

# **St Gildas' Catholic Junior School**

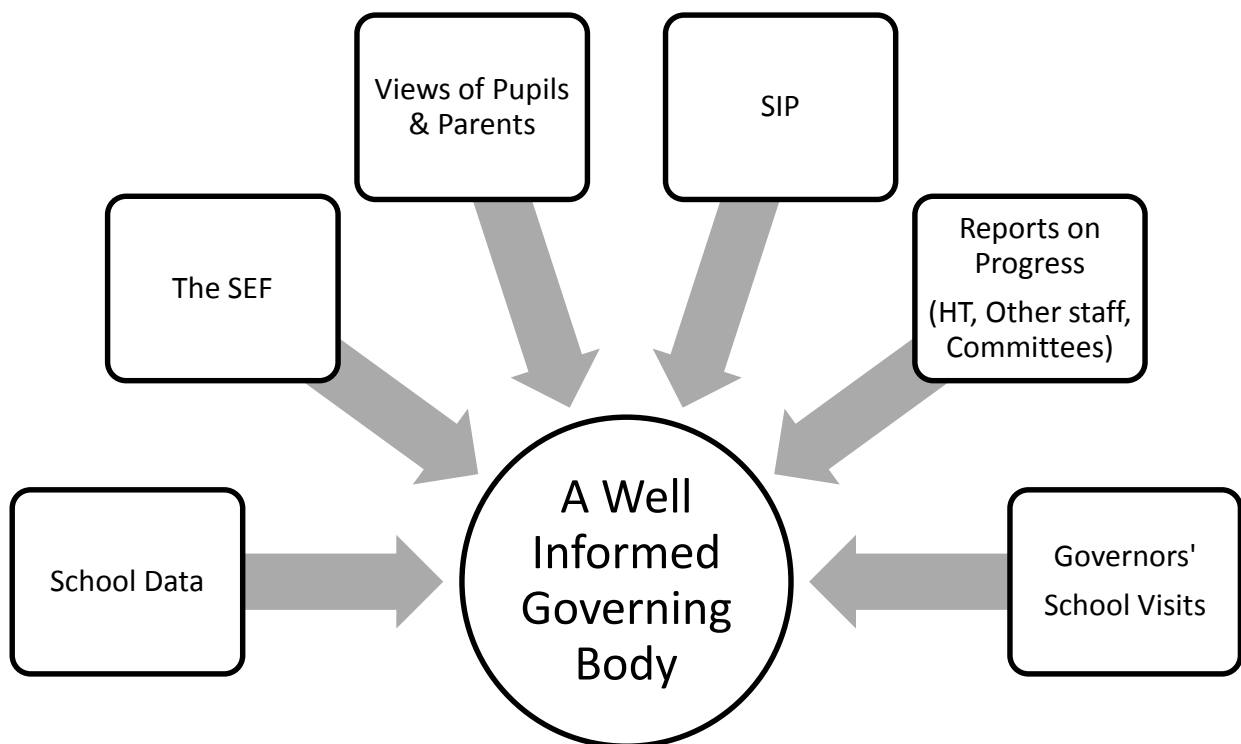


***"Through our actions we will try to live as Jesus lived."***

## **Policy for Governors' Visits**

**March 2018**

# Governor Visits to School



## **Governor School Visits – St Gildas' Catholic Junior School**

**Formal** visits should have a clear focus, ideally linked to priorities in the School Development Plan. Governors have limited time, therefore, time spent on governors' visits should 'add value' both to the school and to the effectiveness of the whole governing body.

### **Lay People**

Governors visit schools as lay people, not as inspectors, even where they have personal professional expertise in the particular subject area. A visit will only ever provide a snapshot of what goes on in. It may not always give a full and balanced picture of the real state of affairs. That is why it is always important that the information and impressions gained by individual governors during a visit are checked and, if necessary, revised in consultation with the headteacher or appropriate member of staff.

### **Governors' school visits should not be confined to the classroom**

Ideally governors should consider a series of different types of visits, some of which are focused on the classroom but others might include, for example, the playground, the school environment, health and safety, parents'/carers' consultation evenings, meetings with senior staff; shadowing staff and/or pupils; looking at a sample of pupils' work (more able, average, less able) in a particular subject area; attending a school assembly; reporting on the school's extra-curricular activities, joining scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, meeting senior staff to discuss homework setting and marking. Whatever focus is agreed, it is important that governors' visits link with issues in the School Development Plan.

### **Teaching and Learning**

**Governors do not undertake formal visits to judge the quality of teaching and learning in the school.** This is a specialist skill which non-specialists are not equipped to undertake. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching. Headteachers have a duty under the School Teacher Appraisal Regulations to ensure governors receive appropriate information on this key issue. They should provide governors with:

- details of systems used to monitor the quality of teaching;
- the professional support available to teachers to help them teach more effectively;
- the timescale and likely outcome/s of this support;
- the headteacher's overall assessment of the quality of teaching in the school.

Governors are entitled to have a clear view about the quality of teaching in their school, including the measures and timescales to address weaknesses. If the governing body includes people from educational backgrounds i.e. retired headteachers, advisers or inspectors a decision needs to be made about how best to employ such people on visits, especially to the classroom. It may be felt appropriate for them to accompany the headteacher on classroom observations – this is for the headteacher to decide. However, despite the expertise that such governors bring, they should not engage with staff about professional matters.

Governors should use their visits as occasions on which to collect information to report back to the governing body/ relevant committee on the progress of key priorities or initiatives in the school development plan. Planned and focused governors' visits contribute significantly to more informed decision making by the governing body.

### **Written Reports**

Governors' visit reports should be quite simple, giving a layperson's account of what was seen and learnt by the governor conducting the visit and whether there are issues for the governing body to consider. It is helpful if governors record what they see and do on a standard form. (*See Template for Governor School Visit*) Draft reports by governors should be read first by the headteacher before they are circulated to other members of the governing body.

Written reports, like all other documents for the governing body, should be available for public scrutiny after the governing body has seen them. They should not name individuals e.g. Jennifer Jones/John Smith but they will identify post holders by title. Reports should not contain any criticisms but they may raise important strategic issues, which the governing body needs to consider.

### **Informal visits**

Governors on informal visits attend in a more personal capacity, much as a parent might do, but always with the knowledge and approval of the headteacher. Such visits add to individual governors' knowledge and understanding of the school and can strengthen relationships and foster trust and respect between governors and staff.

Informal visits can take many forms, for example, attending a play, concert or sports day; helping on school trips; listening to pupils reading aloud or simply running a stall at the school fair. On the whole informal visits are generally easier and less daunting than formal visits. They should be seen as a valuable **complement to formal visits** – not an alternative.

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## **A Protocol for Governors' Visits**

- Governors are there to observe and inform themselves. They will intrude as little as possible on the teachers' time.
- Governors attached to a subject area or class should arrange an appointment to discuss how to proceed with the link arrangement.
- Governors can go into classes when invited to do so by the teacher.
- Governors can talk to pupils in class only when invited to do so by the teacher.
- Governors can attend staff meetings when invited to do so.
- Members of staff invite governors into the staff room if they wish.
- Governors will not go into the staff room unless they are invited.
- Governors will always make an appointment when they want to come into school, not just drop in.
- Members of staff are always free to say that it is not convenient for a governor to come in at any particular time.
- These informal contacts should not be used to raise individual problems that should properly be resolved by the Senior Leadership Team.
- If governors see something that worries them, they will discuss this first with the teacher and the headteacher.

## **Planning and Undertaking School Visits**

### **Before**

- Check to see if there is a policy for governors' visits
- Clarify the purpose of the visit. Is it linked to the School Development Plan? How does this determine the itinerary?
- Discuss an agenda with the headteacher well in advance. Make sure that the date chosen is suitable for the purpose identified.
- Find out if there is a prompt sheet/checklist, agreed by staff and governors, to guide governors' visits.
- Time permitting, discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. How do they want governors to integrate into the lesson?
- Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. The teacher may be able to guide you on this.
- Discuss with the headteacher if any supporting information is available – Ofsted report, improvement plan, performance data.

### **During**

- Be punctual.
- Keep to the agreed timetable but be flexible
- Decide with the teacher how you will be introduced and what your role in the classroom will be.
- Get involved with the children if the teacher has agreed that this would be appropriate.
- Remember it is a visit not an inspection.
- Observe discreetly. Remember that note taking can be disconcerting.
- Don't distract the teacher from his/her work but be prepared to talk and show interest.

- Be courteous, friendly not critical.
- Interact, don't interrupt.
- Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit.
- Listen to staff
- Be interested and enthusiastic

### **After**

- Discuss what you have observed with the teacher. Use the opportunity to clarify any issue you are unclear about. For example, did your presence have any impact on the atmosphere in the classroom? If so, how?
- Refer to the purpose of the visit. Consider together whether it has been achieved.
- Thank the teacher for supporting you in your role as a governor. Be open, honest, positive.
- Make notes as soon as possible after your observation while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Discuss your observations with the headteacher. Be prepared to take the comments of others on board.
- Agree with the headteacher how and when you will report on your visit to the governing body.
- Write up your report and circulate a draft to the head and any staff involved. Be prepared to amend it. Aim to achieve a report that is agreed by those involved.
- Reflect: how did that go?

### What to do and not to do when reporting back on visits

Do	Don't
Prepare the report in draft as soon after the visit as possible. (Governors visiting as a pair will need to get together to discuss observations and conclusions.)	Be lengthy. A single A4 sheet is often sufficient.
Have the report typed if possible. (For those governors without access to a computer, the clerk to governors may be able to help.)	Write like an inspector (even if you are one) and don't make written observations about the quality of teaching and learning. If there are concerns, raise them with the headteacher verbally.
Discuss the draft with the headteacher, in case there are mistakes or misunderstandings that need to be clarified. (A visit can only be a snapshot of the school or a class at a particular time.)	Name staff or pupils except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when in a teacher's class for a lengthy period of time). Check with the headteacher if you are unsure.
Give a copy to the clerk to the governors, to circulate with the papers for the next meeting, following which (like other governing body papers) it will be available for public inspection.	Hand round the report at the meeting; governors will have had no opportunity to read it and give it proper attention.
Come to the meeting prepared to make a short verbal introduction to the report and answer any questions other governors may have.	Go through your report in full detail, or read it out verbatim. This lengthens meetings unnecessarily.
Think to yourself: what can I do to make my next visit even more effective.	

## Governor's Visit Record – St Gildas' Catholic Junior School

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Purpose of Visit:</b>	
<b>Links with the School Development Plan:</b>	
<b>Governor observations and comments:</b>	
<b>Safeguarding Question Asked of Staff:</b>	
<b>Record of Response Received:</b>	
<b>Any key issues arising for the governing body:</b>	
<b>Action following governing body meeting:</b>	



## **Appendix 1: What should be monitored and evaluated?**

### **Outcomes**

#### **Achievement and standards**

- National Curriculum assessments and test results
- attainment and progress of specific groups of children e.g. boys/girls, children from ethnic minority groups, looked after children, children with learning difficulties and disabilities, pupil premium pupils, etc...

#### **Personal development and wellbeing**

- pupil attendance
- pupils' behaviour, attitudes, independence and self-esteem
- pupil exclusions
- pupil involvement in extra-curricular activities

#### **Provision**

- quality of teaching and learning
- the school's curriculum

#### **Impact of leadership and management**

- staffing and budget
- number of applications for admission
- school ethos/culture
- staff morale, attendance and commitment
- partnership with parents, agencies, and the wider community
- views of parents, pupils, staff and the community
- the learning environment

#### **Safeguarding**

## Appendix 2: School Performance Monitoring Questions for Governors

Standards	Quality of Teaching	Leadership & Management
<p>How is our school currently performing? Are our children making better than expected rates of progress? How do standards in year groups, classes, and / or subjects compare with national standards? How does the school's performance compare with LA averages? How does the school's performance compare with that of similar schools? How does the school's current performance compare with its previous performance? What is the trend in results over the last three years? Have some subjects / year groups shown a marked improvement this year? If so, why? Are some groups of pupils doing better than others? If so, why? (e.g. looked after children, gender, ethnicity, SEND) What are the attitudes of pupils towards their learning?</p>	<p>How do teachers plan for their lessons? How do teachers ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged? How do teachers explain to pupils what they are going to teach? How do teachers keep track of progress? What do teachers do when they see pupils underachieving? To what extent do teachers seek the views of their pupils about learning? Does the school know what teaching styles work and why? Can these styles be applied in those parts of the school where results need to improve? What professional support do teachers get to help them teach more effectively? How do support staff contribute to teaching and learning? How do support staff support pupils to ensure they have equal access to opportunities to learn and develop? How do support staff support pupils to help them make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions? What professional support do support staff get to help to maintain and improve their contribution to raising pupil achievement?</p>	<p>Does the governing body and the leadership team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide a clear vision and sense of common purpose among key stakeholders?</li> <li>• foster high aspirations?</li> <li>• maintain an explicit focus on pupil achievement?</li> <li>• plan strategically?</li> <li>• adopt a proactive stance to change</li> <li>• demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion?</li> <li>• promote the personal development and wellbeing of learners</li> <li>• ensure that rigorous Self evaluation keeps the Self Evaluation Form current and informs plans?</li> <li>• make effective use of performance data</li> <li>• ensure sound financial and resource management?</li> <li>• practise distributed leadership?</li> <li>• ensure that all judgements about performance are based on sound evidence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Possible safeguarding questions to ask staff:</b></p>	<p>Do you know who the named Designated Safeguarding Lead [DSL] is? If the DSL is absent, who deputises? Do you know where to find the most recent safeguarding policies? Do you know what to do if a child makes a disclosure? Do you know what to do if an allegation is made against a member of staff?</p>	

### Appendix 3: A visit to High Hopes Primary School

<i>Name</i> Augustin S Sekasanke	<i>Date</i> 1st June 2013
<b>Purpose of visit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To tour the school to make informal contact with staff and to observe behaviour in class, assembly and at break time</li> <li>• To monitor the quality of the learning environment</li> </ul>	
<b>Links with the School Improvement Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning are key elements of the action plan.</li> <li>• The school is due to move to new premises and we are trying to maintain standards in the old building.</li> </ul>	
<b>Governor observations and comments</b> <p>Two year five pupils accompanied me and were very positive about their experiences in the school. Throughout the school, the atmosphere was calm and I observed staff intervening with pupils when they weren't concentrating –both in class and in assembly. In one class the children were coming to the end of a 40minute session on writing and they were totally focused, quiet.</p> <p>One supply teacher was doing D and T and the children were competing to build the strongest, tallest tower that could have a ping pong ball balanced on the top. This was proving very popular. They were all totally engaged.</p> <p>The courtyard area was very overgrown and the children told me that it used to be looked after but not much was happening now. The one bench was damaged. The children said they thought it would be good to tidy it up and have more seats out there.</p> <p>Displays throughout the school were well presented and colourful. There was lots of children's work and it was all recent. My 'guides' proudly showed me examples of their work that was displayed.</p> <p>Assembly included presentation of golden apples for good behaviour and a presentation to a teacher who was leaving. Children were well behaved and attentive. Cheering and clapping at the end did not get out of control. Not clear if that was the daily act of worship?</p> <p>At playtime all the staff seemed to be out on the playground. I wondered what breaks they have during the day.</p>	
<b>Any key issues arising for the governing body</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive news re behaviour and displays.</li> <li>• Follow up idea of turning the courtyard area into an attractive space for children to have lunches, relax etc.</li> <li>• How are we managing the daily act of worship? Is there a programme of themes? Are children involved in delivering? Are our values being promoted through this medium?</li> <li>• How are playground rotas managed? Do our teachers have a break?</li> </ul>	
<b>Action following governing body meeting</b> <p>(Record any action agreed by the governing body with regard to this visit)</p> <p>GB also considered latest data re exclusions – significantly down on same period last year. Agreed chair would send a letter to staff congratulating them on the impact of their work to improve behaviour. In addition agreed I would write a letter to be read in assembly to say how much I had enjoyed my visit and how impressed I was by the behaviour of children in classes and in the playground.</p> <p>Link governor to discuss with school council what they would like to see happen with the courtyard and whether they could help. Following that head to write to parents via the newsletter to see if they'd help. Furniture that will be purchased for the new school to be purchased early for use in the courtyard</p> <p>Ast Head to report to the next GB meeting on how we manage the daily act of collective worship – themes etc.</p> <p>GB reassured.</p>	

#### **Appendix 4: Monitoring the school's culture / ethos**

You could use the following success criteria and look for evidence. It is not an all embracing list, and you will be able to add to it every time you do the exercise.

<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>What I saw or heard (evidence)</b>
<b>There are high expectations of all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School vision and aims displayed</li><li>• Staff follow up students who are not adhering to the school's standards – uniform, behaviour etc</li><li>• Staff handbook describes standards for performance, behaviour</li><li>• School rules are in evidence</li></ul>
<b>Mutual respect is evident in the way that staff and pupils relate to each other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils work without disturbing others</li><li>• Pupils are encouraged to work cooperatively</li><li>On group tasks</li><li>• Pupils do not interrupt each other or staff</li><li>• Staff do not interrupt each other or pupils</li><li>• Pupils do not intimidate or belittle each other</li><li>• Teachers maintain control without the use of threats, humiliation etc</li><li>• The behaviour policy emphasises 'catch them being good'</li><li>• Teachers are courteous when they speak to pupils and the reverse is true</li><li>• All staff have access to appropriate accommodation and facilities staff rooms, work rooms, offices etc</li><li>• 'What do you think?'</li></ul>
<b>The school promotes positive attitudes to ethnic and cultural diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff and pupils are aware of the school's Race Equality policy</li><li>• The school uses the expertise, skills and knowledge of people from ethnic minority communities</li><li>• Pupils are encouraged to recognise and respect social, ethnic and cultural differences and similarities</li><li>• Positive images of people from various ethnic groups and their cultural backgrounds are displayed in the school</li><li>• Celebrations of festivals of different cultures and religious beliefs</li><li>• Ethnic and cultural diversity in the staff and the governing body are commonplace</li><li>• Special dietary needs are catered for</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum content and resources reflect ethnic and cultural diversity</li> </ul>
<b>Pupils have rights as well as responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are associate members of governing body committees</li> <li>• Pupils are exercising leadership skills</li> <li>• School council information is displayed</li> <li>• Pupils are acting as mentors / buddies / counsellors for their peers</li> <li>• The head and staff refer to pupils by name</li> <li>• Routine management does not interrupt teaching and learning</li> <li>• Pupils are aware of and articulate about their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• High quality teaching and resources support learning</li> <li>• Home/school agreements list the rights of each partner (as well as responsibilities)</li> <li>• Pupils help to determine the rules and sanctions</li> <li>• Suggestion box</li> <li>• Exit surveys</li> <li>• Staff interactions with pupils model the values of the school</li> </ul>
<b>Pupils' achievements are celebrated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide range of work is displayed, not just excellent work</li> <li>• Displays are up to date and in good condition</li> <li>• Displays, photos cover a range of achievements academic, social, cultural, sporting, both in and out of school</li> <li>• Positive and public appreciation of effort as well as success awards assemblies, badges, stickers, certificates etc.</li> <li>• Teachers show pride in pupils' work</li> <li>• Pupils show pride in each other's work</li> <li>• Monitors chosen for their personal qualities regardless of their academic achievements</li> <li>• Regular home/school communication about pupils 'efforts and successes</li> </ul>
<b>The school environment is looked after by all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils and staff show respect for people, living things, property and the environment</li> <li>• Litterfree, clean, tidy corridors, reception area, classrooms, toilets</li> <li>• Interactive wall displays are used, not damaged</li> <li>• Displays are up to date</li> <li>• Equipment all in good working order</li> </ul>
<b>Safeguarding (In addition to all related above)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitors are signed in and out at reception and given a visitor's badge</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff know what to do if a pupil makes a disclosure</li> <li>• Staff know who the designated safeguarding lead is and who deputises in their absence</li> <li>• Staff have had recent safeguarding training</li> <li>• The school environment is safe and well maintained</li> <li>• Staff know where to locate copies of most up to date safeguarding policies</li> </ul>
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