

NETHER GREEN JUNIOR SCHOOL

POLICY FOR

**GUIDANCE AND CODE OF
CONDUCT
FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS
VISITING SCHOOL**



Nether Green Junior School

Author: Adapted from PCfRE Code by Governors' Collective Worship Working Party

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Context

As the school policy states we encourage and welcome visitors into school to support and enrich the learning opportunities for the children. In order to ensure the visits achieve this we ask all religious visitors to work within the framework of this guidance and abide by our school visitors code of conduct. This guidance is adapted from the Professional Council for Religious Education and has been approved by the local authority. Groups invited into school will be given a copy and asked to abide by it. The term religious visitor in this document applies to people from faith communities and those with an atheist or humanist perspective.

1. Introduction

The school welcomes believers from different communities to make a contribution to learning. Religious believers and representatives from different groups can make a powerful impact in RE and collective worship in schools when they visit. Spiritual and moral development and religious learning can be stimulated most effectively through encounters between people of faith and school children of all ages. Schools have good reason to be grateful to people from faith communities or other groups, often volunteers, and usually unpaid, who are willing to play a part in school life.

2. Principles and good practice

Schools are educational communities. All religious visitors are guests in the school community, and whether they are frequent guests ('almost members of the family'), or one-off visitors, it is helpful to bear in mind the ethos, purpose and aims of the school.

Schools are committed to the needs and interests of all their pupils, and they are plural communities. Religious visitors need to think through what they have to offer to all pupils. The sharing of insight, experience, belief and practice is appropriate. It is never appropriate to impose on members of the audience. Children have their own integrity. It is a fundamental principle that religious education work and collective worship experiences should respect the attitude and perspective of each child. The school will ensure current legislation relating to child protection procedures is covered and implemented with regard to visitors to the school.

3. Schools' responsibilities

The school will brief religious visitors in advance, plan and evaluate jointly and make religious visitors welcome. The school will guide and assist religious visitors to make an appropriate contribution to the curriculum or the programme of collective worship. The school is responsible for the curriculum and the school's collective worship as outlined in the school policy. Activities such as interviews, question and answer sessions, sharing experience, or talks introduced by the teacher are all appropriate. Generally, religious visitors should work alongside teachers at all times: the responsibility for the pupils, including their protection and health and safety, rests with the school.

The school will support pupils from a particular faith community who wish to practice their faith in voluntary time at school. Outside visitors to such groups have a special importance, and a special responsibility.

4. Audiences and appropriateness

There are three distinct contexts in which religious visitors might participate in school life:

- collective worship;
- the curriculum (including RE);
- voluntary groups, such as a lunchtime Christian Union, or Islamic salah.

Each context requires a suitable approach.

In collective worship pupils are offered opportunities for spiritual and moral development, including opportunities to join in with worship. Visitors can present ideas and experience from their faith, making clear the value of these ideas and experiences within the community, and asking pupils to think about them from their own point of view. In leading prayer, no assumptions should be made about the commitments of the pupils: no religion advocates compulsory worship! Prayer may be introduced for example by offering pupils a choice between the role of participant, and the role of observer. Pupils will always be given the choice to join in an activity and never forced.

In lessons, including RE, pupils are engaged in the task of learning. Religious visitors are valuable because they bring an authentic voice of faith into the classroom. This may be informative, help develop understanding, and may also challenge pupils to reflect on their own commitments. Visitors will want to think carefully about the educational aims of the session(s) or contributions which they offer. In voluntary, extra-curricular groups, some pupils may wish to share their faith through a regular meeting or club outside curriculum time. Pupils, teachers, parents or visitors may take a lead in organising this. If such groups are clear in their purpose and open in their agenda and their invitation to all to participate, then they have the function of enabling believing pupils to share their faith in school. Visitors to such groups are participating in the life of the faith community, on school premises. This special opportunity should be taken seriously, and should be arranged with appropriate liaison between visitors, voluntary pupils' groups and senior staff in the school.

5. Appropriate communication

Believers who visit schools are most often ineffective because their presentations are too difficult or too easy for the children they address. To be an effective visitor, believers need to set the level of their presentation to match carefully the aptitudes and age of the group they work with. Going 'over the pupils' heads' or 'talking down' to them is all too easy.

Effective communicators will:

- plan carefully;
- discuss the input with teachers in advance, and be open to teachers' suggestions;
- take account of the differing abilities of the pupils;
- use a variety of teaching methods and styles, including those which elicit a response from all the pupils;
- select content carefully: avoid the temptation to try and get the whole of their faith across

The Code of Conduct

Religious and other visitors taking part in the life of a school should:

- share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid criticising the experience and insights of others and imposing their views upon pupils in any way;
- be familiar with the school's aims, ethos and policies, and plan their involvement in the light of the aims and curriculum at the school
- seek to use engaging teaching and learning methods that involve the pupils actively, and to communicate at appropriate levels for the age/groups concerned
- make clear to pupils who they are, who they represent, and what their aims are;
- respect and value the faith of the pupils and adults in the school when it is different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise.
- work within and reflect the values of the school and work within their policies – for example safeguarding, equal opportunities etc.
- abide by the guidance set out by S.A.C.R.E.

A key question to help visitors reflect on their approach:

If a member of another religion visited my child's school and contributed

in the same way that I have done, would I, as a parent, be happy with the education given?

Name of visitor.....

Link

I confirm that I have read and are happy to work within the school code of conduct

Signed

Date