

## **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 Tarneit Rise 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 Department of Education and Training (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 MPs and political candidates and will not distribute, promote or display material that may be considered political in nature.
- 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 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 July 2017).

<b><u>Ratification Date</u></b>	<b><u>Review Date</u></b>	<b><u>Policy Number</u></b>	<b><u>Version Number</u></b>	<b><u>Date Produced</u></b>
October 2017	2020	65	1	September 2017

Reference:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/mpvisit.aspx>