Governor School Visits Policy v2.3

Important: This document can only be considered valid when viewed on the TEAL or school website. If this document has been printed or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the document online. **Name and Title of Author:**	Lisa Longstaff, Director of HR
Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:	Trust Board
Implementation Date:	Spring 2024
Review Date:	Spring 2027
Target Audience:	Local Governing Bodies, Trustees, Headteachers, Senior Leadership Teams
Related Documents: **All TEAL policies and procedures referred to are located on TEAL's website, www.theeducationalliance.org.uk.** **If English is not your first language, and you require assistance/translation, please contact the central administration team.**	The Education Alliance's Governance Framework Academy Trust Handbook 2023 DfE Governance Handbook Code of Conduct for Governance

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Policy Statement

We are here to make great schools and happier, stronger communities so that people have better lives. We do this by:

- Always doing what is right

- Trusting in each other and standing shoulder to shoulder

- Doing what we know makes the difference

Doing what is right means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others and being honest, open and transparent.

The role of a Local Governor within a Multi-academy Trust is an important one. In developing governance arrangements, the Trust Board seeks to ensure that the responsibility to govern is vested in those closest to the impact of decision-making and that such responsibility matches the capacity of those assuming responsibility. The Trust Board establishes Local Governing Bodies for each of its schools, for the most part made up of individuals drawn from the school's community. This policy aims to support governors in fulfilling their crucial roles within schools.

1. Aims

Governor visits provide opportunities for governors to monitor, support, challenge and feedback to Headteachers and other members of their local governing body. They also form an essential part of our wellbeing checks and support for Headteachers. This policy aims to provide a framework for governor visits and includes a process for reporting back to the governing body, ensuring learning, monitoring and feedback is shared across the local governing body. Governor visits are important activities and this policy aims to provide a consistent approach across the trust, whereby governor visits are purposeful, productive, enjoyable, meaningful, clear and transparent, and not burdensome on governors, headteachers, staff and pupils.

2. Guidance and scope

This policy takes account of best practice and guidance from the DfE's Academy Trust Handbook, its Governance Handbook and aligns with TEAL's Governance Framework.

Governors must know their schools in order to maintain robust accountability. One way this is done is through pre-arranged governor link visits and/or a school tour. Governors – especially in our secondary schools - are often also linked to a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or associate managers within the school, to ensure that all areas of the School Improvement Plan, and any statutory areas of responsibility (e.g safeguarding or SEND), have governor oversight.

Where Trustees undertake visits, they should adhere to this policy and complete the relevant documentation.

It is important that governors act as a critical friend to the school and that during a visit, governors will not:

- assess the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom

- manage the school or interfere in the day-to-day operations of the school

3. Governor Visits

Governors will carry out regular governor link meetings and/or school tours to meet the local governing bodies statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness and to act as critical friend to members of the senior leadership team, whilst ensuring that we are mindful or the workload of our headteachers, especially in our smaller schools.

It is important that there is a clear purpose for each visit for them to be effective.

There are two types of governor visits:

1. **Governor Link Meetings**, where governors discuss the progress of the school in a particular area with the Headteacher or relevant senior leader. These visits can be undertaken remotely via Microsoft Teams if required. This may involve more than one governor or senior leader as appropriate, for example where governors share an area of the School Improvement Plan.

2. **School Tours**, where governors will be shown around the school by the relevant staff member to get a feel for a particular area and to see the school in operation. They may also talk informally to staff members and pupils. Governors may decide to combine the tour as part of a link meeting should they wish.

Governors have strategic oversight of the School Improvement Plan. Individual governors, or a sub-group of governors, may be linked to the most appropriate senior leader to oversee a specific strand of the plan to make school visits more focused. School administrators will arrange these visits in conjunction with the headteacher.

The frequency and number of visits will vary depending upon the size of school. For example, in our secondary schools (with larger senior teams) each governor might try and visit two or three times a year, usually within the first half of the autumn, spring and summer terms, linking to a member of the senior team. In a small primary school - where there is often just the Headteacher in a leadership position - this would not be feasible, and a rotation would be more appropriate ensuring that there are – in total - no more than two visits per term, or five or six across the full year. In addition, to these visits Chairs of LGBs will keep more regular contact, also checking on the wellbeing of the Headteacher.

Where governors are unable to visit schools, they may contact their link within school to agree a remote way of monitoring, such as utilising Microsoft Teams to hold virtual meetings.

School visits will normally take place within school hours.

4. During a visit

Governors should:

*   Sign in/out at the Reception and wear a governor badge.

*   Check with teachers before speaking to pupils.

*   Remain as observers and not pass comment on classroom practice or any specific incidents that happen, judge teaching methods, assess the quality of teaching, or comment on the extent of learning.

*   Use the agreed recording method for the visit (see Appendix A).

*   Raise any contentious points or issues of concern with their link senior leader or the Headteacher before leaving school or immediately afterwards.

- Adhere to the `Helpful Guide to Microsoft Teams Meeting for guidance (Appendix B) for governor meetings that are undertaken remotely.

5. After a visit

Following a visit, the link senior leader will complete a brief summary of the meeting in order to provide a record of the points discussed and to help continuity for the next meeting. These notes will be shared with the governor(s) involved and the Headteacher.

Governors are also requested to complete a brief feedback form (Appendix A) as soon as reasonably practicable, normally within 7 days of the school visit. This form should be used to record each governor visit, remote meeting or school tour attended. The feedback form should be emailed to the Governance Clerk who can upload the document to the Resources Section of Decision Time for all governors to access. When completing the report, governors will:

- Provide constructive, clear and transparent feedback

- Remain observational

- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role

6. Access to School Sites

Should the school be closed for an unplanned period (for example, due to a national lockdown) it is anticipated that governor visits will continue on a remote basis. This approach may also apply to governors who are well, but for a period of time, are unable to attend the school site (e.g. incapacitated or working away).

Appendix A: Feedback Form for Governor School Visits

This form is to be used to record all governor visits to the school

Governor Name:	
School:	
Link Area(s)	
Date of Visit:	
Staff Member(s) visited:	
Visit type:	Governor Link/School Improvement Plan Meeting ☐ School Tour ☐ Other (please state)
Agreed Focus of visit:	
Issues and key questions discussed:	
Comments:	
Any issues or concerns as a result of the visit *(where this is the case, please discuss these with the Headteacher before completing):*	

Signed:		**Date:**	

Please email a copy of your completed form to your Governance Clerk within 7 days of your school visit.

A Helpful Guide to Microsoft Teams Meetings

Before the Meeting:

If already using Office365, it is recommended you download and use the desktop app for Microsoft Teams: https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app

• Be aware of confidentiality and that sensitive information may be discussed, for security purposes please ensure you join the meeting from a private room where possible.

• Ideally, choose an area that is well lit and sit close to your device to maximise sound quality.

• If available, using headphones will improve sound quality and help to block out any background noise. Importantly, it also helps keep the meeting discussion confidential.

• During meetings on Microsoft Teams, please ensure that the Chat function is not used for any sensitive or confidential information.

• Please note if using the Microsoft Teams App on your mobile phone, ensure you are connected to Wi-Fi to avoid any data network charges.
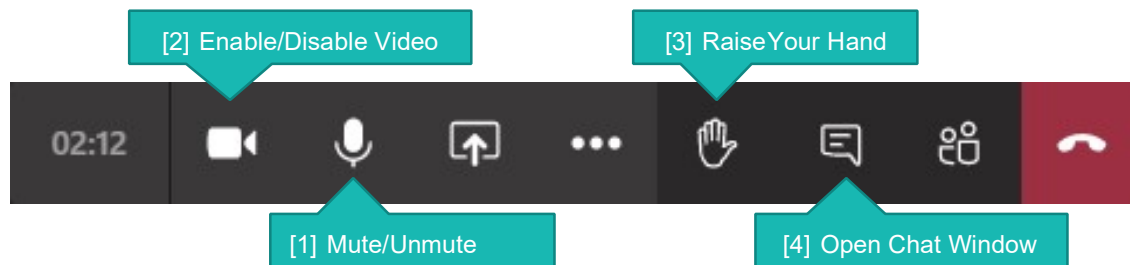
Joining the Meeting:

You will be emailed a link to join the meeting. Simply click the link before the meeting is due to start.

• If you are not using the Microsoft Teams desktop app, instead using your web browser, click the '**Join on the web**' button.

• The web version of teams may ask permission to use your computer's camera and microphone. Grant these permissions if you want to use them.

• You will then be asked to enter your name, after which the meeting's organiser will 'admit' you to join the meeting.
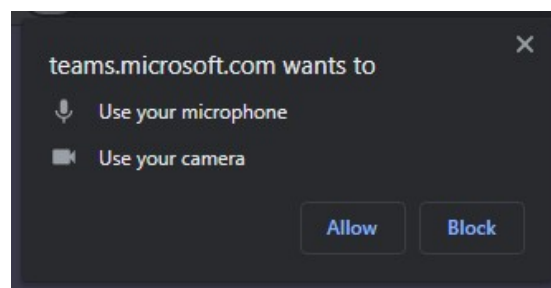
During the Meeting:

• **Mute [1]** - please mute your microphone for the duration of the meeting. This minimises background noise and enables all participants to hear the speaker more clearly. Simply 'unmute' should you wish to speak.

• **Video [2]** - Enabling video is the preferred method of communicating during meetings. Should connection issues occur, turning off your video and only activating when you wish to speak may help to improve quality.

• **Raise your hand [3]** – use this function to indicate to the Chair you have a question to ask, without interrupting the flow of the meeting. 'Lower your hand' when you have spoken.

• **Chat [4]** – view the meeting conversation thread by clicking on the 'show conversation' icon and type in comments or questions which can be viewed by all participants.

[2] Enable/Disable Video [3] RaiseYour Hand

02:12

[1] Mute/Unmute [4] Open Chat Window

General Information regarding remote meetings for Governors and Trustees

The agenda and associated papers will be made available on Decision Time 7 days prior to the meeting. Should you experience any issues accessing the information on Decision Time, please contact your Governance Clerk or the central administrative team before the meeting date.

- The link to join the Microsoft Teams meeting will be emailed well in advance.

- As the meeting agenda and papers contain confidential information, and in order to comply we GDPR, we recommend that you delete any agenda/documents downloaded onto your laptop, PC, or other device as soon as possible following the meeting. Hard copies of documents should either be shredded or returned to the central administrative team in order that they can be disposed of as confidential waste. Should you need to view any meeting papers at a later date, these will be available on Decision Time.