



Mandir Support Guidelines for Successful School Visits

Hosting school groups at the Mandir presents a wonderful opportunity to introduce young minds to the richness of Hindu culture, traditions and practices. By offering a respectful, engaging and informative experience, the Mandir can nurture a deeper understanding and appreciation of Hindu Dharma among students. Below are key steps to ensure that the visit is both educational and enjoyable for students and teachers alike.

1. Planning and Preparation

Coordinate with the School:

- Establish clear communication with the school to understand the purpose of the visit, the age group (primary or secondary), the number of attendees, and any topics they may be exploring in their studies. It's best to request this information in writing (via email or letter) for proper documentation.
- Confirm any special requirements, such as accessibility needs, in advance.

Set a Structured Itinerary:

- Create a detailed schedule that includes arrival, a guided tour, Q&A sessions and any interactive activities.
- Aim for a 60 – 90 minutes visit. If possible, align the visit with aarti (prayer ceremony) times so the students can observe this integral aspect of Hindu worship.
- Ensure the timing is convenient for both the Mandir and the school, considering travel time and worship schedules.

Conduct a Risk Assessment:

- Evaluate the premises to ensure the safety of visiting students.
- Highlight emergency exits, first aid facilities and confirm that all areas accessible to school visitors are child-friendly.

2. Welcoming the Group

First Impressions Matter:

- Designate a welcoming team to greet the group upon arrival.
- Offer a brief introduction to the Mandir, explaining essential customs, such as the removal of shoes, appropriate attire and maintaining a respectful demeanour.

Embrace Cultural Sensitivity:

- Be mindful of the diverse backgrounds of both students and staff. Use inclusive and accessible language to ensure the message is clear to all.

3. Delivering the Experience

Guided Tour of the Mandir:

- Highlight key areas such as the prayer hall, shrines and community spaces.
- Introduce important terms like *murti* (deity), *prasad* (offering), *aarti* (prayer ceremony), *dīpa* (lamp or light), and *ghāṇṭī* (bell), explaining their significance in a way that resonates with the students' age group.
- Share insights into the Mandir's architecture, deities and rituals, ensuring the content is age-appropriate and engaging.

Interactive Activities:

- For younger students, include hands-on activities like a demonstration of the aarti ceremony or a showcase of traditional Hindu attire.
- For older students, delve into discussions on Hindu philosophy, values and their relevance in today's world.

Learning Resources:

- Direct teachers with relevant materials in advance, such as activity sheets, to enhance the learning experience and offer students an opportunity for reflection after the visit. There will be worksheets available for students to complete on Hindu Education Board UK website. Schools can download these to consolidate learning.

Encourage Open Dialogue:

- Foster an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions. While avoiding overly complex theological concepts, focus on sparking curiosity and providing insights that will inspire greater understanding.
- If unsure about how to answer, reply “we will find out more and get back to you.”

- If asked an inappropriate or rude question, please ask the teacher to manage any student misbehaviour.

4. Practical Considerations

Ensure Accessibility and Comfort:

- Make sure the premises offer clean, accessible toilets and handwashing facilities. Provide a suitable space for students to sit or rest if needed.
- If the school requests lunch arrangements, ensure there is a designated area for dining. Be sure to inform the school in advance that only vegetarian food is allowed, in keeping with Mandir customs. If the Mandir has limited space, please remember that you do not have to provide a lunch area, inform the school accordingly that you do not have a lunch area.

Staffing and Volunteer Support:

- Assign knowledgeable and approachable volunteers or staff to act as guides.
- Provide training for volunteers to ensure they can explain Hindu practices and customs in a manner that is both child-friendly and informative.

5. Post-Visit Follow-Up

Gather Feedback:

- Allow the lead teacher to provide feedback to share their thoughts on the visit. This will help refine and improve future school visits.

Encourage Ongoing Engagement:

- Offer additional resources for continued learning, such as links to the Hindu Education Board UK website.
- Encourage schools to share photos or feedback from the visit with their wider community, helping to promote the value of the experience.

6. Additional Tips for a Memorable Visit

Celebrate Festivals:

- Invite schools to visit during major Hindu festivals like Diwali or Holi, providing a vibrant and immersive experience of Hindu cultural celebrations.

Promote Inclusivity:

Emphasise shared values between Hindu Dharma, British values and other traditions, such as kindness, respect and community service, to promote understanding and unity.

Align with Curriculum Needs:

- Tailor the visit to support the school's Religious Education (RE) curriculum, focusing on topics like worship, festivals, and Hindu perspectives on God, life and the universe. You can ask teachers for a copy of the curriculum before the visit to ensure alignment.

By adhering to these guidelines, the Mandir can create a meaningful and impactful experience that fosters respect, understanding, and curiosity among young learners.