



## Governor School Visit Policy

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| Author              | Shane Baker                   | Date: January 2024 |
| Approved by:        | Full Governing Body           | Date:              |
| Last reviewed on:   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024 |                    |
| Next review due by: | January 2027                  |                    |

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### 1. Aims

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow when making visits to the school. Governors do not have an automatic right to enter Cann Bridge School. When they do so, they are invited guests.

This policy sets out the procedure which all governors are expected to follow when visiting Cann Bridge and how they are expected to report back on that visit to the governing board.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that all governors understand their role and purpose so school visits are a productive and enjoyable event for all involved.

### 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

Boards must know their schools in order to maintain robust accountability. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, governors will:

- 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

## 2.2 Governors are not inspectors

Governors:

- 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

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

## 3. Visits programme

Governors will carry out regular school visits in order to meet the board's statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness.

There are 2 types of visits:

- **Formal monitoring visits**, where governors discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member
- **Learning walks**, where 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

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

Governors are required to make at least one visit to school per term (3 times a year) for each link role they hold and record them on a visit form. Of course, Governors may perform more than one link role per visit and also go into school more regularly if it is felt necessary. Where this occurs, separate forms should be completed so that there is the required evidence trail for Ofsted.

## 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 as a matter of courtesy
- Schedule an appointment with relevant members of staff in order to avoid friction and ensure visits are scheduled for times that are mutually convenient. Generally, governor visits are more productive when conducted during a school day
- 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
- Send questions in advance to the staff member, so everyone can feel properly prepared
- Be familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures

## **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 and meet with the headteacher ahead of the visit
- Always wear their governors' badge
- Use the agreed recording method for the visit. Photographs and videos are to be avoided unless specifically agreed with the headteacher 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
- Be friendly but professional and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils

### **During the visit, governors may:**

- Visit a classroom (make sure everyone understands why the governor wishes to spend time in the classroom)
- Look at a sample of pupils' works
- Talk to teachers and pupils
- Discuss school improvement plans
- Hold meetings with the senior leadership team (SLT)

### **Staff governor visits**

It's appropriate for all governors to visit the school. Understandably, staff governors may feel uncomfortable going into classrooms when their colleagues are teaching. If this is the case, work with your chair to:

- Remind the staff governor that they're there as a governor rather than a staff member
- Suggest for the staff governor to prepare questions they'd like answers to
- Remind other staff members that it isn't an inspection or evaluation
- Make sure that everyone involved understands the purpose of the visit and sticks to it
- Reassure the staff governor that any feedback will be professionally received

If staff governors would rather not visit lessons taught by their colleagues, they should discuss this with the chair.

### **What can governors observe on a visit?**

#### *External appearance*

- Are the school grounds tidy, attractive and well maintained?
- What is the general state of external decoration?
- Is the school entrance welcoming?
- Are there adequate signs directing you to the reception?

### *The school in general*

- Is the reception area well maintained?
- Is there an adequate visitor signing-in procedure?
- What is the overall atmosphere in school?
- What sort of a general welcome did you receive?
- What is the general state of the internal decoration?
- Are there any obvious examples of community links?
- What is the general standard of pupil dress and behaviour in school?
- How effective are communications, within and outside of school, with parents, governors, community and interest groups?
- How is success and behaviour measured and rewarded in schools?

### *The classroom*

- Are the pupils busy and active within the classroom?
- How is the classroom resourced?
- Are there any areas where resources could be improved with extra finance?
- Were you welcomed into the classroom?
- What is communication like in the classroom?

### **Governors will not:**

- 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
- 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

### **6. After a visit**

Governors will complete a written report as soon as reasonably practicable Appendix A as appropriate. In completing the report, governors will:

- 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 board
- The Clerk to Governors

### **Administration of your visit form**

- The Clerk will log your form as received on the Governors Visit Record
- All received forms will be collated and an electronic copy will be circulated, along with a copy of the updated visit record, for Governors perusal prior to the next Governors meeting
- The Clerk will store the electronic copy on Governor Hub and the original will be destroyed.

**Procedures in the event of concern**

Where concerns exist, it is vital that they are discussed immediately with the Headteacher. If you are not satisfied with the response and remain concerned, your next step should be to talk to the Chair of Governors.

**And finally,....**

- Enjoy your visits to school
- Encourage other governors to visit
- Remember that as well as being a duty and a pleasure it is a privilege to go into a school
- You may observe children's work, health or they may innocently reveal things about their home life – it must remain confidential
- A good reputation is very hard to gain and very easy to lose. As a governor, you are part of the team aiming to build this good reputation. It can be extremely damaging if concerns are expressed to the community.

## Appendix 1: Template report for a monitoring visit

Formal monitoring visits are where a governor discusses 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.

| Part 1: Plan the visit   |  |
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| Name and role of governor(s)   |  |
| Name and role of staff member(s)   |  |
| Date and time of visit   |  |
| <b>Agreed focus</b><br>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.   | To discuss the school's new strategy to improve pupil premium expenditure.   |
| <b>Relevant school objective or priority</b><br>This might be taken from the school development plan (SDP) objectives or the school's overarching vision and values.   | Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.   |
| <b>Questions to ask</b><br>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SDP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.<br>Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare. | What is the process for supporting pupils who need extra help?<br>Have teachers had any training to help them put this into practice?<br><br>Search <a href="#">GovernorHub Knowledge</a> for questions specific to the purpose of your visit. For example, you can search for ' <a href="#">safeguarding questions</a> '. |

| Part 2: In the meeting   |
|--|
| <b>What is the school doing within this area of focus?</b><br><i>Tips:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where'</li><li>• Don't be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</li><li>• Remember you are <b>not</b> there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them – you remain an observer</li><li>• When writing the report, use neutral language and do not name individual teachers and pupils</li></ul> |

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**How do you know the school's actions are having an impact?**

*Remember:*

- Include specific evidence that demonstrates the positive impact the school is having in this area
- Where a positive impact has not been made yet, note down why that is and what steps are being taken to make progress
- Add any further evidence you would like to see to help you make a better assessment of the impact

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**What successes stood out and why?**

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

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| <b>Signed</b> |  | <b>Date</b> |  |
|---------------|--|-------------|--|

Please send a copy to the Chair of Governors, Clerk to Governors and Headteacher

**Clerk Administration**

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| <b>Form entered onto the Visit Log and Governor Hub</b> |  |
| <b>Form shared at Full Governing Board</b>              |  |

## Appendix 2: Template report for a learning walk

Learning walks are where a governor goes around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area. You are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils. Use this as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

| Part 1: Plan the walk  |   |
|--|---|
| Name and role of governor(s)   |   |
| Name and role of staff member(s)   |   |
| Date and time of visit   |   |
| <b>Agreed focus</b><br><i>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.</i>  | To discuss the school's new strategy to improve pupil premium expenditure.  |
| <b>Relevant school objective or priority</b><br><i>This might be taken from the school development plan (SDP) objectives or the school's overarching vision and values.</i>  | Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.  |
| <b>Questions to ask</b><br><i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SDP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.<br/>Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i> | Ask staff: what do you do if you think a student needs further support?<br>Ask pupils: if you need help with something, what do you do?<br><br>Visit our <a href="#">link governor hub</a> for questions specific to the purpose of your visit. |

| Part 2: On the walk   |
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| <b>General notes from discussions with staff</b><br><i>Tips:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me ...'</li><li>• Don't be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</li><li>• Remember you are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them</li><li>• When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers</li></ul> |
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| <p><b>General notes from discussions with pupils</b></p> <p><i>Remember:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not ask them for pupils' views on a specific teacher</li> <li>• Do not record pupils' names</li> </ul> |
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| <p><b>General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere</b></p> <p><i>Note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the governors' vision of the school is replicated on the ground</li> <li>• Any issues with the school site you see, e.g. broken equipment or lack of resources</li> </ul>   |   |
|   |   |
| <p><b>Safeguarding – whilst on site I observed:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No mobile phone signs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All staff wearing Lanyards and ID</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Restricted access to the building during school hours</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding team posters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding Signage - indicating who children/adults should speak to regarding Child Protection concerns</p> | <p><b>Health and Safety – whilst on site I observed:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical equipment without PAT testing stickers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Extension cables appearing to be in long-term use</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Open Fire Doors</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Escape routes hampered by or risk of injury from clutter</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unwanted or broken equipment not disposed of</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Potentially risky areas such as kitchens screened from sight</p> |

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| <p><b>What successes stood out on the learning walk and why?</b></p> |
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| <b>Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors</b> |
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|               |  |             |  |
|---------------|--|-------------|--|
| <b>Signed</b> |  | <b>Date</b> |  |
|---------------|--|-------------|--|

Please send a copy to the Chair of Governors, Clerk to Governors and Headteacher

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***Clerk Administration***

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| <b>Form entered onto the Visit Log and Governor Hub</b> |  |
| <b>Form shared at Full Governing Board</b>              |  |