



## South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust

# Governors' 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

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## Introduction

The Local Governing Committee has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum in accordance with the SMART Scheme of Delegation. They also fulfil a largely strategic role in monitoring and reviewing aims, objectives and whether the policies, targets and priorities are being achieved. The governors should aim to provide challenge and support in equal measure.

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

## Why should Governors visit school?

- To demonstrate their commitment to the school and support for the Headteacher and their staff
- To enable governors to make better informed decisions to assist policy making and strategic planning
- To monitor the progress towards the aims of the School Development Plan and fulfil their link responsibilities

## Through visiting Governors can:

- Develop a greater understanding of the functions of the school
- Learn first-hand how the Curriculum is being implemented
- Build up relationships with staff and pupils by speaking to both groups
- Evaluate the resources and the environment of the school
- Give visible support to the activities of the school
- 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

## Successful visiting

When the visiting governor 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 is not there to make judgments.

## Frequency and duration of visits

All governors should be linked to an area in the School Development Plan for monitoring; the requirements for which should be included in the Governor 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. 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.

## **Preparation for a visit**

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.

## **Arranging the visit**

The visiting governor will need to arrange, in advance of the visit, for the relevant staff member to be available at a mutually convenient time to visit the school. The visiting governor 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. The visiting governor will need to make sure they have a clear agenda for the visit: times, meetings and items for discussion.

If arranging a visit to classrooms the visiting governor will need to discuss with the Headteacher 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 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 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 before leaving.

The visiting governor 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 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 3 which provides further guidance on governor visits.

## **Arrival in school**

The visiting governor 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

If the visiting governor's visit involves being in a classroom the following guidance should be observed:

- 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
- Gain a little background to the topic about to be taught

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

The visiting governor 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.**

## Reporting back

The visiting governor should complete the 'Governor Visits Form' (see appendix 1) and returned to the Headteacher for agreement and signature and a signed PDF copy will be shared with the Chair of Governors. Governors' Visits will be a standing agenda item for the Local Governing Committee meetings.

## Appendix 1 – Secondary School Governor Visits Form



### Governor Visit Report Form

<b>Name of Governor</b>		<b>Date of Visit</b>	
<b>Focus of the Visit</b>			
<b>Reference to School Development Plan</b>			
<b>Staff visited</b>			
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		Date	

Thank you for making the visit – please send a draft copy to the Headteacher 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



### Governor Visit Report Form

<b>Name of Governor</b>		<b>Date of Visit</b>	
<b>Focus of the Visit &amp; link with SDP</b>			
<b>Classes/Staff visited</b>			
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 (or SLT member if Head unavailable)

Signatures:

Governor		Date	
Staff Member		Date	
Headteacher		Date	

Thank you for making the visit – please send a draft copy to the Headteacher 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 – 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 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.