



Sandford St. Martin's
P R I M A R Y S C H O O L

Governor Visits to School Policy 2022-24

Our mission: Learn Love Laugh

Safeguarding: If there are any 'Safeguarding' issues that arise from the implementation of this policy then they should be dealt with in accordance with the School's Safeguarding policy. Any safeguarding concerns should be referred directly to the School by telephone or in person for the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead along with any concerns relating to the Prevent Strategy.

Equality: This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Equality Policy. The general equality duty requires that, in the exercise of their functions, schools must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. This school endeavours to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for all.

General

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Governors are recognised and valued part of the ongoing development and progress at Sandford St Martin's Primary School. A strong partnership of support and challenge is essential to allow the whole school community to be successful therefore, as Governors, we are to take an active role in school life; learning about the School's practice through volunteering, observing, questioning and supporting. The governors play a key role as senior leaders in the School.

Confidentiality

Being a governor is both a responsibility and a privilege. All visits and observations within the School should be carried out in line with the signed 'Governors Code of Conduct' and so individual governor views should only be discussed in the arranged feedback meeting and not elsewhere.

Governance

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

Governors need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many governors 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 governors 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.

Governors 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 governors wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.

Note: Where personal visits to the School are not possible or not permissible due to reasons such as the Covid-19 restrictions, Governor monitoring must still take place. Where the term 'visit' occurs in this Policy it will be deemed to include other forms of contact including telephone, e-mail, or other internet facilitated contact such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

As seen above, visiting the School is not a statutory requirement but visits can be extremely important to learn how it functions and to see how the School operates, its strengths and weaknesses, increasing the governors' first-hand knowledge, informing self-evaluation and strategic decision making against its core functions. It is recognised that the amount of time that a governor can commit to visits will vary but in general, governors should expect to make at least one monitoring visit a term and no more than 5 visits a year unless the School circumstances necessitate. Whole Governing body days in school can also be a valuable tool in knowing your school with a planned focus and feedback.

This policy sets out protocol and procedures and has been agreed with the Headteacher. It sets out how governor visits should be conducted to allow governors and staff to gain the most from the visit.

Governors' monitoring visits should generally align to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Action Plan (SIAP), against an agreed monitoring visit schedule, 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 to cover the School priorities and the designated statutory governor monitoring roles. Each monitoring visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose.

Governors should arrange their planned visits in advance with the relevant subject lead.

Governing Monitoring Visits to School

Introduction

This section of the policy applies to school visits made for the purpose of governance e.g. Formal (Monitoring) Visits and not to visits to the School site that any individual may make in other capacities e.g. as parent, priest, volunteer or member of staff.

Purpose

All school monitoring visits will:

- Have a clear focus, linked to the SIAP and strategic priorities and designated statutory governor roles and be timely, planned and on the approved monitoring schedule which is agreed by the full governing body.
- Be arranged with adequate notice, following the schedule, and in agreement with the subject lead.
- Be of value to the governing body which can be demonstrably evidenced to outside agencies e.g. Ofsted or the LA.

It is not the role of governors 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 and governing body codes of conduct 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. The governing body's code of conduct contains reference to governor visits.

Governor reports following visits

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

The 'Governor Visit Report' (see Appendix 2) will be completed after each visit. A draft will be shared with the Headteacher and any other members of staff involved in the visit and, when agreed, a final version will be sent to the clerk of governors to be included in the supporting papers for discussion in the next governing body meeting or committee meeting as appropriate from the monitoring schedule.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be discussed with the subject lead 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 school visit reports.

Frequency of Visits

Governors will undertake visits as agreed in their approved monitoring schedule with a minimum of one monitoring visit a term and no more than 5 visits a year unless the School circumstances necessitate.

Review

This policy, protocol and procedure should be reviewed by the governing body in conjunction with the code of conduct. A two year review cycle is expected.

Purposes of a governor visit

The benefits to governors:

- To see the strategies in action as outlined in the SIAP e.g. meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement and learning about the strategy adopted and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning. Governor monitoring visits will mainly be for this purpose in support of the School Leadership Team.
- To improve knowledge of the School, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses
- 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
- Gaining an understanding of a particular curriculum area or year group
- Gaining an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts
- 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 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
- To evidence the governing body's ethos, vision and values in action

- To observe the impact of policies in action including monitoring the implementation of a particular policy e.g. safeguarding, behaviour
- To assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties and demonstrate their accountable role as both supportive and challenging.

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 get to know and build positive relationships with governors
- To understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- To feel valued
- To have an opportunity to reflect on the impact of policies and procedures through discussion
- To highlight the need for particular resources

The potential benefits to pupils:

- 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 have
- 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

- Making professional judgements about staff expertise (governors are not inspectors).
- Visiting classrooms to observe a lesson, **unless as part of an accompanied learning walk against a specific school improvement priority.**
- Undertaking staff roles e.g. touring the School undertaking health and safety checks, even if professionally qualified in this area.
- Checking on the progress of individual children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- An opportunity to tackle staff about specific issues

Protocols or ground rules for visits (See also Appendix 1)

- Ensure the visit has a clear focus linked to the SIAP, strengths and weaknesses, impact of policies or responsible areas of the individual statutory governor required roles i.e. Safeguarding, SEND, Equality, Health & Safety, Pupil Premium
- Governors to remember that during any visit their role is strategic not operational.
- The link governor and subject lead will liaise to arrange the meeting for the School/priority/policy objective.
- Staff should know in advance the focus of the visit.
- Staff should have the opportunity to explain in advance the context of any lesson to a governor on visits to a classroom
- Governors will not interrupt lessons by asking teachers questions during visits.

- Governors may talk to pupils 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; understand how they will be addressed and how to address others and dress code as outlined within both codes of conducts.
- A breach of the monitoring policy will be dealt with following the process of a breach of the code of conduct.
- Governors will formally write reports covering their visits using the approved templates (see Appendix 2) ensuring that draft reports are sent to the subject lead for proof reading, accuracy and comments prior to the final report being produced.
- Monitoring visit reports will be circulated, via the clerk of governors, to either the relevant committee or governing body meeting to enable discussion, triangulation and key questions to be raised and documented showing the impact of the visit.

Programme of visits

A programme of visits (monitoring schedule) should be planned, using the SIAP and subsequent approved, priority and statutory monitoring governor roles, spread evenly across the school year in consultation with the Headteacher. Regular analysis of this schedule enables governors to ensure they are monitoring and triangulating against the current school priorities and know the School in terms of being able to describe to Ofsted or other outside agencies. The number of visits by each governor should be a minimum of once a term and not more than five times a year, unless the School situation necessitates.

Visits can take the form of

- Learning walks with members of staff
- Pupil voice in the class or interviews in groups
- School council
- Parent forum
- Visiting break and lunchtimes
- Looking at pupils' work against marking policy
- Monitoring implementation of a policy e.g. behaviour, equality
- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum, or particular area
- Gaining an understanding of the impact of spend of funding with spending leads
- Ensuring finance processes are in place
- Monitoring the culture, ethos and values and the distinctive Christian character is maintained in all that is undertaken.
- Monitoring the British values
- Monitoring the preparation for the next stage of education
- 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 resources of the School
- Focussed whole governing body visits to School

Monitoring and review of school visit policy

Areas governors should consider when reviewing are:

- Are visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Are visits timely against the SIAP?
- Do we have the right governor monitoring roles against the current school priorities?
- Are we better informed and can evidence the accuracy of Headteacher and SLT reports?

- 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 staff?

Governor Visits - Good Practice

Preparing for a visit

- Check the agreed policy and schedule for governors' visits
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to visit, within the monitoring schedule window.
- Discuss the visit and agreed timetable with the subject lead.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit as outlined within the monitoring schedule and background preparation reading required. Understand your strategic monitoring role.
- Review the action points in the SIAP? 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 – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.
- Ensure that you are familiar with safeguarding, equality and health and safety procedures
- Read the governing body code of conduct and staff code of conduct to ensure understanding of 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 you. Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible to the School needs.
- Decide with the subject lead 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, it is a visit not an inspection.
- Keep to the role agreed; only talk to students if invited/ agreed to do so.
- Observe discretely. Remember that 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 subject lead at the end of the visit and discuss what you have seen, any issues or concerns you may have. Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Ensure that you have signed out.

After

- Share any concerns with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, however trivial. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Thank the staff by email for contributing to the success of the visit and for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, and positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind. Complete the agreed visit template proforma (see Appendix 2).
- 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 subject lead and once you have taken their comments into account send the final written report to the clerk of governors for circulation at the appropriate committee or governing body meeting.
- Ensure that action points from your visit are included as an agenda item at the next appropriate committee or governing body meeting. The School should reflect, discuss and action relevant points and monitor the ongoing impact of actions from governor visits.
- Reflect: How did that go? Has the visit enhanced relationships? Have I learned more about the School? Have I helped the governing body fulfil its duties?

Informal Visits

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity for less formal occasions such as school plays, sports day, and celebration events. 'Discreet' information can be gathered on these visits which build on your knowledge of the School. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role. Visiting governors should ensure that any matters of importance noted on informal visits are reported to the Headteacher using the Report form in Appendix 3. Completion of Appendix 3 Forms is not otherwise a requirement after informal visits.

For example, times when governors may be visiting the School as governors not against an agreed monitoring schedule

- The Chair making a regular visit to see the Headteacher
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- New governor tour of the School
- Attending working groups, committee or board meetings
- Invited to attend prize giving or celebration events

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

- To help in a class
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To speak to a teacher/ Headteacher in relation to your own child
- Attending a school function or educational visit
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor

Protocol for Visits (Checklist only – refer to text of policy)

Governors visit their school to enhance their understanding of the School's work and to help fulfil their responsibilities of monitoring and evaluating the School.

We have an agreed schedule of governors' visits to the School, reflecting the priorities in the School improvement plan and the specific interests and responsibilities of governors, and we keep a file of visit reports.

	ALWAYS	NEVER
BEFORE	<p>Agree purpose of visit with clear focus to SIAP.</p> <p>Agree how much time (a timetable is a good idea).</p> <p>Agree when you will discuss the planned visit with the subject lead.</p> <p>Ensure familiarity with relevant Safeguarding, Prevent Strategy, H&S, and Equality Policies as well as Codes of Conduct.</p> <p>Consider practicalities (dress, parking, time of arrival, who to report to, how to make notes, breaks and lunch).</p> <p>Consider what questions it is appropriate to ask.</p> <p>Find out how each teacher wants you to contribute (or not!).</p>	<p>Turn up unannounced.</p> <p>Approach Staff directly when it is not in accordance with the set schedule for the year (without the approval of the Headteacher).</p>
DURING	<p>Introduce yourself to staff and pupils.</p> <p>Note and praise the positive.</p> <p>Ask questions to increase understanding.</p> <p>Remain focused on the purpose of the visit.</p> <p>Respect confidentiality</p>	<p>Walk in with a clipboard.</p> <p>Arrive with pre-conceived ideas.</p> <p>Interrupt the teacher.</p> <p>Make professional judgements about staff expertise (we are not inspectors).</p> <p>Pursue one's own personal agenda/ focus on the progress of one's own child.</p> <p>Monopolise the children's or the staff's time.</p>
AFTER	<p>Thank the teacher and pupils.</p> <p>Discuss visit with the teacher.</p> <p>Write a thank you note to teacher and pupils.</p> <p>Compile a report as soon as possible (use framework if appropriate).</p> <p>Raise any concerns sensitively with the Headteacher.</p> <p>Follow up action points in Governor meetings and with the SLT.</p>	<p>Leave without a word.</p> <p>Break 'Code of Conduct' Confidentiality rule</p>

Record of a governor's visit to the School - Formal

Name	Date																
Purpose of visit Previously agreed by the Governing Body with the Headteacher	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">Sources of evidence</th> <th style="width: 50px;"></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Talk with staff</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Talk with pupils</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pupils' books</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>School documents</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lesson visit</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Observe groups</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Learning walk</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sources of evidence		Talk with staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk with pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pupils' books	<input type="checkbox"/>	School documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesson visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Observe groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning walk	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Links with the School Improvement Action Plan (SIAP) How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Improvement Plan?																	
Relevant findings of the visit																	
Any key issues/ questions arising from the visit in relation to the focus of the SIAP																	
Action following Governing Body meeting Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit																	

Helpful questions to ask the teacher:

- 1) What is working well? 2) Explain some of the difficulties 3) How is this area of the SIAP going?
- 4) What needs to be done now? 5) What's been the impact on pupils?

Record of a governor's visit to the School - Informal

NAME:	DATE:
Focus of visit <i>(event, celebration, parents evening, function)</i>	
Observations and comments by the governor <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned)</i>	
Any key issues or questions arising for the governing body or leadership team <i>(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the School communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)</i>	
Signed: Governor	



GOVERNOR VISITS TO SCHOOL POLICY.	
Date adopted: 8th December 2022	Version: 6.0
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Author/Owner:	Headteachers/Standards and Assessment Committee
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