**INFORMATION FOR HOSTS INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL VISITS OR FAITH TRAILS**

**Learning outside the classroom**

Thank you for agreeing to host a visit to your place of worship for ………………… (class / year/ group) to support their Religious Education on …………………………

Visiting faith communities as part of a curriculum for Religious Education (RE), provides exciting opportunities to enhance the learning that pupils undertake in the classroom. Host communities play an important role in supporting and delivering the learning that pupils will experience in this context.

Whether this is a single visit to a faith community or part of a series of visits on a faith trail, Learning Outside of The Classroom is intended to enable children and young people to:

Five broad learning aims are important in this endeavour so that pupils can:

* Experience being in a holy place and consider what it means to a member of that faith;
* Explore each building and its features and learn interactively how it is used;
* Find out what the religious community does to help others locally and abroad;
* Reflect on what the religions have in common and respect the differences;
* Enjoy a fascinating, thought-provoking and unforgettable day out together!

This opportunity can be a unique and special experience for the visiting children and adults. It is not a classroom lesson but an interactive learning, researching and exploring experience. In order to deliver this experience and make it as inclusive as possible for the visitors, you might find the following ‘Teaching Tips’ below helpful!

Religious Education (RE) in schools enables children to share their own beliefs and learn about the beliefs and experiences of others; the purpose of RE is not to challenge and remove the faith of children or to try to convert them, so visits must take place in this spirit.

Therefore please note:

It is a privilege for the children to be present at and to observe prayers or other religious activities taking place in the buildings during their visit, however it isimportant that pupilsare not asked to join in or take partin any kind of worship.

It is lovely for the children to meet and listen to someone/people who are devout and enthusiastic about their religion, but please make sure all of your team are aware that it is not acceptable to use language that might seem to try to persuade or

convert pupils to your faith or indeed to imply that yours is better than another religion.

Although you will be sharing your own beliefs, values and practices, please ensure that you do not say anything derogatory about other religions. Of course, the children will naturally be noticing similarities and differences, but we want to discourage them from making negative comparisons and value judgements and to encourage them instead tounderstand and respect the differences.

Content of teaching and learning at each place of worship.

Depending on how a visit or a faith trail is organised it can be a long event or part of an intense day for the children with a great deal to take in, so it is best if they are not expected to sit and listen for more than 20 minutes. It will be helpful to find out from the teachers organizing the visit what they plan to be the main focus or purpose for the visit for example, finding out what goes on there and hear about how the building is used on a regular basis or for a special event

Using ‘Visual aids’ and religious artefacts really helps the children to understand and remember. Where possible focus on helping them to learn from what they can see, hear, touch and experience rather than abstract concepts.

Please allow enough time for questions. Children enjoy the opportunity to ask questions. Sometimes it helps if the class teacher can select from the hands which go up (to encourage shy children to join in).

Repeat any question a child asks,before answering, so that everyone can hear the question.

Finally pupils like generally moving round to explore buildings. Activities might include (these are faith specific but please consider a parallel in your context):

* Helping to open the Ark, to use the Yad and looking at the Siddur (Jewish prayer book):

* In the mosque, seeing the prayer mats, the Qibla, prayer beads and where relevant the mortuary and hearse and learning how and why they are used;

* Standing around the baptismal Font / pool in a church and learning about some of the symbolism and artifacts used or looking at and researching the stained glass windows and musical instruments;

* In the Hindu temple, seeing a lamp and incense being lit on an Arti tray and finding out how and why it is used, hearing the singing of a bhajan (hymn), playing musical instruments.

Pleaseconsider planning a few minutes of quiet time before leaving so children can absorb the atmosphere of a sacred space.

To summarise: children learn best by not having to listen for too long, with the

opportunity to ask questions and by participating in activities for discovery and

reflection

**Risk Assessment and Safeguarding**

You will need to consider any arrangements your community has for risk assessing and safeguarding, and then sharing any concerns you may have with teachers.