St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation

For the good of all through curiosity, creativity and love

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1.4				

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St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation
Governor Visits Policy

At St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation, our vision is 'For the good of all – through curiosity, creativity and love.' This vision inspires everything that the federation does. It applies equally to all the federation's policies with the intention that our policies impact as fairly and positively as possible to meet the needs of all members of our schools' community.

1: Introduction
Governors have a strategic duty to monitor and evaluate the progress being made towards the priorities and targets set out in the Federation Development Plan. Much of this monitoring will be done through the executive headteacher and other members of staff reporting to the governing board and its committees. However, it is also good practice for governors to visit the school during the school day to see at first hand the impact of their policies and plans on the schools' performance. A carefully-planned visit by a governor can generate evidence that will inform decision-making by the whole governing board or its committees. It is essential that governors and staff are clear about the reasons for such visits and have agreed the way in which they will be conducted.

As with all other visitors to either school, governors should sign in on arrival. It is also important to adhere to current requirements on checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service and Safeguarding guidance and legislation.

2: The Vision
For the good of all – through curiosity, creativity and love.

Governors should be mindful of the vision and its impact on the schools throughout their visits. Everything taking place in the schools should have the vision at the core.

3: Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for governors to make focused visits within the schools so that they can build an effective working relationship with the staff and have a better understanding of the context in which they work. Governors will observe policies and plans being implemented on a day-to-day basis, and their findings should help the whole governing board and its committees make well-informed judgements about the progress being made towards the priorities and targets in the Federation Development Plan. This process will enable the governing board to recognise and celebrate the efforts and successes of pupils and staff and to identify further areas for development.

Visits are not about making judgements on the quality of teaching; that is the executive headteacher's responsibility. Nor are they about checking on the progress of individual children or pursuing personal agendas.

4: Role and responsibilities of executive headteacher, head of school, other staff, governors

The executive headteacher will present a termly monitoring and evaluation schedule to the governing board, which will include monitoring activities related to the key priorities within the Federation Development Plan. These monitoring activities may relate to school staff, but will also include governor monitoring priorities.

Ideally, each governor should aim to achieve a minimum of one visit per year. Governors will decide for each visit how many people are needed for the visit to be effective. The executive headteacher and heads of school will guide the governing board on the areas of the curriculum, policies and federation development plan priorities and targets to be covered each term.

Individual governors or pairs of governors will, with the guidance of the whole governing board, identify an aspect of the federation's work on which to focus. This will enable individual governors to develop a deeper understanding of a subject, a policy or policies, or a year group. They will focus on areas where they have an interest or expertise. The aim will be for them to get to know an aspect of the schools really well, increasing their confidence and knowledge. It will help to maximise the effectiveness of the governing board team.

When organising and conducting a visit, governors will be courteous and considerate, at all times respecting the professional roles of the executive headteacher, heads of school and all staff. Working to the annual schedule agreed, they will confirm with the heads of school the date, timing and focus of each visit at least one week in advance. This will include agreeing what will be observed and to whom it would be useful to talk. If time permits they will discuss the proposed agenda with any staff involved. They will prepare by reading relevant documentation/guidance.

At the end of each visit, the governor(s) will discuss what they have observed with the teacher and clarify any points they are uncertain about. They will discuss their observations with the executive headteacher and/or heads of school and agree how and when they will report to the governing board, using the GAR (Governor Activity Report) form (Appendix 1).

Teachers and support staff will at all times be courteous and considerate, recognising the contribution made by the governing board to the school. They will make practical suggestions on the focus for governors' visits to ensure that they are productive and enjoyable for all concerned. This will include specifying the evidence that could be shared with governors.

Whenever practical, governors will be invited to relevant staff meetings and training sessions. Questions will be invited from governors, while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality.

5: Governor Monitoring Visits

Governor monitoring visits, agreed as part of the monitoring and evaluation schedule will take place every half term. There will be an agreed focus for the term. Monitoring visits will involve at least two governors and will look in detail at an aspect of the federation's practice.

6: Monitoring and evaluation

Governors' visits will be an agenda item at the termly meeting of the governing board (i.e. 6 times a year). They are also an agenda item at every meeting of the Standards and Curriculum Committee where most of the planning and arrangements for the monitoring activities takes place.

Governors will circulate a record of their visit, following the process shown and using the form shown in Appendix 1.

By reviewing the minutes of meetings when reports of visits were discussed, the governing board will judge the extent to which the observations made informed the whole governing board's understanding of the progress made towards meeting priorities and targets. Staff governors will feedback from colleagues. They will be asked to identify what worked well and what, if anything, needs to be reconsidered. They will also be asked to describe the extent to which their understanding of the governing board's role has been enhanced.

Appendix 1

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Governor Activity Report

Name of Governor/s, Date of activity:
Governor/s initials & Date

Type of activity: training/visit to school - St John's or St Nic's/other – please specify
List

Which part of the Federation Development Plan is being monitored by the activity?
Priority number:
Explanation

Please note that Link Gov visits are always: Priority 2: Set a clear vision for the schools' curriculums enabling curiosity and creativity to thrive across all year groups, with high expectations and clear outcomes. Please note the guidance for Link Gov visits as the bottom of this form.

How are our Vision, Values and evidence of Spirituality shown in this activity?
List

How does this activity relate to particular groups (SEND/EAL/PPG/Gender/MAG&T)?
List

FOCUS/area of enquiry/reason the activity is taking place List

ANALYSIS/brief report on activity List

DO/next steps; actions and recommendations arising *Use the box below if you would like an issue raised at the next S&C (it will appear on the agenda).*

Action	Allocated to	Timescale	Completed

EVALUATE/How Governors should use this information to impact on their effectiveness
Suggestions

- *For Link Governor visits please note the following:*
  - *discuss the subject leader role - what is working well? - what could work better?*
  - *discuss the subject focus this year - what is the focus? Why? how is this being implemented?*
  - *what is the focus moving forward next year - how will this be put into place?*
  - *where relevant and if time look at books, displays, assessment etc*
  - *arrange a time to meet outside of classroom teaching time, suitable for class teacher*
  - *keep the meeting to a maximum of 30 minutes*

Once you have checked the form with any relevant member of staff involved in the activity, send to the Chair of the Standards & Curriculum Committee. It will be then checked by SLT & sent to the Clerk for inclusion in the relevant Standards & Curriculum Committee meeting folder/FGB meeting folder.