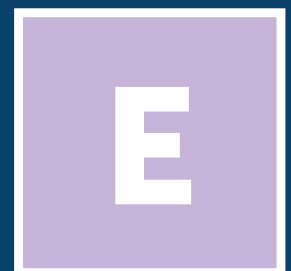




**Wonder**  
Learning Partnership  
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# Governor School Monitoring Visits





# An Introduction to Governor Monitoring Visits

**The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with some guidance and support with respect to undertaking governor monitoring visits.**

## The Purpose of a School Visit

**Governor monitoring visits are essential for effective governance. These visits provide opportunities for governors:**

- to carry out the statutory responsibilities of their roles, allowing them to ensure that they are actively monitoring the school's effectiveness across a variety of areas.
- to ascertain whether policies are being implemented with fidelity and are aligned with school improvement priorities.
- to establish and evaluate whether the intended progress and impact of policies and initiatives are being realised, to support school improvement priorities.
- to gain an appreciation of the areas that work well in the school and areas that could work better.
- to identify how resources are being used.
- to gain a contextual awareness of their school, with afforded opportunities to 'see the school in action'.
- to experience the ethos and culture of the school.
- to present governors with an occasion to build supportive professional relationships with school colleagues, and the school community.

**Governor Monitoring Visits are NOT intended to take the form of an inspection, and governors should not make judgements on the teaching and learning they may have observed.**

# An Introduction to Governor Monitoring Visits

## Reasons for Governor Monitoring School Visits

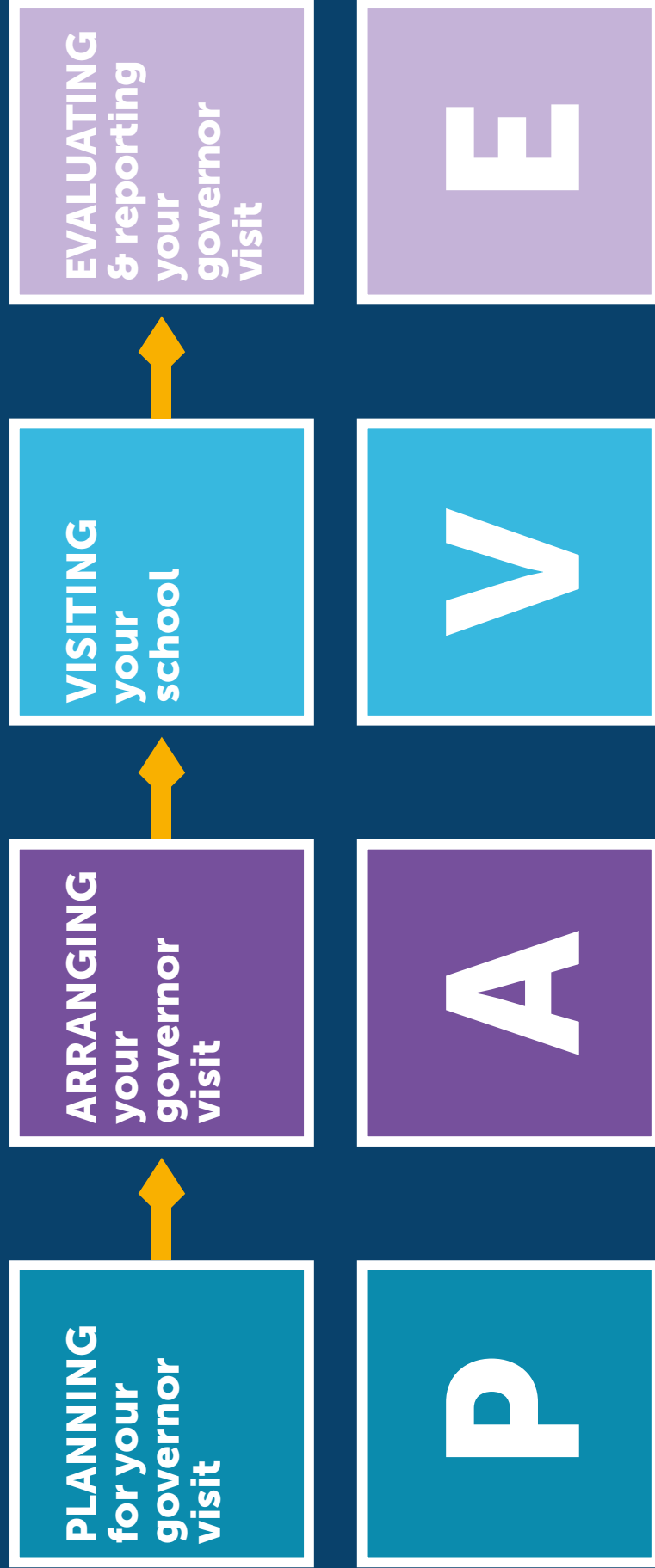
**Governors can visit school for a number of reasons including:**

- to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the Governing Board's strategic aims.
- to monitor the progress and effectiveness of policies and initiatives pertaining to school improvement priorities.
- to undertake data review visits, such as attainment, progress, attendance and exclusions.
- to complete focused visits into specific areas such as safeguarding, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), pupil premium, etc
- to monitor the areas of improvement as identified by the most recent Ofsted visit.
- to carry out progress reviews with school colleagues to monitor the progress and developments relating to earlier meetings in the year or previous year.
- to seek assurances from the Headteacher for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the effective and efficient performance management of the staff.



# Governor Monitoring Visit Process

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MONITORING





# PLANNING

## for your governor visit

### 1. Identify a focus area

To ensure that monitoring remains strategic, relevant and purposeful, the focus of the visit should be carefully planned and agreed prior to the visit. This should link to the:

- Strategic priorities of the board
- School Improvement Plan priorities
- Governance monitoring plan
- Statutory requirements for example, safeguarding, SEND, etc.

### 2. Framing your purpose

Governor monitoring visits are opportunities for governors to make discoveries about their school. This should pertain to the ethos, culture, values and the strategic direction of the school. Schools are complex, and it is therefore essential governors arrive at their governor monitoring visit with a clear purpose.

One way to ensure that you have a focused purpose, is to frame your purpose as a research question related to the intended outcome of your visit.

#### Example:

A governor is visiting a school because they want to monitor the effectiveness of the new strategies that have been introduced in the attendance policy to support the attendance of vulnerable groups in the schools.

How effective have the new attendance strategies been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact are they having?

#### This would be a focused visit as:

- The governor wants to monitor the effectiveness of new attendance strategies.
- The governor is also focusing on vulnerable groups within the school.
- The impact would be the impact on the attendance of vulnerable groups, but it could also include the impact on the staff who are implementing the new attendance policies.

### 3. Triangulating the evidence

Once you have your research question, you can consider what type of evidence you would need to collate to answer it.

#### Example:

How effective have the new attendance strategies been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact are they having?

- Attendance data and/or the Headteacher Report
- Meeting with attendance staff (Attendance Champion of the school)

Ascertaining the evidence you require, is also particularly useful when you are deciding what activities you would like to do during your visit.

## 4. Pre- Visit Research

Before attending your governor monitoring visit, it is important that you allocate some time to ensure that you are informed as much as possible about the purpose of your visit. How much research you need to do, will vary, depending on the type of visit you are conducting. Below are some examples of pre- visit research you might wish to do before you attend your visit.

- |                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Governor Strategic Plan  | Data                              |
| School Improvement Plan  | Stakeholder feedback              |
| Particular policies      | Department for Education guidance |
| Headteacher Reports      | Governors Handbook                |
| Previous Notes of Visits |                                   |

## 5. Planning questions

It can be helpful, to consider three key questions that you would want to ask during your visit, these can act as prompts, to ensure you meet your outcomes and ensure you remain focused on your visit purpose. These questions can normally be deconstructed from the research question that you have written.

### Example:

How effective have the new attendance strategies been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact are they having?

#### Questions for attendance officer:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| How effective do you think the Golden Hour attendance strategy has been on improving attendance for our vulnerable groups of pupils? | strategies, do you think is having the greatest impact on the attendance for our vulnerable groups of pupils? |
| Which one of the new attendance  | What impact is the new attendance strategies having on your workload?   |

Generating some key questions prior to your visit, DOES NOT mean that you cannot ask further questions; conversations with stakeholders will normally present other opportunities for you to ask questions; but it is important that you make sure that further questioning, remains strategic.

# ARRANGING

## your governor visit

**When arranging your visit you should provide as much notice as possible for the school, so that they have plenty of time to prepare and make the necessary arrangements.**

### Via Email

## 1. Emailing the link colleague

When you have completed your planning, you are ready to arrange your governor monitoring visit. Schools will provide you with a list of link colleagues and their email addresses, and it will state the areas that they are responsible for in the school, so you can contact the relevant link colleague.

When you are emailing the link colleague, please remember to CC the headteacher, and your Chair of Governors so that they are aware of your planned visit.

## 2. Essential information to include in your email:

- Strategic purpose of your visit.
- Your research question – so that they are aware of what you are trying to ascertain by the end of the visit.
- At least two possible dates and times for your visit.
- Any activities that you would like to do during your visit:
  - Meeting with the link colleague
  - Pupil Voice
  - Staff Voice
  - Learning Walk
  - Book Look
  - Data Dive
  - Subject Deep Dive
- Be specific about what you would like to do during these activities, so if you want to do pupil voice, which pupils, which phases, any particular groups of pupils, etc.
- Some suggested questions that you plan to ask during a meeting, during your pupil and/or teacher voice, may be useful.

## 3. Confirmation Email

At least two days before your visit is due to take place, contact your link colleague again, to confirm your visit, and your intended time of arrival.





# VISITING

## your school

### Be Curious

All schools are different, and this is based on their ethos, culture, diversity, identity and heritage. When visiting our schools we want you to enjoy having an opportunity to immerse yourself in the dynamics of school life, and for you to experience how schools work. This will make it easier for you to be an advocate for your school.

If there is something that you would like to find out more about, then please do not hesitate to ask your link colleague, how this may be possible.

### Be Caring

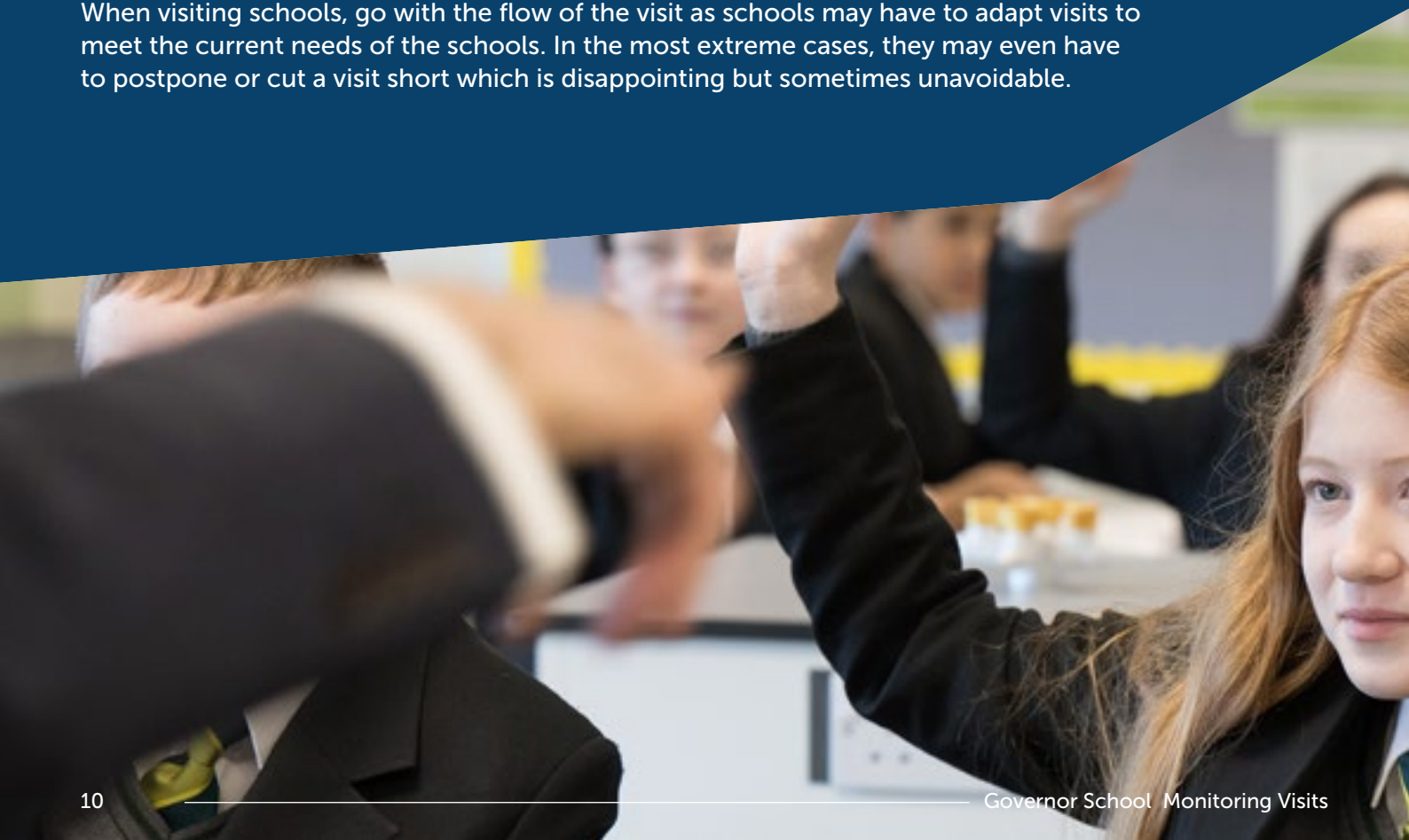
We know that ALL governors are caring. You are already giving your own time to ensure children within our communities are receiving the best possible educational experience, as well as supporting the wellbeing of school colleagues.

Visiting schools is also a great way to build relationships and a rapport with colleagues, gain valuable insights and a clearer overview of the school and the different roles colleagues play in ensuring it is a safe, inclusive and welcoming educational environment.

Saying thank you to colleagues and pupils means a lot to schools and is always greatly appreciated.

### Be Contextual

Schools are unpredictable. We are all therefore very mindful of a need to be flexible. When visiting schools, go with the flow of the visit as schools may have to adapt visits to meet the current needs of the schools. In the most extreme cases, they may even have to postpone or cut a visit short which is disappointing but sometimes unavoidable.





## Be Consistent

When conducting the monitoring part of your visit, it is important that you always view this through a strategic lens and that you are focusing on the bigger picture. This means that you should be considering:

- Processes
- Impact
- Progress

During this part of the visit, it may be helpful for you to take notes so that you are able to reflect on your findings.

## Be Courageous

Providing effective challenge is an essential part of the governing board's role. These are necessary to drive school improvement, ensure value for money and check statutory compliance

In your monitoring and checking role ask thought provoking questions that let you open up the conversation and help you understand the bigger picture and to elicit a candid discussion about a particular topic. Please also ask questions if something sparks interest, or if you require a little more clarity or assurance on a particular matter.



# EVALUATING

## and Reporting on your school visit

**Immediately after your visit, email the link colleague, to thank them for their time and perhaps comment on a positive experience from your visit, such as excellent behaviour or a welcoming atmosphere.**

It is then useful to complete your Governor Note of Visit document as soon as possible, so that you can recollect as much as possible. It may also be useful to refer to your notes at this time, to help you reflect on your findings.

If there is still a question or a situation that you want to clarify before you write your report, then email the Headteacher and seek guidance from them.

Governor Notes of Visit should be as succinct as possible, as it is important to be mindful of workload for other governors who will need to read through a variety of information before attending their next governor meeting.

Ideally, Notes of Visit should bullet point key findings of your visit, as you will have an opportunity to go into a little more depth during your Governor meeting, when your visit is discussed.

Remember to keep your comments, linked to the area of focus.

If however, you saw something else, that may have been of concern, for example, around safeguarding, you can also bullet point this concern on your Note of Visit.

When documenting findings from your visit, consider the validity of the evidence that this finding is based on. Data driven findings are usually the most valid and reliable forms of evidence, particularly if it has been collated by a business analytics platform, for example Power Bi or the View Your Education Data platform from the Department of Education (although data platforms are only as good as the data behind it). Other types of data, particular subjective data, is not necessarily invalid, but may require further exploration, to confirm its validity and reliability. Also be mindful that some activities, such as learning walks, are what we would deem *in the moment* this means that they are just a snapshot of what is happening in the school and may well suggest that there is an issue but should not be considered concrete evidence, again further exploration would be recommended.



It is also important that if you need to set targets, that these targets are **SMART**.

- | **SPECIFIC** clearly define the goal and its purpose
- | **MEASURABLE** establish the criteria to track progress and success
- | **ACHIEVABLE** ensure that the target is realistic and achievable
- | **RELEVANT** align the goal with broader objectives and priorities
- | **TIMELY** set a deadline for achieving the goal



Once your Note of Visit has been completed you should then send this to the Link Colleague and/or the Headteacher for comment. When you have received their response, please forward to the Clerk, for inclusion in the agenda pack.

# Governor Note of Visit: Example 1

<b>School:</b>	Wonder Academy	<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mr Browne
<b>Date of visit:</b>	19/11/2025	<b>Visit duration:</b>	20 minutes

<b>Governor Name:</b>	Miss Katy Green
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<b>Staff seen:</b>	Mr Jack White - attendance officer
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<b>Purpose of the visit:</b>
<i>To assess how effective the new attendance strategies have been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact they are having?</i>

<b>School progress with agreed actions from previous visit:</b> (if appropriate)	
<b>Previously Agreed Actions/Findings</b>	<b>Progress and Impact (how do you know?)</b>
<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>

<b>Visit Summary –</b> (please highlight key information to feed back at next LGC)
<p>I asked Mr. White <i>whether he was using the Golden Hour strategy to conduct pre-emptive and supportive telephone calls to encourage school attendance for the vulnerable groups of children</i>. Mr White confirmed that he had been doing this daily since the beginning of term for all children, where there is no communication from a parent on the first day of absent and if the message left by the parent did not state a specific reason why the child was absent. This included all the children in vulnerable groups. Mr White also said that he rings home on subsequent days of absence, again if the parent had not contacted the school.</p> <p>I asked Mr. White <i>whether he thought that this was having an impact on attendance for our vulnerable groups of children</i>. He responded that he did think it was having an impact on the vulnerable pupils, that already had a relatively high attendance of over 95% but it became <b>less effective as their attendance rates decreased, with the least impact being evident, with those pupils that fell into the persistent absence group</b>.</p> <p>I asked Mr. White <i>why he thought this was the case</i>, he said that a lot of the time he finds that the parents do not answer the phone for the vulnerable pupils, who are already in the persistent absence group, so he has to send a text message instead, and often he receives no response. I asked if he had gathered evidence of this, and he said no he had just drawn this conclusion, as he noticed this a lot.</p> <p>I asked Mr. White <i>what impact the Golden Hour strategy was having on his workload</i>. He replied that it was more like a Golden 2 – 3 hours after he had done the daily absences and then the subsequent absences, <b>so it was very time consuming</b>. Then in addition to this he would have to send text messages to all those parents who had not responded to the call and this often meant he was playing catch up all day and <b>feeling under pressure</b>.</p> <p>He also mentioned that he was <b>dealing with some very difficult phone calls</b> on a daily basis, with parents often being defensive when he called, wanted to know why he wanted so much information, why he could not authorise their absence, why the school thought sending sick children to school was appropriate.</p> <p>I asked Mr. White <i>what training he had had in dealing with difficult conversation</i>, he had <b>not had any</b>.</p>



Key Agree Actions/Matters to Resolve:		
Agreed Actions/Matters: - Governor to follow these up at the next meeting	Person Responsible	Follow Up? Y/N
Keep a record of the number of calls that are not taken by parents of vulnerable groups of pupils with an attendance of 95% or less.	Mr. White	
Discuss impact and challenges of the Golden Hour strategy and impact for vulnerable groups of pupils and the impact on attendance staff at next governors’ meeting. (issues highlighted) above.	All Governors	
Check with headteacher if there was any training frontline staff could receive in dealing with difficult conversations.	Miss Green	
Suggested date for next visit:	Next term	
Persons involved:	Miss Green and Mr. White	
Draft agenda:		
TBC		

*Please pass the completed form to the member of staff and HT for comment before forwarding onto the clerk for inclusion in the agenda pack.*

What is good about this Note of Visit	What areas could be even better?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversation between the Governor and MW focused on a new attendance strategy being used. Therefore partially met the focus of this visit.</li> <li>Method of reporting was quite lengthy.</li> <li>Did consider the impact of the initiative on the children and the attendance colleague.</li> <li>Although the governor did ask MW about what training he had had in dealing with difficult situations, was this the right time for this question?</li> <li>Target was set for MW relating specifically to vulnerable groups and a measurement criteria was established and may have been relevant if MW hunch was correct.</li> <li>Has arranged to go back but has not put down what that meeting will relate to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the Governor had asked questions on all of the new strategies, as detailed in the researched question.</li> <li>Could have used bullet points to detail findings, saving elaboration for next governor meeting.</li> <li>On finding out about the difficult conversations, the governor could have asked the Headteacher about what training front line staff have received when dealing with difficult conversations.</li> <li>But there was no time frame for the targets, and as MW is also feeling pressurised, should we be asking him to do more?</li> <li>Tabled the findings around the Golden Hour and vulnerable groups for next governors meeting, was this premature, without concrete evidence?</li> <li>As the governor only looked at one new attendance strategy, could have confirmed the next meeting to look at a different strategy the school is using such as triaging attendance concerns.</li> </ul>

# Governor Note of Visit: Example 2

<b>School:</b>	Wonder Academy	<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mr Browne
<b>Date of visit:</b>	19/11/2025	<b>Visit duration:</b>	20 minutes

<b>Governor Name:</b>	Miss Katy Green
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<b>Staff seen:</b>	Mr Jack White - attendance officer
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Purpose of the visit:
<i>To assess how effective the new attendance strategy of the Golden Hour has been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact is it having?</i>

<b>School progress with agreed actions from previous visit:</b> (if appropriate)	
<b>Previously Agreed Actions/Findings</b>	<b>Progress and Impact (how do you know?)</b>
<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>

<b>Visit Summary – (please highlight key information to feed back at next LGC)</b>
<p>Mr. White (MW) confirmed that the Golden Hour strategy had been done daily since the beginning of term.</p> <p>MW confirmed that all groups of children (including vulnerable groups) were called on the first day of absence, when there was no communication from a parent on the first day of absence and if the message left by the parent did not state a specific reason why the child was absent.</p> <p>MW confirmed that he rings home on subsequent days of absence, if the parents do not contact the school.</p> <p>MW had not collated any official data on the impact of the Golden Hour strategy on vulnerable groups, his subjective opinion is that "it was having an impact on the vulnerable pupils, that already had a relatively high attendance of over 95% but it became <b>less effective as their attendance rates decreased, with the least impact being evident, with those pupils that fell into the persistent absence group</b></p> <p>MW subjectively attributed this to fewer parents answering the phone.</p> <p>MW stated the Golden Hour Strategy <b>was time consuming</b>, taking at least 2 – 3 hours each day.</p> <p>Is the time it is taking for the Golden Hour Strategy a potential SG concern? – To check with HT.</p> <p>MW feeling <b>under pressure</b> due to the time being invested in Golden Hour strategy</p> <p>MW is regularly dealing with <b>defensive parents</b>, who find his questioning intrusive.</p>

Key Agree Actions/Matters to Resolve:		
Agreed Actions/Matters: - Governor to follow these up at the next meeting	Person Responsible	Follow Up? Y/N
Keep a record of the number of calls that are not taken by parents of vulnerable groups of pupils with an attendance of 95% or less for 4 weeks. Share with Headteacher and Miss Green prior to next governor meeting.	Mr. White	Y
Discuss impact and challenges of the Golden Hour strategy and impact for vulnerable groups of pupils (Evidence dependent) and the impact on attendance staff at next governors' meeting. (highlighted).	All Governors	Y
Clarify with Headteacher if frontline staff have received any training in dealing with difficult conversations.	Miss Green	Training received; access to DfE scripts to help with difficult attendance conversations.
Suggested date for next visit:		Next term
Persons involved:		Miss Green and Mr. White
Draft agenda:		
To assess how effective the new attendance strategy of Triaging Attendance has been in supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils, and what impact is it having.		

*Please pass the completed form to the member of staff and HT for comment before forwarding onto the clerk for inclusion in the agenda pack.*

What is good about this Note of Visit	What areas could be even better?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversation between the Governor and MW focused on a new attendance strategy specified, the Golden Hour.</li> <li>Method of reporting was more succinct.</li> <li>Did consider the impact of the initiative on the children and the attendance colleague.</li> <li>Decided to follow up concerns about training with Headteacher at a later time. Then documented findings prior to sending in Note of Visit.</li> <li>Target was set for MW relating specifically to vulnerable groups and a measurement criteria was established and may have been relevant if MW hunch was correct, time frame provided.</li> <li>Noted a safeguarding concern to follow up with the Headteacher.</li> <li>Noted the discussion for governors meeting around the impact of the Golden Hour and vulnerable groups of children would be evidence dependent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MW is feeling pressurised, should we be asking him to do more, is there another way to collate this information?</li> </ul>

# Three

## FAQs

### 1. How many visits should we do a year?

There isn't a predetermined number of visits- it will depend on your governor role, the board strategy, the needs of the school.

### 2. How long should a visit last?

Visits should take the minimum time necessary for you to carry out the activities you need to answer your research question, so will be variable.

### 3. How can we be sure to remain strategic during our monitoring visits?

One of the best analogies to describe the role of the School Governor comes from the National Governance Association. They say that we should imagine the school is like a bus. It is the Strategic role of the School Governors to determine where the bus will go (in the same way as School Governors decide where they would like to see the school in the next 3 to 5 years).

It is not however the role of the school governors to drive the bus or to decide the route that the bus will take to reach that destination, this would be the role of the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team

as this would be deemed to be operational. But it is the role of the school governors to make sure that there are systems in place to check, whether the bus is on track to reach its destination. So when you are visiting the school, you are just checking and monitoring, whether the route the bus is taking, will ensure it meets its intended destination.












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