



# Higham Primary School Governor Code of Conduct & Visits Policy

**January 2025**

Authorised and issued.	FGB 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	
Date for next review.	March 2026	

## Code of Conduct for Governors

The Governor Code of Conduct and Visits Policy will be reviewed annually at the FGB Administration Meeting, along with the Terms of Reference. It should be on the agenda and discussed prior to approval, which should be evidenced in the full board minutes.

All members of the governing board have access to this document on the Governors SharePoint and all board members are expected to abide by, and will be held accountable to, the agreed document.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Governance Handbook and relevant law. Once approved by the Governing Board, it will apply to all governors. By being a member of the governing board, governors agree to abide by it.

### **Vision/Ethos Statement:**

Our motto, Grow, Learn, Believe, Achieve, sums up our ethos and values. At Higham, we enable children to **grow** into confident, responsible, caring young people. During their time here, they **learn** all they need to take a productive role in society, and to pursue their dreams. They **believe** that they are capable of whatever they set their minds to, and we help them to **achieve** the very best they can.

We help pupils to:

- Develop lively, enquiring minds
- Acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life
- Use language and mathematical concepts effectively
- Develop a sense of awe and wonder for their spiritual world
- Understand that people come from different backgrounds and cultures, and respect the fact that they may hold different views
- Show respect for others, and demonstrate good manners
- Understand the world in which they live
- Be proud of their own achievements and appreciate the achievements of others
- Form strong, supportive relationships with other children and adults, both in school and the wider world
- Know the difference between right and wrong and make the right choices

### **Purpose of the Governing Board**

The purpose of governance is to provide confident and strong strategic leadership which leads to robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. The governing board is the key strategic decision-making body in the school, setting the strategic framework and ensuring it meets all its statutory duties. High quality, effective and ethical governance is key to success in our school and for the future of our pupils. Ensuring the best possible outcomes is at the heart of a governing board's strategic role. Every child has the right to reach their full potential.

**The Governing Board has the following core strategic functions:**

**Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction by:**

- setting the vision, values, and objectives for the school
- agreeing the school improvement strategy as appropriate including its priorities and targets
- being the strategic key decision maker with decisions made in the best interest of pupils and our purpose
- delegating operational matters to executive leaders and governance functions to committees as appropriate
- being connected with, and answerable to, the communities we serve, particularly parents/carers
- meeting statutory duties

### **Actions & Expectations**

**Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff by:**

- appointing the headteacher
- performance managing the headteacher
- robust holding to account for improving pupil and staff performance by asking the right questions
- workload consideration
- rigorous analysis of data
- understanding the curriculum offer, its intent, implementation, and impact
- monitoring and evaluating progress towards targets
- contributing to school self-evaluation

**Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent by:**

- ensuring financial probity
- ensuring financial compliance
- setting the budget
- monitoring spending against the budget
- ensuring value for money is obtained, with the money being well spent
- ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

**Collectively as a board we agree the following:**

- **Organisational purpose** - our board is clear about the purpose of the school and ensures these are being delivered effectively and sustainably.
- **Leadership** - our school is headed by an effective board that provides strategic leadership in line with the school strategic aims, values and culture, and a commitment to fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. Our board bases our effectiveness on the six key features of effective governance: strategic leadership; accountability; people with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity; structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities; compliance with statutory and contractual requirement; and evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.
- **Integrity** - our board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture which helps achieve the school's purpose. Our board is aware of the importance of the public and stakeholder confidence in our school and governors undertake their duties accordingly, abiding by the Seven Principles of Public Life (see appendix 1 - Nolan principles) including avoiding placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.

Before acting and taking decisions, governors must declare and resolve openly **any perceived conflict of interest and relationships**, with our board, managing any risk appropriately.

- **Decision making, risk and control** - our board makes sure that its decision making processes follow our required statutory procedures, which act solely in the interest of pupils and staff, are informed, timely, impartial and fair, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias, and that effective delegation, control and risk assessment, and appropriate management systems are set up and monitored. Further, our board assesses the risks attached to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare by abiding and role modelling the school's culture to encourage pupils to respect other people with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- **Board effectiveness** - our board works as an effective collective team, using the appropriate balance of skills, experience, backgrounds and knowledge to make informed decisions as informed by the competency framework for governance.
- **Diversity** - our board's approach to diversity supports its effectiveness, leadership and provides sufficient diversity of perspectives to enable robust decision making.
- **Openness and accountability** - our board leads the school in being transparent and accountable. Our board and school are open in its working- particularly to ensure transparency of decision-making.

#### **As individuals on the board, we agree the following:**

##### **Role & Responsibilities**

- We understand the purpose of the board, the skillset required to perform our core, and any individual delegated, functions and the role of the headteacher.
- We accept and abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life (see appendix 1).
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the board has given its delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing board when we have been specifically authorised to do so, reporting back accordingly to the governing board.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing board meeting.
- When making decisions we will act objectively, impartially and fairly. We will use the best evidence, and without discrimination or bias, be objective when exercising judgement and analysis solely for the good of the pupils.
- Upon communicating formally within our governing role, we will ensure any comments made reflect the school/organisation policy even if they differ from our personal views.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open transparent governance and will act appropriately.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the wider local community will reflect this.
- We will promote and demonstrate tolerance of and respect for those of different faiths and beliefs, races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientation in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- We will demonstrate a professional attitude in all our undertakings as a governor.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints we will follow the policies and procedures established by the governing board, acting without discrimination or bias.
- We will actively support the headteacher and senior leadership team but challenge their expectations and respectfully hold them to account for school performance.

- We understand, accept, and respect the differences between the strategic board role and the staff day to day operational and management roles, avoiding actions that may undermine these arrangements.
- We understand, will adhere to, and respect the differences between the strategic governor role and any other which we may undertake within the school as a parent, professional or volunteer.
- We agree to adhere to the school's rules and the policies and procedures we approve as a board as set out by the relevant governing documents and law, including complying within the required timeframe to apply for an enhanced criminal records certificate from the DBS and any subsequent DBS.
- We agree to abide by the school e-safety protocols for social media and when communicating in a private capacity will strive to uphold the reputation of the school. We will always use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither our personal or professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- We agree to abide by the requirements of any Service Level Agreement (SLA) contracts procured by the governing board.
- We agree to use our governance portal and school email addresses for all governance communication both within and outside the school organisation. We recognise this will protect the school/organisation from any potential breach of data protection.

### **Commitment**

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor committee member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will **each** involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees, panels or working groups.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings, including any held virtually, and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will attend meetings being fully prepared, having read all papers in advance, being ready to make a positive contribution.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- We will visit the school/s with all visits arranged in advance with the headteacher, undertaken in accordance and abiding with the monitoring visit policy and schedule as established annually by the governing board.
- We will demonstrate commitment to our individual and collective needs for induction, training and development, and will undertake relevant training to develop the knowledge and skills required to effectively perform our core and individual delegated functions and keep them up to date.
- We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school's website until 12 months after our service has ended.
- In the interest of transparency, we will commit to declaring at meetings and updating our pecuniary and business interests as soon as possible.
- In the interest of transparency, we accept that information relating to governors committee members will be collected and logged, until 12 months after our service has ended on the DfE's national database of governors Get Information About Schools (GIAS) with updates to any changes made as soon as possible.
- In following statutory requirements, we will ensure we are registered with GovernorHub, the Kent County Council maintained school statutory database and keep our contact details up to date.

## **Relationships**

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors, committee members, the clerk to the governing board and all school staff.
- We will always support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at and between meetings.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other board members in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the wider community.

## **Confidentiality**

- We will ensure we abide by the protocols of our virtual meeting policy and processes to ensure our attendance enables the confidential conditions required.
- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside and outside school.
- We will continue to recognise and honour the commitments made in this Code when visiting the school in a personal capacity (ie, as a parent or carer, volunteer)
- We will always exercise the greatest prudence when discussions regarding school/trust business arise outside a governing board meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing board vote.
- We will ensure all confidential documentation including any held electronically, is securely stored, and disposed of appropriately in accordance with our data protection policy and procedure, and being mindful of the GDPR legislation requirements.
- We will use school email accounts for all email communication in our governance role, for communications both within and outside of the governing board.

## **Conflicts of interest**

- We will record any pecuniary, relationship or other business interest (including those pertaining to people we are related to, connected to or friendly with, and those governing in other schools) in the Register of Business Interests and also declare these at all relevant meetings. If any pecuniary, business or relationship conflict perceived or real arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time and accept the board's decision on managing the conflict. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school website.
- We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected or appointed by them, to the governing board.

**We recognise this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this Code, governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the school, its pupils, and their role in holding public office.**

## **Breach of this Code of Conduct**

- If we believe this Code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair for investigation and reporting back to the governing board.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this Code, the issue should be raised with the vice chair for investigation.

- In certain circumstances, eg, tainting, it may be more appropriate for another member of the board or an appointed independent investigator to undertake the investigation, then report back to the governing board.
- The governing board will only use suspension or removal (ensuring statutory guidance, procedures and regulations are followed) as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways. Removal will be used where serious misconduct has taken place.
- We understand, in maintained schools, that we are only expected to exercise the power to remove an elected governor, with a five-year disqualification term, in exceptional circumstances where the actions or behaviour of the elected governor warrants removal rather than suspension.

## **Annual Governor Declaration**

I declare that I am not disqualified from serving as a school governor (or associate member) in that I do not breach any of the circumstances in which a governor (or associate member) is disqualified from standing for election, being appointed or continuing in office:

### **Qualifications and disqualifications (regulation 17 and Schedule 4 to the Regulations)**

**Grounds for disqualification fall into three broad categories:**

- general grounds
- grounds that apply to particular categories of governor; and
- grounds that arise because of particular failings or actions on the part of the governor.

All the grounds for disqualification apply also to associate members except that associate members can be registered pupils at the school and can be under 18.

#### **General grounds**

Registered pupils cannot be governors.

A governor must be aged 18 or over at the time of election or appointment.

A person cannot hold more than one governor post at the same school at the same time.

#### **Grounds that apply to particular categories of governor**

A person is disqualified from being a parent governor if they are an elected member of the LA or paid to work at the school for more than 500 hours (ie for more than one-third of the hours of a full-time equivalent) in any consecutive twelve-month period at the time of election or appointment.

A person is disqualified from being a local authority governor if they are eligible to be a staff governor at the school.

A person is disqualified from being a partnership governor if they are:

- a parent of a registered pupil at the school
- eligible to be a staff governor at the school
- an elected member of the local authority; or
- employed by the local authority in connection with its education functions.

#### **Grounds that arise because of particular failings or actions on the part of the governor**

A person is disqualified from being a governor of a particular school if they have failed to attend the meetings of the governing board of that school for a continuous period of six months, beginning with the date of the first meeting they failed to attend, without the consent of the governing board. This does not apply to the headteacher or to foundation governors appointed by virtue of their office.

A foundation, local authority, co-opted or partnership governor at the school who is disqualified for failing to attend meetings is only disqualified from being a governor of any category at the school during the twelve-month period starting on the date on which they were disqualified.

A person is disqualified from holding or continuing to hold office as a governor of a school if, in summary, that person:

- is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order; an interim bankruptcy restrictions order; debt relief restrictions order; an interim debt relief restrictions order; or their estate has been sequestered and the sequestration has not been discharged, annulled or reduced
- is subject to a disqualification order or disqualification undertaking under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986; a disqualification order under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 2002; a disqualification undertaking accepted under the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002; or an order made under section 429(2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986 (failure to pay under county court administration order)
- has been removed from the office of trustee for a charity by an order made by the Charity Commission or Commissioners or High Court on grounds of any misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of the charity, or under section 34 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 from being concerned in the management or control of any body
- has been removed from office as an elected governor within the last five years
- is included in the list of people considered by the Secretary of State as unsuitable to work with children or young people
- is barred from any regulated activity relating to children
- is subject to a direction of the Secretary of State under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 or section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008
- is disqualified from working with children or from registering for child-minding or providing day care
- is disqualified from being an independent school proprietor, teacher or employee by the Secretary of State
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has been sentenced to three months or more in prison (without the option of a fine) in the five years ending with the date preceding the date of appointment/election as a governor or since becoming a governor
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has received a prison sentence of two and a half years or more in the 20 years ending with the date preceding the date of appointment/election as a governor
- subject to certain exceptions for overseas offences that do not correlate with a UK offence, has at any time received a prison sentence of five years or more
- has been convicted and fined for causing a nuisance or disturbance on school or educational premises during the five years ending with the date immediately preceding appointment/election or since appointment or election as a governor
- refuses a request by the clerk to make an application to the Disclosure and Barring Service for a criminal records certificate.

**Anyone proposed or serving as a governor who is disqualified for one of these reasons must notify the clerk to the governing board.**

#### **Criminal record certificates**

**Maintained school** governing boards must apply for an enhanced criminal records certificate and section 128 check for any governor who does not already hold one for the school. This must take place **within 21 days of appointment** or election if a governor is elected or appointed after 1 April 2016.

**I have agreed to an application being made for an enhanced criminal record certificate, section 128 check and any other checks deemed necessary.**



**I agree to abide by the above Code of Conduct and know of no reason from the above disqualification criteria for not continuing to hold the office of governor.**

### **Governor Visits**

**This policy applies to school visits made for the purpose of governance and not to visits to the school site that any individual may make in another capacity e.g. as parents, priests, professional advisers, volunteers or members of staff.**

**The Governing body has a statutory duty to oversee the policies and direction of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance.**

**The governance handbook states on the role of governor school visits:**

*Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the board can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views; though are unlikely to be sufficient for these purposes.*

*Boards are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of executive leaders. If boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.*

**It also says:**

*Boards needs clear processes for overseeing and monitoring school improvement and financial health, providing constructive challenge to executive leaders*

As seen above, visiting the school is not a statutory requirement, though visits play an extremely important role in order to know and learn how it functions, operates and to prevent any over reliance on Headteacher information. Seeing the governing body agreed ethos, culture and values in action as well as its strengths and weaknesses, increases the Governing Body's first-hand knowledge and informs governor self-evaluation and strategic decision making against its core functions.

The National Governance Association and governance handbook both note references to not interfering in the day-to-day operational running of the school and the impact too many governor visits may have on the operational school day.

It is recognised that the amount of time that a governor can commit to a visit will vary but in general governors should expect to make at least **one** visit a year and no more than **three** visits unless the school circumstances necessitate i.e. school category of RI or inadequate. There is the expectation the statutory delegated governors for safeguarding; health & safety; SEND; careers guidance (secondary); finance (KCC maintained schools) will visit the school **three** times a year. All visits will be aligned with the monitoring schedule and governing body agendas and meetings. Whole governing body days in school can also be a valuable tool in knowing your school with a planned focus and feedback. If governors cannot undertake this commitment, they should question whether they can make a realistic and valuable contribution as a governor in line with the board Code of Conduct.

This policy sets out the protocol and procedures for a governor visit which have been shared with staff. It sets out how governor visits should be conducted to allow both governors and staff to gain the most from the visit and enable evidence of impact.

Governor visits should align to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Plan, against an agreed monitoring visit schedule with reporting recorded timely to the governing body meeting agendas, so that the strategies, interventions and impact can be seen in action. The governing body should develop a schedule of planned visits over the year, which could include visits resulting from committee meetings, appointing governors with reference to their skillset, to cover the school priorities. The monitoring schedule should include provision for the statutory delegated governor monitoring roles of safeguarding; health and safety; SEND; career guidance (secondary); finance (KCC maintained schools). Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Role descriptors will aid governors in their understanding and expectations in carrying out their monitoring visits.

Governors should arrange their planned visits in advance with the Headteacher who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. The governing body should review their school visits policy, protocols and procedure annually to ensure its effectiveness with the approved policy circulated to all staff.

## **Purpose**

All school visits will:

- Have a clear focus, linked to strategic priorities and delegated statutory governor roles, be timely and planned against the governing body approved monitoring schedule and governing body meetings.
- Be arranged with adequate notice through the Headteacher who will agree the visit with the relevant members of staff
- Be of value to the governing body in holding the school to account and demonstrably evidenced to outside agencies e.g. Ofsted, the Local Authority, Diocese, DfE

*It is not the role of those governing to form judgements about the performance of school staff during visits and individuals should make every effort to avoid this impression.*

### **Governor Conduct**

Governors undertaking visits will comply with the School Code of conduct, as well as this policy and the standards of presentation expected of staff. They will be mindful that they are representing the whole governing body through their words and actions.

### **Training**

Governors should ensure they understand their monitoring remit, undertaking relevant training to keep up to date with best practice and latest statutory and legislative requirements. Role descriptors would aid governors in their understanding and expectations in carrying out their monitoring visits.

### **Governor reports following visit**

Governors undertaking their visits will have the opportunity to discuss the visit, including any concerns, with the Headteacher immediately or as soon as possible after the visit.

The attached 'Delegated Governor Visit Report' will be completed after each visit, containing the visit findings and questions to be raised at the full governing body or committee meeting. A draft will be shared with the Headteacher and any other members of staff involved in the visit for any comments concerning factual accuracy; a final version will be sent to the clerk to be included in the agenda and as a supporting paper for collective discussion and further constructive strategic questioning at the next Full governing body or committee meeting.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the Headteacher with whom the visit was arranged but not with other staff or with parents. Individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) should not be identified in the governor visit reports.

### **Frequency of Visits**

Each Governor will undertake visits as agreed in their approved monitoring schedule with a minimum of one visit to the school per academic year but no more than three times a year unless the school circumstance necessitates.

### **Review**

This policy, protocol and procedure should be reviewed by the governing body every academic year alongside the code of conduct.

**This Policy will be circulated to all new governors upon appointment.**

### **Purposes of a governor visit**

The benefits to governors either within their monitoring role or as whole days:

- To enable the delegated statutory governor roles of safeguarding; health and safety; SEND; careers guidance (secondary); finance (KCC maintained schools) to hold leaders to account and the governing body collectively fulfilling its statutory duties by demonstrating accountability and constructive challenge

- To see the strategies in action as outlined in the school improvement plan e.g. meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement, seeing first-hand and learning about the impact of the adopted strategy and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning
- To improve knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses and have prevent overreliance of Headteacher only information.
- To see in action the impact of specialist funding i.e. pupil premium, sports premium (primary), year 7 literacy and numeracy catch up (secondary)
- Financial probity by providing robust and effective governance to ensure the viability and efficiency of the organisation through effective business and financial planning and processes.
- To develop an understanding of issues facing the school and how they are dealt with on a day to day basis to inform strategic decision making
- To observe the impact of policies in action including monitoring the implementation of a particular policy e.g. safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety, SEND, careers guidance.
- Gaining an understanding of the broad full curriculum or a curriculum subject area as relevant.
- To see the use of resources and how the premises are utilised, understanding the environment for teachers and pupils
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To evidence the governing body's ethos, vision and values in action.
- To show themselves as part of the school and to gain stakeholder engagement with pupil, parents, staff or the wider community e.g. Pupil voice, school council, parent forum, parent evenings.

#### **The potential benefits to staff:**

- To ensure governors understand how school priority strategies are embedded in practice, understanding the reality of the classroom and environment.
- To enhance the continuous professional development of middle and subject leads
- To get to know and build positive relationships with governors.
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities including the responsibility to work with executive leaders to address unnecessary teacher workload.
- To feel valued.
- To have an opportunity to reflect on the impact of policies and procedures through discussion.
- To highlight the need for/ impact of particular resources.

#### **The potential benefits to students:**

- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom environment, broad curriculum and school life.
- To get to know governors.
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities.
- To give feedback about the school and their views of the impact of policies to the governors.

#### **The potential benefits to parents:**

- To ensure governors understand the issues that parents may face.
- To have mechanisms for enabling the governing body to listen, understand and respond to the voices of parents / carers, particularly to ensure transparency of decision- making.

- To get to know governors.
- To understand better governor roles and responsibilities.
- To give feedback about the school to the governors.

### **What a visit is not about**

- Visiting classrooms to observe a lesson, unless as part of an accompanied learning walk against a specific school improvement priority. This prevents any confusion on a class visit being confused as a form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of a teacher.
- Undertaking a staff operational role e.g. touring the school undertaking health and safety checks, even if professionally qualified in this area.
- Checking on progress or receiving information of individual children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- An opportunity to tackle staff about specific issues not related to the delegated statutory governor roles.

### **Protocols or ground rules for visits**

- Ensure the visit has a clear focus linked to the school improvement plan and/or area of governor responsibility.
- Governors individually understand the governing body and their delegated area of responsibility, enabling preparation to ensure they provide the constructive challenge required.
- Governors to remember that during any visit their role is strategic not operational.
- Governors to ensure in preparation for their visit they have undertaken relevant training and read any relevant policy or supporting documentation.
- The Headteacher will liaise with the member of staff responsible for the school/ priority/policy objective to arrange the date and schedule of the meeting.
- Staff should have the opportunity to explain the context of any lesson on the rare occasion that a governor visits a classroom
- Governors will not interrupt lessons by asking teachers questions on the rare occasion that they may visit the classroom.
- Governors may talk to students during learning walk visits to lessons, about their understanding and learning journeys, but must not ask questions about the teacher's conduct of the lesson.
- Governors will ensure that they are familiar with the school's code of conduct as well as that of the governing body, with expectation that they follow the same behaviours to understand how they will be addressed and how to address others as well as appropriate dress code as outlined within both codes of conducts.
- Governors will have a clear understanding that a breach of the governor monitoring visit policy will be dealt with as a breach of the governing body code of conduct.
- Governors will formally write reports on their visits using the Governing Body approved templates ensuring that draft reports are sent to the Headteacher for factual accuracy comments prior to the final report being produced.
- Monitoring visit reports will be circulated in advance, via the clerk, for either the relevant committee or Full governing body meeting to enable discussion, triangulation and key questions to be raised; with minute evidence documented to show the impact of the visit.

## **Annual programme of visits**

A programme of allocated governor visits (monitoring schedule), spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Headteacher, should be planned using the school priorities, school improvement plan, Full governing body and committee meeting timetables and governor roles by skillset. This should be approved alongside the statutory delegated monitoring governor roles. Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to ensure they are monitoring, evaluating and triangulating against the current school priorities and statutory areas and reporting back to the committees or board as appropriate. This enables the governing body to know the school in terms of being able to evidence this to Ofsted or other outside agencies and demonstrate constructive challenge and impact. The number of visits by each governor should be a minimum of once a year and not more than three times a year, unless the school situation necessitates, or they are fulfilling the statutory delegated governor role which requires 3 visits a year.

### **Example of governor monitoring visits may include:**

- Learning walks with members of staff.
- Pupil voice in the class or interviews in groups.
- Looking at pupils' work against marking policy.
- Monitoring implementation of a policy e.g. behaviour, equality, safeguarding, finance.
- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum, or particular area.
- Seeing in action the impact of specialist funding
- Ensuring finance processes are in place.
- Seeing in action deployment of staff and impact of any change e.g. reduced class sizes/ split classes.
- Reviewing the environment, the condition and maintenance, use made of the buildings or the site and impact of the resources of the school.

### **Whole board days can for example include:**

- Visiting break and lunchtimes with staff and pupils
- Pupil voice and their understanding of how they are receiving a quality education
- School council
- Parent forum
- Gaining an understanding of the impact of spend of funding with spending leads
- Monitoring the boards culture, ethos and values and for Church schools, ensuring the distinctive Christian character is maintained against agreed expectations.
- Parental engagement at the start; end or during parental events in school
- Monitoring British values
- Monitoring the preparation for the next stage of education

## **Monitoring and review of school visit policy**

The policy should be monitored and reviewed annually alongside the code of conduct.

Areas we should consider when reviewing are:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified? Are we fulfilling our core functions?
- Are our individual reports having impact within the committee or governing body meetings?

- Do our governing body and committee discussions from the governor reports show further collective constructive challenge and holding to account which is evidenced in the minutes?
- Are our visits timely against the school improvement plan?
- Do we have the right governor monitoring roles against the current school priorities?
- Are all governors aware of their responsibilities? Do they understand their role? Do we have role descriptors?
- Are statutory delegated governors appointed to their roles due to skillset? Are they keeping up to date with best practice and latest statutory/ legislative requirements?
- Are we better informed and can evidence the accuracy of Headteacher and SLT reports?
- Have we engaged with stakeholders to understand their views to use as part of informed strategic decision making?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make our practice even better? Is there anything we need to change in how visits are conducted from feedback from stakeholders?

### **Governor Visits - Good Practice**

#### **Preparing for a visit**

- Check the agreed policy and schedule for governors' monitoring visits
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to visit, within the monitoring schedule and governing body meeting windows, with the Headteacher.
- Discuss the visit and agreed timetable with the Headteacher and ensure that any member of staff who will be involved in the visit, understands the arrangements.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit as outlined within the monitoring schedule and undertake background preparation reading preparation. Understand your strategic monitoring role. Do you have a role descriptor explaining your responsibilities?
- Review the milestones and action points in the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies associated to this area? How does this determine the activities I am interested in seeing in action? What questions do I want to ask?
- Discuss with the Headteacher/staff lead if any new supporting information is available, e.g. Ofsted report, updated improvement plan, performance data, subject lead report, policy.
- Ensure that you are familiar with safeguarding and health and safety procedures
- Read the governing body code of conduct and staff code of conduct to ensure understanding of the professional behaviours required.

#### **During the Visit**

- Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body; it is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on behalf of the governing body.
- Be punctual, reporting to reception and signing in as a governor. Wear a badge to identify yourself as a governor. Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible to the school needs.
- Decide with the Headteacher how you will be introduced and how you will address staff and pupils
- Be courteous and professional throughout the visit, friendly not critical, including thanking members of staff before leaving.
- Remember you are there to learn and see the information you have been told is happening with your own eyes. It is a visit not an inspection.
- Keep to the role agreed; only talk to students if invited/ agreed to do so.

- Observe discretely. Depending on the context of the visit, excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Respect confidentiality
- Meet the Headteacher at the end of the visit and discuss what you have seen, including any issues or concerns you may have. Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Ensure you have signed out

## After

- Share any concerns with the Headteacher and Chair, however trivial. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you remain unclear about.
- Thank the staff by email via the Headteacher for contributing to the success of the visit and for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, and positive.
- Make more notes as soon as possible after your meeting/ observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Complete the agreed visit template proforma (see appendix A).
- or committee meeting. (see appendix A).
- Draft the report ensuring individual children or staff members (other than the member of staff involved with the visit) are not identified in school visit reports.
- Send the draft to the Headteacher and once you have taken their comments into account send the final written report to the clerk for circulation at the appropriate committee or governing body meeting.
- Ensure that your visit is included as an agenda item at the next appropriate committee or governing body meeting.
- Complete the agreed visit template proforma in time for the Headteacher to comment on and sending to the clerk for sending out 7days in advance of the board meeting. Ensure that all the questions and answers are captured for the delegated statutory roles and for all key questions are added following evaluation of the visit to be raised at the next governing body or committee meeting. (see appendix A).
- Reflect: how did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the school? Have I helped the board collectively fulfil its duties with constructive challenge and holding to account? Are there actions the board will want the next visit to follow up/ focus on following discussion? Do I need to undertake training to increase my skillset to fulfil the monitoring role effectively? How has this visit had impact at the board meeting?

## Informal or outside of delegated role visits

Outside of delegated and scheduled monitoring, visits may also take place to gain stakeholder view, focus whole day visits on a specialised area or monitor the governing body's ethos, vision and values. These can be documented using the approved formal visits template (Appendix A) or as a governor day with specific documented feedback. Visits may also take place in an informal capacity for less formal occasions such as school events, plays, sports day, and celebration events. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the school. Visiting governors should ensure that they follow the governor visits protocols as appropriate and consider how they will feedback to the governing body having completed the report using the informal template (Appendix B) Informal Visits

There will also be times when a governor visits the school and a report is not required. For example:

- The chair making a regular planned visit to see the Headteacher



- To get information from the office relating to a committee or board meeting
- New governor tour of the school
- Attending working groups, committee or board meetings
- Invited to attend prize giving or celebration events

#### **Areas not considered as a governor monitoring visit**

It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse their roles when they wear more than one hat within the context of the school.

For example, times when governors may be visiting the school **NOT** as a governor

- To help in a class as a volunteer
- To lend a helping hand with a school event or educational visit as a volunteer
- To speak to a teacher/ Headteacher in relation to your own child
- Attending a school function or educational visit as a parent/relative/invitee
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest, councillor, member of staff or providing commissioned or uncommissioned support (which needs to be declared) in your, professional capacity. E.G. advising on finance, amending/ devising the school website etc

## Appendix A



### Record of Governor Visit to the School – Formal (to be used for visit linked to the School Plan, etc)

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
<b>(Governor Role) :</b>	
<b>Member(s) of Staff involved:</b>	
<b>Focus of Visit, linked with the School Improvement Plan</b> <i>(How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Improvement Plan or is it in a statutory Governor delegated role?)</i>	
<b>Areas and Summary of Planned Activities, including Departments or Areas of School visited, Staff and Pupils that the Governor met during the Visit</b> <i>(Previously agreed by the Governing Body with the Headteacher)</i> <i>(Governors should refer to Staff by their role or job title and not by name)</i>	
<b>Observations and Comments by the Governor</b> <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned relating to the focus of the visit; how long the visit lasted)</i>	
<b>Comments on Safeguarding Culture observed during Visit</b> <i>(e.g. in relation to KCSIE part 2 and Child Protection Policy)</i>	

**Aspects I would like clarified and 5 key questions I would like to raise at the Governing Body meeting**

**Actions for the Governing Body to consider**

*(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)*

**Impact of the Visit and follow up next Visit planned focus:**

**Signed:**

**Meeting to be considered at:**



**Record of Governor Visit to the School – Informal**  
*(to be used for casual visit not linked to the School Plan)*

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
<b>(Governor Role):</b>	
<b>Focus of Visit:</b> <i>(Event, Celebration, Parents Evening, Function)</i>	
<b>Observations and Comments by Governor</b> <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned behaviour, stakeholder interaction/ engagement, safeguarding)</i>	
<b>How will this Report be considered at the Governing Body meeting</b> <i>(eg Verbal feedback, raised as a question, raised as part of triangulation)</i>	
<b>Signed:</b>	