

Ravensbury Community School

Governor school visits policy



Approved by:

Date:

Last reviewed on:

Next review due by:

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1. Aims

Governor visits are an important part of the governing board’s monitoring arrangements. It is important that governors and school staff are clear on the role of a governor and have shared expectations regarding governor visits to Ravensbury Community School.

This policy aims to set and maintain –

- the procedures which all governors are expected to follow in arranging and visiting our school,
- the standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow when making a visit to the school; and
- expectations on reporting back on that visit to the governing board.

By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that all governors understand their role and purpose, so school visits are a productive and enjoyable event for all involved.

2. Guidance and scope

This policy takes account of expectations, best practice, and guidance from a number of key sources including the DfE Governance Handbook (specifically section 3.4.2).

2.1 Governors are observers.

Boards must know their schools in order to maintain robust accountability. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, governors will – ‘see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears’:

- whether the school is properly implementing school policies, and actions from the school improvement plan.
 - how those procedures are working in practice
 - and will the opportunity to gather the views of pupils and staff?
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2.2 Governors are not inspectors!

Governors:

- Will not attempt to assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom; and
- Will not overstep the boundaries of their governance role to interfere in any way with the day-to-day operations and management of the school.

For those governors who wish to spend time in a classroom, their visit plan must provide clarity on the purpose and scope of their visit. The visit plan should be approved by the governing board and shared with all parties involved in the visit.

3. Visits programme

Governors will carry out regular school visits in order to meet the board's statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness.

There are 2 types of visits:

- **Formal governance monitoring visits**, where governors discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member.
- **Learning walks**, where governors will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area and are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils.

Governors will carry out school visits in accordance with visit plans agreed by the governing board. These may be set out in an annual monitoring programme or be agreed at a meeting of the governing board or one of its committees.

. For other visits, roles and responsibilities will be as set out in the Generic Governor Visit Role Remit.

3.1 Link Governors

Our Board appoints a number of Link Governors who have specific responsibilities as set out in their specific Link Governor Role Remits.

Our Board appoints the following Link Governors:

Safeguarding Link Governor

Special Educational Needs

Curriculum/Subject Specific Link Governors

Key Priority Link Governor

These governors are expected to attend:

- At least one pre-arranged meeting with either other staff or with pupils to gather staff / pupil voice relevant to the Link governor focus – this may be incorporated into the termly monitoring visit or conducted as a separate exercise.
- Ad hoc meetings as required or requested on issues specific to their areas of responsibility.

3.2 Curriculum / Subject Lead Governors

Our Board appoints a number of Curriculum Lead Governors who have specific responsibilities as set out in their specific Link Governor Role Remits.

Our Board appoints the following Curriculum Link Governors:

Name	Governor Responsibilities 2022-2023																			
	Category	Committee	Health and Safety	Safeguarding	Pupil Premium	LAC SEND	EYF5	KS1	KS2	Reading	Writing	Maths	Humanities	Creative	Science/PE	Curriculum	Parental Engagement	Attendance	Well Being	RSE
Maureen Hughes	Headteacher	Resources Achievement and Inclusion																		
Louise Thewlis	Associate Governor	Achievement and Inclusion					✓		✓											
Nicola Richardson	Co-opted Staff	Resources	✓																	
Chris Moore	Co-opted Community	Achievement and Inclusion															✓			✓
Dave Goddard	Co-opted Community	Achievement and Inclusion		✓		✓		✓												
Sarah Crowe Chair	Co-opted Community	Resources	✓													✓			✓	
Kudzai Zizwira	Co-opted Community	Achievement and Inclusion											✓							
Kelly Gallery	Co-opted Staff	Resources																✓		
Adam Woolf	Co-opted Parent	Resources											✓							
Amal Iqbal	Co-opted Staff	Achievement and Inclusion			✓										✓					
Linzi Hall	Co-opted Community	Achievement and Inclusion		✓											✓					
	LA Governor																			
Allan Mandipati	Co-opted Parent	Achievement and Inclusion									✓									
Yasmin Clarke	Parent Governor	Resources Achievement and Inclusion							✓											
Mithila Achutha	Parent Governor	Resources										✓								

3.3 All governors

All governors will:

- Participate in at least specific review visit each term as deployed by the board or a committee of the board. The role and responsibilities for governors participating in a focused learning walk or other review will be as set out in the Generic Governor Visit Role Remit.
- Attend at least 1 other school activity in the year (this may be through joining an educational visit / attending an assembly / attending a school concert or sports day/ etc. There is no specific Role Remit for governor joining general school activities although the Governance Code of Conduct should be respected at all times.

All visits and learning walks are agreed in advance by the board with relevant remit.

4. Before a visit

Governors will:

If visits details are not set out in the monitoring plan (e.g., if Link Governor are able to set their own dates with relevant Leaders) – then consider the inclusion of the following -.

- Notify the headteacher and chair before visiting just as a matter of courtesy, even if the headteacher will not be involved in the visit.
- Schedule an appointment with relevant member of staff balancing the needs to
 - Be sensitive to the numerous demands staff have on their time,

- Understand school timelines for availability of information updates,
- Share the importance of building in sufficient time to provide written report-back to Board or a board committee,
- Be sensitive to school life in order to avoid friction and ensure visits are scheduled for times that are mutually convenient. Generally, governor visits are more productive when conducted during a school day.
- Confirm the purpose of the visit in advance with the relevant member of staff ahead of the visit.
- Clarify the purpose of the visit in advance with the relevant member of staff ahead of the visit – ensuring that the Chair and HT are also aware of the agreed focus of each meeting.
- Send questions in advance to the staff member so everyone can feel properly prepared.
- Be familiar with the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures.

5. During a visit

The Governance Code of Conduct sets out the values and expectations including with regard to governor behaviour. This Code should be reviewed by all parties involved in a visit, to ensure shared understandings.

Good visit planning and following behaviour expectations will help to minimise disruption for staff and pupils and to receive the maximum benefit from the time spent.

Governors will:

- Act in line with the governance Code of Conduct – modelling behaviours relevant to the school’s values and ethos.
- Be on time to meet with the visitor leader.
- Always follow all school safeguarding protocols - including always wearing a visitor’s badge, not taking photographs and videos unless specifically agreed with the headteacher for a specific purpose,
- Use the agreed visit report template to confirm the purpose of the visit and to record your monitoring headlines for feedback to the board / board committee method for the visit.
- Reassure staff regarding your role – you are there to learn from them – to better understand how school policies, systems, processes etc., actually work in practice; to listen to what the leader and others in the school have to say about the topic you are looking at; to get a little experience of real school life; and to be an ambassador for the Board – to listen to what others may wish to say about their experience at the school. Check out staff understandings of your role to ensure that they don’t feel that they are being formally observed or judged in any way – this is particularly important if your visit includes time in the classroom,
- Check with teachers before speaking to pupils / looking at pupil’s work etc.

Some ‘top tips’ from experienced governors:

- Bear in mind that some staff may find the whole process of governor visits a little daunting! Sharing a little about yourself and your background can give you an opportunity to assure staff that you are not there to judge them in any way just to better understand how things work in practice.
- Be friendly but professional and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils.

- Occasionally someone may take the opportunity to raise a concern with you – always encourage them to go through appropriate channels but pass on any concerns which are raised to the Chair.
- Be an ambassador for the board – supporting positive relationships with staff and better understanding of the role of the board.
- Be careful when taking notes during the visit – to you this may be to help you remember something great you've seen – to the member of staff it may feel that you are 'recording evidence against them!'

Governors will not:

- Pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen whilst the visit is taking place.
- Give any impression that their role is in any way to inspect or judge teaching methods, assess the quality of teaching, or comment on the extent of learning.
- Interfere with the day-to-day running of the school or classroom activities.
- Raise concerns or respond to concerns in the moment. If a governor has any concerns about anything they have seen or heard – then these should be shared in a considered manner with the chair of governors or headteacher as soon as possible after the visit. This will enable you to be provided with further information on context.

6. After a visit

Governors will complete a written report as soon as reasonably practicable [using the form attached as Appendix A]. In completing the report, governors will ensure to:

- Use neutral language at all times.
- Remain observational and describe only what they see.
- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role.

Once complete, governors will submit their draft reports to the following people, in the following order:

- A more experienced governor (as nominated by the board) for feedback - if they've been in place for less than 1 year.
- The relevant staff member, both as a courtesy and to check for accuracy.
- The headteacher, as a courtesy.
- The chair of the governing board or the relevant committee, as agreed.
- The clerk to enable circulation of reports for feedback to the next Board / Committee meeting

Appendix A: Guidance on use of Template report for a learning walk

Learning walks are where you will go around the school with the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area. You are likely to talk to a range of staff members and pupils. Use this as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

Part 1: plan for the learning walk	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
<p>Agreed focus: <i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting too distracted by other issues that have not been agreed in advance.</i></p>	<p>The purpose of the visit should be agreed in advance by the Board as part of the monitoring plan.</p> <p>A visit may be to support CPD of an individual governor – if so, this should be approved by the Chair of the board / board committee in discussion with the HT.</p> <p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>For governors to gain an understanding of how pupils with additional needs are supported with writing</p> <p>To develop individual governor knowledge of pupil progress monitoring system / financial monitoring systems.</p> <p>This learning walk was approved: as part of the Governor Monitoring Plan / within the remit of a Link or Lead Governor Role / based on an individual governor request and approved by the Board / Chair of GB (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>Relevant school objective or priority <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.</i></p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>SIP Priority 2: Percentage of pupils achieving 'greater depth' in writing improves at KS2.</p>
<p>Questions in advance (if any) <i>There may be limited opportunities for questions during the walk, but the staff visit leader will arrange opportunities for visit members to talk with staff and pupils as appropriate to the visit. There may be some specific questions you know in advance that you want to ask based on the SIP; or questions raised during</i></p>	<p>EXAMPLES:</p> <p>I'd like to get a better understanding of -</p> <p>How is pupil progress tracked?</p> <p>How staff know what 'greater depth' looks like?</p> <p>I'd like to see some examples of 'greater depth' work compared to 'expected'?</p> <p>Examples of Good Questions are available through -</p> <p>Review of the One Education Termly Briefing Handbook</p>

<p><i>board discussions when the visit was set up; or points to follow up on from a previous visit – if so, add these here.</i></p> <p><i>As appropriate – take the opportunity to introduce yourselves to staff and pupils while you are in school.</i></p>	<p><i>Review of guidance on The Key for School Governors / The NGA / - add details of governance support services you buy-into.</i></p>
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<p>Part 2: On the walk</p>
<p>Provide a headlines report of your experience on the learning walk – focus on sharing what you saw and experienced.</p> <p>what impressed you most?</p> <p>what knowledge have you gained?</p> <p>could you see evidence of the operation of school policies in the area relevant to the visit?</p> <p><i>Remember your role is to monitor – to gather and to later share information with other governors.</i></p> <p><i>When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers or pupils.</i></p>

<p>Headlines report from the Learning Walk</p>
Empty space for the report

General notes from discussions with staff

Tips:

- Talk about what impressed you most in what you saw.
- Ask for clarity on anything you weren't sure of in what you saw.
- Ask staff to explain how school policy, systems etc., support them.
- Ask if there is anything that the member of staff would like governors to appreciate about school activities.
 - Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me...'
 - listen to responses.
 - follow-up with further questions
 - check-out your understandings
- Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with
- Remember you are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them.

General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere

Note:

- Whether the governors' vision for the school is replicated on the ground
- Any issues with the school site you see e.g., broken equipment or lack of resources

General notes from discussions with pupils

Remember:

- Check out with staff when it's OK to talk with pupils and follow safeguarding protocols.
- Do not ask for pupils' views on a specific teacher.
- Do not record pupils' names

Example questions you could ask of pupils:

If you were going to give an award for the best book you've read this year – what book would it be and why?

tell me about a recent piece of writing that you are proud of?

what's the best advice you've received from your teacher about your writing?

Any questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors following the visit

Report completed by visiting governor:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reviewed by visit leader:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Date reviewed by HT: _____

Date reviewed by Chair of GB / GB Committee: _____

Date sent to clerk for inclusion on next agenda: _____