

'Encounters with faith & belief'



Visits and visitors as part of Religious Education and collective worship in Surrey schools



This guidance will be circulated to all maintained schools through the SCC bulletin system, to members of Surrey belief communities through their member representatives on Surrey SACRE, including wider organisations such as Guildford Diocese, the Surrey Muslim Association, Working People of Faith and other interfaith forums.





What's in this guidance?

- **Introduction**
- **Section 1: Visits to places of worship** (*including guidance about managing specific parental concerns*)
- **Section 2: Welcoming visitors to schools**
- **Section 3: Visitors to extra-curricular groups of a religious nature**
- **Section 4: Specific guidance for members of belief communities**
- **Resources: checklists, agreements, evaluation forms & sample letter to parents**

Sections 1-3 are specifically for schools to refer to, and section 4 is for members of belief communities. There are checklists in the 'Resources' section for both schools and hosts / visitors from belief communities to use.

This document has been produced by Surrey SACRE, in consultation with the representative members of Surrey belief communities, teachers, Babcock 4S, and Surrey County Council.

Surrey SACRE, September 2015



Acknowledgements: Our thanks go to the PSHE team at Babcock 4S for allowing us to use their proformas as a basis for the checklists & evaluations included in this guidance, and to NATRE for the use of elements from their guidance document '**Religious believers visiting schools**' (2007)

Introduction

Well-conducted school visits to places of worship or visits by members of belief communities to schools should be of tremendous educational benefit to both schools and communities. Whilst the primary focus of this document is the place of visits and visitors to RE and collective worship, such events are also of tremendous value in enhancing schools' SMSC provision and helping to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, with its increasingly diverse communities. For the purpose of this document, the term *'belief communities'* encompasses people who hold either a religious faith or non-religious worldview, as both may be involved with schools. These guidelines aim to consider the thinking behind such visits; what both schools and belief communities can expect from each other, and to give some recommendations to aid the planning process.



There is a significant amount of detail in this guidance, which at first may seem unnecessary: however, the purpose of this degree of detail is to **support schools**, step-by-step, through planning and delivering a successful and memorable experience for both their pupils *and* the members of belief communities who they are partnering with.

Within this guidance, there is information for schools (including handling parental concerns) and for belief communities. It is emphasised throughout that:

- the purpose of all visits is **educational**, not to evangelise or proselytise;
- the teacher must be present throughout all visits and should supervise and be actively involved in them, from the planning stage to the evaluation at the end;
- members of belief communities should recognise that they are speaking as an *individual*, and that their views may be part of a spectrum of diversity within that community;
- parents should be informed about the educational purpose of such visits (as would be normal practice for visits linked with other curriculum areas) but in addition should be made aware that with matters relating to Religious Education (RE) and school collective worship (sometimes called 'assemblies'), parents have the right of withdrawal.

This document establishes some important principles for schools and belief communities to adhere to in order to establish and maintain good relationships and ensure high quality learning for pupils, bringing the authentic voice of a believer into the classroom – either within or outside of school. Any member of a belief community who is engaged in supporting Surrey schools with their RE should be expected to adhere to the NATRE (National Association of Teachers of RE) Code of Conduct (from their guidance document **'Religious believers visiting schools'**), which states that:

Members of belief communities taking part in the life of the school, including visits to places of worship, should:

- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid:
 - i. criticising the experience and insights of others and
 - ii. imposing their views on 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 group(s) concerned;
- be willing to respect and value the beliefs of any pupils and adults in the school when they are different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise.

***A key question to help visitors reflect on their approach – the 'golden rule' of the conduct:
'If a member of another religion or belief 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?'***

There is a similar code of conduct that schools engaging with visitors from belief communities should adhere to on page 7. A sample agreement (1:1) for both parties is included in the 'Resources' section of this guidance, along with checklists for schools to use to help them to prepare for, conduct and evaluate visits to places of worship, and visits to schools by members of belief communities.



SECTION 1: VISITS TO PLACES OF WORSHIP

A visit to a place of worship should be a hugely enriching experience as part of RE in Surrey schools. Many of the units of work within the Surrey Agreed Syllabus (the statutory document for RE in maintained schools) recommend visits as a way of bringing a faith to life. Visits also make a significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development, including giving them an understanding of British Values.

Whilst recent world events may have caused some concern, SCC (through their Strategic Risk Management department) recommends:

"Many schools have asked for guidance on how to proceed with visits following terrorist attacks and unrest. In particular, concern has been raised by parents about visits to mosques and synagogues. As well as carrying out their normal risk assessments, schools should contact venues to ask about their security arrangements, monitor the situation leading up to the visit and remain vigilant during it. Schools should also stress that places of worship in this country are very low risk venues and school parties are very unlikely to be targeted.

*Whilst it is natural that some parents may feel anxious about their children taking part, it is **essential** that schools continue to stress the benefits that such activities bring. Now, perhaps more than ever, it is essential that bridges between faiths and communities are strengthened and we increase our understanding and empathy for each other. It is very possible that the children currently in our schools will live their whole lives with some form of active terrorist threat. As far as possible, we need to maintain learning outside the classroom and carry on enjoying the activities we value. It is the right of any parent to withdraw their child from any visit and alternative provision must be available for such children at school. It is, however, up to all of us to decide how we can best maintain day and residential journeys."*

SCC Strategic Risks Departmental statement, June 2015

Visits allow pupils to see that places of worship are not just a building but also a living community of believers, giving pupils a 'feel' of the faith and a sense of the 'spiritual', and ensuring that pupils take more away from the visit than just facts about beliefs, practices and artefacts. Visiting a place of worship can also be a multi-sensory experience involving sight, smell, touch, hearing and even taste. This helps pupils of all abilities to absorb and retain their learning.

As with welcoming people into your home, the way that different cultures express welcome is varied. Your host will be able to tell you the best way for adults and children to express greeting: in some cultures, **it's not common practice to shake hands across genders**, so it's generally best to only shake hands if a hand is first extended.

It might be that the visit comes at the beginning, middle or end of a unit of work in RE: this context is important for both the school and host communities.

Preparation with pupils beforehand is also important – some children (especially those with some SEN) may feel more prepared for a visit out of school if they have seen (e.g. on the host community's website) what it looks like before they go.

The checklist (1:2) included in the Resources section of this document guides schools through the main elements of a visit to a place of worship, including suggested points of discussion during a pre-visit (which is essential!)

A visit might include:

- engaging activities that include a combination of listening, doing, talking, questioning and recording, in age-appropriate ways
- activities designed to enhance specific Agreed Syllabus units
- a tour of the place of worship
- handling of special objects
- interviews with members of the belief community



It should be made clear that the teacher remains responsible for the pupils throughout the visit and should be seen as an active participant, working in partnership with host e.g. leading questioning, intervening in behaviour management etc. Teachers should be prepared to step in and refocus the direction of the session if it becomes inappropriate for the visiting pupils. Good communication is essential, and it should be expected that both schools and host communities are involved in agreeing the content of visits.

Handling parental concerns:

Parents have the right to know what is happening in school, and on visits, and clarity and transparency of information from school to home needs to be maintained at all times. In accordance with the 1998 School Standards & Framework Act, it is the right of any parent to withdraw their child from Religious Education (either all, or part). If a request is made concerning withdrawal from a visit, alternative provision must be made available for such children at school. This being said, it is hoped that schools will take steps to reassure parents of the educational purpose of the visit, sharing with them how it will enhance their child's learning in RE, so that parents can make informed decisions about withdrawal.

It is usually better to pre-empt any worries by letting parents know in advance exactly what is and is not going to happen, e.g.:

- pupils will not be taking part in worship, but may be observing it;
- there will be no form of proselytising or evangelising;
- the teacher is leading the visit and working in partnership with the host community;
- any requirements to wear a head covering or remove shoes is an outward token of respect for others' beliefs and sensitivities.

There are some particular elements of visits that may cause concern for parents of pupils participating in the visit, and if you know from your liaison with the host community that your visit will include the following elements, then it's important to make this clear to parents in the trip consent letter and give them the opportunity for their child to opt out of any of these aspects of the visit. In all cases the teacher should ensure that it is made clear to pupils that participation in certain activities is optional.

Dressing up and acting out:

Particular care should be taken over certain elements such as 'dressing up' or 'acting out', and teachers should be aware that for some people (pupils and/or their parents), this may cross the line (in worship terms) between observing and participating. It may be safer to ask for a volunteer to demonstrate e.g. wearing clothing, prayer positions, rather than suggesting that 'everyone does it', or at the very least, making it clear that such actions are voluntary.

Food:

If children are taking a snack or packed lunch with them, then there may be restrictions on the types of food and drink that can be taken onto the premises. Out of courtesy to the hosts, please establish during the pre-visit what these restrictions may be.

Visits to places of worship are one of the few places where children may be **offered** food as part of their visit, so it's vital that schools talk through the issues as part of their pre-visit.

Parents may also have concerns about any food offered to pupils by the host community during the visit, as it is the practice in some religions for food to be offered to their god(s) first, which is then distributed to the community. Again, the pre-visit liaison is crucial, as is communication with parents beforehand, giving them the opportunity to opt their child out.

It may also help to invite any cautious parents (or even **interested** parents – and governors!) to accompany pupils on their visit, so that they can see what takes place: it would be beneficial to agree in advance what actions may be taken by them during the visit, and perhaps also to either ask parents for feedback or to arrange a specific feedback session after the visit.

After the visit:

In addition to a formal letter of thanks (or even letters from pupils), there should be opportunity for both schools and host communities to evaluate pupils' experiences so that consideration can be given to what might need to be adjusted for a future occasion. There are sample evaluation sheets for pupils, teachers and host communities within the 'Resources' section of this guidance. The host community may also be interested in mounting a display of some of the pupils' work at the place of worship, or even coming to see it at school: great for good community relations!

Suggested documentation:

Form 1.1: Code of conduct agreement

Form 1.2: Checklist for schools (visits to places of worship)

Form 1.3: Checklist for host communities (visits to places of worship) – *to be given to host before the visit*

Form 1.4: Sample letter to parents

Form 1.5: Pupil evaluation

Form 1.6: School evaluation – *to be completed and a copy sent to the host / visitor after the visit*

Form 1.7: Host community evaluation – *to be given to host for completion after the visit, and returned to the school*

SECTION 2: WELCOMING VISITORS TO SCHOOLS

When anyone visits a school it is usual for them to be taken on a 'tour' in order to give them a feel for the school: in this context, it is even more important that visitors from belief communities are 'shown around' the educational environment, which may help avoid any potential conflicts of interest. In particular, it is important to remember that:

- the purpose of all visits as part of RE or collective worship is **educational**, not to evangelise or proselytise;
- a member of staff should be present with the visitor during the session;
- parents need to know what such visitors are in school for, in the hope that they will support the educational aims of the visit and appreciate the potential benefits to pupils;
- in voluntary activities or extra-curricular groups, both parents and pupils should be made aware of what is being offered in order to avoid any hidden agendas.

Schools should establish good communication with the visitor in advance and, as with visits, clearly identify what the focus of the session should be. Any relevant policies should also be given to visitors so that they are clear about school protocols.



The NATRE guidance document '**Religious believers visiting schools**' outlines that members of belief communities might be involved in engagement with schools in three distinct ways:

- **In school collective worship**, pupils are offered opportunities for spiritual and moral development, including opportunities to join in with worship. Visitors to collective worship might present ideas and experiences from their faith, making clear the value of these ideas and experiences within the belief community, and asking pupils to think about them from their own (pupils') point of view. In leading prayer, no assumptions should be made about the commitments of the pupils: no religion advocates compulsory worship! As recommended in SACRE's guidance about collective worship 'Time to Reflect', pupils and adults attending an act of worship should be invited to join in with praying or singing with the option of taking the time for quiet reflection if they prefer. (*Further advice can be found in 'Time to Reflect', page 11 in particular*)
- **In lessons, including RE**, as with visits to places of worship, pupils are engaged in the task of learning. Visitors from belief communities are valuable because they can really help to bring such learning to life, bringing an authentic and authoritative voice into the classroom and offering pupils opportunities to question believers directly. This may be informative, help develop understanding, and may also challenge pupils to reflect on their own commitments or perspectives.
- **In voluntary, extra-curricular groups (such as Christian Unions, prayer clubs or Islamic salah)** – see section 3 for further guidance.

Parents

It is particularly important that parents are made aware of any visitors to school for the purposes of RE or collective worship, so that their right of withdrawal is maintained. This should not necessitate a letter each time, but information might be on your school calendar, website or in termly curriculum information / newsletters. It's important to remember to include regular visitors such as your local vicar, and for groups such as Christian Unions. As with any other part of school life where parents may have concerns, an 'open door' policy should be adopted and all efforts made to allay any anxieties.

It is recommended that in the school's prospectus or induction materials, parents are made aware how such information will be shared with them, and that they can approach staff about any queries they may have.

Schools' code of conduct:

It's of paramount importance that visitors to school have as positive an experience as the pupils they will be engaging with, so schools should ensure that any visitor as part of RE or collective worship is warmly welcomed, and their visit properly prepared for. The Religious Education Council have produced a code of conduct for teachers of RE, which states that they should:

- **Respect persons:** Irrespective of their religious or non-religious beliefs, everyone should be treated equally out of respect for their dignity as a human being. This is as true for visitors from belief communities as it is for pupils.
- **Value reason-giving:** Schools are places of critical engagement and respectful, vigorous debate where no belief is above the requirement of reason-giving. Pupils should be encouraged to think skilfully about, and to take responsibility for, the beliefs that shape their behaviour and attitudes so that they continue in or change their own beliefs through lifelong critical reflection.
- **Practise reciprocity:** The Golden Rule, "treat others as you would like to be treated", is a principle which is widely shared across human communities. When handling beliefs in school, teachers should treat other religious and non-religious beliefs as they would like their own beliefs to be treated in the same circumstances.
- **Accept contestability and value self-awareness:** Beliefs are always contestable; the teacher should recognise that they may be controversial and should frame their language accordingly. This entails a willingness to be self-aware, particularly in relation to the way in which the teacher's own beliefs impact on his or her approach to teaching and learning.
- **Be open:** Appropriate openness about what a teacher believes can be a professional asset. This means being prepared to answer questions about and talk about his or her own beliefs when that is appropriate (an important professional judgment) in a way that enables pupils to develop in their own learning.
- **Promote fair and accurate representation:** Where people of diverse beliefs meet, there is opportunity for both conflict and co-operation. To promote cooperation, teachers should treat diversity as an opportunity to work with others in the shared task of achieving excellence in teaching and learning. Teachers should strive for fair and accurate representation of religious and non-religious beliefs by drawing on sound scholarship and by including a range of authentic voices.
- **Model life-long learning:** In a culture where open debate and hard questions are encouraged, teachers will often find there is much that they do not know. Professionalism in these circumstances means being open to the discussion moving into challenging territory and being willing to learn.
- **Promote balance:** The search for truth is central to education. When dealing with a controversial issue, you should encourage consideration of a balanced range of views, even if you find this uncomfortable on occasion.

REC Code of conduct for teachers of RE, 2009

Schools should appropriately brief staff, pupils and any parents included in the session on the principles of this code of conduct. It's often helpful for the teacher who is present to act as a facilitator, as they will know the pupils best, and therefore be best-placed to 'interpret' any tricky questions, encourage quieter pupils to contribute, or where necessary, ask for unfamiliar terminology to be explained.

Recognising that issues of faith and belief are often highly personal and should be handled sensitively, SACRE recommends that schools agree 'safe space' rules for the session, following guidelines developed by 3FF (Three Faiths Forum, a widely-recognised and experienced organisation, specialising in inter- and intra-faith dialogue) e.g.:

- reiterate the class/school rules and ensure that pupils understand that this is an opportunity for deeper discussion;
- show respect to the opinions, beliefs and feelings of others;
- use "I" statements - try not to generalise e.g. "All X believe..." or "We think...";
- emphasise that the aim is dialogue not debate - expressing personal opinions in the spirit of sharing and listening;
- 'oops!' / 'ouch!' – the use of these phrases allows participants to acknowledge any question or comment that may have been phrased in a way that could cause offence, and creates an opportunity to re-phrase it.

More information about 3FF can be found on their website, including a guide for teachers about setting up sessions with visiting speakers. www.3ff.org.uk

SECTION 3: VISITORS TO VOLUNTARY, EXTRA-CURRICULAR GROUPS OF A RELIGIOUS NATURE

In voluntary, extra-curricular groups (such as Christian Unions, prayer clubs or Islamic salah), some pupils may wish to affirm their personal faith through a regular meeting or club outside curriculum time. Pupils, teachers, parents or visitors may take a lead in organising this. In Primary schools, it is generally the practice for all clubs to be undertaken by pupils after parental consent, but at Secondary level, it's likely that pupils will be making their own decisions. **For schools' own protection, it is vital that they know what is being offered to pupils so that any issues of safeguarding and radicalisation are pre-empted.** There are also particular issues here with how the group uses social media, which should follow school protocols.

A group of this nature could be viewed almost in the same way as an act of corporate worship and should be treated as such in communications with pupils, parents, governors and visiting speakers. (NB **Corporate** worship within faith communities is not the same as **collective** worship in schools. Corporate worship is a voluntary activity, the free association of like-minded worshippers, where a community of believers is striving to be one body, heart, soul....family.)

There is a very special responsibility that a school has by having, and thereby endorsing, an extra-curricular group of this nature taking place within its jurisdiction. Parents and pupils must be able to trust the school that everything is as it should be. If such groups are clear in their purpose and open in their agenda and invitation to all to participate, then they have the function of enabling believing pupils to affirm their faith in school, and provide a 'viewing window' into a particular faith for others who may be interested. Setting up and running such a group must be thought about carefully, and only after proper consultation with senior staff. It may well be that in Secondary schools, the group is run by pupils, for pupils: if this is the case, then it is vitally important that all concerned understand the need for transparency of purpose and appropriate monitoring.

Visitors

Visitors to such groups are, in a way, 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, including ensuring that all appropriate security checks have been undertaken. **It is recommended that at least one member of staff should be present when visiting speakers attend a group of this nature and that appropriate feedback should be given to the visiting speaker after the session.** Any printed material that is brought by visiting speakers should be given directly to this member of staff (or senior school leader) so that it can be checked by the school, as would be the case with any other material that gets sent home. It is recommended that an accompanying note should go with the literature informing parents of the nature of the visiting group / speaker and that it is made clear to pupils that the decision to take such materials home is voluntary.

Parents

It is particularly important that parents are made aware of any visitors to school for the purposes of RE or collective worship, so that their right of withdrawal is maintained. This should not necessitate a letter each time, but information might be on your school calendar, website or in termly curriculum information / newsletters. It's important to remember to include regular visitors such as your local vicar, and for groups such as Christian Unions. As with any other part of school life where parents may have concerns, an 'open door' policy should be adopted and all efforts made to allay any anxieties.

It is recommended that in the school's prospectus or induction materials, parents are made aware how such information will be shared with them, and that they can approach staff about any queries they may have.

SECTION 4: SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS OF BELIEF COMMUNITIES

Whether embarking on a visit to a school, or welcoming a school to a place of worship, members of belief communities allow pupils opportunities to encounter faith and belief first-hand and build bridges between their different communities, de-mystifying the 'other', and helping to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, with its increasingly diverse communities. Members of belief communities should acknowledge that they are speaking as an *individual*, and that their views may be part of a spectrum of diversity within that community.

Through closer links with schools, members of belief communities:

- become more familiar with schools and less apprehensive about future involvement;
- learn more about the educational role and content of Religious Education in schools and thus the possibility of greater co-operation and understanding in the future is enhanced;
- develop better communication skills, as they engage with pupils of differing ages and abilities and learn how young people perceive religion and belief;
- can be seen as 'real' people, with interests and experiences similar to those of the pupils they are engaging with.

Any member of a belief community who is engaged in supporting Surrey schools with their Religious Education or collective worship should be expected to adhere to the NATRE Code of Conduct, which states that:

Members of belief communities taking part in the life of the school, including visits to places of worship, should:

- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid:
 - i. criticising the experience and insights of others and
 - ii. imposing their views on 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 group(s) concerned;
- be willing to respect and value the beliefs of any pupils and adults in the school when they are different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise.

A key question to help visitors reflect on their approach – the 'golden rule' of the conduct:
'If a member of another religion or belief 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?'

Schools may, in addition, request that you sign an agreement indicating your adherence to this Code of Conduct, which has been agreed by Surrey SACRE as a way of ensuring that pupils in Surrey schools have the best possible experiences as part of RE and / or collective worship and are kept safe from any potential risks. We are aware that many belief communities produce guidance for preparing for school visits: we recommend that you check beforehand that it is in line with the recommendations outlined in this section.

SUPPORTING VISITS BY SCHOOLS TO PLACES OF WORSHIP:

It is recommended that, in their engagement with school visits, members of belief communities:

- are fully aware of the focus of the visit and are able to communicate effectively with the particular ages and aptitudes of pupils;
- are warm and welcoming in their approach (and ensure that their place of worship is equally so!);
- affirm and value pupils' prior knowledge, however small, respecting pupils' rights to their own beliefs and ideas;
- do whatever they can to make pupils feel secure: the visit is intended to *educate* without making assumptions about pupils' own beliefs or understanding. For example the use of 'we believe...' or 'you...'

should be avoided, in favour of phrases such as 'As a Christian / Muslim / Jew / Hindu I believe....' or 'most Christians / Muslims (etc.) believe...'

- present their beliefs clearly. Learning in RE is about people and their beliefs, so don't let the visit be taken up with an inappropriate emphasis on history and architecture etc.!
- make the most of the opportunity that the visit creates for pupils to see belief being 'lived out' in the everyday life of a worshipping community, so draw attention to where pupils can find this (e.g. on noticeboards, through community activities, events or projects etc.);
- allow pupils to be *active participants* rather than being 'talked at'.

For visits to places of worship, there are suggestions for a range of learning experiences within the Agreed Syllabus units that recommend such visits. This may involve being free to explore the whole building; to draw; to handle artefacts; to re-enact or watch a video of an event in the host community such as a wedding; to interview community members and so on. Schools should provide you with this sort of information in their discussions with you about the content of the visit. A checklist (1:3) is included in this guidance, to help in your communication with schools regarding their visit.

VISITS BY MEMBERS OF BELIEF COMMUNITIES TO SCHOOLS:

Much of what's already been outlined regarding visits to places of worship also applies to visits into schools. Members of belief communities might be invited into schools to further enhance learning in RE, as part of the school's planned programme for collective worship, or to lead a voluntary, extra-curricular group such as a Christian Union. The context for each of these invitations is quite distinct, and needs to be properly understood:

- **In school collective worship**, pupils are offered opportunities for spiritual and moral development, including opportunities to join in with worship. Visitors to collective worship might present ideas and experiences from their faith, making clear the value of these ideas and experiences within the belief community, and asking pupils to think about them from their own (pupils') point of view. In leading prayer, no assumptions should be made about the commitments of the pupils: no religion advocates compulsory worship! As recommended in SACRE's guidance about collective worship 'Time to Reflect', pupils and adults attending an act of worship should be invited to join in with praying or singing with the option of taking the time for quiet reflection if they prefer. (*Further advice can be found in 'Time to Reflect', page 11 in particular*)
- **In lessons, including RE**, as with visits to places of worship, pupils are engaged in the task of learning. Visitors from belief communities are valuable because they can really help to bring such learning to life, bringing an authentic voice into the classroom and offering pupils opportunities to question believers directly. This may be informative, help develop understanding, and may also challenge pupils to reflect on their own commitments or perspectives.
- **In voluntary, extra-curricular groups (such as Christian Unions, prayer clubs or Islamic salah)**, some pupils may wish to affirm their personal faith through a regular meeting or club outside curriculum time (such as breaks and after school). Pupils, teachers, parents or visitors may take a lead in organising this. A group of this nature could be viewed almost in the same way as an act of corporate worship and should be treated as such in communications with pupils, parents, governors and visiting speakers. (NB **Corporate** worship within faith communities is not the same as **collective** worship in schools. Corporate worship is a voluntary activity, the free association of like-minded worshippers, where a community of believers is striving to be one body, heart, soul....family.) There is a very special responsibility that a school has by having, and thereby endorsing, an extra-curricular group of this nature taking place within its jurisdiction. Parents and pupils must be able to trust the school that everything is as it should be. If such groups are clear in their purpose and open in their agenda and invitation to all to participate, then they have the function of enabling believing pupils to affirm their faith in school. Visitors to such groups are, in a way, 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, including ensuring that all appropriate security checks have been undertaken. It is recommended that at least one member of staff should be present when visiting speakers attend a group of this nature. Any printed material that is brought by visiting speakers should be given directly to this member of staff (or senior school leader) so that it can be checked by the school, as would be the case with any other material that gets sent home.

1.1 SAMPLE AGREEMENT / CODE OF CONDUCT

This agreement provides the basis of the partnership between members of belief communities (in their capacity as either host or visitor) and the school.

The school

The member of staff responsible for the visit(s) will:

- explain the purpose and nature of the proposed visit(s) to or by a member of a belief community;
- explain the context of the school's programme for RE, collective worship or SMSC;
- outline the needs of the school and negotiate the most appropriate contribution by the member of a belief community;
- set out the relevant school policies concerning health and safety, child protection and behaviour;
- work with the volunteer in the preparation, delivery and (where applicable) follow-up of the visit, and will address with them the items on the planning checklist;
- ensure that visitors from belief communities are treated in accordance with the '**REC Code of conduct for teachers of RE**' (see section 2);
- pay any fees and other costs where formally agreed in advance.

Member(s) of belief communities

Members of belief communities engaging with schools as part of a visit to a place of worship, or as visitors to school as part of RE or collective worship will:

- complete the planning checklist with the school
- be involved in the planning of the session
- evaluate the session
- adhere to the NATRE Code of Conduct, which states that:

Members of belief communities taking part in the life of the school, including visits to places of worship, should:

- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid:
 - i. criticising the experience and insights of others and
 - ii. imposing their views on 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 group(s) concerned;
- be willing to respect and value the beliefs of any pupils and adults in the school when they are different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils that communicate their open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to 'convert' or proselytise;
- seek to uphold the principle of the 'Golden Rule' e.g. *'If a member of another religion or belief 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?'*

Signed:.....
Teacher

Signed:.....
Host / visitor

Date __ / __ / ____

Date __ / __ / ____

1.2 CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS: VISITS TO PLACES OF WORSHIP

Name & address of place of worship:

Date of visit:

Contact name :

Times they can be contacted:

Name of host (if different):

Position:

Email:

Phone:

Have you...	Date
made contact with the person who will be hosting the visit?	
agreed the date, timing, duration and size and age of group?	
arranged a date for a pre-visit (if not a regular visit) to discuss the content of the visit and to conduct a risk assessment?	
asked if the place of worship has a risk assessment for school visits?	
completed school risk assessment in line with your educational visits policy	
discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parking or drop-off arrangements? toilet facilities? whether a donation should be given? pick-up arrangements? whether food will be offered to pupils during the visit, and discussed how this will be managed in accordance with school policies? 	
agreed where personal belongings / lunch may be safely stored?	
discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any specific requirements from the host community regarding dress code (including accompanying adults) and formal greetings? food requirements (that might, out of respect, restrict what is packed into lunch boxes) and safe storage of any packed lunches? what pupils can and cannot do at the place of worship? whether photos / video may be taken and if there are any restrictions for use? 	
ensured that the host is aware of any special requirements of members of the schools group e.g. age of pupils, mobility etc.?	
ensured the host also has other information about members of the school group e.g. cultural or religious diversity, sensitive issues such as recent bereavements etc.?	
agreed the aims, objectives and content of the session, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> which unit from the Surrey Agreed Syllabus it is linked to? engaging activities that include a combination of listening, doing, talking, questioning and recording, in age-appropriate ways? how the teacher will be involved in the session? whether other volunteers from the host community will be involved? 	
agreed how safety and behaviour management will be handled?	
discussed with pupils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the purpose of the visit? how it will help them in their learning in RE? things they might look out for on their visit? what they might do as a follow-up when they get back? 	
written to parents*, in good time, informing them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> of the educational purpose of the visit, including how it fits with the RE / 	

<p>SMSC curriculum or collective worship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of their right of withdrawal? • that they are welcome to attend with their child(ren)? • that pupils may be observing worship but will not be participating in it? • of the practical arrangements for the visit e.g. dress code, food etc.? • what their 'voluntary contribution' covers? 	
briefed your volunteers about the visit?	
contacted the host a month before to confirm the arrangements?	
contacted the place of worship the day before to check whether there are any changes to those arrangements? (for some religions, funerals can take place at very short notice)	
evaluated the impact of the visit and given appropriate feedback to the host?*	
kept a record of what you did, who you contacted etc. for future visits (time-saving!!!)?	

* sample letter and feedback forms are included in this guidance

1.3 CHECKLIST FOR HOSTS: SCHOOL VISIT TO YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

Name of school:

Date of visit:

Contact name at school:

Times they can be contacted:

Position:

Email:

Phone:

Before the visit, in consultation with the school, you should:	Date
agree the date, timing, duration and size and age of group	
arrange a date for a pre-visit by the teacher (if not a regular visit) to discuss the content of the visit and to conduct a risk assessment	
discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parking or drop-off arrangements • toilet facilities • whether a donation should be given • pick-up arrangements • whether food will be offered to pupils during the visit, and how this will be managed in accordance with school policies 	
agree where personal belongings / lunch may be safely stored	
discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any specific requirements regarding dress code (including accompanying adults) and formal greetings? • food requirements (that might, out of respect, restrict what is packed into lunch boxes) and safe storage of any packed lunches • what pupils can and cannot do at the place of worship • whether photos / video may be taken and if there are any restrictions for use 	
ensure that you as the host community are aware of any special requirements of members of the schools group e.g. age of pupils, mobility etc.	
ensure you have other appropriate information about members of the school group e.g. cultural or religious diversity, sensitive issues such as recent bereavements etc.	
agree the aims, objectives and content of the session, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which unit from the Surrey Agreed Syllabus it is linked to • the educational context of the visit • what activities will be available for pupils, and that they are age-appropriate • how the teacher will support you in the session • the role of any of your volunteers in the session 	
agree how safety and behaviour management will be handled during the visit	
have had contact with the school a month before to confirm the arrangements	
contact the school immediately if you are aware of any changed to the arrangements (e.g. a funeral)	
evaluate the impact of the visit and give appropriate feedback to the school, from your perspective	

1.4 SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Note to schools: You will need to insert all the usual information about date, time, travel arrangements etc. into this proforma, but also insert specific visit details into the spaces provided, and remove any elements you don't need e.g. food requirements. It is recommended that you use this letter for all visits as part of RE, including local churches.

Dear Parents

As you are well aware, we are always trying to provide more opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning across the curriculum. In the past, pupils have enjoyed visits which have often been linked to their learning in history or geography, but we are aware that there are many opportunities to visit places linked with other subjects. Such visits are also of tremendous value in enhancing our school's SMSC provision and in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, with its increasingly diverse communities.

The pupils in Year..... are currently studying *[name of religion]* in Religious Education as part of the locally Agreed Syllabus (which is the statutory document for RE in maintained schools in Surrey). A visit to a local *[place of worship]* is a fascinating opportunity for the pupils to get a real insight into a modern *[Christian / Muslim / Hindu / Jewish / Buddhist / Sikh]* community and meet some of the lovely people who live and work there, including *[names of hosts]* who will be showing us round. We hope it will bring pupils' learning to life and allow them to be curious about the faith and its practices.

Religious Education is an academic subject. It is taught as an understanding of different religions, from an unbiased perspective. It is – in our view – an essential part of the curriculum which is becoming more and more important as British society becomes more diverse. We feel strongly that pupils need a good understanding of different cultures, in order to learn respect for others and practise the values of acceptance, tolerance and unity. We would like to emphasise that as part of this visit, pupils will not be asked to **participate** in worship, but might watch any worship or prayer that is happening during the visit. This visit has been planned by your child's teacher, who is leading the visit and working in partnership with *[names of hosts]* from the host community.

This visit will include:

[insert details, especially referencing any 'voluntary' elements]

For this visit, pupils will need to wear..... *[insert dress code]*

For this visit, pupils will need to avoid bringing in their packed lunch or snack. These particular dress / food requirements are an outward token of respect for others' beliefs and sensitivities, and do not signify participation in worship.

For this visit, your child will also need:

[insert details, especially referencing any 'voluntary' contribution and what it covers e.g. coach, donation to host community etc.]

As with any school visit, we will need parent helpers to ensure adequate pupil: adult ratios. Please speak to your child's class if you can help.

We do, of course, fully respect the wishes of parents with regards to participation in this visit as part of your child's learning in RE. If, after consideration, your child will not be participating in this visit, please ensure they are in school as usual, where they will..... *[insert arrangements]*. If you do decide to withdraw your child, please could I respectfully ask that you think carefully about how you explain this to them and are considerate of pupils and families at our school who practise *[name of religion]*. Please also be thoughtful about any comments posted online which might cause offence.

We are really looking forward to this visit, and have been working closely with to plan an enriching and enjoyable experience. Do come and talk to us if you have any questions or concerns, or would like to attend with your child.

Yours sincerely

1.5 PUPIL EVALUATION FORM

Name:

Class:

	Yes	No	Not sure ?	Comments
Did you enjoy the visit?				
Did this visit help in your learning?				
Write 3 things you have learned from the visit:	1. 2. 3.			
What more would you like to learn?				
Is there anything else you would like to say?				

Thank you!

1.6 SCHOOL EVALUATION FORM

A copy should be given to the host community or visitor to school after completion

Name of school:

Date of visit:

Name of host / visitor:

	Yes / No	Comments
1. Were the agreed aims and objectives of the visit met?		
2. Was the session effectively delivered?		<i>Which parts worked really well and why?</i>
3. Were pupils engaged during the session?		<i>How?</i>
4. What went well?		
5. It would have been even better if.....		
6. Next time we would.....		

1.7 HOST COMMUNITY EVALUATION FORM

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your community for our visit. We would be very grateful if you could make a few comments about the session so that we can plan an even better visit in the future.

Name of host / visitor:

Date of visit:

Name of school:

	Yes / No	Comments
1. Were the agreed aims and objectives of the visit met?		
2. Did the school prepare the pupils for their visit?		
3. Were pupils engaged during the session?		
4. What went well?		
5. It would have been even better if.....		
6. Next time we would.....		
Is there anything else you would like to add? Please continue on the reverse if needed.		

Thank you! Please return this form to.....