**PROTOCOL FOR GOVERNOR VISITS TO [SCHOOL NAME]**

**The purpose of governor visits:**

The governing board holds strategic overall accountability for the school’s educational performance. [School name]’s governors visit the school when they are commissioned by the governing board to see for themselves the work that the school is doing. By undertaking school visits, governors can experience the ethos of the school and directly observe its achievements and school improvement strategies in action, which helps the board build of a clear picture of the school’s strengths and of the challenges it faces.

This protocol provides a framework for governors to use when planning and undertaking their visits to the school.

The protocol is kept constantly under review and is shared with the school community. Feedback from staff and governors is highly appreciated and will be taken on-board to review the protocol as required.

**General points on governor visits to [school name]:**

* The governing board (which includes the headteacher) will decide annually which aspects of the school development plan will be the focus for the year’s governor visits. Typically, each focus area will involve two or three visits over the year, so that the school’s strategies improvement can be seen over-time.
* Governors with lead roles – for example the safeguarding governor and SEND governor – will meet with the relevant school lead once every long term.
* All governors of [name of school] commit through the GB’s code of conduct to visiting the school as part of their governance role. The expectation is that each governor visits at least twice a year.
* Governors may visit individually or in pairs (for example a new governor may accompany a longer-serving governor as part of their induction). If there are several governors visiting school at the same time (for example if the school has set up a ‘governors in school day) governors will separate into individuals / pairs [or specify… eg no more than groups of three] when visiting any class.
* Governors recognised they are being invited into the school when they visit, and will arrange their visits to fit in with the school’s time-table.
* Governor visits will be scheduled well in advance, to ensure that both the governors and the staff helping facilitate visit have time to plan to best achieve the visit’s objectives.
* Governor visits will be time-focussed, typically lasting no more than [specify eg one hour].

**Planning the school visit:**

* Example 1: The governor arranging the visit will email the relevant member of staff as their starting point for planning the visit. This email will be cc’d to the Headteacher. OR
* Example 2: The headteacher will introduce the governor to the relevant member of staff so that the visit can be planned.
* A part of the planning, the governor and member of staff helping to facilitate the visit will discuss ideas for how the visit objective could be best seen during the visit*.*
* If the school visit includes visiting a class or classes, the governor will (where possible) speak to each class teacher before the visit. Governors are mindful to take all possible steps to minimise their impact when visiting a lesson and will seek advice from the class teacher on this before the visit.
* Each class teacher will keep other staff who may be in class during the upcoming visit in the loop, including relating any questions from these staff back to the governor, if there are any questions.
* The general objective of a class visit is for governors to see for themselves how the school is addressing a school improvement objective. **It is key that all participants understand that governor visits are NOT inspections or lesson observations.**
* Governors will prepare well for their visit by reading any documentation supplied in advance.

**During the school visit:**

* Governors visiting the school will [specify eg wear a visitor’s badge, or their governor lanyard].
* Governors will follow the school’s policies, protocols and procedures including those set out in the school’s staff & volunteer code of conduct.
* On the visit day, governors will, where possible, meet with the class teacher before the lesson to check there have been no last-minute changes or in case there are any questions.
* At the end of the visit, the governor will thank staff and will let them know what are the next steps for producing the draft visit report.

Where this is not possible to do in person – eg if the visit finishes mid-way through a lesson [specify eg - the governor will do this via email or the governor will arrange to meet with the class teacher at a mutually convenient time later in the day.]

* If any clarification is required before the report can be written, the governor will seek to obtain this from staff as soon as possible (ideally on the visit day itself).
* Where possible, any governor undertaking a visit will have a short de-briefing meeting with the headteacher before leaving the school at the end of their visit.

**School visit reports:**

* Governors will produce a written report for each visit, generally using the attached proforma (see Appendix 1.) In some cases (for example for safeguarding governor visits) the governor will use a different, specific proforma (these could also be added as Appendices).
* The written visit report is evidence of the governor visiting to see for themselves the activities of the school. The visit report will focus on the visit objective (ie relating to the improvement priority). **It is not part of the governors’ remit to make any assessment of quality of teaching and learning.**
* Governors will ensure that individual children cannot be identified from what is written in their visit reports, and will identify staff by role rather than by name as this improves clarity for the reader.
* If any governor has any question about what to include in a report they will first seek advice from the headteacher, or – if more appropriate – from the chair of governors / their governor mentor.
* Governors will share their draft visit report initially with the member of staff who facilitated their visit, and then with the headteacher. Once the headteacher has confirmed they are happy for it to be circulated, the governor will send it as final version to the clerk - for circulation to the board.
* The governing board is supportive of governor visit reports being shared with the school staff body.
* Governors will deliver a summary of the key findings as set out in their visit report to the governing board at the next appropriate governor meeting to inform the overall governance discussion of progress in the aligned key priority improvement area, as identified in the school development plan.

APPENDIX 1 – Governor Visit Report proforma

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| Governor Name: | Date: |
| Objective of the visit:  *(How does this visit relate to a key priority in the School Development Plan?)* | |
| Outline of visit:  *(What did the visit comprise of)* | |
| Governor observations and comments:  *(ie what did you see and learn about how the school is addressing that improvement priority)* | |
| Next steps:  *(ie what would you like the purpose of the next visit to be)* | |
| Next visit to be [date/term]:  *(ie governor visits monitor the improvement priority over a period of time)* | |