



**Charter Office
Site Visit Protocol
and
Manual**

Last revised: 3/2026

Background: Purpose and Protocol

As a charter school sponsor, CMSD is legally and contractually obligated to monitor and evaluate the charter school's compliance with all applicable law and rule. The site visits are an essential tool for CMSD to perform its obligations as a sponsor.

Ohio Administrative Code defines site visit as “a visit in person, or virtually, by a representative of the sponsor, or of the department, on-site at the location of the school with the school administrator, fiscal officer, and/or member(s) of the governing authority to review and verify contractual, local, state and federal compliance as to the following matters, including, but not limited to: health and safety, educational program, including provision of student learning opportunities as referenced in division (A)(23) of section 3314.03 of the Revised Code and as defined in paragraph (J) of this rule, student state-required academic assessment(s), fiscal operations, governance and administration, and other assessment and accountability measures, as defined in the community school's contract.”¹

Pursuant to state law, sponsors must conduct comprehensive site visits of each sponsored school while class is in session at least twice a year.² Sponsors must also make written reports of information obtained during site visits and provide these to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce upon request.

Additional details regarding the site visit protocol are provided in each school's charter contract.

This document outlines the process and protocols for the site visits. More specific information about the protocols and procedures for elements of the site visit, including classroom visits and focus groups, can be found in the attached appendices.

CMSD's comprehensive site visit protocol meets the criteria for exemplary sponsors as defined in the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Quality Practice Rubric.² Exemplary sponsors collect data from a variety of school employees and other stakeholders, such as board members, students, parents, and management company staff, during site visits. Exemplary sponsors also provide written reports following each site visit that detail the information collected during the site visit, summarize the findings, and note areas of improvement and strength.

¹ See <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-3301-102-02>

² See the current sponsor evaluation protocol at <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Community-Schools>

Purpose of Comprehensive Site Visits

CMSD conducts at least two comprehensive school site visits per year while classes are in session. The purpose of these visits is to verify contractual, federal, state, and local compliance in a variety of areas, including health and safety, the educational program (including provision of student learning opportunities), state-required assessments, fiscal operations, governance and administration, and other assessment and accountability measures as defined in the charter contract. The comprehensive site visits help inform the performance of the school according to the Organizational Performance Framework, which is part of the charter contract.

Comprehensive Site Visit Elements

The following elements are part of the fall and/or spring site visit. CMSD reserves the right to modify the times at which these elements are utilized, provided they notify schools in writing when site visit letters are sent. Site visit letters should be sent to sponsored schools at least one week prior to the site visit.

Classroom Visits

Classroom visits will take place during the fall for all schools. During the spring visits, and at other times throughout the year, classroom visits may take place if deemed necessary by CMSD, or if requested by the governing authority and/or school leadership. Schools will be notified in their site visit letter if classroom visits will be conducted. For more information about the visit protocol, see [Appendix A](#).

Stakeholder Data Collection

During the spring visit, and at other times during the year if deemed necessary, CMSD will collect stakeholder feedback from students, teachers, parents, and/or others. This may be collected via paper or online surveys, interviews, or focus groups with multiple participants. The structure of each school's visit will be identified by the date of the site visit letter, at the latest. The sponsor will aim to meet in person or collect survey data from at least 70 percent of staff and a representative number of students and parents at the spring visit. School and/or network administration may be asked to participate in surveys, interviews, or leadership focus groups for feedback. School administration will not be present for any focus group they are not scheduled to attend. For more information about focus group protocol, see [Appendix B](#).

Enrollment Records Review

During the fall visit, CMSD will randomly review a select number of enrollment records (approximately 10 percent of a school's population). If CMSD staff has identified issues with 20 percent or more of the randomly reviewed records, CMSD may elect to do an additional enrollment record review in the spring. CMSD will inform the school via the spring site visit letter. For more information about records review protocol, see [Appendix C](#).

Special Education

Special Education records will be reviewed at the fall visit. If the sponsor determines it necessary at the fall visit, records may be reviewed again at the spring site visits. Special Education records include, but are not limited to, case management folders; data supporting implementation of Individualized Education Plans and/or Section 504 plans; school policies and procedures for special education and students with disabilities; and any additional trackers or information on the school-wide and/ or network-wide process of identifying students who are struggling or at risk. A site walkthrough will also be conducted during both visits, although items on the walkthrough may vary based on the time of year. Any concerns identified during the fall visit are expected to be addressed promptly by the school and/or network administration and resolved prior to the spring visit. No identifying information for individual students will be collected.

For more information, see Appendix D.

Building Walkthrough

During both the fall and spring site visits, CMSD will do a walkthrough of the building to verify building condition, facility safety, placement of required policies, etc. CMSD shall provide schools with a copy of the walkthrough sheet prior to the site visit.

Compliance Review

CMSD will discuss concerns with any compliance items submitted through the date of the visit and answer any questions about these or other upcoming items.

Other

CMSD reserves the right to add additional elements to its comprehensive site visits in accordance with state law and the charter contract. CMSD will provide schools with notice of additional elements in the site visit notification.

Overview of Site Visit Procedures

Scheduling

CMSD will work with the principal, operations leader, and management company staff (if applicable) to schedule site visits at times that are minimally disruptive.

Notification

CMSD will send a letter via email at least one week prior to the site visit to the principal, operations leader, and board chair of each school notifying them of the visit. The letter should at a minimum inform the school of the elements to be covered during the site visit and should identify the school and other personnel who need to be present during the visit. The email shall also include an attached version of the walkthrough sheet to be used during that visit.

Visit

CMSD staff will report to the school campus office on the date of the visit. In the event the entire site visit cannot be completed in one day, CMSD staff will notify the school and work with the school to set up additional time to complete the visit.

Post-Visit Report

CMSD will draft a report that includes a summary of findings and notes areas of strength and areas for improvement. If the report identifies areas needing improvement, the report shall specify the steps or timeframes for doing so and shall require status updates from the schools pursuant to these steps. CMSD will share the report with the school's board and network and school leadership as soon as possible after the visit.

Monitoring

CMSD will monitor the school's actions and follow up with any relevant concerns identified in the site visit report. If concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, CMSD will take necessary steps described in the Intervention Protocol, identified in the school's contract.

Appendices



Appendix A. Classroom Visits

The purpose of the classroom visits is to ensure the school is implementing the material terms of its education program. CMSD staff will visit most classrooms across a range of subject areas and grade levels in a school for 15-20 minutes each. CMSD will document the classroom visits on the CMSD Charter Sponsor Visit Tool. CMSD will not provide feedback to individual teachers, or report on individual teachers to school administration. Classroom visits are designed to be formative and non-evaluative. CMSD staff may speak quietly to students in the course of the visit or take photos of the classroom environment and student work, in accordance with state and federal law and the charter contract. CMSD will strive to be as least disruptive to the learning environment as possible. CMSD staff will debrief school leadership via team discussion or email with a high-level summary of the visit before leaving the school. The visit debrief and report can be used by school leadership as a qualitative data point when considering all-staff professional development and other supports for teachers. After the site visit, CMSD will summarize the visits in writing and report to the Executive Director of Charter Schools.

Appendix B. Stakeholder Data Collection

CMSD will collect data from various stakeholders such as students, teachers, and parents at a sponsored school during the spring site visits. If necessary, the school will provide coverage for teachers attending a focus group and students will be excused from class to attend a focus group. School administration will not attend any of the student, teacher, parent focus groups or interviews. CMSD will not provide personally identifiable information to school administration about the discussions during the focus groups. CMSD staff will debrief with school leadership with a high-level summary of data trends via team discussion or email before leaving the school. After the qualitative data collection, CMSD will summarize the discussions in writing and report to the Executive Director of Charter Schools.

Sample Student Questions

What are the expectations for your academic performance in class? What are the expectations for your behavior in class?

How do you know how well you are doing in your classes?

How do you get support if you are struggling academically or emotionally? Is the

school safe physically and emotionally?

Does the school celebrate and recognize your accomplishments?

What is the most challenging assignment you have had to compete this year? How is the school preparing you for college (or high school)?

Sample Teacher Questions

What is the school's mission and vision?

What is the common approach to instruction?

How do you assess students during the lesson?

How does the school support students who are struggling or at risk?

How does the school support your professional learning?

How do you receive feedback on instruction?

Sample Parent Questions

What is the school's mission and vision?

How are you informed about your child's progress?

How does the school support students who are struggling or at risk? What activities does your child participate in?

How is your child recognized for his or her accomplishments?

How does the school communicate with you?

Appendix C. Enrollment Review Protocol

CMSD will randomly select a variety of enrollment records from each grade served by the school. CMSD will review the school's proof of residency policy and ensure that the records are consistent with state law and school policy. CMSD will also check to ensure that applications are complete, emergency medical authorizations are signed, and immunizations forms are up to date. CMSD will also verify birth certificates or other appropriate documents are on file. Note that some of the records might be contained electronically. CMSD will summarize the findings in the written report but will notify the school during the site visit of any immediate concerns, such as lack of residency verification. If more than 20% of student files are incomplete, the sponsor may schedule a follow-up review to ensure items are addressed.

Appendix D. Special Education

To determine if the school materially complies with all policies and procedures relating to the education of students with disabilities, CMSD will review a subset of case management folders representing at least 10% of the enrolled population of students with disabilities at the school. Additionally, CMSD may gather and review supporting evidence from classroom visits, interviews with key staff members, and review of the methods used to measure progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives (including, but not limited to, assessments, work samples, checklists, observations, and rubrics).

During the fall site visit, "red flag" and "yellow flag" issues will be identified. "Red flag" issues are to be addressed immediately as they constitute a violation of federal law, Ohio Revised Code, and/or school policies and procedures. "Yellow flag" issues are to be addressed through professional development and quality assurance practices.

Policy Questions - Required by Ohio Revised Code

Does the school have a confidentiality policy with regard to special education students?

Does the school have a written policy regarding the "child find" program to identify special education children?

Does the school have a written policy to provide free and appropriate education to

special needs children?

Does the school have a written policy to ensure that students with disabilities are being educated in the least restrictive environment?

Does the school have a written policy to ensure compliance with IDEIA?

Does the school provide eye exams for special education students?

Does the school receive “excess costs” for special education students? If yes, does the school ensure that it does not exceed the amount received to educate the student?

Does the school have one or more students who could not attend school due to the student’s disabilities? If yes, does the school provide home instruction?

Has the school submitted a plan to D.E.W. for providing education to students with disabilities?

Does the school provide parents with information about the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship program and the Autism Scholarship program as appropriate and specified in ORC 3314.19?

Does the school serve any students with visual impairments? If yes, does the school annually assess the reading and writing skills of each student with a visual impairment in a medium deemed appropriate by the student’s IEP?

Is an agency other than the school responsible for transition services in a student’s IEP? If no, does the school take steps regarding transition services?

Sample Questions Regarding FAPE, LRE, and IEPs

Do Evaluation Team Reports, the eligibility determination process, and supporting documentation meet federal and state requirements for both process and content?

Do Individualized Education Plans and supporting documentation meet federal and state requirements for both compliance and quality of content?

What evidence shows that students with disabilities have meaningful access to the general education curriculum?

What is the evidence that students with disabilities make meaningful progress toward mastery of IEP goals and objectives?

What is the evidence that specially designed instruction is occurring with the frequency, intensity, and duration specified by students' IEPs?

In practice, does the school provide a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment?

Do students with disabilities have the same access to extracurricular and nonacademic activities as typical peers?

Does the school follow Ohio Revised Code which designates appropriate student-teacher ratios for special education services? Does the school have adequate staffing to meet the needs of all learners?