

Hertfordshire

SACRE

Enhancing collective worship and RE

**Guidance and
protocols on
faiths visits and
visitors**

Acknowledgements

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1. How do visits and visitors of faith and belief support the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2012-2017?

Time allocation for Religious Education Key Stages 1-4 'may include RE visits, visitors to RE lessons and RE curriculum days.'

EYFS (*understanding the world: people and communities*)
F:5 explore local places which are important for people, including at least one place of significance for a religious family. They should share their own experiences of places which are special to them;

Key Stage 1 Learning about religion (AT1)

1.2 They should listen to and talk with people who belong to a faith community and about how belonging affects their life;
1.4 about authority figures who influence their lives and find out about religious leaders and their work within local faith communities;
1.5 about, preferably through a visit, at least one place of religious importance;

AT1 Learning about religion Key Stage 2

2.13 about places of religious importance, preferably exploring through visits; the way each place is used and its meaning and significance.

Why offer visits? The September 2014 Ofsted Framework seeks to recognise the key role that Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development and Religious Education (RE) play in ensuring a breadth of education that will offer children a vision and understanding of Britain and the wider world as populated by diverse peoples. Placing mutual respect for the diversity of different faiths at the heart of the curriculum means actively exploring faith and belief in Britain today. Visits provide a good practice model for enhancing community cohesion and enabling schools to build positive relationships with local religious, non-religious, secular and cultural representatives.

How can visitors participate in the school community?

Collective worship, the school curriculum, RE and extra-curricular activities including lunch and after school clubs.

Visitors – who might they be?

Faith leaders or representatives, local people, such as leaders from the community, local residents, members of local voluntary groups, parents, professional groups, presentation troupes (e.g. drama or dance).

What is the value of welcoming faith communities into school?

Welcoming faith visitors can make a vital and invaluable contribution to the culture of the school and learning environment. Offering an authentic voice in the classroom can be an enriching and exciting resource, can challenge prejudices and misconceptions but also allows pupils a reflective response to their own identity and commitments. Faith visitors' powerful impact on RE should not be underestimated and teachers have good reason to be grateful to these visitors, many of whom are volunteers. With their commitment to school life, they provide inspiration and a unique perspective on learning.

Good relations within our multi-cultural and multi-faith community are paramount. Wherever possible we should seek to develop, promote and respect the integrity of the beliefs, cultures and traditions of our neighbours. Inviting visitors into our Hertfordshire schools can significantly contribute to pupils learning, personal, social and moral development and help them to prepare for the multifaceted, complicated world in which we live. By doing so we can continue to build respect and deeper an understanding of the make-up of our peers and our community. Willingness to learn about others faiths, worldviews and cultural diversity should set a harmonious tone for creating an effective partnership. When inviting visitors into our schools they should be made aware that they will encounter a full range and diversity of beliefs, cultural identities, views, experience and knowledge from the pupils.

2. Code of conduct for visitors – what visitors need to know - understanding the religious character and makeup of the school and following school procedure:

Visitors who represent a faith or belief community (including those from other worldviews) invited to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of pupils in RE, collective worship, school celebrations, commemorations and festival etc. should:

1. be confident in sharing their own experiences, insights, beliefs and views, but avoid proselytising or criticising the ethnicity and beliefs of others.
2. be familiar with the school's policy, agenda and ethos and discuss, with the class teacher, the aims and objectives of the session, pupils previous knowledge and how it fits in with the teaching curriculum.
3. adopt the teaching methods and style, previously discussed with the teacher, that are familiar, engaging, active and inclusive.
4. discuss the tone and content, with the teacher in advance, to ensure it is age appropriate and differentiated for the ability range in the classroom/assembly.
5. clearly identify their role, who and what they represent and when using the pronoun 'we' ensure pupils understand that there is diversity and variety and different levels of observation in all faiths.
6. be receptive and accepting of the faiths, beliefs, sensitivities and rights of young children whose response may challenge or conflict with their own.
7. foster ways of communicating with children honestly and avoid ambiguity or subtext.

Cameo 1 – A SACRE Methodist Minister believes that among their duties, the church has given a minister the responsibility to work with children and schools. He regularly contacts the schools to deliver whole school assemblies and work with staff and children to support RE and spirituality in school. He is aware of the difference between worship in a faith community and collective worship in school and his assemblies are reflections on themes linked to values and life experiences illustrated with stories and imagery from the Christian Faith. In order to support schools he will invite members of the church into schools to share their faith through interviews and prepared questions. Schools regularly use the church as part of the curriculum and to ensure continuity it is important to liaise closely with schools on the aims and objectives of the visit. The Church provides a local UN Association for a Peace Day event which is attended by most schools in the Harpenden area. The schools welcome the event as an opportunity for young people of all faiths and none to share in a place of worship reflections and aspirations on a theme that affects everyone.

Appropriate language, content and communication for visitors – Do's and Don'ts

The following principles are intended for visitors will help to make the best use of their visit

Do's:

- introduce yourself and your beliefs in the context of your faith group, e.g. "As a Christian, I believe..."
- use the terms 'some', 'most', 'many' when referring to faith believers, e.g. "some Buddhists believe that..." to ensure pupils understand that there is diversity and variety in all faiths.
- provide a personal perspective on your faith and belief and how it impacts your life, e.g. "My sacred text is the Quran and it instructs me to..."
- help children embrace specialist language used by believers to give them greater understanding of their faith and beliefs in practice, e.g. "in this story the Buddha is described as 'awake', what do these words tell Buddhists about how to live their lives?"
- model how you show respect to your God/gods, e.g. "when some Muslims say the name of the Prophet Muhammad they say, 'peace be upon him.'"
- try to make connections with other faiths that may practice similar customs e.g. "this is similar to some Jews who show respect by not writing the name of God in full."
- share a customary greeting, e.g. "when some Hindu's greet each other they say, 'Namaste, which means I bow to you.'"

Don'ts:

- use the collective pronoun, 'we' which doesn't accommodate the different beliefs and sensitivities of the pupils, e.g. "when we go to church what do we all do?"
- ask children to use a faith vocabulary which is customary for you to use e.g. 'Lord Vishnu' or 'Jesus Christ'.
- ask pupils to reveal their faith group in a collective setting, e.g. "how many of you are Christians?"
- respond to a question with an outright 'no, that's wrong' response. Support children with a gentle correction e.g. "that's an interesting response but I wonder if someone else can help to make it clearer."
- ask pupils to take part in religious practices, ritual or replication of worship e.g. religious prayer, genuflection, meditation or salat movements.
- use inaccessible or spiritual language to demonstrate examples of your faith – make your learning, engaging, age and content appropriate.
- try to cover too much ground about your faith - focus on one or two specific areas.

3. Schools' planning for a visitor and visits - what schools and teachers need to know

Provide a reflective approach to help visitors to set the context and tone of their visit:

What level of learning and experience should a parent expect a faith visitor to provide at their child's school?

It is of fundamental importance to share with any visitor, the schools ethos, vision and religious character as they too will be contributing to the culture, curriculum and educational opportunities within the school.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that their child protection procedures are in place and implemented. Regular visitors, who are part of the schools established community and have a trusting relationship with pupils, are required to have a DBS check and provide this information on visiting the school. Guest visitors, who have supervised access to pupils, (including parents) and who are invited to speak in assembly, collective worship or a discrete RE lesson do not need to follow these procedures (which if implemented may discourage them). All visitors should be briefed on school expectations, health and safety policies and should always wear a visible school security pass.

First impressions are vital in securing a good working relationship with visitors and set a precedent for future visits and visitors. Establish from the outset how the visitor wishes to be addressed confirming title, pronunciation and spelling of their name. Knowing the cultural and religious etiquette of greeting members of faith groups is a pre-requisite for a successful visit (see additional information on school visits – 'etiquette for visiting places of worship' p. 10-11.).

Cameo 2 – When invited to visit local schools, a Rabbi suggests the importance of taking and using various artefacts to focus and engage the listeners. These have included a shofar (ram's horn) and Scroll of Esther (which tells the story of the festival of Purim). He explained, "The first I take because it requires hearing, while the second I take because it requires seeing. Usually, I find that the teachers have prepared the pupils with a basis of knowledge from which I can continue."

Teachers' planning for a visitor/s – what teachers need to know

Schools and teachers should be responsible for the planning and provision of RE and Collective Worship. It is not appropriate to delegate this responsibility to faith visitors. In addition teachers should be monitoring and actively engaged in faith visitor sessions. Ideally the visitors should work in a partnership alongside teachers. Non-educators will often find it daunting to talk about or share their personal beliefs and faiths in a classroom scenario. Hearing the words, "we're learning about Hinduism in my Year 4 RE class, will you come and talk to the children about your religion?" can be intimidating. With this in mind, what information should teachers pre-prepare for both in-experienced and experienced visitors?

Cameo 3 – As a Muslim faith visitor to schools, at the end of my talk I offer a Question and Answer session. It is always interesting to see the different perspectives and viewpoints that are present at the different age categories. Some of my questions have included; what is the significance of the crescent and star? Why can't a woman lead prayers? In a sixth form conference I was asked why do Muslims kill people. I always answer my questions with a clear explanation and address any misconceptions.

Principles for teachers working with visitors of faith and belief – Do's and Don'ts:

Do's

- provide pupils' previous experiences and knowledge about the faith or the topic the visitor is to speak about
- provide the RE focus and learning intention by sharing the lesson planning and what the pupils will do
- provide the context in which they are about to speak, e.g. "we've been learning about keeping Kosher, how does that impact your life?"
- politely remind them that their involvement is not an opportunity to convert, proselytise or criticise the faith of others
- share the age and ability range of the pupils they will meet, modelling the level, pitch and tone
- be as precise as possible keeping the focus of what you require clear
- explain the intended outcomes and how the work will be followed up
- ask about any requirements they might have, e.g. smart board access, religious observation, refreshments, etc.
- ensure financial arrangements are completely clear before you invite them
- negotiate and agree when and where they arrive and any other requirements you may wish to make
- prepare your pupils with some background information on the visitor and share with them the purpose of the visit reinforcing respect and courtesy
- get pupils to prepare some questions to ask your visitor in advance to keep the session focussed
- follow up the visit with 'thank you' letters and positive pupil written and illustrated feedback

Don'ts

- make the assumption that they will turn up; confirm their visit by email or telephone
- assume you can take photos or film the session unless your visitor is comfortable with this and you have cleared this with them previously
- leave your visitor alone with class
- leave your visitor to deal with behaviour management issues
- be afraid to intervene on sensitive or controversial issues
- allow pupils to engage in aspects of worship, e.g. the actions of salat or genuflection
- allow pupils to be disrespectful to the views, ideas and traditions of the visitor
- single out children from the visitor's faith group asking them to demonstrate a particular aspect of their religion unless they are comfortable with this
- forget to inform parents about who you are inviting into the classroom and the nature of their visit
- insist that pupils remain in the session/activities if they or their parents feel their sensibilities are being comprised*

*SACRE guidance on RE and the right of withdrawal can be found on:

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/sacre/#withdraw> Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of RE 2012-2017 Legal Requirements for Religious Education - 8. All parents have the right to withdraw their children from receiving RE. (DfES Circular 1/94 para 44-49)

Cameo 4 - Example of poor practice: A faith leader from a local church was invited to speak in a primary whole school assembly. After being introduced to the pupils, all but one member of staff disappeared. During her talk, one child was taken ill and was promptly removed by the remaining teacher leaving the visitor alone to manage approximately 350 pupils. This daunting experience left the visitor wary about making further commitments to school visits.

4. Teachers planning for an out of school visit to a place of worship – what teachers need to know

Hertfordshire has the privilege of being home for purpose built places of worship for the six principal world faiths and more, many of these diverse groups actively encourage and welcome visitors to their place of worship.

The value of visits should not be underestimated. Providing an excellent resource, it is an integral part of pupils learning and understanding in bringing religion to life. It is a multi-sensory experience which cannot be replicated in the classroom and can promote that elusive sense of awe and wonder. In addition it can facilitate school and community links. An effective visit will include pupils' experiencing a range of activities including guided tours, practical demonstrations, pupils actively involved in learning, opportunities for pupils to explore, to ask questions, share observations and most significantly, a reflective quiet time for pupils to think, question and absorb the atmosphere.

Preparing for your visit: Organise your visit well in advance with the faith host or their administration department. Due to the nature of their jobs, you may only be able to do this in the evening. Share the purpose of the visit (see teachers' do's and don'ts p.8) and make any special requests that you think might enhance the pupils' experience. Try to obtain a day contact number as well as their home. Make a preparatory visit and ensure the usual out of school visits procedures are in place. It is vital that you inform parents of the visit, nature and educational focus of the trip. To allay any concerns emphasize that the visit will be observational and pupils will not be taking part in acts of worship. Some parents may not be comfortable with their children taking part and consequently other arrangements for the child within the school should be made. Alternatively, do invite parents to accompany the pupils allowing them to share the experience.

Discuss with the pupils in advance the conduct you will expect from them and the appropriate dress code for the place of worship you are visiting (see cultural and religious etiquette p.10-11). Engender a positive feeling of excitement rather than restrictive rules. It is imperative that pupils remember they will be in a sacred place of worship with a living community and will need to observe both considerate and thoughtful behaviour particularly in showing respectful stillness and silence during any observed prayer times. You may want to prepare them by showing pictures or virtual reality tours of the place they are about to visit. Talk about where they will sit, what they will see and hear and what is and is not acceptable. This will help to avoid awkward or embarrassed responses when they are faced with an unfamiliar experience. Help this preparatory talk to de-mystify the visit and generate both curiosity and understanding. It will also help to focus the learning intentions.

Pupils should be encouraged to make the journey from learning about religion to learning from religion by extending tasks beyond simple naming the objects and religious artefacts in a place of worship to responding, reflecting and questioning. Pupils should be guided and challenged to understand the symbolic meaning and spiritual significance for believers and the value and importance a sacred place possesses for its followers. The visit should be inspiring, enriching, relevant and meaningful to learning.



Principles for teachers planning a visit – Do's and Don'ts:

Do's

- make a preparatory visit to the place of worship to plan and organise the sequence of learning activities, practical arrangements including toilets and do's and don'ts
- check the host has experience of dealing with children
- check the specific requirements of the place of worship
- ensure the artefacts, exhibits and religious practices are appropriate for the age and ability range of the pupils
- share in advance the precise aims of the visit and prior learning with the host to make learning relevant
- check that all pupils understand they are dressed appropriately (see etiquette p.10-11) and act respectfully
- arrange to meet the host on arrival and introduce them to the pupils allowing them to explain their role
- try to plan your visit to coincide with activities taking place within the community that are suitable for pupils to observe, e.g. prayer, ceremony, education study, communal meal etc.
- help structure the pupils questions in advance of the trip with the communal events taking place in mind
- guide the pupils questions towards the learning objectives or focus of the visit
- ask the host to share with the pupils any special artefacts that might ordinarily not be seen e.g. Torah scrolls, Guru Granth Sahib, Langar etc.
- brief pupils on expected etiquette and cultural traditions within the place of worship, e.g. shoes off in a Mosque, head covered in a synagogue etc. (see etiquette p.10-11)
- ask about refreshments, either provision for the pupils or if it is acceptable to bring their own, e.g., it would not be appropriate to bring food or drink into a synagogue
- follow up visit with 'thank you' letters from the pupils and share some of the learning outcomes with the host and parents
- establish whether any pupils are members of the congregation
- check whether it would be appropriate to make a donation

Don'ts

- let pupils move around unsupervised, there may be congregants visiting for personal reasons
- let pupils take photographs of worshippers, in some communities it may be seen as both inappropriate and disrespectful
- let pupils snack, eat or drink in the place of worship
- allow pupils to take part in any form of prayer, worship or religious ritual – they are there as respectful observers
- allow pupils to act in an insensitive way
- let pupils touch anything unless it is supervised or they have been given advance permission
- let pupils discard gifts of sacred food, e.g. prashad in a Gurdwara, prepare them to accept it appropriately or decline it respectfully (see etiquette p.10-11)
- expect pupils to be comfortable with some of the visiting traditions, e.g. shoes off. Reassure pupils that their shoes etc will be kept safe.
- allow pupils to assume that places of worship in a one faith tradition are the same – remind pupils that there is diversity and variety within all traditions and between countries
- present the place of worship as a single usage, try to explain their multi-functioning purpose, within a community, try to show their 'religious' and 'cultural' importance
- Don't use the visit to a sacred place as a self-contained learning experience – it should be used in the wider context of the RE curriculum and supported with carefully planned follow up in the classroom

Follow up after the visit – what teachers need to know

This session can be as important as the visit itself. Ask pupils to reflect on and share their impressions and feelings. Their responses may include things that surprised, fascinated or made them curious. Use this session to address any misconceptions or record questions that pupils still need answers to; a visitor, expert or pupils may answer these at a later date. Pupils could also interview each other about how they felt, what they remembered, what they had discovered and what had the most significant impact on them. Their reflective responses could be recorded in written or creative work and shared with the place visited. There is also an opportunity for pupils to create an assembly presentation for the school or parents.

5. Collective Worship

School assemblies have a special importance in the school week and the schools statutory requirement for collective worship can be enhanced by faith visitors. Collective worship is fundamentally separate from the religious education curriculum. Legislation recognises that worship in schools should be different in character from that experienced in a faith group or congregation. Collective worship should acknowledge that the school community has a diverse range of cultures, beliefs and worldviews. The age, ability and integrity of pupils is paramount and should be respected and protected at all times. It can offer a valuable and enriching contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It can also support pupil's identity allowing them time for personal reflection.

Further guidance and model policies for collective worship can be found at: <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/general/#collective>

6. Additional requirements for religious or cultural activities in school – what a school can provide

Schools are encouraged to support and provide for the observation and practice of faith during the school day. It recognises the value schools' place on pupil's commitments and identity. This may include a Salat room for Muslims, Puja or a Satsung group for Hindus, a Shabad Kirtan for Sikhs, Mincha for Jews, a stilling or meditation room for Buddhists or a Bible study prayer group for Christians. The session should be voluntary and all-inclusive. Visitors could also be invited to attend these special meetings with the usual protocols in place.

Additional information for school visits - cultural and religious etiquette – what teachers should know

Teachers in Hertfordshire schools can access the 'Faith Communities Directory' to book visitors to enhance teaching about faith, belief and non-religious worldviews. http://www.intra.thegrid.org.uk/downloads/re/faith_directory_2014.pdf

Note: the following are neither definitive nor hard and fast set rules - traditions and cultural practices vary within faiths. This does not apply to specifically religious features, e.g., Altar in a church, Torah Scrolls in a synagogue etc. Always check the specific requirements of each place of worship when organising a visit.

7. Etiquette for visiting places of worship

Buddhist – temple, vihara, monastery, centre

Do's

- dress modestly although there are no strict regulations regarding attire
- remove shoes before entering shrine room
- sit quietly on the floor

Don't s

- sit with legs crossed or pointing in the direction of the shrine
- turn one's back on the Buddha
- ask pupils to bow to the Buddha

Hindu – Mandir

Do's

- greet the host with the words 'Namaste' ('I salute the Divine in you')– said with palms together and a slight bow
- when in the Mandir : wear modest clothes
- be prepared to sit on the floor
- be prepared for females to cover their heads
- accept prasada in cupped hands, right hand uppermost

Don'ts

- attempt to shake hands with the opposite sex unless they offer their hand
- sit with feet pointed towards shrines
- enter or touch shrines

Judaism – Synagogue

Do's

- dress modestly with arms and legs covered and preferably no trousers for women
- cover head if a married woman and males need to wear a kippa or suitable head covering
- be prepared for males and females to sit separately

Don'ts

- try to arrange a visit on a Friday (Friday night is the start of the Sabbath)
- attempt to shake a Rabbi's hand or the hand of the opposite sex unless they offer their hand
- bring food or drink into the synagogue premises
- touch the Torah scrolls
- remove shoes

Islam – Mosque

Do's

- dress modestly. Arms and legs and heads covered for females
- remove shoes when entering the mosque
- respond to the Arabic greeting 'As salaam-u-alikum' ('peace be upon you') with the correct response 'Wa alaikum-us-salaam' (peace be upon us too')
- sit on the floor
- be prepared for males and females to sit separately

Don'ts

- attempt to shake hands with the opposite sex unless they offer their hand
- point feet towards the Qibla (wall showing direction of Mecca)
- bring pupils under 7 into a mosque (unless with prior permission)

Sikh – Gurdwara

Do's

- dress modestly with both males and females using a head covering and women covering their legs
- remove shoes before entering gurdwara
- be prepared to wash hands
- be prepared to stand momentarily as a sign of respect for the Guru Granth Sahib
- be prepared to accept karah prashad (holy food) in cupped hands, right hand uppermost
- explain to the host before hand if pupils do not wish to receive karah prashad or food from the Langar (communal meal)

Don'ts

- point feet towards the Guru Granth Sahib (sacred text)

Christian church, cathedral, chapel

Do's

- dress modestly

Don'ts

- walk in front of worshippers who are praying