

Route Map for Arranging a Visit to a School

Introduction

Almost all schools welcome adults visiting a school with a view to wanting to find out about teaching. Although some schools are still flexible with their arrangements for visitors to observe classes in their school, most prefer to have a policy in place which ensures certain guidelines are adhered to.

Generally speaking, all adults visiting a school will have to be issued with a printed identity tab at reception which might include having their photo taken.

Informal contacts with adults interested in subject teaching are usually encouraged and usually done with the knowledge of a professional tutor or an assistant headteacher. In some cases, these 'guests' to the college are not Criminal Record Bureau checked as they are with the subject teacher at all times and usually escorted from and back to reception. Obviously if the person is known to the member of staff there is a little more flexibility.

However, most adults interested in teaching, approach schools formally and often via PGCE, GTP and SCITT enquiries.

Advice on a formal approach to visit a school

Most often a visit is managed by the school's Professional Tutor or designated assistant headteacher. The school policy might state that a visitor does not need a CRB check for a 1 - 2 day visit because the visitor is never left on his/her own with pupils, a member of staff being always present. This arrangement is unlikely to change in the next 12 months as the Independent Safeguarding Authority (<http://www.isa-gov.org.uk/>) comes into action but may change later as a result of their tightening up procedures.

Visitors can either contact the school directly, asking the Reception to put them in touch with the Professional Tutor/Assistant headteacher or arrange the visit by contacting the Teacher Development Agency (0845 6000 991) and asking about their Open Schools arrangements which is an option available to schools for which they get paid.

The TDA website

(<http://www.tda.gov.uk/partners/recruiting/careerexploration/openschools.aspx?keywords=open+school>) has a very valuable set of instructions regarding visiting a school and it includes the following.

The open schools programme

The open schools programme provides prospective applicants for initial teacher training an opportunity to spend an observation day in school and gain an insight into the role and responsibilities of a teacher.

The exact structure of the day will vary from school to school, but a typical visit could include opportunities to sit in on two different lessons plus a pastoral session - like an assembly or tutor period - and a discussion with a member of the school's senior management team.

Participating schools can access resources offering guidance and information which will help them provide an informative and enjoyable experience for visitors.

The format of visits

The guidance will

- provide the visitor with a positive, informative experience to help their exploration of teaching as a career; and
- give the visitor a broad understanding of the teacher's role and responsibilities.

While the structure of the visit will depend on your school's particular circumstances, the following elements are likely to be included:

- the 'meet and greet' session;
- two periods of classroom observation;
- observation of a pastoral activity (eg. assembly/tutor period/circle time)
- a period of lunchtime or outdoor supervision
- discussion with a member of the senior management staff, and
- the closing meeting.

Meet and greet session

Before the meeting, make sure you have:

- arranged a place to meet where there will be no interruptions;
- ensured that all staff involved in the visit are clear about their roles and the timetable for the day
- considered contingency plans in case of staff absence, and
- gathered the following documentation: a programme for the day's visit, the school prospectus, and a list of staff names and their areas of responsibility.

The 'meet and greet' session has two elements:

1. The welcome and domestic arrangements

The more the visitor feels at ease in the school environment, the more able s/he will be to concentrate on her/his areas of focus. Make sure you provide the visitor with key information regarding toilets, breaks, lunch and the fire drill.

Make arrangements to meet with the visitor during the day (possibly over lunch). This will provide security and support, ensure that the visit is running smoothly and allow you to arrange the review session at the end of the visit.

Provide the visitor with a copy of the timetable for the day and review each element, identifying opportunities for learning and ensuring that the arrangements are clear and understood.

Aim to allow the visitor to function in the school without having to constantly seek out your support. However, please ensure that they are accompanied at all times by a member of staff, particularly when going from lesson to lesson.

2. The guided tour

The visitor may already know about your school's organisation and staffing structure from the pre-visit information. The guided tour is important to set this in context. Introduce the visitor to key personnel such as the headteacher and senior management staff, as well as staff with whom she or he will be spending time.

Please arrange a guided tour of the whole school, pointing out structure (key stage areas, administration and teaching areas) and key resources (ICT suite, sports facilities, library etc). You should personally introduce the visitor to the member of staff they will be with for the next session.

CRB / ISA guidance

Most visitors will not have been vetted by either the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). They must therefore be supervised throughout their visit and accompanied by a member of staff at all times, including when moving around the school between sessions.

The closing meeting

Towards the end of the day you should meet with the visitor to:

- reflect on their experiences during the day
- respond to any outstanding questions or issues
- discuss the next steps they will take in considering a career in teaching
- complete the next steps form, and
- complete the visitor review form.

Keep a copy of the next steps form and the visitor review and send copies to the TDA Teaching Information Line in the envelope provided.

The TDA will follow up with a telephone call to the visitor after the visit to encourage them to achieve their objectives. The visitor review form should provide helpful information about their perception of the day.

After the visit

The school review form together with the visitor's feedback, will help you consider the visit, identifying the strengths of your programme and areas that you may wish to amend or develop. The school review form is for the school's records and a copy does not need to be sent to the TDA.

Suggested programme of activities

Here is a suggested structure for the visit to a secondary, primary or special school.

Primary or special school:

8.30 Arrival - meet with open schools representative
9.00 Guided tour
9.15 Assembly
9.30 First lesson observation
10.30 Break
10.45 Second lesson observation
12.00 Lunch break – perhaps taken with a newly qualified teacher
13.00 Meetings with:

- a key stage coordinator
- SENCO
- subject leader
- support staff - teaching or learning support assistants

15.30 Final meeting and review session open schools representative

Secondary school:

8.30 Arrival - meet with open schools representative
9.00 Tutor period
9.30 Guided tour
10.00 Meet with head of department/senior teacher
10.30 Break
10.45 First lesson observation
12.00 Lunch break – perhaps taken with a newly qualified teacher
13.00 Second lesson observation
14.00 Meet with any other key designated teaching staff
15.00 Meet with support staff - teaching or learning support assistants
15.15 Final meeting and review session with open schools representative (15 minutes)

A footnote on the Independent Safeguarding Authority

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) was created as part of the Government's Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. It is a Non Departmental Public Body, sponsored by the Home Office.

It works in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to help ensure that there is 'no known reason' why individuals who work or wish to work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults should not do so.

The ISA's role within the VBS is to make independent barring decisions and place or remove individuals on either the ISA's Children's Barred List or the ISA's Vulnerable Adult's Barred List, or both.

Increased safeguards were introduced under the Vetting and Barring Scheme, from October 12th 2009:

- It is a criminal offence for individuals barred by the ISA to work or apply to work with children or vulnerable adults in a wide range of posts - including most NHS jobs, Prison Service, education and childcare. Employers also face criminal sanctions for knowingly employing a barred individual across a wider range of work;
- The three former barred lists (POCA, POVA and List 99) are being replaced by two new ISA-barred lists;
- Employers, local authorities, professional regulators and other bodies have a duty to refer to the ISA, information about individuals working with children or vulnerable adults where they consider them to have caused harm or pose a risk of harm.

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