



Education
Service
ARCHDIOCESE *of* SOUTHWARK

GUIDANCE ON VISITORS AND EXTERNAL SPEAKERS WORKING WITH PUPILS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE

Updated November 2025

1. Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance is for voluntary aided Catholic schools, Catholic academies and fee paying independent Catholic schools in the Diocese.

Catholic sixth form colleges may use this guidance, but it is understood that they have protocols and procedures for visitors which differ in part to those used in schools owing to the different regulations that govern sixth form colleges.

This guidance is not intended to replace protocols and procedures already in place in schools but to provide a resource for schools when reviewing procedures.

Schools welcome a variety of visitors for a variety of purposes, for example, contractors, governors, LA officers, Education Service staff, volunteers, speakers, priests, health care professionals, artists, sporting organisations, mission groups, even Section 5 and CSI inspectors and many more.

It is usual practice for part of a school's procedures to be customised to the specific purpose of a visitor coming into the school. For example, a protocol for a building contractor on site would be different to the one for a governor making a link visit.

Schools will receive specific guidance from the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and, if applicable, the Local Authority regarding health care professionals visiting schools.

This guidance focuses specifically on visitors and external speakers (hereafter referred to as visitors) who are invited into the school for the purpose of working with or speaking to pupils.

2. The Welcoming School

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are by their very nature welcoming communities. This is witnessed time and time again and identified as a strength in Section 5 and CSI inspection reports.

It is important that we encourage visitors to come to our schools and witness the great work that is done for the young people entrusted to our care.

For a number of visitors, it will be the first time they have visited a Catholic school and the welcome extended to them provides opportunities for the visitor to experience an ethos which contributes to the distinctive nature of the Catholic school.

Visitors can make positive contributions to the work of the school and very often the relationships that are established will continue and this can help towards the school's commitment to the common good in spreading its values further afield in the local and wider communities.

It is important visitors feel that the time spent in school has been positive and they take away a sense of what the school stands for.

3. Making Contact with Visitors

Initial contact between the school and the visitors is made in two ways. The first is when the invitation comes directly from the school. The second is where the school is approached by the visitor or an organisation with which the visitor is associated. In both cases preparatory work has to be carried out before a visit is agreed.

In the case where the school is initiating the invitation it is likely the school knows the visitor or organisation and has had successful arrangements in the past. It is still important to keep updated by visiting the relevant website(s) to ensure there has been no significant changes which might need further consideration before an invitation is agreed.

In the case of the school being approached it is important to find out as much as possible about the visitor or organisation. This can be done by visiting the relevant website(s) and finding out if the visitor or organisation has worked in other schools and having a conversation with those schools.

It is the school's duty to ensure the wellbeing and safeguarding of all pupils and robust preparatory work will ensure that there is no risk to pupils in regard to them being given unsuitable resources and materials or being exposed to discriminating and extreme views that could be put forward by a visitor.

4. Checklist before the Visit is Agreed

- The Headteacher should be informed of a proposed visit with clear explanations outlining the purpose of the visit, who will be visiting, which pupils will be involved and the proposed dates and time of the visit.
- The member of staff preparing the visit should ensure:
 - The work and values of the organisation represented by the visitor are compatible with the aims and ethos of the Catholic school
 - The focus of the work and presentation complements the curriculum or educational experience of the pupils involved
 - The visitor has the necessary skills, experience and knowledge and that the delivery and outcomes are age appropriate to the pupils attending
 - The aims and outcomes are clear, achievable and agreed between the member of staff and the visitor
 - The visitor shares with the member of staff any materials or resources to be used. It should be made clear at this stage the school has the veto or any materials or resources it considers unacceptable.
- The school must check with the local safeguarding office on the requirement for visits to schools. These may differ between different Local Authorities. Some require all visitors working with pupils to have DBS clearance whilst others only require this for visitors who will be working with pupils unsupervised. The advice from the Education Service is to check this with the relevant local authority and comply with their requirements. This includes academies.
- Any payment should be agreed before a visit is confirmed. The visitor or organisation should be informed how the payment will be made which will be determined by the school's finance procedures.

- The decision to invite the visitor into the school should be agreed between the member of staff preparing the visit and the headteacher and other senior members of staff in accordance with the school's procedures.

5. Before the Visit

Once the visit has been agreed the school should:

- Contact the visitor to confirm arrangements.
- Provide the visitor with information about the school, its aims and values. Some schools have a pre-prepared pack which is sent to the visitor. It is also important to provide a link to the school's website so the visitor can get a 'feel' for the school before the visit
- Ensure staff are informed in the school's customary way.
- Consider informing parents with brief details of the purpose of the visit.
- Prepare pupils (for example, pre-work may be needed).

6. The Day of the Visit

To make sure that everything goes well on the day, the school should ensure;

- The office/reception staff know the name of the visitor and time of arrival. The office/reception staff must ensure the visitor is 'signed in' in accordance with school procedures and given a visitor badge to wear, any other documents given to visitor, for example, emergency evacuation procedures, contact with children procedures.
- The contact member of staff comes to reception to meet the visitor. The contact member of staff will be responsible for ensuring that all 'domestic' arrangements are explained.
- The member of staff should introduce the visitor to the Headteacher or other senior members of staff if the Headteacher is not present and other members of staff if appropriate.
- There is a briefing meeting before the session between the visitor and member of staff to make sure that what has been agreed previously will still take place, that is, there is nothing the visitor will include that has not been agreed by the member of staff.
- Any request for religious images to be removed or covered should be politely refused.
- The visitor should be introduced to the pupils with a short explanation of why the visitor is working with or speaking to them.
- It is important that a member of the teaching staff (it is important it is a member of the teaching staff and not a teaching assistant) is present at all times during the session. This includes sixth form students as the school must ensure it always confirms to child safeguarding arrangements, and according to the DfE a 'child' is a person in the school who is under 18 years of age.
- That the visitor is thanked by the member of staff at the end of the session.
- That all departure procedures are followed according to school procedures, for example, sign-out, hands in badges.

7. After the Visit

- With the view to establishing relationships for the future the school should write a letter of thanks to the visitor/organisation. This can come from the headteacher, the contact member of staff or the pupils, or a combination of the above.
- Ensure that any 'follow up' is carried out, for example, sending an example of pupils' work following the session.
- Maintain a record of the visit for school records and information for governors.

Key points to remember:

- Only materials and resources agreed in advance can be used with or given to pupils. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that there is compliance with copyright and intellectual property requirements.
- The visitor is accompanied by a member of staff at all times whilst on the premises.
- The visitor is never alone with a pupil or pupils.

8. What happens if things go wrong?

In almost all visits both the pupils and the visitor gain a lot from the visit but there are very rare occasions when things go wrong, for example:

- The behaviour of the pupils is not what is expected: the teacher who is in the session is responsible for discipline just as they would be in a classroom. The visitor is not in charge of discipline.
- The content and/or delivery of the session is not age appropriate: the teacher should give a 'break' for pupils and use the time to make suggestions to the visitor which could include the teacher taking part in the delivery.
- The materials or resources are not the ones agreed and are unsuitable for the pupils present: the teacher should give a 'break' and inform the visitor that the materials cannot be used or distributed.
- There is content in the visitor's presentation which the teacher believes to be unsuitable: the teacher should give a 'break' and inform the Headteacher or senior member of staff who will then decide if the session should be stopped or continue.

If there is a decision to curtail the session the visitor and the organisation should be informed as to the reasons why.

If at any time the Headteacher or senior member of staff believes that the content, material or resources are a risk to the wellbeing or safeguarding of the pupils or if any views expressed are considered to be discriminating or extreme, then the local safeguarding office should be informed.