

# **St Mary's C of E School**

## **Governor Visits Policy**



**Date agreed: 28.09.15**

**Signed: Hilary Tyreman**

**Headteacher**

**Signed: Dan Rubens**

**Chair of governors**

**Date for review: September 2016**

## 1. Rationale

The governing body has a duty to oversee the direction and policies of the school, to monitor its standards and be held to account for its conduct and performance.

Visiting the school is the best way to learn how the school functions, and to keep under review how it operates so that the governing body's first hand knowledge can be increased and therefore contribute to the school self evaluation process and inform strategic decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities determined by the School Improvement Plan. The governing body should plan visits to cover a wide range of school work and each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose. Governors should arrange their visits with the headteacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school

## 2. Aims of policy

The purpose and aims of governor visits should contribute to the school self evaluation.

Visiting the school can potentially help governors to:

- Fulfil the governing body's legal duty “ **to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.**” (Section 21, Education Act 2002)
- Develop governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- *Contribute* to the governing body's monitoring role (visits are only one of the ways in which governors fulfill this role)
- Recognise and celebrate success and to support the school's work;
- Develop relationships with the staff
- Give governors an enhanced sense of identity with their school and the people who work in it
- Demonstrate to staff and pupils and parents that governors are interested in what goes on in school;
- Get to know the children
- Recognise different teaching styles and develop understanding of the teaching and learning process.
- Understand the environment in which teachers teach
- Monitor policies in action
- Inform decision making and to enable individual governors to ask informed and challenging questions at governing body meetings
- Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them

Visits can also potentially benefit teachers by:

- Ensuring governors understand the reality of the classroom
- Getting to know governors
- Understanding better the governors' roles and responsibilities
- Having an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion
- Highlighting the need for particular resources

**All visits need to contribute in some way to the school's self evaluation process.**

### **What a visit is not about**

- A form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of the teacher
- Checking on progress of own children
- Pursuing personal agenda
- Monopolising school/teacher time

### **3. Procedures and practise**

#### **Preparing for a formal visit**

*The following lists examples of good practise.*

#### **Before the visit**

- Check the agreed policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Improvement Plan? What are the relevant school Policies? How does this determine the activities I am interested in?
- Contact the head teacher to arrange a date. Discuss the agenda with the headteacher well in advance. Find out if there is a prompt/question sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with the staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson? It might be possible for you to see a copy of the lesson plan beforehand.
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

#### **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.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible.
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.

- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discretely. Remember that excessive note taking can be disconcerting and may make your visit look like an inspection.
- Don't distract the teacher during the lesson from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.
- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff and pupils.

#### **After the visit:**

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- 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?
- Write a short summary 'as a lay governor' of what you learned during the visit and the overall impression that was made. This should refer to the focus of the visit..
- It would be polite to circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved for them to check the accuracy and clarity. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Circulate this at the next appropriate committee/governing body meeting.

#### **Procedures in event of concern**

- Where concerns exist it is vital that they are discussed immediately with the head teacher. If you are not satisfied then with the response and remain concerned then the next step would be to approach the chair of governors
- As a governor you are part of a team aiming to maintain and improve the good reputation of St Mary's C of E School. As you can understand it is would be extremely damaging if concerns are expressed to the community. Please remember confidentiality at all times.
- Although not specifically part of a visitor policy it is worth mentioning what to do if a parent approaches you with a concern. In the first instance please address any concerns raised with the head teacher and the Chair of Governors as well if you think fit. It is requested you do not take sides or attempt to deal with the matter yourself. Your role in this is to be a vital link in the successful communication.

## **Visits' focus**

Although not an exhaustive list visits may focus on:-

- Any area being developed by the school, particular subjects, key stages or classes
- The use made of the buildings or the site
- The condition and maintenance of the premises
- Health and Safety
- Special Educational Needs
- Pupil Premium
- Inclusive Dyslexic Friendly Schools
- English and Maths
- Impact of the religious character (in church schools)
- Lunch and break times
- The use and condition of resources e.g. furniture or ICT equipment
- Deployment of staff, e.g. caretaker, office staff, teaching assistants
- The impact on the school of any changes e.g. reduced classes in a key stage
- Relative numbers of questions and responses to the teacher from boys to girls

## **Informal Visits**

Visits may also take place in an informal capacity. It is vital that everyone is clear about the capacity in which they are visiting and not to confuse the role.

- The chair making a regular visit to see the headteacher
- To lend a helping hand with a school event
- To get information from the office relating to a committee meeting
- To help in a class
- To speak to a teacher in relation to your own child
- Attend a school function or educational visit
- Visit in relation to your position as the local priest or councillor

## **Roles and responsibilities**

Governors are linked to areas of the curriculum or aspects of school life and to the teacher who has responsibilities for that aspect and in some instances to specific classes (e.g Early years)

The head teacher and senior leadership team will set out a schedule for governor visits in the Autumn term focusing on areas in the school development plan.

The head teacher will ensure that governors have relevant information to inform the focus of their visit e.g. relevant data, areas of the school development plan and will provide a visit proforma for governors.

Governors will follow the agreed policy on visits as detailed in this policy.

The head teacher will ensure that the agenda of governors meetings allows time for reports and discussion on the visits

### **Annual Review of this policy**

The governing body will review its practice at the start of the academic year.

Key questions to consider are:

- 1) Have the governors' visits made a difference to the governing body in its effectiveness in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met?
- 2) What does the governing body need to do to make the policy and practice even better

### **Conclusion**

The staff of St.Mary's C of E School welcome and value visits from governors. The staff also thank the governors for their continued support of the work of the school,

### **Appendix**

A Current OFSTED framework and judgments on Leadership and Management

B General proforma for governor visits

C Proforma to link specifically to link aspects of school self evaluation (See Governors monitoring the role of the school file in Head teacher office)

D General list of things to observe when visiting

E General questions about literacy and mathematics to ask

## Appendix A

OFSTED September 2015 judgements about the work of the governing body are as follows:

### **Governance**

1. Inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of those responsible for governance. This includes maintained school governors, proprietors, academy trustees or members of the school's local board. In a multi-academy trust, this is likely to include members of the local governing board or advisory board at school level as well as the multi-academy trust trustees.
2. Where a children's centre is managed directly by the school's governing body, inspectors will consider the impact of any judgements about the children's centre or the services and activities offered through or by the centre, in judging leadership and management.
3. Inspectors will consider whether governors:
  - work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition
  - provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school
  - provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school
  - understand how the school makes decisions about teachers' salary progression and performance
  - performance manage the headteacher rigorously
  - understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school
  - ensure that assessment information from leaders provides governors with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils
  - ensure that the school's finances are properly managed and can evaluate how the school is using the pupil premium and the primary PE and sport premium
  - are transparent and accountable, including in recruitment of staff, governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents.
4. Inspectors will report on the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This includes reporting on the pupils in any specialist resource provision managed by the governing body and the extent to which the education the school provides meets the needs of these pupils.

5. Inspectors will recommend an external review if governance is weak. Under ‘What the school should do to improve further’, inspectors should use the following words in the report:

‘An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.’

The school should decide how this review will take place and commission it. Reviews should be developmental. They do not represent a further inspection, although inspectors will follow up on the review during any subsequent inspection. Full details of what might be the form and nature of such reviews can be found at: [www.gov.uk/reviews-of-school-governance](http://www.gov.uk/reviews-of-school-governance)

Grade descriptors for the effectiveness of leadership and management

Note: Grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a ‘best fit’ approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

### **Outstanding (1)**

- Leaders and governors have created a culture that enables pupils and staff to excel. They are committed unwaveringly to setting high expectations for the conduct of pupils and staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary.
- Leaders and governors focus on consistently improving outcomes for all pupils, but especially for disadvantaged pupils. They are uncompromising in their ambition.
- The school’s actions have secured substantial improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils. Progress is rising across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- Governors systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources, including the pupil premium, the primary PE and sport premium and SEN funding, secures excellent outcomes for pupils. Governors do not shy away from challenging leaders about variations in outcomes for pupil groups, especially between disadvantaged and other pupils.
- Leaders and governors have a deep, accurate understanding of the school’s effectiveness informed by the views of pupils, parents and staff. They use this to keep the school improving by focusing on the impact of their actions in key areas.
- Leaders and governors use incisive performance management that leads to professional development that encourages, challenges and supports teachers’ improvement. Teaching is highly effective across the school.
- Staff reflect on and debate the way they teach. They feel deeply involved in their own professional development. Leaders have created a climate in which teachers are motivated and trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for their pupils.
- The broad and balanced curriculum inspires pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, within this, the promotion of fundamental British values, are at the heart of the school’s work.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well, for pupils and staff, so that the ethos and culture of the whole school prevents any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.



- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and managers have created a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Pupils are listened to and feel safe. Staff are trained to identify when a pupil may be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation and they report their concerns. Leaders and staff work effectively with external partners to support pupils who are at risk or who are the subject of a multi-agency plan.
- Leaders' work to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism is exemplary. Leaders respond swiftly where pupils are vulnerable to these issues. High quality training develops staff's vigilance, confidence and competency to challenge pupils' views and encourage debate.

### **Good (2)**

- Leaders set high expectations of pupils and staff. They lead by example to create a culture of respect and tolerance. The positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils support the progress of all pupils at the school.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils and promote improvement effectively. The school's actions secure improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress, which is rising, including in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education at the school. This helps them plan, monitor and refine actions to improve all key aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders and governors use performance management effectively to improve teaching. They use accurate monitoring to identify and spread good practice across the school.
- Teachers value the continuing professional development provided by the school. It is having a positive impact on their teaching and pupils' learning. Teaching is consistently strong across the school or, where it is not, it is improving rapidly.
- Governors hold senior leaders stringently to account for all aspects of the school's performance, including the use of pupil premium, the primary PE and sport premium and SEN funding, ensuring that the skilful deployment of staff and resources delivers good or improving outcomes for pupils.
- The broad and balanced curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning. This supports pupils' good progress. The curriculum also contributes well to pupils' behaviour and welfare, including their physical, mental and personal well-being, safety and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders consistently promote fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity, resulting in a positive school culture. Staff and pupils work together to prevent any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and staff take appropriate action to identify pupils who may be at risk of neglect, abuse or sexual exploitation, reporting concerns and supporting the needs of those pupils.
- Leaders protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Staff are trained and are increasingly vigilant, confident and competent to encourage open discussion with pupils.

### **Requires improvement (3)**

- Leadership and management are not yet good.
- Safeguarding is effective.

#### **Inadequate (4)**

**Leadership and management are likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.**

- Capacity for securing further improvement is poor and the improvements leaders and governors have made are unsustainable, have been implemented too slowly or are overly dependent on external support.
- Leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor teaching, learning and assessment, which significantly impairs the progress of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, disabled or have special educational needs.
- Leaders are not aware of, or are not taking effective action to stem, the decline in the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The unbalanced and poorly taught curriculum fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.
- The range of subjects is narrow and does not prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.
- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure good behaviour from pupils and a consistent approach to discipline.
- Leaders and governors, through their words, actions or influence, directly and/or indirectly, undermine or fail to promote equality of opportunity. They do not prevent discriminatory behaviour and prejudiced actions and views.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet statutory requirements, or they give serious cause for concern or insufficient action is taken to remedy weaknesses following a serious incident.
- Leaders and governors are not protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views when pupils are vulnerable to these. Policy and practice are poor, which means pupils are at risk.

**Appendix B**



**St Mary's C of E Primary School**  
Governor Classroom visit

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Areas of responsibility:</b>	<b>Foundation/Ex-Officio/Staff/Parent/LA</b>

<b>Class</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>EAL</b>	<b>Initial Concern/On Alert</b>	<b>SEN Support</b>	<b>Statement/EHC</b>
<b>No in class</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Pupil Premium</b>		<b>Vulnerable groups</b>	
	<b>F</b>				

<b>Teacher:</b>	<b>Teaching assistant/s:</b>
<b>Subject area</b>	
<b>Learning objectives</b>	

<b>Area of focus for visit:</b>  <b>Link to School Improvement Plan</b>  (How does the visit relate to a priority in the school improvement plan?)
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<b>Observations and comments by the governor</b>  (e.g. what you saw, what you learned, what you would like clarified)
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<p><b>Any key issues arising for the governing body</b></p> <p><b>(e.g. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy)</b></p>

Presented to governors on \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Action following the governing body meeting</b></p> <p><b>(record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to the visit)</b></p>
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<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Appendix C**



**St Mary's C of E Primary School**

**Record form for a governor's school visit**

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Purpose of visit:</b>		
<b>Links with school improvement plan:</b>		
<b>Observations and comments by the governor</b>		
<b>Challenges by governors:</b>	<b>Response:</b>	
<b>Please comment on any evidence relating the school's core values of Hope, Creativity and Perseverance that you observed.</b>		

**Any key issues for the governing body**

**Action following the Governing body meeting**

**Annex D Possible things to observe when visiting a classroom**

- Relationship between staff and pupils
- Relationships between pupils
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of pupils — are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding?
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and pupils
- How the pupils are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Children’s work
- Displays
- Ethos — the atmosphere and values that are evident (are high expectations, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources

## **Annex E. Questions for governors to ask (Primary English and mathematics)**

*The full governing body retains the responsibility for raising standards of literacy and numeracy. A nominated governor who takes a special interest in literacy or maths can help to ensure that these issues remain on the governing body's agenda. The following questions will help you in your role as literacy/maths governor, as you find out about the teaching of English/math's across the school Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits — it is not intended you work systematically through the list.*

*Discuss with your headteacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your job, in partnership with the headteacher, is to provide a link between your governing body, its committees and the staff of your school. These questions could be adapted for use with other subjects*

### **Achievements and attitudes**

What are the broad trends in the school's achievement in English/Maths?

- Compared to similar schools?
- In relation to the national rates of increase?
- In relation to the national picture in terms of gender?

Where have we improved? Do we know why?

Are there differences between the achievement of different year groups, and if so, why?

How do our results in English/math's compare with those in other subjects?

What aspects of the subject do pupils find easy and which hard?

Are there significant differences in reading and writing between

- Girls and boys?
- Pupils with special educational needs/those with no SEN?
- More able pupils
- Pupils with English as an additional language and the others
- Pupil Premium children
- The majority and any other minority groups, such as travelers. SMEH?

In meetings with the English/Maths leader can you tell how much progress pupils are making? For example, you could look at:

- Key Stage 1 and 2 test results
- The work of a range of pupils — average, below average and above average
- Other evidence. Special Needs

How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support children in their daily Literacy/Maths lessons?

**Management of the subject**

How is the role of the English/maths coordinator developing?

Does the school improvement plan match the identified needs?

What is the allocation of funding to English/Math's for this financial year?

How has it or will it be spent?

Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?

What further training do teachers and support staff need?

How much additional adult support does each class have?

What was the outcome of the local authority's literacy/numeracy monitoring visits?

(Literacy only) Does the school offer a range of reading books catering for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys? Are pupils using the library? What links does the school have with the local library?

How does the school use all its resources (books, materials and displays, as well as electronic media) to promote reading and writing/numeracy?

**Communication**

How are parents kept informed of progress?

What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their children in reading and writing at home?

How are governors kept informed about standards and the progress of pupils?

How do governors celebrate the school's success when things go well?