

Governor Visits

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Core function of governors

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that its money is well spent, including the pupil premium

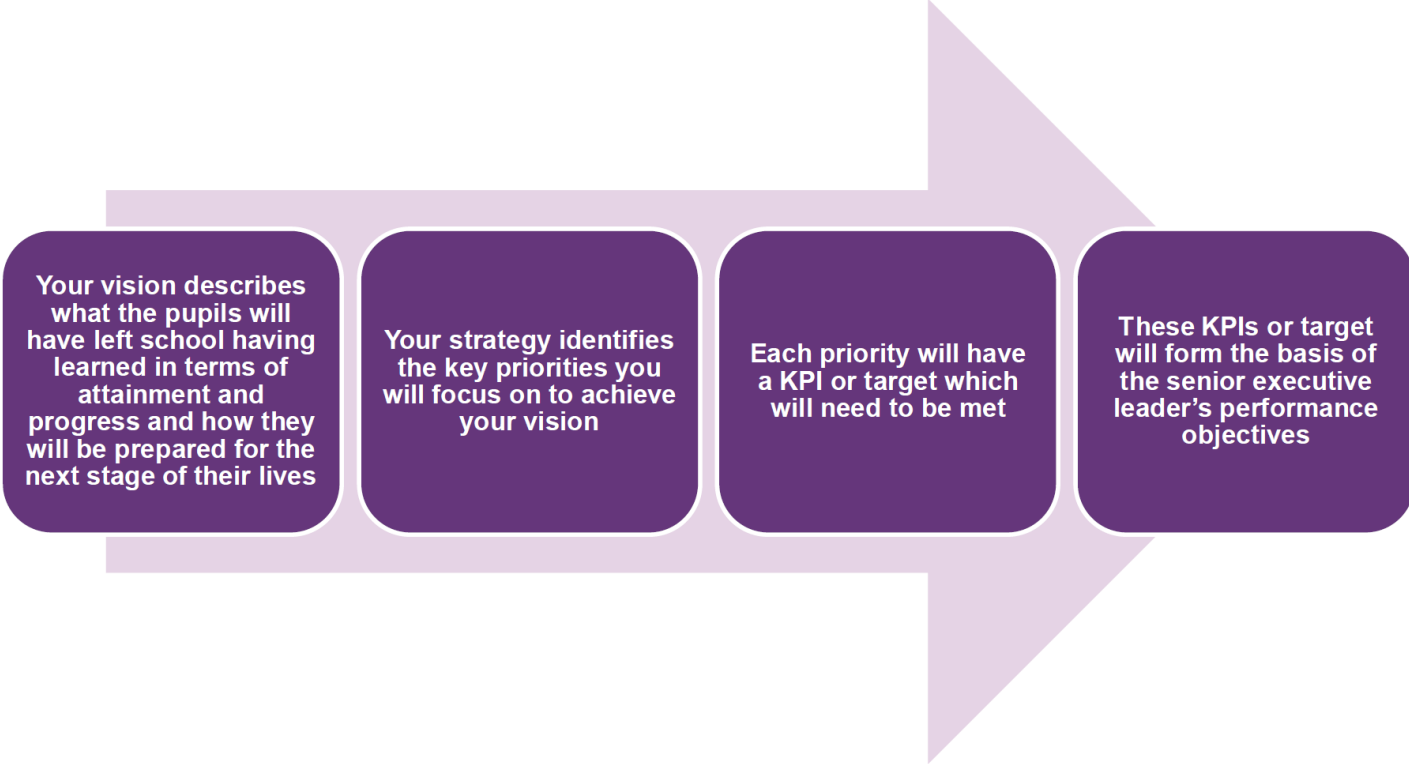
Effective governance is based on six key features:

- Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
- Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance
- People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity
- Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements
- Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

Areas of the Education Inspection Framework:

- **Quality of Education** Do pupils know more and remember more?
- **Behaviour and attitudes** Can pupils learn and feel safe? Good behaviour is for everyone
- **Personal Development** Does the curriculum extend beyond the academic, providing for pupils' broader development? SMSC
- **Leadership and management** SLT / subject leaders / governors / MAT / Safeguarding
- **Focus on disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and Early Years through all areas**

Vision and School Improvement Plan



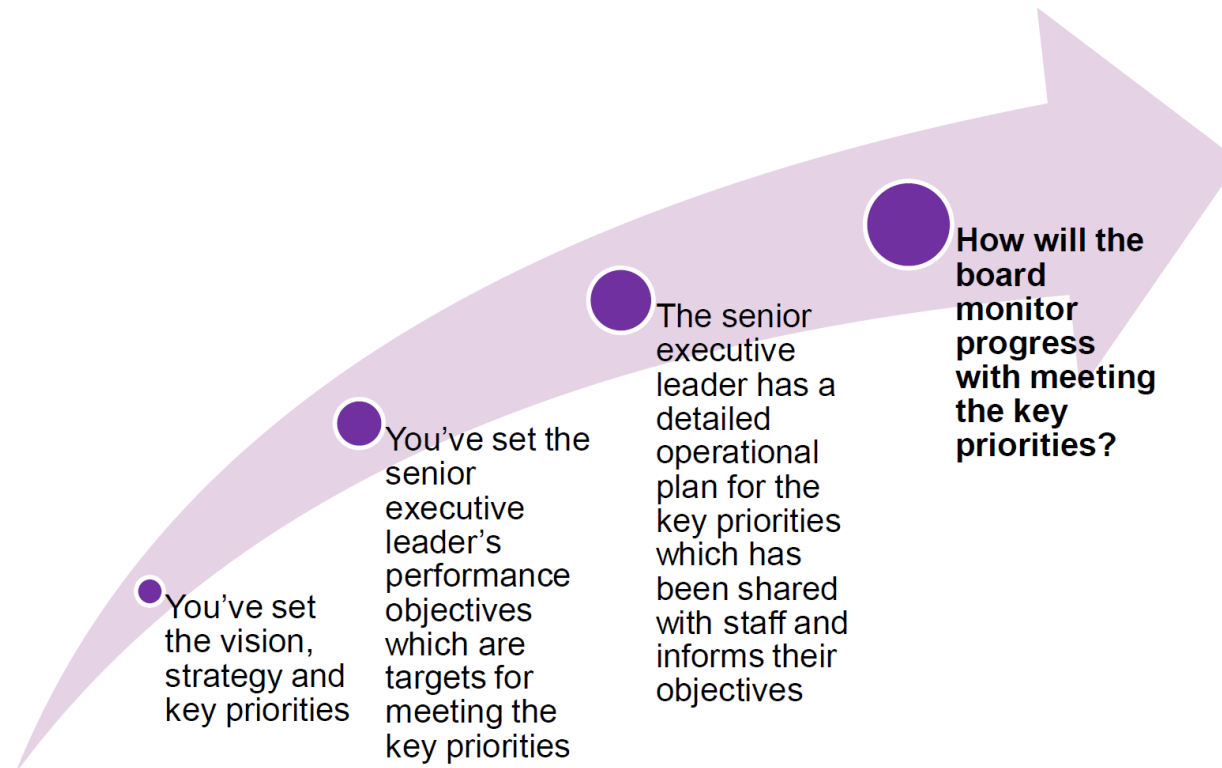
Your vision describes what the pupils will have left school having learned in terms of attainment and progress and how they will be prepared for the next stage of their lives

Your strategy identifies the key priorities you will focus on to achieve your vision

Each priority will have a KPI or target which will need to be met

These KPIs or target will form the basis of the senior executive leader's performance objectives

Monitoring your priorities



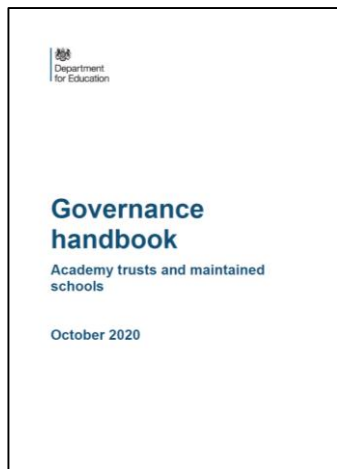
Sources of Information

Reports from senior leaders	Reports from external advisors / consultants	Published data	Ofsted IDSR data
School's internal data	Subject leader / department head reports	Surveys – staff / pupils / parents	Attendance at key meetings
Answers to questions at board meetings	School self-evaluation	Mid-year performance reviews	Governor visits

Triangulation



‘Visits to schools by those governing can be enormously useful in helping them carry out their role. That role is largely strategic, not operational, and includes ensuring vision is being turned into reality, ethos is being embedded and progress is being made against the strategic plan. At the heart of this is one of NGA’s eight elements of effective governance : knowing the school – the data, the staff, the parents, the children and the community.’



‘Many governors find that visiting, particularly during the day, is a helpful way to find out more about the school. Through pre-arranged visits that have a clear focus, governors can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice’.

Setting expectations

- Prearranged focus
- Related to the monitoring of school improvement plan / strategic plan
- Linked to objectives / targets
- Develop an understanding of strengths and weaknesses
- Involve a member of staff responsible for the objective / target
- Give background information / context
- Discussions with pupils / staff affected by it
- See the initiative in action

Examples of visit foci

- The use of resources such as how the premises are utilised, a new teaching resource in action or a demonstration of an IT system
- Monitoring the implementation of a particular policy for example safeguarding, homework, curriculum planning
- Monitoring progress towards specific targets from the school/academy development plan for example meeting with the subject lead of an area for improvement and learning about the strategy adopted and how this translates through to classroom practice and children's learning
- Gaining an understanding of a particular curriculum area or year group
- Gaining an understanding of the process of assessment and tracking pupil cohorts
- Gaining an understanding of how a particular issue (e.g. provision of ICT, boys' achievement, literacy) is dealt with on a day-to-day basis

Strategic not operational

- Visits are not inspections – this should be left to professionals contracted to the school e.g. health and safety
- Developing understanding of policy and practice
- Could be a tour – if new to role
- Attend meetings as an observer
- Visit informally – performances / celebrations
- Governors should not be observing lessons... 'Governors are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning'. DfE
- Follow the protocol for Governor visits

Code of Conduct

How often should you visit?

- Those visiting “should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school”
- It can therefore be useful for the governing board to set a minimum and maximum number of visits that individuals should make each school year
- NGA recommends that each individual board member visits the school at least once a year but no more than once a term
- A well-planned and utilised hour at the beginning or end of the school day can be sufficient for a productive visit

What should I do?

- It is vital to plan school visits in advance, especially if they involve visiting classrooms
- Visits should be part of a planned programme agreed by the **whole governing board** and **linking to the school strategy**
- Having a **clear protocol in place** that is understood by all ensures a disproportionate amount of time isn't spent planning each visit
- Each member of staff who will be involved in the visit should also know the purpose of the visit and what to expect. This should be coordinated directly through the headteacher who will confirm details of the visit with the staff member themselves

What should I do?

Should be familiar with the school's code of conduct as well as that of the governing board.

May wish to ask specific questions such as:

- Where should I go on arrival at the school?
- Who will meet me and introduce me to the relevant staff member?
- How would you like me to be introduced to pupils i.e. by first name or Ms/Mr X?
- How should I address staff i.e. by first name or Ms/Mr X?
- What should I do if a pupil asks for help?
- What should I do if I see a pupil behaving inappropriately?

What should I do?

Reviewing school visits

After each visit to the school, individuals should take time to reflect and consider anything they might do differently in future visits.

In addition, the governing board should review their school visits protocol every academic year. **The review should consider:**

- Are our visits proving useful?
- What benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, have come from our visits?
- Are we better informed and enabled to make sensible decisions?
- Is there anything we need to change about how visits are conducted, taking into account feedback from school staff?
- What should I do if I have concerns about staff?

Do's and Don'ts

Before

Do's

- Discuss the visit at a governing board meeting, including identifying a clear purpose. (It can be useful to think of the governing board as 'commissioning' the visit and delegating responsibility for carrying it out to individual governor(s).)
- Arrange a mutually convenient time, avoiding sensitive times such as exam or assessment periods
- Discuss the visit with the headteacher and ensure that any member of staff who will be involved in the visit understands the arrangements

Don'ts

- Turn up unannounced
- Approach staff directly without the approval of the headteacher

Do's and Don'ts

During

Do's

- Present yourself in a way which matches the professionalism expected of school staff
- Report to reception and follow procedures for visitors – even those familiar with the school should do this
- Only enter classrooms and other areas of the school – including the staffroom – following invitation by a member of staff
- Keep to the role agreed; only talk to students if invited to do so by the teacher
- Be flexible if something urgent crops up which means the arranged tasks cannot take place – always keep in mind that the education of the students is of overriding importance
- Be courteous and professional throughout the visit, including thanking members of staff before leaving.

Do's and Don'ts

During

Don'ts

- Give the impression that you are inspecting, for example by using a clipboard or making notes while visiting a classroom
- Assume a different role to that agreed; parents and education professionals, in particular, should be mindful not to stray into these roles
- Express personal opinions if pressed on a controversial issue – individuals should keep in mind that they are representing the governing board as a whole
- Make assumptions – always ask for explanations of anything not understood at an appropriate time when it will not interrupt pupils' learning (this may be in conversation with the class teacher after the lesson or with the headteacher at the end of the visit)
- Check on the progress of individual children, including your own
- Walk around the school unaccompanied or put yourself in situations where you are likely to be unaccompanied with pupils.

Do's and Don'ts

After

Do's

- Share any concerns, however trivial, with the chair and the headteacher
- Complete a short visit report, a draft should be shared with any relevant members of staff and the headteacher, then taking their comments into account a final written report should be prepared and given to the governing board before the next meeting
- Ensure that school visits is an agenda item at the governing board meeting and that any findings are discussed
- Send a thank you email to those that contributed to the success of the visit

Don'ts

- Make comments regarding the teacher's conduct of the lesson or individual students
- Refer to individual teachers or students in your report, even in a positive light
- Talk about your visit away from the relevant and appropriate persons – what you have seen should be treated with the same level of confidentiality as any other governing board business

Visit Protocol

- Purpose – focus / notice
- Conduct
- Follow-up – visit report / shared with committee / full board
- Confidentiality
- Frequency
- Review

Visit Template

- Focus of visit
- Summary of activities
- Impact of actions to date / next steps
- Clarification / further questions
- Actions for governors to consider
- Other comments

Example of a governor visit on attendance

- Linked with the school improvement objective to improve attendance for disadvantaged pupils

‘We will ensure that our schools relentlessly tackle barriers to learning through high expectations and robust systems, so that all pupils can learn with dignity’

- Familiarisation with attendance policy
- Meeting with attendance lead / pupil premium lead
- Discussion about actions taken to date – and their impact
- Discussions with staff / pupils – how is good attendance encouraged

- How good is attendance? How do you know?
- What is the attendance figure currently?
- What does attendance and persistent absence tell you? Any groups – including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils? How do they compare to national?
- How are patterns identified and what is done about it?
- What has been the impact of the work to improve attendance?
- How many pupils have repeat fixed term exclusions? Are any sub-groups over-represented?

What is it like to be a pupil at your school on a daily basis?

