



# Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

## Policy for Governors visits to schools Spring 2022

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| <b>Agreed by Directors</b> | <b>31 March 2022</b> |
| <b>Review Date</b>         | <b>Spring 2023</b>   |

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 In line with the Scheme of Delegation, the Trust Board delegates aspects of governance and the day to day oversight of school leadership to the Local Governing Committee (LGC) of a school. The LGC decide the school's strategic vision and uphold the school's distinctiveness and unique character, in harmony with the Trust's strategic vision and ethos, whilst providing local accountability and day to day support and oversight of the Academy's leadership team.
- 1.2 One of the best and most effective ways in which an LGC can get to know about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms. If school visits are done well, they will add to governor's understanding of their school, its staff and pupils.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused visits to the school so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work.
- 1.4 A governors' visit pro-forma is attached as an appendix which will help provide discussion on the issues raised and also provide a formal record for OFSTED of the governors' structured and systematic involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base (e.g. performance management)

## **2.0 Link Governors**

- 2.1 The role of a link governor is to provide a link between the LGC and the school in a particular area, by having specific oversight of the area and to deepen the LGC's knowledge of that area. Governors usually agree at the first meeting of the LGC as to who will be linked against which area.
- 2.2 Most LGCs link governors to subjects, classes or themes. The DfE Governance Handbook confirms that all schools should have a safeguarding and SEND link governor and secondary schools should have a careers link governor. These roles should always remain strategic and not operational.
- 2.3 The role will involve visiting the school and meeting with staff leads to understand how the strategic objectives are being embedded, how money is being spent and any particular issues affecting delivery. The link governor should ultimately enrich the whole LGCs understanding of their particular area and contribute to informed decision making.

## **3.0 Why Visit?**

- 3.1 Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, the link governor can become better informed of the strengths as well as improvement needs of the school. A visit can be to see the school generally, to attend a meeting with the link teacher or other staff member, to attend a meeting with staff and pupils or a specific classroom visit.

3.2 Governors' link visits will be a standing agenda item at meetings of the LGC. By reviewing the minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed, the LGC will judge the extent to which the information gathered informed the whole LGC's understanding of the progress made towards meeting priorities and targets. Link governor reports will play a key role in monitoring progress against key school priorities. This process will enable the LGC to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff and to identify further areas for development

3.3 There are a number of benefits to both governors and staff:

**Governors:**

- To establish and develop effective relationships with staff
- To have a greater understanding of pupil's needs
- To recognise and celebrate success
- To monitor the implementation of the School Improvement Plan
- To increase knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions
- To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach
- To see policies and schemes of work in practice
- To find out what resources are used, what resources are needed and prioritise them
- To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils
- To demonstrate that the LGC is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process
- To develop individual governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities

**Staff:**

- To get to know and build positive relationships with governors
- To feel valued
- To demonstrate progress against actions in the School Improvement Plan
- To ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom and school
- To highlight the need for further resources
- To demonstrate that the school is working in partnership with governors
- To share an understanding of the specific area

#### **4.0 What are governor visits not about?**

4.1 Governors should be aware that visits to the classroom are not a form of inspection. It is not the remit of governors to make judgements about the professional expertise of staff or the quality of teaching and learning.

4.2 A school visit is also not about:

- Checking on the progress of your own or known children
- Monopolising staff time
- Arriving with inflexible or preconceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues
- Staff should also realise that governors are not able to address every day matters that would normally be sorted out as a matter of good line management.

## 5.0 How often should link governors make visits?

5.1 This would be at the discretion of the school and Headteacher and would probably depend on the number of governors available to take on each responsibility as well as the size of the school. It is recommended that a rolling programme of visits was arranged to take place on a termly basis. These visits might include a variety of approaches to information gathering.

## 6.0 Visit preparation

6.1 An important part of the visit preparation is to establish the “ground rules”. The monitoring proforma document attached to this policy will assist with this and agreeing protocols will save time.

6.2 Guidelines for a link visit:

|               | <b>You should</b>   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Before</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review action points in the School Improvement Plan</li><li>• Agree the purpose of the visit with the Head teacher or link teacher</li><li>• Arrange details of the visit including your presence in a classroom</li><li>• Try to visit at different times of day over the year</li><li>• Discuss with the Headteacher the focus for the visit and the nature of the link governor involvement</li><li>• Agree level of confidentiality</li></ul> |
| <b>During</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be prepared, organised and punctual</li><li>• Report to the school office to sign in</li><li>• Fulfil the purpose of the visit</li><li>• Observe school/ class guidelines</li><li>• Jot down discussion points (but don't behave like an inspector!)</li></ul>  |
| <b>After</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils</li><li>• Discuss your visit experience as soon as possible after the visit</li><li>• Feedback appropriately to the Head teacher</li><li>• Discuss Health &amp; Safety issues if relevant</li><li>• Complete the visit form and give a copy to the Head teacher</li><li>• Keep the record of your visit to refer to before your next visit</li></ul>  |

## Appendix: Example Link Governor Visit Form



## St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Governors Monitoring Policy  
Visits to School

|  |                          |  |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| Name:  | Governor responsibility: | Date:<br>Duration:   |
| Agreed focus and Link with School Improvement Plan / School self- evaluation / subject action plan priorities:<br><i>Make sure you focus on this agreed reason for the visit. Avoid getting distracted by other issues that haven't been agreed with the member of staff.</i>  |                          | Link to Trust Strategic Objective ( <b><i>see below</i></b> ): |
| Purposes of visit: (tick appropriate boxes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To contribute to the governors monitoring role</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To develop governors understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development including the use of the different areas of focus in an OFSTED inspection:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of education</li> <li>• Behaviour and attitudes</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Leadership and management</li> <li>• Safeguarding</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To see policies in action</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To help governors understand the teaching and learning process</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To give governors an enhanced sense of identity with their school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To support the work of the school</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please detail: _____</li> </ul> |                          |  |
| Questions to ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Remember not to interrupt lessons</i></li> <li>• <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</i></li> <li>• <i>Share these questions with the staff member you're visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who', 'where', 'can you show me'</i></li> <li>• <i>Don't be afraid to clarify any terms or acronyms you're not familiar with</i></li> <li>• <i>If speaking with pupils remember not to ask for their views on a specific teacher and don't record pupils' names</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Include a bank of suggested questions</i></p>   |                          |  |
| Summary of activities (e.g. observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources etc.):  |                          |  |

Governors findings:

- *Remember you're not there to pass judgement on staff or inspect them*
- *When writing the report, use neutral language and don't name individual teachers*

*Share completed exemplar proformas for areas e.g. subject-specific, area-specific*

What is the school doing within this area of focus?

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

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

What successes stood out and why? – *make sure this is linked to the focus of visit*

Governors further action / Key issues arising for the LGC: - *make sure this is linked to the focus of the visit*

Comments from Link teacher:

Any other comments (i.e. Headteacher / any other staff member involved):

Signed:

Governor:  
Staff member:  
Headteacher\*:  
Date:  
Date reported to LGC:

\*Ensure Headteacher has sight of form before Governor feeds back at next LGC meeting

## **Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust Strategic Objectives (2021-22)**

1. All schools strive to be outstanding
2. Workforce development
3. Driving a Trust culture whilst maintaining the uniqueness of our schools
4. Supporting the vulnerable, disenfranchised and disengaged by removing barriers to enable all to succeed
5. Working towards a greener and more sustainable future
6. Supporting and improving health and wellbeing by reducing obesity and improving health and fortitude