



# OFF SITE VISITS POLICY

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## LEAF ACADEMIES - OFF SITE VISITS POLICY

This policy has been evolved from the DfE guidelines and Bournemouth LA guidance notes and has been developed to be consistent with the Schools Mission Statement.

LeAF acknowledges that students can derive immense educational benefit by taking part in off-site visits. Taking part in problem solving, decision-making and residential experiences both at home and abroad can enhance the development of personal and social skills. The knowledge and experience gained beyond the classroom can consolidate and extend the taught curriculum within it. This policy seeks to establish a framework from which students can benefit in a safe, healthy and secure environment.

An Off-site Visit is defined as students going 'beyond the school gates' to pursue an activity organised through the school. Activities may take place during or after the school day, at weekends or in school holidays and will be educational, curricular or recreational based. All off-site visits must have an educational purpose and pre-determined clear educational objectives. All participants in activities will be identified as group members associated with the school.

The LeAF policy recognises that every student should have full access to each visit that is appropriate to their class, year or option subject, regardless of their abilities, therefore, developing further 'the whole child'.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Approval / Notification Process**

The following categories of visit are taken from the LA guidance on managing off-site visits for Bournemouth Schools:

**Category One Activities** - Activities classed as Category One must have the approval of the Principal/EVC, who should be satisfied with the purpose, planning and staffing for the proposed off-site activity.

**Category Two Activities** - As well as approval of the Principal/EVC the activity should receive approval by the LA via an RV1 form. Sufficient information must be given and also any significant changes and progress must be communicated to the LA via the EVC.

**Category Three Activities** - Approval for off-site activities involving hazardous pursuits or in areas of high risk must, in the first instance, be obtained from the EVC, Principal and/or governing body, prior to seeking approval from the LA. This touches on very hazardous activities such as rock climbing or canoeing. The Health and Safety Team (LA) will provide advice and assistance where necessary in order that approval can be given.

### **One off Specific Visits**

**Parental permission letter** must be used for this type of visit. Parents should complete the form including the medical information, sign and return to the academy indicating whether or not they are giving permission for their child to participate in the visit. However, in some instances local trips that take place during normal school hours may not require written parental consent or written notification. In some instances notification of educational off site visits may be made by telephone.

### **Regular Visits**

A letter can be used for regular out-of-school visits, this form can be signed on an annual basis by the parent giving consent for trips within the neighbouring area of the school, ie. environmental studies, swimming events, sports fixtures etc. Although it will still be necessary to provide parents with information of any planned visits, ie. actual times and dates, it will be the responsibility of the parent to let the school know if they do not want their child to go along, rather than waiting for permission slips to be returned. In some instances notification of educational off site visits may be made by telephone.

### **The Members of the Party**

The Group Leader must ensure that members of the party have reasonable preliminary, theoretical and practical preparations that should be at a level appropriate to the age of the group and the nature of the activities. This should include consideration of potential emergencies and associated actions to be taken.

### **First Aid**

The Group Leader must ensure that adequate first aid arrangements are made bearing in mind the location and nature of the activity. In a situation where expert medical help is not readily available at least one member of staff should be a competent first aider.

## Recording Accidents

Accidents are 'unplanned events' and, therefore, not every eventuality can be accounted for in the risk assessment. Should an accident occur it must be, if applicable, recorded in the accident book at the venue. Upon return to school the accident should also be recorded in the school accident book, and if appropriate a P25 accident form should be completed and sent/faxed to the Health and Safety Team, keeping a copy for school records. If the accident resulted in a major injury, ie. fracture, concussion, hospital treatment etc., it is advisable to obtain witness statements. The reason for this is that children have until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday to make a claim for compensation, it may be many years until the claim transpires by which time many members of staff who witnessed the event may have left or moved on, making it very difficult to compile the necessary information.

## Medicines and Medication

In general, medicines should be clearly labelled with name and dosage and handed to the Group Leader, as clearly it is not desirable for young children to be responsible for them. For certain conditions however, this procedure may be wholly inappropriate and potentially harmful, ie. asthma where it would be wrong to separate an asthma sufferer from a prescribed inhaler. Similar consideration and care might need to be exercised for the sufferer of diabetes. In such circumstances, it would be advisable to consult with the young person's parents/carer and, if necessary, seek medical advice.

## After the Visit

A report on the visit should be made to the Principal/EVC. The party should be debriefed and any follow-up completed. Any appropriate letters of thanks should be sent and all accounts checked, finalised and closed. Alterations/amendments to the risk assessments can be made at this stage if the trip is to be repeated at a later date. See form **Evaluation of the Visit by the Group Leader for Future Reference**.

## Mobile Phones and Pagers

It is the responsibility of the Group Leader to ensure that there are enough mobile phones/pagers within the group, and delegate responsibility for maintenance of batteries. Do not rely on a mobile phone for emergency situations as the signal may be out of range.

## Preliminary Visits

The Principal/EVC must ensure that, in case of field studies, museum, farm and industrial visits, a preliminary visit by the teacher is made where the site is not known to accompanying staff. In all other cases, a preliminary visit is strongly recommended but, where this is not possible, the leader must obtain information of the places to be visited with particular regard to potential hazards. Use of **External Providers Form**.

## Notification of Emergency Contact Information

Any visit that is to take place out-of-school hours, involves an overnight stay either in the UK or abroad requires **an RV1** to be completed and sent in to the LA at least 8 weeks before the trip.

The Group Leader should ensure that they have with them at all times the 24 hour emergency contact number and pager number, so that they can contact the LA, for example, if a serious incident occurs, or there are serious delays in travel times, any illness amongst the party etc.

## **Risk Assessments**

Risk Assessments will be prepared for all aspects of a school trip for which the school are actually organising (i.e. transport to and from venue, leisure activities at a centre etc.). Activities undertaken under the supervision of instructors when visiting organised centres, ie. Rockley will be the responsibility of the centre. Risk assessments must be reviewed upon return, this is especially important where the venue is to be re-used or if an accident/incident occurred.

## **Competence**

All activities must be supervised by people of suitable competence, for some activities the teacher may be required to hold a national governing body leader or instructor qualification.

However, paper qualifications will need to be supplemented by the verification of other qualities, ie. maturity, general supervision skills, ability to supervise different types of group, relevant experience, etc.

Competence as a leader will result from:

- experience/knowledge of the environment/venue to be visited
- experience of the activities to be undertaken
- leading similar educational visits
- knowledge of the students involved
- appropriate training
- leadership skills and other personal qualities.

The EVC and Principal needs to be satisfied that the Group Leader and other accompanying teachers are sufficiently competent to carry out their responsibilities and are suitable for the role.

The following can be considered evidence of competence:

- National Governing Body Awards/qualifications.
- National Vocational Qualifications.
- OCR Off-site Safety Management Certificate.
- Local or in house validation.
- Site-specific assessment.
- Experience confirmed by assessment in the field.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The LA**

The LA has the following responsibilities:

- Provide written guidelines for governors, Head teachers and teachers, including advice on risk assessment.
- Assess and approve proposals for certain types of visits.
- Provide an emergency 24-hour contact number.
- Ensure training needs are catered for.
- Give access to members of staff for advice.

### **The Governing Body**

Where the governing body is the employer their role will be the same as the LA. They should be satisfied that risk assessments have been carried out with appropriate safety measures in place and that training needs have been addressed.

Governing bodies of all types of schools should:

- ensure that all school visits have a specific and stated objective
- ensure that the Principal/Group Leaders plans for the visit adhere to the LA guidelines and regulations, and the schools health and safety policy
- ensure that the Principal/Group Leader reports back to them after the visit
- ensure that they are informed of less routine visits well in advance
- assess proposals for specific types of visits i.e. overnight stays, trips abroad etc, and submit to the LA for approval
- approve visits reported to them.

### **The Principal**

Principals must ensure that any proposed school visit complies with:

- LA procedures and policy;
- the schools own health and safety policy.

Principals must also:

- be satisfied that the visit has been planned effectively and that any risks identified by a risk assessment are minimised
- be clear about their own role if they are going on the visit as a group member/supervisor. In these circumstances they must follow instructions of the Group Leader who is in sole charge of the visit
- ensure that all staff accompanying the visit are appropriately selected and have the expertise, experience and qualifications relevant to the activities
- ensure that the group leader has experience in supervising the specific age of the students on the visit and is able to organise the group effectively
- ensure that the group leader, or an accompanying teacher, is familiar with the venue and is suitably competent to instruct the activity
- ensure that the group leader is given sufficient time to plan and organise a visit properly
- ensure that the ratio of adults:students is appropriate and suitable
- ensure that child protection procedures are in place
- ensure that the Governing Body and/or the LA have approved the visit if appropriate

- ensure that parental consent forms have been issued and returned signed
- ensure that suitable arrangements have been made for the medical and special needs of all students
- ensure that First Aid provision is available
- ensure that the mode of transport is appropriate and that outward/inward journey times are clear
- ensure that there is relevant insurance cover
- ensure that they have details of the venue including address, telephone number and contact name
- ensure that a school emergency contact has been nominated and that the Group Leader has these details
- ensure that the Group Leader has the LA emergency contact information available
- ensure that the group leaders, supervisors and school contact have a copy of the agreed emergency procedures and the names of ALL members of the group, with emergency contact details of parents/guardians or next of kin
- ensure that there are contingency plans in place for delays or alternative arrangements should the original visit have to be cancelled, eg. for bad weather
- ensure that where appropriate, the LA have been issued with Form A (notification or approval) and a copy of all risk assessments at least four weeks before the visit, and one week before the visit, Form E, with the emergency contact details of the school, accompanying adults and all students.

The Principal can delegate tasks to the Group Leader who undertakes much of the planning and organisation.

\*Ideally one of the teachers accompanying the visit should have general health and safety training (including risk assessment) and/or specific EVC training.

### **The Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC)**

Each school must have an EVC; in many cases this will actually be the Principal. However, it may also be a teacher or another member of school staff – in which case the EVC will be appointed by and act on behalf of the Principal. The formal recognition of an EVC will help the school to fulfil its health and safety obligations for off-site visits. If there is no EVC then the duties will pass by default to the Principal. The EVC will be involved in the planning and management of visits including adventurous activities led by other members of school staff.

The functions of the EVC are to:

- liaise with their employer to ensure that all educational visits meet with the employer's requirements, including those of risk assessment
- support the Principal and governors with approval and other decisions
- assign competent people to lead or supervise a visit
- assess the competence of leaders and other adults proposed for a visit. This may include reference to awards, practical observations or verification of experience
- organise the training of leaders of visits, ie. first aid, hazard awareness etc.
- ensure that CRB disclosures are in place as necessary (no-one should have unsupervised access to children unless fully CRB cleared)
- work with the Group Leader to provide parents with full details of the visit enabling parents to accept or refuse consent on a fully informed basis
- organise the emergency arrangements and ensure there is an emergency contact for each visit
- review systems and, on occasion, monitor practice.

The EVC must be competent to fulfil the role in relation to the size of the school and the extent and nature of the planned visits. The Principal and the EVC must agree the delegation of tasks and the way in which the role of EVC will work within the school.



## **The Group Leader**

The Group Leader is the teacher whom the Principal has approved to take overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit, and for the health and safety of the group.

The Group Leader must:

- obtain the Principal's prior agreement before any visits take place
- follow all the LA / Governing body regulations, guidelines and policies
- define accompanying supervisors roles and ensure tasks are assigned
- have the ability to control and lead students of the relevant age group
- be suitably competent to instruct students in the activity and be familiar with the venue
- be aware of child protection issues
- ensure that there is adequate provision for first aid provision
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation, brief all group members and parents
- prepare risk assessments, however, if s/he is not competent in this area then the task may be delegated.

## **Teachers**

Teachers on school visits act as employees of the LA / governing body by agreement with the Principal and governors.

Accompanying teachers must:

- do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group
- act as any reasonable parent would in the circumstances
- take reasonable steps to avoid exposing students to dangers that are foreseeable and beyond those that the students can reasonably be expected to cope with
- consider stopping the visit or the activity and notify the Group Leader if s/he thinks there is an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the students in their charge.

## **Volunteers**

Non-teacher adults must be clear about their roles and responsibilities.

Volunteers must not be left in sole charge of students except where they are CRB cleared and it has been previously agreed as part of a risk assessment.

They must follow the instructions of the Group Leader and teachers and assist with control and discipline.

## **Students**

Older students in particular have a part to play in avoiding risk to health and safety, they must:

- not take unnecessary risks
- follow instructions of the Group Leader, teachers, instructors and people within the venues
- follow the school's dress and behaviour conduct
- when abroad, be sensitive to local customs
- be aware of anything that may cause themselves or others harm, speak to their Group Leader or teacher if they are concerned.

## **Parents**

Parents have the responsibility of ensuring that their child is following the school dress code, preparing their child for participation and accepting that a child who is a risk to the health and safety of either him/herself or others may be sent home early.

Parents must inform the school about any medical needs / allergies / special dietary needs etc. of their child.

When children are going on a residential trip, parents must supply an emergency contact name and telephone number, this contact must be available for the duration of the trip.

The school must inform the parents about all aspects of the visit to enable them to make an informed choice as to whether or not they want their child to participate.

## GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

### Immediate Action following a Serious Accident or Incident

A serious accident or incident is defined as:

- an accident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious injury
- circumstances in which a party member might be at serious risk/serious illness; or
- any situation in which the press or media might be involved.

*Remember that serious accidents and incidents are extremely rare, but if one occurs it certainly makes great physical and emotional demands upon you. These guidance notes are designed to help you deal with an emergency.*

*Remember that you are not alone, the LA or your school will support you as much as possible.*

#### 1. Be prepared

- Carry the LA 24-hour emergency telephone number and pager number at all times.
- Ensure that you are familiar with all of the LA guidelines for off-site activities.
- Brief your group on emergency procedures before they set off, including details of communications, so that they know how to deal with situations should the party get split up.

#### 2. Care of the Group

- Ensure safety from further danger.
- Contact local emergency services immediately and follow their advice.
- Deploy other staff/adults as effectively as possible in continuing to ensure the welfare of your group.

#### 3. Communication

- Contact your LA 24-hour helpline number.
- Contact the schools 24-hour standby person.

*In either event, give the following information:*

- Your name
- Name of Group
- Telephone number you are calling from
- What happened
- To Whom
- Where
- When
- What has happened since
- If a fatality is involved, has this been confirmed?
- By Whom
- Which local emergency services are involved.

#### 4. Next Steps and General Advice

- 4.1 Parents and relatives will naturally be anxious to establish what is happening, but do NOT let party members (staff or young people) telephone home until after you have made contact with your LA and this has been agreed.
- 4.2 Do NOT speak to the press or media. Refer enquiries to the local emergency services handling the incident on the ground and promise that “an official statement will be made through the County Council Media Team as soon as possible”.
- 4.3 Do NOT admit liability of any sort to anybody.
- 4.4 Do NOT allow anyone, apart from medical services, to see any party member without an independent witness being present.
- 4.5 Retain any equipment involved in an unaltered condition.
- 4.6 Keep a written record of all that happens.
- 4.7 Be as compassionate as possible, with anyone involved.
- 4.8 Remember that no one, unless they are in a relevant official capacity, has the right to see anyone who does not wish to see them.
- 4.9 If you change location, remember to let your Principal/LA contact person have the new telephone number at which you can be contacted.

*Finally, all situations are different, your Principal/LA contact or a Senior Officer of the Authority will make themselves available to offer you advice and support. Use them as much as you need.*

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PRINCIPAL / SCHOOL 24- HOUR STANDBY PERSON(s)**

In the event of a serious accident or incident involving a group on any form of school outing, it is paramount that the Group Leader should receive as much advice and support as he or she needs.

A serious accident or incident is defined as:

- an accident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious injury;
- circumstances in which a party member might be at serious risk/serious illness; or
- any situation in which the press or media be involved.

Serious incidents are fortunately rare – this can however lead to complacency that must be guarded against. Therefore, you will need to “think on your feet”. This could be difficult under pressure and the following guidelines will help.

### 1. Be prepared:

- 1.1. You must have immediate access to these procedures and the information and means to use them, at all times.
- 1.2. Make sure you are familiar with all the LA guidelines for off-site activities.
- 1.3. Contact the 24-hour LA Emergency Helpline.

### 2. Answering the Emergency Call

You will need to gain and record the following:

- Name of Group
- Name of Group leader/Caller
- Telephone number the caller is speaking from
- What happened
- To Whom It May Concern
- Where
- When
- What has happened since

If a fatality is involved or suspected

- Has this been confirmed?
- By whom?
- Which emergency services are involved?
- Have the Police informed any next of kin?

### 3. General Advice

Advise the group leader to follow instructions from the local police/emergency services but unless they specifically request otherwise, your advice to the group leader should be to:

- keep the party together;
- co-ordinate any contact with parents or any outside bodies;
- refer media attention to the police or County Councils Media Team – do not answer questions.

Remain available: if it is necessary for the party to change location they must advise you of the new telephone number.

## **FIRE PRECAUTIONS AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

### **Precautions:**

All premises with fire certificates must have fire routine notices. Ensure that all members of the group understand them - do not take it for granted that they will read them without prompting. If necessary, read the instructions to them.

Obtain advice from the management on the means of escape available, and investigate ALL means of escape to ensure that they are adequate and unobstructed. Emergency exit doors need to be checked to ensure that they can be readily opened from the inside. Check on fire alarm call point positions.

Supervisory staff should have rooms next to or very close to party members.

A fire drill must be conducted as soon as possible after arrival using the alarm systems available. This drill must be taken seriously and repeated if necessary until the Group Leader is confident that every member of the group would:

- recognise the alarm
- know the most suitable escape route
- be aware of any other emergency fire procedures relating to those particular premises
- proceed to the assembly point in an orderly manner.

A suitable assembly point must be established.

In the event of fire:

- Give priority to the evacuation of persons in your group.
- If it is safe to do so, check that those in your group have heard the alarm and are evacuating the premises.
- Do not use lifts.
- Do not attempt to collect baggage, valuables, etc.
- Check that all persons are accounted for by carrying out a roll call. Sub-groups are particularly useful for carrying this out accurately and speedily.
- If any members of the group are missing, report them immediately and without fail to the Fire Officer in charge at the scene.
- On no account should you or any member of your group re-enter the premises to locate or attempt to rescue missing persons after carrying out the procedure above.

Extra precautions must be put into place to ensure the safety of SEN students/adults, particularly those with hearing or sight impairments and those with walking aids or in wheelchairs.

## FIRST AID BOXES

First Aid boxes should contain a sufficient quantity of suitable first aid materials and NOTHING ELSE (antiseptic creams and liquids are not suitable). The contents should be checked regularly by the first aider or appointed person and replenished when necessary. Sufficient quantities of each item should be in every first aid box and in most cases will be:

- Twenty individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes)
- SIX individually wrapped triangular bandages
- SIX safety pins
- SIX medium size individually wrapped sterile non-medicated wound dressings (approx 10cm x 8cm)
- TWO large individually wrapped sterile non-medicated wound dressings (approx 28cm x 17.5cm)
- Disposable plastic gloves

Where mains tap water is not readily available for eye irrigation, sterile water or sterile normal saline (0.9%) in **sealed disposable containers** should be provided. Each container should hold at least 300ml and should not be re-used once the sterile seal is broken. At least 900ml should be provided. **Eye lotions - eye baths - eye cups - refillable containers should not be used for eye irrigation.**

### Travelling First Aid Kits

In such a situation, the Group Leader would be discharging a duty of care and acting in loco parentis if they administered the type of help and care that a parent would give to his/her own child. The principle should be to hand the patient over to more expert medical aid (be that rescue services, a doctor, etc) in as good a condition as possible.

In addition to any of the contents listed in the First Aid Box, the trained first aider might wish to carry certain items, stored in a separate container, with each item clearly marked with the students name and dosage requirement, which he or she has been trained to use such as:

- Paracetamol \*
- Saline Solution
- Crepe bandages
- Plastic bags and ties for disposal of soiled items
- Scissors (must be blunt ended)
- Individually wrapped hypo-allergenic waterproof elastoplast-type dressings
- Individually wrapped hypo-allergenic moist cleansing wipes

The first aider, on the basis of numbers at risk, environment and portability should decide the total quantity of equipment carried.

\* If painkillers are carried, prior parental consent should be sought.

It is essential to carry adequate First Aid kits for the group. The relevant number should be noted on the Risk Assessment Form, completed prior to the trip.



## **PLANNING THE VISIT**

Whatever the type or length of a visit, thorough planning is essential before departure.

Implicit to any planning is risk assessment, consideration must be given to the dangers and difficulties that may arise, and control measures must be put into place to reduce them.

### **Risk Assessment**

The risk assessment must take into account:

- The type of visit / activity and the level at which it is being undertaken.
- The location, route and method of transport.
- The competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff.
- The ratio of teachers and supervisory staff to students.
- The students ages, competence and fitness and the suitability of the activity.
- Students with SEN or medical needs.
- Quality and suitability of equipment.
- Seasonal conditions and timings.
- Emergency procedures.
- Risks should be monitored throughout the duration of the visit.

The Group Leader should, if possible/appropriate make a preliminary visit in order to familiarise themselves with the venue and assess hazards.

### **Other Planning Considerations**

- The facilities at the venue.
- Equipment the group will need to take with them.
- Staff training needs.
- Transport arrangements.
- Insurance arrangements.
- Supervision ratios (see next section).
- Emergency procedures.
- Arrangements for sending students home early.
- Informing parents of arrangements.
- Preparing students.

### **Supervision**

Supervision needs should be considered during the planning stage.

Adult:student ratios are difficult to prescribe as needs differ according to the type of visit or the planned activity. The factors that must be taken into account are:

- Sex, age, ability and competence of the group.
- Students with medical needs or SEN.
- The type of activity and the hazards associated with it.
- The length and type of journey.
- Type of accommodation to be used.
- The competence of staff both generally and in specific activities.
- The requirements of the venue to be visited.
- The competence of the students and their standards of behaviour.
- Provision for first aid.

## **Suggested Ratio**

There must always be a minimum of two adults.

These ratios are for guidance only, a higher ratio may be appropriate for a higher risk activity.

- There must be sufficient supervisors to cope with an emergency.
- Some residential visits with mixed groups will need a teacher of each sex.
- Non-teaching staff or volunteer parents may be used where a higher ratio is required. These people should be carefully selected and known to the school and students.

*Never allow unsupervised access to children to anyone who has not been CRB checked.*

***It would however be impossible to CRB check host families when a school organises students on a foreign exchange visit. The Group Leader must have good relations with the host school and rely on their judgement to assess suitable families. Parents must be informed that the host families have not been CRB checked before they consent to their child taking part.***

## **Head Counts**

Whatever the nature or length of a visit there should always be regular head counts, particularly before leaving any venue.

A supervisor must carry a list of all students and adults on the visit, at all times. Students should NEVER wear name badges as this makes them vulnerable to strangers pretending to know them. Badges displaying the school name and its emergency contact number can be useful.

## **Insurance Arrangements**

It is essential that the Principal / Group Leaders check that adequate insurance arrangements are in place whether through the LA Insurances, the travel firm or an independent insurance company.

## **PRELIMINARY VISITS**

Use the **External Providers Checklist** where appropriate.

A preliminary visit is an important and legitimate part of planning for any educational visit. During this preliminary visit, Group leaders should keep full, written notes. The visit will help Group leaders to gain an insight into the site or centre and it should include an evaluation of the following:

### **Accommodation**

Check that the sleeping areas are adequate for the needs of the group. This will obviously vary depending on the accommodation chosen but it should offer:

- adequate ventilation
- reasonable washing and toilet facilities
- heating and lighting
- enough storage space for personal belongings
- sufficient room between bunks or beds to allow easy movement (particularly in the event of an emergency).

Permanent centres should also provide a separate area for sick/unwell visitors and sleeping areas should be clean and tidy.

Check facilities for washing/drying clothes and storing outdoor equipment. Find out about meeting rooms, work bases and evening recreational/relaxation areas.

Ensure that kitchen and dining facilities are sufficient for the numbers involved and particularly if your group is self-catering, that there are sufficient facilities for safety, health and hygiene.

### **Staff/Instructors for Activities**

Check that there are written operating procedures for each activity and ask for written evidence of the qualifications and experience of the staff leading activities. Many centres use their own in-house training and this can vary from the very good to the unacceptable. Find out what you can about the trainers. Wherever possible, insist on recognised National Governing Body Awards.

### **Special Risks on or Near the Site**

Find out about hazardous areas, i.e. chemicals, storage pits or tanks, dangerous animals, water areas, drops/heights, etc.

### **Supervision**

Group Leaders and visiting staff remain responsible for the well-being of their party members at all times, although clearly the centre has a duty here, particularly during activity sessions. Discuss and confirm with the centre staff the level and type of supervision that they will undertake.

### **Transport and Equipment**

If centre transport is to be used it must be in a roadworthy condition. If in doubt, press the centre manager for details on maintenance.

All equipment used should be adequate for the purpose. Most outdoor equipment such as helmets, buoyancy aids etc have recognised standards such as BSI, BMIF, CEN or UIAA. Again, if the equipment, even to an untrained eye, appears neglected or deficient, press the centre manager.

## **General Considerations**

If possible, visit the centre when another group is in residence so that the activities can be seen and other group leaders consulted.

Ask for written references from previous groups, or, even better, ask for the names and address of the **last five schools** who have visited.

Remember that whilst safety is obviously paramount, it is also necessary to consider the quality of the programme offered in terms of educational content and participant involvement.

Collect promotional material and take photographs that can later be used to inform all staff or be displayed at a parents' meeting.

Finally, on return, confirm any verbal arrangements in writing and inform the Principal/EVC how the preliminary visit went and what impressions and knowledge you have gained.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Residential Visits**

The type of visit will depend on its purpose, the time of year, the distance to be travelled, the price and the nature of the group. It is possible to buy a package of accommodation and activities or these can be arranged separately. Whichever is chosen the site residential arrangements and the instructors should be suitable for the needs of the group.

### **Prior to the Visit**

All of the considerations for a day visit will apply, as well as the specific points that follow: The roles, duties and expectations of accompanying staff and helpers should be clearly defined and understood so that everyone is involved and clear about what will be expected of them. This should be done through formal meetings rather than on an ad hoc basis. This is particularly true for inexperienced staff and adult helpers who may not appreciate that residential visits require a great deal of commitment and goodwill if they are to be successful.

Parents need to be fully informed of the type of visit proposed. This is best done through an initial letter followed by a parents' meeting at which they should be informed of the following:

- reason and purpose of the visit
- nature of the programme (this must include details of all activities)
- nature of the supervision arrangements
- expectations of behaviour (Code of Conduct)
- method of travel, including names of coach companies, airlines, etc, as appropriate
- insurance arrangements
- cost and methods of payment
- pocket money and any arrangements for giving it out
- address and telephone number of venue
- type of accommodation, i.e. bunks, shared facilities, etc.
- clothing requirements via a kit list (stress that clothing and other possessions should be clearly marked)
- emergency contact telephone number
- procedures for storage and administration of medication
- banned items i.e. jewellery, mobile phones etc.
- the use of cameras/video cameras
- sun protection requirements

This information should be confirmed in writing and parents/guardians should then be asked to complete and sign:

- a a consent form
- b a medical information form

In addition to the information above, participants will need to know about:

- the implications of communal living in terms of tolerance, chores, conduct towards others, etc.
- the purpose and aims of the visit
- the nature of any specific work to be undertaken
- work/training which is necessary before going
- how spare time might be used
- expectations of conduct

## On Arrival at the Residential Centre

When arriving at a staffed residential centre, the Group Leader should meet the Centre Manager, or someone of similar status and agree on any routines and regulations that have not been previously given. **The Group Leader should ensure that any requests or stipulations agreed in writing prior to the journey (i.e. leaders' qualifications, fire regulations, first aid arrangements, etc.) still apply.**

Define limits early - remember the group is new to the site - explain boundaries/limitations - say what you want but do so only after consultation with the Centre Manager, and leaders of other parties if appropriate.

Explain duty rotas and procedures in relationship to the site.

## Fire Evacuation

The following points need to be noted:

- Check that all exit routes from dormitories and other sleeping accommodation is clearly indicated.
- The posted instructions are clear and have been read to new visitors and are understood.
- A leader of responsible age is appointed to each dormitory who will possess a reliable torch where emergency lighting is not provided.
- A fire drill is held during the first day for new visitors.
- The arrangements for calling the fire brigade are adequate and understood and that someone has the duty to make such a call on hearing the alarm where there is no member of the permanent staff on-site who already holds this duty.
- This person knows the location of the nearest telephones and the full address of the building/camp to enable prompt response by the fire brigade.
- All occupants are familiar with emergency procedures and escape routes.

## Detailed Organisation/Administration

### Supervisory Ratio - Accompanying Adults

Careful consideration should be given to this point and the activities to be carried out should be properly evaluated, to ensure that sufficient staff are available for supervision at all times. To implement this, a ratio of staff to young people of at least 1:10 will be needed for visits abroad. The majority of commercial school tour operators now offer an automatic supervisory place ratio of one adult to ten paying young people. These supervisory places should only be available for members of staff or designated supervisory adults.

**At least two members of staff must** accompany any group abroad, one of them clearly designated as Group Leader. A mixed group must be accompanied by male and female adults. The Group Leader should be an experienced teacher and should be satisfied that there is sufficient experience and expertise in the staff team accompanying him/her.

Adults other than members of staff (i.e. husband/wife or teacher/youth worker, parent, student, foreign language assistant) may usefully accompany the group but the ultimate responsibility for the young people's welfare and safety lies with the teachers involved and in particular with the Group Leader. Adults may only accompany the party as supervisors if they have no other commitment throughout the whole of the visit. Wherever possible, a second teacher should be designated as a deputy leader, be fully associated with the planning and organisation of the visit and be prepared to take responsibility for the group in case of emergency.

All adults should have been clearly briefed by the Group Leader so that roles, duties and responsibilities are understood and accepted. All adults should be aware of their own role and duties, both to ensure that they feel involved and to give adequate supervision.

## **Group Composition/Parental Involvement**

Information by letter to parents about the proposed educational visit should, in the case of visits abroad lasting more than two days, be complemented by a parents' meeting at which issues can be clarified, questions answered, etc. Many schools prepare a booklet for parents, with detailed information about plans, requirements, etc.

Ground rules for the visit should be clearly established at an early stage. Parental consent forms should be completed and relevant medical/diet details should be obtained in good time before the journey begins. The Group Leader must compile a full list of names, addresses and contact telephone numbers of parents/carers in case of emergency. A copy of this list should be left with the home based contact. Ensure that the Group Leader has the 24 hour Emergency Helpline Number to contact the LA.

## **Financial Arrangements**

Steps should be taken at an early stage to secure an initial deposit from party members and to allow for regular payment by instalments by agreed dates. Receipts and payments must be fully documented and the account details must be available for scrutiny by the Principal or LA representative at all times. **A teacher should never - even temporarily - pay such money into his/her own account.** When initially estimating the overall cost of a journey, it is best to include all expenses (including, for example, pocket money) and to give a realistic global figure to parents. A refund in the case of an over-estimate is always more acceptable than a supplementary charge.

The best exchange rates for foreign currency are usually obtained in this country. Where the visit will involve a need to pay large bills abroad, this is best done by Bankers' Draft.

Within European Community countries, reciprocal health insurance arrangements apply. It is important that parents should obtain an EHIC in respect of their children from their local DHSS office or post office in good time before the journey begins. Group Leaders should collect and safeguard these forms in respect of all members of the group so that they are readily available if required in the foreign country.

**NB** It is advisable to take photocopies of EHIC (together with the originals) when travelling to an EC country. The original should always be retained by the Group Leader and a copy be given to authorities abroad (i.e. local sickness insurance office) if necessary.

Great emphasis should be placed on traffic risks abroad, particularly when crossing roads. Work should be done on this before the visit, with reminders when in the foreign country (ie. mandatory use of recognised crossings). Younger children should not be allowed to cross roads unsupervised in the early stages of the stay.

## **Supervision of Students on the Journey and in Foreign Centres**

Accompanying staff must accept responsibility for the good behaviour of their groups both on the journey and while abroad.

It will greatly ease supervision if each accompanying adult takes responsibility for a sub-group, with the Group Leader or deputy being personally responsible for any young people who might create difficulties. Each sub-group leader will naturally have a list of the young people in his/her group, while the Group Leader has a complete list, augmented by a card for each person giving personal details and a passport sized photograph. If a member of the party should go missing the local police would then have some concrete details to work from. Impress on everyone that if lost they should go for help to a public building (shop/museum) or find a person in uniform and not approach passers-by in the street.

## **Emergencies - the Duty Officer System**

The Principal must ensure that Group Leaders have telephone numbers for a 24-hour standby person based contact (for minor problems) and the LA 24-hour emergency contact/pager number (for serious incidents). The home emergency contacts must be available 24/7. Groups must not be in the position of having to speak to an answer phone, leaving a message. A hierarchy of contacts is most desirable.

## **Support from the British Consul**

The Group Leader should, before the visit commences, obtain from the Foreign Office, London (Monday to Friday, telephone 020 72703000) the address and telephone number of the British Consul and thus be assured of help from an English speaking person with knowledge of local services and regulations and access to emergency funds. In the event of death or serious injury to any member of the party, the British Consul should be contacted immediately. He/she will inform the Foreign Office, which has a 24-hour open line service.

## **Right Hand Traffic**

All group members need to be aware of unfamiliar right hand traffic. Extra care must be taken parking UK coaches and minibuses to avoid left side passenger door opening straight onto passing traffic and in crossing roads.

## **Insurance**

Schools need to inform their insurance section of all international links and twinning activities both at home and overseas to ensure that adequate cover exists to include travelling, all activities and events and also public liability cover. This applies to all members of the party.

## **Vaccinations**

It is always advisable to obtain medical advice from a GP well in advance of travelling, occasionally GP's do not administer specific vaccinations that may be necessary for certain countries.

## **National Tourism Offices**

Many countries have national tourism offices based in London, who will upon request, provide general information about the country, or specific areas, to be visited.

## **Foreign Office Travel Advice**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) produce regularly updated travel advice bulletins on possible security risks in travelling to or within a particular country. The advice usually gives a summary of the current political situation, health warnings, etc. and will send out warnings if they feel the situation within a country is unsafe. As security issues are subject to change it is advisable to check travel advice every time travel is planned. Web site address: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)



## **ADULTS OTHER THAN TEACHERS**

The Department of Education and Skills published the *Health and Safety of Students on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide* in 1988; this document tends to use the generic word 'teachers.' The Government has now developed a policy on **support staff** in the light of the National Agreement on raising standards and tackling workload.

The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003, that came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2003 set out certain conditions under which support staff, and other categories of staff, in schools, may undertake specified teaching activities or 'specified work.'

Staff selected by the Principal, or Educational Visits Co-ordinator, to work on an educational visit must meet certain criteria; the category of staff is unimportant for the selection process i.e. teacher, teaching assistant, support staff (i.e. administrators) etc. The following questions must be positively answered:

- Can this member of staff fulfil the educational purpose of the visit? and
- Do they have the specific skills, experience and expertise to fulfil the supervisory tasks assigned?

Well-trained support staff, normally those having attained higher level teaching assistant (HTLA), will be able to lead classes, under the direction and supervision of a teacher, however, there is no assumption that a teacher will be physically present whilst the member of support staff is carrying out specific work.

### **Beyond the Classroom**

With appropriate training and demonstrated competence, many different categories of school staff can safely enrich the curriculum by extending students' learning beyond the classroom. This could be:

- In the school grounds; or
- Into the neighbourhood; or
- Farther a-field, where the group can no longer rely on the school's immediate support and where activities may be more complex and demanding.

### **Training and Competence**

Schools must monitor the pastoral competence of all staff that undertake 'specified work.' All employers, either LA's or Governors, must ensure that school staff who lead or supervise a visit are demonstrably competent to a sufficient level in risk management, by training, experience or both.

Outdoor competence could be demonstrated, including risk management, through several routes, including:

- Support staff attaining HTLA status where risk training was available
- Holding a technical qualification at a suitable level for the activity i.e. trekking, sailing
- Holding Duke of Edinburgh Award or relevant NVQ 3

### **Types of Visits – Off-site, close to school**

School staff newly trained in outdoor supervision, including support staff, under indirect supervision, may take students to, for example:

- facilities within walking distance of the school; or
- recognised providers/centres where the instruction/training is provided, ie. swimming pool where an approved provider provides life saving and teaching.

The key factor is that the school's support structure is readily available for assistance.

## **Types of Visits – Farther a-field**

Where the teachers, other staff and/or volunteers work in the direct charge of the Group Leader. The competence of all adults involved must be specific to the tasks assigned; the group leader and the EVC must ensure this is the case.

Travel to a location further a-field (ie. beyond 20-30 minutes) requires one member of the staff to have Group Leader competence, as the group will be beyond the rapid response of the school support. Where support is clearly some distance away, the visit or venture needs to be self-contained, this applies particularly to residential trips. The school must transfer the normal class size teaching/duty of care ratios off-site, before enhancing with other teaching/support staff/volunteers, to bring ratios down to those required by the LA/Governors and the school regulations/guidance.

### **Group Leader**

It is good practice for the Group Leader to be a member of school staff as they are working on behalf of the Principal and the employer (LA/Governor) who has health and safety responsibilities.

Younger or less experienced school staff (those who have yet to serve an apprenticeship in outdoor supervision under an experienced group leader) should not lead a group themselves.

At the present time the Group Leader should be a teacher, however, that may not be necessarily so in the future. An HLTA, with educational competence and experience in the outdoor supervision of students is capable of overall lead of a supervisory team made up of teachers, other staff and volunteers.

Any category of school staff, who as a Group Leader takes students away from the school (including a member of support staff who is not being directly supervised), must have demonstrated knowledge of:

- The educational objectives
- How the learning is to be conducted

Also, just as important:

- Behaviour and group management
- The environment itself
- Risk management in this context
- The communications system available to summon assistance for the group when an accident or incident has occurred.

Guidance has been published to accompany The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (England) Regulations 2003 to assist schools in applying the regulations. This guidance can be accessed on:

- [www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling)
- Telephone 0845 602 2260 quoting DfE/0538/2003
- [www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031663.htm](http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031663.htm) - full regulations

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR SAFE PRACTICE FOR SCHOOL VISITS**

All school visits carry elements of danger or risk, whilst adopting principles of safe risk will not necessarily prevent accidents or incidents, they will assist in ensuring the likelihood is reduced to acceptable levels.

- 1 Carry out a risk assessment that considers the Health, Safety and Welfare of all adults/students participating in the activity.
- 2 Ensure that there is a clearly identified purpose for the whole visit, appropriate to the age and ability of the group.
- 3 The qualities of leadership, judgement, anticipation and control are essential on the part of staff and assistants, particularly the group leader.
- 4 Ensure that you comply with any statutory regulations.
- 5 Work within the guidance and standards of competence recommended by national governing bodies and other recognised organisations.
- 6 Ensure that appropriate personnel, group equipment and clothing is available, where appropriate.
- 7 If uncertain about 'safe practice' seek professional advice.
- 8 Take a responsible attitude toward the environment.
- 9 Good discipline throughout the whole of the visit is essential. A code of conduct in relation to smoking, alcohol and behaviour between sexes needs to be clearly established and understood.
- 10 Keep parents and students informed about proposed visits, gain approval from the LA where appropriate.
- 11 Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times, but can be close or remote supervision.
- 12 Carry a list of the contact numbers for each person on the visit, and the emergency contact information for the school and the LA.
- 13 Know your group.
- 14 Carry out a pre-visit to the venue, assess the risks and put control measures in place.
- 15 Assess the conditions of the day, change the day's activity if necessary, and do not take unnecessary risks.
- 16 Record and learn from accidents, incidents and near misses.
- 17 Review the risk assessment on returning to school.

## SUMMARY

The following procedures should be followed for all school trips:

- Written permission must be obtained from parents, for each child prior to a school trip, annual permission for regular visits.
- Staffing ratio levels must be maintained throughout the visit.
- First Aid should be accessible either through an appointed person with the visit or by the venue facilities. Copies of information containing emergency contact/medical/allergy details should be available at all times.
- A head count should take place before leaving school (or on the coach) and at regular intervals throughout the whole visit. Transport should not be allowed to depart until two adult members of the party have independently counted and agreed that all students are present.
- Toilet facilities must be provided at regular intervals.
- Food and drink should be provided at regular intervals. On very hot days it may be necessary to provide extra drinks.
- Where applicable, meeting points should be pre-designated and specific times arranged for party assembly. These times should be strictly adhered to.
- Where applicable, the transport must be fully insured, the drivers documentation valid and all seats should be forward facing and have seat/lap belts fitted. The maximum seating capacity of the vehicle must not be exceeded and students must never travel standing.

Students should be informed of any rules and regulations relating to the visit. All adults should know which students they are responsible for and likewise the students should know to whom they are accountable. Where necessary written guidance should be issued to students and parents.

The school should, however, recognise that it is in the nature of the behaviour of children and teenagers that instructions may be disobeyed through forgetfulness or wilful disobedience. It should also be recognised that through their inexperience children and teenagers are unable to make a reasonable analysis of potential risks, and thus may need to be protected by their own behaviour. Therefore, teachers should not proceed on the basis that all children will obey instructions, but will take the necessary steps to ensure that instructions are followed at all times.

At the end of each visit the Group Leader should review the trip (use of the form 'Evaluation of the Visit to be Completed by the Group Leader for Future Reference') and amend any risk assessments if the trip is to be repeated on a future date. Risk Assessments will be prepared for all aspects of a school trip for which the school are actually organising (i.e. transport to and from venue, leisure activities at a centre etc.). Activities undertaken under the supervision of instructors when visiting organised centres, ie. Rockley, will be the responsibility of the centre. The **External Providers Form** should be used to ensure that centres/venues/accommodation etc are complying with regulations. School risk assessments should be reviewed either after a trip or annually, all supervising adults going on the trip should be made aware of, and understand, the control measures introduced as a result of the risk assessment. They should be asked to signify their understanding and acceptance of the resources required.