



BDMAT

Birmingham Diocesan
Multi-Academy Trust

Director Visits Policy

Issued: May 2018
Next review due: Summer 2020



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust has a statutory responsibility to establish and monitor its schools' policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the schools and their curricula. Directors are held to account for the schools' performance.
- 1.2 To ensure that directors stay 'rooted' in school improvement, each director is allocated a 'link' school to gain knowledge of school practices and particular strengths and development points of their link school. The school a director is linked to may change each year.
- 1.3 OFSTED assumes that directors know the strengths and weaknesses of their schools and will test that assumption during a school inspection. One of the best and most effective ways in which a director can learn about their school is to visit during the school day and see it at work, talking to staff and pupils and finding out what happens in the school and the classrooms.

2.0 Aims of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to ensure that:
 - directors are fully conversant with their duties in relation to school visits;
 - schools' leaders, teachers and other staff fully understand the purpose of director visits;
 - all involved fully understand what a director will and will not do when visiting the school;
 - all involved know what will happen following a director visit and how the information will be used;
 - all involved understand how the effectiveness of this policy will be measured.

3.0 Purpose of Director visits

- 3.1 The Board of Directors recommends that Director visits to schools be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:
 - improve director knowledge of their school, its staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses;
 - familiarise themselves with the priorities as outlined in the development plan;
 - assist the school in fulfilling its statutory duties;
 - directors will plan to visit their school at least once per academic year.
- 3.2 The Board of Directors recognise that visits to school are a key component to being an effective director which offer the following benefits to directors and staff:

For Directors:

- recognise and celebrate success;
- develop relationships with school leaders and staff;
- recognise different teaching styles;
- understand the environment in which teachers and other staff work;
- see policies and schemes of learning in action;
- inform decision making;
- find out what resources are needed and prioritise them.

For Staff:

- help directors understand the reality of the classroom;
- get to know the director;
- understand better the directors' roles and responsibilities;
- have an opportunity to reflect on practice through discussion;
- act as a 'fact-finder' for the school leaders;
- highlight the need for particular resources.

4.0 Director visits will:

4.1 In visiting the school, directors will:

- be clear about the purpose of the visit;
- if the visit involves a member of staff, they will be fully involved on the run up to the visit;
- make themselves aware of the relevant policies and procedures, as advised by the head teacher;
- set a good example to other visitors to the school;
- form part of the evidence used to demonstrate directors' involvement in the school for OFSTED;
- the role of the director is not to be an advocate for the school.

5.0 Director visits will not:

5.1 In visiting the school directors will not:

- pursue personal agendas or arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas;
- make any judgements about pupil's work or behaviour;
- make any judgements about teaching practice or issues relating to the day to day running of the school;
- form part of any evidence which can be used in the performance management of staff.

6.0 Planning the Visit

- 6.1 Visits will be undertaken only as part of a strategic programme formally organised by the Board of Directors or one of its committees and with approval of the headteacher.
- 6.2 The headteacher will be kept informed of, and agree, the subsequent details of the planned visit. At least one week's notice of a visit will be provided to schools.
- 6.3 If the visit is to involve any member of staff, then that member of staff will be fully involved in the planning through the appropriate member of the senior leadership team.
- 6.4 The director(s) making the visit will make themselves fully acquainted with Health and Safety procedures, including fire safety, prior to the visit and Safeguarding arrangements.

7.0 During the Visit

- 7.1 Directors will report to reception upon arrival and follow the procedure for visitors in order to provide a good example for other visitors. Directors should acquaint themselves with the safeguarding procedures for the school.
- 7.2 If visiting a classroom, the director will arrive at the time planned to avoid disrupting the learning and follow the agreed purpose of the visit. Directors must be aware that some teachers may feel nervous or stressful about having a visitor in the classroom.
- 7.3 At the end of the visit directors will thank everyone concerned, including the children.
- 7.4 Directors should be aware of their behaviour and avoid any implication that they are inspecting, such as by using a clipboard – this is not an inspection. Directors should not make judgements.

8.0 After the Visit

- 8.1 After visiting the school, the directors(s) will:
- give some time and thought to reflection;
 - consider what went well and what did not go so well with respect to their involvement in the visit;
 - consider what they would do differently in a future visit;

- using the pro-forma (Appendix 1), draft a brief description commentating on what was seen in the session relative to the agreed purpose and agree the contents of this with the staff involved, prior to passing onto the Headteacher and Chair of the Board of Directors;
- monitor outcomes shared with Directors.

9.0 Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

9.1 The success of this policy will be measured by the following:

The extent to which:

- directors become involved in visits to the school;
- directors are able to challenge and hold the executive to account;
- directors make more informed decisions;
- staff feel comfortable with Directors' involvement in the school;
- directors feel more involved in school life;
- directors can demonstrate an enhanced understanding of BDMAT's schools' strengths and weaknesses, needs and priorities.

Appendix 1 – Template for Reporting Director Visits.

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| Name: | Date: |
| Purpose of visit: (Previously agreed by the board with the Headteacher) | |
| Links with the MAT Development Plan / Strategic Aims of BDMAT: (How does the visit relate to a priority in the MAT Development Plan / Strategic Aims?) | |
| Director observations and comments: (e.g. What did you see? How long did the visit last? What did you learn? What would you like clarified?) | |
| Any key issues arising for the board of directors: (e.g. the way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy, evidence of the impact of the board's work on pupils' achievement, support being received from BDMAT) | |