



Governor School Visits Policy

v1.0

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Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:	Board of Trustees
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Reference Documents:	Governance Framework

Contents

Policy Statement

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Aim | 3 |
| 2. Guidance and Scope | 3 |
| 3. Governor Visits | 4 |
| 4. Before a Visit | 5 |
| 5. During a Visit | 5 |
| 6. After a Visit | 5 |
| 7. Access to School Sites | 6 |

Appendices

- | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|---|
| Appendix A | Governor Feedback Form | 7 |
| Appendix B | Guide to Microsoft Teams | 8 |

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 the academies, for the most part made up of individuals drawn from the Academy'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. 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. Monitoring visits are important governor activities and this policy aims to provide a consistent approach across the trust, whereby monitoring visits are purposeful, productive, enjoyable, meaningful, clear and transparent, and not burdensome on Governors, Headteachers, staff and pupils/students.

2. Guidance and scope

This policy takes account of best practice and guidance from the Key, the NGA and the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#).

Governors must know their schools in order to maintain robust accountability. This will be done through either a pre-arranged governor link visit or school tour. Governors are linked to a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or associate managers within the organisation, to ensure that all areas of the School Development 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.

2.2 Governors are not inspectors

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 in order to meet the local governing bodies statutory obligation to monitor the school's effectiveness and to act as critical friend to members of the SLT.

It is important that there is a clear purpose for each visit in order 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 relevant SLT member. These visits can be undertaken remotely via Microsoft Teams when required. This may involve more than one governor or member of the school's SLT as appropriate, for example where governors share an area of the School Development 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/students. Governors may decide to combine the tour as part of one (or more) of their link meetings should they wish.

3.1 Governor Link Meetings

Each LGB has governors with links to specific areas of the school (such as finance, special educational needs and inclusion, safeguarding and looked after children, pupil premium and other statutory grants and health and safety). Those link governors will carry out school visits and tours according to the following schedule and are requested to attend:

- A termly 1:1 link meeting with corresponding staff leads (face-to-face or remotely). These meetings will usually be in the first half term of the autumn, spring and summer terms.
- Ad-hoc meetings as required or requested on issues specific to their areas of responsibility
- A school tour, a minimum of one per academic year. Again, governors may decide to combine the tour as part of one (or more) of their link meetings should they wish.

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.

3.2 All Governors

As well as the specific responsibilities outlined above, all governors will oversee a section of the School Development Plan and will be linked to the most appropriate member of the school's SLT to support this.

Governors should attend:

- A termly 1:1 link meeting with corresponding staff leads (face-to-face or remotely). These meetings will usually be in the first half term of the autumn, spring and summer terms.
- A school tour, a minimum of once per academic year. Governors may decide to combine the tour as part of one (or more) of their link meetings should they wish.

4. Before a visit

The Headteacher's PA will contact governors to organise a mutually convenient time for the governor link meeting or school tour to take place. This will normally be within school hours; however arrangements can be made should a meeting be required outside of these times.

4.1 Preparing for a visit

When deciding a focus for the visit, governors may find it useful to look at the School Development Plan and use the 'Review Questions' as guidance

5. During a visit

Governors are requested to:

- Sign in/out at the Reception and wear a governor's badge.
- When applicable, 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 SLT 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.

6. After a visit

Following a visit, the link SLT member 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 can also be completed electronically via the Governance Portal:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd45EXCmq4k4I14_kpiDt6li3hw3rpUSGt7IAHY0d_N14CIXA/viewform

In completing the report, governors will ensure to:

- Provide constructive, clear and transparent feedback
- Remain observational
- Focus closely on the agreed reasons for the visit, and its strategic role

Once complete, governors will submit their feedback form to the Governance Team at: governance@theeducationalliance.org.uk. A copy will also be forwarded to the Chair of Governors and Headteacher.

7. 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. In such an event, the Headteacher will have responsibility for authorising remote governor meetings where they are considered practicable. 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:			
Role/Area of Specialism			
Date of Visit:			
Staff Member visited:			
Visit type:	Governor Link Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> School Tour <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
Agreed Focus of visit:			
Issues and key questions discussed:			
Comments:			
Any issues or concerns as a result of the visit <i>(where this is the case, please discuss these with the HT before completing):</i>			
Signed:		Date:	

Please return your completed form within 7 days of your school visit.



A Helpful Guide to Microsoft Teams Meetings

Before the Meeting:

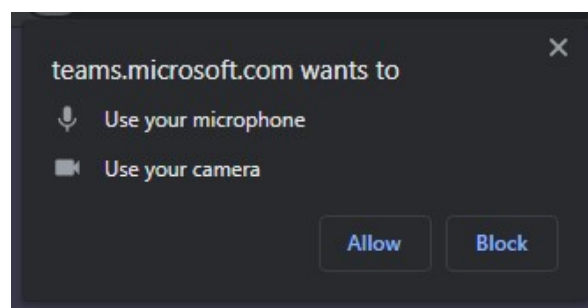
If already using Office365, it is recommended you download and use the desktop app for Microsoft Teams: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app>

- 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:

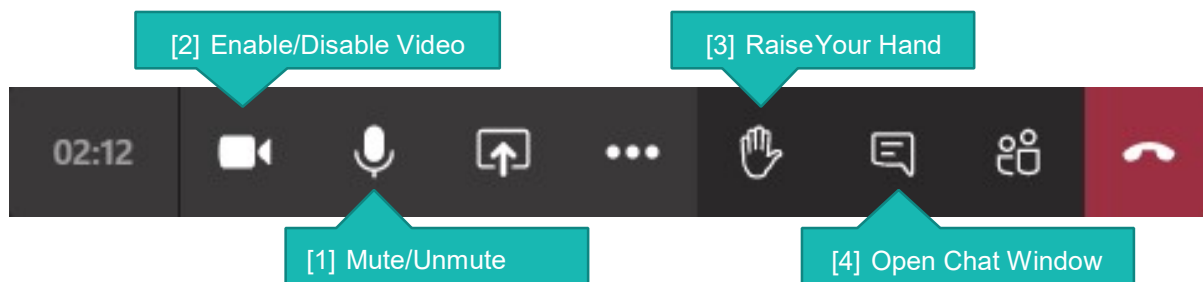
You will be emailed a link to join the meeting. Simply click the link before the meeting is due to start.

- 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.



General Information regarding remote meetings for Governors and Trustees

The agenda and associated papers will be made available on the Governance Portal 7 days prior to the meeting. Should you experience any issues accessing the information on the portal, please contact the Governance 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 governance 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 either on the Governance Portal or by contacting the governance team directly.

If you require a 'practice run' on Microsoft Teams before a meeting, please contact the Governance Team to arrange.