



GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY

NAME OF SCHOOL	Stanmore Primary School
DATE OF POLICY ISSUE	February 2024
DATE OF POLICY REVIEW	February 2025

1. Rationale

Governing bodies have a statutory duty responsibility to promote high standards at their school and must monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in this respect. Well planned Governor Visits will support Governing Bodies in discharging this duty. Impressions and observations gained will help governors in their role.

It is often difficult for busy governors to find time to be in school while it is in session but it is essential that they are able to do this. National surveys show that most Headteachers and staff are encouraged by governors visiting the school, provided the governors come to learn and help rather than to inspect.

Governor visits to school are one of the best ways to learn how it functions. Many governors are keen to follow protocol for productive and useful visits to school and particularly about visiting a classroom. This policy suggests how a visit should be conducted in a way that allows governors, pupils and staff to gain the most from the visit. The Governance Handbook published by the DfE states that "*Governors shouldsee for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice*".

2. Purpose

Visits to see the school in action provide governors with an opportunity to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of how the school works and the teaching and learning process
- demonstrate their interest in the school and encourage Headteacher/staff in their work

- gain a wider understanding when making decisions affecting the school
- be better informed advocates, having gained first-hand knowledge of the school at work
- share their skills and expertise as appropriate
- develop supportive relationships with staff and pupils
- recognise and celebrate success
- monitor policies in action
- ensure statutory responsibilities are being carried out (eg. safeguarding/health & safety)
- more efficiently carry out their responsibility for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of a particular subject area. However, this does not involve making judgements of individual teachers and their work.

Visits from governors provide staff with potential benefits, including to:

- aid governors understanding of the reality of the classroom/school
- get to know the governors
- understand a governor's role and the associated responsibilities
- highlight the need for particular resources

3. Guiding Principles of Visits:

Trying to monitor everything that happens in school is an impossible task and governors should focus on their strategic role, as the guidance from the DfE outlines.

The governing body is a corporate body and every governor will visit the school as a member of that body, not as an individual.

Governors visit the school as part of the senior leadership team/guests not as officials; they come to learn and help, not inspect.

An effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding, benefits the whole school community.

The governing body is responsible for the general oversight of the school; it is not concerned with the day-to-day management of the school, which is the responsibility of the Headteacher.

Governors must recognise the confidentiality of what they see and hear during a visit.

Visits will be planned and agreed with the Headteacher and the governing body will have a programme of visits, avoiding exceptionally busy times of the school year.

Visits will link to school priorities, within the school improvement plan or strategy, although other routine visits such as monitoring safeguarding, finance, health & safety, etc. are also necessary.

Governor visits are not about:

- checking progress of own children
- pursuing personal agendas
- arriving with inflexible preconceived ideas
- interrupting, giving ideas or suggestions during teaching time

4. Types of Governor Visits:

Formal visits

In consultation with the headteacher and staff, the governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school activity and each visit should have a clear focus. Visits may be linked to priorities in the school development or improvement plan and would not ideally be confined to the classroom. Governors have limited time, and what they learn should also add to what the governing body as a whole knows about the school. Formal visits would usually last a whole or half day, but different approaches might be agreed to suit the purposes of the visit.

Governors' visits might focus on:

- The implementation and impact of a key policy e.g. safeguarding
- Progress in an aspect of the School Improvement Plan
- Progress on areas identified during an Ofsted or Local Authority Monitoring Visit
- Provision for identified groups e.g. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium grant (PPG)
- Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs or disability (SEND)
- Provision for Higher attaining pupils
- Particular subjects, key stages or classes, Cross-curricular areas e.g. Literacy and Numeracy & IT
- The use made of the buildings, the site or Resources e.g. Interactive Whiteboards
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Health & safety
- Extended Services including Extra-Curricular activities
- INSET days or training sessions, continuing professional development, as appropriate
- Pupil participation e.g. attend a school council meeting
- The impact on the school of any key changes e.g. impact of increased staffing in Support roles or deployment of staff
- Educational Visits – provision and impact
- Collective Worship

In addition to any special focus to a visit, governors may learn more about some of the following areas:

- Implementation of the teaching and learning and continuing professional development/performance management policy
- Availability, deployment and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Relationships
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How the pupils are grouped
- How different attainment is catered for
- Examples of children and young people's work, written and oral
- Displays in open areas and classrooms e.g. learning walls, reflection of community in images round the school.
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Classroom facilities: lighting, layout, storage, furniture and décor
- Facilities for outdoor play and learning outside the classroom.
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources and associated storage
- Pupil movement on site

- Storage and cloakroom facilities for pupils

Informal visits

Governors who visit the School informally do so in a more personal capacity, much as a parent might do, but always with the knowledge and approval of the headteacher. Such visits add to individual governors' knowledge and understanding of the school and can strengthen relationships and foster trust and respect between governors and staff and the wider School Community. Governors should always reply to special invitations and make an effort to attend. An encouraging 'thank you' letter following the event will be welcomed by the staff and pupils.

Informal visits can take many forms, e.g. attending school assemblies, open days and events; accompanying school trips; helping in class or running a stall at the school fair. Attending a parents/carers consultation event or Open Day is a particularly valuable opportunity for governors to seek opinions and to explain the work of the governing body.

Informal visits are a valuable complement to formal visits – not an alternative.

Each governor will meet at least once a year with their linked subject leader, as determined in the school governor handbook. The aim will be to spread governor visits across the school year and as such a programme of visits will be agreed by the full governing body.

5. Triangulation of Evidence:

To evaluate the school's performance and to ensure the picture of the school is accurate, governors will gather evidence from many sources, e.g. performance data, Headteacher reports, committee reports, external monitoring reports, surveys of parents/staff/pupils. Evidence from a governor visit is one piece of the picture and will support/be supported by evidence gathered from other sources. A visit report should not be undertaken as a stand-alone monitoring tool.

6. Guidance for Visits:

6.1 New Governors:

After the appointment of a new Governor, the Headteacher will invite the new Governor to make arrangements to visit the school. This general visit would include a tour around the school, an opportunity to meet the staff and collect some of the school documents listed in their information checklist within the Welcome Pack. Parents with children at the school should also make this visit as they are taking on a new role within the school and the visit will provide them with a broader perspective of the school. The new governor should inform the training governor that this visit has taken place. After the first general visit, the first two visits a new governor makes focusing on their particular area should also include the Headteacher or another member of the senior leadership team.

6.2 What to do before a visit:

Governing Body/Governor to identify:

- Areas of focus and reporting arrangements in consultation with the Headteacher (or subject leader)

- Preparation and background documentation required for the visit (including reviewing the last two governor visit reports regarding the particular focus)
- Clear objectives for visit
- Governor(s) who are involved in the visit (no more than 2 at any one time if classroom based)
- Convenient dates, times and duration of visit
- Possibility of meeting staff, other than the designated person
- Suggested questions to ask staff/pupils
- When and how impressions of the visit will be shared with staff and the Headteacher

Head Teacher/Subject Leader to:

- Arrange date, time and duration of visit in conjunction with governor(s) involved
- Brief staff on details of visit
- Prepare for visit
- Inform children of who is visiting in conjunction with the teacher(s) involved
- Delegate responsibility for subject visits to subject leaders

6.3 What to do during the visit:

- It is necessary for governors to emphasise that they are coming to learn and understand, with no hint of inspection.
- Dress appropriately for the particular visit
- Sign in and follow school security procedures, as necessary
- Arrive in time to greet teacher before the lesson/activity begins
- Focus on the purpose for the visit and timing
- Listen, observe and talk to children when appropriate, without interrupting the teacher
- Keep note taking brief and only if required
- Governors should not voice personal opinions to staff during the visit (or in any subsequent report)
- Thank the teacher and children

6.4 What to do after the visit:

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher or subject leader (if possible/appropriate). Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your visit while it is fresh in your mind.
- Written draft report should be circulated to the designated staff member and Headteacher initially for corroboration (within 2 weeks of visit)
- Within a month of visit, a final copy to be sent to the Chair of Governors, who will then decide when/how it will be shared with other governors and staff
- Any concerns arising from the visit should be addressed to the Headteacher as soon as possible
- Personal reflection; have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

6.5 What to include in the Written Report:

- Use the agreed proforma (see Appendix 1, which can also be found on the Dropbox)
- Keep the report brief, factual and focused. Use bullet points so information is easy to assimilate.
- Individual staff and pupils should not be identified within reports

- Information within any report should as far as possible be objective, based on observation. Do not make judgements.
- Governors should not criticise or find fault with staff in any report
- If you believe there are key issues for the governing body to consider, note these in the appropriate section.

6.5 Frequency of visits:

- Governors should aim to visit the school at least once a year (including more informal visits)

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy was approved by the Governing Body and will be reviewed after one year in the first instance and then biennially. It will be reviewed by asking these questions:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we improve our practice?
- What is staff feedback regarding governor visits?

STANMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL - GOVERNOR SCHOOL VISIT RECORD

Name:		Date of visit:	
Purpose of visit:			
Strategy / Ofsted Action / SIP reference(s):			
Structure / timetable of visit:			
Key personnel met:			
Report:			
Safeguarding Observations:			
<i>Main points for consideration of the Governing Board:</i>			