Long Lawford Primary School

Love, Learn, Persevere and Succeed

Governor Visits Policy

Policy Approval Date	**11th September 2019**
Policy Review Date	**September 2022**
Signed Head Teacher	**C Stringer**
Signed Chair of Governors	**S Smyth**

COVID addendum added November 2020

Rationale

Every Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor school policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors are also held to account for the school's performance. The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) assumes that Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will test this assumption during a school inspection.

This policy includes a sample Governors' Visit report form and some key questions to consider, which will help guide discussion on the issues raised and provide a formal record for OFSTED of the Governors' structured involvement in the work and life of the school. It should not, however, form part of any other evidence base, e.g. a member of staff's performance management.

Policy Aims

To enable Governors to:
- Gain insight into the life of the school.
- Create and develop relationships with staff, children and where appropriate, parents.
- Better understand the Governors' roles in raising standards.
- Have a better understanding of the school's current performance, practice, strengths and areas for further development, thus enabling them to provide more targeted and effective challenge and support.

Overarching Principles

The Governors of Long Lawford Primary School recognise that one of the best and most effective ways they can get to know their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work. To this end the Governors undertake official termly 'monitoring visits' to the school to review and explore a specific aspect of practice. (These visits are not an inspection, but a 'fact finding' and observational opportunity and a platform to help Governors ask questions and understand practice.)

To further support the effectiveness of their work the Governing Body also appoint a 'Link Governor' to key areas of the school practice, such as Pupil Premium, and review other areas of practice through the use of Governor committee groups. These groups include:
- A Performance and Standards Committee.
- A Resources (including finance, Safeguarding and Health and Safety) Committee.
- A Pay and Performance Committee.

Other visits to the school are be agreed with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Leadership and Management Team (LMT) in advance, and focus on ensuring the aims outlined above are fulfilled.

What are Governor visits about? *(The main purposes)*

A Governor visits school to:
- Increase the governing body's first-hand knowledge about the school and its daily operation; thus, helping to inform ongoing and future strategic decision making.
- Keep under review the way in which the school is operating and performing and what it is doing to manage areas requiring further development.
- Experience the impact and progress resulting from the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies.
- Demonstrate to staff that the Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously.
- Establish and develop good professional working relationships with staff, especially those that are linked with an individual area of responsibility, e.g. Special Educational Needs or Health and Safety.
- See in context some of the monitoring systems employed by the school.
- Demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process.
- Show support and encouragement to staff and children.

What are Governor visits not about?

Governors' visits to classrooms are **not a form of inspection** in terms of making judgements about the professional expertise of members of staff, especially with regard to the quality of teaching.

A school visit is also not about:
- Checking on the progress of their own or known children
- Monopolising staff time

- Arriving with inflexible or pre-conceived ideas
- Pursuing personal agendas or issues

Benefits of Governor visits to school:

Potential Benefits to Governors	Potential Benefits to Teachers
- To have a greater understanding of pupils' needs. - To recognise and celebrate success. - To establish and develop effective relationships with the staff. - To monitor the implementation of the School Development/Improvement Plan. - To increase their first-hand knowledge of the school which will inform strategic decisions. - To understand the environment in which staff work and teachers teach. - To recognise different teaching styles and understand the environment in which 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 get to know the children. - To show support and encouragement to staff and pupils. - To demonstrate that the Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process. - To develop individual Governor's roles in terms of their specific responsibilities e.g. Special Needs, Literacy etc. - To inform future decision-making.	- To understand better the Governors' roles and responsibilities. - To have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion. - To get to know and build positive relationships with Governors. - To feel valued. - To appreciate and value the role and responsibilities of all Governors. - To ensure Governors understand the reality of the classroom and the school. - To highlight the need for further resources. - To share an understanding of the specific area.

Setting up the visits
- Dates of the termly 'Governor monitoring' visit to classrooms will be agreed with the headteacher at the start of the year and shared with all relevant stakeholders. To organise other visits the visiting Governor(s) should make contact with the appropriate member of staff, (by telephone, email or in person) to negotiate dates/times and to agree the focus of the visit.
- To support the visit Governors will receive a copy of any relevant plans or documentation.
- When Governors make visits to classrooms, this should be undertaken individually or in pairs. If larger groups are required, this should be approved in advance by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher to ensure if doesn't lead to unnecessary disruption to the children or daily operation of the school.

Undertaking the visit
- Governors will arrive in good time for their visit.

- Particularly for 'termly monitoring' visits, Governors should allow enough time for an informal briefing and debriefing after the visit activity have taken place.
- Brief notes may be taken in the classroom; however, copies of these could be made available to staff, if required.
- Governors will concentrate on the agreed focus of the visit.
- If in the rare eventuality, a Governor feels that their presence is making a member of staff feel uncomfortable or the lesson is clearly going awry for some reason, the Governor will judge whether to withdraw. If a major problem arises in any classroom during a visit, a member of the SLT should be informed before leaving the school.
- During the lesson opportunities may arise for the Governor to talk to pupils; however, care should be taken to ensure this doesn't affect the delivery or flow of the lesson.
- Whilst Governors should be sensitive about distracting pupils from their tasks, they should use the opportunity to see the lesson from the pupils' perspective by asking questions. For example, can you tell me what you are learning, what do you do if you get stuck? How do you know how well you are doing? What is your best piece of work and why? What helps you learn best?

When in school Governors will be expected to follow our 'Code of Conduct' (see Appendix 2) and behave in an appropriate manner at all times showing courtesy to all adults and children.

In order to help Governors and school leaders focus during the limited time of the visit, some key questions have been provided to support the visit (see Appendix 4). This is not an exhaustive list, but a prompt for support.

At the end of the visit
- Any monitoring visit or activity should be discussed with a member of the SLT at the end of the visit and a written record made on the day of the visit. Copies will be taken at the end of the visit.
- Governor(s) will avoid being drawn into judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governor(s) may ask questions to help clarify their understanding of things seen, heard or told.
- Governor(s) will share with staff what they have learned from their visit.
- Records made or written summaries completed will be subsequently made available to both relevant staff and the Full Governing Body meeting.

See Appendix 3 for a pro forma to record visits.

Roles and Responsibilities
The governing body is responsible for ensuring this policy meets the needs of Long Lawford Primary School and is regularly reviewed and monitored for its effectiveness. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff, children and parents are aware of this policy and that it is fully implemented.

Policy Monitoring and Evaluation
The Governing Body will review this policy at least once every 3 years or sooner if necessary. This review will consider:
- Are we doing what we set out to do?
- Are our visits achieving the potential benefits identified in the policy?
- Are we more able to make informed decisions?
- Do staff feel affirmed and valued?
- Have there been any unexpected benefits?
- How can we make the policy and practice even better?

COVID-19 Addendum

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent school closures in March 2020-June 2020, the Governing Body, with support from Warwickshire Local Authority amended monitoring process so that the Governing Body was able to continue to support the school throughout the pandemic. Adjustments made include:

- Virtual Full Governing Body meetings via Microsoft Teams using Governor school email accounts, including Headteacher reports and updates as appropriate.
- Virtual Governor Committee meetings via Microsoft Teams using Governor school email accounts
- Support for the Senior Leadership Team via phone or Microsoft Teams virtual meetings
- Monitoring Visits were cancelled during school closures

From September 2020, the virtual arrangements remain in place and both Full Governing Body meetings and Committee Meetings continue. Governor Monitoring visits will take place virtually to support the school's ongoing efforts to remain COVID secure.

Governor visits will take place as follows:

- Governors and school leaders will arrive in good time for their visit via Microsoft Teams.
- Brief notes may be taken in the meeting and copies of these could be made available to staff, if required.
- Governors will concentrate on the agreed focus of the virtual visit.
- Governors cannot undertake classroom visits at present, however school leaders may wish to share subject-specific data, learning outcomes or child/teacher conference feedback.

When in a virtual meeting both Governors and school staff will be expected to follow our 'Code of Conduct' (see Appendix 2) and behave in an appropriate manner at all times. **It is not expected that Governors virtually visit classrooms whilst on Microsoft Teams.**

In order to help Governors and school leaders focus during the limited time of the visit, some key questions have been provided to support the virtual visit (see Appendix 4). This is not an exhaustive list, but a prompt for support.

Review: Date adopted by FGB: 11th September 2019
Date due for next review: September 2022

Appendix 1

What if……………… (questions that may arise)

What if I see children misbehaving when the teacher doesn't?
It depends how serious the misbehaviour is and how frequently it happens. The occasional incident should probably be overlooked, but if the teacher is consistently failing to notice misbehaviour, it is something which should be taken up after the lesson.

You could ask the teacher if they noticed a particular incident, for example, and what they would have done about it had it been noticed, or whether they chose to ignore it?

If you still have major concerns you may need to talk to the headteacher or member of the SLT about it, in confidence. The headteacher should find a way of following it up without suggesting in any way that you have reported a concern.

What if a pupil asks me how to do something?
It depends what it is. If it is something the teacher has already explained in the lesson, you can reinforce the teacher's message by explaining it again to the pupil. Otherwise, unless it is a trivial thing, you should ask the teacher on the pupil's behalf or encourage them to ask the teacher directly. You might also be able to ask a teaching assistant, if one is present.

What if the teacher has problems controlling the class?
It depends on the level of poor control. Maintaining perfect class control at all times is not easy, especially in practical activities, so some leeway should be given. Also a certain level of noise might just be a sign of enthusiastic participation in an activity.

Usually if a teacher is really struggling, the headteacher would know about it anyway and not encourage a Governor to visit in the first place. There will be some kind of support available for the teacher, possibly from a more senior colleague; but if control is obviously seriously lacking, then the headteacher needs to be told.

Appendix 2

Summary Visit protocol sheet (Code of Conduct)

	Always	**Never**
Before	• Agree the purpose of the visit with Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team. This includes considering which actions of the School Development Plan to review or the context of lessons being visited. • Be clear beforehand exactly what you are observing. Try to prepare questions for staff in advance. Arrange and plan the details of the visit with the Headteacher/relevant member of staff, drawing up a schedule for the visit - When? Where? With whom? Duration? Time for feedback? • Discuss with the Headteacher if any supporting information is available. E.g. Ofsted report, improvement plan, scheme of work etc. • Try to visit at different times of the day. • Agree the level of confidentiality.	• Turn up unannounced for a focused / formal visit. • Expect to go into a classroom without prior arrangement or a recommended minimum notice of one week. • Visit during a SATs week without the visit being authorised by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
During	• Be prepared, organised and punctual. • Report to the school office and sign in. • Fulfil the agreed purpose of the visit.	• Monopolise staff time. • Interrupt teaching or talk to the teacher while he / she is teaching.

	• Observe school / class guidelines. • Jot down discussion points to consider later at the feedback session. • Remember why you are there. Don't lose sight of the purpose of your visit. • Listen to staff and pupils.	• Behave like an Inspector! • Walk in with a clipboard and take copious notes. • Remember you are making the visit on behalf of the governing body. It is not appropriate to make judgements or promises on their behalf.
After	• Thank the member(s) of staff and pupils. • Discuss what you have observed with the teacher or staff lead as soon as possible after the visit. Use the opportunity to clarify any issues you are unclear about. • Feedback appropriately to the Headteacher / relevant SLT member. (Refer to the purpose of the visit, considering together whether it has been achieved.) • Discuss Health and Safety issues if relevant. • Complete the Visit Form and give a copy to the Headteacher, (unless a group feedback sheet has been completed during the feedback session.) • Prepare your own portfolio to include the records of your visit.	• Leave without a word of thanks. • Leave the school without giving some feedback. • Discuss observations with other members of staff, parents or individual Governors, (except the Chair) unless given permission to do so.

Appendix 3

Record of Governor's Visit

Focus of visit:
Comments about Leader's knowledge of area:
Comments about Pupils' outcomes:
Comments about standards in subject:

Comments from the Pupils about the subject:

General comments:

Signed _____(Governor)   Date _____

Signed _____(LMT/SLT)   Date _____

Appendix 4

Questions for Governors to ask the Headteacher/leadership team in their support and challenge role

A vital part of the role of school governors is providing effective support and challenge for their headteachers and senior leaders. In order to assist governors in that role, this document has been produced to suggest areas of discussion and investigation for governing Body Meetings.

This list is by no means exhaustive, but does direct Governors towards the key areas of School life.

The use of 'we' in all of these questions is deliberate to emphasise that the governors are an integral part of the school.

Below are starter questions that would require follow up questions dependent on the answers provided to ensure accountability e.g.
- What do we know?
- How do we know?
- How do we monitor this?
- What effect has this had?
- What plans do we have in place to improve this?
- When will we review these?
- Who is responsible for this?

Standards
- How are pupil numbers reflected as percentages – what is the actual number of pupils being considered?
- How good are standards in the school? How do we know?
- Are our pupils performing as expected, better or below expectations?
- Are these results an improvement on last year?
- Is there anything we should know about the cohort of pupils which could affect the results?
- How is achievement analysed and evaluated? What impact does this have on standards?
- Is there a trend appearing for certain subjects or year groups, if so what strategies can we put in place to improve results in that area?
- What are our best performing areas of learning /subjects in the Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2?
- What subjects/areas are a cause for concern the Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2?
- What does the 'value added' element look like?
- How do we compare with schools with similar Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement? What are our benchmark quartiles for each indicator?
- How well do our boys perform compared to our girls? How well do our boys perform compared to boys in other similar schools?
- How well do our FSM /SEN /EAL pupils perform compared to pupils in other similar schools?
- How well do these groups perform over time?
- How can we show we are consistently "adding value" both within year groups and across phases?
- What is the impact of the various interventions used in the school? Do they give value for money?

Pupil Premium
- How effectively is Pupil Premium money being spent?
- How well do Pupil premium children achieve compared to non-Pupil Premium and Pupil premium children nationally?
- How effective is the monitoring and review of Pupil premium spend?
- Is the School's Pupil premium Policy and spend on the school website?

Wellbeing
- How well does the school promote pupils' wellbeing?
- How well does the school promote staff wellbeing?
- What is the impact on current wellbeing strategies?
- Do all staff know what the wellbeing agenda for the school is?

Attendance
- What are the overall absence levels for the school?
- Has anything happened during the term to affect the attendance figures, e.g. bad weather conditions, high incidence of illnesses?
- What were the attendance figures for the last two years?
- How does our attendance compare to modelled expectations over the last 3 years?
- Have we improved, stayed the same or worsened? Is there a pattern/trend to the figures?
- How does our attendance compare with similar schools for the same period?
- Have we analysed the attendance of different groups of pupils? How do these compare?
- Who are our persistent absentees? What improvements have we made with these pupils?
- What strategies do we use to improve or ensure good attendance?
- If we disregard the worst 5 or so attendees what would the figures look like?

Behaviour
- How well do our pupils behave?
- How do our exclusion rates compare with other schools?
- What is the trend for fixed term exclusions over the last three years? Have we analysed the exclusions of different groups of pupils? How do these compare? What strategies do we use to improve or continue this positive / negative trend?
- How effective are our pupil voice strategies? What input do they have in what they learn?

Learning Experiences
- What are the good features of the curriculum?
- What are the shortcomings in the curriculum?
- Does the curriculum meet the needs of all our pupils? Are there any barriers in terms of equality or access to the curriculum?
- How do we develop progression in learners' literacy, especially reading, writing, and numeracy skills across all subjects? How well do develop our pupils' ICT skills? How well are these skills taught and reinforced across the curriculum?
- How well do we plan to develop pupils' wider skills – thinking, problem solving, working with others, improving their own learning and performance?

Learning Environment
- How effectively do we promote an inclusive ethos, racial tolerance, equal opportunities and diversity? Have all staff received appropriate equality training? How do we record and monitor issues or complaints that arise?
- What are the current priorities for the accommodation and resources? Do our pupils agree? What plans do we have in place to meet these?

SEND
- Are all statutory documents in place?
- Is appropriate SEND information available on the school website?
- Is the SEND information report up to date and available?
- Are there appropriate resources available for all SEND children across School?
- How do you know that all SEND children are making at least expected progress?
- Which SEND groups make the best/worst progress? Why?
- What interventions are in place to support children? How do you know they are effective?

Partnership working
- What strategic partnerships do we have?
- How do we work with all these partners to plan, manage and quality assure provision?
- What impact do these partnerships have on pupils' standards and wellbeing?
- Can we develop stronger relationships with partnership schools?
- How well does the school engage with other schools to raise standards?

Teaching
- How good is the teaching in the school? How do we know? What do we do to ensure good or improve teaching?
- What are our pupils' perceptions of the school?
- As a result, how well do our pupils make progress in their lessons? Are there any classes / year groups / subjects that are a cause for concern? How do we monitor and support these?
- How do we set targets for pupils and measure their progress? How effective is this?
- What are expectations of teachers in respect to assessment, recording and reporting?
- What training does all the staff receive to develop teaching and learning strategies, including specific support to improve literacy and numeracy?
- How consistent is AfL across the school? Do learners get good feedback and act on it successfully?
- How do we know that our end of year assessments are accurate?
- What are the perceptions of teachers? Are we managing staff absence/capability issues? How do we know if other staff in the classroom are impacting on standards?

Leadership
- What is our vision for the school?
- How do our aims, strategic objectives and plans meet the needs of our pupils? How are they monitored?
- How well do you communicate these expectations to all the staff in the school?
- How well is the school, and teams within the school managed? How effectively is the work of these teams monitored?
- How effectively do you challenge, but also support staff through performance management to achieve their best?
- What is the impact of this?
- What are the arrangements for succession planning and talent spotting?
- How is leadership contributing to the development of the next generation of school leaders?
- Are there any issues of underperformance? How have you addressed these issues? What strategies are in place to challenge and support these members of staff?
- What are our local and national priorities? How effective are we in meeting these?

Improving quality
- What are the school's strengths and weaknesses?
- How well do we evaluate and review all aspects of school life? How often do we observe lessons?
- How often do we scrutinise pupils' work and teachers' assessment of the work?
- Does the SLT work together and with others to ensure judgments are standardised?
- How effectively do we take on the views of pupils? How effectively do we take on the views of parents? How effectively do we take on the views of external stakeholders?
- How often and how effectively do we review the work of departments/year groups?
- As a result, what are the school's priorities for improvement? Do these arise from self-evaluation?
- How well is progress against priorities monitored and evaluated? What improvements has this led to?
- How well have we planned to ensure these improvements? What actions, resources and time are required to achieve these? How do we / will we monitor these?