

Governor Visits Policy

Statement of intent

Through this policy, **Royal Cross Primary School** aims to embed effective procedures concerning governor monitoring visits. Each governor is expected to make at least **one** visit during the academic year, demonstrating the governing board's role in the strategic management of the school by helping to evaluate and improve practice.

Governor visits inform understanding of the school's practices and procedures, allow opportunities to speak to pupils and teachers, enable the identification of resource needs, and allow governors to see the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in action.

For staff, governor visits allow staff the chance to find out more about governors, provide an opportunity to draw attention to issues or questions they wish to raise, and provide an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss current practice.

Governors must:

- Remember to respect school staff and pupils.
- Support the Headteacher.
- Acknowledge that they represent the full governing board.

By following the agreed principles and procedures, governor visits will be pleasant, purposeful, and will significantly contribute towards school improvement.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013
- DfE (2020) 'Governance handbook'
- DfE (2014) 'The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013'

Roles and responsibilities

Governors are responsible for:

- Meeting their target of one visit per academic year.
- Understanding the needs of staff members through discussions with at least one staff member per academic year.
- Reporting their observations to the full governing board during a full governing board meeting.
- Familiarising themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Facilitating governor visits.
- Discussing completed visits with governors, prior to a report being made to the full governing board.

A number of governors at Royal Cross are linked to particular subjects or areas of the school's provision. These links can be found on the school web site and are updated regularly by the Chair of Governors.

Annual schedule

There is an agreed annual schedule of visits that is shared with governors and with staff in advance of any visits. School may amend or postpone scheduled visits as appropriate and in response to any unforeseen circumstances and will ensure that any cancelled / rescheduled visits are discussed with governors in a timely manner.

Etiquette

- Governor visits are not a form of inspection, and governors will not make judgements concerning teaching or other areas of school provision in any official capacity.
- Governors will avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present.
- Governors will not pursue personal agendas during visits.
- Governors will remain flexible and understand that the school must make pupils' education the priority, and that this may sometimes lead to the rearranging of visits.
- Governors will never visit the school unannounced.
- Visits are not an opportunity for governors to check on individual children or monopolise the time of staff.

Preparing for a visit

Governors will arrange visits at least one week prior to the date of the proposed visit.

Before a visit, governors will:

- Agree a clear, purposeful focus for the visit.
- Consider how the area of focus will be identified and observed during the visit.
- Discuss the context of the activities to be observed.
- Agree their role within the activities.
- Refer to the school's School Improvement Plan to ensure the visit's focus is strategic and in line with the school's priorities for improvement.
- Read the documentation relevant to the focus of the visit, and prepare relevant questions, where appropriate.

During a visit

During a visit, governors will:

- Adhere to their agreed role at all times.
- Make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school.

- Where visiting activities involve lesson observations, not ask questions, interrupt the teacher or distract pupils during the lesson.
- Spend time in a classroom only when they have provided a clear reason for doing so.
- Adhere to confidentiality agreements.
- Adhere to the agreed times and purpose.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the pupils and the wider school community.

After a visit

After a visit, governors will:

- Thank the staff, and pupils where appropriate, involved in the visiting activities.
- Discuss the visit with the staff involved in the visiting activity at their convenience.
- Provide feedback regarding the visit to the full governing board.

After a visit, governors will not:

- Break confidentiality agreements.

Providing feedback

A time will be agreed between the governor and staff, at the staff member's convenience, to discuss what was observed during the visit.

During the discussion, governors will adhere to the following framework:

- Ask staff for their views on what happened during the visit
- Present governors' observations
- Provide positive feedback
- Raise any issues
- Ask further questions
- Thank staff for the opportunity

By the end of the discussion, both the governor and staff members will be clear as to what information will be shared with the Headteacher and full governing board.

The Governor Visit Proforma will be completed as soon as possible after the visit.

The Headteacher and governors will discuss the observations prior to the distribution of the Proforma.

A copy of the completed Proforma will be provided to:

- The Headteacher
- The subject leader
- The relevant staff members

A copy of the report will be circulated to all governors at the next appropriate committee or governing board meeting.

The governing board will ensure all board members have the opportunity to discuss and ask questions regarding the final report and the visit undertaken.

Forms and Guidance

Included in this policy are the recording sheets and guidance for:

- Monitoring Visits
- Learning Walks
- Questions to ask during learning walks

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and the chair of the governing board.

When reviewing the success of the policy, the Headteacher and chair of the governing board will take the following into consideration:

- Has every governor conducted at least one visit during the academic year?
- Has every governor made links with their allocated subject or area of provision?
- Has every governor met with the staff members they are linked to?
- Are visits achieving the desired outcomes?
- What worked well?
- What did not work well?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can practice be improved?

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all governors, staff members and relevant stakeholders.

Appendix 1:

Undertaking a governor learning walk: guidance for governing boards

As defined in the Governance Handbook, the purpose of governance is to provide 'confident, strategic leadership, robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance'.

A learning walk is one of the ways in which governors can maintain oversight of pupils' educational performance.

What is a governor learning walk?

A learning walk is an opportunity for governors to observe school life in action and monitor an aspect or aspects of the school improvement plan (SIP). **A governor learning walk is not a formal observation of teaching.**

A governor learning walk differs to a formal learning walk undertaken by the SLT, which may be used as a tool within the performance management process and must take place in accordance with the teaching/NAHT Trade Unions classroom observation protocols for England and Wales.

Governor learning walks usually involve group/individual governors who have been tasked with a specific area to monitor, e.g. curriculum provision. It gives governors the opportunity to observe school life in action and can be used to further evidence and triangulate information reported to governors during committee or FGB meetings.

Preparing for a governor learning walk

It is important that each learning walk has a transparent and clear focus. This ensures that the governors undertaking the learning walk know the area they are monitoring and remain focussed, but also makes certain that staff know what to expect of the visit and are clear on its aims and purpose.

Each learning walk should have an identified purpose and aim linked to the governing board's agreed monitoring of the SIP. This will ensure the visit remains strategic and focussed.

The governing board should decide which governors are most appropriate to participate in the learning walk. It is recommended that those who do participate have a role in the subject area being monitored.

Governors undertaking a learning walk should plan by preparing questions ahead of the visit. These questions should be developed using other sources of information linked to the area being monitored, e.g. relevant policies, the SIP or subject improvement plans.

Like any monitoring visit to school, a learning walk must be planned and arranged in line with the Governor Visit Policy and appropriate notice (at least 1 week) must be given to all staff who may be involved or visited during the learning walk. Governors should ensure that staff and pupils whose classrooms are being visited are aware of the timing and purpose of the visit. A member of staff should be chosen to facilitate the learning walk; this person must be able to answer any questions governors may have. The decision as to who this is should be made in partnership with the governing board and Headteacher.

Undertaking a governor learning walk

When governors are observing active learning environments, they should conduct themselves with courtesy and not disturb or distract learning by talking between themselves. If governors wish to look at books or undertake pupil voice to support the learning walk, these activities should be pre-planned with the Headteacher facilitating the visit to ensure that any disturbance is minimised. If governors have questions that arise during the visit, then these should be asked outside of the classroom or at the end of the learning walk. Teaching staff should not be taken away from pupils and their learning.

Governors should take care not to pass comment or judgment during the visit. To ensure the visit remains true to the agreed aims, the visit plan should not be deviated from and governors should not allow themselves to be distracted from the task and monitoring activity agreed. If governors identify something they consider requires further investigation or questioning, it should be identified in the 'next steps' section of the Governor Learning Walk Report and a further monitoring visit should be planned.

Governors should be clear that they are not conducting the learning walk to make judgements on the quality of teaching and any questions they may have should not infer they are. Pupils must not be asked for their views on individual teachers or teaching styles.

Any information that governors may have access to during the visit that may be confidential in nature should not feature in any written report of the learning walk and remain confidential.

Recording the governor learning walk

Following the learning walk, governors should have planned time to debrief, share their individual observations and record using the Governor Learning Walk Report.

In their report, governors should identify strengths and development areas noted and also any emerging trends observed during the learning walk. The final visit report must be free from personal opinion and entirely evidence based.

Where possible, individual classes should not be identified and individual teachers and pupils must not be named or identified in the report.

The final report should be shared with the member of staff who supported the learning walk to check for factual accuracy. If a query or disagreement does arise, the governors should seek to resolve this with the staff member where possible; however, it is important that the report remains the governors own and so they should not feel they have to change any aspect of the report that the staff member disagrees with, so long as it is a factual, objective and a fair representation of the visit.

Next steps

Once the report has been finalised then it should be shared with the Headteacher and the governing board in line with the governing board's usual practice for sharing visit reports. The clerk to governors should be asked to include the report on the next appropriate meeting, e.g. committee meeting or FGB meeting, to enable other governors to receive an update on the visit, ask questions or plan further monitoring.

Appendix 2:**Governor learning walk report**

Names of governors undertaking the learning walk:	
Area being monitored:	
Date of learning walk:	
Staff member/s accompanying governors:	
What is the purpose of the learning walk?	
Why is this area being monitored?	
What other evidence or information will be considered in relation to this learning walk?	
How does the learning walk link to the school improvement plan (SIP)?	
Agreed questions for governors to ask during the learning walk:	Comments and observations
Additional observations from the learning walk	
Please record any further observations noted during the learning walk which are relevant to the focus of the visit.	
Further questions to ask	
Please note any questions arising from the learning walk.	

Appendix 3:

Possible Questions for a Learning Walk

General

- How well are the children in each group progressing from their starting points? How do you know?
- What are the learning outcomes for the pupils?
- What is the atmosphere like in class, purposeful, interactive, busy?
- Can you see evidence of challenge for the more-able children?
- Is there children's work represented on the walls and is it children's own work and labelled?
- What is the presentation like in children's books? Is there a learning Objective (LO)?

Pupil progress

- How and when are the children assessed? Is this being used to inform teacher planning?
- To what extent are children engaged in self-assessment? What is the impact of this?
- What interventions are in place in class to accelerate progress?
- Are children aware of their learning outcomes and how to improve? How do you know?

Quality of provision

- What training have staff had on supporting pupils within the observed areas?
- How is the school demonstrating it is supporting pupils learning and making a positive impact on their progress and attainment?
- How are school using resources to support pupils learning?
- For curriculum leadership, what additional training has the subject lead accessed to support subject knowledge?
- How does the school ensure that pupils benefit from enrichment activities to support their learning, including clubs and trips?
- What arrangements are in place to support successful access to learning for all pupils?
- What additional support is in place to help specific pupils access their learning?

Appendix 4:**Governor monitoring visit Record**

Name of governor:
Date of visit:
Member of staff involved:
Class visited:
Link to School Improvement Plan:
Objective:
Focus:
Governor's report of visit:
Additional questions to ask:
Follow up / next steps: