

Governance Visit Policy

Policy type	Non - Statutory
Review period	Annual
Last reviewed on	March 2024
Next review due	November 2025
Approval level	CEO
Number and Version	Policy Number: 024. Version 1.2
Published on	Staff Area

Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
V1.1	Added references to Reading monitoring in report template and added appendix 2	Karen Willis	03-May-2022
V1.2		Angela Barry	04-March-2024

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Aims of visits to the Academies	4
Principles	4
Code of Practice for Visiting	4
Appendix 1: Governor/Director Visit to Academy report template	9
Appendix 2 – Reading monitoring	10

Visits Protocol & Policy

1. Introduction

It is often difficult for busy Directors and Governance teams to find time to be in PLT academies while it is in session, but it is essential that they are able to do this. National surveys show that most Headteachers and staff are encouraged by Director/Governance visiting.

2. Aims of visits to the Academies:

Visits to see the academy in action provide governance with an opportunity to:

- understand better the work being done by pupils and all staff
- enable pupils and staff to get to know Directors/Governance
- demonstrate their interest in the academy and to encourage the Headteacher and staff in their work
- have a wider understanding when making decisions affecting the academies
- be better informed advocates, able to speak up for the academies from personal knowledge
- share their skills and expertise as appropriate
- more efficiently carry out their responsibility for monitoring the quality of education being provided for the pupils in the academies. However, this does not involve making judgements of individual teachers and their work.

3. Principles

- The PLT and its bodies are corporate bodies and every Director/Governance should visit the academies as a member of that body, not as an individual.
- Directors/Governance visit the academy as guests not as officials; they will come to learn, and help, not to inspect.
- An effective partnership between Directors/Governance and staff, must be based on mutual understanding that benefits the whole academy community.
- The Local Governance arrangements are responsible for the general oversight of the academies; they are not concerned with the day-to-day management of the academy, which is the responsibility of the (Executive) Headteacher(s) & CEO.
- Visits to the academies should to self-evaluation activities, Raising Achievement Plan (RAP), and support national/local initiatives such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and SEN.
- Directors/Governance must recognise the confidentiality of what they see and hear during a visit.

4. Code of Practice for Visiting

4.1. Focus of visit

One or more of the following will provide a focus for a visit, with the agreement of the relevant personnel:

- links with academy self-evaluation, academy development or action plan
- following a line of enquiry from a Governance/Board
- extra-curricular activities
- joining assembly or worship
- the PLT policies and practices in a particular area
- looking at the use of information technology in the academies
- shadowing of a pupil, or class or teacher or Headteacher for the day
- looking at provision for special needs; looking at the premises, health and safety and learning environment
- the organisation of classes and teaching groups
- lunch-time arrangements, including sharing a meal with pupils or staff
- pastoral care and safety of pupils and staff

- links with parents and the local community
- sharing skills and expertise with pupils

4.2. Before a visit

In advance of the visit, the Director/Governance should discuss with the Headteacher or designated person the management of the visit:

- focus for the visit including the preparation needed and background information
- convenient dates, time and duration of visit
- the possibility of being shown around by a pupil (a current Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Check will be required)
- acceptable behaviour when visiting a class where teaching is in progress, and agreeing Directors/Governance interaction with pupils during a lesson
- including opportunities for discussion with the Headteacher/designated person immediately before and after the visit
- links with the self-evaluation process, school development or action plan
- appropriate behaviour in the context of pupil and adult relationships
- suggestions of ways of asking questions of pupil and staff
- how staff and pupils will be informed of the visit, including the introduction of the Director/Governance to the staff directly involved
- when and how impressions of the visit will be shared with staff and the Headteacher

4.3. During a visit

It is necessary for Directors/Governance to emphasise that they are coming to learn and understand, with no hint of inspection.

4.4. Observation

In addition to any special focus to a visit, other areas may be observed, such as:

- facilities for staff
- pupil movement on site
- displays in open areas and classrooms
- relationships between pupils, pupil/staff; staff/staff
- storage and accessibility of resources, books, equipment and pictures
- classroom facilities: lighting, layout, storage, furniture and décor
- storage and cloakroom facilities for pupils

4.5. Notes

If any notes are made during the visit these should be made unobtrusively. These notes should inform the final writing of any report. The report should be produced jointly with any staff who have supported the visit.

4.6. Different classes

If visits are being made to several different classes, it is good practice if approximately the same amount of time is spent with each class. It is important that Directors/Governors keep to their time schedule.

4.7. Impressions

Before completing a visit a Director/Governor will have been encouraged by some of the things seen and experienced – these will be shared with pupils, staff and the Headteacher. Be sure to thank staff and pupils for their time.

4.8. After a visit

- Share impressions of visits with the Headteacher and particular staff and agree a draft of any written report
- Share impressions with the PLT and/or its bodies by written reports (see Model Report template below)
- Copies of written reports should be given to the Headteacher and Chair of the PLT or its bodies and then subsequently made available to Directors/Governors. Such reports should ideally be kept in a log-book of Directors/Governors' visits.
- Give staff the opportunity to comment on the Director/Governors' visit

4.9. Evaluating the visit

- Were objectives clear?
- Were they realised? If not, why not?
- Was preparation adequate?
- What, if anything would be done differently next time?
- When will be the next visit to the school?

4.10. Visiting tips Do ...

- always check in and out with the Headteacher and wear a name badge
- remember Directors/Governance have a strategic overview and are not responsible for managing the academy
- listen carefully, concentrate and show interest
- begin and end your visit in a positive way, finding some things to genuinely praise
- be punctual, polite and sensitive
- do your homework before you visit and be gentle but persistent with any questions
- invite pupils and staff to ask you questions
- avoid times when staff are particularly busy, for example, the first and last weeks of term, SATs, GCSE, Ofsted visits
- always reply to special invitations to attend and make an effort to be there - this does much to encourage pupils and staff
- earn the respect and confidence of staff by not talking about your visit except to the Headteacher and when reporting to fellow Directors/Governance (this is very important)
- leave pupils and staff hoping you will come again soon!

4.11. Don't ...

- drop in unannounced
- destroy confidence, it is a fragile commodity
- talk too much - you have come to learn
- remain silent, this can send negative messages
- get involved in discussion of personal staffing matters
- sit at the back of the class making notes
- always expect immediate answers
- behave like an inspector
- say 'when I was at school we didn't do it that way!'

4.12. Advice for a programme of visits

A variety of good arrangements have been developed by Academies and schools to help Directors/Governance have a focus for their visits, these include:

- **Focus on a section of the Raising Achievement Plan**
- **Focus on the implementation of a policy**
- **Director/Governance of the month.** One or two Directors/Governance are on duty for a month taking

part in any activity where the governing body needs to be represented, for example, a special assembly, welcoming a visitor, attending a parents' evening. A rota for duty Directors/Governors is agreed at the beginning of the school year.

- **New Directors/Governance** could be linked with an experienced Director/Governance, who acts as a mentor for initial visits. These are an important part of an induction programme.
- Directors/Governance could take part, by invitation, in teachers' in-service training (INSET) days and occasionally attend staff meetings.
- The Ofsted inspection handbook para 141 lists the following as key areas for Governance responsibility. It is common that most visits will link to one of the following key areas;

A	Governors' vision and ambition
	Create a culture of high expectations, aspirations and scholastic excellence
	Promote equality and foster understanding
B	Challenge re motivated, respected and effective teaching staff
	Use of performance management
	Commitment to own development
C	Engagement with parents, carers, stakeholders and agencies
	Fulfilment of core statutory functions
	Keep pupils safe from dangers including radicalisation
D	Challenge re progress of groups of pupils
	Challenge re teaching, learning and assessment
E	Challenge re pupil premium
	Challenge re Year 7 catch-up funding
	Challenge re primary PE and sport funding

Completed Visit Forms must go to relevant Headteacher first please

Appendix 1: Governor/Director Visit to Academy

Name:

Academy:

Date of visit:

Focus of visit:

1

2

3

Ensure that a check is made on reading - have you seen reading take place (either for pleasure or as part of the lesson) in sessions/around the academy? Have you listened to a pupil read? Was the text suitable for their ability? Have you discussed reading with a staff member?

Deaired outcomes:

1

2

3

Classes/staff visited

Summary of activities e.g. talking to staff and students, documents reviewed etc.

What have I learned as a result of my visit?

Positive comments about the visit

Actions

Ideas for future visits

Any other comments

This Form must go to Headteacher first please

Headteacher signature	Governor/Director completing visit	Chair of Academy

PLT Academy Council : prompts/questions to ask during visits to support READING in your academy

These are prompts/reminders/example questions. Choose a **few** of these each time you visit and ensure that the **information is included in your visit report**. You may have a few of your own.

- Listen to a pupil read. After 1-2 pages you will gauge if the text is too easy, too hard or **just right**. **Just right** is what we want to see. Ask 1-2 questions about the text read. Has the pupil understood what they have just read?
- Ask 2-3 pupils questions about reading:
 1. Do you enjoy reading? If not –why?
 2. What do you read most? Fiction? Non-fiction? Do you read from on-line sources?
 3. How often do you read in school? Do you read in lessons? Which ones? Do you have time in class to sit and read a book?
 4. Has your reading improved in this school? If so, what has helped you the most? If not – what do you think would help you?
- During your visit do you observe any times that pupils are reading –for pleasure –or as part of the lesson?
- If you see lexia taking place – have a look at the programme
- If you see phonics taking place – sit in for 5-10 minutes and observe
- If your focus is on teaching and learning – ask about the reading interventions taking place: What support is in place to support those pupils who need help with reading? How are these pupils identified?
How does the academy know the interventions are working?
How much time is spent on phonics and reading per week? What training is given to staff to support the weakest readers?
How do leaders ensure that reading is prioritised within the curriculum?
- Does the academy have a library? If so – how often is it used?
- Primary classrooms - are there book corners? Are these areas attractive? How are they used?

Questions for staff:

- What have been the biggest changes in teaching and promoting an enjoyment of reading so far this school year? Has there been any impact?
- Does the academy have any 'tried and tested' methods to teach/promote an enjoyment of reading –that have been successful over time?
- Do staff feel confident in teaching/ promoting reading in non-English subjects? If not –what would support them?
- What training/support have staff running any intervention groups had?