



PROTOCOLS FOR VISITS BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT POLICY

Rationale

- State and Commonwealth Members of Parliament (MPs) are regular visitors to schools – for instance, to attend the official opening of facilities or other school functions and presentations.
- Schools have the discretion of hosting or inviting MPs to the school.
- The Principal is responsible, in consultation with the School Council, to issue an invitation or respond to a request by an MP to visit the school.
- When issuing invitations or granting permission to MPs, including Ministers, Principals are required to notify their Regional Director of the date, time and reason of the proposed visit, and whether or not the media are likely to be present. The Principal must ensure this information is provided to the Regional Director as early as possible, and ideally no later than five working days before the date of the proposed visit.
- Where more than one MP is attending an event, the school (together with the Regional Office) should ensure that the respective roles of the MPs are identified.
- These protocols also apply when local political candidates visit schools.
- Under the *Visitors in Schools* policy the school must consider the best interests of students, including the duty of care and education benefits to students, and appropriateness of the proposed visit, see: [Visitors in Schools](#)
- Party political activities are not permitted at a government school
- The distribution of any materials that convey partisan or party political activity, including any materials that promote a particular political party or election candidate, are not appropriate and may breach obligations under the *Public Administration Act 2004* and the *Constitution Act 1975*.
- Formal school gatherings, including school assemblies, cannot be used as a forum for political announcements.
- Principals of schools who refuse to host MPs or political party candidates during election periods should explain the reasons for not accepting requests.
- Principals of schools who agree to host MPs or political party candidates must notify their Regional Director as soon as possible and provide the details of a proposed visit and whether the media is likely to be present.
- During an election period the Regional Director must be notified of a request to visit the school made less than five days before the proposed visit and approval sought from the Regional Director.
- If there is a media presence, schools are reminded that the usual consent requirements associated with photographing students apply.

Purpose

- To ensure Footscray North Primary School meets these protocols when Members of Parliament or political candidates visit school sites and/or attend school functions.
- To ensure the school complies with DET policy and guidelines and the legislative requirements of the *Public Administration Act 2004* and the *Constitution Act 1975*.
- To ensure the school is aware of those aspects of school management that the Department specifically draws to the attention of schools.

Implementation

- The Principal will ensure that the school is neutral in its engagement with Members of Parliament and political candidates and will not distribute, promote or display material that may be considered political in nature.

Examples of activity that is prohibited:

A Member of Parliament or political candidate for election requests to attend a school assembly to announce funding for school capital improvements that is dependent on the outcome of an upcoming election.

A Member of Parliament or political candidate displays material that promotes a particular political party, for example, at a stall at a school fete.

Member of Parliament or political candidate makes a speech at the end of year function that promotes the policies of a particular political party.

Examples of activity that is not prohibited:

A Member of Parliament has asked to attend a school assembly to announce a Government initiative on behalf of the relevant Minister.

A candidate for election requests to organise a media event involving the Principal and School Council President to announce an election commitment (so long as all candidates are given equal opportunity and the Principal remains neutral).

A candidate for election seeks to visit the school to consult with school council about its aspirations for the school (so long as all candidates are given equal opportunity and the Principal remains neutral).

The School Council hosts an evening for political candidates to outline their respective positions on education in the school's catchment area.

A Member of Parliament is able to talk to members of the school community about their views, for example, at a school fete.

A Member of Parliament attends a school assembly to generally discuss how Parliament works and his or her role.

A Member of Parliament and opposing candidate for election participate in a debate as an educational activity for school students or to inform the school community.

A Member of Parliament makes a speech at the end of year function that includes statements about representations that he or she has made on behalf of the school community.

- Further, the Principal will ensure that Ministerial Order 199 *Teaching Service (Employment Conditions, Salaries, Allowances, Selection and Conduct) Order 2009* requirements at 11.1.10 that:

(1) An employee must not use, directly or indirectly, the resources of the Department, school or students of the school for any activity other than for official school purposes or other activities as authorised by the Secretary.

(2) An employee must not use his/her official position, the resources of the Department, school or students of the school to produce and/or distribute material that is not in connection with his/her official duties as an employee of the Teaching Service.

will be applied at all times.

- The Principal will ensure that the privacy of students is protected during visits, see: [Photographing and Filming Students](#)
- School employees must comply with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees see: [State Services Authority - Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#). As public servants school employees serve the Government of the day and must not give actual or perceived favour to one political candidate or party over another. Such an alignment also has the potential to become divisive in the parent and wider community.
- For further information, the school will refer to the website below particularly for advice on what are and what are not prohibited activities.
- Please refer also to the school's *Information Privacy Policy*, the *Visitors to the School Policy*, the *Photographing & Filming Children Policy*, the *Governance & Management Policy* and the *School Facilities Hire/Shared Use Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update early June 2019).

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/education/principals/spag/management/Pages/mpvisitt.aspx