GRESHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

GOVERNOR SCHOOL VISIT POLICY

September 2026

The term 'governors' is used throughout to refer to whoever is responsible for fulfilling governance functions – whether that be the Governors of a maintained school, the Trustees of a Standalone or Multi Academy Trust, or the local governors to whom the function in question has been delegated within a MAT.

Purpose
This guidance has been written to provide a consistent framework for all our Governor visits, to ensure we fulfil our strategic purpose and aid our accountability.

One of the Board's key roles and responsibilities is to monitor the progress and performance of the school and its pupils. Governors' school visits are an integral part of their strategic monitoring role and are important to ensure robust school accountability. School visits help to demonstrate the Board's role in the strategic management of the school by:

- Helping to evaluate the school's progress.
- Holding school leaders to account.
- Helping Governors to get to know our school and to aid their asking of challenging questions.

School visits are undertaken during the school day. This ensures Governors can review that the policies and improvement plans that the Board have agreed are being implemented, and allows Governors to see how the agreed vision and plans for the school are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to arrange meetings with key stakeholders such as pupils, staff and parents.

Whilst it is helpful to see classes at work and the learning environment, Governors are **not** inspectors and it is **not** our role to assess the quality or method of teaching. We are also not school managers and we must make sure that we do not interfere in the day-to-day operational running of the school. Both of these roles are the remit of the head teacher.

Aims of School Visits

- Governors see the school at work and observe attitudes, behaviours and achievements.
- Improve Governor knowledge of the school so that Governors:
    - Gain first-hand information to assist with policy making and decision taking.
    - Are better informed when discussing and making decisions.
    - Have a greater understanding of the context of their role.
    - Understand the needs of the school.
    - Develop relationships with staff and our stakeholders.
    - Demonstrate their commitment to the school.
    - Assist the Board to fulfil its statutory roles in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum.
    - Assess the effectiveness of the school improvement plan and/or priorities for future plans.
    - Assess the impact of key decisions and initiatives to drive school improvement.
- Focused school visits are one form of evidence for OfSTED of Governors' strategic contribution, highlighting the positive impact made by the Board on school improvement and, in turn, providing effective, constructive and appropriate challenge to the senior leadership team.

Benefits of school visits
For Governors, these include:

- More informed understanding of classroom life and practice.
- Opportunity to meet and chat with the children/pupils.
- Opportunity to meet class teachers and put faces to names.
- Seeing policies and schemes of work in action.
- Finding out what resources are being used and what are needed.

For Staff, these include:

- Opportunity to find out more about the role of the Governor.
- Putting faces to names for members of the Board.
- Having chance to illustrate the theory and policy in practice.
- Opportunity to draw attention to any issues or questions they wish to raise.
- Opportunity to reflect upon practice through discussion.

Types of Visits

1) *Informal Visits* - can take many forms, for example reading stories, helping with gardening, cooking, supporting fundraising visits, making drinks at a parent event etc. These are not formal Governor visits and, whilst help to see the school in action and meet stakeholders, have no impact on the strategic role of Governors.
2) *Formal visits* - must have a clear focus, which is linked with the Governor's link role and the priorities in the School Improvement Plan. The visit must add value both to the school and the effectiveness of the whole Board with respect to its role of strategic accountability. It is expected that each Governor will formally visit at least once a term [or other Board expectations].

Policy for Governor School Visits

Informal visits

- All informal visits must be agreed in advance with the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team, clearly identifying the purpose of the visit.
- Informal visits are not part of the Governor's formal or statutory duties, therefore no formal report or feedback to the Board is expected.

Formal Visits

- All formal visits must be agreed in advance with the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team.
- The purpose of the visit must be discussed and agreed in advance with the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team:
    - A timetable for the visit should be agreed, including identifying any classroom visits, where required and where appropriate; and
    - Documentation to be reviewed, both before and during the visit, to be clarified and agreed.
- Governors must prepare themselves for the visit by reading the school improvement plan and any relevant policies linked to the focus of their visit/their Link Governor role. Pre-reading, identifying key areas that they wish to explore and key questions they may wish to ask will aid the efficiency and effectiveness of the school visit.
- Governors are expected to talk to the lead staff member linked to the visit focus as well as the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team.
- Governors are expected to talk to other staff, as appropriate, to ensure consistent understanding of stated practice within the appropriate policies.
- Time must be allowed at the end of the visit to discuss the visit, clarify any areas and agree any actions with the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team.
- A formal report, using the visit report template – see Appendix 1 – must be completed on a timely basis, following the completion of the visit.
- The visit must be on the agenda for the next Board/committee meeting and the completed visit report must be included in the supporting documentation and discussed.

Duty Governor

- Each month a non-staff Governor will be designated as the "duty Governor" and will make contact with the school to see if they can give support in any way. This is in addition to the interaction of the Chair with the Head and the school.
- It is expected that the duty Governor will take this opportunity to make a formal visit into school, linked to their Governor role as well as attend any function that is held in this month as a Governing Board representative.
- At the end of the month, the Governor will pass over any key information to the next duty Governor and feedback to the Chair on how it has gone and how this role could be improved.

Points to Note:

- Governor visits are not a form of inspection and do not involve Governors making a judgement about the quality of teaching or the professional expertise of the teacher. That remains the responsibility of the head teacher and other education professionals.
- Governors cannot expect to turn up announced and expect the school to facilitate them with a formal school visit.
- Governors must not arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.
- Governors must avoid visiting classrooms where their own children are present. Governors must also avoid pursuing personal agendas and make sure they follow the agreed policy and code of practice.
- Members of staff are very busy people whose first priority must be the children. There may be times when arrangements have to be changed or alterations made, sometimes at the last minute. Please be sensitive to the circumstances and flexible in your expectations.
- Keep an open mind about what you see. Education and classrooms have changed a great deal since you were at school and practice is very different. Don't expect to see the formal type of lesson you might remember from your own childhood. Do ask questions (preferably at the end of the lesson) but be sensitive to the demands on the staff.
- Any issues / concerns must be discussed with the head teacher / relevant member of the senior leadership team, not staff or other members of the community.
- Support can be obtained from the Board Chair, Vice Chair or head teacher; Governors new to the Governing Board may wish to shadow another member of the Board during their school visit to ascertain how a Governor visit is undertaken effectively in practice.
- Governors are reminded of the confidentiality aspect of their role, both during their visit into school and by not discussing findings outside of the Board room – see code of practice for further information.

The Board adopted this policy on (insert date) and it will be reviewed bi annually.

Signed:……. Print Name: Kim Durling.

Position: Chair of Governing Board Date: 16/09/2026

Appendix 1 – Governor School Visit Report

Name:	Date:
Purpose of visit and how this links with the School Development Plan:	
Sources of Information looked at (i.e. Class teacher, children's books, talking to children, review of polices):	
Classes visited:	
Summary of activities undertaken:	
Governor observations and key learning:	
Comments from the Head Teacher / relevant Senior Leadership Team member:	
Key issues and actions to take back and discuss at the next FGB/Committee meeting:	
Any other observations (i.e. children's behaviour, access to learning for all pupil groups, safeguarding):	
Focus for future visits:	