



# THE SHROPSHIRE GATEWAY EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## GOVERNOR SCHOOL VISITS POLICY

Author	Governance Professional (NGA policy model)
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## 1. Policy aims

This policy aims to ensure that all governors/directors understand:

- the purpose of monitoring visits
- the expectations for carrying out visits including preparation, expected conduct and reporting back to the governing/trust board

## 2. Purpose of visits

Visiting school on a planned, regular basis allows governors/directors to:

- better understand their 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 a school
- experience the culture and ethos of the school

Monitoring 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)

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 judgments about quality of teaching)
- seeing examples of pupil work

## 3. Frequency of visits

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/directors to see relevant activities and strategic milestones.

## 4. Arranging and preparing for visits

Visits should be arranged through the headteacher with adequate notice and agreed with the relevant members of staff.

Due regard should be given to:

- how the visit 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

Governors/directors are encouraged to prepare for their visit. This may include:

- reading and familiarising yourself with the governing board's protocol for visits and the expected conduct
- reading and familiarising yourself with the school's policy for visitors (this is different from the governor/trustee visits policy) that includes relevant health, safety and safeguarding instructions
- reading the background information relating to the focus of the visit, such as relevant section(s) of the strategic plan, performance data, policies and stakeholder information
- clarifying the purpose of the visit with the headteacher and or relevant member of staff
- confirming the visit schedule and activities

## **5. Conduct on visits**

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
- be respectful of the school at work and if you wish to take notes check that those you are with are comfortable with this
- if you are taking notes, be clear with everyone that this is for feedback purposes and that you are not recording judgments (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/directors are also expected to behave in line with the governing board's code of conduct, being aware of the need to maintain confidentiality.

## **6. Expectations following a visit**

A report (App 1) should be completed as soon as possible 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 included in the papers for discussion in the next governing board meeting.

Your report should detail the key learning points, discussion points for the governing board, the follow-up required, and next steps. When writing your report, we suggest that you:

- Use neutral, collaborative language to describe what you observed (for example, 'reading attainment in key stage 1 is poor, the school needs to improve this' could be written as 'we have discussed the school's strategy to improve reading in key stage 1')
- Detail the agreed reasons for the visit and focus your report around this
- Consider asking an experienced governor for feedback on your report
- Send a draft of your report to the relevant staff member as a courtesy and to invite feedback before circulating more widely
- Submit your report in line with your visits policy. You may also need to give oral feedback on your visit at a future board meeting



## APPENDIX 1 – school visits report template example

For governor & director monitoring visits

<b>Name of school:</b>
<b>Governor/director name:</b>
<b>Name of lead staff member:</b>
<b>Date of visit:</b>
<i>Focus of visit</i>
<i>Visits should focus on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the governing board</i></li><li>• <i>the evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening actually happening?</i></li><li>• <i>seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met</i></li></ul>
<i>Summary of activities</i>
<i>For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>meeting staff with responsibility for specific areas (such as safeguarding or SEND)</i></li><li>• <i>talking to staff and pupils</i></li><li>• <i>experiencing a lesson being taught (as part of getting to know the school, rather than making judgements about quality of teaching)</i></li><li>• <i>seeing examples of pupil work</i></li></ul>
<i>What have I learned and how will I feed this back to my board?</i>
<i>Relate this back to focus of your visit.</i>
<i>Discussion points for the governing board</i>
<i>Any other comments</i>
<i>An opportunity for the relevant staff member to provide comments on your report.</i>