



Date of Policy: **November 2024**

Approved by: **C&S Committee**

Date of next review: **November 2027**

1. Introduction

Best practice guidance regarding Governor visits to schools emphasises that:

- Governors do not have any rights of access to the school.
Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:
 - > improve Governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
 - > monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the development plan
 - > assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties
- Before planning to visit the school, the Governor(s) should:
 - > contact the head teacher or lead member of staff, to arrange the date and time of the visit.
 - > ensure that they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire
- After visiting the school, the Governor(s) should:
 - > complete a visit report outlining the objectives and results of the visit (see Annexes 1 & 2)
 - > report back to the committee or governing body as appropriate
- It is important that Governors remember that the purpose of Governors' visits is not to assess the quality of teaching provision, nor to pursue issues that relate to the day to day management of the school other than as agreed with the Head Teacher/School Leadership Team (SLT).

2. School approach to Governor visits

At St Mary's School we believe that visits play a key role in familiarising Governors with the work of the school. Visits to school by Governors (during the time that the school is in operation) provide important insights to the life of the school.

For our Governors to carry out their role they need to understand the way schools work and a feel for the dynamics of the school. There is no better way of gaining this information than by visiting the school at work. Ideally, we would like governors to visit school at least twice per academic year (as a minimum).

There are three types of Governor visit:

a. Familiarisation visit

Purpose: To enable Governors to familiarise themselves with the day-to-day life of the school. Governors will be expected to participate in sessions and work with groups of children-if appropriate. These visits enable Governors to experience and monitor the systems and practices in place across the school and report back to the Governing Body & Head Teacher. (Reporting: Governor Visit report form-Annex 1).

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b. Focussed visit

Purpose: To ensure that Governors play an integral role in the monitoring and evaluation schedule of the school. Visits will have a specific focus identified on the School Self-Evaluation/Monitoring programme or be linked to undertaking the role of a Subject Link Governor (subject focussed visits). Governors may visit lessons (for example spending 20-30 minutes in one or two classes) or undertake learning walks, involving shorter visits to a number of classes / sessions (with a member of the SLT/identified Subject Leader) (Reporting: Governor Visit report form – Annex 1)

c. Monitoring visit

Purpose: To enable Governors to monitor and evaluate progress towards targets and achievement of success criteria within the School Development Plan. Governors may meet with the member(s) of staff responsible for specific areas of the School Development Plan, undertake pupil conferencing or meet with specific subject leaders (Reporting: Governor Visit report form- Annex 1). It may be feasible to undertake these visits via TEAMS so governors can have the option of a 'virtual' monitoring visit.

d. Virtual visits / meetings

Liaison between Link Governors and Subject Leaders / SLT members may take the form of email communication (e.g. updates from a SL regarding progress with specific projects, updated Subject Development Plan documents etc.) or virtual meetings (to discuss specific development priorities, provide progress updates, opportunities for Q&A etc.). These interactions should be recorded by the Link Governor using the 'Link Governor report form' (see Annex 2)

The head teacher / SLT member will also greet Governors on arrival and provide an oral brief for the visit. After any visit the Governor concerned will have a brief feedback discussion with the head teacher and complete a 'Governor Visit Form' that will be returned to the head teacher within 5 working days. Comments recorded on the visit form should detail the content of the visit, general observations and specific points related to the identified foci for the visit. Governors should not record comments relating to the quality of teaching or provision.

A copy of the visit form will be filed in the Governors folder and a copy given to the class teacher(s) visited. Governors will provide summary feedback regarding any visit at the relevant committee / GB meetings.

3. Scheduling of Governor Visits

It is important that dates and times of visits and meetings are arranged well in advance. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and responsible Governors to agree a timetable that works for all parties.

Familiarisation: Governors contact the Head Teacher regarding their availability for a visit during the designated term. The Head Teacher confirms a date / session time for the visit. Session times could vary from 1-3 hours.

Focussed & Monitoring Visits: For SLT linked monitoring activities the Head Teacher contacts the responsible Governor(s) to inform them of the week in which the lesson visits / Learning Walk are planned. The Governor & Head Teacher agree a session date / time for the visit. Governor visits related to other priorities, including subject focussed visits, are more flexible and governors should contact the Head Teacher to confirm when they would be available to visit (contact should be at least 7 days ahead of any potential visit).

Visits will typically be between 1-2 hours but monitoring visits may be shorter.

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Visits schedule (linked to School Self Evaluation matrix – SSE)

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors review Subject DPs and feedback to SLs -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures (CP Governor) SCR/training/compliance	-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors meet with SL's (virtual / in-person) for updates & SDP progress reviews. -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures / (CP Governor) Completion of annual safeguarding audit with SLT	-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors review Subject DPs and feedback to SLs -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures / (CP Governor) Compliance / review progress with safeguarding audit actions

Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors meet with SL's (virtual / in-person) for updates & SDP progress reviews. -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures / (CP Governor) SCR / review progress with safeguarding audit actions	-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors review Subject DPs and feedback to SLs -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures / (CP Governor) Compliance / review progress with safeguarding audit actions	-Governor visits sessions (SDP priority & Link Governor subject focussed) -Link Governors review end of year Subject DP progress evaluations and feedback to SLs -Monitoring & evaluation of SDP progress (C&S / Responsible Governors). -Monitoring of Child Protection procedures / (CP Governor) Compliance / review progress with safeguarding audit actions

4. Protocol for Classroom Visits

For Governing Bodies

- *Ensure that the policy on Governors' visits and a system for reporting back have been agreed with staff.*
- *Recognise that classroom visits are primarily for Governors to gain first-hand knowledge of the school at work.*
- *Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned.*
- *Ensure that there are agreed timescales for Governors' visits, usually giving at least five days' clear notice.*
- *Recognise the right for teachers to invite Governors into school for specific purposes if they so wish.*
- *The Head Teacher should provide members of the governing body with the relevant background information, i.e. staff names, responsibilities and timetables.*
- *Recognise that any visit to the classroom can be stressful and can disrupt normal classroom working, and that therefore the number of visits should be limited.*
- *Respect the normal conventions of Governor confidentiality, in particular issues surrounding named staff or pupils.*

For Individual Governors

- *Ensure that any visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed with all concerned.*
- *Raise any concerns related to your visit with the head teacher.*
- *Always wear a visitor sticker.*
- *Try to participate in sessions, if appropriate, but avoid attempting to take on a teaching role, or discussing irrelevant issues with the pupils during the lesson.*

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- *Agree the form of recording for Governor notes (Usually the 'Governor Visit Form' or 'Link Governor report form') and always ensure that you complete this written record of your visit, for accountability purposes.*
- *Avoid making promises to staff on behalf of the governing body.*
- *Respect the normal conventions of Governor confidentiality, specifically regarding any issues arising that relate to staff members or children.*
- *Recognise that sometimes it might be appropriate for you to leave the classroom should a situation arise which might become more problematic, e.g. a behaviour outburst.*

For Teachers

- *Always feel able to suggest an alternative time if the visit is not convenient.*
- *Ensure that each visit has an explicit purpose and focus, which have been agreed by all concerned.*
- *Raise any concerns over the visit with your line manager or head teacher.*
- *Prepare your class for the visit of a Governor.*
- *Welcome the Governor when they arrive in your class.*
- *Have a seat ready for the Governor and tell them where it is.*
- *Inform the Governor if you wish them to be involved in the lesson, and what it would be helpful for them to do.*
- *Don't leave your Governor alone with the class, even if they are willing for you to do so.*
- *Avoid discussing unrelated issues during the lesson.*

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Annex 1 St Mary's Catholic Primary School Governor visit report form

(For recording lesson or activity visits to classes or specific group activities)

		Governor Activity Visit Record		Agreed Circulation: Specific Committee or full GB:
Name of Governor:		Date & Time of Visit:		
Member of staff / class(es) / groups visited:				
Agreed focus of visit and any link to School Development Plan priorities:				
Context: <i>(e.g. particular issue identified from GB meeting; actions/follow up from previous meetings/visit)</i>				
Comments on visit focus / foci:				
General comments: <i>(e.g. Behaviour, environment, staff wellbeing etc.)</i>				
Notes / comments linked to Catholic ethos / school values:				
Any outstanding questions / queries:				
Agreed actions / follow-up:				

Please email to the Head Teacher & Chair of Governors prior to any wider distribution

Annex 2: Link Governor report form

(For recording meetings with Subject Leaders/SLT members, Pupil conferencing etc.)

Link Governor report form

Subject:	Link Governor: Subject Leader:	Date(s):
Nature of activity Formal title or description Underline the relevant category	SL/LG meeting Report from Subject Leader Pupil Conferencing Other	

General notes <i>(indicate the related monitoring activity)</i>

Follow-up actions / next steps <i>(indicate the related monitoring activity)</i>

Questions <i>(indicate who the questions is for e.g. SL, HT, CoG)</i>
? - ? -

Please pass a copy of this report to: -the relevant Subject Leader

- Head Teacher

-Chair of Governors