



Visits to Catholic schools by Members of Parliament

Engagement with Members of Parliament

State and Commonwealth MPs are regular visitors to schools for events such as the official opening of facilities, fetes and presentations, or to tour schools.

Schools should always feel comfortable with inviting their local state and federal MPs to visit and attend public events. Principals are encouraged to accommodate requests from MPs and candidates to visit schools.

School visits of this nature serve a valuable purpose in increasing an MP's knowledge of the Catholic sector and help to develop an appreciation of the important roles that Catholic schools play in their communities and the talent and enthusiasm of the students and teachers in our sector's vibrant Catholic learning communities.

Invitations to school organised events can continue to occur during election campaign periods. If a local MP or candidate is invited to a school organised event or requests an invitation, it would be appropriate for other local candidates to be given the opportunity to attend in addition to any government representatives. However, MPs and candidates should not be given the opportunity to use such events to campaign for the election, make election commitments or refer to any matters relating to the election.

Notify your proprietor of MP visits

Schools should notify their proprietor of a visit by a Member of Parliament, or, during an election campaign, visits by any candidate standing for election.

When issuing invitations or agreeing to host MPs or candidates, including ministers, principals are required to notify DOBCEL of the date, time, reason of the proposed visit, and whether they expect media to be present. Principals must ensure this information is provided as early as possible, ideally no later than 5 working days before the proposed visit.

Ministerial visits

If a school has been contacted by the office of a Minister or Shadow Minister regarding a school visit or attendance, they must notify their proprietor promptly, according to the process outlined above, ensuring that they provide:

- details of the Minister invited/attending, and any additional MPs
- contact details for the representative from the Minister's office
- the date and purpose of the event.

Proprietors will contact the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) and provide notice of the visit, as agreed under existing protocols.

Schools are encouraged to proactively invite VCEA to ministerial visits, once the proprietor has been notified. In keeping with its representational role, VCEA may send representation to the event.

Prime Minister and Premier visits

Schools may be contacted by the Prime Minister's office or Premier's office or department regarding a formal school visit. The respective office will request that this visit be kept confidential.

While this confidence should be respected, schools must notify their proprietor of these visits. Proprietors will then contact VCEA to enable VCEA to organise representation.

Maintaining an impartial and apolitical approach

Partisan or party-political materials, including materials that promote a particular political party or candidate, must not be distributed, promoted or displayed in a school, other than for educational purposes (and if being done so for educational purposes, care should be taken to ensure that this is done in a way that is apolitical and fair).

A school may publish on school channels (such as a newsletter) photos and factual information about an MP or candidate's visit but must not promote voting for a particular candidate or party.

A school may communicate a funding announcement or an election commitment to its community, provided the communication is restricted to factual information about the commitment, does not promote voting for a particular political party or candidate, and that the school communicates commitments from all political parties in the same way.

Any materials VCEA provides to schools to share with school communities will be in line with requirements and schools can confidently distribute.

Filming, photography and media

Positive publicity/media can usually be built into key events or visits; however, they should always be with prior agreement. When Ministers are involved, VCEA will work with Ministerial media advisors to ascertain the suitability of publicity and issue appropriate media statements.

Any footage or photos of school staff and students that MPs or their staff take must have consent from the staff, parents or carers to be used (i.e., for social media posts).

Permission should be reconfirmed before use even where the normal school permission form covers use, as staff, parents or carers may have particular sensitivities regarding their inclusion in material of a political nature.

Principals must ensure that any printed or electronic material (including badges) that may be considered political in nature is not distributed, promoted or displayed at the school or during a school event, and that school resources are not used for political purposes.