



SPHERE FEDERATION

Governor Handbook

September 2021



Scholes (Elmet) Primary
St James' CE Primary
Moortown Primary

Governing Body Governor Handbook Contents

Contents

Key Information	3
2021/22 Committees, roles and responsibilities	7
Suggested questions	8
Guidance on school visits	13
School visit notes	14
Register of interests	15
Code of Conduct	16
Glossary	18

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

Key information



Welcome to the Sphere Federation governing body!

Sphere Federation schools are happy and healthy places to learn.

The role of the governing body is critical to the effectiveness of a school, and here at Sphere Federation we focus on core strategic functions, as set out by the Department for Education:

- setting vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- holding the Head of Federation to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils, and the performance management of staff;
- overseeing the financial performance of the schools and making sure money is well spent.

It is our role to provide both support and challenge, and ensure accountability in all areas, whilst remembering that the day to day management of the schools is the responsibility of the Head of Federation and Heads of Schools. The governing body is answerable to parents and the wider community to which the schools belongs.

How does the governing body operate?

We meet at least four times in the year, usually in the early evening, and dates of meetings are set well in advance. At these full governing body meetings, which are attended by all governors, we discuss any strategic areas of concern, take any required actions, and monitor the outcomes of any previous or ongoing activities. We set aims and objectives, and agree, monitor and review policies, targets, priorities and ongoing progress of the school as a whole.

Meetings are supplemented by a series of sub-committee meetings dealing with more specific issues. These committees comprise a smaller number of governors and usually meet once a term (although more frequent meetings may be scheduled if the need arises), reporting back to the full governing body. Sphere Federation have the following committees:

- **Teaching, Learning and Children:** *Its main purpose is to ensure that Sphere Federation schools are all happy and healthy places to learn. To do this, the committee's work centres around two main areas: a high-quality education delivered to all pupils so that each pupil reaches their full potential, and safeguarding to ensure every child is kept safe. The committee will monitor, evaluate and challenge about matters such as the curriculum (to make sure it's broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements), the pupil premium and PE grants, attendance, behavior, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision. An important role of the committee is to ensure that all safeguarding policies are fully understood and correctly implemented by all staff.*
- **Resources:** *This committee's main purpose is to ensure that spending for each school remains within budget and that all funds are spent wisely to best meet the needs of the pupils. Although it meets every term, there are additional review meetings with the local authority finance officer. Like the Teaching, Learning and Children committee, an important area of work for the committee is safeguarding: the health and safety practices and policies in place at each school site is part of this committee's remit.*

There are also committees for Policies, Performance Management and for Pay, although these meet less frequently. A Church Distinctiveness Group (St James' only) regularly meets. Working Groups are also set up as needed.

Each governor has responsibilities for specific issues within school such as safeguarding, and finance, and will work more closely with the school to be involved in these areas. This will typically involve regular visits to each school and provision of a short, written report to the relevant committee afterwards. (See below for more guidance on visits.)

Who are the federation governors?

The governing body of Sphere Federation consists of:

- the Head of Federation

- one staff governor, elected by the staff across the federation – *this could be a teacher, teaching assistant, administrative assistant... any staff member*
- one appointed local authority governor
- two foundation governors – *one appointed by the Diocese of Leeds, one ex-officio*
- two parent governors, elected by parents across the schools – *a parent governor is not there to represent the views of parents at their school, but is there as a 'representative parent'*
- seven co-opted governors – *appointed by the governing body*

The standard term of office for a governor is four years. The chair and vice-chair are elected annually.

Contact details for the Chair of Governors, and a full list of the governors are available on the school websites.

What is expected of a governor at Sphere Federation?

It is important to recognise that governors are part of a team whose main concern is the welfare of the children of all schools within the federation. Governors do not have individual power to act alone, and the governing body makes decisions democratically, by consensus. It is also important to remember that the Head of Federation, and Heads of Schools, are responsible for the day to day management of the schools, including implementing policy and managing the curriculum.

Being a governor involves giving time and energy to the school. As well as regularly attending full governing body and committee meetings, governors should take time to visit the schools and get to know its staff and pupils in relation to their strategic role and responsibility.

Training is important as it is essential all governors are clear about their powers and responsibilities. Induction training is mandatory for new governors of Sphere Federation. On-going development is essential to be an effective governor.

DBS and Section 128 checks for governors are mandatory. The Federation Resources Manager will arrange for the checks to be made as soon as you are appointed.

Some specific requirements:

- attendance – full attendance at meetings is expected; we accept there may be instances when you need to send apologies, but be aware your position could be terminated on the grounds of non-attendance;*
- behaviour – maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of the schools, including on social media;*
- computer literacy – you will need this to set up and use a Sphere email account as communication is mainly by email. Papers are circulated electronically and stored on a shared drive;*
- discretion – matters discussed are typically of a confidential nature. All governors must be mindful of this;*
- engage – get to know the schools, respond promptly, actively contribute to meetings.*

The benefits of becoming a school governor are immediate and long lasting. In volunteering your time you are making a positive contribution to the school's success and having an impact on the lives of its pupils, teachers and local community. Your role can also help develop transferable skills useful in other areas of your life.

Thank you for your contribution!

What are the differences and boundaries between the roles of the governing body and the Head of Federation?

Responsibility	Governing Body's role	Head of Federation's role
Aims, vision and values	Agree the aims, vision and values for the school	Draft documents and arrange consultations as needed eg staff

	Ensure these are reflected in all policies and key documents and are available to all	
School Improvement Plan (SIP)	Approve and set priorities for the school Monitor how the plan is implemented Evaluate whether success criteria are met	Prepare costed proposals for SIP that are consistent with the aims/priorities agreed by the governing body Implement the approved plan and report progress to the governing body
Self-evaluation	To discuss and support the judgements made in the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) with a view to ensuring school improvement through the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Ensure statutory requirements are met Receive reports from school improvement advisors and consider recommendations	Complete the SEF on a regular basis discussing with governors the key judgements Inform governors of any areas where improvement is required and implement any agreed actions
Curriculum	Set policy and ensure it reflects statutory requirements Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy Monitor achievements of pupils and be fully engaged in the target setting process	Organise the curriculum and assessment arrangements in line with the policy Monitor day to day delivery of the curriculum and the standards of teaching and learning
Staffing	Decide staffing structure and numbers giving consideration to workforce reform Appoint Head of Federation and Deputy Headteachers (and other staff unless formally delegated to the Head of Federation) Ensure effective performance management of all teaching staff and ensure resources for CPD are in place Carry out performance management of the Head of Federation Ensure appropriate staffing policies are adopted If necessary, agree steps required for managing staffing reductions including formal panels and offering support to the Head of Federation during the process	Take delegated responsibility for appointments in line with agreed structure Implement the performance management policy and report annually to governors on its effectiveness Ensure CPD is delivered to staff Implement managing staffing reductions and other staffing policies as required
Finance	The whole governing body or delegated committee must approve the budget	Manage the budget within the limits agreed by the governing body Ensure financial procedures are correct and secure

	<p>Monitor expenditure to ensure it is in line with the budget and that all priorities are properly resourced</p> <p>Approve virements/contracts above the delegated limit</p>	<p>Report regularly to the governing body on expenditure drawing attention to any significant issues arising that could effect the budget</p>
Behaviour and discipline	<p>Agree the statement of behaviour principles, the school policy for behaviour, and monitor and evaluate its effectiveness</p> <p>Set up exclusion panels as required</p>	<p>Draft a behaviour policy for the governing body to consider and implement the agreed policy</p>

Further information

The schools' websites are highly informative and straightforward to navigate. Here you can learn a huge amount and find out more about each of the schools, including aims and ethos, current creative curriculum, academic performance, and details about specific policies.

Training is provided; contact the Federation Resources Manager to arrange this. You can be booked on a variety of courses (in particular, through Noctua Teaching School and Leeds City Council). Our school governors also have access to [The Key for Governors](#). Induction training is a requirement for new governors; an understanding of [safeguarding](#) is essential; and regular training around your specific, strategic role to ensure effective governance is also required.

New governors will be assigned a mentor - a more experienced governor - to help guide you through your early days of being a governor. Amongst other things, they will introduce you to other governors at the school and guide you through the educational terminology and acronyms you will encounter!

You will also be provided with the following information:

- detailed copy of the federation's committee structure and terms of reference
- Code of Conduct form (to sign and return)
- conflict of interests form (to sign and return)
- national database of governors form (to complete and return)
- documents illustrating the difference between the strategic role of the governing body and the role of the Head of Federation
- dates of meetings for the academic year
- contact details for key people and introduction with your mentor

The amount of information you will receive as a new governor may feel daunting initially, but you are not expected to take it all in at once and is for reference to help you fulfil your role.

Additional resources and useful links

- The DfE governance handbook for school governors gives comprehensive advice for governing bodies. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>
- Compare and contrast performance: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>
- Ofsted school common inspection framework, setting out the general principles and processes of inspection. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>
- National Governors' Association. <http://www.nga.org.uk>
- Framework to facilitate discussions between governors and school leaders <http://www.questionsforgovernors.co.uk/>
- Leeds City Council governor support service. <http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Services/Details/2503>

If you are a Twitter user, follow @UKGovChat and join in with governor talk 8:45 – 9:15pm on a Sunday evening #ukgovchat. School Governor Facebook groups are also worth joining.

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

2021-22 committees, roles, responsibilities



Sub-committees

Resources	Teaching, learning and children
Nolan Keep (C) Andy Miller David Roundtree Jude Rawlings Rachel Greenhalgh Shobha Bentley Sue Quirk (O)	Andrew Gibson (C) Andy Sammons David Roundtree Matt Hick Rachel Cooper Rachel Greenhalgh Paul Wilks (O) Paula Allaway (O)

Other committees and groups

Headteacher performance management	Complaints	Church distinctiveness	Pay committee	Pay appeal committee	Policies
Nolan Keep Rachel Greenhalgh Shobha Bentley External School Improvement Advisor	Andrew Gibson Jude Rawlings Rachel Cooper	Brendan Giblin (C) David Roundtree Jude Rawlings Kathryn Wenn Rachel Greenhalgh Natalie Beatson (O)	Andy Miller Nolan Keep Jude Rawlings	Andrew Gibson Matt Hick Shobha Bentley	David Roundtree Jude Rawlings Rachel Greenhalgh + relevant link governor

Chair of the Governing Body

Rachel Greenhalgh

Vice Chair(s) of the Governing Body

Jude Rawlings and Matt Hick

Link roles

Data Protection – Shobha Bentley

Finance - Andy Miller

Governor Training & Development - Rachel Greenhalgh

Early Years and Early Reading - Rachel Cooper

Health and Safety - Nolan Keep

Mathematics – Andrew Gibson

Reading and Writing – Andy Sammons

Safeguarding, Safer Recruitment and CLA – Shobha Bentley *NB safeguarding is the responsibility for all governors*

Science and Foundation Subjects – Matt Hick

SEN and Inclusion - Andrew Gibson

Website Compliance – Andy Sammons

C – Committee Chair; O – Observer.

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

Suggested questions



1. Do we have a clear vision for the federation and the schools?

This is a question the governing body should take the lead on.

1. Do we know where we want to be in the next five or ten years?

2. What are the federation and the schools' values?

This is a question the governing body should take the lead on.

1. When did we last review our ethos/values statement?
2. Are the values reflected in school development plans?
3. How do we publicise our values (eg are they on our website)?
4. How do staff and governors promote the values in their conduct?
5. Do pupils know what its school's values are?
6. How do we ensure that pupils leave our schools equipped for the next stage of life?
7. Does the school curriculum reflect and develop our stated values?
8. How do staff embed the values into their teaching?

3. What are we doing to raise standards for all children?

The governing body should know the answers to the first list of questions from data sources such as ASP, the Ofsted dashboard and [Fischer Family Trust dashboard](#), and from internal data provided by school leaders, including the Headteacher's Report.

From various data sources:

1. How does attainment at all schools compare to national averages and the government's floor standards?
2. What, if any, impact does the context of our schools have on pupils' attainment?
3. How are each of the schools performing in English and maths?
4. How do children in our schools progress compared with expectations?
5. How do the schools' performances compare to those for other similar schools?
6. Which groups of pupils in terms of sex and ethnicity are the highest and lowest performing?
7. How are disadvantaged, SEN and EAL students progressing compared with other students in this school, and compared with students in other schools?
8. How are low, middle and high ability children progressing and attaining?
9. Which subjects are highest and lowest performing?
10. Do we know how these results have been changing over the past three years: are we improving?
11. How does attendance in each year group compare with national averages, and what are the trends over time?

From the School Leaders' Report:

1. Does the School Leaders' Report give a clear indication of progress towards meeting the targets/objectives in the school development/improvement plan?
2. Does the School Leaders' Report give a clear indication of pupil progress for all year groups and subjects in the schools?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the schools?
4. How do we know that the information we have about each of our school is robust and accurate?

Examples of questions for the Head of Federation and Heads of Schools (some of these should be answered regularly by the School Leaders' Report)

These questions are examples for any school governing body

1. Why is progress in some subjects under national expectations? What is your strategy for improving the areas of weak performance?
2. Why is progress in some subjects or year groups better than others in the school? What is being done to raise performance specifically in those areas which are under-achieving? What has worked well and can we use it more widely? How does this relate to the quality of teaching across the school?
3. Why are some groups of pupils (as identified above: by sex, ethnicity, EAL, socio-economic status, ability) progressing less well than in other schools? What is being done to raise performance for those children? Are staff aware of which pupils and groups of pupils are underachieving?

4. Why are some groups of pupils progressing less well than others in the school? What is being done to close this gap?
5. How will you demonstrate to the governing body that improvement is taking place? Who in the staff group has responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of different interventions, and how is this done? Which interventions offer the best results and how does this compare with the cost? Are we learning from other schools?
6. For pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan, are we meeting all of the requirements set out in the plan?
7. How much progress are pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM making in relation to the expected levels of progress; the national average; the school average; equivalent schools?
8. What is the attainment for pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM in our schools in comparison to the expected level; the national average; the school average; equivalent schools?
9. How do we assess our pupils? How do we set individual targets for pupils? What proportion of pupils are meeting their personal progress targets? How do you know the targets are ambitious enough? What is being done to help the individual pupils that aren't meeting their targets? What is the impact of that and how do you know?
10. How is assessment and feedback used to help children progress and meet their targets?
11. What strategies are in place to ensure the highest attaining pupils are stretched? How do you know they are working?
12. Is low attendance having an impact on pupil outcomes? Are there any persistent late-comers – if so, what impact is that having? Are there particular groups affected, such as children on ever-six Free School Meal? What is being done to improve attendance and is it having an effect?
13. Does the number of children arriving at a school after the usual intake affect their attainment and what are we doing to improve outcomes for those children?
14. How do we support children arriving at a school to settle in and learn?
15. How do we prepare children for the next stage of their education?

4. Are we making best use of the Pupil Premium?

For governing bodies:

1. Can we identify how much money is allocated to the school for the Pupil Premium? Is it identified in the school's budget planning? Can we identify the Pupil Premium funding separately to any other funding for disadvantaged pupils?
2. In determining the strategy for spending the pupil premium have we considered the Ofsted/Education Endowment Foundation information about what methods are effective in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils?
3. Does each school improvement/action plan identify whether there are any issues in the performance of pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium?
4. Do the actions noted for improving outcomes for Pupil Premium pupils give details of how the resources are to be allocated; give an overview of the actions to be taken; give a summary of the expected outcomes; identify ways of monitoring the effectiveness of these actions as they are ongoing and note who will be responsible for ensuring that this information is passed to governors; explain what will be evaluated at the end of the action and what measures of success will be applied?
5. Will we know and be able to intervene quickly to request remedial action if outcomes are not improving in the way that we want them to?

For senior leaders

1. Have you checked the [KeytoSuccess](#) website to ensure that you have a full list of all eligible pupils – given that some of the children will not currently be claiming FSM?
2. Are staff aware of which pupils are Pupil Premium children and the possible support and expected intervention?
3. What processes have you put in place to evaluate whether the intervention strategies are working?
4. Are the progress and outcomes of eligible pupils identified and analysed by the school's tracking systems? How will you report this information to governors in a way that enables them to see clearly whether the gap in the performance of eligible pupils and other pupils is closing?
5. Do the school's systems enable you to give a clear picture to governors about the progress and attainment of pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium in all year groups across the school, not just those at the end of key stages?
6. Are there gaps in the attainment of pupils who are eligible for the Pupil Premium and those who are not, and if so, are eligible pupils making accelerated progress – to allow the gaps to close?

7. Are you tracking the attendance, punctuality and behaviour (particularly exclusions) of this group and taking action to address any differences?
8. Have you looked at the websites of other similar schools to see what interventions they are using?
9. How do you promote awareness of FSM eligibility to encourage all eligible pupils to claim?

5. Have we got the right approach to staffing?

Questions to senior leaders:

1. If you could change the staffing structure, would you and why? What changes would you make? Are there any areas (including business management) we need more/less staff in? Is the support staff to teaching staff ratio right? Do we have the right line-management structure in place?
2. Have we got an effective pay structure in place? Have we reviewed and updated our pay policy to take account of the most recent School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document? Is it clear how performance and pay are related? Are we able to use the pay structure to reward our best staff?
3. How effectively are all the staff managed and appraised? How are ECT supported? Do all line managers meet regularly 1:1 with their staff? How do you go about setting objectives? Do all classroom based staff (teaching and non-teaching) have performance objectives which relate to the school development priorities? What objectives have been set for staff? How many staff achieved their objectives for the past year? What additional support is being offered to staff struggling to meet objectives and is that working well? Are any teachers subject to capability proceedings?
4. Is there correlation between appraisal outcomes, pay and the quality of teaching and learning?
5. What is the proportion of teaching which can be judged to be outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate?
6. What action is being taken where lessons are less than good?
7. How effective is continuous professional development in improving teaching and learning? How do you know?
8. Do you have a programme of staff development for succession planning to ensure the school has a good supply of middle and senior leaders?
9. What is the staff retention like in reference to similar schools?
10. What is staff absence/sickness like in reference to similar schools?
11. Are you carrying out 'exit' interviews for staff who leave – are there any common themes?
12. Have we got human resources expertise which is high quality and how do we know?
13. Have we got the skills and knowledge in the staff team to manage personnel matters well, and how is this demonstrated?

Question for governing bodies

1. How effectively is the Head of Federation's appraisal carried out?
2. Are her/his objectives set in line with school priorities?
3. Does the governing body/relevant committee receive good quality information about the performance appraisal outcomes of staff?

6. How well does the curriculum provide for and stretch all pupils

Questions to senior leaders:

1. How do we ensure our pupils receive a broad and balanced education? How do we know that the curriculum meets the specialised needs of all our pupils?
2. If there were no rules, how would you change the curriculum? If so, what's stopping you?
3. How do you ensure that the curriculum across the schools promotes the ethos of each of the schools and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?
4. What do internal assessments by staff tell us and parents i.e. is it just pupils' progress through the curriculum? Or does it tell us about the skills, values, and personal qualities they've developed?
5. Could the curriculum be made more exciting/stand out more?
6. Have you asked the pupils what they want from the curriculum? And what did they say?
7. What do other local schools offer in their curriculum which is different from ours?
8. How does each school use partnerships with other schools/businesses/the local community to enhance the curriculum? Have you developed links with the secondary schools?
9. How are staff encouraged to be more innovative about the teaching of the curriculum? Is there sufficient lesson differentiation to provide for students of all abilities?
10. How are you encouraging different key stage staff to collaborate and inter-department collaboration?

For schools using the National Curriculum:

1. How do you ensure all teaching staff are clear about the National Curriculum requirements?
2. What proportion of the week do pupils spend on the National Curriculum? Is this too much, too little, about right? How have you developed the offer for the remaining time?
3. What skills do we want our children to leave with? To what extent are they being developed? How can this be improved?

7. How does the school promote good behaviour to enhance learning?

The answers to some of these questions will be found in the behaviour policy, but as part of the review and monitoring process, these can be useful:

1. Is this a happy school with a positive learning culture? What is the overall picture of behaviour in this school – how does it compare with other schools? How is good behaviour rewarded, and how often?
2. How are pupils, parents and staff made aware of the school behaviour policy? What measures are in place to ensure good behaviour, discipline and respect is communicated to pupils? Are staff clear about the school's behaviour policy and the extent of their disciplinary authority/powers? What steps do we take to inform parents about how they are expected to behave while on school premises?
3. What impact does the behaviour policy have on classroom practice – how do you know?
4. How do you monitor whether the behaviour policy is being applied consistently across the school?
5. How do you assess/monitor pupils' attitudes to learning?
6. What information do you have about the levels of attendance; incidents of bullying (including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying); levels of poor behaviour? What are you doing to address any issues?
7. What measures are in place to deal with persistent poor behaviour e.g. systems to identify and address the needs of pupils who continuously display disruptive behaviour? How do you monitor pupils causing concern? Do you/the staff know the root causes of poor behaviour? What external support do the staff have for dealing with any behaviour issues? Have all staff received appropriate training in relation to dealing with aggressive pupils where restraint may be required?
8. How many pupils have been excluded (fixed term/permanently) in the last term/year/three years?
9. How many managed moves have taken place this term/year?
10. How do you deal with poor behaviour that takes place beyond the school gate?
11. How do you deal with cyber bullying? What steps do we take to educate staff about the issues of social media? What steps have you taken to inform/educate parents about the potential pitfalls of social media, for example, cyber-bullying, 'grooming' and 'unfriending'?
12. How do you deal with poor behaviour that occurs during a school organised or related activity/trip?
13. Does the school have links with other schools in relation to behaviour initiatives?
14. How many Early Help Assessments have been carried out on pupils in this school?

8. Do we have a sound financial strategy, make the most efficient use of our resources, obtain good value for money and have robust procurement and financial systems

Questions for the governing body:

1. Do we understand how the delegated budget received from the local authority or the General Annual Grant from the Education Funding Agency has been calculated? Are we clear what items of expenditure this budget is meant to cover?
2. Do we have the necessary skills on the governing body to effectively monitor the finance and procurement processes effectively?
3. Are there clear terms of reference for any committee(s) dealing with finance?
4. Are there clear financial procedures, including procedures for procurement, in place? Are there appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that the agreed procedures are being followed? Have we taken/received advice from the local authority/our auditors on our financial systems? Do we have sound procedures in place for fraud detection?
5. Are we allocating funding in line with development/improvement priorities?
6. Are we making efficient use of all our financial resources?
7. Are there areas in which we could obtain better value for money from our budget?
8. Are we under or over spending in any areas of the budget? Why is this?
9. Do we have a deficit and do we have a clear plan for eliminating it?
10. Do we have any reserves and do we have a clear plan in relation to spending them?

Questions for school leaders:

1. Does the school have the necessary skills in the staff team to manage finance and procurement well?

2. Do you think that the governing body has the necessary skills to effectively monitor the finance and procurement processes effectively?
3. Have you benchmarked our spending on (e.g. learning resources and energy) against similar schools?
4. Have you considered joint procurement with other schools?

Local authority maintained schools:

1. Is the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) return a regular item on the relevant GB/Finance Committee agenda? Have the governing body put in place an action plan to address any issues found when completing the SFVS? Have all members of the governing body seen a copy of the SFVS?

9. Are the buildings and other assets in good condition and are they well used?

1. Is there a systematic cycle of planning and review of the state of our buildings and other assets?
2. Do we have a priority list of buildings and assets in need of repair/replacement?
3. How will projected pupil numbers affect the building requirements for the next three years?
4. Are all parts of our buildings used to their maximum potential and, if not, do we have a plan in place to improve this.
5. What process does the school use to identify possible building development funds?
6. Have we identified all the obvious risks (including asbestos) associated with our buildings and do we have a plan for managing them?
7. Have we got adequate levels of insurance?
8. Do we know/employ someone to maintain the buildings/manage repairs?
9. Do we have a plan for investment in learning resources (including IT systems)? Do we invest adequately in comparison to other schools?

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

Guidance on School Visits



Visits provide an opportunity to develop a good awareness and understanding to help governors in their strategic role as well as to develop teamwork with school staff. Visits help provide an understanding of the way in which the school operates to embed its ethos and achieve its aims. Visits allow governors to support the school through informed decision making.

Visits should generally relate to the priorities in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

It may not be possible for governors to be available during the day, however, **all** governors should do **some** visits, at least once per term. The frequency and type of visit will vary according to role, for example, the governor with responsibility for child protection will ideally be making half termly visits.

What a visit is not

- ☞ A form of inspection - governors should not make judgements about individual staff members.
- ☞ A chance to check on the progress of own children – it is recommended that governors do not visit classes in which they have children/family members.
- ☞ An opportunity for a governor to pursue a personal agenda – governors are visiting on behalf of the governing body.
- ☞ A lengthy process which monopolises school/teacher time.

The benefits of visits to school

To governors:

- ☞ Recognise and celebrate success.
- ☞ Develop relationships with staff.
- ☞ Get to know the children.
- ☞ Understand the environment in which teachers teach.
- ☞ Monitor policies in action.
- ☞ Find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.
- ☞ Deepen understanding and increase confidence and knowledge.
- ☞ Inform decision making.

To teachers:

- ☞ Ensure governors understand the reality of the classroom.
- ☞ Get to know governors.
- ☞ Understand better the governors' roles and responsibilities.
- ☞ Have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion.
- ☞ Highlight the need for particular resources.

Before the visit, governors will:

- ☞ Agree the date of the visit in advance with the Head of School.
- ☞ Clarify the purpose of the visit and how this links to priorities in the SIP/SDP and agree an agenda with the Head of School. Visits should help inform the strategic role of the governing body.
- ☞ Undertake any pre-reading required, such as reviewing related policy documents or guidance material.

During the visit governors will:

- ☞ Remember the visit is being made on behalf of the governing body and not make any judgements or promises.
- ☞ Be punctual, courteous and considerate at all times respecting the professional roles in school.

 Follow safeguarding procedures for visitors.

 Respect confidentiality at all times.

After the visit governors will:

 Consider if the purpose of the visit has been achieved and determine any follow up activity that would be useful.

 Complete the *School Visit Notes* form (below) as a record of the visit and contribute feedback to the governing body or committees; this form should be sent to the Head of Federation and the Chair.

Sphere federation

Governing Body

School Visit Notes



Name:		Governor role:	
School(s):		Date:	
Purpose of visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>		Arranging and planning a visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Observe range of attitudes, behaviour, achievements <input type="checkbox"/> Understand views and values of staff and/or pupils <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the resources and the environment <input type="checkbox"/> Gain information to assist policy-making and decision-taking <input type="checkbox"/> Governors are known and demonstrate commitment to the school <input type="checkbox"/> Observe the operation of policies <input type="checkbox"/> Give active support to the activities of the school <input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of changes and different approaches to teaching and learning <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate being a critical friend of the school <input type="checkbox"/> Holding school to account, evaluating its progress		<input type="checkbox"/> Agree a date and time with the headteacher <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify what you will do (time of arrival, departure; who you will see; focus of your visit) <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that you are representing the governing body, and are a guest of the school; governors do not have an automatic right to enter the school buildings <input type="checkbox"/> Remember to respect the professionalism of the teachers and to respect the children <input type="checkbox"/> Be supportive of the headteacher and all staff <input type="checkbox"/> You may wish to make a full report of your visit for the GB; share your observations with the headteacher first	
Key priorities for visit <i>(please indicate below)</i>		TLC points <i>(link governors)</i>	Safeguarding <i>(essential)</i>
Core functions, listed in DiE's Governance Handbook (2017): <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction <input type="checkbox"/> Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff <input type="checkbox"/> Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent		<input type="checkbox"/> SEND and pupil premium <input type="checkbox"/> EYFS <input type="checkbox"/> SIP priorities <input type="checkbox"/> Any other comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Signed in correctly <input type="checkbox"/> Good behaviour observed <input type="checkbox"/> Safe physical environment <input type="checkbox"/> Any other comments:
Thoughts in advance of your visit <i>(optional; consider the points above, so that you're clear what to explore)</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			
Summary of activity <i>What did you do? What did you see? (eg lesson, meeting) Who did you talk to?</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			
Strengths? <i>eg achievements of the children</i>		Areas to develop? <i>eg learning environment</i>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>	
What do you want to find out more about? <i>eg any clarification needed, concerns to be raised</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			
Who did you share the observations of this visit with? What will happen next? <i>eg headteacher, GB chair</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			
St James' only: Comment on the Christian vision in practice. <i>eg what you saw / heard – and what impact?</i>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px;"></div>			

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

Register of governors' business and personal interests



The governing body is required by regulations made under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to establish a register which lists, for each member of the governing body and the Head of Federation, any business or personal interests they or any member of their immediate family have which **could conflict with the schools' interests**; to keep the register up to date with notification of changes and through annual review of entries, and to make the register available for inspection by governors, staff, parents and the Directors of Education and Finance or their representative.

For register purposes a close relative is defined as a spouse, parent, sibling, son, daughter or common law partner. **As a general principle, governors should err on the side of caution** and declare interests that they think could be covered by the guidance above. Such a declaration must be made as soon as a governor becomes aware of the possibility of any such conflict arising or indeed that may be perceived / construed as arising. A good test is for the governor to ask himself / herself whether others would think that the interest is of a kind to make this possible. If the governor thinks this is so or is in doubt then the information should be recorded on the register of interests. Assistance can be sought from the Governor Support Service in the first instance if any clarification is required.

Please note all governors should sign and return this form even if they have no interests to declare. Please ensure this form is returned to the school for retention.

1. **Involvement in companies:** Includes, for example, directorships and company secretary, employee, or any other position where a person is actively involved in the running of a company's affairs, where the company has, or may have, a contractual relationship with the school. (Governors must declare any financial interests which could conflict with the school's interests, e.g. work for which a fee is received)

Details (including company / position):

2. **Other personal interests:** Governors must declare any non-financial interests that they consider conflict with the School's interests, for example, if they are involved in an official capacity with an outside organisation which has dealings with the School or if a member of their immediate family works or applies for a post in the school.

Details:

3. **Shares or other securities:** The holding of shares or other securities in a company or other body with whom the school contracts or is considering contracting, should be declared if the holding exceeds £25,000 or more than 1/100th of the nominal value of the issued share capital, whichever is less. **The size and nature of the holding need not be declared, simply the name of the company.** This requirement does not extend to banks or building societies.

Details:

4. The intention to bid for the purchase of land or property owned by the council or school

Details:

Name of governor:

Signature:

Date:

Sphere Federation

Governing Body

Code of conduct



Introduction

The following has been produced by Leeds Governor Support Services. It is not a definitive statement of responsibilities but is concerned with the common understanding of broad principles by which the Governing Body and individual governors will operate.

The governing body accepts the following principles and procedures:

General

1. I will have responsibility for determining, monitoring and keeping under review the broad policies, plans and procedures within which the schools operate.
2. I recognise that the Head of Federation is responsible for the implementation of policy and internal organisation and management of the schools, and the implementation and operation of the curriculum.
3. I accept that all governors have equal status, and although appointed by different groups (i.e. parents, staff, Diocese) and that every governor's role is to govern the schools; in the best interest of pupils, not to represent the interests of the constituency from which they were elected or appointed.
4. I have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given me delegated authority to do so.
5. I have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as I have responsibility for staff, I will fulfil all the legal expectations as, or on behalf of, the employer.
6. I will encourage open government and shall be seen to be doing so.
7. I will consider carefully, how our decisions may affect other schools.
8. The following details for each governor and associate member will be published on the school websites:
 - name
 - category of governor
 - which body appointed them
 - date of appointment
 - term of office
 - date when stepped down (where applicable)
 - names of committees the governor serves on
 - details of any responsibility, e.g. chair or vice chair.
 - summary of relevant business and pecuniary interests (as recorded in the register of interests)
 - attendance record at governing body and committee meetings over the last academic year

Commitment

9. I acknowledge that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
10. I will involve myself actively in the work of the governing body, attend governing body meetings as frequently as possible; I accept that failure to attend at least one meeting every six months will lead to the termination of my position as governor.
11. I accept my fair share of responsibilities, including membership of committees or working groups.
12. I will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve myself in school activities.
13. Every member of the governing body will actively contribute relevant skills and experience
14. I uphold an ethos of professionalism and have high expectations of the governors' role, including an expectation that I undertake whatever training or development activity is needed to fill any gaps in the skills I have to contribute to effective governance. If I fail persistently to do this I will be in breach of the code of conduct and may bring the governing body or the office of a governor into disrepute – and as such provide grounds for the governing body to consider suspension.

Relationships

15. I will strive to work as a team.
16. I will seek to develop effective working relationships with our Head of Federation, staff, parents, the Local Authority, and other relevant agencies (including the Diocesan Authorities where appropriate), and the community.
17. I acknowledge the Governing Body committee structures and relationships, and will respect the schemes of delegation ie the agreements made to delegate some decision-making to sub-committees.

Confidentiality

18. I will observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the governing body in meetings and from my visits to school as governors.
19. I will observe complete confidentiality when required or asked to do so by the governing body, especially regarding matters concerning individual staff or students.
20. I will exercise the greatest prudence if a discussion of a potentially contentious issue affecting the school arises outside the Governing Body.

Conduct

21. I will encourage the open expression of views at meetings, but accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents.
22. I will only speak or act on behalf of the governing body when I have been specifically authorised to do so.
23. In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school I will follow the procedures established by the governing body.
24. My visits to school will be undertaken within the framework established by the Governing Body, in agreement with the Head and staff.
25. In discharging my duties I will always be mindful of my responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of my school; this includes interaction on social media which should be sensitive and respectful, and in line with the schools' ethos, principles and policies.

Suspension

26. If the need arises to use the sanction of suspending a governor, I will do so by following legal requirements so as to ensure a fair and objective process.

Removal

27. I recognise that removing a governor from office is a last resort, and that it is the appointing bodies which have the power to remove those they appoint.
28. If the need arises to use the sanction of removing a governor or removing the Chair, I will do so by following legal requirements so as to ensure a fair and objective process.

Name of governor:

Signature:

Date:

Sphere federation

Governing Body

Glossary



- ASP – Assessing School Performance
- CPD – Continuous Professional Development for school staff
- DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service
- EAL – English as an Additional Language
- ECT – Early Career Teachers
- EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan
- EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage
- GLD – Good Level of Development
- GPS – Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (occasionally, this may be referred to as SPaG; this is not the official term)
- FFT – Fischer Family Trust (a non-profit company providing data to schools)
- FSM – Free School Meals
- HLTA – Higher Level Teaching Assistant
- KS1/2 – Key Stages of the curriculum (KS1 is for pupils aged 5 to 7; KS2 for pupils 7 to 11)
- LA – Local Authority
- Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education (the body which inspects education)
- PRP – Performance related pay
- PSHE – Personal, Social and Health Education
- Pupil premium – additional funding allocated to pupils eligible for FSM, in care, or parents in armed services
- Quorum – minimum numbers of members present at meetings before decisions can be made
- SATs – Standard Assessment Tasks used for curriculum assessment
- SIP – School Improvement Plan
- SEAL – Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
- SEF – Self-Evaluation Form
- SEN(D) – Special Education Needs (and Disabilities)
- SENCo – SEN Co-ordinator
- SFVS – Schools Financial Value Standard (a means for the governing body to assess its financial processes)
- SLT – Senior Leadership Team
- SMSCH – Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural and Health
- SPAG – Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar (Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling more correctly)
- TAs – Teaching Assistants
- TLRs – Teaching and Learning Responsibilities
- virement – agreed transfer of funds from an allocated budget heading to another