

How to invite your MP to your school

The most effective way to let your MP see the excellent work being done in your school is to let them see it first-hand. Inviting your local MP to visit your school is a great way to demonstrate the achievements of Catholic education in England and Wales, and for the MP to become more involved in their local constituency.

Here are a few tips to guide you in sending out invitations to MPs.

Find out who your local MP is

To find out who your local MP is, visit <http://www.parliament.uk> and enter your postcode to find out who your MP is and their contact details.

If you want to find out a bit more about your MP, including their voting record and register of interests, visit <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/> and enter your postcode to get this information.

Invite your MP to your school

Once you have found the details of your MP, you can send them a letter or email inviting them to visit your school. Here are a few important points to bear in mind:

- Be quite formal with your request or invitation. A letter from a senior member of the team is harder for an MP to turn down.
- Give them as much notice as you can. Their diaries are usually very full, so the earlier you invite them, the better.
- Explain clearly that you want the MP to speak to the students, and offer them some guidance so that they can plan their visit.
- Follow-up the request. MPs offices get lots of requests so there's no harm in calling a week or so after you send your letter or email to check they've received it and ask directly whether the meeting or visit is possible.
- MPs generally spend Monday to Thursday in Westminster and Friday to Sunday in their constituencies, although this can vary. Friday is therefore a good day for MPs to visit schools in their constituency.

Take a look at the template invitation in "Active Citizenship Resources" for an example of how you might write to your MP.

Before the visit

When the MP says yes to your request, it's important to put plans in place to make the visit go smoothly. It's a good idea to send an agenda across to the MP with any other logistical information about a week in advance of the meeting. You could also provide suggestions of what the MP could talk about; for example: How they ran and won their election campaign, policy issues which interest them, what is coming up in this next parliament, how students can get involved and find out more. Don't forget to also give the MP a tour of the school while they are there.

After the visit

After the visit, write a letter or email to thank them for giving their time, and also to remind them of anything you discussed or requested (such as a mention in a parliamentary debate). You can also send them pictures of the visit for them to put on their website.