

Getting more from your visit



Manchester
**Buddhist
Centre**

Prepare well

We notice some groups come with little or no preparation. For some, this means they are open and receptive, without preconceived ideas.

However, for others this means a less rewarding visit: their curiosity has not been awakened; they haven't worked out what they want to ask or what they want to get out of the experience.

This may result in a more passive experience for most pupils, with the visit dominated by the questions of one or two pupils.

You know your pupils.
Which approach will suit them best?

If you want to prepare, here are some suggestions.

Prepare questions

In class, stimulate questions to bring to the Buddhist Centre. You could use pictures or quotations to stimulate questions. Write down these individually or in groups.

Ask questions such as

- What do you already know about Buddhism?
- What else would you like to know?
- What aspects of Buddhism have you not really understood yet?
- What Buddhist ideas do you disagree with?
- What ethical topics have arisen in lessons on which you'd like a Buddhist view?

Group the questions if there is repetition or overlap. Refine each group of questions down to one or two questions if you can.

If this process yields more than about 10 questions, post these questions around the classroom and get pupils to vote for them. Give each pupil 3 sticky spots and ask them to stick them on the 3 questions they personally find most interesting. Bring the top ten questions with you to the Buddhist Centre.

“There are no answers; only better and better questions.” Is this true? What could it mean?

Look at our information sheets online

You can use these as they are, or copy and paste into your own materials.

Try stilling/meditation before you visit

Surprisingly, meditation is often the thing pupils are most looking forward to on their visit. However, some are scared or resistant.

In your classroom, you can help prepare pupils for the experience of meditation/stilling at the Buddhist Centre, listening to the sound of a singing bowl, or by using a CD such as *Stilling Exercises for Young People*, available on the Clear Vision website. There are many meditation CDs; ours has short tracks specially for young attention spans.
www.clear-vision.org

Arrive well

In the street or coach, build a sense of anticipation. Ask pupils what they think they might see inside. While you sign in and wait for your Buddhist guide, encourage pupils to sense the Buddhist Centre atmosphere.

Longer, more exploratory visits?

Our standard visits are 1.5 or 2 hours long and are largely whole-class events with plenty of Q&A. We teach in a lively and interactive manner. If you wish, you can leave the visit entirely to us.

But... if you come for longer, well-disciplined groups might enjoy a more organic, exploratory visit involving group work on topics chosen before your visit or emerging out of the visit.

In this case, you could encourage pupils to make decisions about what they want to do here. **Please let us know when you book.**

See next page for ideas.



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Longer, more exploratory visits

Some ideas

Pupils find a place they like (ground floor or shrine rooms) and sit or stand quietly with their experience for a few minutes. They think about and decide how they will record/recreate that experience, immediately and afterwards, in prose, poetry, music art or another medium. They make notes and drawings now, for later.

Investigation

After Q & A in the shrine hall, in small groups pupils could investigate a question such as

‘What does it mean to be a member of this Buddhist community?’

They could

- interview the receptionist, or their visit guide.
- video these interviews and edit them afterwards so all get to see all the interviews
- write individual accounts or poems or create a piece of art to answer the original question.
- using mobiles or cameras, photograph three things they think are special to Buddhists.

(Pupils need to justify their choices.)

Put together an assembly presentation or a display, on a wall or online.

At KS2/3, after listening to someone tell the Buddha’s life story, pupils could

- find two things in the shrine room which remind them of incidents from his life *or*
- decide which four artefacts they would put in a story sack to illustrate the Four Sights if retelling the Buddha’s life story to younger children; e.g. medicine, a walking stick, newspaper obituary pages and a monk or nun’s robe.

“Senses poems”

In the shrine room pupils could write poems beginning, “I see... I feel...” or “See...Feel...”

Drawing meditation

Pupils draw themselves doing the stilling exercise/ meditation. In a large speech bubble above their head they draw everything they noticed while they were doing it.

For more information and teaching materials, see www.clear-vision.org

Don’t miss **Ask A Buddhist!**, our free online video FAQ pages
www.clear-vision.org

Many thanks to members of the Association of Religious Education Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC) for ideas included here.

“Thank you for the professional and friendly way in which you shared with our pupils the Buddhist vision of life, in what was an engaging, welcoming and reassuring environment... They were clearly impressed and enriched.”



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