# Governor School Visits Policy

# Barnhill School

| APPROVED BY: | Local Governing Body |
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# Governor School Visits Policy

**Rationale**

Governors are expected to monitor the implementation of policies and plans and to evaluate the progress that the school is making. Much of the monitoring will be done by the Headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff reporting to the governing bodies and its committees. However, it is also good practice for governors to visit the school during the school day to see the impact of their policies and plans on the school's practice. An effective partnership between governors and staff, based on mutual understanding and respect, benefits the whole school community. School visits are one way to facilitate appropriate challenge by the governing body and provide timely support.

**Purposes/Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused monitoring visits to the school so that they can:

- Improve governor knowledge of the school, its staff, needs and priorities
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school to develop informed questions for governing body and committee meetings
- Build an effective working relationship with the staff, particularly those in senior leadership roles beyond the Headteacher
- Have a better understanding of the context in which staff work
- Observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis regarding achievement, behaviour and safety, teaching and learning, and leadership
- Monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the school improvement plan
- Assist the governing body in fulfilling its statutory duties by reporting the findings of each visit to the relevant committee or local governing body

Governor visits should be positive and supportive events. The purpose is not to assess the quality of teaching provision or to pursue issues that relate to the day-to-day management of the school other than as agreed with the Headteacher or relevant senior leader.

**The Visit Framework**

The visit framework is designed to facilitate links between Ofsted's key areas, the SEF, the school improvement plan, and statutory policies and documents to committees and individual governors.

**Attached Governors**

Each governor will be attached to at least one particular area or Ofsted strand, which will normally comprise the focus of his/her visit. For some larger areas, more than one governor may be attached and governors may visit in pairs. Governors may change their assigned area from year to year to develop a broader understanding of each of the Ofsted strands and the work of the school leaders.

The following chart outlines the focus areas for Governors' Visits and the range of possible discussion topics. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Topics for discussion should be agreed with the relevant senior leader prior to the visit.

| Focus Area for Visit | Possible Discussion Topics (to be agreed prior to visit) | Timing of Visit | Relevant Senior Leaders | Attached Governor(s) |
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| **Achievement** | • Current and projected attainment and progress of all groups of students (e.g. see questions in Appendix B and Appendix C)<br>• Areas of concern and intervention strategies | Following publication of Raise Online | ☐Deputy Headteacher: Impact | |
| **Curriculum implementation** | • Attitudes to learning (e.g. see questions in Appendix C)<br>• Quality of learning (e.g. see questions in Appendix C) | TBC | ☐Deputy Headteacher: implementation | |
| **Curriculum implementation** | • Lesson Observation Policy<br>• Summary of teaching judgements and lesson observation data<br>• Strategies for improving teaching | During one of the scheduled Reviews | ☐Deputy Headteacher: implementation | |
| **Curriculum and Provision (inc. Alternative Provision)** | • Curriculum models and outline of provision (including alternative provision)<br>• Factors impacting on curriculum<br>• Sex and Relationships Education Policy | TBC | ☐Deputy Headteacher: SDBA | |
| **SEN Provision** | • SEN Policy<br>• Issues and developments in SEN provision | TBC | • SENCO<br>• SLT line manager of SENCO | |
| **Behaviour and Safety** | • Behaviour for Learning Policy<br>• Attendance Policy<br>• Attendance and exclusions data<br>• Health and Safety Policy | TBC | ☐Deputy Headteacher: SDBA | |
| **Child Protection and Safeguarding** | • Child Protection Policy<br>• Safeguarding Policy<br>• Current issues/concerns | TBC/as required | ☐Designated Safeguarding Lead | |
| **Leadership** | • Performance Management Policy and use of BlueSky<br>• Notable outcomes of PM<br>• Strategic use of School Reviews<br>• Strategies to develop staff/ leadership (e.g. see questions in Appendix B and Appendix C) Mapping of strategic responsibilities across the school | TBC but following Performance Management Reviews | ☐Headteacher | |

* Assistant Head: Quality may also be involved in some visits

**Timings of Visits**

There will be a minimum of one visit per area scheduled in a school year, usually in the Spring Term. Each visit should be strategically timed to coincide with the ongoing work of the school, and therefore some visits may occur at times other than in the Spring Term. The specific dates for visits will be proposed to attached governors by relevant senior leaders in conjunction with the school calendar.

Once senior leaders and the attached governors agree specific visit dates, the senior leaders will inform the Headteacher's PA and the Clerk who will publish/update a calendar of visits for all governors. Governors' visits will be published on the school calendar also.

**Before The Visit**

A carefully planned visit by a governor can generate evidence that will inform decision-making by the whole governing body or its committees.

- In the weeks leading up to a visit, the governor(s) should see suggestions from staff identified above about what would be appropriate to look for and how to make the most out of an upcoming visit in relation to the specific Ofsted strand, the SEF, the school improvement plan, and/or any relevant statutory policies and documents.
- Governor Visit activities might include:
  - Discussions with the Deputy Headteacher and/or Assistant Headteacher(s) ○Supported Progress Review of related aspects of School Improvement Plan ○Review of related documents and data (e.g. attainment, progress, attendance, Sleuth behaviour reports, exclusions, lesson observations) with Deputy/Assistant
    Headteacher(s) ○Focused Teaching and Learning Walks
  - Staff Voice and/or Student voice ○Presentations about
    methods/strategies/new developments ○Review of policy
    documents
- Governors should also refer to the documents 'School performance monitoring questions for governors' (Appendix B) and 'Further questions governors could ask/evidence they could see' (Appendix C).
- In advance of each visit, the specific focus, agenda, duration of visit and details will be discussed and agreed with the relevant Deputy Headteacher or designated contact.
- The length of a governor visit will depend on the focus area, but it is anticipated that each visit will last 2 – 3 hours. Some visits may indeed be shorter.
- The agenda for the visit and any relevant paperwork or preparation material will be provided to the governor and any staff involved at least one week prior to the visit.
- The governor(s) will prepare by reading all relevant documentation/guidance/papers.
- In the interest of transparency, all staff involved will be made fully aware of the focus of the visit.

**During The Visit**

- Governors must sign in at reception on arrival, wear their school identification badge or collect and wear the visitor badge for the duration of the visit, and return the visitor badge when signing out at the end of the visit.
- Governors need to be aware that staff members have to be discreet about some information, particularly if it pertains to individual students or staff. Staff will attempt to anonymise any information or examples of work; however, in any situation when governors are able to identify individuals in discussions, governors must be fully mindful of and committed to absolute confidentiality in such circumstances.
- Staff will endeavour to be prepared and answer questions as fully as possible during a visit but may need to provide some information in a follow-up to the visit.
- If there are to be any classrooms visits, appropriate conduct includes: sending positive messages (smiling, being interested, joining in, asking questions without interrupting the teaching and learning) and avoiding negative messages (staying silent, making notes whilst in the room, asking too many questions, etc.)

- At the end of each visit, the governor will discuss their observations with the staff and Deputy Headteacher involved and clarify any points they are uncertain about.
- The Deputy Head and governor(s) will jointly agree key points to report to their committee.
- Before leaving the school, the governor(s) will aim to discuss their observations with the Headteacher, if this has been agreed.  They will agree how and when they will report to the relevant committee.
- Any urgent concerns, for example, about child safeguarding or matters relating to health and safety, should be reported immediately to the Designated Senior Person (DSP).

**After The Visit**
- Using the pro-forma (Appendix A), a draft record of the visit will be discussed/refined with the senior staff involved and copied in the first instance to the Headteacher.
- Once agreed as an accurate record, it will be circulated to all governors.
- Governors' visits will be an agenda item at committee and, where relevant, issues may be raised at local governing body meetings.
- At the final meeting of each academic year, the Vice Chair will report the number of visits conducted, the areas of focus, a summary of action points, analysis and recommendations for the following year.  This report and minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed will enable the governing body's understanding of the school's performance.  This report will also generate data for the leadership and management section of the summary of selfevaluation.

**Record of Governor Visit**

| Name | | Date | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Committee | | LG Contact | |

| Purpose and Focus of Visit (How does the visit related to an Ofsted strand or priority in the SIP, SEF or statutory policy?) |
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| Governor observations and comments (Describe the main components/aspects of the visit.  What did you see/do?  What did you learn?) |
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| Key Issues arising for the committee/governing body |
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| Date shared with Headteacher/LG link/other staff involved | |
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| Date shared with Committee/Governing Body | |

| Action(s) agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit |
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**School performance monitoring questions for governors**

| Achievement Standards | Quality of Teaching | Leadership and Management |
|---|---|---|
| • How is our school currently performing?<br>• Which groups are at risk of underachieving? (e.g. FSM, looked after children, gender, ethnicity, SEN)<br>• What progress are we making with narrowing gaps?<br>• What % of our children are making or exceeding expected rates of progress?<br>• How do standards compare with national standards?<br>• Are results better in some subjects than others? Do we know why? What are we doing about that?<br>• How does the school's performance compare with LA averages?<br>• How does the school's performance compare with that of similar schools?<br>• How does the school's current performance compare with its previous performance? What is the trend in results over the last three years?<br>• Have some subjects/year groups shown a marked improvement this year? If so, why?<br>• What are the attitudes of students towards their learning? | • How often are teachers observed teaching?<br>• How are staff trained to observe colleagues? How are their judgements moderated?<br>• What % of lessons are outstanding/good/requiring improvement/inadequate? What is the trend?<br>• How else do we judge the quality of teaching? (Work scrutiny. Plans. Feedback from students, parents, staff. Results.)<br>• How do teachers ensure that all students are appropriately challenged?<br>• How do teachers highlight progress within lessons?<br>• What do teachers do when they see students underachieving?<br>• To what extent do teachers seek the views of their students about learning?<br>• What professional support do teachers get to help them teach more effectively?<br>• How do support staff contribute to teaching and learning?<br>• What professional support do support staff get to help to maintain and improve their contribution to raising pupil achievement? | How do the governing body and the leadership team:<br>• Provide a clear vision and sense of common purpose among key stakeholders? Foster high aspirations?<br>• Maintain an explicit focus on pupil achievement?<br>• Plan strategically?<br>• Adopt a proactive stance to change?<br>• Demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion?<br>• Promote the personal development and wellbeing of learners?<br>• Ensure that rigorous selfevaluation keeps the summary of self-evaluation current and informs plans?<br>• Make effective use of performance data?<br>• Ensure sound financial and resource management?<br>• Practise distributed leadership?<br>• Ensure that all judgements about performance are based on sound evidence? |

**Further questions governors could ask/evidence they could see**

The following questions are based on questions in the NAO publication 'Improving School Performance. A guide for school governors' and the Ofsted briefing for inspectors: 'The quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning'. Use them as a guide in a meeting or on school visits – it is not intended you work systematically through the list.

Discuss with the Headteacher how best to use these questions to help you gradually build up a picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Think about what evidence could be provided in relation to each question. For example, you wouldn't need to ask if students were proud

of their work if you observed them in class, sharing their work with their peers, pointing out where their work is displayed, taking it home to show their parents.

**Making learning attractive to students**
1. What processes do we have in place to involve students in decision making, such as school council or pupil access to the governing body?  How do we know they are effective?
2. To what extent do these processes represent the views of all students, including those from minority groups, those with learning difficulties and those who rarely ask or answer questions?  How do we know?  What have we done in response to listening to students?
3. Have we carried out subject audits to find out how interested and motivated students are in lessons and what particular things they like or dislike about the subject?  What were the findings?  What action has been taken?
4. How often/to what extent do teaching staff have regular joint planning meetings to discuss what teaching and learning approaches work best across the curriculum to interest and motivate students?  Have there been any significant changes in practice?  If so what impact have they had?
5. How do Curriculum Leaders, KS Directors and subject co-ordinators gain access to, and keep up to date with, resources that are proven to involve students most effectively in teaching and learning?  Are they being used to best effect?  Are we achieving value for money?
6. What training do staff have to ensure they understand how information and communications technology such as interactive whiteboards can best be used to make learning attractive to students?  How effective is it?
7. How do we judge whether students are engaged, working hard, making a good effort, applying themselves, concentrating and productive?
8. How do we know if students are happy with their work?  Are they proud of it?
9. Are students interested in their work and in what they are learning?  Or are they easily distracted?
10. What, if any, additional resource would significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning?
11. What impact does marking have on helping students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve?


**Quality of teaching**
1. What system is in place for recording observations of teaching?
2. How does it relate to the Ofsted framework?
3. Who observes teaching and what training have they had?
4. How are decisions made about who and what to observe?
5. How are judgements moderated?
6. How do we share best practice?
7. Which aspects of teaching are most in need of improvement and what action is being taken?
8. How do school systems support teachers to improve their teaching or maintain outstanding teaching?

**Quality of learning**
1. Are students engaged/interested in their work? (Could be answered via a learning walk)
2. Are students making links between previous/new learning?
3. Are students working independently?  Are they self-reliant?
4. How well do students collaborate with each other?
5. How well do students follow routines/expectations?
6. How often/well do students act on the feedback/marking they receive?
7. How well do students respond to questions?

**Monitoring students' attainment and progress**
1. Are there significant differences in the performance of:
   - Students eligible for free school meals

- Girls and boys (NB reading and writing)
- Children in care
- Child carers
- Students with special educational needs
- Very able students
- Students with English as an additional language and the others - The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

2. If so, what are our interventions and how successful are they?
3. Specifically how much impact has the pupil premium had on narrowing the FSM gap?
4. What do we do to ensure a culture of high expectations and achievement?
5. What percentage of students are making the expected rate of progress?
6. Are there differences between the attainment and progress of different classes, year groups or key stages, and if so, why? Have we put in place action plans to tackle weaknesses? What impact are these having?
7. How do we ensure that our targets are stretching for all students?
8. Do staff understand and use the various sources of information about the school's performance, including RAISE Online reports? If not, how can we improve confidence and competence in data analysis? (Governors also need to understand RAISE Online and other school performance data so should ensure they ask questions to secure their own understanding.)
9. How do we use our systems to monitor students' attainment and progress to identify students who are working at relatively low levels as well as more able students who could move on more quickly?
10. How good are our Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 results especially the percentage of students gaining L5+ in English and Maths/5+ A*-C including English and Mathematics?
11. Is performance consistent across all subjects?
12. What percentage of students met their targets/exceeded their targets/failed to meet their targets? (By KS, year group and subject)
13. How do students' results in English/Maths/Science compare with other schools nationally?
14. Where have we improved? Do we know why?


**Staff development and deployment**
1. How are decisions made about developing individual teachers and the staff as a whole?
2. How are decisions made about developing support staff?
3. How are decisions made about deploying support staff?
4. What impact has been achieved from the staff development budget in the past year? What evidence is there to confirm that?

**In meetings with the Achievement team (DHAAL and AHAs), you could also explore:**
1. The system for target setting and assessing students' progress
2. External exam/test results and teacher assessment results (anonymised)
3. The work of a range of students – average, below average and above average (anonymised)
4. RAISE Online data, Fischer Family Trust and other pupil progress and achievement data (anonymised)

**Special Needs**
- What proportion of the budget is allocated to SEN?
- How are students with special educational needs integrated into lessons?
- How have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) been adapted to support students in their lessons?
- How do staff, students and parents view the effectiveness of personal support plans (PSPs)?
- What works well? What if anything needs to be done differently?

**Communication**
- What do we do to promote student voice?

- How are parents kept informed about pupil progress?
- What steps are being taken to encourage parents to support their students' learning?
- How can governors be better kept informed about standards and the progress of students?
- How can governors celebrate the school's success when things go well?
- How do we, as governors, seek feedback from staff about the impact of their work?

**Possible questions regarding departments/curriculum areas/Key Stage teams**What are the key strengths of the department?
- How do you know?
- Specifically what are the priorities for improvement?
- What strategies are being implemented?
- What impact are they having?  How do you know?