



South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust

Governor and Trustee Visits Policy

Date	Changes
3/9/17	Original draft circulated to LGCs and Trust Board
26/3/18	All SMART-Trust policies which unions requested further consultation on were removed from sites and previous policies reinstated to enable establishment of a JCNC and a fresh round of consultation
14/12/18	Updated draft circulated
13/03/19	Copy sent to senior staff, unions, LGC, legal and Trust Board inviting comments
01/05/19	Consultation with unions in JCNC meeting at Liskeard
25/06/19	Recommended by the Chairs of the LGCs for approval by Trust Board
26/06/19	Version sent for final check prior to Trust Board
22/07/19	Approved by Trust Board
Dec 21	Policy review initiated
June 22	Policy consulted by Trustees, governors and JCNC
July 22	Approved by Trust Board
May 25	Policy review initiated
June 25	Approved by Trust Board

Adopted Date: 25th June 2025
Current Status: For approval
Review Date: 1st May 2028

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Introduction

Monitoring visits provide governing boards with essential information about how the school's and Trust's strategy is being implemented and how issues discussed at board level translate into the everyday life of the school.

OFSTED requires governors and Trustees to know the strengths and weaknesses of the schools. This includes assessing performance data with an understanding of the learning contexts of the school.

This policy aims to ensure that all governors/Trustees understand:

- the purpose of monitoring visits
- the expectations for carrying out visits including preparation, expected conduct and reporting back to the governing board

Purpose of visits

Visiting school on a planned, regular basis allows governors and Trustees to:

- better understand their school's strengths and areas for development
- determine if agreed policies and procedures are working in practice
- identify how resources are being used
- show staff and pupils that they are interested in school life, work and achievements
- experience the culture and ethos of the school
- develop a greater understanding of the functions of the school and Trust
- learn first-hand how the Curriculum is being implemented
- build up relationships with staff and pupils by speaking to both groups
- become aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning
- become informed about relevant documentation and legislation for their particular linked area
- understand the context in which OFSTED sets its criteria for evaluating subject provision
- be aware of the local and national issues impacting on their particular linked area

School visits can cover several activities, such as:

- meeting staff with leadership responsibility for specific areas, such as safeguarding or SEND
- talking to staff and pupils
- experiencing a lesson being taught (as part of getting to know the school, rather than making judgements about quality of teaching)
- seeing examples of pupil work

In many cases, school visits are carried out by a link governor or Trustee given responsibility for monitoring a strategic priority or area of compliance.

Monitoring visits should have a strategic rather than operational focus. In practice, this means visits should focus on:

- strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the governing board.
- the evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening actually happening?
- seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met (such as safeguarding and SEND).

There may be opportunities to visit your school on an informal basis, such as attending performances or events. Whilst these visits are valuable, they are not a substitute for scheduled visits with a clear focus linked to strategic priorities.

Successful visiting

When the visiting governor or Trustee goes into school outside the normal pattern of meetings, interviews, hearings, events, it is to learn, not inspect. Visits should be as positive and constructive as possible. The visiting governor or Trustee is not there to make judgments.

Governing boards should plan a schedule of visits for each academic year using their Governor/Trustee Monitoring Plan. When making these plans, boards should consider:

- strategic milestones (things that the board expects to have happened) – these should be outlined in the school development plan or trust strategic plan.
- the board's own capacity to fulfil the schedule: is it manageable?

Frequency and duration of visits

The frequency of governance visits should be in accordance with the schedule established by the governing board and recorded in the Governor/Trustee Monitoring Plan which is then agreed with school leaders and relevant staff. Visits should be scheduled to allow governors/Trustees to see relevant activities and strategic milestones.

All governors and Trustees should be linked to an area in the School Development Plan for monitoring; the requirements for which should be included in the Governor/Trustee Monitoring Plan. Some governors may have additional responsibilities e.g. Special Education Needs Governor, Safeguarding Governor.

All governors are expected to monitor their link areas as detailed in the current School Development Plan/Governor Monitoring Plan. The duration of each visit will be dependent on the purpose of the visit and the time available. All governors should make every effort to visit the school at least three times per year. Safeguarding visits should be at least once per term, preferably half termly.

Arranging and preparing for visits

Visits should be arranged through the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead, with adequate notice, and agreed with the relevant members of staff.

Due regard should be given to:

- how the visit fits with the schedule of board and committee meetings, to allow for timely feedback and discussion
- how to avoid visits clashing with important events and/or busy periods in school life
- the workload implications for staff who are likely to be involved in the visits

Governors/Trustees are encouraged to prepare for their visit. This may include:

- reading and familiarising yourself with the governing board's protocol for visits (this policy) and the expected conduct

- reading and familiarising yourself with the school's policy for visitors (this is different from the governor/Trustee visits policy) that includes relevant health, safety and safeguarding instructions
- reading the background information relating to the focus of the visit, such as relevant section(s) of the school development plan/strategic plan, performance data, policies, stakeholder information
- clarifying the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead and or relevant member of staff
- Emailing questions in advance of the visit to the relevant staff member to allow them time to prepare
- confirming the visit schedule and activities

When governors are visiting classes, they will need to ask for information about the context of the topic being covered. If they are visiting for other reasons they will need to ask for any appropriate and relevant background information so that they can familiarise themselves with what the school is trying to achieve.

The visiting governor/Trustee will need to advise a senior member of staff where an issue has arisen when there is no supervision by a member of staff present during their visit.

If arranging a visit to classrooms the visiting governor will need to discuss with the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead or Head of Department the particulars of which classes will be visited in order to focus the visit in the agreed area. The visiting governor will need to know for each; visit in which classroom it is being taught, the name of the teacher and the year group being taught. Parent governors should avoid being in the same class as their child. Headteachers/Head of School/Nursery Lead or Heads of Department/subject leads will need to notify class teachers a week before that a governor wishes to be present in their classroom and reassure them about the governors' role. The visiting governor/Trustee will need to confirm that somebody will be available to guide them to and from reception if necessary. For primary school governors, they should ensure that they provide brief verbal feedback to the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead before leaving.

The visiting governor/Trustee should also consider whether they will be in school for registrations, break and lunchtime and make appropriate arrangements. Registration time may be a good opportunity to talk to some students or visit an assembly. Meetings should be arranged to meet with the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead or Head of Department/subject lead to gain knowledge about developments in the department/subject as a whole.

Remember the importance of taking a balanced view of what is experienced. Do not take what one teacher or student says as the only opinion - try to talk to several people - and remember that even if the visit is for a whole day it is still only a snapshot in the life of the school.

For governors in primary schools, please refer to appendix 4 which provides further guidance on governor visits.

Arrival in school

The visiting governor/Trustee must at all times remember that they are a visitor to the school. They must sign in and wear a visitor or governor badge whilst on school premises. They should also be punctual throughout the visit.

Conduct in the classroom

When visiting the school in a governing capacity, you should:

- arrive in good time and follow the school's procedures (such as signing in and producing identification)
- introduce themselves to the teacher in each classroom they will attend (if a member of staff has not already done so)
- if it is possible, talk briefly with the teacher before the start of each session to reassure them of the purpose of the visit - to watch and learn not to criticise and judge
- adopt a friendly approach that puts everyone at ease
- be respectful of the school at work and if you wish to take notes, check that those you are with are comfortable with this
- if you are taking notes, be clear with everyone that this is for feedback purposes and that you are not recording judgements (for example on the quality of their teaching)
- ask relevant questions that are closely linked to the purpose of your visit
- acknowledge the staff and pupils you meet
- gain a little background to the topic about to be taught

Governors/Trustees are also expected to behave in line with the governing board's code of conduct, being aware of the need to maintain confidentiality.

It is very important that the teacher introduces the visiting governor/Trustee to the class and lets them know why they are attending the session. The visiting governor/Trustee should ask the teacher where they should sit, or how they can be involved in the session (or not). Governors/Trustees should ensure that they maintain professionalism.

The visiting governor/Trustee must clear it with the teacher in the classroom before the session begins if they feel the need to make any notes or jot down questions to be asked later.

At the end of the session

The visiting governor should make sure that there has been a dialogue with the teacher during the session or, if this is not appropriate, that they have a short discussion with the teacher at the end of the session, or as soon as reasonably possible and within the timetable of the visit, so that they understand what the governor has learned from the visit and whether the focus of the visit has been realised. The visiting governor should give positive feedback to the teachers concerned (a thank you and a smile is much appreciated, even by experienced staff), and discuss anything they do not understand. **Take care not to make promises on behalf of the Local Governing Committee.**

Expectations following a visit

A report should be completed as soon as possible after each visit. A draft will be shared with the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead and any other members of staff involved in the visit and, when agreed, a final signed version will be included in the papers for discussion in the next governing board meeting (this may be the full governing board or a committee, as appropriate).

The report should detail the key learning points, discussion points for the governing board, the follow-up required, and next steps. Key points for when writing reports are:

- use neutral, collaborative language to describe what you observed (for example, 'reading attainment in key stage 1 is poor, the school needs to improve this' could be written as 'we have discussed the school's strategy to improve reading in key stage 1').
- detail the agreed reasons for the visit and focus your report around this.
- record the questions used from the Governor/Trustee Monitoring Plan and the answers provided by the staff member
- consider asking an experienced governor for feedback on your report.
- send a draft of your report to the relevant staff member as a courtesy and to invite feedback before circulating more widely.
- submit your report in line with the Governor and Trustee visits policy

Governors and Trustees may also need to give oral feedback on the visit at a future board or committee meeting. Governors' Visits will be a standing agenda item for the Local Governing Committee meetings.

Appendix 1 – Secondary School Governor Visits Form



Secondary Governor Visit Report Form

Name of Governor		Date of Visit	
Focus of the Visit			
Reference to School Development Plan or Link responsibility			
Staff visited			
Brief summary of what you did during your visit			
If this is your first visit on this focus, please detail the starting point and the interventions being introduced to realise improvement			
If this is your second or subsequent visit, please detail the progress or differences found compared with your previous visit			
Can you give examples of any progress or differences; you can include the opinions of staff and pupils			

Detail of any actions you feel should be taken as a result of your visit
Any further comments
Comments from staff member

Signatures:

Governor		Date	
Staff Member		Date	
Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead		Date	

Thank you for making the visit – please send a draft copy to the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead for signature/agreement. Once all complete, email a PDF signed copy to the Clerk for circulation by email to chair of governors. A final copy will be circulated to all governors on the next LGC meeting agenda.

Appendix 2 – Primary School Governor Visits Form



Primary Governor Visit Report Form

Name of Governor		Date of Visit	
Focus of the Visit & link with SDP or Link responsibility			
Classes/Staff visited			
Summary of activities eg. talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch with staff and/or students, listened to readers, school displays walkabout, looked at pupil workbooks, etc			
What have I learned as a result of my visit			
Positive comments about the visit			
Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have			

Ideas for future visits
Any other comments
Verbal debriefing with Head/Head of School/Nursery Lead (or SLT member if Head/Head of School/Nursery Lead unavailable)

Signatures:

Governor		Date	
Staff Member		Date	
Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead		Date	

Thank you for making the visit – please send a draft copy to the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead for signature/agreement. Once all complete, email a PDF signed copy to the Clerk for circulation by email to chair of governors. A final copy will be circulated to all governors on the next LGC meeting agenda.

Appendix 3 – Trustee Visits Form



Trustee Visit Report Form

Name of Trustee		Date of Visit	
Focus of the Visit			
Reference to Strategic Development Plan or Link responsibility			
School visited			
Staff visited			
Brief summary of what you did during your visit			
If this is your first visit on this focus, please detail the starting point and the interventions being introduced to realise improvement			
If this is your second or subsequent visit, please detail the progress or differences found compared with your previous visit			
Can you give examples of any progress or differences; you can include the opinions of staff and pupils			

Detail of any actions you feel should be taken as a result of your visit
Any further comments
Comments from staff member

Signatures:

Trustee		Date	
Staff Member		Date	
Headteacher		Date	

Thank you for making the visit – please send a draft copy to the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead for signature/agreement. Once all complete, email a PDF signed copy to the Clerk for circulation by email to chair of trustees. A final copy will be circulated to all Trustees on the next Trust Board meeting agenda.

Appendix 4 – Primary School Visit Guidance

To assist in establishing if progress is being made, it is important to try and cover as much as possible from the list below:

- Ensure you have a focus for your visit which should be something from the SDP (School Development Plan)
- Check you have seen pupil workbooks – ideally should be three from a class including one from a pupil working towards Expected/Exceeding. No names should be visible on the pupil books
- Have a discussion with some pupils (2-4) and ask about what they consider are the “matters of the moment” in their school
- Try and listen to three children read and spend a few minutes asking them about their reading in school and at home. It's useful to ask in advance of your visit, for the children to be of various stages in their reading
- Build in 10-15 minutes scheduled meeting time with the Class Teacher or Subject Leader depending on your visit focus. Ask them how they feel the particular SDP focus is progressing
- Show interest in the work on display around the school in addition to the classroom that you are visiting. Ideally ask for a pupil to take you on a guided tour of their classroom
- Have a debriefing meeting with the Headteacher/Head of School/Nursery Lead before you leave so that between you, there is an understanding of what you have learned which can be reported at the next LGC meeting but essentially be actioned at school level before then
- Remember to praise, challenge and offer support.