

PARKSIDE HOUSE SCHOOL  
HEALTH & SAFETY ON  
EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

July 2014

## **Educational Visits Policy Statement**

### **Introduction**

All offsite visits and activities (apart from work experience or college placements which are dealt with separately) that are organised and undertaken by the school are regarded as “educational visits”. Whenever pupils leave the school site under the direct or indirect supervision of school staff, they are undertaking an educational visit.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The school aims to offer children a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and prepares them for adult life. The school’s Headteacher and Governors recognise the value and importance of learning outside the classroom, and encourage staff to organise educational visits that enrich the curriculum and enhance the learning and development of our pupils.

### **Types of visits organised by the school**

The school offers a wide range of educational visits, including:

- Museums, indoor and outdoor
- Farms, Zoos and outdoor Adventure Parks
- Theme Parks
- City visits
- Cinema
- Leisure Centres and Swimming pools
- Adventure Activity centres
- Beach visits
- National Trust properties

As well as an overnight Residential stay

### **Compliance**

The school’s Educational Visits policy should also be read in conjunction with the other relevant school policy documents, such as the following:

- Health, Safety and Welfare, Risk Assessment Policy
- Equal Opportunities, Inclusion, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

### **Access to Policies and Guidelines**

Staff involved in the leadership and management of visits should be familiar with all relevant guidelines and policy documents, and should know how/where this information can be accessed. Hard copies of these documents can be accessed in the School Office.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for all the school's educational visits.

If the Headteacher is absent or unavailable, the Deputy Head will act as the appointed deputy, and Fulfil the same responsibilities regarding the management and approval of educational visits.

### **The School's Educational Visits Coordinator is Mr A Barnes**

The EVC oversees the planning and organisation of the school's visits, and provides advice and guidance to staff and Headteacher, including recommendations regarding the approval of visits. New EVCs should access training during their first term regarding their responsibilities with respect to the management and approval of educational visits, and should attend refresher/update training at least every 3 years.

## **Advice and Guidance**

Staff should seek advice and guidance regarding educational visits from:

- the school EVC
- the Headteacher
- the LA Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Consultant
- other experts with specialist/local knowledge (e.g. National Park ranger)

## **Monitoring**

To assure quality of standards on educational visits...

- the school's Headteacher and/or the EVC will accompany at least one visit per term/year to monitor real practice, and to assist with the review of policies and procedures
- Records of these monitoring visits are stored in the school office.

## **1. Planning and approval procedures**

Visits should be recorded, checked, and approved in accordance with the following procedures:

### **Category 1 - DAY VISITS (ROUTINE)**

Visits that take place on a regular basis throughout the year, or over a specific period of time (e.g. a series of six weekly visits) e.g. visits to local library/swim pool/away sports matches. Category 1 visits should be recorded using:

- In-house form, available from school office

Category 1 visits should be checked and approved:

Internally - by the Headteacher and EVC.

Category 1 visits should be submitted for approval:

- at the beginning of the academic year to obtain "blanket approval" for the year or
- at least 2 weeks in advance of the first of a series of visits.

### **Category 2 – DAY VISITS (NON ROUTINE)**

One-off or occasional visits e.g. day visit to York Minster, Beamish, Sea Life Centre etc

Category 2 visits should be recorded using:

- In-house form, available from school office
- Require parental consent form for each visits

Category 2 visits should be checked and approved:

Internally - by the Headteacher and EVC.

- In addition, the Governing Body should be informed of visits that will take/have taken place each term, this will be reported in the Headteachers termly report to the governing body.

### **Category 2 visits should be submitted for approval:**

- at the beginning of the academic year or
- at least 2 weeks in advance of the visit

### **Category 3 – UK RESIDENTIAL VISITS**

Visits that involve one or more nights away from home in UK or Overseas.

Category 3 visits should be recorded using the In-House form. Category 3 visits should be checked and approved:

Internally - by the Headteacher, EVC and Governing body.

- at the beginning of the academic year
- at least 6 weeks in advance of the first of the visit.

### **Category 4 – OVERSEAS VISITS**

Residential or day visits to any place outside England/Scotland/Wales.

Category 4 visits should be recorded using the In-House form

Category 4 visits should be checked and approved: Internally - by the Headteacher, EVC and Governing Body. Externally – by the LA Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Consultant of the relevant authorities.

Category 4 visits should be submitted for approval:

- at the beginning of the academic year.
- at least 6 weeks in advance of the first of the visit.

For visits with significant financial commitment, “Outline Approval” should be obtained before firm bookings are made.

If any of the above 4 types of visit involve what may be regarded as “High risk activities or environments” they MUST be given an additional subcategory “A” classification:

### **Sub Category “A” – HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES and ENVIRONMENTS**

All day visits, or residential or overseas visits that involve hazards that are significantly different or more serious (in terms of severity and/or likelihood) than might normally be encountered in everyday or school life.

e.g. a weekly climbing day visit = 1A, a day visit to dry ski slope = 2A

a residential stay at outdoor centre = 3A, an overseas trekking expedition = 4A

All Sub Category “A” visits should be checked and approved:

Internally - by the Headteacher, EVC and Governing body

Externally – by the LA Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Consultants if required All Sub Category “A” visits should be submitted for approval:

- at the beginning of the academic year
- at least 6 weeks in advance of the visit

For visits with significant financial commitment, “Outline Approval” should be obtained before firm bookings are made.

## **2. Visit objectives**

All educational visits should have a defined purpose, with clearly stated, justifiable educational objectives, or else they may not be approved, and may not be covered by the School insurance.

## **3. Selection of young people**

Every effort is made to ensure that school journeys and activities are available and accessible to all who wish to participate, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, gender or religion.

- inclusion of all those with special/medical needs? - e.g. transport provision
- School specific policy regarding involvement of children of staff on a visit
- School specific procedures for leaving behind an accurate up-to-date list of participants

## **4. The Overall Group Leader/Visit Organiser**

The Overall Group Leader must be assessed and approved as suitable and competent to fulfil their role and responsibilities by the Headteacher.

- **Deputy Leaders should normally have been Assistant Leaders on at least 3 similar visits**
- **Overall Group Leaders should normally have been an Assistant or Deputy Leader on at least 5 similar visits,**

We require Overall Group Leaders of more complex and demanding visits (e.g. ski visits or overseas expeditions) to have much broader leadership experience, during this school year 2011-2012 we do not have any such visits organised.

## **5. Deputy, Assistant and Volunteer Leaders**

Visits normally require a Deputy Leader who is able to deputise, and take full responsibility for the Overall Group Leader, if necessary.

Assistant Leaders should be chosen carefully, and must be assessed and approved as suitable and competent to fulfil their roles and responsibilities by the Headteacher, EVC and Overall Group Leader.

Leaders should consider carefully the implications of family members being present, and the possible complications that might arise.

The school has a responsibility to ensure that all adults involved in the supervision of children during school-related activities (including visits) are suitable people to work with children, and pose no threat to the young people in their care.

Concerns about possible child abuse or poor practice by a member of staff, volunteer or other adult should be reported immediately.

Young people on educational visits should at all times have ready access to a competent adult who has an appropriate level of first aid training. This normally requires at least one of the group's leaders to have an appropriate and current first aid qualification (6-8 hours of emergency aid training is the minimum training recommended for leaders on educational visits)

- All volunteers or family members supporting a educational visit must be Enhanced CRB Checked
- All educational visits will have at least 1 staff member who is First Aid trained

## **6. Staffing selection and supervision ratios**

Effective supervision is of the utmost importance in maintaining the safety and welfare of the children on educational visits.

The DFE Educational Visits Guidelines provide recommended minimum staffing ratios, but the choice of staff and the decision regarding ratios is still a matter of judgement for the Head teacher, and EVC as part of the risk assessment and management process.

- A meeting will take place between the EVC and the group leader at least two weeks before the visit to Risk Assess the visit, organise staff ratios, supervision etc.
- All visits will have at least two adults accompanying any off-site experience so that there is some flexibility and reserve capacity if things go wrong.
- If possible there will be at least two forms of transport on the visit to allow for flexibility and reserve capacity if things go wrong
- For overseas visits, at least 6 adults should normally accompany the group to allow for the needs of our pupils, also additional reserve capacity and flexibility is vital in
- Particular consideration should be given to staffing levels required for visits that involve adventurous/high risk activities, and those that involve indirect or remote supervision.
- All visits will have gender specific staff to suit the activity if required.

## **7. Selection and suitability of accommodation or venues to be visited**

As part of the overall risk assessment process, and in keeping with their legal duty of care, the Overall Group Leader must take reasonable steps to check that any accommodation (e.g. youth hostel) that is used, and any venues (e.g. castles or museums) that the group plans to visit, are suitable, satisfactory, and acceptably safe.

Many organisations now have websites or supply teacher information packs that provide all reasonable assurances regarding standards, or have obtained a Learning Outside the Classroom “Quality Badge”.

When planning a visit, the Visit Organiser (and other group leaders) should, wherever possible, undertake an exploratory visit to inspect and familiarise themselves with the accommodation to be used and venues to be visited.

## **8. High risk activities and environments**

Leaders who organise visits that involve high-risk activities and environments must be aware that such visits normally require a greater degree of planning and preparation by virtue of their complexity and unpredictability.

All Category 1 and 2 (Day), Category 3 (UK Residential) and Category 4 (Overseas) visits that involve high risk activities and environments are classified as subcategory “A” and must be recorded and approved by the EVC, Headteacher and Governors.

Leaders and other supervisors must be sufficiently competent to supervise pupils in the activity/environment. Competence derives from knowledge, experience, training and personal qualities.

The school keeps a record of staff qualifications, training and leadership experience. This is Stored in the school office.

Visit Organisers should plan alternative activities and venues to cater for possible changes in circumstances (e.g. worsening weather or rising river levels), and all staff should be aware of these possible contingencies. The EVC will sometimes ask to see and check these plans

## **9. Risk assessments and management**

The school has a legal duty of care for its young people, and must therefore give careful consideration to the hazards involved during an educational visit, and ensures that risks are managed at reasonable and acceptable levels.

The Visit Organiser should undertake an appropriate risk assessment for each visit, and this should be shared/discussed/agreed by all visit leaders before the visit takes place. Appropriate written evidence of this process should be provided.

The process of risk assessment should be a positive means of raising awareness of hazards and prompting constructive discussion regarding the best means of risk management – it should therefore be of real practical value to the leaders and group members, not just a paper exercise. A set of written generic risk assessments and a blank specific visit form is available from the school office.

- all relevant generic risk assessment forms are reviewed, amended, and agreed at the start of each academic year by all relevant staff as a whole staff team.
- these generic forms are stored in a clearly marked file, labelled Risk Assessment File; in the School office and staff are encouraged to reference these if unsure about agreed practice or before undertaking visits that they are less familiar with.
- new leaders/volunteers are asked to read all relevant forms and add their signed agreement before assisting with the leadership of a visit.
- an additional specific visit risk assessment should be completed by the visit leaders for each visit to record and share information about potential hazards and precautions that may be particularly noteworthy for that specific group, doing particular activities, at specific sites on that visit.
- completed assessments are spot checked/approved by the school EVC and Headteacher

## **10. Insurance and finance arrangements (including charging arrangements)**

The Headteacher/EVC/Overall Group Leader must ensure that adequate insurance arrangements are in place for all educational visits, and Group Leaders should check carefully that the scope and level of cover provided is adequate for each visit. Visit Organisers should also check that any external service providers have sufficient public liability cover (normally at least £5 million).

- The school insurance policy is managed by Royal Sun Alliance
- The Visit Organiser and school EVC should ensure that: each visit is accurately costed and budgeted for; adequate allowances are made for additional unforeseen costs and changes in circumstances;
- financial plans – especially for more complex and committing visits – are checked over and agreed first by the EVC and Headteacher before financial commitments are made;
- for visits that involve substantial commitment financially (e.g. overseas expeditions),
- no firm bookings or financial commitments are made until the visit has been agreed and received “Outline Approval” by the relevant authorities;
- the costs of the visit are made clear to all concerned (including parents), including how much will come from school funds, and how much each parent will be charged or asked to contribute;
- money collected for visits is kept in separate, and secure systems are in place to ensure that money is accessed and accounted for correctly.

The school will not charge for;

- any activity undertaken as part of the National Curriculum , or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education.
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip transport provided in connection with an educational trip during school hours. The school may ask parents for voluntary contributions towards the cost of these visits, but it must be clear that any contribution is genuinely voluntary.

### **11. Overseas visits (Not currently scheduled for school year 2011-2012)**

All overseas visits (Category 4) require Local Authority approval as well as School approval. Because of the additional complexity and financial commitment involved, staff planning overseas visits should seek outline approval for the visit at an early stage from all the relevant authorities, before parents or the school make commitments.

It is good practice, wherever possible, for the Visit Organiser to make an exploratory visit to a location. If this is not reasonably practicable, then the Visit Organiser should gather sufficient appropriate information and assurances (via website/teacher pack) about the location and facilities.

The level of staffing required for overseas visits should reflect not only the direct supervision needs, but also the contingency plans made for emergencies. It is not uncommon for a member of staff to need to return home early or to accompany a group member to hospital.

The Overall Group Leader must ensure that the party is covered by comprehensive insurance that covers all travel and all planned activities.

It is recommended that pupils carry a note in the relevant foreign language in case they get lost to help re-unite them with the group.

For exchange visits, both parents from host families in the UK are required to be DBS checked. Partner schools abroad are expected to make maximum practicable use of the facilities for vetting that are available in their own country.

New organisers of ski visits, overseas expeditions, or other complex overseas visits should obtain specific training and guidance from the LA before organising



## **12. Transport**

As part of the overall risk assessment process, the Visit Organiser must take reasonable steps to check that any transport used during the visit is suitable, satisfactory, and acceptably safe, and that any specific legal requirements are met.

- Internal Transport should be organised in line with 'The school minibus policy'
- Only staff approved to use their own vehicles may transport pupils, these staff will of been approved by the head teacher as being suitable qualified, experienced and competent
- Staff approved to transport pupils must have a copy of their driving licence and insurance documents specifying business cover on record in the school office.
- Staff who transports pupils must be aware of the responsibilities and school procedure for example keeping to speed limits and the use of seat belts.
- All staff who transport pupils are responsible for ensuring their car is legally roadworthy
- Externally booked transport must be booked from a reputable company and all vehicles must be fitted with safety restraints.
- Externally booked taxi transport must be booked through the school office using the school account

For the safe supervision of pupils on coaches, buses or the school minibus, group leaders and staff on the visit are required to:

- sit in various locations, spread throughout the coach/bus to supervise pupil behaviour
- sit near emergency exits
- carry a first aid kit and the school mobile phone.

Use of minibuses – the school follows national regulations and guidance, and all minibus drivers have been assessed and approved, from Sept 2008, all new minibus drivers will be required to successfully complete the MiDAS courses, and existing minibus drivers will be required to complete the MiDAS course at least once every 4 years).

## **13. Parent information and consent**

The Overall Group Leader and EVC must ensure that parents/guardians are provided with appropriate and sufficient information about all visits. The amount of information and method of provision will depend upon the type of visit planned and the assessed level of risk involved. Parents/guardians of each pupil on a visit are asked to complete and sign a written consent form, whether it be an annual "rolling" consent for routine visits, or specific consent for a particular visit/activity.

Any special/medical needs of pupils are collated by **the group leader** and supervising staff are briefed and trained accordingly.

Parents are asked to give written consent to the administration of plasters and off-the-shelf first aid/medication, if deemed necessary.

Medical information can be obtained from **the school office**.

Parents should be clearly informed of the arrangements and any responsibilities for collecting a pupil after a visit, if required in letter form and followed up by a telephone call if required by the group leader, or visit organiser.

The Visit Organiser/EVC must obtain parent contact details for all pupils on the visit.

#### **14. Staff briefing and emergency procedures**

It is important that all staff (including volunteers) involved in the leadership of a visit are fully briefed about each visit.

Staff should be aware of their expected roles and responsibilities before, during and after a visit. Group leaders should be aware of emergency procedures and how to obtain outside assistance or contact the emergency services if required.

Part of the planning for emergencies must involve the recording of one or more Emergency Home Contact(s) who should be available at any time during the visit.

The Visit Organiser must ensure that group leaders have immediate access to the emergency contact details of the school managers and the parents of those on the visit.

A properly equipped first aid kit is always available to staff during school visits and must be checked and taken on all visits. The school first aid kits are stored in the first aid cupboard

All staff should be made aware of the conduct and behaviour expected of them during the visit, particularly in regard to issues such as smoking and alcohol use.

#### **15. Briefing and preparation of young people**

Providing relevant information and guidance to pupils is an important part of preparing for all school visits.

Pupils should be briefed about safety arrangements and what clothing/equipment should be brought, in letter format.

Leaders must ensure that pupils clearly understand what will be considered unacceptable behaviour or conduct, and the consequences of non-compliance.

“Buddy systems” are an effective means of promoting safety and welfare within the group.

During any time that remote supervision takes place the visit leader must ensure that pupils are aware of the supervision and emergency contact arrangements, and that they have the necessary skills, maturity, responsibility, knowledge and equipment to operate safely as an independent individual/group.

Pupils should be briefed what to do in an emergency, or if they become separated from the rest of the group.

It is good practice to teach pupils how to recognize dangers and manage risks sensibly.

#### **Amendments to visits**

If there are significant late changes to visit plans that have already been approved or submitted for approval, the Visit Organiser must notify all relevant approving authorities (EVC/Headteacher/ Governors) of these changes, and ensure that their additional consent is given. There should be a clear system for the notification and approval of amendments to visit plans, so that there can be no misunderstanding or confusion by any parties involved.

#### **20. Post visit review and evaluation**

It is good practice for Visit Organisers, on return from a visit, to review the visit with the EVC and/or Head teacher, and to record any examples of good practice and lessons learned that might assist with the planning and leadership of future visits.

In particular, it is important to record and review any accidents, incidents, or near-misses (i.e. dangerous incidents that nearly happened, but fortunately didn't).

It is important that details are recorded as soon as possible after an incident whilst they are still fresh in the memory.

Visit Organisers should take several blank photocopied pages from the school's accident book to record details of any incidents? These can then be copied or added to the school accident book on return home.

Serious incidents must be notified to RIDDOR (HSE's "Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995).

Post-visit reviews and evaluations should be recorded and stored in the school office.

Post visit reviews and accident/near misses' records are reviewed regularly by the EVC. Any lessons learned are shared with all relevant staff, and any necessary changes to procedures made.

After any major accident, the school will undertake a review of the incident and their emergency procedures, and will share the findings with the Local Authority for the benefit of other schools. Staff are encouraged to express any concerns regarding the organisation and management of visits in writing to the Headteacher, and these will be taken seriously and dealt with in confidence. If necessary, issues will be considered further by the Governing Body.