

PROTOCOLS FOR POLITICIANS, AND CANDIDATES FOR AN ELECTION, TO VISIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

For the purpose of these protocols, the term “visitor” refers, but is not limited, a Member of Parliament (either State or Federal), and candidates for election.

Members of Parliament, need the permission of the Minister for Education to visit a public school - refer to the relevant sections below.

For others, the Minister for Education should be advised via the Ministerial Services Unit, as a matter of courtesy.

For official overseas visitors refer to the protocols published by the [Department of the Premier and Cabinet](#).

Any reference to an election, State or Federal, includes by-elections.

These protocols relate to public schools; it is important to note that visitors are not bound by them when visiting non-government schools.

1. General information

- 1.1 As public sector officers, all Department of Education staff are expected to maintain an apolitical stance and not promote or lend support to any political party. They must observe the [Visitors and Intruders on Public School Premises](#) policy and [Code of Conduct](#) at all times.
- 1.2 Under the *School Education Act 1999* (Section 121) and the *School Education Regulations 2000* (Regulation 72), the use of school premises that conflicts with the ethos and values of the school is not permitted. This means that school premises must not be used for purposes intended to generate support for any political party.
- 1.3 No political campaigning or provision of information (either orally or in writing) is permitted on school premises. This includes the use of social media, school communications and the acceptance of merchandise that identifies a political candidate (e.g. posters, campaign buttons, fridge magnets).
- 1.4 Public announcements about education policy can be made on school premises by the Premier of Western Australia, the Western Australian Minister for Education or their delegate/s.
- 1.5 A principal must remind visitors that they:
 - cannot express political views and ideologies, either personal or those of a political party, to students, staff and members of the school community; and
 - can talk generally to students and staff about their roles in the confines of student learning and the curriculum.
- 1.6 Visitors must not campaign while on school visits.

2. Media and social media

- 2.1 A principal cannot prevent visitors from addressing the media outside the school grounds, but must telephone the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821) immediately to advise when this occurs.
- 2.2 The media should not accompany a visitor on a school visit. If the principal becomes aware that the media is likely to be present, or is present, they must immediately telephone the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821) for advice.
- 2.3 The Western Australian Minister for Education and local member can bring media on to school grounds as long as it is not for electioneering purposes.
- 2.4 If media attendance is required, it is usual practice for media to be invited by the Government. If the principal wishes to invite media, the principal must first telephone the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821) for advice.
- 2.5 Visitors wishing to invite media and/or a Member from another electorate to accompany them on a school visit must seek permission from the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education, which advises the visitor directly if there are any concerns about the visit.
- 2.6 Principals who become aware of an upcoming visit and wish to invite media to the school must telephone the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821) for advice before informing or inviting any media.
- 2.7 Where the Western Australian Premier and/or Minister visit a school for the purpose of official opening or announcement, principals should not post anything on the school web or social media sites until the Minister has announced it.

3. Permission to visit a school

- 3.1 State/Federal Members of Parliament are welcome to visit schools in their own electorates and do not need to seek permission from the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education. However, Members must communicate with the principal to ensure intended visits are at a convenient time and do not disrupt the school's normal activities. In accordance with the *Visitors and Intruders on Public School Premises* policy statement 'The principal has primary responsibility for the day-to-day management and control of a school' and can negotiate a different time if the proposed schedule does not suit the school.
- 3.2 Principals must notify the regional Director of Education and the [Ministerial Services Unit](#) as soon as they are aware of visits by visitors other than local Members, whether or not the visitor has gained, sought or intends to seek permission from the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education.
- 3.3 Where principals are approached directly about visits by visitors other than local Members, they must advise them to notify the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education.
- 3.4 Visitors seeking permission from the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education must email minister.butl@dpc.wa.gov.au. This applies to:
 - State/Federal Members of Parliament wishing to visit schools outside their electorate (including during caretaker periods).
 - State/Federal Members of Parliament wishing to invite media and/or Members from other electorates to accompany them on school visits.
 - Candidates for election who want to visit schools.

- Any other dignitaries.

3.5 The Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education advises visitors directly if there are any concerns about upcoming visits.

4. Visitors seeking permission during caretaker period

4.1 Once a caretaker period is in place for a State/Federal election, all existing State/Federal Members of Parliament must:

- notify the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education to visit schools in their electorates; and
- seek permission from the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education to visit schools outside their electorates.

5. Protocols for the Western Australian Premier and/or Minister for Education to visit a school

5.1 A request from the Premier or the Minister for Education to visit a school is received by the Ministerial Services Unit. The Ministerial Services Unit (MSU) checks with the principal whether the proposed date and time are suitable. Once a suitable date and time are confirmed, MSU requests briefings through the regional education office, which liaises directly with the principal.

5.2 A request from a principal for the Premier or the Minister for Education to attend an event at a school (other than an official opening) or to visit a school must be in writing in the form of a memo from the Director General (template at [Ministerial Services Unit](#)). The principal (if an Independent Public School) or regional office (if not an Independent Public School) must forward the request to the [Office of the Director General](#).

5.3 When a principal wishes to invite the Western Australian Minister for Education to open a facility at a school, the principal must notify the [Ministerial Services Unit](#) that the facility is ready for opening. MSU liaises with the Office of the Western Australian Minister for Education to arrange a mutually-agreed date and time. A formal memo is not required. The principal should initially refer to the [Official Opening of School Buildings guidelines](#) for further information.

5.4 If media attendance is required, it is usual practice for media to be invited by the Government. If the principal wishes to invite media, the principal must first telephone the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821) for advice.

6. Protocols for candidates for election to visit schools

6.1 A person becomes a candidate for an election only when that person nominates during the specified nomination period, which generally starts at the time the writs are issued for an election. That person then remains a candidate until they withdraw their nomination, is declared elected or is not elected.

6.2 If people refer to themselves as candidates for particular seats or parties before the nomination period, they may be potential or preferred candidates but are not official candidates until they nominate.

6.3 Candidates have no automatic right to visit schools or meet with principals and/or school staff. It is not appropriate to acknowledge candidates at any school event.