

Appendix 5

Guidelines for school visits

DES Circular 0023/2010

Talks and programmes delivered by outside agencies or speakers must be consistent with and complementary to the school's ethos and SPHE or RSE programme. Visits should be planned, researched and implemented in partnership with school personnel.

It is of the utmost importance that classroom teachers remain in the classroom with the students. The presence of the classroom teacher should ensure that the school follows appropriate procedures for dealing with any issues that may arise as a result of the external inputs.

Relevant teachers need to liaise with and be involved with all visitors and external agencies working with the school and the whole staff needs to be made aware of same.

It is strongly recommended that parents should be consulted and made aware of any such visiting people or agencies to classrooms and schools.

All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specifically qualified to work with the young people for whom the programmes are designed.

All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of the subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

Inappropriate teaching approaches not to be used by school visitors include:

Scare tactics: Information that induces fear and exaggerates negative consequences is inappropriate and counterproductive.

Sensationalist interventions: Interventions that glamorise or portray risky behaviour in an exciting way are inappropriate and can encourage inappropriate risk-taking.

Testimonials: Stories focused on previous dangerous lifestyles can encourage the behaviour they were designed to prevent by creating heroes or heroines of individuals who give testimony.

Information that is not age-appropriate: Giving information to students about behaviours they are unlikely to engage in can be counterproductive in influencing values, attitudes and behaviour.

Once-off or short-term interventions: Short-term interventions, whether planned or in reaction to a crisis, are ineffective.

Normalising young people's risky behaviour: Giving the impression to young people, directly or indirectly, that all their peers will engage or are engaging in risky behaviours could put pressure on them to do things they would not otherwise do.