



Statutory guidance

# 2026 key stage 2 and phonics maladministration investigation visits guidance

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## Introduction

This guidance is for local authorities carrying out school visits as part of the Standards and Testing Agency's (STA's) investigations into allegations of maladministration in the national curriculum assessments.

## Why school visits are needed

STA may ask local authorities to visit schools as part of investigations into reported maladministration allegations. These visits aim to gather information about:

- a school's procedures for keeping assessment materials secure
- how a school has administered the assessments
- the measures a school has put in place to ensure its teacher assessment data is accurate

The [maladministration investigation procedures](#) explain how STA investigates allegations of maladministration.

# Who can manage or carry out a school visit?

Local authority representatives must carry out visits impartially and manage any conflict of interest.

The visit requires 2 local authority staff members:

- a lead interviewer
- a second interviewer to act as a note taker

They must both be familiar with this guidance and the [preparations needed for the visit](#).

If there are other ongoing STA investigations at the school, different local authority representatives should carry out each investigation. This will avoid a conflict of interest. Where local authority staff are involved in both investigations, they must make it clear to interviewees which investigation they are being interviewed about.

## Preparing for a school visit

Before the visit, STA will provide a tailored visit specification that describes the requirements for the visit and discuss this with you to clarify what information you need to gather.

All information collected must comply with the:

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)

You must treat any information given to you as confidential, including:

- interview notes
- check and test timetables
- seating plans
- written statements
- emails

Only local authority staff involved in the school visit should have access to this information. This will ensure the integrity of the investigation is not compromised. You must provide all information you collect to STA.

# Notifying the headteacher

The lead interviewer should contact the headteacher to:

- organise a date and time for the visit – you should contact the school the day before, avoiding visits on Mondays or other days where you would have to inform the school just before a weekend
- explain the purpose of the visit
- inform them of who you need to interview, including everyone involved in administering the affected assessment, and agree any specific arrangements
- ensure they are aware of the [maladministration investigation procedures](#)

Depending on the nature of the case, explain that the aim of the visit is to gather information for STA in relation to either:

- how the school administered a particular assessment, including material storage, who was involved in the administration, evidence for access arrangements and any timetable variation information
- how teacher assessment judgements were reached – this could include reviewing evidence of pupils' work against the teacher assessment frameworks

If the headteacher is not aware of the nature of the allegation, you should explain that you will share this with them when you first arrive at the school.

## Additional support for interviewees

Interviewees may have a union representative or another person attend the interview with them for moral support. You should ask the headteacher whether anyone wishes to be accompanied. If a member of staff requests union representation, you may need to reschedule the visit to accommodate this. The headteacher must make sure that there is no conflict of interest with anyone attending in a support role. Interviewees cannot provide support roles to other interviewees.

## At the start of the visit

You must meet the headteacher or a delegated senior member of staff on your arrival at the school. Use this meeting to introduce yourselves and to confirm your roles and arrangements for the visit. You should also explain the nature of the

allegation at this point.

## Conducting interviews

The lead interviewer should use the information STA provided before the school visit to conduct the interview. It may not be necessary to ask all interviewees all the questions provided by STA. You should, however, ensure you have a thorough understanding of each person's role in the administration of the assessment or in producing the teacher assessment judgements.

At the start of each interview, introduce yourselves and explain that:

- you are visiting the school on behalf and request of STA because of a reported maladministration allegation
- the lead interviewer will ask the questions, with the second interviewer taking notes and asking any additional questions as they see fit
- the headteacher has confirmed whether the interviewee does or does not want additional representation and, if so, that they are present
- at the end of the interview, you will ask the interviewee to read and sign the notes from the interview to verify their accuracy
- you will not copy or share notes from the interview with the headteacher
- you will use and share the notes to create a report for STA, in which you will redact any personal or identifying information, where appropriate
- STA will then share the report with the school for comment
- STA does not apportion blame for any proven maladministration – any subsequent disciplinary proceedings are the responsibility of the school's governing body or academy trust

We recommend that you interview the headteacher or delegated senior member of staff last.

## Before leaving the school

After you have finished your interviews, you must outline the next steps of the investigation to the headteacher or delegated senior member of staff – you should:

- explain that you will supply STA with the information gathered during the school visit
- inform them that STA will contact the school after the visit

- advise that STA aims to complete investigations in a timely manner

## Reporting your findings

After the visit, the lead interviewer must write and submit an electronic report, summarising their findings, to [sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk](mailto:sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk).

The lead interviewer must ensure that their electronic report does not include any personal or identifying information about pupils, staff or other individuals. Reports must describe behaviours, concerns or issues in a non-identifiable way. When referring to a person, please use their initials only.

STA's case manager will email the headteacher with a copy of the local authority's redacted report, alongside STA's relevant findings. The headteacher will then have an opportunity to respond with any further information for STA to consider as part of the investigation.

STA's case manager will then make a recommendation, based on all the findings, to STA's senior decision maker, who will decide whether further action is necessary. STA will inform the school and its local authority, governing body or academy trust of the final decision and any required actions, as appropriate.

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