VISITORS IN SCHOOLS POLICY

PURPOSE

To ensure schools effectively screen, manage and supervise visitors to the school.

POLICY

Schools must develop school level policies and procedures to manage all visitors to the school.
Principals must:

- Implement Department and school level policies and procedures.
- be responsible for visitors allowed into school.
- Ensure as a minimum a record of all visitors to the school is kept in the event of a school emergency or any future investigation.
- Ensure that visitors where required have the appropriate approvals to work with children, see Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors (previously 'Volunteer Checks').
- Ensure that the school has policies and procedures in place to meet the requirements of the Child Safe Standards, including for identifying and responding to child abuse.
- Ensure that any programs or content delivered by visitors (other than Special Religious Instruction) complies with the requirement that education in Victorian government schools is secular.
- Ensure that any programs delivered by visitors are delivered in a manner that supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy including a commitment to the following, as outlined in s 1.2.1 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic):
- Elected government.
- The rule of law.
- Equal rights for all before the law.
- Freedom of religion.
- Freedom of speech and association.
- The values of openness and tolerance.

RATIONALE

To increase experience of the cultural and social features of the community, the Department encourages schools to:

- Ensure parents/guardians partner in their children's development.
- Create strong partnerships with community services, schools, businesses and the wider community.

TYPES OF VISITORS

Visitors to schools may include, but are not limited to:

- Prospective parents and employees.

Those who are addressing a learning or developmental need, such as:

- Parent and community volunteers.
- Invited speakers.
- Sessional instructors.
- Representatives of community, business and service groups.
- Local members of the State and Commonwealth Parliaments.
- Those who are conducting business such as:
- Uniform suppliers.
- Booksellers.
- Official school photographers.
- Commercial salespeople.
- Trades people.
- Children's services agents.
- Talent scouts.
- Instructors providing Special Religious Instruction (SRI).

Other visitors may include:
- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Workers, and Victoria Police.

Persons who are authorised to enter on to the school premises, for a specific purpose (e.g. Worksafe or Environmental Health officers). In such cases school procedures should set out:
- The process for checking the identification and authorisation of such persons.
- The process for recording their attendance.
- Who should facilitate their entry on to the school premises in a manner consistent with the authorisation.
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- Department staff including allied health practitioners (regional and central offices).
- Public officials (e.g. Ministers, Members of Parliament, Mayor).
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Therapists and other allied health or health practitioners that are not employees of the Department or school council.

SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURES
School policy and procedures regarding visitors to the school must, as a minimum:
- Require all visitors arriving and departing during school hours to use a visitors book to record their name, signature, the date and time, and the purpose of the visit.
- Include procedures for assessment and verification of the suitability of visitors to be in a location where children freely move about, learn and play.
- Ensure that any programs or content delivered by visitors complies with the requirement that education in Victorian government schools is secular (apart from the provision of Special Religious Instruction)
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and available/visible to visitors including the requirement to abide by the school's child safety Code of Conduct
- Ensure that emergency exits and emergency management plans and procedures are available/visible to visitors
- Ensure that any programs delivered by visitors are delivered in a manner that supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy including a commitment to elected government, the rule of law, equal rights for all before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and association and the values of openness and tolerance.

To develop local policies and procedures school councils should consult the views of school communities and address each of the following.

Considerations	School principals should consider
Safety needs	Schools are not public places. The safety of students and staff. Potential risks posed by visitors. What suitability checks may be needed, see: Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors. The school's policies and procedures in relation to child safety and the implementation of the Child Safe Standards. The processes for identifying and reporting alleged misconduct of employees, volunteers and contractors, see: Reportable Conduct Scheme.
Visitors purpose	Categories of visitors that will be allowed into the school and on what conditions potential benefits of different types of visits.

Considerations	School principals should consider
	Whether the proposed visit is appropriate for young people (in the relevant age group). Whether the proposed visit, programs or content to be delivered is consistent with the values of public education, Department policies and the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic). Whether a distinction should be made between the protocols applying to: Community-based, not-for-profit groups. Visitors with commercial, advertising or marketing purpose. The potential for a visitor or the content of their program/presentation to cause controversy within the school or broader community.
Educational merit	Whether the proposed visit is: For an educational purpose. Consistent with curriculum objectives. The reorganisation of school programs or routines required in relation to the potential benefits to the students. The appropriate use of Department resources, including teachers' time.
Legal requirements	Legal considerations and Department policies concerning: Privacy. Photographing of students. Mandatory reporting. Children First - promoting and protecting the rights and well-being of children. Delivery of Special Religious Instruction.
Working with Children Check (WCC)	The suitability of visitors who will be in a location where children move freely about, learn and play. Whether an exemption to the Working With Children Check applies to a visitor The evidence provided by the visitor to support their exemption due to their occupation.

Considerations	School principals should consider
	How to communicate policies and procedures to staff, visitors and community.
	How to impose conditions on visitors, if required.
	How to manage and maintain a written record of all visitors.
	Whether visitors will be required to wear a distinguishing badge.
	Circumstances for visitors to be accompanied by a member of staff.
	That visitors delivering programs directly to students are adequately supervised by teaching staff of the school, in order for the school's duty of care to be discharged to those students.
	The familiarisation with school routines, including the emergency management plan, required for regular visitors.
	When parents will be notified in advance about visitors to the school.
Procedures	Requirements for parental permission for students to participate in programs or related activities delivered by visitors.

TALENT SCOUTS

Principals should consider the following when talent scouts approach a school.

Stage	Description
1	Determine whether the school community: Prefers parents/guardians to privately contact talent scouts outside of school hours or supports the school facilitating contact with students and talent scouts, such as: children's choirs, orchestras, drama groups, sporting associations, film companies looking for groups of 'extras' or undertaking individual casting, modelling agencies.
2	Where the school community supports school visits by talent scouts, consider whether the activity being scouted: Is regarded by the broader community as suitable for the age group being targeted. Will enrich learning and skill development for identified students. Will complement the identified students' education. Has demonstrated an appropriate commitment to child safety and meeting duty of care obligations by the individual or organisation (e.g. no prior convictions or complaints).
3	Other considerations include: Allowing visits by approved organisations at negotiated, convenient times during school hours. Providing information to the parents/guardians in the relevant year levels about opportunities so that, if desired, independent contact can be made, or Planning sessions by approved organisations for interested students accompanied by their parents/guardians, using school facilities and outside of school hours.

Stage   Description

Note: If after-hours auditions on school property are preferred, school councils will need to consider whether a fee for the use of facilities would be appropriate.

VISITING SPEAKERS

Schools should:

- Ensure the content of presentations and addresses contributes to the development of students' knowledge and understanding.
- Extend the invitation to external speakers to support its educational program, rather than allowing groups to use the school as a forum to advance their causes or beliefs, particularly if speaking on a controversial matter.
- Brief presenters about the nature of the school and its community.
- Ensure that visitors do not present information or programs that may conflict with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, policies of the Department and the school.
- Respect the range of views held by students and their families.

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 1st November 2019 and is scheduled for review in 1st November 2022.