual member of staff. Governors should be aware of the confidentiality of what they see and hear.

School visits should be a partnership. Each Governor due to make a visit should contact the Headteacher in advance to arrange the date, the staff member they will be working with, and the precise objective, length and structure of their visit. The Headteacher may delegate arranging these details to another member of staff, in which case it is the Governor's responsibility to ensure that the Headteacher is notified in advance of the visit of what has been agreed.

When visiting the school Governors should sign in in accordance with the school's signing in procedures.

When observing teaching and learning, Governors must not

- Check on the progress of particular children
- Pursue any personal agenda
- Interrupt the flow of the lesson.

Governors are expected to complete a written report, using the pro forma at the end of this document for each visit to the school, or collection of visits where they are related to one SIP monitoring activity.

Exceptions to this are:

- Introductory visits for new Governors
- Meetings which have their own minutes, or documented outcome
- Meetings about individual pupils or staff, or which are confidential for other reasons
- Meetings between the Chair of Governors and Head Teacher
- Agenda setting meetings
- Visits to the school which are about building relationships, and raising the profile of Governors, e.g. attendance to school functions, parents' evenings.

Governors are expected to agree with the school at the start of any visit whether a report will be produced. The school staff involved in the visit must be given the opportunity to comment on the report before it is issued to the Full Governing Body, or Committee.

The following sections describe the guidelines and conduct relating to visits to the school by Governors in more detail. Note that visits involving or discussions concerning individual members of staff or pupils, or meetings between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher are outside the scope of this document.

Principles of Governor Visits and Learning Walks

To develop, and continue to develop, a healthy relationship between governors and school staff.

To assist the Headteacher and staff in the continued improvement of the school.

To ensure that improvement plans that have been put in place are in place and are working in order to continue the school's improvement.

Talk with pupils and staff to gather their thoughts on any implementations that have been agreed by the board.

It is not the role of governors to assess the quality of teaching or the extent of learning this is the role of the Headteacher. Any comments regarding the quality of teaching or the standard of learning should be reserved for the Headteacher only.

To assist the whole Governing Body in fulfilling its statutory role by improving the Governors':

- Knowledge of the workings and ethos of the school;
- Understanding of the impact of statutory changes on the school;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the current School Strategic Plan;
- Understanding of school needs and priorities for future school development and improvement plans;
- Links with staff; an effective partnership between Governors and staff, based on mutual understanding, benefits the whole school community

To recognise and celebrate the successes of the school.

To help Governors to be better able to support the needs of the school within the community.

To raise Governors' profile amongst children and parents by attending parental consultations, curriculum evenings, assemblies.

Before a Visit

In advance of the visit, the Governor should discuss with the Headteacher or designated member of staff the management of the visit:

- Focus for the visit including the preparation needed, background information and objectives. It is each Governor's responsibility to ensure that they understand the precise objectives of their visit and how they will be able to monitor whether they have been met
- Convenient dates, time and duration of visit
- The possibility of being shown around by a pupil
- Acceptable behaviour when visiting a class where teaching is in progress, and agreeing Governors' interaction with pupils during a lesson if appropriate. For example:-
 - Supporting a group of children on a set task
 - Informal observation of children at work
 - Opportunities to speak to children on their work in progress
 - Opportunities for observing displays of work in the classroom which show progress over time
- Including opportunities for discussion with the Headteacher/ designated member of staff immediately before and after the visit

- How staff and pupils will be informed of the visit, including the introduction of the Governor to the staff/pupils directly involved
- When and how impressions of the visit will be shared with Governors, Headteacher and staff.

The Purpose of the Visit

During the visit there are many aspects that you will be able to observe these could include:

1. Carry out checks on aspects such as financial procedures, SEN provision, health and safety and child protection.
2. Visit classrooms to informally observe the impact of recent school improvement projects.
3. Spend time with a representative group to gather information and opinions from members of the school community. For example meetings could focus on the impact on teachers of any newly implemented teaching strategy.
4. To inspect the exterior of the property – is it well maintained, tidy and welcoming?
5. What is the atmosphere in the school like?
6. What is the standard of dress and behaviour?
7. Are the pupils busy, active and interested when in class?

During a Visit

It is necessary for Governors to emphasise that they are coming to learn and understand, and not judge.

If any notes are made during the visit these should be anonymous but should inform the final writing of any report.

If visits are being made to several different classes, it is good practice if approximately the same amount of time is spent with each class. It is important that Governors keep to their time schedule.

Questions that maybe asked when visiting a school:

When talking to a member of the teaching staff during a visit:

- How do you judge how well pupils are learning and making progress?
- What learning resources are available to your pupils and how do they learn effectively?
- How do you cope with the needs of different pupils?
- How do you decide to seat children and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary, and why?
- How do you encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning?
- How are the most vulnerable learners in the year group being supported?
- How many pupils in the year group are currently receiving pupil premium funding?
- How is this funding being used and what is the impact of this funding on these pupils?
- How are the most able learners being challenged?
- How are children who are gifted and talented in your year group identified?
- What provision is made for these children?

Potential questions to ask a pupil during a visit:

- How well they understand the school's behaviour policy
- Whether they understand the rewards for good behaviour
- Whether they understand the sanctions for unacceptable behaviour
- Whether they receive feedback on their work
- Whether the work stretches them
- What lessons do you enjoy most in school?
- What do you most like doing in ... (select a range of curriculum subjects, including Core)?
- Do you enjoy ... (select a range of curriculum subjects, including maths and literacy)?
- Is there anything you don't like in ... (select a range of curriculum subjects, including Core)?

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- What are you learning today?
- Do you like ... (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 ...?

Questions a governor should NOT ask a pupil:

- For their views on a teacher
- For their personal information

Governor attendance:

Each governor should carry out at least one school visit a term. Some governors may choose to carry out more than one. The frequency of the visits will help to normalise the appearance of governors for staff and pupils which will, in turn, create a closer working relationship and encourage both staff and pupils to approach the governors. This practice also helps governors to feel that they are part of the establishment and can develop first-hand knowledge of the school's culture and atmosphere. Furthermore the governors can develop a sense of the challenges that staff face on a daily basis.

Governor School Visit Form.

There are three parts to this form:

1. Arranging the visit.
2. Preparing for the visit.
3. During the visit.

Arranging the visit	
Date/Time of visit.	
Details of any appointments with staff members.	
Link to school improvement plan.	
Preparing for the visit	
Questions to ask teaching staff.	
Questions to ask pupils.	
During the visit	
Notes from discussions with staff.	
Notes from discussions with pupils.	
Comments on the learning environment and pupil behaviour.	
Comments on the physical environment such as engaging displays, tidiness of classrooms and corridors.	

What stood out on the learning walk, and why?	
Questions for the headteacher or senior leadership team arising from the learning walk.	

Please send or email to The Clerk to the Governors within 1 week of your visit.

Signed _____ (Governor)

Date of report: _____

<p>Article 3 All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.</p>	<p>Article 13 You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people</p>	<p>Article 28 You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can</p>	<p>Article 29 Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.</p>	<p>Article 31 You have the right to play and rest</p>
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