

## **Newham Community Learning - trustee and governor school visits: code of conduct**

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Applies to: Newham Community Learning

Approved by: CEO, September 2022 [with minor amendments made in November 2022]



[newhamcommunitylearning.org](https://newhamcommunitylearning.org)

Tel: 0203 102 4002 | Email: [ceo.pa@newhamcommunitylearning.org](mailto:ceo.pa@newhamcommunitylearning.org) | [@NCLTrust](https://twitter.com/NCLTrust)  
Newham Community Learning, Sarah Bonnell School, Deanery Road, London E15 4LP

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## Contents

<b>1. Code of conduct for school visits</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Overview	3
1.1.1. Safeguarding	4
1.1.2. Possible questions that trustees or governors may wish to ask during a visit	4
1.1.3. How and to whom trustees and governors report	5



# 1. Code of conduct for school visits

## 1.1. Overview

Trustees and governors do not have a statutory right of access to the school. However the DfE *recommends* and Head teachers often encourage trustees and governors to visit the school during the day to observe it in operation. Trustees and governors should remember that visits can create quite a lot of extra work for staff and that some teachers might be apprehensive when governors sit in on lessons. *Trustees and governors should always remember that they are visiting the school as a critical friend and a source of support to staff.*

Whilst not a statutory requirement, the DfE *recommends* that the Trust Board draws up a policy/code of conduct for trustee and governor visits to the Trust's schools.

Newham Community Learning has a *trustee and a governor code of conduct in place* (available on the [Governance Page](#) of the Trust website) that applies to all trustees and governors, and covers all their activities. In addition, the following guidance applies when arranging and undertaking visits to any of the Trust's schools:

1. Visits should be undertaken as part of a strategic programme to:
  - improve trustee knowledge of the schools, their staff, needs, priorities, strengths and weaknesses;
  - monitor and assess the priorities as outlined in the Trust's/school improvement/development plan;
  - assist the Trust Board and the local governing bodies to fulfil their statutory duties.
2. Before visiting any Trust school, trustee or governor should:
  - inform the school of the visit and seek approval of the arrangements (including any requests to meet with individual members of staff and classroom observations);
  - share with the relevant staff any questions or issues that they would like to raise;
  - ensure that they are familiar with health and safety procedures including what to do in the event of a fire.
3. After visiting any Trust school, the lead trustee or governor should:
  - complete the School Visit Form outlining the objectives and results of the visit (available as a Google Form on the [Governance Page of the website](#));
  - report back to the committee or Trust Board or to the local governing body as appropriate;
  - provide constructive feedback to school staff as appropriate.



Trustees and governors are always conscious of the strategic nature of their roles, and do not become involved in operational matters as a result of the visits.

### 1.1.1. Safeguarding

Trustees and governors must be familiar with, and adhere to, the Trust's safeguarding and child protection policy - including any local arrangements in place at the school where the visit is taking place. Where applicable to the role that the governor will be undertaking, specific safeguarding training will be provided.

All trustees have a record on the Trust's Single Central Record (SCR) of recruitment and vetting checks, and this is available to the Headteacher and to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at all Trust schools. Governors all have a record on the school SCR.

If any trustee or governor, visiting any school, has concerns about the welfare of a child, or if a child makes a disclosure, they should speak directly to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy DSL. The details of all DSLs at all Trust schools are available in the Safeguarding Policy, as referenced above, and published on the [Policies Page](#) of the website.

Whenever they are undertaking a visit to a school, trustees and governors are advised that they should refrain from physical contact with pupils. Although very unlikely in a school visit situation, governors and trustees must ensure that they never form personal relationships with pupils, either inside or outside of school, with whom they do not already have a personal relationship. This includes:

- Exchanging contact information;
- Making contact with pupils outside of school, including on social media;
- Arranging to meet pupils outside of school; and
- Not taking or sharing photographs of pupils.

### 1.1.2. Possible questions that trustees or governors may wish to ask during a visit

Trustees and governors should have a clear focus or objective for the visit. Within this context, they should prepare for the visit and think about whom it might be appropriate to meet, what questions might be asked and what activities to request, for example observing a lesson, talking to a group of pupils or attending a school council meeting. At this point it may be useful to do one or more of the following:

- talk to the CEO/Head teacher at the school/schools to which the visit is planned;
- look at past reports/papers relevant to the area;
- look at guidance on the internet



*General questions might include:*

- Are there any statutory requirements for this area of work/responsibility?
- What are the main improvements/objectives/targets of the school for this area?
- What actions are you taking to meet these improvements/objectives/targets?
- How are you monitoring the school's progress in this area?
- How will you know when you have met the improvements/objectives/targets for this area?
- Are there any barriers to meeting the improvements/objectives/targets?

*Trustees and governors should also ask about Trust/school policies in place in their area. Questions around this might include:*

- Who should be aware/implement this procedure/policy?
- Who in the school is accountable for/monitors whether the procedure/policy is effective **or** how do you know the procedure/policy is working?
- What issues are there for staff/ senior managers in this area of work?

### **1.1.3. How and to whom trustees and governors report**

Based on the nature of the visits, the trustee or governor will report back to the relevant Board committee, full Trust Board or to the local governing body.

All reports are held within Google Forms in the Trust's admin account - [ncl.admin@newhamcommunitylearning.org](mailto:ncl.admin@newhamcommunitylearning.org) and are available to all members of the Central Team, who are advised whenever a form is completed, and who will send to the relevant Headteacher (and PA) who will review before adding to the next meeting papers for reporting back.

