



Director and Governor Visits Policy

**Reviewed July 2025
Next review due July 2027**

**Preston Primary Academy Trust
Governor Visits Policy**

Introduction

The Board of Directors has responsibility for the direction, policies and standards of the Trust and is accountable for its overall conduct and performance. Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) provide assurance for the Trust Board that schools' statutory obligations and Trust policies and procedures are being implemented correctly and effectively. LGBs are also responsible for monitoring the direction, standards, conduct and performance of the individual schools.

Director and Governor visits serve several key purposes:

- Monitoring and evaluation: Ensure the school's policies and practices are aligned with the strategic priorities set out in the Trust and school development plans (TDP/SDP).
- Understanding school context: Gain a better understanding of the school's challenges, strengths, and needs.
- Accountability: Provide assurance that the Trust Board's strategies and priorities are being implemented effectively.
- Building relationships: Foster positive relationships between directors, governors, staff, and the school community.

Directors and governors should note safeguarding practice on every type visit e.g. check that safeguarding posters are up to date and clearly visible. When visiting church school, directors and governors should note evidence of the school's Christian values in action.

For staff, director and governor visits allow staff the chance to find out more about directors and governors and their roles and responsibilities, provide an opportunity to draw attention to issues or questions they wish to raise, and provide an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss current practice.

What a visit is **not** about

- Making judgements on the quality of teaching or professional expertise of the teacher, this is the role of the Headteacher
- Checking on progress of individual children
- Pursuing personal interests and concerns
- Monopolising school/teacher time

Types of Visits

- Focused visits: Looking into specific areas such as safeguarding, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), pupil premium, collective worship etc.
- General observations: Observing particular classes or subjects across year groups linked to a specific SDP priority.
- Learning walks: Visits that involve walking through the school to gain a broad overview of a particular focus such as learning practices, classroom

environments or pupil engagement.

All visits should have a clear aim. The CEO who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Trust will guide Directors on the area of the TDP or aspect of the Trust's work to be covered. The Headteacher, who has the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, will guide the Local Governing Body on the areas of the curriculum, policies and SDP to be covered.

Preparing for a visit

Directors and governors should never visit a school unannounced and are expected to arrange visits in advance with the Head Teacher. Ideally, directors and governors should work to an annual schedule agreed at the start of the year.

Before the visit, directors and governors will:

- Agree a clear, purposeful focus for the visit.
- Consider how the area of focus will be identified and observed during the visit.
- Discuss the context of the activities to be observed.
- Agree their role within the activities.
- Ensure the visit's focus is strategic and in line with the trust's/school's priorities for improvement.
- Read the documentation relevant to the focus of the visit, e.g. the school's Behaviour Policy, and prepare relevant questions, where appropriate.

During the visit

Visits should be conducted to minimise disruption to staff and pupils. During a visit directors and governors will

- Always wear a visitor's badge
- Be friendly but professional, and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils
- Follow the agreed timings and purpose of the visit
- Be friendly but professional, and dress appropriately, bearing in mind the standards of dress set for teachers and pupils
- Be sensitive to the needs of the pupils and the wider school community.
- Avoid, if possible, visiting classrooms where their own children are present.
- Pass on any concerns the staff raise with the relevant people

Safeguarding is everybody's business

If a safeguarding concern is raised or directors or governors see something that is a potential safeguarding issue this should be reported to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately

After the visit

Directors and governors will reflect on the visit and:

- Discuss, as soon as possible, what they have observed with the CEO or Headteacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about.
- Complete a written report using one of the forms attached – see Appendix 1 for copies of the forms, please see Appendix 2 for tips on their completion
- Share a draft version of the report with the relevant staff to check for accuracy and clarity
- Circulate the report via the clerk so that it is available to all board/LGB members at the next meeting

Reviewing visit reports

Visit reports provide all directors and governors with a wider view of the school and are a standing item on board and LGB meeting agendas. All directors and governors therefore have an opportunity to ask questions about and discuss the focus of the visit.

Appendix 1: Template report for a focussed visit

Part 1: Plan the visit	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus	
Relevant school objective or priority	
<p>Questions to ask</p> <p>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SDP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</p> <p>Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</p>	
Part 2: In the meeting	
What is the school doing within this area of focus?	

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

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What successes stood out and why?

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Safeguarding Practice

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Church School Distinctiveness in Action

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Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or CEO

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Template report for a learning walk

Part 1: Plan the walk	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Agreed focus	
Relevant school objective or priority	
Questions to ask <i>Note specific questions you want to ask based on the SIP, or points to follow up on from a previous visit.</i> <i>Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	
Part 2: On the walk	
General notes from discussions with staff	

General notes from discussions with pupils

General notes on the school environment and overall atmosphere

What successes stood out on the learning walk and why?

Safeguarding Practice

Church School Distinctiveness in Action

Questions and clarifications to follow up with the headteacher or CEO

Appendix 2 - Tips for completing the visit form

Writing a clear, concise, and impactful report is essential to ensure that observations are useful for the trust's and school's ongoing development. Here are some key tips to keep in mind:

- **Be objective and factual:** Focus on what you observed during the visit, sticking to the facts rather than providing personal opinions or interpretations. Do not make subjective judgments about staff performance or teaching quality. Validate your findings through triangulation by comparing your observations with available data and reports.
- **Use clear and simple language:** Your report should be easy to understand for all readers, including those who might not have an educational background. Avoid jargon and explain any technical terms if necessary.
- **Focus on key areas:** Stick to the agreed focus areas for the visit, aligning your report with the trust or school development plan (T/SDP) or other key school priorities. Make sure your findings relate directly to the objectives established beforehand.
- **Avoid naming individuals:** For confidentiality reasons, do not mention individual staff members or students. Instead, use general references, such as 'staff members' or 'a group of pupils.'
- **Keep It concise:** Aim to make the report as succinct as possible. Avoid unnecessary detail and focus on insights that will be most useful for school improvement discussions.
- **Ensure follow-up actions:** Include clear next steps or recommendations. Specify any follow-up actions required and who is responsible for them, ensuring continuity between visits and a positive impact on school improvement.