SAINT JOHN'S

Governor Visits Policy and Procedure

Designated Member of Staff	Head Teacher
Frequency of Review	Annual

Issue Number	Issue Date	Summary of Changes
1	May 2024	New policy introduced and approved FGB T5
2	May 2025	Reviewed and approved by governors at FGB T5
3	September 2025	Reviewed and approved by governors at FGB1
4	September 2026	Reviewed and approved by governors at FGB1

This policy is written to underpin our school ethos to ensure that Saint John's Church of England Primary School is a place "where we all flourish". Monitoring visits provide governing boards with essential information about how their strategy is being implemented and how issues discussed at board level translate into the everyday life of the school.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to ensure all governors 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 to:

- Better understand the 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 the life, work and achievements of the school.
- Experience the culture and ethos of the school.

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 the quality of teaching).
- Seeing examples of pupil work.

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

The focus for school visits

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.

Procedures for a Governor Visit

Scheduling visits

Governing boards should plan a schedule of visits for each academic year. When making these plans, boards should consider:

- How the visits schedule 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.
- The board's own capacity to fulfil the schedule: is it manageable?

The schedule of visits should be agreed between the governing board, school leaders and relevant staff. This will help ensure that the timing of visits allows governors to see relevant activities.

Pre-visit planning

Visits are more effective when governors prepare in advance. This might include:

- Familiarising yourself with a relevant policy and the background information relating to the focus of the visit
- Familiarising yourself with your school's procedures for health, safety and safeguarding instructions.
- Clarifying the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher and/or relevant member of staff.
- Confirming the visit schedule and activities.

Frequency of visits

Governing boards are best placed to determine how often and when their visits should take place, with the aim of balancing board visibility and minimising disruption for the school. The frequency of governance visits should be in accordance with the schedule established by the governing board and agreed with school leaders and relevant staff. Visits should be scheduled to allow governors to see relevant activities and strategic milestones.

In most cases, governors can expect to carry out monitoring visits at least twice a year.

During a visit

Governors are usually accompanied on their visits by a relevant member of staff to help guide their monitoring, answer questions and clarify learning points or lines of enquiry.

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).
- Adopt a friendly approach that puts everyone at ease.
- 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.

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

After a visit

Following a visit to school, you may wish to:

- Send a follow up message thanking everyone involved in supporting your visit for their time and assistance.
- Emphasise the positive aspects (such as the behaviour of pupils, welcoming atmosphere) with the Headteacher and relevant member of staff who acted as your guide.

Reporting back to the board

The impact of visits is increased when the learning is shared through structured feedback to the governing board. As soon as possible following a visit, use any notes you have taken to complete a report on your visit. Your report should detail the key learning points, discussion points for the governing board, the follow-up required and next steps.

Any concerns will be shared with the Headteacher, rather than in the written report. The final version will be uploaded on the system for reference in the next governor meeting.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the governing board on an annual basis.

The governing board will, at the same time, review the impact of their school visits, building lessons learned into future plans and consider the following:

- Are our visits proving useful?
- What benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, have come from our visits?
- Are we better informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Is there anything we need to change about how visits are conducted, taking into account feedback from school staff?