



School Visits Policy - LAC Member and Trustee Monitoring Visits

September 2024

| New or updated policy | New |
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| Page | Summary of Change |
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Approved by the Trust Board on: 18th July 2024

Review Date:

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy aims to ensure that all Local Academy Committee (LAC) Members and Trustees understand:

- The purpose of monitoring visits
- The expectations for carrying out visits including preparation, expected conduct and reporting back to the LAC (LAC Members) or Trust Board (Trustees)

2. Purpose of visits

2.1. Visiting school on a planned, regular basis allows LAC Members and Trustees to:

- Better understand each school's strengths and areas for development
- Determine if agreed policies and procedures are working in practice
- Identify how resources are being used
- Show staff and pupils that they are interested in the life, work and achievements of the school
- Experience the culture and ethos of the school

Monitoring visits should focus on:

- Strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the LAC and Trust Board
- The evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening actually happening?
- Seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met (such as safeguarding and SEND)

3. Frequency of visits

3.1. The frequency of governance visits should be in accordance with the schedule established by the LAC or Trust Board (see attached template) and agreed with school leaders and relevant staff. Visits should be scheduled to allow LAC Members or Trustees to see relevant activities and strategic milestones.

4. Arranging and preparing for visits

4.1. Visits should be arranged through the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher, with adequate notice, and agreed with the relevant members of staff.

4.2. Due regard should be given to:

- How the visit fits with the schedule of Trust Board, Committee or LAC meetings, to allow for timely feedback and discussion
- How to avoid visits clashing with important events and/or busy periods in school life
- The workload implications for staff who are likely to be involved in the visits

4.3. LAC Members and Trustees are encouraged to prepare for their visit. This may include:

- Reading and familiarising yourself with the school's protocol for visits and expected conduct
- Reading and familiarising yourself with the school's policy for visitors (this is different from the LAC Member and Trustee School Visits Policy) that includes relevant health, safety and safeguarding instructions
- Reading the background information relating to the focus of the visit, such as relevant section(s) of the strategic plan, performance data, policies, stakeholder information
- Clarifying the purpose of the visit with the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or relevant member of staff
- Confirming the visit schedule and activities

5. Conduct on visits

5.1. When visiting the school in a governing capacity, you should:

- Arrive in good time and follow the school's procedures (such as signing in and producing identification)
- Adopt a friendly approach that puts everyone at ease
- Be respectful of the school at work and, if you wish to take notes, check that those you are with are comfortable with this
- If you are taking notes, be clear with everyone that this is for feedback purposes and that you are not recording judgements (for example on the quality of their teaching)
- Ask relevant questions that are closely linked to the purpose of your visit
- Acknowledge the staff and pupils you meet

5.2. LAC Members and Trustees are expected to behave in line with the Trust Code of Conduct and be aware of the need to maintain confidentiality.

6. Expectations following a visit

6.1. A report should be completed as soon as possible after each visit. A draft will be shared with the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher and any other members of staff involved in the visit and, when agreed, a final version will be included in the papers for discussion in the next Trust Board, Committee or LAC meeting.

School visits: report template

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|---|
| Name of School / Trust: |
| LAC Member/Trustee name: |
| Name of lead staff member: |
| Date of visit: |
| Focus of visit |
| <p><i>Visits should focus on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>strategic priorities and key policies agreed by the LAC or Trust Board</i> • <i>the evaluation of progress: are the things people say are happening actually happening?</i> • <i>seeking assurance that the needs of pupils are being met</i> |
| Summary of activities |
| <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>meeting staff with responsibility for specific areas (such as safeguarding or SEND)</i> • <i>talking to staff and pupils</i> • <i>experiencing a lesson being taught (as part of getting to know the school, rather than making judgements about quality of teaching)</i> • <i>seeing examples of pupil work</i> |
| What have I learned and how will I feed this back to my board? |
| <p><i>Relate this back to focus of your visit.</i></p> |
| Discussion points for the LAC or Trust Board |
| |
| Any other comments |
| <p><i>An opportunity for the relevant staff member to provide comments on your report.</i></p> |

School visits: schedule template

(Adapted from the NGA schedule template)

We recommend that LACS or Trust Boards plan a schedule of visits for the year ahead.

When making these plans, consider:

- Strategic milestones – these should be outlined in the school improvement plan or trust strategy document.
- How the visits schedule fits with the schedule of LAC, Board and Committee meetings, to allow for timely feedback and discussion.
- How to avoid visits clashing with important events and/or busy periods in school life.
- The workload implications for staff who are likely to be involved in the visits.
- The LAC or Board's own capacity to fulfil the schedule: is it manageable?

The schedule of visits should be agreed between the LAC/Trust Board, school leaders and relevant staff. This will help ensure that the timing of visits allows LAC Members or Trustees to see relevant activities.

| <i>Focus of visit</i> | <i>Proposed visit date</i> | <i>LAC Member / Trustee name</i> | <i>Lead staff member and role</i> | <i>Reporting arrangements</i> |
|---|---|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>To review recent updates to the school's safeguarding policy, including attending and observing staff training to ensure these changes have been embedded.</i> | <i>[To be confirmed between relevant parties ahead of the visit.]</i> | | <p><i>Designated safeguarding lead</i></p> <p><i>[A relevant member of staff will usually help guide monitoring, answer questions and clarify learning points or lines of enquiry during a visit.]</i></p> | <p><i>Report to be circulated to chair, DSL and the clerk and a verbal summary to be given at the next full LAC or Trust Board meeting.</i></p> <p><i>[Reports produced following a visit should detail the key learning points, discussion points for the LAC or Trust Board, the follow-up required, and next steps.]</i></p> |
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