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CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
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# Governor Visits Policy, Protocol and Procedures 2021 - 2025

(Refer to the Governance Handbook October 2020)

## **Turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding (Proverbs 2:2)**

Broadwater is a Christian School. We will enable children to become wise, confident, successful learners with the motivation, skills and responsibility to make a positive difference in God's world. Our vision is underpinned by the values we live by.

*The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22*

It is this fruit that, in partnership with parents, we will instil in the children of our school.

## Governance Handbook 2020

### 3.4.2 School visits

40. Due to coronavirus, if governors or academy trustees wish to visit a school, they should speak with the school leader and work out a pragmatic solution that takes into consideration the school's risk assessment, and how the health and safety of any visitors, alongside staff and pupils, will be protected.

41. Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards find that visiting their school(s), particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school, its staff and students. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the board 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.

42. Boards 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 boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so.

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

Governors Visits should generally align to the priorities determined on the School Improvement Plan, against an agreed monitoring visit schedule, so that the strategies, interventions and impact can be seen in action. The Governing board should develop a schedule of planned visits over the year to cover the school priorities and the designated statutory governor monitoring roles. Each visit should be agreed and have a clear purpose.

Governors should arrange their planned visits in advance with the Headteacher who has the responsibility of the day-to-day management of the school.

The Governing board should review their school visits policy, protocols and procedure annually to ensure its effectiveness with the approved policy circulated to all staff.

## Governing Board Monitoring Visits Policy

### Introduction

This policy applies to school visits made for the purpose of governance and not to visits to the school site that any individual may make in other capacities e.g. as parents, volunteers or members of staff.

**Definition of school visit:** School visits may be conducted in person or virtual alternatives may take place. The method and format of each visit will be agreed with the Headteacher before the visit is conducted. Effective monitoring practices can take place virtually and evidence secured without physically visiting the school site.

### Purpose of visits:

A well-planned programme of visits forms an important element of the governing bodies strategic role.

All school visits will:

- Have a clear focus, linked to strategic priorities and designated statutory governor roles and be timely, planned and on the approved monitoring schedule which is agreed by the full governing board
- Be arranged with adequate notice through the Headteacher who will agree it with the relevant members of staff
- Be of value to the governing board which can be demonstrable evidenced to outside agencies e.g. Ofsted or the LA
- Involve the member of staff responsible for the objective or target meeting with the member of the governing body in order to provide background information and context, showing the initiative in action, and if possible providing the opportunity for them to speak to children or staff members who are affected by it.

Examples of what a visit could focus on include:

- The use of resources such as how the premises are utilised, a new teaching resource in action or a demonstration of an IT system)
- Monitoring the implementation of a particular policy for example safeguarding, homework, lesson planning
- Monitoring progress towards specific targets from the school/academy development plan for example 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
- Gaining an understanding of a particular curriculum area or year group
- Gaining an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts
- Gaining an understanding of how a particular issue (e.g. provision of ICT, boys' achievement in reading) is dealt with on a day-to-day basis

It is not the role of those governing to form judgements about the performance of school staff during visits and individuals should make every effort to avoid this impression.

During any visit to the school it is important to remember that the role of those governing is strategic, not operational. Visits by members of the governing board should not be confused with inspections. For example, if the focus of the visit is the Health and Safety policy, acceptable activities would be to seek an understanding of how the policy is managed, how staff are made aware of the policy, about any issues and how they have been dealt with, what lessons have been learned when things go wrong, how health and safety is audited and how the findings are acted upon.

Most of the time school visits will have a key focus on the governing boards monitoring role, but there are some occasions where this won't necessarily always be the case. For example, a new member of the governing board may 'tour' the school as part of their induction or those governing may attend a parent evening as a means of engaging with parents. If the school has parent or pupil councils, it can be useful for members of the governing board to meet with these groups or sit in on meetings.

### **Governor Conduct**

Governors undertaking visits will comply with the school and governing board's codes of conduct and the standards of presentation expected of staff. They will be mindful that they are representing the whole governing board through their words and actions. The governing board's code of conduct will contain reference to governor visits.

### **Governor reports following visit**

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 attached 'Governor Visit Report' 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 to be included in the supporting papers for discussion in the next governing board meeting or committee meeting as appropriate from the monitoring schedule.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding visits. Comments should be limited to the Headteacher with whom the visit was arranged 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.

### **Number and Frequency of Visits:**

There is no need for those governing to be in school every week – as the *Governance Handbook* states, those visiting “*should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school*”. At Broadwater we will follow the NGA (National Governors Association) recommendation that each individual board member visits the school at least once a year but no more than once a term. Governors, trustees and local governing committee members will undertake visits as agreed.

### **Review**

This policy, protocol and procedure should be reviewed by the governing board every academic year alongside the code of conduct.

### **Purposes of a governor visit**

The benefits to governors:

- To see the strategies in action as outlined in the school improvement plan 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
- 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 boards ethos and Christian 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 students:

- To begin to understand the role of the governor and their 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 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**

- Visiting classrooms to observe a lesson, unless as part of an accompanied learning walk against a specific school improvement priority. This prevents any confusion on a class visit being confused as a form of inspection to make judgements about professional expertise of a teacher.
- Undertaking staff roles e.g. touring the school undertaking health and safety checks, even if professionally qualified in this area.
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing a personal agenda
- An opportunity to tackle staff about specific issues
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### **Protocols or ground rules for visits:**

- Ensure the visit has a clear focus linked to the Strategic School Action Plan, strengths and weaknesses, impact of policies or responsible areas of the individual statutory governor required roles i.e. safeguarding, SEND, Health & Safety.
- Governors to remember that during any visit their role is strategic not operational.
- The Headteacher will liaise with the member of staff responsible for the school/ priority/policy objective to arrange the meeting.
- Staff should know in advance the date and focus of the visit arranged via the Headteacher.
- Staff should have the opportunity to explain the context of any lesson on the rare occasion that a governor visits a classroom
- Governors will not interrupt lessons by asking teachers questions on the rare occasion that they may visit the classroom.
- Governors may talk to students 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 board, 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 board's code of conduct.
- Governors will formally write reports on their visits using the approved templates ensuring that draft reports are sent to the Headteacher for proof reading, accuracy and comments prior to the final report being produced.
- Monitoring visit reports will be circulated, via the clerk, 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.

### **Annual programme of visits**

A programme of visits (monitoring schedule) should be planned, using the Strategic School Action Plan 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 year and not more than three 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
- Virtual admissions meetings
- School council
- Parent forum
- Visiting break and lunchtimes
- Virtual meeting to review a report
- Looking at pupils work against marking policy
- Monitoring implementation of a policy e.g. behaviour, equality
- 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
- 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
- Virtual meeting to discuss school development area
- Gaining an understanding of the broad curriculum or a particular area
- Reviewing the environment, the condition and maintenance, use made of the buildings or the site and resources of the school
- Virtual meeting to review a policy
- Focussed whole governing body days in school

## **Monitoring and review of school visit policy**

Areas we should consider when reviewing are:

- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits we identified?
- Are our visits timely against the Strategic School Action Plan?
- 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, with the Headteacher.
- Discuss the visit and agreed timetable with the Headteacher and ensure that any member of staff who will be involved in the visit, understands the arrangements.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit as outlined within the Strategic School Action Plan and background preparation reading required. Understand your strategic monitoring role.
- Review the action points in the Strategic School Action Plan? 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 and health and safety procedures
- Read the Governing board code of conduct and staff code of conduct to ensure understand 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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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, however trivial. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about.
- Thank the staff by email via the Headteacher 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 A).
- 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 Headteacher and once you have taken their comments into account send the final written report to the clerk for circulation at the appropriate committee or governing board meeting.
- Ensure that your visit is included as an agenda item at the next appropriate committee or governing board meeting.
- 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 they follow the governor visits protocols as appropriate and report using the informal template (Appendix B)

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 clergy or councillor

### **Governor Committee Meetings**

All members of the Governing Body will attend FGB (Full Governing Body) meetings in person if they are attending.

Committee meetings will be attended in person by the Chair, Headteacher and Clerk to the Governing Body. All other committee members will choose to attend in person on school site or virtually (blended approach).

Protocol for virtual attendance: All cameras to be enabled and sound to be on mute if not talking. Please raise the hand symbol so that the clerk and Chair can see that you wish to speak. This will ensure that the meeting is inclusive and members don't speak over one another when all ... can not be seen on the split screen.

**As a Governing Body we acknowledge the benefits of virtual communication and see this element as a permanent part of our monitoring and meeting process and procedures. We commit to reviewing this blended arrangement on an annual basis.**

**Discussion about the protocols of virtual meetings: Please comment on the discussion zone if you have any pertinent points that you feel could be added to this document.**

## Record of a governor visit to the school - Formal

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
<b>Focus of visit, links with the School Improvement Plan.</b> <i>(How does the visit relate to a priority in the School Improvement Plan?)</i>	
<b>Areas and summary of planned activities. Including departments or areas of school visited, staff and pupils that the governor met during the visit</b> <i>(Previously agreed by the governing body with the Headteacher)</i> <i>(Governors should refer to staff by their role or job title and not by name)</i>	
<b>What have I learnt as a result of my visit? Comments by the governor</b> <i>(e.g. what you saw; what you learned relating to the focus of the visit; how long the visit lasted)</i>	
<b>Aspects I would like clarified and 3 key questions I would like to raise</b> 1. 2. 3.	
<b>Actions for the governing board to consider</b> <i>(e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the school communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)</i>	
<b>Any other comments/ideas for future visits?</b>	
<b>Signed: Governor</b> <b>Meeting to be considered at:</b>	

Record of a governor visit to the school - Informal

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