



St Nicolas CE Primary School

GOVERNOR VISITS POLICY

HEADTEACHER SIGNATURE:

GOVERNOR SIGNATURE:

DATE ADOPTED: February 2024 (FBG)

DATE FOR REVIEW: February 2026

Additional notes:

- Cross check with guidance from NGA and best practice from The Key at each review
- Cross reference with the following policies:
 - Governor Code of Conduct
 - Confidentiality Agreement
 - Safeguarding policy
 - COVID Risk Assessment

Teacher / Governor Liaison Policy

1. Aims

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that all Governors are expected to follow when making visits to the school. Governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school – when they do so, they are invited guests.

This policy sets out the procedure which all Governors are expected to follow when visiting the school and how they are expected to report back on that visit to the Governing Body. The creation of this policy aims to ensure that all Governors understand their role and purpose so that school visits are a productive and enjoyable event for all involved.

The key objective of any monitoring visit is to share the knowledge gained from the visit with all Governors.

2. Guidance and scope

This policy takes account of best practice and guidance from the [Governance Handbook](#) (section 3.4.2).

2.1. Governors are observers

The Governing Body must have good knowledge and understanding of the school in order to maintain robust accountability and be a critical friend. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, Governors will:

- Reinforce good relationships between Governors and teachers
- Show an active interest in the life of the school
- Be aware of the nature and range of work involved
- Be aware of resource/site limitations
- Be able to contextualise the monitoring information received
- See policies and schemes of work in action
- Observe whether the school is properly implementing school policies, and actions from the School Development Plan
- Observe how those procedures are working in practice
- Have the opportunity to gather the views of pupils and staff
- Recognise and celebrate success

2.2. Governors are not inspectors

Governors will not:

- Will not assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom
- Will not manage the school or interfere in the day-to-day operations of the school

3. Visits programme

Governors will carry out regular school visits in order to meet the Governing Body's statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness. Monitoring activities enable Governors to gather relevant information about the school. Evaluating the information gained through these activities helps to inform Governors' views about the effectiveness and impact of School Development Plan (SDP) and of school policies. There are 2 types of visits which Governors may be asked to do:

- **Formal monitoring visits**

During these visits Governors will discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member this may be related to an aspect of the School Development Plan, a specific subject or learning area, or a policy.

- **Learning walks**

During these visits Governors will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area and are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils. These learning walks are often linked to a specific area of the SDP or a statutory duty.

For those Governors who wish to spend time in a classroom, they will make it clear about their purpose in doing so.

Governors will carry out school visits according to the following schedule:

3.1. Health and Safety, Special Educational Needs, and Safeguarding

Governors responsible for these areas will attend a termly 1:1 monitoring visit with the corresponding staff leads with ad hoc meetings as required or requested on issues specific to their area of responsibility.

3.2. Curriculum Link Governors

Curriculum Link Governors will usually attend three visits a year which following the pattern:

- T1 – Staff/Governor tea to set and agree objectives in line with the SDP
- T3 – a monitoring visit or call, sharing of information (eg samples of work)
- T5 – a follow up visit or call to understand progress over the year

3.3. All Governors

All Governors are encouraged to carry out:

- at least one curriculum monitoring up to three times a year
- at least one policy or other area of responsibility monitoring visit each year
- at least one visit to a school assembly or other school activity/performance each year

Examples of appropriate monitoring activities include:

- Lead Governor and staff meet to work through an audit tool, *e.g. preparation of annual report for SEN, Safeguarding, Health and Safety*
- Learning Walks, always with a specific focus, *e.g. impact of Behaviour Policy, implementation of Assessment Policy, sequencing of learning in literacy or maths across year groups*
- Staff / pupil / parent focus groups, *e.g. meeting with school council, meeting with staff working group / subject team*
- Join staff for scrutiny of pupils' work, *e.g. to establish impact of marking policy, to determine levels of challenge*
- Join Headteacher and School Business Manager for budget monitoring
- Classroom visits with senior leader – these may be longer visits but always with a specific focus for the Governor, *e.g. talking to pupils about their learning, looking at marking*. Classroom visits must never be in relation to formal lesson observation, appraisal or teacher capability.
- Organisation of stakeholder surveys
- Meeting with lead staff to receive and discuss a report, *e.g. achievement in a specific key stage or subject*.
- Attending assemblies or school plays *e.g. to celebrate success, monitor implementation of school vision and values*

4. Before a visit

Governors will:

- Notify the Headteacher and the Chair before scheduling a visit, even if the Headteacher will not be involved in the visit. They should be made aware just as a matter of courtesy.
- Schedule an appointment with relevant members of staff at a mutually convenient time (generally, Governor visits are more productive when conducted during a school day)
- Be clear as to whether this is an in person or virtual meeting (for the latter, see guidance below on how to conduct a virtual meeting)

- Be sensitive to the numerous demands staff have on their time
- Clarify the purpose of the visit in advance with the Chair, the Headteacher and/or relevant member of staff ahead of the visit
- Send questions in advance to the staff member so everyone can feel properly prepared
- Be familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Governors are required to sign into school before commencing the visit
- Adhere to this policy in spirit and practice

5. During a visit

Governors should know how to conduct themselves appropriately during visits in order to minimise disruption for staff and pupils and to receive the maximum benefit from the time spent.

Governors will:

- Be on time
- Always wear a visitor's badge
- Arrive in school with a positive and non-judgemental approach to staff and children
- Use the agreed recording method for the visit (photographs and videos are to be avoided unless specifically agreed with the relevant member of staff for a specific purpose)
- Remain as observers: they are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them
- Ensure all parties are clear about why a Governor wishes to spend time in the classroom, if they wish to do so
- Check with teachers before speaking to pupils
- Pass on any concerns the staff raise with the relevant people (usually the Headteacher or the Chair)
- Be friendly but professional and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils

Governors will not:

- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas
- Pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen, judge teaching methods, assess the quality of teaching, or comment on the extent of learning
- Interfere with the day-to-day running of the school
- Check on the progress of individual children
- Behave in a manner than would make staff feel that they are there to inspect, e.g. sit at the back of the classroom with a clipboard
- Raise concerns in the moment. Governors should note down any concerns they may have and raise them with the Chair of Governors or Headteacher after the visit
- Pursue personal agendas
- Monopolise a teacher's time

6. Remote (virtual) visits

From time to time it may be appropriate to undertake a virtual monitoring visit or call. Consideration should be given as to ensuring that the appropriate technology is easily available for all parties and how the relevant information can be best shared.

Follow the guidance for setting up a meeting and during a meeting as above. Consideration should also be given to the following:

- Can paperwork be shared via video call or by email (depending on UK GDPR requirements)
- Check if any of the documents needed are already available on the school's website
- To ensure security, Teams via the school accounts should be used for the meeting (WhatsApp or other video conferencing should not be used) unless it is by telephone
- It may be possible to film a learning walk, or take the video call into the classroom/around the school but this should be arranged on a case by case basis

- Consider if a group video call with pupils is possible if seeking their opinions and unable to be on site
- If it is not possible to be on site, it may be possible for the teacher to scan/take photos of pupils' work to share during the call

7. After a visit

Governors will complete a written report as soon as reasonably practicable [using the form attached as Appendix A (monitoring visit) or Appendix B (learning walk)], as appropriate.

In completing the report, Governors will ensure to:

- Use neutral language at all times
- Remain observational, and describe only what they see
- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role

Once complete, Governors will submit their reports to the following people, in the following order:

- The relevant staff member, both as a courtesy and to check for accuracy
- The Headteacher, as a courtesy
- The Chair of the Governing Body or the relevant Committee

All reports should be uploaded to GovernorHub.

Given the governing body's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2004, consideration should be given to whether the written outcome can be released unedited to appropriate third parties, and work under the assumption that the report will be disclosed on request. This assumption applies unless the full governing body acts to make the report confidential and agrees a form for release. In such circumstances, the balance between the rights to privacy of individuals is considered against a right of access of information.

Appendix 1: Aide Memoire for a School Visit

What is the purpose of the visit?
What has prompted my visit? What aspect of the school development plan does my visit relate to? How can my visit benefit the school?
How shall I carry it out?
Who do I need to contact in advance? What particular areas of the school am I interested in? What particular activities am I interested in? What particular age group(s) am I interested in? What questions should I ask? Who should I ask?
Did I achieve my aim?
To what extent did I address the reason for my visit? Which of my questions did I answer? What difficulties did I meet and why?
Is there any other follow up?
Have I recorded my experiences? Did I 'report back'? Have I prepared a short report for the next Governors meeting? How can I build on this for next year?

Appendix 2: Information on Learning Walks

- Agree the focus in committee
- All Governors should be accompanied by a senior, or occasionally middle, leader
- Maximum of four in any one classroom (three is better)
- Maximum of ten minutes in any one classroom.
- Brief to be shared with relevant staff, at least 24 hours prior to the visit.
- Participants meet afterwards for debrief, discussion and agreement about the key points for a report.
- Report may be drafted by one Governor but should be shared and agreed by all, prior to further distribution to Governors and staff.
- Judgements should only be made by Governors on the agreed focus and where all are agreed that the aspect being monitored is within Governors' capacity, knowledge and credibility.
- Judgements should never be made on performance of individual staff although it should be acknowledged that data gathered may inform the view of the headteacher or senior leader in relation to subsequent judgements.

	Always	Never
Before	Agree the purpose and details of the visit with senior leaders	Turn up unannounced
	Ensure that all participants are appropriately briefed	
	Agree levels of confidentiality	
	Notify relevant staff	
During	Stick to the agreed protocol	Interrupt the flow of teaching and learning
After	Thanks staff and pupils	Leave without a word
	Give praise (where its due) – try to leave classrooms with a positive comment	

Appendix 3: Template report for a monitoring visit

Formal monitoring visits are where you discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member. Use this form as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

ST NICOLAS C. E. PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR'S VISIT MONITORING REPORT

Part 1: Planning the visit	
Name and role of Governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that have not been agreed with the member of staff.	
Relevant school objective or priority This might be taken from the School Development Plan (SDP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.	
Questions to ask Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SDP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit. Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.	

Part 2: in the meeting
What is the school doing within this area of focus / progress since last meeting?
<i>Tips:</i> <i>Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where'</i> <i>Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</i> <i>Remember you are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them – you remain an observer</i> <i>When writing the report, use neutral language and do not name individual teachers and pupils</i>

How do you know the school's actions are having an impact?
<p><i>Remember:</i> <i>Include specific evidence that demonstrates the positive impact the school is having in this area</i> <i>Where a positive impact has not been made yet, note down why that is and what steps are being taken to make progress</i> <i>Add any further evidence you would like to see to help you make a better assessment of the impact</i></p>
What successes stood out and why?
Agreed next actions
Date of Next Meeting

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of Governors

- The link Governor is responsible for completing this report.
- Remember to share with staff involved in the visit and Headteacher in the first instance
- Once all are happy with the record of the visit, upload to Governor Hub under the folder for the next Full Governors' Meeting