

Colchester Islamic Cultural Association

Colchester Central Mosque • Serving the community since 1985

SCHOOL VISITS POLICY

Guidance and requirements for schools visiting Colchester Central Mosque

1. Purpose

Colchester Central Mosque welcomes visits from local schools as part of our commitment to community engagement, interfaith understanding, and support for Religious Education (RE). This policy sets out how visits are arranged, what is expected of visiting schools, and what schools can expect from us, in order to ensure every visit is safe, respectful, and educational.

2. Eligibility and Suitability

Visits are open to primary and secondary schools, as well as further and higher education groups, home-education groups, and other recognised educational organisations. Content and delivery are adapted to suit the age and needs of the visiting group.

3. How to Book

- Requests should be made by the Google Form found on the Mosque website.
- Please provide: preferred date(s) and time, group size, pupils' age range, number of accompanying staff, and any access or additional needs.
- Bookings should be made at least four (4) weeks in advance, subject to availability.
- No school visits are held during Ramadan. Please plan visits outside of this period; we are happy to help you find a suitable alternative date.
- We will confirm the date, time, and duration in writing, along with arrival, parking/drop-off instructions, and any preparation notes for staff and pupils.
- The mosque reserves the right to decline, postpone, or reschedule a visit where necessary (for example, due to prayer times, building works, or unforeseen circumstances).

4. Group Size and Supervision

- A minimum ratio of one accompanying adult to every ten (10) pupils is required for primary-age groups, and one adult per fifteen (15) pupils for secondary-age groups, in line with standard school trip guidance.
- Responsibility for pupil supervision, behaviour, and safeguarding during the visit remains with the visiting school at all times, in line with the school's own safeguarding and educational visits policies.
- Group sizes should be agreed in advance; we may ask for a visit to be split into smaller sessions where numbers are large.

5. Visit Format and Duration

A typical visit lasts 45–60 minutes and may include:

- A welcome and introduction to the mosque and its role in the community
- A guided tour of the prayer hall and facilities
- An age-appropriate talk on the basics of Islam, worship, and daily practice
- An explanation of the call to prayer
- A question and answer session with a member of our team

Timings may be adjusted where visits coincide with a prayer time; schools will be advised of this in advance and, where appropriate, pupils may observe or briefly pause during prayer.

6. Dress Code and Conduct

- Out of respect for the mosque as a place of worship, pupils and staff are asked to dress modestly (shoulders and knees covered).
- Headscarves are a normal part of Muslim women's dress in the prayer hall, but this is not a requirement for non-Muslim visitors. Female pupils and staff are welcome to bring one if they'd like the experience, though it is entirely optional.
- Shoes must be removed before entering the prayer hall. Pupils should wear, or bring, socks, and be prepared to walk on carpeted floors.
- Pupils and staff are asked to remain quiet and respectful while inside the prayer hall, particularly if others are praying.
- In line with Islamic custom, members of our team may not shake hands with, or exchange physical greetings with, individuals of the opposite gender. This is a mark of respect within our tradition and is not intended as impolite; a smile, nod, or verbal greeting is always welcome instead.
- Food, drink, and chewing gum are not permitted inside the prayer hall.

7. Photography and Filming

Photography or filming inside the mosque, including of worshippers, is not permitted without prior agreement. Schools wishing to take photographs for educational records should request permission in advance and will be advised of any areas or individuals that must not be filmed.

The mosque may also wish to take a small number of photographs of the visiting group for its own records and for use in its promotional and marketing materials (for example, on our website, social media, or newsletters). Schools are asked to confirm their consent to this at the time of booking, via the visit request form. Regardless of this consent, any individual pupil or staff member who does not wish to be included is welcome to simply step outside of the photograph, and this request will always be respected without question.

8. Safeguarding

- Overall safeguarding responsibility for pupils remains with the visiting school throughout the visit.
- Mosque staff and volunteers who interact directly with visiting groups hold, or are in the process of obtaining, an appropriate DBS check.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising during a visit should be reported immediately to the accompanying school staff and to the mosque representative present.

9. Accessibility

Please let us know at the time of booking about any access requirements, including mobility needs, sensory considerations, or other adjustments, so that we can prepare the visit accordingly.

10. Health and Safety

- Fire exits and evacuation procedures will be explained to the group on arrival.
- Schools should inform us in advance of any pupils with medical conditions or allergies that may be relevant to the visit.
- The mosque holds appropriate public liability insurance; schools should ensure their own educational visit risk assessments are completed as normal.

11. Cancellations and Changes

Where a school needs to cancel or reschedule a visit, we ask for as much notice as possible so the slot can be offered to another group. The mosque will likewise give as much notice as possible if a confirmed visit needs to be postponed.

12. Cost and Donations

There is no charge for school visits. Voluntary donations to support our community work are welcomed but never expected.

13. Contact

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