

SACRE Classroom Visits: Guidelines

Preamble

Portsmouth SACRE should know the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching of RE within PCC schools. This will depend on assessing performance data if presented to them by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and through the arranged visits made to schools in the context of an understanding of what happens in the classroom.

It is also important **that SACRE make** an impact on school improvement and **by visiting** schools to see it in operation, and to be aware of standards and progress are important aspects of this crucial role.

SACRE members are not qualified to assess standards but they need to visit lessons in order to:

- Appreciate and understand the work of the staff (teachers and support staff) and how the pupils are learning;
- Be aware of the response of pupils to their work and check that the pupils are aware of what they are learning;
- Be aware of resource issues;
- Be able to ask appropriate questions and hold sensible discussions with the professionals;
- Understand as fully as possible the meaning of the results of monitoring reported to them.

N.B. SACRE members are not inspectors and are not present in a lesson to make judgements about the professional expertise of the teachers. That remains a task for the head and/or other education professionals. It would be inappropriate, therefore, for **SACRE members** to:

- Make judgements about the quality of teaching;
- Report on the progress of individual children;
- Pursue personal agendas;
- Monopolize teachers' time;
- Arrive with inflexible pre-conceived ideas.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be adhered to regarding classroom visits. Observations and comments should be shared with the teacher concerned, and with the headteacher, but not with other staff or with parents. And the approach of a **SACRE member** should be to ask for explanations of anything not understood, not to make assumptions.

Reports to **SACRE** should not identify individuals in a critical manner: this is not the role of **SACRE**

Minimum commitment

Individual **SACRE members** have differing amounts of time to commit to an exercise such as classroom visits. It is important; however, that all **SACRE members** should try to make visits at some time, **but visits should take place at least** once a year.

Ground rules

It is useful to follow some basic rules in planning visits.

School Visits – an Aide-Memoire

What is the purpose of the visit?

What has prompted my decision to visit?
Who has prompted my decision to visit?
Is the reason specific or general?
What are my/other people's expectations?
How can my visit benefit the teacher?

How shall I carry it out?

What particular areas of the school am I interested in?
What particular activities am I interested in?
What particular age-group(s) am I interested in?
Are there any questions that can be answered by observation?
What questions should I ask?
Who should I ask?

Did I achieve my aim?

To what extent did I address the reason for my visit?
Which of my questions did I answer?
To what extent did I fulfil my own/other people's expectations?
What difficulties did I meet and why?

Is there any follow-up?

Have I recorded my experiences?
Did I 'report back' to the head and staff?
Have I prepared a short report for the next governors' meeting?
How can I build on this for the next visit?

	Always	Never
Before	Arrange details of visit. Agree purpose of visit Discuss the context of the lesson to be observed. Agree role within the lesson	Turn up unannounced
During	Keep to the role agreed Keep questions for the class teacher until after the visit is over Please remember confidentiality Stick to the times and purpose agreed Be sensitive to the mood in the classroom and the expectations of the children.	Assume a different role Walk in with a clipboard Distract the pupils from their task
After	Thank the teacher and the pupils -Discuss the visit with the teacher at their convenience -Feedback to the governing body	Leave without acknowledgement Break rules of confidentiality

Review

The guidelines should be reviewed by **SACRE** each academic year. We would need to ask:

- o Are our visits proving useful?
- o Have there been benefits, particularly unexpected benefits, from our visits?

SACRE Visit Report

Name:	Date:
Focus of visit	Classes/staff visited
Summary of activities e.g. talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch etc.	
What have I learned as a result of my visit?	Positive comments about the visit
Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have:	
Ideas for future visits:	
Any other comments:	
Signed _____ Signed _____ (SACRE member)	