

Guidelines for schools hosting short-term international visitors

The Government encourages international activities at schools.

This is a best practice guide for New Zealand schools hosting short-term international visitors' who are not enrolled, to ensure they are well cared for while they are here. This includes visitors who intend to visit a school for two weeks or less, and who do not pay any fees.

Before the Visit

Where boards have foreign students at their schools who will pay, or have paid, to receive education services from the school, and/or they are attending the school for longer than two weeks the Ministry of Education considers that the students should be enrolled at the school for the purposes of the Education Act 1989 and recorded in the ENROL system. Such foreign students must only be enrolled in schools that are Signatories to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code), and be covered by the Code.

A foreign visitor who does not pay the school money for the visit and who will not attend school for longer than two weeks may attend any school and may not need to be enrolled. Schools should manage such visits according to the Guidelines specified in this document.

Whether to enrol or not

If visiting students are fee-paying and/or attending the school for longer than two weeks, they should only attend Code Signatory schools, be enrolled, and pay international fees.

If visitors are attending schools for two weeks or less, and if they do not pay a fee to schools for the visit, they do not have to be enrolled, and can attend any school (including non Code Signatory schools).

If visitors intend to extend the short-visit beyond two weeks they should transfer to a Code Signatory School.

Note: schools are not required to accept international visitors. International visitors are not eligible for government-funded support (such as ESOL funding).

Immigration Requirements

Schools should ensure that visitors have a valid Visitor Visa or permit during their stay. To support their application for entry to New Zealand, schools may provide a letter of support to Immigration New Zealand. This should state the duration and purpose of the visit, the agent that is authorised by the school to organise the visit (if applicable) and the names and contact details of supervisors if the visit is for more than two visitors.

Parental Consent

If a school-age visitor is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, schools should request a letter of consent from the visitor's parent/legal guardian giving permission for the visit and approving the arrangements being provided by the school or its authorising agent.

Medical and Travel Insurance

Schools should advise all visitors that they are not eligible for publicly-funded health and disability services in New Zealand, and should recommend the purchase of medical and travel insurance for the visit.

Setting out Responsibilities

Regardless of the length of the visit schools should have policies and procedures in place that clearly set out the responsibilities of the school, group supervisors, parents, and any other third party involved in organising and delivering the visit. The policies and procedures should reflect the expectations of these guidelines and the legal obligations of all parties involved in the visit.

Third party contracts

If your school relies on a third party to organise and deliver the visit you should advise the third party on all relevant legal obligations and best practice, including these guidelines. You should also develop written agreements with third parties and keep a record of the agent's contact details.

Supervisors

Schools should ensure that their international school visitors have sufficient adult supervision. Determine an appropriate supervisor to visitor ratio based on the following factors:

- The number of visitors
- The ages of visitors (visitors under the age of 18 without parents should have 24-hour supervision)
- The duration of the visit
- Visitors with minimal or limited English language proficiency
- The activities involved.

If Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) activities are planned refer to the *EOTC Guidelines* for appropriate supervision ratios.

As a reference, the *Code* and the *Guidelines that support the Code* provide more comprehensive information in relation to group students.

During the Visit

Orientation

Schools should provide orientation for visitors including:

- Introduction to relevant staff members
- Provision of contact details of staff members responsible for the support of visitors (available 24/7 for emergencies)
- A brief introduction to the environment and culture of the school
- Accommodation arrangements and expectations
- Risk management measures associated with planned activities/excursions both in and outside the school (refer to the EOTC web pages for guidance)
- Complaints procedure appropriate to the purpose and duration of the visit

First Language Support

Schools should ensure that first language support is available for visitors and supervisors with English language proficiency.

Accommodation

Visitors in Years 1 - 4

Schools should only accept visitors in years 1 – 4 if they live with a parent or legal guardian during the visit, or live in a school hostel.

Homestay Accommodation

When either the school or an agent organises homestay accommodation for visitors, schools should ensure that:

- Homestays are visited and host parent/s interviewed
- The homestay families are provided with orientation and on-going support from the school during the visitor's stay
- Visitors are interviewed, as appropriate, to determine their satisfaction with the accommodation

Accommodation provided by designated caregivers

If the parents of an international visitor designate a local person to provide accommodation for a visitor, schools should request the designation in writing from the parents. Schools should also visit the accommodation to ensure that it is appropriate for the visitor.

As a reference, the *Code* and *Guidelines that Support the Code* provide more comprehensive information on what is regarded as appropriate accommodation.

Record of International Visitors

Schools should keep a record of international visitors, such as full legal name, citizenship, date of birth, first and last date of attendance or visit, the year level, and whether the visitor is part of a family or sister-school group. Schools should be able to provide this information to the Ministry of Education when requested. A template is available for this purpose.

Complaints procedures

As part of their orientation all international visitors whether individuals or members of groups should be informed of the appropriate complaints procedures. Use an evaluation form to identify any issues during the stay for future reference.

Other resources

- *The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* publications and further guidance can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz
- Information on school-to-school exchange programmes can be found at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/InternationalEducation/ForProvidersOfInternationalEducation/StudentExchangeApprovals.aspx>
- Education outside the classroom <http://eotc.tki.org.nz/>
- Further notes on International Visitors can be found at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/InternationalEducation/ForProvidersOfInternationalEducation/InternationalStudentVisitors.aspx>