

## Educational Visits Policy

Committee	Premises, Health & Safety Committee
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**“Pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their college. 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.”**

(Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational visits, DfEE, 1998)

**Nominated Educational Visits Coordinator – Nick Allan /Trevor Herbert/Lil Atkinson**

## **The College Visits Policy**

We recognise and welcome the legal duties contained in the Health and Safety Act (1974), the Management of Health and Safety at Work and the County Regulations and Guidance as described in the Educational Visits Regulations and Guidance Manual 2007.

### **BREACHES OF THE POLICY**

**Breaches of the policy will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary provisions set out in the relevant college policy.**

#### **Section 1**

##### **The College Visits procedure**

The management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, made under the 1974 Act, require employers to:

- Assess the risks of activities
- Introduce measures to control these risks
- Tell their employees about these measures

Also under the Health and Safety legislation employees must:

- Take reasonable care of their own and other’s health and safety
- Cooperate with their employers over safety matters
- Carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions
- Inform the employer of any serious risks

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

The above responsibilities necessitate a procedure for arranging visits, which teachers should follow.

## Responsibilities

The LA has the following main roles:

- Provide written guidelines for governors, headteachers and teachers including advice on risk assessment
- Assess proposals for certain types of visit
- Provide emergency telephone contact for the duration of the visit where necessary
- Ensure training needs have been addressed
- Provide access to named staff for advice
- Maintain appropriate insurance cover
- Have in place procedures to monitor and review safety during offsite visits and activities

The **Governing Body** of the college should:

- Ensure that the visit has a specified and stated objective
- Ensure that the head teacher/group leader shows how their plans comply with regulations and guidelines including the college's Health and Safety Policy and where applicable the Local Authority Educational Visits Regulations and Guidance.
- Ensure that they are informed about less routine visits well in advance
- Assess proposals for certain types of visit, which might involve an overnight stay or travel outside the UK, and submit these proposals to the LA if appropriate

The **Headteacher** should:

- Ensure that visits comply with regulations and guidelines provided by the LA or governing body
- Ensure that the group leader is competent to monitor risks throughout the visit
- Be clear about their role if taking part in the visit as a group member/supervisor and follow instructions of the group leader who has sole charge of the visit

In addition the **Headteacher** should ensure that:

- Adequate child protection procedures are in place
- All necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins
- The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place
- Training needs have been assessed by a competent person and the needs of the pupils and staff have been considered
- The group leader has experience in supervising the age groups on the visit and will organise the group effectively
- Group leaders are allowed sufficient time or access to support, in order that the visit is organised properly
- Non-teacher supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children
- Ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate
- The Local Authority has approved the visit, if the following appropriate action has been taken:
  - Parents have signed consent forms
  - Arrangements have been made for medical needs and special educational needs of all pupils
  - Adequate first-aid provision will be available
  - The mode of travel is appropriate
  - Travel times out and back are known including pick-up and drop-off points

- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover
- They have the name and contact number of the visit's venue and have a contact name
- A college contact has been nominated and the group leader has details
- The group leader, group supervisors and nominated college contact have a copy of the agreed emergency procedures
- The group leader, group supervisors and nominated college contact have the names of all the adults and pupils travelling in the group, and the contact details of parents and the teachers' and other supervisors' next of kin
- There is a contingency plan for any delays including a late return home

The **group leader** should 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 appointed or approved by the headteacher or the governing body: The **group leader** should:

- Obtain the headteacher's prior agreement before any off-site activity takes place
- Follow Local Authority and/or governing body regulations, guidelines and policies
- Appoint a deputy group leader
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned
- To be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age group
- Be aware of child protection issues
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision has been made
- Undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including the briefing of group members and parents
- Undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment
- Ensure that teachers and other supervisors are fully aware of what the proposed visit involves
- Have enough information on the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability or be satisfied that their suitability has been assessed and confirmed
- Ensure the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group
- Consider stopping the visit if the risk to health or safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality
- Ensure that the group supervisors have details of the college contact
- Ensure that the group supervisors and the college contact have a copy of the emergency procedures
- Ensure that the group's teachers and other supervisors have the details of pupils' special educational or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively

**Teachers** on college visits act as employees of the LA or of the governing body, whether the visit takes place within college hours or outside those hours, by agreement with the head teacher and governors. They must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would in the same circumstances. They should:

- Follow the instructions of the group leader
- 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 hands is unacceptable

**Non-teacher volunteers** on 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 has 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 and safety of pupils at any time during the visit

The group leader should make it clear to **pupils** that they must:

- Not take unnecessary risks
- Follow the instructions of the leader and other supervisors including those at the venue of the visit
- Dress and behave sensibly and responsibly
- If abroad be sensitive to local codes and customs
- Look out for anything that might hurt or threaten themselves or anyone in the group and tell the group leader or supervisor about it

**Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be prevented from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit should be fulfilled in other ways where possible.**

## Section 2

### Planning the visit

Whatever the nature of the visit, it is essential that formal planning takes place before setting off. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties that may arise and making plans to reduce them. In reality, the head teacher will delegate this responsibility to the organiser of the visit or group leader. The most important aspect of effective planning is related to assessing the actual and potential risks associated with the proposed visit.

### Risk Assessment

In practice, risk assessments, which employers are legally obliged to undertake are usually carried out by the group leader. An assessment should be completed well before the visit, and should be approved by the head teacher. The risk assessment **need not be complex but it should be comprehensive**. It does not generally require technical formulae or professional health and safety expertise.

A formal assessment of the risks that might be met on a visit should have the aim of preventing the risk or reducing them. Pupils must not be placed in situations that 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?

Copies of the risk assessment should be given to all those directly affected by the proposed visit: headteacher (as delegated by the governing body), group leaders and non-teacher supervisors. A copy should also be attached to the visits documentation lodged with the visits coordinator. The format for the risk assessment document can be found in Appendix 1. Further advice regarding potential risk and guidelines addressing them can be found in the following documents:

- Group Safety at Water Margins (DfES)
- Standards for LAs in Overseeing Educational Visits
- Standards for Adventure (HSE)
- Handbook for Group Leaders
- Suffolk LA Guidelines for Educational visits (revised 2007)

**All of these publications are available from the College Visits Co-ordinator**

### **Critical incidents**

Disasters can strike suddenly and without warning and we are not immune from this. Sudden and unpredictable incidents are made far worse for those who share the task of dealing with them when they are unprepared and find themselves operating in a totally unfamiliar field. The following guidance is taken from the Suffolk Local Authority Guidelines for Educational Visits (2007). Reference should also be made to the County guidance note “Managing Critical Incidents in Colleges” (available from the College Trips Co-ordinator)

The emergency situations for which this guidance is relevant range from relatively minor incidents, which nonetheless require additional staffing support (for example where a pupil needs to be taken to hospital) to serious accidents or medical emergencies, possible involving a number of members of the party.

## **1. PLANNING**

As part of the planning process, the visit leader should ensure that:

- all participants have access to first aid equipment, and a nominated person with first aid knowledge throughout the visit. (The more remote the location, the higher the level of first aid knowledge required);
- the means of summoning the emergency services at any stage during the visit has been identified (normally the location of the nearest telephone);
- all group leaders know the location of the nearest accident and emergency hospital;
- any pupils operating unaccompanied have a means of making contact with their group leader in the event of an emergency;
- group leaders have a means of contacting the visit leader or deputy throughout the visit (or failing that of making direct contact with one of the emergency home contacts);
- group leaders have access to any medical and dietary information regarding pupils in their charge pertinent to their treatment in an emergency whilst in their care.

The possibility that staff may need to be redeployed to assist in an emergency should be considered by the visit leader in planning the deployment of staff and pupils during the visit. It is however accepted that, in an emergency, it may sometimes be necessary to leave pupils in larger groups with a single member of staff than would normally be advised or, exceptionally, to leave pupils unaccompanied who would normally be accompanied.

For visits extending outside college hours, the headteacher should additionally ensure that:

- two emergency home contacts are identified (normally the headteacher or educational visits co-ordinator and a deputy) who can between them provide, as far as is reasonably practicable, 24 hour access by telephone for the duration of the visit. (This may be facilitated by the use of mobile phones or answer phones referring callers to another number, provided the equipment can be relied upon);
- both home contacts know the procedure for alerting the County Council in the event of a serious incident which is likely to require special support or which will receive media attention;
- a list of participants, including staff, with contact arrangements for parents or next of kin, is available to both home contacts. A copy should also be taken on the visit.

The headteacher may want to advise the visit leader in what circumstances the emergency contact procedure should be used (see the following section). Alternative arrangements may be appropriate for non-emergency situations such as travel delays.

Mobile phones are able to provide a valuable means of communication during a visit. It is, however, unwise to rely upon mobile phones as the sole method of communication in an emergency. On a residential visit, as part of the planning process, it is helpful to establish the reliability of mobile phone reception in the area to be visited.

Remember, though, that even in an area where transmission is totally reliable, mobile phones must be kept charged and in credit.

### **Charging for Educational Visits**

Schools may invite, but not require, parents to make **voluntary contributions** towards the cost of any school activities, including educational visits, whether they take place inside or outside school hours.

A **charge** may be made for the cost of activities provided **outside school hours** except where the activity is specifically required by an external examination syllabus or national curriculum legislation.

Schools are prohibited from **charging** for any activity undertaken **within normal school hours** except for board and lodging on residential courses.

### **Activities Partly during School Hours**

The Act prescribes a basis for determining whether an activity is deemed to take place in or out of school hours as follows:-

### Non-residential Activities

If 50% of more of the period spent on the activity occurs during school hours then the activity is deemed to take place in school time

Where less than 50% of the period spend on the activity falls during school hours then the activity is deemed to take place outside school hours.

In calculating the percentage of the time spent on the activity that falls outside school hours, travel time outside the school hours may not be counted. 'School hours' do not include the mid-day break.

### Residential Visits

For residential visits the calculation is based on the number of half-days taken up by the activity, including travel, relative to the number of school sessions the participant would have attended if the activity had not taken place.

For calculation:

- The school day is divided into two sessions. Where half or more of a school session is spent on the visit then all of the session counts
- The visit is divided into 'half-days' defined as any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight. Where 6 or more hours of a half-day are spent on the visit then the whole half-day counts.

If the number of school sessions missed by the participant is less than 50% of the number of half-days taken up by the visit then the visit is deemed to take place outside school hours.

If the number of school sessions missed is 50% or more of the number of half-days taken up by the visit then the visit is deemed to take place during school hours.

### Voluntary Contributions

In practice, for most educational visits, funding through voluntary contributions may be the simplest option. In seeking voluntary contributions for school activities schools must make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to contribute and that pupils for whom the visit is appropriate, and whose parents wish them to participate, will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made a contribution.

In consequence schools are permitted and are strongly advised to:

- indicate to parents the level of contribution required for the activity to take place
- indicate that the activity may not be able to take place if parents are reluctant to support it.

### Board and Lodging

On residential visits the cost of board and lodging may be **charged** to pupils in all cases (except where remissions apply), whether in school hours or not.

Board and lodging costs are deemed to include all elements of food and accommodation as appropriate to the particular visit.

Charges for board and lodging must not exceed the actual cost of its provision for the individual pupil.

### **Expenses of Accompanying Staff**

The Act differentiates between visits undertaken in school hours and out of school hours. In the former case none of the expenses of accompanying staff, whether board and lodging or otherwise, can be passed on to pupils, except through voluntary contributions.

Where a **charge** is made for residential activities taking place out of school hours this may include a cost element for engaging accompanying staff specifically for providing the activity, and for supplying such staff with travel, board and lodging. This must be done by engaging teachers on a simple but separate contract to provide the optional extra. No such contract is required where the visit is funded through **voluntary contributions**.

### **Remissions**

Most schools operate their own remissions policy. The Act requires that any **charges** made for board and lodging on a residential visit must be remitted for pupils eligible for free school lunches, that is pupils whose families receive income support, family credit, the disability working allowance, the job seeker's allowance or the **guarantee** element of the state pension credit. This applies only where parents apply for such remission and the visit falls into one of the following categories:

- during school hours
- involving delivery of the national curriculum
- required as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination.

For other residential activities such remissions are at the discretion of schools.

The Act only requires the remission of board and lodging charges for families in receipt of the above benefits. However, school governing bodies, in framing or reviewing their own policies, are recommended to consider also taking into account dependence by the family on widow's benefit, invalidity benefit, or old age pension, as per the County Council's remissions policy (e.g. for school transport).

## **2 IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY**

The group leader should take the following course of action. Assistance will be required either from adult helpers or members of the group. (It may be helpful to identify in advance which responsibilities will be delegated to whom.)

- Immediately inform assistant staff of the emergency
- Ensure all uninjured group members are accounted for, safe and supervised and are given as much information as they need to know about what has happened.

- Establish the number and names of those involved in the incident and the extent of any injuries. Arrange for first aid treatment and the summoning of the emergency services if required.
- Make contact with the visit leader

The visit leader (or if unobtainable, the group leader) should then:

- reallocate staffing, if available, to assist with the incident;
- ensure that, wherever possible, any casualties are accompanied to hospital by an adult known to them;
- if appropriate, alert the emergency home contact
- write down as accurately as possible all relevant facts and witness details, preserve any vital evidence, and keep a written account of events, times and contacts after the incident

Please note that the college has established procedures for responding to emergencies.

### **3 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

In the event of a serious incident, media response is likely to be very quick.

Action is necessary to ensure that the parents of those involved are informed through appropriate channels before the incident becomes public knowledge. It is also important to direct media attention away from the visit leader who will have other responsibilities. To this end:

- participants should not telephone home, at least until the emergency home contact has been alerted; (It will be necessary to explain carefully why they should not do this as it will be a natural reaction, particularly if any of the participants are in possession of mobile phones.)
- the names of injured participants must not be released other than to officials of the emergency services;
- all requests for information from the media should be referred to the emergency home contact.

The emergency home contact has the responsibility for alerting the parents of any casualties. If the incident has attracted media attention the parents of all other participants should also be contacted.

The emergency home contact must also decide whether to alert the County Council. The procedures for alerting the County Council in an emergency are included in the guidance note for Headteachers “Managing Critical Incidents in Colleges”.

Note that neither the visit leader, members of the party, or the emergency home contact should enter into any discussions with other parties regarding legal liability.

#### **4 FOLLOW UP**

On return home, or sooner where possible, the visit leader must comply with the County Council's incident reporting procedures and any requirements relating to insurance claims. Any claims additional expenditure will need to be backed up by receipts.

In the event of serious injuries or a fatality the Area Education Manager will advise the Headteacher on the follow up support services available, in accordance with the authority's procedures for college emergencies.

#### **General**

The staff/pupil ratio prescribed in this section are minimum figures. It refers to the visit as a whole, rather than to individual activities. It does not remove from the headteacher the duty to ensure that a visit is adequately staffed, bearing in mind the nature of the activities to be undertaken and the particular needs of the pupils. Frequently a higher ratio of staff to pupils will be appropriate.

The following is the **minimum** staff/pupil ratio for educational visits involving pupils in the age range:

- Age 11-18 (years 7-13) : 1 to 20;

In every case one staff members included in the above ratio must be a teacher. Larger parties must include at least one teacher to every 30 pupils.

#### **Visits including an Overnight Stay (Category A)**

For visits involving an overnight stay the minimum staff/pupil ratio is 1 to 15, subject to there being at least 2 staff. For single sex parties one staff member must be of the same sex as the pupils. For mixed parties a staff member of each sex must be included.

At least one staff member must be a teacher and larger parties must include at least one teacher to every 30 pupils.

#### **Visits Abroad (Category D)**

For visits abroad the minimum staff/pupil ratio 1 to 10, subject to there being at least 2 staff. For single-sex parties one staff member must be of the same sex as the pupils. For mixed parties a member of staff of each sex must be included.

At least one staff member must be a teacher and larger parties must include at least one teacher to every 30 pupils.

## **Visits including Adventurous Activities (Categories B and C)**

Overall staffing for any visit in which activities classified as adventurous form part of the programme must conform to the general requirements for visits of this nature. In addition, specific regulations may apply to the staffing of the activities themselves. (See Section 3 below.)

## **Inclusion of Non-teachers in the Staff/Pupil Ratio**

### **Adult Helpers**

Adult helpers, other than teachers, may be included in the staff/pupil ratio provided they are acceptable to the headteacher in the role that they will be required to fill. Guidance on the acceptability of adult helpers is available from the College Trips Co-ordinator

### **Young People**

Young people under 18 who are participating in the visit are counted as pupils in the above ratios, even where they are not on the roll of the college. Young people over 18 are also counted as pupils if they are still on the college roll, or if they are contemporaries of pupils on the college roll who are participating in the visit. In other cases young people over the age of 18 may be counted as staff, at the Headteacher's discretion.

### **Residential centre staff**

In the case of residential visits to centres providing overnight duty staff, these duty staff may exceptionally be included in the ratios at the discretion of the Headteacher. However, care must be taken to ensure that centre staff are willing and competent to undertake these duties, and understand the responsibilities involved. For the journey to and from the centre the staff/pupil ratios prescribed above are mandatory.

### **Criminal Record Bureau Checks**

County policy on criminal record bureau checks must be followed in respect of adult helpers.