

Off-Site Visits Policy

(To be read in conjunction with the policy on Health, Safety and Welfare.)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Off-site visits are activities arranged by or on behalf of the school, and which take place outside the school grounds. The governors and teaching staff believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities must serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our children's learning experiences.
- 1.2 In this policy, we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of all pupils at all times. Within these limits, we seek to make our visits available to all pupils, and wherever possible to make them accessible to those with disabilities. The visits usually take place within the school day.
- 1.3 This policy has been revised to incorporate the new national guidance on school trips produced by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2011 and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) *School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities: Tackling the Health and Safety Myths*.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The aims and objectives of our off-site visits policy are to:
 - encourage visits that enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils and provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone;
 - promote the independence of our children as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments;
 - set out how visits are to be organised, led and managed, setting out the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
 - ensure that all activities have an appropriate and proportionate risk assessment carried out so that children will be as safe as possible. However, it is accepted that all activities carry some risk but we do not want these risks to inhibit the educational experiences of our children.

These visits begin with short excursions into the local area in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and progress to a residential experience towards the end of Key Stage 2.

3 Curriculum links

- 3.1 For each subject in the curriculum, there is a corresponding programme of activities (which includes visits to the school by specialists). All these activities are in line with guidance published by the LA:

English – theatre visits;

science – use of the school grounds, visits to botanical gardens and science museums;

mathematics – use of shape and number trails in the local environment;

history – castle visits, study of local housing patterns, local museums;

geography – use of the locality for fieldwork, village trails;

art and design – art gallery visits, use of the locality;

PE – a range of sporting fixtures and extra-curricular activities;

music – a variety of specialist music teaching, extra-curricular activities, local schools' orchestra and concerts for parents and carers to hear;

design and technology – visits to local factories or design centres;

ICT – its use in local shops/libraries/secondary schools etc;

RE – visits to local centres of worship;

PSHE and citizenship – visits to the fire station or an old people's residential home.

4 Residential activities

- 4.1 Children in Year 6 have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit. This activity is in school time and linked to the National Curriculum, so we do not make any charge for the education or cost of travel. We do, however, make a charge for board and lodging, insurance and specialist instruction for certain activities.
- 4.2 The residential visit enables children to take part in outdoor and adventure activities as part of their PE work. We undertake this visit only with the written agreement of the LA. We provide qualified instructors for all specialist activities that we undertake.

5 How visits may be authorised

- 5.1 The headteacher will appoint a party leader to be responsible for running the activity. This will normally be a teacher employed at the school.
- 5.2 The school's educational visits coordinator, who may be the headteacher, will be involved in the planning and management of off-site visits. They will:
- ensure that appropriate risk assessments are completed;
 - support the headteacher and governing body in their decisions on approval;
 - assign competent staff to lead and help with trips;
 - organise related staff training;
 - verify that all accompanying adults, including private car drivers, have had satisfactory CRB checks.
- ensure contact arrangements are in place for the visit;
- make sure that all necessary permissions and medical forms are obtained;
- keep records of visits, and ensure that there are regular generic assessments of the risks (for example, road-crossing) where there are frequent visits to local venues (for example, a swimming facility).

Staff arranging or otherwise involved in off-site activities must familiarise themselves with the regulations, advice and procedures published by the LA.

- 5.3 When a member of staff proposes an off-site activity they must seek and obtain the approval of the headteacher before any commitment is made on behalf of the school. A comprehensive **visit plan** should be provided by the member of staff to allow for an informed decision to be made.
- 5.4 Where the activity involves a period of more than 24 hours, an overnight stay, or a journey by sea or air, the headteacher will seek the approval of the governing body and the LA before permitting the activity to take place.
- 5.5 It is our policy that all children should be able to participate in educational visits. Where a child with a disability is eligible for a trip, we will make every effort to ensure that he or she is included. We may seek guidance from parents or carers to help us to adapt our programme, and we will make any reasonable adjustments to our itinerary to include a child with disabilities. Any such adjustments will be included in the risk assessment.

6 Risk assessment

- 6.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 schools must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. This means when taking children off site teachers must make an assessment of any possible risks involved and take all reasonable steps to address these risks. Therefore a risk assessment is carried out by the group leader before the proposed visit. It will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit, and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:
- What are the hazards?
 - Who might be affected by them?
 - What safety measures are needed 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?
- 6.2 If a visit involves outdoor adventure activities such as water sports, climbing or skiing, and is led by an external instructor, the school will check that the course organiser has an Adventure Activities Licence.
- 6.3 Staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment. It is important to take into account the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip, and the party leader should take careful account of the facilities available, with due regard to the proposed size of the group. The group leader should also assess the site's suitability with regard to the age and any particular needs of the children and will also consider the venue's own approach to security and to health and safety. Venues providing instructor-led activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments may be adopted if it is impractical for the group leader to experience the activity beforehand, or if the group leader lacks the skills required to make informed judgements about the risks it may involve.
- 6.4 It is important to assess and record any health, safety or security issues that are identified during the preliminary visit. Any such issues will be taken into account when the final decision is taken on whether the visit should proceed, and the visit plan must state both the extent of any risks involved, and the measures that will be taken to reduce or eliminate them. The cost of these preliminary visits will be borne by the school, and should be built into the overall financial arrangements for the visit itself.

- 6.5 An activity should normally have sufficient adults taking part to provide the following minimum ratios:

one adult to between 10 and 15 pupils in Years 4 to 6;
one adult to six pupils in Years 1 to 3;
one adult to three pupils in Early Years.

Any trip will require a minimum of two adults. However, these are minimum requirements, and may not provide adequate supervision in all cases.

- 6.6 A risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. The coach companies we use on a regular basis have provided us with a letter detailing all the health and safety measures it routinely takes, including:

the provision and required use of seat belts;
proper vetting of the driver by the police;
proper insurance for the driver;
details of first aid and emergency equipment;
breakdown procedures.

- 6.7 The group leader will double-check that all adults helping to supervise the trip have been subject to CRB checks (see 5.2 above).

- 6.8 A copy of the completed risk assessment will be given to the headteacher, the governing body, the LA, our educational visits coordinator, and all adults supervising the trip.

7 Transport

- 7.1 The costing of off-site activities should include any of the following that apply:

transport;
entrance fees;
insurance;
provision of any special resources or equipment;
costs related to adult helpers;
any refreshments that the school has opted to pay for.

- 7.2 Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party. It is our policy only to use coaches fitted with seat or lap belts, and to insist that they be worn by all those participating in the visit.

- 7.3 Where private cars are used for transport, the group leader is responsible for checking that the insurance of each driver covers such journeys, and double-checking that each driver has been subject to the normal CRB checks (see 5.2).

- 7.4 Our minibus meets LA guidelines, and each seat has a belt. We instruct all children, whether travelling by car, minibus or coach, to attach their seat belts. Staff may drive a minibus as long as they are fully qualified to do so. Please ask to see our updated file for current qualifications required.

- 7.5 The school makes a charge to parents and carers if their children are transported in the school minibus to sporting fixtures. The charge covers the expenses of the journey only; we do not make any profit from this.

8 Communication with parents and carers

- 8.1 The parents and carers of children will be invited to complete an off-site visit form when their child joins the school. This allows the school to take children off site without the need for repeated consent forms to be completed for each visit. When children are taking part in an off-site activity parents will be provided with the appropriate information about the intended visit. Parents and carers **will not** normally be asked to give their permission before a child can be involved in any off-site activities. Parents and carers do have the right to withdraw their child from the activity if they so wish. Parents and carers will be asked to complete a consent form if the activity involves a higher than normal level of risk management or those that take place outside normal school hours.
- 8.2 Funding for off-site activities is provided mainly by parental contributions (voluntary, except in the case of residential visits), with a limited subsidy from the parent–teacher association. This must be made clear to parents and carers in all correspondence about an educational visit at the planning stage (see Charging Policy).
- 8.3 No child may be excluded from an activity because of the unwillingness or inability of the parent or carer to make a contribution. Parents and carers will be informed of this principle through the school prospectus and letters sent home about intended visits.
- 8.4 The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the headteacher to make a decision about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

9 Further health and safety considerations

- 9.1 All adults accompanying a party must be made aware, by the party leader, of the emergency procedures which will apply. Each adult should be provided with an emergency telephone number. This will normally be the school number, but where an activity extends beyond the normal school day, the home telephone number of a designated emergency contact should be provided.
- 9.2 Before a party leaves school, the school office should be provided with a list of everyone, children and adults, travelling with the party, together with a programme and timetable for the activity.
- 9.3 The safety of the party, and especially the children, is of paramount importance. During the activity, the party leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that children are both safe and well looked after at all times.
- 9.4 Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise the safety of others or the good name of the school, the party leader should discuss with the headteacher the possibility of excluding that child from the activity.
- 9.5 More detailed guidance on procedures and requirements can normally be obtained from the LA.

10 The visit plan

10.1 The visit plan for intended educational visits will usually include the following, as appropriate:

- risk assessment;
- report on preliminary visit or contact;
- applications for approval of visit;
- general information;
- names, ages, contact details, permission forms, medical records and other relevant details of all those going on the visit;
- travel schedule;
- accommodation plan (if applicable);
- full plan of activities;
- fire precautions and evacuation procedures;
- intended arrangements for supervision;
- insurance arrangements for all members of the group;
- emergency contacts and procedures;
- general communications information;
- guidance for party leaders;
- guidance for the emergency contact and headteacher;
- medical questionnaire returns;
- first-aid boxes.

11 Monitoring and review

11.1 This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.

Signed:

Date: