Visits Policy for Trustees/Local Governing Body Members

Approval Body:	MST Standards Committee
Approval Date:	February 2022
Implementation Date:	February 2022
Review Date:	Spring 2024
Policy Version:	4

Version	Reviewed	Changes since last version
1	November 2017	• New policy
2	January 2018	• Implementation Date
3	February 2020	• Small change to staff job title and part of the policy review process
4	February 2022	• No Changes – part of a 2 year review cycle

This policy has been adopted by the Mulberry Schools Trust and will be applied to all schools that belong to the Mulberry Schools Trust.

Academy Visits Policy for Trustees/Local Advisory Body members[1]

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy has been designed and agreed by the Trust Board to ensure that Trustees/LGB members are clear about the arrangements for any Trustee/LGB member visits, their purpose and the protocols that must be observed.

The Trust Board and the Local Governing Bodies recognise that visiting the Trust Schools is a useful means of gaining information about the schools' work as well as giving opportunities to experience the ethos of the Trust. Trustees and LGB members may visit a school for a variety of reasons and each visit will further develop their understanding of students' progress and the work of members of staff.

During a visit a Trustee or LGB member acts as a representative of the Trust and will take back information from the visit to the Trust Board or Local Governing Body meetings. While undertaking a visit, Trustees and LGB Members must be clear about their role – they are observers not inspectors. Any school visit by Trustee or LGB member must have a clear focus and have been shared and agreed with the CEO / Headteacher and appropriate school staff, prior to the visit.

2. The Purpose of Trustee/LGB member Visits

Visits help Trustee/LGB members get to know schools so that they can make informed and credible decisions about schools' standards and operation. Visiting your school(s) is part of the process of knowing the school(s). Trustee/LGB members may visit for a number of reasons including:

a. To get to know the school in a general way – the staff, the students, the premises, the grounds.
b. To monitor the work the school is undertaking to achieve its vision, to ensure that it is doing so effectively, and to ensure that it is doing so in the agreed manner
c. To learn so that they can increase the Trust Board's and Local Governing Body's first-hand knowledge base
d. To informing strategic decision making
e. To keep under review the way in which the school is operating
f. To experience the impact and progress of the implementation of the school improvement plan and school policies
g. To demonstrate to staff that the Trust Board and Local Governing Body takes its responsibilities very seriously
h. To establish and develop good professional relationships with staff, in specific areas such as Safeguarding, Looked After Children, SEND or Health and Safety.
i. To see in context some of the monitoring systems employed by the School

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j. To demonstrate that the Trust Board and Local Governing Body is contributing to the school's self-evaluation process and annual School Improvement Plan

k. To show support and encouragement to staff and students

The Department for Education suggests that school visits are a good way for those charged with governance to find out more about their school(s):

"Boards need to know their school if accountability is going to be robust and their vision for the school is to be achieved. Many boards 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, the board can see for themselves whether the school is implementing their policies and improvement plans and how they are working in practice. Visits also provide an opportunity to talk with pupils, staff and parents to gather their views; though are unlikely to be sufficient for these purposes.

"Boards are not inspectors and it is not their role to assess the quality or method of teaching or extent of learning. They are also not school managers and should make sure they do not interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. Both are the role of executive leaders. If boards wish to spend time within a classroom, they need to be very clear why they are doing so."

(Extracted from the Department for Education's Governance Handbook, p.25, January 2017.)

3. Protocol for Visits – What should and should not happen

Trustees/LGB members should:

- Agree the visit in advance with their Chair
- Trustees must agree the visit with the CEO
- LGB members must agree the visit with the Headteacher
- Once approved, inform the Director of Governance and Development with details of visit (see contact details, item 7)
- Report to reception and sign in
- Wear a visitor badge
- Remember that some information may be confidential

4. Visit Reports

All arranged visits must be reported using the Visit Report Form (see Appendix 1). The form contains essential information and should be completed in full and within

two weeks of the visit taking place. The report should be shared with the CEO / Headteacher for comment to ensure accuracy of both content and tone. Once finalised, the report should be sent to the Chair and CEO, as well as the Director of MAT Development for recording and further circulation where necessary.

The report will also be shared with the MST Standards Committee. The Committee has particular responsibility for oversight and scrutiny of the following areas:

- Individual School Performance
- School SEFs (Self Evaluation Forms) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- HR; Pay and Reward
- Education Policies
- Safeguarding
- Wider Learning and Partnerships

5. Expressing Concerns

Once a visit has ended, if there are any urgent actions that need following up, such as a health and safety issue, these should be raised in person or telephone with the CEO/Headteacher. **If you have any safeguarding concerns, report it to the CEO/Headteacher immediately.**

6. Arranging your visit with the Director of Governance and Development

Once approved, all visits should be arranged via the Director of MAT Development, who will ensure the visit is co-ordinated appropriately and a schedule is put in place.

Contact details for Director of Governance and Development

Name: Shanaz Jameson
Email: sjameson@mulberry.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Telephone: 020 791 7205

Appendix 1

VISIT REPORT FORM	
Name:	**Date:**
Trustee or LGB Member: (note any additional responsibility e.g. Key links, Committee roles etc.)	**Staff seen during visit:**
Focus of previous visit (if applicable):	
Reason for visit (i.e. routine monitoring, specific focus):	
Links with Strategic or School Improvement Plan:	
Preparation/background to visit (e.g. reading policy, discussion with CEO/Headteacher, subject leader or teacher, Local Authority or DfE/Ofsted focus area)	
Information gathered during visit: (e.g. what you saw, what you learned, what would you would like clarified. How long the visit lasted)	
Any key issues arising for the Trust Board or Local Governing Body (e.g. the way resources are allocated; the way the academy communicates; progress in implementing a key policy)	

VISIT REPORT FORM
Action following Trust Board, LAB or Committee meeting (record any action agreed by colleagues with regard to this visit e.g. training for Trustees or LAB members)

Appendix 2

Helpful tips regarding monitoring

Trustee/LGB member monitoring can take several forms:

- Meeting with Trust Executive Team, Senior Leadership Team members/subject leaders/support staff etc.
- Student interviews
- Snapshot of a lesson
- Walk around the school – 'Learning Walk'

Monitoring Aims:

- To know and understand the level of enjoyment students have for a subject
- Understand what students like best/least in the school
- Know the standards of achievement in a subject area
- Know what steps are being taken to improve standards
- Know how well strategic policies approved by Governors are working
- To report main findings back to the Trust Board or LGB

Observations to make when visiting a classroom

- Relationship between all staff in the classroom and students
- Relationship between students
- Variety of teaching styles
- Availability and role of any support staff
- Behaviour and attitude of students – are they attentive, motivated, listening, questioning, responding
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm of both staff and students
- How students are grouped
- How different abilities are catered for
- Students' work
- Displays
- Ethos – the atmosphere and values that are evident (are expectations high, encouragement, praise, equality of opportunity apparent?)
- Use of space and working conditions
- Quality and quantity of equipment and resources
- Health and Safety regulations practiced i.e. fire exits kept clear, certificates and inspections up to date

Questions to ask

Students:

- Can you talk to me about what you are learning today?
- Do you like (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- Tell me what you most like doing in (select curriculum area being monitored)
- Is there anything you don't like in (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- Do you know how you can improve/what your next target is in (select curriculum area being monitored)?
- How could the school be improved?
- What are the best things about this school?

Subject leaders/ teachers

- What is your vision for the subject? Do you have a set of minimum expectations?
- What were the Ofsted findings about the subject? Subjects may also have been the focus of a HMI curriculum inspection
- What are the strengths of the subject? How do you know?
- How do you keep a track of standards and progress across the school in this subject?
- What improvements have you made/planned for this year in the subject?
- What resources does the academy have for the subject and how are these organised? Are there any additional resource needs?
- How do you help develop other teachers' skills in teaching this subject?

Achievements and attitudes including questions about the teaching of English, Maths & Science

- What are the broad trends in the school's achievement?
- Compared with similar schools?
- In relation to the national rates of increase and progress?
- In relation to the national picture in terms of gender/disadvantage etc.?
- Where have we improved? Do we know why?
- What are the differences between the achievement of different groups and why?
- How do our results in English/Maths compare with other subjects?
- What aspects of the subject do students find easy and which hard?

Are there significant differences in reading and writing between:
- Students with special educational needs
- Very able students
- Students with English as an additional language
- The majority and any other minority groups, such as travellers?

In meetings to understand how much student progress is being made you could look at:

- Key Stage 3 or end of key stage scores and Key Stage 4 examination/mock results.
- Student progress data across each year
- The work of a range of students
  - Below average (Lower Attainers)
  - Average (Middle Attainers)
  - Above average (Higher Attainers)
- How are students with special educational needs integrated into the daily literacy/Maths lessons? And into other subject areas?
- How are the roles of the English/Maths leaders developing progress and success?
- Does the School Improvement Plan/SEF match the identified needs?
- How has the budget for this area been spent?
- Is there a need for additional resources for any aspect of the work?
- How much additional adult support does each class have? How do you decide how to deploy additional support?
- (Literacy only) What type and how do you ensure there are a range of reading books available that cater for all abilities, cultural backgrounds and tastes, especially boys?
- How well do students use the library? What links does the academy have with the local library?

In the classroom

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
Help me to understand how you plan your lessons: how do you decide what individual students will be doing in Science today?	Curriculum specifications and guidelines Key stage plan Scheme of Work and/or Learning Lesson Plan Marking Year/termly/weekly/daily plans Individual plans Assessments	

Question	Possible features of answer	Notes of answer
How do you judge how well students are learning and making progress?	Questioning in lessons Marking Assessments, including tests SATs and/or CATS scores (for Year 7's) Target-setting and achieving Value-added data (VA) Progress data	
What learning resources are available to your students and how do they learn effectively?	ICT – access to computers & internet, ICT application & software Use of school library Use of basics like pens and pencils.	
How do you cope with the needs of different students?	Boys v. girls Most Able, Least Able &SEND students English as an Additional Language Disruptive Pupils	
How do you decide to seat students and arrange the classroom? Does it ever vary and why?	Ability groups Mixed or single age groups Boy-girl patterns Different for different activities	
How do you encourage parents/carers to be involved in their child's learning?	Regular contact Reports Parent evenings Letters & Phone calls home Students Planners & Homework	

Communication
- How are parents/carers kept informed of progress and how do you gather parents views?
- What steps are taken to encourage parents to support their child in reading/writing at home?