



BRENTWOOD DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

*“Supporting Catholic schools to provide excellent education where pupils flourish,
and Christ is made known to all.”*

Monitoring Remotely

Guidance for monitoring during the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020

Schools have welcomed back all pupils from September and started to get back to a level of normality. The support and strategic oversight of this process will be a key role for governing bodies, but it is likely that much of the business of the governing body will still be conducted remotely and that ‘virtual’ meetings will continue for some time.

[DfE guidance](#) does not prevent governors or trustees going into schools. When considering how to organise visits from governors or trustees, schools will need to consider their own risk assessments and how they will protect the health and safety of any visitors alongside staff and pupils

The guidance also explains that schools should consider how to manage visitors to the site and ensure site guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival.

If governor visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors. Depending on their risk assessment, schools may choose to continue to host governor meetings virtually.

This guide is to help governors prepare for, and carry out, the challenge of their monitoring role in the remote world.

Focus for monitoring

Leading into the Autumn term much emphasis is on maintaining oversight of the school/trust **plans and risk assessment** for getting all pupils back into education safely. [This checklist and questions to consider looks at some of the items for governing bodies to focus on as the new term unfolds](#)

Although the world will still be slightly different in the autumn, governors will need to re-focus on the other areas of monitoring that may have been side-lined over the past few months so it will be important to draft and implement a monitoring programme which allocates specific areas to governors/committees if you haven't already.

Safeguarding

Key contact:

Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting, if safe to do so. Agree the frequency of these calls/meetings and an outline of the discussion topics.

Key areas to consider:

- How the school is working to safeguard vulnerable pupils (including any who are at home for any reason, rather than in school), and whether these plans are working well
- Whether staff have concerns about any individual pupils, including those who were not technically categorised as 'vulnerable' by the DfE, and what the school is doing for these pupils? (Governors must not know any child specific information)
- If the school is delivering any remote lessons, what safeguarding arrangements are in place to keep pupils safe?
- Have all staff and governors (and regular volunteers, if being used at the present time in line with the risk assessment) read at least Part One of [the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2020'](#) (governors should read the whole document) and the appropriate induction policies (Safeguarding / Child Protection, Online Safety, Behaviour, Children Missing from Education, Code of Conduct)? How do governors know this? Where is it recorded?
- Have the Safeguarding and Behaviour Policies been updated and approved by governors, taking into account the new arrangements for the Autumn term? How do governors know that all staff are familiar with the updated policies? Where is this recorded?
- Has safeguarding training been completed by all staff? Where is this recorded and what arrangements are in place for staff unable to attend the training or new staff to be fully briefed?
- Is the Single Central Record up to date, when was it last monitored and by whom? Governors to decide on the frequency of their SCR monitoring and arrangements for reporting. Is the school aware of the updated DBS requirement that all pre employment documentation needs to be physically (not virtually) verified from the Autumn term?
- Are governors confident that all adults in school are aware of how to report a concern about a child as well as the whistle blowing procedure?
- Has the full governing board considered how it will get safeguarding updates and how these will feature in the governing board agendas?
- Does the school have sufficient numbers of staff/governors trained in safer recruitment? What are the arrangements for updating training and skills?

The [BCCS website has useful resources designed to help parents instigate or respond to dialogue around their child's wellbeing](#) (with specific help in talking to children about Coronavirus, Coping with Grief and Loss, and Mindfulness)

Health & Safety

This is a statutory element of compliance for schools - governors need to ensure they maintain a strategic overview of how this is managed.

Key contact:

Headteacher; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so

Key areas to consider:

- Are governors aware of the Health & Safety Executive spot check regime ([see HSE bulletin Sept. 2020](#)) and that the duty holders in school have been briefed on their responsibilities?
- Is the H&S policy up to date and being implemented by staff?
- Are governors assured that appropriate risk assessments are completed for off-site activities?
- Is staff training up to date (Fire, First Aid, etc.)
- Has the fire risk assessment been completed?

Headteacher and staff workload & wellbeing

It is important that governors fulfil their responsibility for the wellbeing of staff, and headteachers during this challenging time.

Key contact:

Headteacher; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so

Key areas to consider:

- Be wary of asking too much of the headteacher early in the autumn term until a routine is established
- Is the level of reporting (provided or requested) reasonable and proportionate for the work of the governing body?
- How often does the chair meet with the headteacher to discuss their and staff wellbeing? • Any additional support the Headteacher, or staff, needs?
- What are the workload pressure points and what can be done to alleviate these?
- Do governors need to do a staff wellbeing survey if not already completed?

Data

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance '[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): school and college performance measures](#)' outlines the approach to school and college accountability, performance tables and data during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. They will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020 and the Reception Baseline Assessment due to rollout this year has been suspended.

Although it may be difficult to get into school for classroom visits it is important that governors continue to monitor pupil progress and the impact of the various interventions and strategies implemented by the school. Governors need to be able to understand the range of school data available, so that they can challenge and support the school's professionals.

Key Contacts:

Headteacher, heads of year, subject leads; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so Request reports from the in-school tracking system.

Key areas to consider:

- How will the school identify where pupils are in their learning since returning to school after lockdown?
- What measures will there be for catch up and are there additional cost implications to consider?
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers
 - Has this gap widened due to pupils not being in school during the pandemic?
 - What are the plans to close these gaps?
 - What interventions/strategies are required?
 - What is the evidence to assure governors that these are the most appropriate strategies to use?
- What are the targets for the coming year?

Finance

Key contact:

Headteacher, Business Manager, CFO; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- Is a budget review meeting scheduled?
- Does the Budget Control Report (BCR) show that we are on track?
- Is the forecast expenditure on the SIDP on track to deliver the required outcomes?

- Have any development areas identified by the SFVS been added to action plans?
- Is the impact of expenditure being monitored effectively?
- Is the school tracking relevant additional COVID related expenditure (e.g. excess cleaning costs)?
- Have governors and trustees checked that their schools are accessing the funding, resources and training to improve remote learning for all pupils?
- Has the governing board considered benchmarking against similar schools via the [‘Schools Financial Benchmarking Service’](#)?
- What are the plans and rationale for spending the additional Coronavirus catch-up premium? Do these align with the catch-up priorities of pupils?
- Are the school and governors making use of the Education Endowment Foundation [Support Guide for Schools](#) and [School Planning Guide 2020/2021](#)?
- Is the impact of pupil premium expenditure being rigorously monitored?
- Is the impact of primary PE & sports premium being rigorously monitored?

Attendance

Understanding a school's attendance patterns and trends enables focus on helping those pupils, or groups of pupils, to ensure they are given every opportunity to engage fully with their education.

Key contact:

Headteacher, Heads of year; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- Has the expectation for children to attend from September been communicated by the school?
- Are governors aware of the new [contingency planning guidance](#), which sets out the process to follow if local restrictions are imposed?
- Are there any pupils or groups of pupils for whom attendance is a problem?
- Are there any trends in the attendance figures?
- How does attendance compare with previous years/terms?
- What strategies are being used to improve attendance if necessary?
- Has the attendance policy been communicated to all parents? • What action is the school taking for persistent non-attendance?

Curriculum

Many pupils will be trying to catch up on missed months of education, so it will be important for governors to understand how this will be achieved.

Key Contacts:

Headteacher, heads of year, subject leads; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- How do governors ensure that the planned curriculum (Intent) is what is being delivered (Implementation)?
- Could subject lead governors make a virtual appointment to discuss with school subject leads and question what is happening in class, and compare this against their sequenced curriculum plans as an assurance that the intent is being implemented?
- Have governors/trustees been involved in discussions around curriculum intent?
- How will the curriculum prepare pupils for the next stage of education/life?
- How do we know that the curriculum is broad and balanced? What evidence is there?
- Can curriculum leaders explain how the curriculum is planned and sequenced? • Does the curriculum meet the needs of every pupil- do we have high expectations for all?
- How will the school identify where pupils are in their learning since returning to school after lockdown?
- How do we know it is suitable for each key stage?
- Are the legal requirements of the curriculum covered by what we offer? Are plans in place to address new RSE requirements?)
- What do our pupils say about the curriculum that we offer? How have we sought out their views?
- How do we know what we have planned for pupils is being delivered?
- If there are any pupils that have not returned to school and are working online, how is their work being allocated and monitored and does this differ from the curriculum being taught to their peers in school?
- What are the catch-up priorities for pupils? Is the school ensuring transparency with parents as to how these priorities will be met using the Coronavirus catch-up premium?
- Are all governors involved in monitoring various aspects/subjects?

RE and Catholic Life

It is important that Catholic school leaders ensure that any modification of timetables to accommodate 'catch-up' curricula are not made at the expense of Religious Education. As the core of the core curriculum, Religious Education must continue to be given full parity with other core curriculum subjects and the requirement remains that it must constitute at least 10% of the taught curriculum from Early Years to the end of year 11, and 5% of the taught curriculum in sixth form.

An integral part of life in a Catholic school, governors have a responsibility to ensure that daily prayer and liturgy remain at the heart of the Catholic schools so that children and young people, as well as staff, can be consoled by the sure knowledge of the presence of God with them. Of course, all gatherings for shared prayer and the celebration of the Liturgy should observe social distancing, ensure that the integrity of 'bubbles' is preserved and conform to the school's risk assessment for the full return of pupils to school.

Key contact:

Headteacher, RE Coordinator; via phone call, online meeting or face-to-face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- What did the school do for RE and Collective Worship/Spiritual Development/Catholic Life during lockdown?
- What are the plans for addressing 'gaps' in RE and Spiritual Development?
- What will Collective Worship provision be now? How is the school mitigating issues/restrictions?

SEND

The Covid-19 pandemic may well have been more disruptive to the lives and routines of children with special educational needs and disabilities, so this is a key area to monitor to ensure these pupils are settled back into education.

Key contact:

Headteacher, SENCo; via phone call, online meeting or face to face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- Have strategies been put in place to support SEND pupils back to school? Have they been effective?
- Is there a named member of the governing board (or a committee) with oversight of the school's arrangements for SEND?

- Have they been involved in reviewing the school's SEND Policy?
- Are regular meetings held between the SEND Governor/committee and the SENCo? How frequently are these?
- Is a SEND Annual report produced and presented to Governors? Who writes this? How is this shared?
- How are disabled learners accounted for in school's policies with regards to behaviour and exclusions?
- What is the quality of teaching like for pupils with SEND? How do you know?
- Have staff involved in supporting SEND pupils received appropriate training?
- What funding does the school receive for SEND?
- How is this money spent?
- What impact is the funding having?
- How many pupils in the school have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?
- What progress are pupil with SEND making in school?

Stakeholder Engagement

Communication with parents on the expectations and safety protocols of getting all pupils back into school is vital to re-establishing their confidence that their children will be as safe as possible in school.

Key contact:

Headteacher; via phone call, online meeting or face-to-face meeting if safe to do so.

Key areas to consider:

- Is the school website up to date and informative?
- Do parents know what to expect?
- Is there regular communication with parents to update them when necessary?
- Have parents been advised of any changes to Health & Safety aspects when dropping off and picking up their children?
- Are parents aware of transport plans and safety measures?

Below is an example monitoring programme, should you wish to use this as a basis for your own if you do not already have one.

Example Monitoring Programme

Term	Focus	Date/Method	Name of Governor(s)	Staff Member	Impact and Action	Share Findings
Autumn half term 1	Risk Assessment	(Date) Online meeting	Chair H&S governor/ committee	HT	All safety requirements in place. Weekly reviews in place.	FGB (date)
Autumn half term 1	Safeguarding	(Date) Meet with DSL	Safeguarding governor	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (HT)	Report to FGB. Assurance on safeguarding	FGB (date)
Autumn half term 1	Workload and Wellbeing	(Date) Survey?	Chair/Personnel or HR Committee	HT/Wellbeing lead	Report to FGB	FGB (date)
Autumn half term 1	Pupil Premium – planned spend and impact	(Date) Review of plans	Pupil Premium / Vulnerable Groups linked governor	Pupil Premium staff lead	Closing the gap. Cohort analysis by each year & subject and by groups of learners	FGB or relevant committee (date)
Autumn half term 1	SEND and LAC	(Date) Meet with SENCo	SEND governor	SENCo	Familiarise with SEND cohort and EHCPs & any LAC - Identify any issues	FGB or relevant committee (date)
Autumn half term 2	Curriculum (intent and implementation)	(Date) Meet with HT/Subject Leads	Named governor	HT	Overview and monitor progress against milestones	FGB or relevant committee (date)
Autumn half term 2	Data	(Date) Monitor reports. Meet with subject leads/HT	Named governor	HT	Monitor progress against milestones. Gaps, interventions, targets	FGB or relevant committee (date)
Autumn half term 2	Attendance	(Date) Meet with HT	Named governor	HT	Absence rate, trends, reasons for absence, appropriate actions	FGB (date)
Autumn half term 2	Finance	(Date) Meet with HT/Business Manager	Finance Committee	HT/Business Manager	Finance on track Budget review Impact of performance management reviews	FGB (date)