

Governing Body: Visits

Date: July 2022

Visits provide an opportunity to develop a good awareness and understanding to help governors in their strategic role as well as to develop teamwork with school staff. Visits help provide an understanding of the way in which the school operates to embed its ethos and achieve its aims. Visits allow governors to support the school through informed decision making.

All governors must undertake at least three monitoring visits per academic year (with at least two in person visits per academic year).

Visits may be virtual visits by Zoom if the purpose of the call is to gather information. Other visits may require an in-person visit to one of the Sphere Federation schools. An in-person visit provides opportunities to check safeguarding procedures are followed, to observe whether children and staff members are happy, and potentially to review books and/ or observe lessons.

What a visit is not

- ☛ a form of inspection - governors should not make judgements about individual staff members
- ☛ a chance to check on the progress of own children – it is recommended that governors do not visit classes in which they have children/family members
- ☛ an opportunity for a governor to pursue a personal agenda – governors are visiting on behalf of the governing body
- ☛ a lengthy process which monopolises school/teacher time

The benefits of visits to school

To governors:

- ☛ recognise and celebrate success.
- ☛ develop relationships with staff.
- ☛ get to know the children.
- ☛ understand the environment in which teachers teach.
- ☛ monitor policies in action.
- ☛ find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.
- ☛ deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge.
- ☛ inform decision-making.

To teachers:

- ☛ ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom
- ☛ get to know governors
- ☛ understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- ☛ have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- ☛ highlight the need for particular resources

Before the visit, governors will:

- ☛ agree the date of the visit in advance with the Head of School
- ☛ clarify the purpose of the visit and how this links to priorities in the School Improvement Plan and agree an agenda with the Head of School; visits should help inform the strategic role of the governing body
- ☛ undertake any pre-reading required, such as reviewing related policy documents or guidance material

During the visit, governors will:

- ☛ remember the visit is being made on behalf of the governing body and not make any judgements or promises
- ☛ be punctual, courteous and considerate at all times respecting the professional roles in school
- ☛ follow safeguarding procedures for visitors
- ☛ respect confidentiality at all times

After the visit, governors will:

- ☛ consider if the purpose of the visit has been achieved and determine any follow up activity that would be useful
- ☛ complete the *School Visit Notes* form (below) as a record of the visit and contribute feedback to the governing body or committees; this form should be sent to the school leader (with whom the governor met during the visit), the Head of Federation, and the Chair



Governing body: notes from visits

Date: 2022-23

Name:		Governor role:	
School(s):		Date:	
Purpose of visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>		Arranging and planning a visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Observe range of attitudes, behaviour, achievements <input type="checkbox"/> Understand views and values of staff and/or pupils <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the resources and the environment <input type="checkbox"/> Gain information to assist policy-making and decision-taking <input type="checkbox"/> Governors are known and demonstrate commitment to the school <input type="checkbox"/> Observe the operation of policies <input type="checkbox"/> Give active support to the activities of the school <input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate being a critical friend of the school <input type="checkbox"/> Holding school to account, evaluating its progress		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree a date and time with the headteacher <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify what you will do (time of arrival, departure; who you will see; focus of your visit) <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that you are representing the governing body, and are a guest of the school; governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school buildings <input type="checkbox"/> Remember to respect the professionalism of the teachers and to respect the children <input type="checkbox"/> Be supportive of the headteacher and all staff <input type="checkbox"/> You may wish to make a full report of your visit for the GB; share your observations with the headteacher first	
Key priorities for visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>		TLC points <i>(link governors)</i>	Safeguarding <i>(essential)</i>
Core functions, listed in DfE's Governance Handbook (2017): <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction <input type="checkbox"/> Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff <input type="checkbox"/> Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent		<input type="checkbox"/> SEND and pupil premium <input type="checkbox"/> EYFS <input type="checkbox"/> SIP priorities <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom 20%: closing the gap <input type="checkbox"/> Any other comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Signed in correctly <input type="checkbox"/> Good behaviour observed <input type="checkbox"/> Safe physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Any other comments:
Thoughts in advance of your visit <i>(optional; consider the points above, so that you're clear what to explore)</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px;"></div>			
Summary of activity <i>What did you do? What did you see? (eg lesson, meeting) Who did you talk to?</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			
Strengths? <i>eg achievements of the children</i>		Areas to develop? <i>eg learning environment</i>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px;"></div>	
What do you want to find out more about? <i>eg any clarification needed, concerns to be raised</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>			
Who did you share the observations of this visit with? What will happen next? <i>eg headteacher, GB chair</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>			
St James' only: Comment on the Christian vision in practice. <i>eg what you saw / heard – and what impact?</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>			