

Political Visits Policy - March 2026

1. Introduction

Prestolee Multi-Academy Trust values constructive engagement with Members of Parliament, councillors, political candidates and wider political stakeholders. When well-managed, these visits can strengthen community relationships, offer valuable insights into the work of our schools, and create positive opportunities to celebrate our pupils and staff.

However, political engagement also carries inherent risks. In the current political climate, politically biased or poorly coordinated visits can lead to reputational, operational, and safeguarding concerns for individual schools and the Trust. As a public education provider, Prestolee MAT must uphold political impartiality at all times.

This policy sets out a clear, consistent, and centrally supported approach to managing political visits across the Trust.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all political visits within Prestolee MAT:

- Maintain political neutrality and comply with legal duties relating to impartiality.
- Support educational value and benefit pupils.
- Are safe, appropriate and well-managed.
- Avoid unnecessary reputational, safeguarding or operational risk for the Trust or its schools.
- Reduce pressure on leaders by ensuring decisions around political engagement are taken centrally where required.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Members of Parliament, local councillors, mayors, peers, candidates for elected office.

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- Representatives of political parties or organisations with political affiliations.
 - Visits requested by political representatives or proactively invited by a school.
 - Activities hosted on school premises or involving pupils in a school context, including:
 - Election hustings
 - Roundtable discussions involving political speakers
 - Visits to open facilities or attend events
 - Any event or promotional activity which may reasonably be considered to be politically contentious

This policy applies during teaching time, out-of-hours events, and any scenario where a visit may reasonably be connected with a school.

4. Core Principles

All political engagement across Prestolee MAT must:

- Have a clear educational purpose, not be campaign-driven or politically promotional.
- Be politically neutral and non-partisan, with no implied endorsement of any party or candidate.
- Avoid exposing pupils, staff or the school to politically sensitive or divisive debate, unless the activity is explicitly educational and carefully facilitated.
- Comply fully with the Trust's safeguarding responsibilities, statutory guidance, and legal requirements on political impartiality.
- Be scheduled and delivered in a manner that does not disrupt the running of the school.
- Ensure staff avoid expressing personal political views or facilitating partisan discussion.
- Consider carefully the implications of any event associated with the school or any resource or media posting which may reasonably be considered politically sensitive.

Schools must never enter political debate, promote political viewpoints, or appear to endorse a political position.

5. Mandatory Trust Approval Process

To ensure consistency and effective risk management:

1. Schools must notify the Trust as soon as they become aware of a potential political visit.

- Ideally one month's notice, though shorter periods are recognised.
- Notification should include:
 - Name(s) of visitors
 - Representing organisation
 - Proposed date and timings
 - Purpose and suggested format of the visit

2. Notification should be sent to the CEO

5.1 Identifying a Potentially Contentious Visit

Headteachers should assess whether a visit may be contentious. Indicators include:

- Staff or governors refusing to be on site during the visit.
- Strongly voiced concerns from staff, governors, parents or pupils.
- Obstructive behaviour or significant discomfort among stakeholders.
- Anticipated local controversy around the visitor or political context.

If any concerns arise, the Headteacher must escalate immediately to the CEO (or representative) to agree next steps.

5.2 Example Scenario

A newly elected MP requests a visit following a by-election. While most reactions are positive, several staff have expressed concern, and one staff member asks not to attend school that day. Some parents have also shared negative feedback since the visit was announced.

This scenario **requires escalation** and Trust involvement.

6. Conditions for Approved Visits

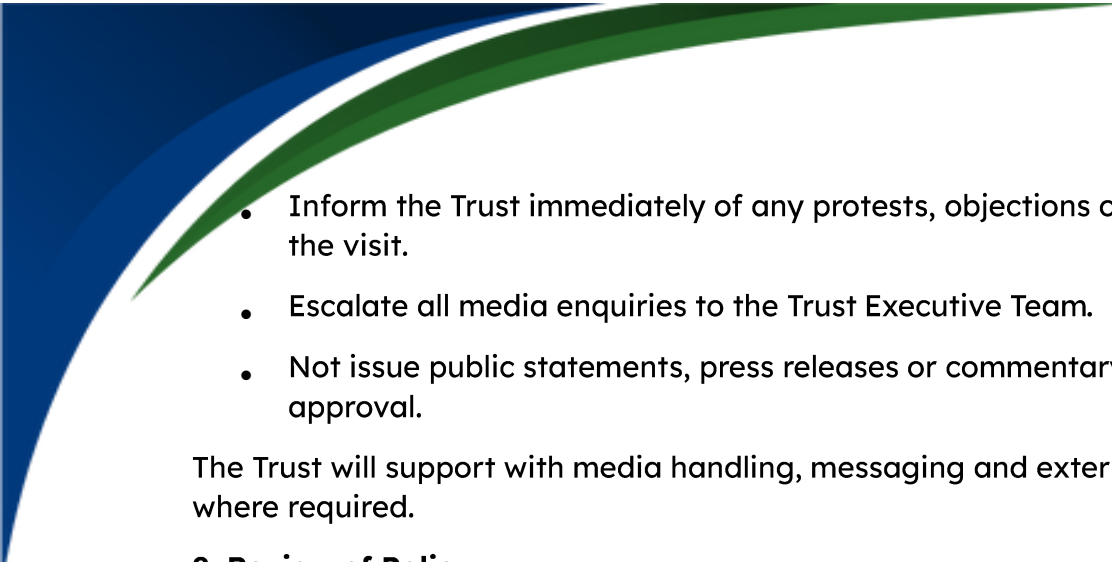
Where visits are approved, the Trust may apply conditions to ensure smooth delivery, including:

- Agreement in advance of purpose, agenda and key messages.
- Confirmed staff presence throughout the visit.
- Support with logistics via the Trust central team.
- Clear parameters for photography, filming and media engagement.
- Prior approval for any external communication relating to the visit.

Schools must follow Trust guidance carefully to minimise reputational or political risk.

7. Communications and Escalation

Schools must:

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- Inform the Trust immediately of any protests, objections or concerns linked to the visit.
 - Escalate all media enquiries to the Trust Executive Team.
 - Not issue public statements, press releases or commentary without Trust approval.

The Trust will support with media handling, messaging and external communication where required.

8. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Executive Team, or sooner where:

- The political climate intensifies
- There is an election period
- Statutory guidance changes
- Schools request further clarification or support