



Off-site Activities and Educational Visits: General Guidance

General Statement

West House School and Nursery is committed to providing a broad range of educational opportunities for its pupils. Educational visits and off-site activities form an important part of the rounded education offered. However, all off-site activities must be carefully planned with appropriate risk assessments in place.

Aims and Objectives

Every educational visit should fulfil a clear aim and purpose. The Party Leader must determine the aim and purpose of the visit, whether it accords with the school's curricular aims, which pupils it would benefit, whether the aims could be achieved in a different way, and whether the proposed venue is best for the purposes.

Responsibilities

The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring that all visits and activities are properly planned and supervised, that appropriate training has been carried out and the group leader is competent for that type of visit.

Each group should have one overall **Party Leader**, responsible for the planning, supervision and conduct of the visit. The Party Leader is responsible for liaising with the Headmaster's PA to ensure that all necessary travel arrangements are made. While the employer retains the ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of those on the visit, the Party Leader has the same health and safety responsibility that he/she has during the normal teaching day.

All Teachers involved in a visit should do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the health and safety of pupils in their charge, along with the health and safety of others and their own health and safety.

Other Accompanying Adults have a general responsibility for the care of pupils. Party Leaders should supply them with detailed information, and should brief them orally, to enable them to carry out their supervisory duties effectively.

The Package Holiday Regulations (1992) place a duty of 'due diligence' (i.e. a duty of care) firmly on the shoulders of **Tour Operators** where they are used. This reduces much of the Party Leader's responsibility for assessing the suitability of accommodation, travel and other arrangements made for the school journey.

Supervision Ratios

The school and nursery has clear guidelines on acceptable ratios for all visits:

- All Visits involving nursery children must adopt the same ratios that exist within the nursery department or better, in line with Ofsted requirements.
- Pre-Prep: one adult for every eight pupils.
- Prep: one adult for every ten pupils.

Inspection Visits

Inspection visits are encouraged, especially to new destinations. They form an important part of the risk assessment process, by gaining an advance familiarity with the location, accommodation, etc. Tour Operators may provide all the information necessary in the case of a residential trip.

Risk Assessments

Party Leaders are expected to carry out a thorough risk assessment on every potential risk. They should complete the risk assessment in line with the advice below unless otherwise instructed by a travel company.

Copies of the risk assessment should be forwarded the Headmaster before the trip takes place, handed in to the school office for parents to view, and circulated to all adults involved in the trip.

Administration and Finance

The Party Leader, in liaison with the school bursar and the school secretary is responsible for the administration relating to the visit. This includes passport information, dietary requirements and insurance information. Financial aspects of the visit are controlled by the school bursar in liaison with the school secretary. A full record of the financial aspects of off-site activities and trips is held by the school bursar.

Information for Pupils and Parents

It is important that parents are fully briefed about trips and visits. All parents must receive written information regarding all visits. Parent and pupil briefing sessions must be prepared carefully.

Parental Consent Forms

All letters requesting parental consent for a visit must be viewed by the Headmaster. The annual consent form and specific consent forms must include the following phrase;

‘A full risk assessment has been carried out by the school. A copy of the risk assessment can be viewed in the school office.’

Guidance on Risk Assessments

There are basically three types of risk assessment:

- **Generic** – general school policies on leader qualifications; teacher pupil ratios etc.
- **Specific** - the assessment that takes place before the visit, when leaders must consider and make plans for all the ‘**reasonably foreseeable**’ hazards that might befall the group at each stage of the visit.
- **On-going** - the continuing risk assessment as the visit progresses and circumstances change.

It is important to consider risks after obtaining:

- All the information about the environment that activities will take place in.
- The qualifications and experience of those leading and accompanying them.
- The suitability of equipment, and the age, ability, aptitude and experience of the pupils on the visit.

Having assessed the risks it is important to manage the identified risks in such a way as to:

- Avoid them.
- Do what is reasonably practicable to minimise their effect.

The legislation suggests that a school will have done what is reasonably practicable if it has considered the following aspects:

- Supervision of the pupils.
- Protection.
- Training.

Once the specific arrangements have been determined the Headmaster should be informed, and permission sought.

The Health and Safety Executive has published helpful advice on Risk Assessment. (See HSE A Guide to Risk Assessment Requirements and Five Steps to Risk Assessment available on the internet at www.hse.gov.uk)

The Procedure for Assessing Risks is:

IDENTIFY POSSIBLE PROBLEMS/RISKS

CONSIDER WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO MINIMISE THEM

DEFINE THE NECESSARY ACTIONS

IDENTIFY PEOPLE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS

SET A TIME-FRAME IF NECESSARY

HOW TO ASSESS RISKS

TWO FACTORS HAVE TO BE ASSESSED:

- a) How serious an injury could be
- b) The likelihood of it occurring

HIGH RISK: Could be a very serious injury with a high probability of it occurring.

MEDIUM RISK: Could cause a serious injury, but unlikely to occur

OR

Less serious injury but likely to occur

LOW RISK: A slight injury but unlikely to occur

Party Leaders may, at their discretion, adopt the following numerical approach to assessing the degree of risk. However, this is optional and not a requirement of the school.

SCALE: (a) 1 TO 5 (5 = High)

 (b) 1 TO 5 (5 = High)

MULTIPLY THE TWO TO GIVE A SCALE AS FOLLOWS:

1-8 = LOW 9-17 = MEDIUM 18 - 25 = HIGH RISK

SERIOUSNESS OF INJURY:

- 5 VERY HIGH POTENTIAL FOR DEATH
- 4 HIGH POTENTIAL FOR A REPORTABLE INJURY
- 3 MODERATE, CAUSING INJURY OR DISEASE CAPABLE OF KEEPING A PERSON OFF WORK FOR THREE DAYS OR MORE, MAY REQUIRE REPORTING
- 2 SLIGHT, CAUSING MINOR INJURIES EG ABLE TO WORK AFTER FIRST AID
- 1 NO RISK

FREQUENCY

- 5 VERY LIKELY, ALMOST CERTAIN

- 4 LIKELY TO OCCUR, i.e. EASILY PRECIPITATED BY SLIGHT CARELESSNESS
- 3 QUITE POSSIBLE, ONLY LIKELY TO OCCUR IF CAUSED BY OUTSIDE EVENT e.g. A SLIP, OR LIGHT NOT BEING ON
- 2 LOW OR MINIMAL LIKELIHOOD
- 1 NOT LIKELY AT ALL

Party Leaders should be reassured to know that courts have made it clear over the years that they do not wish to stifle educational visits. Schools are not expected to second-guess what a court will consider to be the correct response to a risk. Leaders would be expected to make a decision within a 'reasonable range of responses'. This is no more than teachers are ordinarily expected to do in their daily work at the school.

As educational visits are amongst the safest places for a child to be – statistically safer than in the home, or on the streets, or even in school – it is a tribute to the general safety conscious group leaders, who run 'school trips'.

Remember some of the helpful statements made by lawyers e.g.

WE SHOULD NOT BE RISK ADVERSE

LEARNING TO IDENTIFY AND HANDLE RISKS IS A NECESSITY FOR CHILDREN, NOT A LUXURY

WHERE BETTER TO LEARN HOW TO HANDLE RISKS THAN AT SCHOOL?

TIME SPENT ON RECONNAISSANCE IS NEVER WASTED –

Courts will always consider positively a school's efforts to consider the organisation of a visit having obtained all the available information and using all relevant experience.

Educational Visits: Off-site Swimming Pool

General Statement

Pupils in Years 1 – 6 benefit from swimming lessons as part of their educational experience. At present lessons take place at The University of Birmingham and the school adopts their Health and Safety policy for the duration of the visits.

Responsibilities

The Head of PE or his senior representative is responsible for ensuring that pupils are aware of the health and safety issues relating to swimming pool based activities. The Head of PE has regular meetings with representatives from the university to review issues of health and safety.

Staff/pupil Ratios

Under normal circumstances, pupils will be placed in three groups according to ability. Each group will number no more than fifteen pupils to one swimming instructor, with pupils of lesser ability in smaller groups.

Model Checklist

The Head of PE carries out the following checklist annually. It is based on the Department for Education 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits' 1998 guidance.

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|---|--|---------------|
| - | Is there regular testing of water? | Yes/No |
| - | Are accurate signs displayed indicating the depth? | Yes/No |
| - | Is the depth of water less than 1.5 metres?
(if so, diving should not be allowed) | Yes/No |
| - | Is there a resuscitator? Are the lifeguards trained in its use? | Yes/No |
| - | Is there poolside rescue equipment? | Yes/No |
| - | Is an emergency action plan displayed? | Yes/No |
| - | Are normal operating procedures available | Yes/No |
| - | Is there constant pool supervision? | Yes/No |
| - | Is any indoor pool locked when not in use? | Yes/No |
| - | Do the supervisors have current National Pool Lifeguard
Qualifications? | Yes/No |
| - | Is the number of pupils/students supervised by one qualified
adult to fewer than 20 pupils? | Yes/No |
| - | Are the changing facilities in keeping with basic hygiene
and personal safety? | Yes/No |
| - | Do the pupils know not to leave any group member
alone at any time in the pool? | Yes/No |

The Physical Education Policy should be read alongside this appendix.

Monitor and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Headmaster every two years and in the light of changes in statutory guidance.

Date: September 2009

Next Review: September 2011