

Policy and Guideline for Educational Visits

INTRODUCTION

Pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom. Visits help to develop a pupil's investigative skills and longer visits in particular encourage greater independence. This Policy is designed to help Headteachers, Staff and Governors and others to ensure that pupils stay safe and healthy on school visits.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else on the premises or anyone who may be affected by their activities. This includes participants in off-site visits.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, require Group Leaders to:

- Assess the risks of activities;
- Introduce measures to control these risks;
- Tell all employees about these measures;
- Take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety;
- Carry out activities in accordance with training and instruction;
- Inform the Headteacher of any serious risks

These duties apply to all school visits. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils also have a common law duty to act as any reasonably prudent parent would do in the same circumstances.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VISITS

APPROVAL FOR VISITS

Group leaders must seek the approval of the Headteacher at the planning stage of any educational visit. The cost of the visit should be obtained, together with the amount that parents will be asked to contribute. However, no firm booking should be made until approval is granted.

GROUP LEADER

One teacher, the group leader, will have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit and should have regard to the health and safety of the group. The group leader should have been approved by the Headteacher or the Governing Body.

The group leader should:

- Obtain the Headteacher's prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place;
- Follow all available regulations, guidelines and policies;
- Appoint a deputy leader;
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned;
- Be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range;
- Be aware of child protection issues;
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision will be available;
- Ensure that other teachers and supervisors are fully aware of what the proposed visit involves;
- Ensure the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group;
- Consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health or safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality;
- Ensure that group supervisors have details of the school contact;

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

Teachers on school led visits act as employees of the LEA or of the governing body, whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours, by agreement with the Headteacher and Governors.

Teachers must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances.

They should:

- Follow the instructions of the group leader and help with control and discipline
- Consider stopping the visit or the activity, notifying the group leader, if they think the risk to the health and safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

GUIDANCE FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Non-teacher adults on the visit should be clear about their roles and responsibilities during the visit. Non-teacher adults acting as supervisors must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- Not be left in sole charge of pupils except where it have been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment;
- Follow the instructions of the group leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline;
- Speak to the group leader or teacher supervisors if concerned about the health or safety of pupils at any time during the visit.

PLANNING VISITS

Whether the visit is to a local park, museum or swimming pool, or includes a residential stay in the UK or abroad, it is essential that formal planning takes place before setting off. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to reduce them. In practice, the head teacher - who is responsible for planning visits - will often delegate the detailed planning to the organiser of the visit or the group leader. Head Teachers must satisfy themselves that the person planning the visit is competent to do so and has the necessary relevant experience.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A formal assessment of the risks that might be met on a visit should have the aim of preventing the risks or reducing them. Pupils must not be placed in situations which expose them to an unacceptable level of risk. Safety must always be the prime consideration. If the risks cannot be contained then the visit must not take place.

The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- what are the hazards?
- who might be affected by them?
- what safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- what steps will be taken in an emergency?

Risk Assessment must be completed on the 'Evolve' site which is accessible through the DVRC home page.

The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all teachers/supervisors on the visit, with details of the measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks. LEAs, head teachers and governing bodies should also be given a copy so that approval, as necessary, can be given with a clear understanding that effective planning has taken place.

Frequent visits to local venues such as swimming pools may not need a risk assessment every time. Nevertheless, it is essential not to become complacent. A generic assessment of the risks of such visits should be made at regular intervals, and careful monitoring should take place. The group leader and other supervisors should monitor the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action as necessary.

The group leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:

- the type of visit/activity and the level at which it is being undertaken;
- the location, routes and modes of transport;
- the competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff;
- the ratios of teachers and supervisory staff to pupils;
- the group members' age, competence, fitness and temperament and the suitability of the activity;
- the special educational or medical needs of pupils;
- the quality and suitability of available equipment;
- seasonal conditions, weather and timing;
- emergency procedures;
- how to cope when a pupil becomes unable or unwilling to continue;
- the need to monitor the risks throughout the visit.

Many schools will take new groups of pupils to the same location each year. As some factors will change from year to year, it is prudent to re-assess the risks each time - even when the group leader stays the same. It may be useful to evaluate each completed visit and keep a record. Model Form 5 provides a suggested format.

Other Considerations

Other factors which should form part of the planning stage include:

- the facilities/equipment the group will need to take on the visit;
- the facilities/equipment to be provided at the venue;
- staff training needs;
- the designation of someone to record the details of the visit and to carry accident forms etc;
- transport arrangements;
- insurance arrangements;
- information to the provider;
- communication arrangements;
- supervision ratios;
- contingency measures for enforced change of plan or late return;
- information to parents;
- preparing pupils;
- emergency arrangements;
- arrangements for sending pupils home early.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

The group leader will ensure that parents have early written information about the costs of the visit, how much each parent will be charged or asked to contribute. Parents should be given enough time to prepare financially for the visit.

CHARGING FOR VISITS

In schools other than independent schools the education provided wholly or mainly during school hours is free. This means that head teachers may not impose a charge on parents for any visit that occurs during school hours. The headteacher may, however, ask for a voluntary contribution.

Parents should be made aware that the contribution is not compulsory, and the children of parents who do not contribute may not be discriminated against. It is permissible to ask parents to contribute more than the minimum amount in order to subsidise those pupils whose parents have not contributed. In the last resort, the visit may have to be cancelled if there are not enough voluntary contributions and the shortfall cannot be made up.

The headteacher may, however, charge parents for board and lodging on residential visits as well as the full costs when a visit is deemed to be an 'optional extra'. An optional extra:

- falls wholly or mainly outside school hours;
- does not form part of the National Curriculum;
- is not part of a syllabus towards a Prescribed Public Examination; and is not in scope of the statutory requirements
- relating to religious education.
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FIRST AID

First aid should form part of the risk assessment. Before undertaking any off-site activities the group leader should assess what level of first aid might be needed. On any kind of visit the group leader should have a good working knowledge of first aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken.

For adventurous activities, visits abroad or residential visits it is sensible for at least one of the group's teachers to be a fully-trained first-aider. All adults in the group should know how to contact the emergency services.

The minimum first-aid provision for a visit is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid carrier;
- a person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

Other considerations when considering first-aid needs should include:

- the numbers in the group and the nature of the activity;
- the likely injuries and how effective first aid would be;
- the distance of the nearest hospital.

First aid should be available and accessible at all times. The Health and Safety Executive recommends the following minimum contents for a travelling first-aid box where no special risk has been identified:

- a leaflet giving general advice on first aid;
- six individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings;
- one large sterile unmedicated wound dressing approximately 18 cm x 18 cm;
- two triangular bandages;
- two safety pins;
- individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes;
- one pair of disposable gloves;

SUPERVISION

Ratios

It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- gender, age and ability of group;
- pupils with special educational or medical needs;
- nature of activities;
- experience of adults in off-site supervision;
- duration and nature of the journey;
- type of any accommodation;
- competence of staff, both general and on specific activities;
- requirements of the organisation/location to be visited;
- competence and behaviour of pupils;
- first aid cover.

Staffing ratios for visits are difficult to prescribe as they will vary according to the activity, age, group, location and the efficient use of resources. However, a general guide for visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances, might be:

- 1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3 (under 5s reception classes should have a higher ratio);
- 1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6;

Vetting Suitability

The group leader needs to be clear about procedures for vetting volunteers who wish to be supervisors or drivers, in particular for residential visits. The suitability of potential supervisors should be assessed by the group leader and the head teacher at an early stage of the planning process. Where there is any doubt about suitability further investigations should be made and if any doubt remains the adult should not be allowed to help supervise the visit. Similar considerations should be made for adults who have no supervisory role but who wish to take part in the visit.

The Education (Teachers) (Amendment) Regulations 1998, which came into force on 1 August 1998, made changes to the law with the aim of preventing people who are barred by the Secretary of State from being directly employed by an LEA, school or further education college from getting round the ban by either:

- working as a volunteer; or
- working in a business that is contracted to provide services to schools, further education institutions, or pupils attending them.

For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone with a pupil wherever possible. Any adult who has not been CRB checked should not be left in sole charge.

TRANSPORT AND PUPILS

Pupils using transport on a visit should be made aware of basic safety rules including:

- arrive on time and wait for the transport in a safe place;
- do not rush towards the transport when it arrives;
- wear your seatbelt and stay seated whilst travelling;
- bags must not block aisles or cause obstructions;
- never attempt to get on or off the moving transport;
- never run about or pass someone on steps or stairs while moving;
- never kneel or stand on seats;
- never distract or disturb the driver;
- after leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move off before crossing the road;
- if you feel unwell – tell an adult.

All children transported in staff cars must use appropriate booster seats if below 1.35cm in height.

PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL NEEDS

Head teachers should make every effort to include pupils with special educational or medical needs in school visits, whilst maintaining the safety of everyone in the group. Special attention should be given to appropriate supervision ratios and additional safety measures may need to be addressed at the planning stage.

Pupils with medical needs

Additional safety measures to those already in place in the school may be necessary to support pupils with medical needs during visits. Arrangements for taking medication and ensuring sufficient supplies for residential visits may be required.

All adults supervising visits should be aware of a pupil's medical needs and any medical emergency procedures. Summary sheets held by all teachers, containing details of each pupil's needs and any other relevant information provided by parents, is one way of achieving this. If appropriate, a volunteer teacher should be trained in administering medication, if they have not already been so trained, and should take responsibility in a medical emergency. If the pupil's safety cannot be guaranteed, it may be appropriate to ask the parent or a care assistant to accompany a particular pupil.

The group leader should discuss the pupil's individual needs with the parents. Parents should be asked to supply:

- details of medical conditions;
- emergency contact numbers;
- the child's GP's name, address and phone number;
- information on whether the pupil has spent a night away from home before and their ability to cope effectively;
- written details of any medication required (including instructions on dosage/times) and parental permission to administer;
- parental permission if the pupil needs to administer their own medication or agreement for a volunteer teacher to administer;
- information on any allergies/phobias;
- information on any special dietary requirements;
- information on any toileting difficulties, special equipment or aids to daily living;
- special transport needs for pupils who require help with mobility.

All adults supervising the visit should be given the opportunity to talk through any concerns they may have about their ability to support the child. Extra help should be requested if necessary, eg a care assistant.

Pupils with special educational needs

Schools will already be familiar with the nature of a pupil's special educational needs. Any limitations or problems the pupil may have should be taken into account at the planning stage and when carrying out the risk assessment. Off-site visits may pose additional difficulties for a pupil with SEN and the behaviour of some pupils may prove challenging. The following factors should be taken into consideration:

- Is the pupil capable of taking part in and benefiting from the activity?
- Can the activity be adapted to enable the pupil to participate at a suitable level?
- Will additional/different resources be necessary?
- Is the pupil able to understand and follow instructions?
- Will additional supervision be necessary?

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Parents should be informed in writing of any offsite activity or visit unless it is a regular part of the school curriculum which parents have already been informed about through the school prospectus or a letter. Seeking annual consent for such routine visits is sought via the form sent out to parents each September.

Information to Parents

Before residential visits, or engage in adventure activities, parents should be encouraged to attend a briefing meeting where details of the proposed visit will be provided. There will be alternative arrangements for parents who cannot attend.

Parents need to be aware that the teachers and other adult supervisors on the visit will be exercising the same care that a prudent parent would.

The following information on matters that might affect pupil health and safety should be given to parents:

- dates of the visit;
- visit's objectives;
- times of departure and return - parents must agree to meet their child on return;
- the location where the pupils will be collected and returned;
- details of accommodation with security and supervisory arrangements on site;
- procedures for pupils who become ill;
- names of leader, of other staff and of other accompanying adults;
- details of the activities planned and of how the assessed risks will be managed;
- what pupils should not take on the visit or bring back;
- details of insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, clothing and equipment;
- money to be taken;

Parental consent

Group leaders should seek consent for:

- non-routine visits involving pupils in school years 1 to 6 (no matter how short the visit);
- adventure activities;
- visits abroad;
- other residential visits;

If parents withhold consent absolutely the pupil should not be taken on the visit but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent the head teacher will need to consider whether the pupil may be taken on the visit or not.

A parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group. Besides conveying the parents' consent it could also form the basis for obtaining details required.

General issues to consider include:

- any allergies/phobias the pupil may have;
- any medication the pupil is taking (if so what the dosage is and who is to administer it);
- whether the pupil administers their own medication;
- any contagious or infectious diseases suffered within the family during the preceding 4 weeks, and any other recent illnesses suffered by the pupil;
- the name, address and phone number of the pupil's GP;
- any special/medical dietary requirements;
- whether the pupil suffers from travel sickness;
- information on any toileting difficulties;
- whether the pupil has any night time tendencies such as sleepwalking (for residential visits);
- any other information which the parent thinks should be known;
- the parental home and daytime phone numbers and addresses;
- an alternative contact.

Medical consent

This should form part of the parental consent form. Parents should be asked to agree to the pupil's receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not agree to this, head teachers may decide to withdraw the child from the visit - given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.

Early return

The group leader should tell parents if they will be expected to fund the early return of a pupil whose conduct gives cause for concern on a visit. A written agreement may be necessary.

PLANNING TRANSPORT

General

The group leader must give careful thought to planning transport. The main factors to consider include:

- passenger safety;
- whether the driver holds the appropriate valid licence;
- number of driving hours required for the journey and length of the driver's day (including non driving hours);
- type of journey - will the visit take place locally or will it include long distance driving ie motorways?
- traffic conditions;
- contingency funds and arrangements in case of breakdown/emergency;
- appropriate insurance cover;
- weather;
- journey time and distance;
- stopping points on long journeys for toilet and refreshments;
- supervision.

All children transported in staff cars must use appropriate booster seats if below 1.35m in height.

Legislation

The employer, usually the LEA or governing body in schools, should satisfy themselves that all travel arrangements, including the hire of private coaches or buses, are suitable for the nature of the visit. In practice headteachers will normally carry out these checks.

The driver is responsible for the vehicle during the visit.

Seat belts: All minibuses and coaches which carry groups of three or more children aged between 3 and 15 years inclusive must be fitted with a seat belt for each child. The seats must face forward and seat restraints must comply with legal requirements. For further information contact the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

Supervision on transport

The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk assessment for the journey. The group leader is responsible for the party at all times including maintaining good discipline.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

General

Teachers in charge of pupils during a visit have a duty of care to make sure that the pupils are safe and healthy. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation.

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit. County and controlled schools should follow LEA guidance on emergency planning procedures.

If an accident happens, the priorities are to:

- assess the situation;
- safeguard the uninjured members of the group;
- attend to the casualty;
- inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident.

Who will take charge in an emergency?

The group leader would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged. The group leader should liaise with the representative of the tour operator if one is being used.

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