Information for participants

How does the School Experience Programme work?
If you need help finding a school to visit to re-familiarise yourself with the school environment, we can put you in touch with a local school. To request a school visit, you need to complete the online application form. We will endeavour to send you the contact details of a school, or a couple of schools, in your locality within five working days. The onus is on you to contact the school to arrange a visit. The school will be informed that you will be in touch and we will let them know that you are a qualified teacher who is thinking about returning to teaching. Sometimes a school may not be able to accommodate you at a specific time. If this is the case you can either wait until they are available or we can give you the details of another school to contact.

What type of school will I visit?
We have a range of schools on our SEP database including schools that teach A-level physics, state-maintained and independent schools. Due to demand we may not be able to match you with a specific school and will simply look for the closest school in proximity to the postcode you provide.

I would like more than one day of school experience. Can you still help?
We can only help you arrange one school visit due to the number of SEP schools available. You may be able to negotiate further days with the school directly.

What can I expect?
Typical school visits will include opportunities to talk to different teachers and see a range of lessons and age groups being taught. Each SEP participant will have varying levels of experience, so it's impossible to set a specific programme that will be suitable for everyone. If you have any specific requests, you should arrange these directly with the school. If for instance you have some experience in teaching lower year groups and would like to see what it’s like teaching older students, ask the school if this can be accommodated. Please note that your experience is intended to be purely observational and you may not be permitted to take an active role in the classroom.
Do I need to obtain a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check?
Guidance from the Department for Education (‘Keeping children safe in Education’ April 2014) states that a volunteer in this capacity is not in 'regulated' activity and is therefore not required to undergo a DBS check. However, schools still may request a DBS check to satisfy their own school policy requirements.

Do I need to prepare anything before my visit?
Unless you have specific things that you want to get out of our visit, just take a notebook and ensure that you take notes throughout the day. This will help you to reflect on your visit and aid your decision as to whether or not you should return to teaching. Remember, you will be entering a professional work place so your professionalism is required at all times. Please follow a suitably smart dress code and ensure you are well presented. Any piercings should be removed, tattoos concealed and bright hair dye avoided. SEP can be a great way to make contacts and could even lead to future employment.

After your school placement
Schools do not receive any payment for supporting SEP and we rely completely on their goodwill and generosity. Please show your gratitude and appreciation by sending an email or letter of thanks to your host teacher once you have completed your visit. Following your visit please spare us some time to complete our short survey that will be emailed to you. This will really help us to ensure we are offering the best SEP possible. If you have any feedback or comments before receiving our survey you can email teach@iop.org.

We really hope you enjoy your experience back in the classroom. If you haven't done so yet, register your interest in returning to teaching with the Department for Education to access support you might be entitled to.

If you have any further questions, please email teach@iop.org.