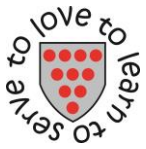


# A Guide for Visiting Places of Worship

Visits are a useful resource and add another dimension to RE by providing pupils with the opportunity of experiencing religion as a living vibrant community. Visits can be used as a stimulus to start a piece of work or to reinforce learning undertaken in the classroom. Encounter and dialogue with people from different religions and beliefs is a good way to encourage and develop respect. It is also a key opportunity for building understanding of the role religion and belief plays in the lives of individuals and communities. Both are important aims of Religious Education.

## General Information

- There are several things to bear in mind when you visit any place of worship in any religion. This place will be a special place for those who worship there so it is important that everyone should **respect** both the place and the guide, remembering that the school is a visitor in someone else's sacred place. Nearly all religious communities want to help your children understand more about their beliefs and practices.
- Ensure your visit has an educational objective. Follow up work is generally the expectation and an important thing to remember is that all place of worship will have distinctive features that may be different to what has been taught in the classroom- be aware of this.
- Ensure that the destination of the visit is the right one to fulfil the aims and educational objectives for the visit.
- Ensure that you have made a preliminary visit, particularly if this is the first time that you have used the venue as a school or teacher, so that you can satisfy yourself that it not only meets the educational objectives but also that it is safe and secure. Any points for consideration will need to be added to your risk assessment.
- Ensure you have written confirmation of your visit and the type of activities the pupils will be involved in. Get a contact number.
- Places of worship will have expectations of visitors and it is vital that all adults and pupils are aware of these **BEFORE** the visit takes place. A reminder on the coach is also advisable.
- Check what pupils will need. Find out if the pupils will be largely on the move, or if there is a dedicated area for them to work.
- Preparation of the pupils is essential for a successful visit. Spend time in lessons to ensure the pupils have questions to answer and to ask and know what to look out for.
- Be aware that teachers may need to explain things to pupils if the speaker in the place of worship is not talking at the appropriate level.
- Some parents may feel insecure about their child visiting religious places which might be contentious. Refer to your individual school policy.
- Really important to make it clear what time the visit has to end and make sure you keep to your time limit.



## Organising a School Visit to a Place of Worship

Examples of aims for the visit:

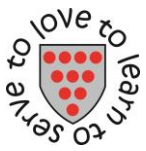
- To experience the atmosphere inside the place of worship
- To learn about the purpose of the layout and furniture of the building, and how these reflect beliefs
- To investigate the significance of the symbols and objects
- To learn about the rituals and importance of this place to believers of that faith

### Learning strategies

The minister, elder or guide in attendance should be clearly briefed about the purpose of the visit and the needs of the pupils namely for them to have time to reflect and that the explanations given should be appropriate to their understanding of the religion.

Pupils should have opportunities to -

- ask appropriate questions
- reflect on the atmosphere, symbols and objects around them
- express their impressions and ideas and experience silence and stillness



## Visiting a Gurdwara – KS3

### Clothing

Clothing should be modest female staff – long skirt/loose trousers. Head covering is essential for everyone. A large clean handkerchief is adequate for male teachers and boys, and female teachers and girls are expected to use scarves. The gurdwara will usually have **some** head coverings for those who have forgotten them, but possibly not enough for a large group.

**Shoes** are **removed before** going into the gurdwara and put on the racks provided. **Pupils** should have clean and presentable socks or tights.

### Entering the Prayer Hall

- In addition to covering your heads, visitors may be asked to wash their hands (Sikhs do so before entering to pray).
- On entering the **Prayer Hall**, the **Guru Granth Sahib** (the Sikh sacred scriptures) will be observed on a low platform, covered by a canopy. When Sikhs enter, they touch the floor this with their forehead and offer a gift such as food and money.
- Visitors **may** also **bow** in similar fashion as a mark of **respect or stand for a few minutes before the Guru Granth Sahib in silence also as a sign of respect.**
- No gift is demanded from any visitor, but it would be appreciated if the teachers on behalf of the school wish to make one – leave it with the other gifts.
- Seating is on the floor which is carpeted. Men and women sometimes sit in separate groups, but everyone should avoid their feet being pointed towards the Guru Granth Sahib, or their backs being turned towards it – both those positions are considered disrespectful.

### Worship and sacred food

- **No food should be brought into the gurdwara.**
- If you arrive during worship, pupils will normally be expected to sit alongside the worshippers, but of course **do not have to join in.**
- At the end of the worship visitors may be offered **Karah Prashad** (holy food). This is a sweet mixture that has **been** blessed during the service and is given to everyone to signify that **all are equal.** ) This is usually given in cupped hands and eaten immediately. If you are uncertain about your ability to eat a lot of this food – Say “very small portion” to the Sewadar (volunteer) serving the Karah Parshad
- If you do not want to eat this food, a polite ‘no thank you’ will suffice- teachers can explain this in advance to the gurdwara.
- The same applies to **langar** (the food served in the communal kitchen at the gurdwara) since this also may be blessed – head covering should be maintained because of this.
- The langar is a meal to which all visitors are welcomed. However only accept what you are prepared to eat rather than leave any food – **pupils will need to be reminded of this.**

### The gurdwara is

The Sikh community -the secretary, the elder

### What to look for

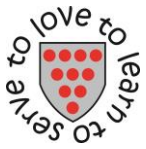
Guru Granth Sahib

Palki – canopy which forms part of the Guru’s platform

Chauri – whisk waved over the Guru Granth Sahib to avoid dust contaminating it.

Ik Onkar – the symbol that represents the One Supreme Reality

Musical Instruments



## Visiting a Church

### Clothing

There are no particular requirements with regard to clothing except that it should be modest

### Entering the Church

Most churches have pews or rows of seats, although in Orthodox Churches most people stand for worship. Christians will not expect visitors to bow or show other outward respect to the altar.

### Worship and sacred food

School visits would not normally take place when there is a service in progress. However, if you ask, a minister may arrange for aspects of a ritual or service to be re-enacted.

### What to look for

Banners  
Stained glass windows  
Architecture  
Kneelers  
Symbols

## Visiting a Synagogue

### Clothing

Clothing should be modest and girls should not wear trousers. Married female teachers, male teachers and boys should cover the heads when visiting any synagogue.

### Entering a place of worship

In Orthodox synagogues, women will sit in a separate balcony or gallery area during worship.

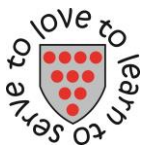
### Worship and Sacred Food

No food should be brought into the synagogue.

No sweets or chewing gum. It is unlikely a service will be taking place as synagogues will not usually accept visits then.

### What to look for

The Ark  
Menorah  
Scrolls/scroll covers  
Ner Tamid – eternal light  
Bimah  
Yad  
Ten commandments  
Women's gallery



## Visiting a Mosque

### Clothing

No shorts, skimpy tops. A headscarf – check when you phone, if the mosque requires you to wear them. Shoes are removed before going into the prayer hall and put on the racks provided or wrapped in a plastic bag and taken into the hall.

### Entering the Mosque

Where women attend the mosque, men and women usually go in by separate entrances. Visitors may be greeted in Arabic. Visitors may be greeted with the Arabic, 'As salaam-u-'alaikum' ('peace be upon you') and the correct response is, 'Wa' alaikum-us-usalaam' ('peace be upon you too'). Staff should not expect to shake hands with the opposite sex.

### Entering the Prayer Hall

The school party should go quietly into the prayer hall, and sit on the floor, with legs tucked in or crossed. Pupils should sit facing the Qiblah (the wall with the niche or alcove in it, indicating the direction of Mecca); however, it is considered disrespectful to sit with feet pointing towards the qibla wall, so preferable to sit with feet tucked underneath or to the side. Medical conditions are exempt from this so mention any medical issues when you confirm

### Worship and Sacred Food

No food should be brought into the Mosque. No sacred food will be offered to visitors at a mosque. Visitors are asked to remove their shoes and act respectfully in the prayer hall

### Notes

The main prayer hall is often used only by the men, and a separate room is provided for women. Where men and women pray in the same hall, they remain in separate groups.

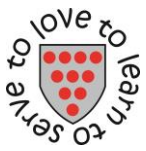
### What to look for

- Rack for removing shoes
- Women observing heads and arms
- Architecture
- Rooms for wudu – washing
- Prayer mats
- Prayer clocks – 6 times of prayer
- Minbar- pulpit where the imam stands to deliver sermons
- Qiblah wall – direction of Mecca

## Visiting a Mandir (Hindu)

### Clothing

Clothing should be modest and no head covering are not usually required. Shoes are removed before going into the temple and put on the racks provided.



### Entering the temple area

There may be a bell for worshippers (only) to ring. Children should walk **quietly** and find a place to sit on the floor (usually carpeted). In some temples men and boys sit on one side of the room and women and girls on the other. Pupils should sit with legs crossed, or with legs pointing to one side- it is considered disrespectful to sit with legs

forward and feet pointing towards the sacred area of the front of the temple. In some mandirs guests may be expected to **stand** as a sign of respect during **arti** (the ceremony of blessing with fire).

### Worship and Sacred Food

No food should be brought into the mandir. There is no expectation that visitors should join in the **formal prayer and worship**. When Hindus go to the mandir, they usually take an offering such as **food or money** to give to the deities, visitors may give a small sum of money for the upkeep of the building.

After food is blessed, it becomes **sacred** and is called **prashad**. Often the prashad is in the form of sweets or fruit offered on a tray. Visitors **will** be offered some which can either be eaten there and then or taken home. If children take some, **they should receive it in cupped hands with the right hand uppermost. You can say a polite NO thank you.** If children have any allergies these can be explained when you speak to the guide.

Some Hindus meet in hired premises or in each other's homes. Most mandirs are in buildings adapted from other uses, and few are purpose built.

### What to look for

- Statues of the deities
- Lamps
- The priest
- Prasad
- Bell
- Music

## Visiting a Buddhist Temple

Buddhist places of devotion and worship vary considerably in style and practice.

### Clothing

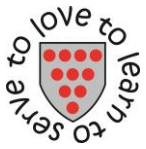
There are no particular requirements with regard to clothing except that it should be modest.

### Entering the shrine room

Before entering the shrine room, shoes should be removed as a mark of respect. Inside the room, seating is generally on the floor and it is appropriate to sit quietly and reflect.

### Worship and sacred food

No food should be taken into the temple. The shrine room is mainly a place for meditation and teaching. It is also a place for **PUJA – a way of expressing your devotion by means of offering flowers, lights, incense, food or other gifts.** There is no expectation that visitors will participate in this.



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**What to look for**

Candles

Incense

Flowers

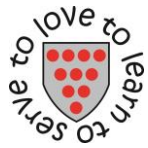
Statues of the Buddha

The monks

Architecture


Women covering heads and arms

The shrine room

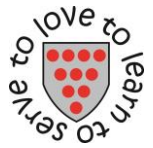





**Places of Worship and contacts in and around Worcestershire**

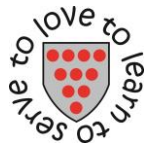
Below is a list of suggested places of worship which could be used to enhance the teaching and learning of RE. Please note that schools will need to carry out their own risk assessments in line with their schools’ educational visits policy before carrying out a visit.

Faith	Address/ Key Contact	Additional Comments
<b>Worcestershire SACRE</b>	<b>Chris Giles, Head of RS South Bromsgrove High School</b> <a href="mailto:GL@Southbromsgrove.worcs.sch.uk">GL@Southbromsgrove.worcs.sch.uk</a>	
<b>Christianity</b>	<b>Worcester Cathedral</b> Education Officer: Daniel Parnell By Telephone - 01905 732919 By email - <a href="mailto:schools@worcestercathedral.org.uk">schools@worcestercathedral.org.uk</a> By letter - to The Education Officer, 8 College Yard, Worcester, WR1 2LA	 <p>Visit plans bespoke to your learning aims and to meet objectives of Understanding Christianity curriculum including place of Christian Worship, Pilgrimage, Prayer &amp; Communion. Full Day or half day visits. Cross curricular links with several subjects.</p>

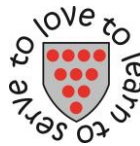







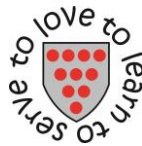
<p><b>Islam</b></p>	<p><b>Worcester Mosque</b>          Address: Tallow Hill, Worcester WR5 1JU          Phone: 01905 20005  <i>Mohammed Iqbal</i> - Secretary/Treasurer  <a href="mailto:worcestermosque@gmail.com">worcestermosque@gmail.com</a>.</p>		<p>Hour/hour and a half tour          Take off shoes          Visit shower area          Girls cover heads          Visit prayer room          Listen to call to prayer          Q&amp;A session</p>
<p><b>Islam</b></p>	<p><b>Central Masjid Worcester</b>          Address: 86 Lowesmoor , WR1 2SB  <a href="mailto:worcestercentralmasjid@gmail.com">worcestercentralmasjid@gmail.com</a>          Ali Ahmed: 07540251527</p>		
<p><b>Islam</b></p>	<p><b>Central Mosque – Redditch</b>          Address: Jinnah Rd, Redditch B98 7ER          Phone: 01527 63834</p>		




<p><b>Islam</b></p>	<p><b>Birmingham Central Mosque</b>          180 Belgrave Middleway,          Highgate, Birmingham          United Kingdom B12 0XS          Tel: 0121 440 5355          Email: <a href="mailto:enquiries@centralmosque.org.uk">enquiries@centralmosque.org.uk</a>          Website: <a href="http://www.centralmosque.org.uk">www.centralmosque.org.uk</a>  <b>For Group Visits: 0121 440 5355</b></p> <p>Islamic Exhibition around the corner from the Mosque</p>		<p>'Youth guide was fantastic and made the visit personal to our children, who were buzzing'</p>
<p><b>Judaism</b></p>	<p><b>BPS Birmingham Progressive Synagogue</b>          1 ROSELAND WAY, BIRMINGHAM B15 1HD          0121 634 3888</p> <p>office @<a href="mailto:bps-pro-syn.co.uk">bps-pro-syn.co.uk</a></p> <p>OFFICE@BPSJUDAISM.COM</p>		<p>Modern but very child friendly.          Nr New St Station</p> <p>Men and women are allowed to sit together.</p> <p>No fee but donation welcome (£60)</p>



<p><b>Hinduism</b></p>	<p><b>Hindu Mandir</b>  Dudley Road East  Tividale  West Midlands B69 3DU  England  Phone 0121 544 2256  Fax 0121 544 2257</p> <p><a href="http://www.venkateswara.org.uk/Home.aspx">http://www.venkateswara.org.uk/Home.aspx</a></p>		<p>Children very welcome.  Served poppadum's and lemon rice.</p>
<p><b>Sikhism</b></p>	<p><b>Gurdwara</b>  Gurdwara Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha  18-20 Soho Road  Handsworth  Birmingham  B21 9BH</p> <p>Tel: 0121 551 1125  Email: <a href="mailto:visitors@gnnsj.org">visitors@gnnsj.org</a>  Contact for SACRE: Jatinderpal Loyal  (<a href="mailto:jatinderpalloyal@gmail.com">jatinderpalloyal@gmail.com</a>)</p>		<p>Children are able to sample foods, curry naan etc.  Experience Prashad in Worship Hall</p>
<p><b>Buddhism</b></p>	<p><b>Amida Mandala Buddhist Temple</b>  34 Worcester Road  Malvern  WR14 4AA  Tel 01684 572444</p>		



<p><b>Multi-faith</b></p>	<p><b>HMP Long Lartin</b> Kevin Downham, Managing Chaplain South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 8TZ Tel: 01386 295302</p>		
<p><b>Multi-faith</b></p>	<p><b>Worcestershire Interfaith Forum</b> <a href="https://interfaithworcestershireshire.wordpress.com/contact/">https://interfaithworcestershireshire.wordpress.com/contact/</a></p>		<p>Contact through website. List of up-and-coming events</p>