St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon

Visitors' Policy

'Achieving Excellence Together'

June 2026

Rationale
We, at St Patrick's Academy, have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of our staff, pupils and visitors. While visitors to our school are very welcome, we need to ensure that they follow a clear set of guidelines so that child protection and safeguarding requirements are not compromised in any way. In addition, all of our staff and pupils have a right to carry out their work in a safe environment, free from any behaviours that may cause distress, alarm or harassment. The purpose of this policy is to remind parents, carers and other visitors of expected conduct while on the school premises so that we can create an atmosphere of mutual respect and continue to work towards our vision of *achieving excellence together*.

Principles
The principles and philosophy which underpin our work with young people are those established in the 'UN Convention of the Rights of the Child' (UK Agreement 1991) and enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (effective from November 1996). In particular, the principle we support is that every young person has the fundamental right to be safe from harm and to be shown proper care of their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, by those looking after them. We have a statutory duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and a common law duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the school premises are safe and that visitors to school come to no harm.

Aims
The aims of this policy and its associated procedures are to:

- protect the welfare of staff, pupils and visitors while they are on the school premises;
- foster positive relationships with our parents/carers and other visitors in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding;
- develop a set of guidelines and procedures for visitors so that child protection requirements are adhered to.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Governors/Principal/Designated Teacher/School Business Manager must:

- Develop a clear and robust set of guidelines and procedures for the building supervisor and office staff to follow before admitting a visitor to the school (see Appendix 1);
- Assess the visitors' intentions at the reception desk before allowing them to continue with their role;
- Take all reasonable steps to check and assess the suitability of private contractors, peripatetic tutors, coaches, volunteers and so on before granting them admittance to the school e.g. Access NI clearance.

Staff (teaching and non-teaching) must:

- Notify reception in advance if they are expecting a visitor to the school, detailing the person's name, role and appointment time;
- Meet the visitor(s) at reception and accompany them to their place of business;

- Supervise the visitor at all times;
- Accompany the visitor back to reception and ensure that they sign out;
- Ensure that meetings with visitors are purposeful and professional at all times;
- Make every effort to provide parents/carers and visitors with the information they require (subject to data protection) so that a positive and co-operative relationship can be maintained between home and school.

**Please note: Peripatetic tutors may not require constant supervision as they are employees of the Education Authority and have been fully vetted.*

Parents/carers and visitors must:

- Make every effort to arrange meetings and/or visits in advance. This can be done by emailing the school 'info' account or by contacting reception;
- Comply with signing in and out procedures as requested by the school's receptionist, including the completion of registration documentation, if necessary;
- Wait in the foyer until a member of staff becomes available;
- Engage in professional, purposeful and respectful conversations with our staff;
- When seeking permission to speak to a teacher, follow school policy and understand that the teacher should not be interrupted when they are teaching. If the matter requires an urgent response, the Principal, relevant Vice-Principal, Head of Key Stage, Head of Department or Head of Year may be asked to assist;
- Wear the school lanyard and return this to reception upon departure;
- Not use any photographic devices or voice/video/recording devices whilst in the building, without prior consent from the Principal;
- Be aware that, for safeguarding and security reasons, the school operates CCTV recording 24 hours per day.

Private contractors

The school will make every effort to ensure that such work takes place outside of normal school hours, where possible. However, this may not always be possible, therefore, the contractor will be asked to read and agree conditions of entry on the Visitor Management System at reception. Recurring visitors/individuals who carry out works on a regular basis may only need to complete a Visitor Entry Form once. All private contractors will be expected to display their Visitor Lanyard at all times while on the school premises and should be used to sign in and out.

The school has a legal responsibility, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to ensure that private contractors work in a responsible manner when on our site. When working on the school premises, contractors have a duty to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the school who may be affected by their work activities and to co-operate with our procedures.

Guest Speakers

We will, from time to time, seek support from guest agencies to supplement and enrich, for example, the delivery of our preventative curriculum programme. Such agencies must agree to deliver their programme in accordance with our ethos and school policies and will be required to complete a Service Level Agreement (Appendix 2) before speaking to our pupils.

Breach of Visitors' Policy

Whilst it is anticipated that visitors to our school will be respectful of our procedures, it should be noted that any form of disruption to the operation of the school or harassment of staff, pupils or other members of the school community will not be tolerated. Visitors are expected to wear their lanyard(s) at all times and, due to safeguarding and security concerns, can expect to be challenged to identify themselves if they are not. The Principal, on behalf of the Board of Governors, reserves the right to put in place arrangements for addressing serious situations where the approach of a visitor might amount to harassment of staff, children or other members of the public. In such cases, the principal will ask a visitor to leave the premises and may contact PSNI, if necessary. Should harassment and/or disruptive behaviour continue, either in person or online, the Principal, in consultation with the Board of Governors, may apply for an injunction to restrain the individual(s) from entering the school premises.

Review

The Safeguarding Team will update this policy and its associated procedures when new guidance is issued or at the end of each academic year.

Reviewed: June 2026
To be reviewed: June 2027

APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for management of visitors to the school.

1. All visitors must report to reception.
2. The receptionist will oversee the signing in and issue a Visitor Lanyard before notifying the person or persons with whom they have an appointment.
3. If no appointment has been pre-arranged, the receptionist may check to see if someone is able to meet with them and at what time. If it is a short time period – no more than 15 minutes – the visitor may be asked to wait in the foyer and told when someone will be available. Visitor Lanyards are only issued once an appointment has been confirmed.
4. If the member of staff is unable to meet the visitor, ask for an alternative time and offer this to the visitor. In this case the visitor is asked to return at that time.
5. If no agreement can be reached and the visitor indicates that they will remain until someone becomes available, ask them to return at a specified time or contact the Principal, relevant Vice-Principal or School Business Manager to get someone to come and deal with the situation.
6. In all other circumstances, ask the visitor to sit at reception until the appropriate person arrives to see them.
7. Check on the visitor regularly and, if someone has been waiting for more than 10 minutes, send an urgent message to the person for whom they are waiting. If the person still does not arrive after 15 minutes, speak to the Principal, relevant Vice-Principal or School Business Manager to find someone to speak with the visitor.
8. If a visitor attempts to leave the foyer area and proceed into the building, ask them to remain and reassure them that someone will be with them shortly. If they are not cooperative, contact the Principal (203), Principal's PA (202), relevant Vice-Principal or School Business Manager (205) using the emergency telephone at reception (5555 or 321) describing the situation as *urgent.*
9. Should a visitor become uncooperative and/or difficult while in the school building e.g. during a meeting, please conclude the meeting immediately and ask the visitor to leave. If they continue to be uncooperative, please notify a member of staff listed in Point 8.
10. The Building Supervisor may also be alerted using the walkie-talkie system.
11. Ensure that any visitors are accompanied by a member of staff before leaving the foyer.
12. Never permit a pupil to be alone with the visitor.
13. If a visitor asks for a toilet, direct them to the accessible toilet beside reception and check if they have returned to their seat after a reasonable interval.
14. Visitors should ensure they do not use any photographic devices or voice/video/recording devices whilst in the building, without the consent of the Principal.

(APPENDIX 2) Service Level Agreement

1. I can confirm that I have read and fully agree to adhere to the school's ethos when working with pupils in St Patrick's Academy.

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

2. I can confirm that I have read the following policies and fully agree to adhere to these when working with pupils in St Patrick's Academy:

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

   - Pastoral Care;
   - Safeguarding and Child Protection;
   - Relationships and Sexuality (RSE);
   - Visitors' Policy

   (Available on school's website and/or from the Principal's PA)

3. I am willing to provide full details of material to be covered in the programme to our school's Governors, Senior Leadership Team, Parents and other relevant bodies in advance.

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

4. I am willing to make all adjustments recommended by the school before delivering the programme.

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

5. I understand that the school reserves the right to withdraw the invitation of supporting pupils at any time.

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

6. I can confirm that I have the authority to sign this agreement on behalf of

   _____ (insert name of agency).

   Yes **No**

   ❑ ❑

I formally accept the terms as set out above and acknowledge in doing so that an agreement has been made.

Signed: _____ (on behalf of agency) Date _____

Signed: _____ (Principal) Date _____