



# Botley School Governor School Visits Policy

**Approved by:** Full governing Body      **Date:** April 2021  
**Last reviewed on:** March 26  
**Next review due by:** March 27

## **Botley School Vision statement**

*A high-quality education in a positive and happy school,  
where everyone is included, celebrated and encouraged to be  
a creative lifelong learner.*

## **Botley School Values**

*Inclusivity      Teamwork      Kindness      Respect      Resilience      Creativity*

## 1. Aims

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all governors to follow when making visits to the school. Governors do not have an automatic right to enter Botley School. When they do so, they are invited guests.

This policy sets out the procedure which all governors are expected to follow when visiting Botley School and how they are expected to report 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 best practice and guidance from the [Governance Handbook](#) (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:

- Observe whether the school is properly implementing school policies, and actions from the school improvement plan
- Observe how those procedures are working in practice
- Have the opportunity to gather the views of pupils and staff

### 2.2 Governors are not inspectors

Governors:

- Will not assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom
- Will not manage the school or interfere in the day-to-day operations of the school

For those governors who wish to spend time in a classroom, they will make it clear about their purpose in doing so.

## 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. These will mainly take place during the termly Governor Visit Days. During these days the governors will undertake a range of activities with predefined foci, including:

- **Formal monitoring conversations**, where governors discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member or Curriculum Action Teams (CATs)
- **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

The Governor visit days may also contain opportunities to participate in pupil conferences and staff conferences.

In addition to the three Governor Visit days in each academic year, the Safeguarding Governors, Health and Safety Governor and the SEND Governors will meet with the relevant members of the Leadership Team in each half term. These will be arranged in advance in liaison with the Headteacher(DSL).

## 4. Before a Governor Visit Day or a Governor Visit

Governors will:

- Agree the dates for scheduling a visit with the headteacher. It is unlikely the headteacher will not be involved in a Governor Visit Day, however they may not be available for any other ad hoc Governor visits and therefore should be made aware of any meetings as a matter of courtesy.

- › Schedule an appointment with relevant members of staff 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. Governor Visit Days will be added to the annual governance Calendar at the end of the previous academic year.
- › Be sensitive to the numerous demands staff have on their time
- › Clarify the purpose of the visit in advance with the chair, the headteacher and/or relevant member of staff ahead of the visit
- › Send questions in advance to the staff member so everyone can feel properly prepared (See appendix 3 for suggested questions to ask staff)
- › Be familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and procedures

## 5. During a visit

Governors should know how to conduct themselves appropriately during visits in order to minimise disruption for staff and pupils and to receive the maximum benefit from the time spent.

### **Governors will:**

- › Be on time and meet with the headteacher ahead of the visit
- › Always wear a visitor's badge
- › Use the agreed recording method for the visit. Photographs and videos are to be avoided unless specifically agreed with the headteacher for a specific purpose
- › Remain as observers; they are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them
- › Ensure all parties are clear about why a governor wishes to spend time in the classroom, if they wish to do so
- › Check with teachers before speaking to pupils
- › Pass on any concerns the staff raise with the relevant people
- › Be friendly but professional and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils

### **Governors will not:**

- › Pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen, 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
- › Behave in a manner than would make staff feel that they are there to inspect, e.g. sit at the back of the classroom with a clipboard
- › Raise concerns in the moment. Governors should note down any concerns they may have and raise them with the chair of governors or headteacher after the visit

## 6. After a visit

Governors will complete a written report as soon as reasonably practicable using the form attached as Appendix 1 (monitoring visit) or Appendix 2 (learning walk), as appropriate. 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 reports to the following people, in the following order:

- › A more experienced governor 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

## Appendix 1: Template report for a monitoring visit

Formal monitoring visits are where you discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the relevant staff member. Use this form as a reminder of what to look for and what to ask.

Part 1: plan the visit	
<b>Name and role of governor(s)</b>	
<b>Name and role of staff member(s)</b>	
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	
<b>Agreed focus</b> Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that have not been agreed with the member of staff.	
<b>Relevant school objective or priority</b> This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.	
<b>Questions to ask</b> Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit. Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.	

Part 2: in the meeting
<b>What is the school doing within this area of focus?</b>  <i>Tips:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where'</li> <li>• Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</li> <li>• Remember you are <b>not</b> there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them – you remain an observer</li> <li>• When writing the report, use neutral language and do not name individual teachers and pupils</li> </ul>

**How do you know the school's actions are having an impact?**

*Remember:*

- *Include specific evidence that demonstrates the positive impact the school is having in this area*
- *Where a positive impact has not been made yet, note down why that is and what steps are being taken to make progress*
- *Add any further evidence you would like to see to help you make a better assessment of the impact*

**What successes stood out and why?**

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors

## Appendix 2: 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 the walk	
<b>Name and role of governor(s)</b>	
<b>Name and role of staff member(s)</b>	
<b>Date and time of visit</b>	
<b>Agreed focus</b> <i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that have not been agreed with the member of staff.</i>	
<b>Relevant school objective or priority</b> <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the school's overarching vision.</i>	
<b>Questions to ask</b> <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</i> <i>Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	

Part 2: on the walk
<b>General notes from discussions with staff</b> <i>Tips:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where' and 'can you show me...'</li> <li>• Do not be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</li> <li>• Remember you are not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them</li> <li>• When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers</li> </ul>

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**General notes from discussions with pupils**

*Remember:*

- *Do not ask them for pupils' views on a specific teacher*
- *Do not record pupils' names*

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**General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere**

*Note:*

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

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**What successes stood out on the learning walk and why?**

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**Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or chair of governors**

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## Appendix 3: Specific Link Governor Roles

The Governing Board has two statutory Governor Link Roles: Safeguarding Governor and SEND Governor. At Botley School the Governing Board have two Governors who make up the Safeguarding link role and one Governor for the SEND Link role.

All other governor visits are arranged in liaison with the Headteacher and the Governing board and are based on the SIP.

### Safeguarding Link Governors

The Governing board has a collective responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Governors should always adhere to the statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) and make sure that policies and procedures are effective and comply with the law.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all Governors, but the LGB must appoint two governors to take leadership responsibility for the school's safeguarding arrangements. These must be full members of the governing board. Associate members cannot take on safeguarding responsibilities.

If no other Governor can be appointed, responsibility for fulfilling role will fall to the Chair of Governors

### Responsibilities of the Safeguarding Governors

The safeguarding link governor will:

- Undertake safeguarding training.
- Meet regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), along with other relevant members of staff, to monitor the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Make sure the DSL has sufficient time, resources and training to carry out their role effectively.
- Make sure the school has suitable and up-to-date policies for i) child protection, ii) Staff code of conduct / staff behaviour, iii) Handling allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers and verify that these are being followed in practice.
- Report back to the governing body about how effective safeguarding is and to facilitate the scrutiny of safeguarding.
- Monitor the Single Central Record (SCL) is compliant. Ensure online and physical records are up to date, comprehensive and kept securely
- Ensure that there is appropriate monitoring and tracking in place for vulnerable pupils
- Ensure that there is a consistent approach to safeguarding and child protection across the school. Speak to staff and carry out questionnaires when necessary.
- Ensure that the curriculum for safeguarding reflects the risks for young people in the area
- Ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place and at least one member of the LGB has undergone up to date Safer recruitment training
- Make sure the school has an appropriate safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
- Make sure the school has appropriate online filters and monitoring systems in place
- Make sure the school has appointed a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, and that this person has appropriate training
- Make sure the curriculum covers safeguarding, including online safety
- Make sure that checks to the [single central record \(SCR\)](#) are happening. They will not be checking the SCR themselves
- Keep the governing board up to date with statutory guidance relating to safeguarding and child protection and any advice issued locally by the school's safeguarding partners
- Inform the board of whether it needs to make any changes (e.g. in light of new regulations)

- Update the board on how monitoring activities are going
- Encourage other members of the board to develop their understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities

The link Governor role is strategic and monitoring, not operational, therefore the link governor for safeguarding **will not**:

- Produce a [safeguarding report](#) to the board, as this is done by the headteacher or DSL
- Deal with specific safeguarding incidents, but they will be notified by school leaders when they happen

Useful links –

[Keeping children safe in education](#) 2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Safeguarding: role of the link governor | The Key for School Governors \(thekeysupport.com\)](#)

[Safeguarding | Schools \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

## SEND Link Governor

The link governor for special educational needs (SEN) will understand:

- The governing board's responsibilities under the special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice
- The different special educational needs represented at the school
- The local and national policy context for SEND

The SEND Governor will make sure the school:

- Makes the necessary special educational provision for pupils with SEND
- Meets the needs of pupils with SEND
- Makes reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010
- Ensures that all pupils with SEND join in with the everyday activities of the school together with the children without SEND
- Has appointed a SENCO and they have received appropriate training
- Has a suitable and up-to-date SEND information report and policy which is published on the school's website

The SEND Governor will meet the SENCO on a termly basis to monitor:

- All aspects of SEND provision
- That the school makes good use of its SEND budget and resources
- The progress of pupils with SEND

The SEND Governor will report to the local governing body on the monitoring work carried out, ensuring that the board:

- Is up to date about issues related to SEND
- Considers SEND in any budget discussions
- Asks challenging questions about the school's SEND provision and strategies

## Appendix 4

### Curriculum Visits

A focus on the curriculum linked to the SIP will be a standing agenda item within the termly Governor Visit days.

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors and the Vice Chair of Governors will agree the focus for the Governor visit day in advance so that the Headteacher can provide an agenda and timetable. While agreeing this agenda they will:

- Always refer to the school improvement plan (SIP) Understand the curriculum priorities, areas of challenge and what the school is trying to achieve with the curriculum.
- Establish a clear focus for each visit.
- Agree on a means by which monitoring will take place.

Ways to monitor

- Meetings with the subject leads or Curriculum Action Teams (CATs).
- Contact other relevant Link governors to identify areas of cooperation. For example, SEND Link Governor.
- [Learning](#) walks to see the curriculum in action.
- Talking to [pupils](#), parents and staff (or conducting a survey).
- Reports and or presentations from the subject leads or CATs.

Example questions to ask about the curriculum

Strategy:

- Tell me about the subject curriculum plan?
- Are different members of staff responsible for different parts of the plan?
- How will the subject develop across the school? What are the plans and how will you do this?
- How are you monitoring the subject across the school? How often do you do this? What's the impact of monitoring? (A lead should have time to monitor their subject. If the lead says they don't have time, bring this up in your feedback to the board.)
- Are there any barriers to meeting the improvements/ objectives/ targets?
- How are pupils prepared for the subject within the EYFS curriculum?
- How is your early years curriculum designed? The early years curriculum should be designed around the early learning goals (ELGs).
- There might be reference to local learning – for example, going on visits to local places and developing links with home experiences.
- How is transition between phases and into secondary school managed?
- How does the EYFS curriculum ensure pupils are ready for the National Curriculum in KS1?
- How do staff ratios support the curriculum – how a staff ratios deployed in EYFS?

Other suggested questions:

- Have you changed classroom displays to reflect what our focus is? How do displays support learning?
- How is classroom space and outdoor space organized in EYFS?
- What resources are we using? Are they effective?
- How are we working with parents to support the subject? Do parents know what our focus is for the subject?
- How is Tapestry used to inform parents of progress in EYFS?
- How are we helping children take responsibility for their own learning?

- Do staff have the right knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum well? Are there any gaps where we need to provide additional training?
- How are we supporting the staff who work with the weakest readers?
- Do you feel supported by senior leaders?

#### Teaching and learning

- How well are subject specific skills taught across the whole curriculum?
- How are we supporting children who aren't on track with our numeracy/maths curriculum or are struggling with subject specific skills? Do we know this support is working?
- How do we assess this subject? How do we know pupils are making good progress?
- How are we supporting pupils in EYFS towards the Early Learning Goals?

#### Pupil groups

- How do the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils compare – for example, girls compared with boys, children on free school meals (FSM) compared with others?
- How are our children with special educational needs (SEN) challenged and supported to reach their individual potential?
- How might the experience of a pupil with SEN differ from one without?
- How are high-attaining children challenged to reach their individual potential?

#### Suggested data questions to ask subject leader or CATs

- What's your vision for the subject and how are you putting this into practice?
- What's the quality of teaching of your subject like across the school and how do you know?
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you track standards and progress in the subject?
- Did we hit our target for the proportion of pupils reaching expected standard/greater depth?
- If not, why not? What are we doing to address this?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- Is there a specific aspect of the subject where our pupils do especially well? Any instances where they don't perform as well?
- Are the upcoming years on track to do better/worse than the recent cohort?
- What did progress look like last summer? How has this changed? What does this tell us about the progress made by pupils?
- What support do you put in place to ensure the needs of different pupils are met?
- What resources are available to your pupils to help them learn effectively?
- What continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities are available to you/staff?