

EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

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Aim: To establish consistent procedures for School Visits in line with school objectives 4, 5, 9 and 14 and Staffordshire County Council Policy, Procedures and Guidance on Educational Visits.
(See also school documents on Dealing with Accidents, Emergencies and Critical Incidents, Use of School Mini-bus, and Charging for School Activities).

1. **Introduction**

It is school policy to encourage visits, both for the variety of learning experience which they offer and for the social benefits to pupils.

2. **Definitions**

- (a) **Visit.** The term visit or educational visit refers to any journey or activity organised by or for the school, for a group of its pupils and students, that takes place off the school premises.
- (b) **Activity.** Throughout this document the term activity includes any curricular academic study, lesson, lecture, extra-curricular activity, sport, outdoor and adventurous activity or recreational activity.
- (c) **County Educational Visits Adviser (EVA).** This is the officer of the County Council Education Service responsible for advice, guidance, any necessary approval and the monitoring of this policy document within schools. The EVA is the first point of contact for schools.
- (d) **Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC).** This is the person within a school who is designated with the role of co-ordinating educational visits, ensuring the necessary records are up to date and advising headteachers or approving the categories of visit delegated to the school by the County Council Education Service. Additionally the EVC is required to liaise with the EVA for activities that require County Council Education Service approval.
- (e) **Leader.** The visit leader is the staff member in charge of and responsible for all aspects of the safety, conduct, supervision and deployment of all participants and staff attending the visit. Every visit must have a leader who, although they may receive advice from more senior staff, retains command. The leader should monitor all services provided to the group and receive satisfactory responses on any issue they judge to be unsafe or, if necessary, withdraw the group from the activity.
- (f) **Assistant Leader.** Assistant leaders operate under the leader's direction. They may be other staff members or, where appropriate, volunteers. Assistant leaders may, at times, be delegated responsibility for all or part of the group. Where an assistant is the senior qualified leader for a particular activity (e.g. They are the qualified swimming pool supervisor) they hold visit leader's responsibility for that particular activity.
- (g) **Participant.** Participants are the school pupils, students, young people or other group members attending a visit.
- (h) **Provider.** A provider is any individual or organisation that offers a service giving either access to premises (e.g. theatre, museum, castle or farm) or staffing of an activity (e.g. ski instruction, sports coaching or staffing of an interactive activity at a Tudor house).

3. Approval of Visits

All proposals for visits involving pupils from the school will be considered by the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC), who will take account of the following factors:

- (a) The educational value of the visit, especially where it takes place in school time.
- (b) The implications of the visit for pupils and staff missing lessons, particularly in the provision of cover.
- (c) The acceptability of the arrangements for supervision, transport, insurance etc.
- (d) The competence of the visit leader to organise the visit and supervise the participants effectively.

If the EVC feels that the proposal or arrangements are not acceptable, s/he will discuss this with the visit leader.

Visits during school time should fall into one of the following categories:

- (a) Visits which are a requirement of public examinations.
- (b) Visits which clearly aim to enhance the understanding, awareness or interest of pupils in some areas of the curriculum.
- (c) Visits which extend students' awareness of future educational or career opportunities.
- (d) Teams or individuals competing in league or area fixtures or performing in county or national events.

4. Categories of Risk

The DfES recognises three categories of activity with increasing levels of potential or actual risk. It should be recognised that all activities have some level of risk and that every visit or departure from the school premises requires approval, appropriate risk assessment and a system to deal with emergencies.

(a) **Category A – Normal Risk**

These are activities that present no significant risk beyond those of everyday life. Some of these activities still expose participants to appreciable risk and, for example, crossing a road or any activity near water will present risks to an inexperienced and unsupervised person. These activities are:-

- (i) Visits to local places of religious worship, museums, open farms, zoos, sports centres, towns or villages.
- (ii) Attractions that are specifically designed for use by groups and where the owners are responsible for the procedures and safety of those attending and accountable to the Health and Safety Executive. Examples include: theme parks and adventure playgrounds.
- (iii) Swimming pool visits under the auspices of the County Swimming Services or other qualified instructor, supervisor or lifeguard.
- (iv) Taking groups as passengers on any public transport including licensed passenger craft, ferries, aircraft, railways, buses or coaches.
- (v) Inter-school sports matches and events.
- (vi) Field studies in environments presenting no technical hazards including pond studies where the supervisor could effect a rescue from the bank or by wading and small streams where the depth is nowhere deeper than 15cm.
- (vii) Activities such as walking in a parkland or non-remote country area with no technical hazards.

(b) Category B – Additional Risk

These are activities or visits to locations with a higher risk. Safe supervision will require the leader to have some specific knowledge and abilities that need to be assessed. This will be by having additional qualifications and/or verifiable experience. Currently, the activities in this category on the LEA **Approved Activities List** are as follows:-

- (i) Walking or field studies in non-remote country where technical hazards exist. In particular where there are cliffs or quarries of any height, areas of steeply sloping ground, or natural water features (rivers, ponds or lakes) that would present a significant hazard if a participant fell in. In Staffordshire this would include walking on the Roaches Hill and areas of the White Peak with cliffs, such as Chrome Hill, and activities beside rivers such as the Trent or the Dove.
- (ii) Camping.
- (iii) Cycling either on road or off-road areas in Staffordshire such as Cannock Chase.
- (iv) Orienteering in areas that are open to the general public or have technical hazards such as steep banks, water features (ponds or rivers), dense woodland or are open to roads and vehicles.
- (v) Canal studies and activities along canal banks and boating in a powered canal boat.

(c) Category C – High Risk

These are the highest risk activities. They include all those included within the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (AALR) plus some other activities included in the current **Approved Activities List** shown below:-

- (i) Walking and trekking activities on any open moor (at any altitude) or land above 600 metres where it is possible to become more than 30 minutes walking time from the nearest transport or refuge.
- (ii) Any activity on or in open water e.g. canoeing and kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, rafting, rowing, power boating and water skiing, sub-aqua, gorge walking and swimming in any open water including the sea, rivers, lakes or canals. This also includes river study fieldwork where flowing rivers deeper than 15cm are practically investigated.
- (iii) Caving (except guided visits to public areas of show caves).
- (iv) Climbing including gorge walking with technical descents or ascents.
- (v) High Ropes Courses.
- (vi) Skiing including supervising skiing sessions at ski resorts or at artificial ski slopes.
- (vii) Horse riding.
- (viii) Off road cycling outside Staffordshire (all terrain or mountain biking).

Activities that are not on the current authority approved activities list are either not considered appropriate for school pupils and students or not activities for which the authority has a technical expert. Schools wishing staff to lead, instruct or supervise any other activity should check with the EVA. It may be necessary to engage an appropriate technical expert to assess the proposal. Providers that hold the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge do not need to be risk assessed, but should inform the leader of all relevant matters, including significant hazards.

5. Planning Visits

The formal approval of the EVC must be granted for all visits except routine P.E. fixtures. Approval must be gained well in advance of the visit following the timescales.

- (a) At least fifteen weeks in advance for overseas or new visits.
- (b) At least six weeks in advance for all other visits.

Standard procedures for planning visits and excursions are as follows:

STEP 1 - Application

- (j) The visit leader should complete the standard application form for the approval of an educational visit (EV1) and the model risk assessment and operating procedure form and submit these to the EVC for formal approval (unless the provider holds the LOtC Quality Badge).
- (k) The visit leader should consult the appropriate member of the Leadership Team concerning dates and staffing in order to avoid pressure on particular days/times of the year and to ensure that cover can be arranged where necessary.

STEP 2 – Approval

- (i) After due consideration of details on Form EV1 and the risk assessment, the EVC will give school outline approval if s/he is satisfied that the visit is appropriate for the participants involved. Planning in detail may now resume for **Normal Risk Activities**.
- (ii) Additional or High Risk Activities, visits outside the UK and all Residential Visits must seek approval from the EVA for County Council Education Service approval. Additional documentation will be required (EVC1, EVC2 as appropriate unless the provider holds the LOtC Quality Badge). The EVC is responsible for liaison with the EVA to seek approval for such visits.

NB Approval for such visits must be gained before anyone is financially committed to the visit.

STEP 3 – Detailed Planning

- (i) The visit leader will ensure that they follow the procedures in the School Educational Visits Policy. In addition, the visit leader should be familiar with the key document 'A Handbook for Group Leaders'. (*HGL*) Copies of these documents can be obtained from the EVC or from <http://teachernet.gov.uk/visits/>
- (ii) The visit leader should make a pre-visit wherever possible.
- (iii) The visit leader should check the availability of the school minibus if required and make a booking with the school office. If coaches or forms of transport are required, bookings should be made with reputable companies, via the school office.
- (iv) The visit leader should liaise with other staff as appropriate. This might involve checking with the Head of Year of the pupils involved or the Examinations Officer to ensure that the visit will not adversely affect other school activities.
- (v) Visit leaders planning visits abroad and residential visits in the UK must consult the EVC for additional requirements. Skiing visits must follow guidelines given in *Staffordshire Guidelines for Ski Course Organisers and Leaders*. Visit leaders planning farm visits or those including water or adventure activities must consult *HASPEV / HGL* or the EVC for guidelines specific to such visits.
- (vi) The visit leader will send an information letter about the visit home to parents which should include a consent slip that must be returned to school. The letter should provide the following details to parents:
 - a brief itinerary including times of departure and expected time of return
 - identify the mode of transport
 - an outline of planned activities (including an indication of any free time)
 - the level of supervision and any other relevant details
 - the cost of the visit, if any
 - In addition, parents must be asked to declare any relevant medical or special needs on the consent form (this applies to non-residential visits).

A model Parental Notification Letter and Consent Form are available from the EVC. Sufficient time should be allowed after the distribution of the letter of information for parents to request further details before the consent slips are collected. For further advice on residential visits, see *HGL* and EVC.

- (vii) Residential visits/visits abroad require more specific medical details and all participants need to complete the County Medical Form, EVM (see EVC).
- (viii) The visit leader will organise a Parents' Evening for all residential visits and visits abroad.
- (ix) If parental contributions or payments have to be collected to cover part or all of the expenses, these must be paid before the visit can take place. Monies should be paid into the school office and a standard paying-in slip submitted on each occasion. The School Office Manager will issue a receipt for each payment to the visit leader.
- (x) Other teaching staff and Teaching Assistants must be informed of the visit via the Staff Bulletin or by email at least 7 days in advance.
- (xi) The School's Catering Manager must be informed at least 7 days in advance if pupils will miss school lunch or where early or late lunches are required.
- (xii) The visit leader will consult the Medical Information List and the Special Educational Needs Register for details about pupils participating in the visit. Planning must take account of medical and other needs of pupils taking part. Students with physical disabilities will be subject to an additional Risk Assessment, produced by the SEN Department.
- (xiii) A complete list of names of pupils who are participating in the visit must be displayed on the Staffroom notice-board or emailed to all staff one week prior to the visit.
- (xiv) The visit leader will ask the Administrative Officer to implement CRB screening procedures where necessary; see Section 6 (c).

6. **Responsibility**

- (a) **The EVC** will approve a visit leader who is competent to control and lead pupils of the relevant age group; competent to instruct the pupils involved in the activity concerned; and competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit.
- (b) **The role of the visit leader**
 - (i) One teacher, the visit leader, will have overall authority over all participants in the visit, i.e. pupils, teaching staff and supervisors. The visit leader should appoint an assistant leader.
 - (ii) The visit leader will undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit, including the briefing of visit members and parents where appropriate; the risk assessment; the completion of all other documentation required.
 - (iii) The visit leader will clearly define the role of other teachers and supervisors.
 - (iv) The visit leader will be aware of child protection issues in planning and leading the visit.
 - (v) The visit leader will ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available.
 - (vi) The visit leader will monitor the health and safety of all members of the group during the visit and consider stopping the visit if the risk is unacceptable
 - (vii) The visit leader will ensure that teachers and supervisors have details of the school contact and that they, and the contact, have a copy of emergency procedures
 - (viii) The group leader will ensure that teachers and supervisors have details of pupils' medical or special educational needs
- (c) **The role of teachers**

Teachers on school-led visits act as employees of the LEA, whether the visit takes place within or outside school hours. They must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone on the visit and act as any reasonable parent would in the same circumstances. They should follow the instructions of the visit leader, and help with control and discipline. They should also consider stopping the visit/activity (notifying the visit leader) if they consider the risk is unacceptable.

(d) The role of non-teacher adults

Non-teacher adults should be clear about their roles and responsibilities. Those acting as supervisors must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone on the visit. They must not be left in sole charge of pupils (unless previously agreed). They must follow the instructions of the visit leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline. They should speak to the visit leader/teacher supervisors if they are concerned about the health and safety of pupils at any time during the visit.

(e) The role of pupils

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

- Not take unnecessary risks
- Follow the instructions of the leader or any other supervisors (including those at the venue)
- Dress appropriately and behave sensibly and responsibly
- If abroad, be sensitive to local codes and customs
- Look out for anything which may be a threat and tell the visit leader/supervisor about it
- Pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger (to themselves or the group) should not be allowed on the visit
- Pupils who attend residential visits or trips abroad will be required to sign a copy of a code of conduct. This will be counter-signed by their parents.

7. School Contact

- (i) Before departure, the group leader will ensure the following documentation has been given to the School Office Manager.
- A copy of Form EV1 which includes the address and telephone number of the venue.
 - A list of names of all pupils and teachers and other adults taking part in the visit.
 - Visits abroad or residential visits must also include additional emergency contact details for all members of the visit, copies of any group passports, a detailed itinerary, contact details for the destination and contact details of travel firms
- (ii) A school contact will be nominated for all visits. For non-residential visits, school contact will normally be the Headteacher. The visit leader must collect a copy of the EMERGENCY CONTACT CARD (with key telephone numbers shown) before departure.
- (iii) For residential visits or foreign visits, a senior member of staff must be nominated as the Home Contact. The Home Contact must be available for emergency contact for 24 hours a day for the duration of the visit and in residence within reasonable travelling distance of the school site. All residential or foreign visits must also obtain details of the LEA emergency contact for the duration of the visit. Within two weeks prior to the visit, the EVC must contact the Director of Education's Personal Assistant to obtain contact telephone numbers, available 24 hours a day, for the member of the LEA senior management team who will be on duty during the period of the visit. The school will need to give details of the Home Contact person's telephone number.

- (iv) The Home Contact will also need to have copies of details of everyone on the visit, the itinerary, contact details for the destination, contact numbers for travel companies and all other appropriate information.
- (v) Parents must be able to contact their child via the Home Contact and the visit leader in the event of a home emergency. All residential and foreign visits must give parents the Home Contact telephone number that can be used out of school hours.
- (vi) The visit leader should ensure that they have a mobile telephone for use in emergencies. The School Office will allocate a mobile telephone on departure.

8. **Supervision**

- (i) The level of supervision for school visits will be agreed by the EVC in consultation with the Visit Leader. The guide ratio of one adult to 15-20 pupils is generally required, with at least one male supervisor and one female supervisor for visits involving boys and girls. A ratio of one adult to ten pupils is required on residential visits and visits abroad. More adults may be required where high-risk activities are involved or where pupils need close supervision.
- (ii) Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be known to the school. For day visits a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure will not be required for parents of pupils attending the school. Any adult who is not the parent of a current pupil at the school must undergo CRB disclosure at enhanced level before being used as an assistant staff member.
- (iii) Before accompanying any residential visit, all adults, including parents and governors, must be subject to a CRB disclosure at enhanced level.
- (iv) Regular head-counts should take place on all visits, particularly before leaving any venue.
- (v) All teachers and supervisors should carry a full list of all pupils and adults involved on the visit.
- (vi) The visit leader should establish rendezvous points and tell pupils what to do if they become separated from the group.
- (vii) Pupils of Year 10 and above may reasonably be allowed to spend some time, on non-hazardous visits, when they are unsupervised, e.g. to conduct a field study in pairs. However, no pupil should be allowed to wander off alone. Parents must have agreed to this unsupervised part of the visit, which should be clearly explained in the initial information for the visit.
- (viii) Where the excursion involves adventure activities, skiing, swimming, a field trip, farm visit or coastal visit, supervision must be provided by suitably qualified staff, as specified in DCSF/LEA guidelines.
- (ix) Where a visit returns to school after normal school hours, the visit leader should exercise discretion over whether it is safe for pupils to be left unattended on the premises whilst awaiting collection by parents. This will depend on the time of day, age of pupil, etc. If there is any doubt, then the visit leader should appoint a teacher to stay with the pupil(s).

9. **Recreational and Free-time on Visits**

- (i) All recreational time and other periods e.g. while travelling, must be risk assessed and control measures produced. This includes organisation of any free time that is remotely supervised by staff.
- (ii) This is most likely to result in rules as to where participants can and cannot go, what they can and cannot do, what time they must return and who they must be with.
- (iii) The leader and staff retain responsibility during any periods of remote supervision.
- (iv) At the end of all such periods the group must be counted to ensure that all participants have returned. This is particularly important during rest breaks while travelling and before going to bed at the end of the day on residential visits

10. **Staff Accompanied by their own children**

Children of persons staffing the visit should only be included if they are of similar age and/or ability as the other participants. Even so, it should be realised that a staff member who is acting as a parent may have divided loyalties and demands upon their time, especially in an emergency. Staff cannot adequately fulfil their duties if their own child's needs for supervision or support are significantly different from those in the group. In this instance, staff should not include their children on the visit.

11. **First Aid**

On any kind of visit, the visit leader should have a good working knowledge of first-aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken.

12. **School Regulations**

- (i) The school's code of conduct for pupils applies to travel on school activities or on home to school journeys.
- (ii) School uniform will be worn unless otherwise stated by the organiser of the visit.

13. **Charging**

Refer to the school policy on Charging for School Activities.

- (i) Wherever possible, all visits should be self-financing.
- (ii) In cases of financial hardship, assistance for individual pupils may be available. The Headteacher should be consulted in such cases.
- (iii) Where possible, field study visits for examination purposes should be self-financing but the Headteacher may award some financial support where necessary.
- (iv) Field Study for Examinations
For financial support for the costs of any visit made necessary by public examination requirements, see the Headteacher in the March preceding the visit. However, where possible, fieldwork should be self-financing.

14. **Accounts**

The visit leader will inform the School Office Manager that a visit has been planned so that she can set up an account. Once this is open, the following procedures should be followed:

- (i) Teachers who collect money for school should keep accurate records of all monies received.
- (ii) Cash or cheques received from pupils for visits must be paid into the School Office promptly on a daily basis using the standard paying-in slip.
- (iii) Colleagues should never pass these monies through their own private accounts.
- (iv) Bills for payment should be passed to the School Office.
- (v) Receipts must be kept for any additional payments incurred.

15. **Insurance**

The LEA holds public liability insurance cover to protect the County Council, school staff and approved volunteers. In addition The Friary School subscribes to the School Journey Off-Site Activities Insurance scheme that gives full benefits to cover personal accident and injury for all educational visits (normal, additional and high risk) both in the UK and abroad. It is not necessary for visit leaders to purchase additional insurance from travel firms. The School Office Manager holds a copy of the insurance policy.

16. **Transport**

Only approved contractors should be used for educational journeys and visits.

- (i) Any minibus hired should comply with L.E.A. guidelines.
- (ii) All coaches should be fitted with lap belts or seat belts.
- (iii) Double-Decker buses will be avoided.
- (iv) A policy of one person per seat for all educational journeys and visits will be implemented.
- (v) Consult the schools' health and safety procedures for risk assessment of vehicles manoeuvring on school premises.

17. **Use of Employees' Private Motor Vehicles**

- (i) All teachers intending to use their own vehicles for transporting pupils must obtain the appropriate insurance under their own motor vehicle policy. They must provide the Head with confirmation of this before they carry any pupils in their vehicle. The Teacher Driver's Declaration Form should be used for this. Copies of this form are available from the school office.
- (ii) The Headteacher advises all teachers with their own vehicles to ensure that their own vehicle insurance covers "business use", to cover instances where they wish to transport pupils in their own vehicle.

18. **Use of Parents'/Volunteer Private Motor Vehicles**

- (i) The school Admission Form gives parental consent for pupils to travel in the vehicle of another parent (or a teacher) in order to undertake activities organised by the school. This is on condition that a) the driver has passed the appropriate test b) the school has obtained written confirmation that the driver has the necessary insurance cover for transporting pupils.
- (ii) It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that he/she has the appropriate tax and insurance for these journeys. This would be regarded by most insurance companies as simply use for social, domestic and pleasure purposes).
- (iii) The parent driver should be known to the school as someone who can be relied on to operate their vehicle legally and safely.
- (iv) The parent driver will not transport a single pupil, that is not their own child, as part of a school visit.
- (v) Parent drivers must be given instruction regarding what is expected of them. The Volunteer Driver's Declaration forms will be used in such circumstances and this must be completed by all parent drivers. Copies of this form are available from the school office.
- (vi) Arrangements must not be made by the school for pupils to travel in a vehicle driven by another pupil as the comparative inexperience of the driver may be seen to present an unacceptable risk.

19. **Emergency Procedures**

- (i) The visit leader must ensure that all members of the group know what action to take if there is an emergency. The visit leader would normally take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back-up cover is arranged.
- (ii) All residential or foreign visits must also obtain details of the LEA emergency contact for the duration of the visit. Within two weeks prior to the visit, the EVC must contact the Director of Education's Personal Assistant to obtain contact telephone numbers, available 24 hours a day, for the member of the LEA senior management team who will be on duty during the period of the visit. The school will need to give details of the Home Contact person's telephone number.
- (iii) Visit leaders must be aware of the importance of controlling communications in the event of an emergency. Specifically, they must not allow participants to contact home until the parents of any affected child have been informed and not allow anyone to talk to the media except designated senior staff. The ownership of mobile telephones makes the management of an incident very difficult and mention should be made of this at visit briefings and parental meetings.