

# Off Site Educational Visits Policy

Approved by RET Board

Approved on January 2016

SLT contact Headteacher

Revision due Every 2 years



## 1. Introduction

- a. Experiences gained by students through off-site educational opportunities should not be seen as isolated opportunities but as a vital part of the progression of a student's education. That they have a profound effect on students is an indication of their relevance within a broad and balanced curriculum. The experience provided can be determined within a number of specific categories:
  1. Personal and social education. These skills are developed through such activities as problem solving, decision-making and team work. Working and playing together, particularly in a residential situation, afford plenty of opportunities for development in these particular areas
  2. Residential experiences. These provide an opportunity for development of social skills through living and working together.
  3. Environmental awareness. The cross-curricular theme of environmental education is catered for specifically when pursuing off-site activities. A rich variety of environments, both natural and man-made can be experienced by students of all ages.
  4. Aesthetic and creative development. Project and topic work related to the vast range of activities available, give rise to a multiplicity of opportunities related to creative and aesthetic interpretation.
- b. The range of activities covered by this policy includes:
  - a. adventurous activities using licensed providers;
  - b. adventurous activities not involving a licensed provider;
  - c. residential activities during school time;
  - d. residential activities in holiday or weekend periods;
  - e. overseas residential visits;
  - f. exchange visits;
  - g. day visits to the continent;
  - h. day or part-day visits using transport;
  - i. day or part-day visits on foot;
  - j. after school sporting activities;
  - k. swimming pool visits;
  - l. farm visits;
  - m. field studies.
- c. The legal framework
  1. Two major pieces of legislation bear on all activities taking place off the school site. The terms and conditions of employment of staff and health and safety at work requirements must be taken into consideration whenever an activity is being planned.
    - Terms and conditions of employment  
Many activities will fall within the "normal" school day and will therefore be included in "directed" time. However, where an activity falls partly or solely outside the school day, there are implications for employment. Staff cannot be required to undertake activities out of their normal working time. It is therefore crucial to ensure that staff have volunteered their services for out of school hours activities and that full indemnity is available for all those taking part in such activities.
    - Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc, Act 1974: employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else on the premises or anyone who may be affected by their activities. This duty of care extends to the students in school and includes participants in off-site visits.

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- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 requires the employer to assess the risks of activities, to introduce measures to control those risks and to tell employees about the measures taken. Responsibility also falls to the employee to take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety: to co-operate with their employer over safety matters: to carry out activities in accordance with the instructions and training they have received and to inform the employer of any serious risks they encounter.
- Teachers also have a common law duty to act "in loco parentis" (as a reasonable parent), as indeed would any other employee involved in an off-site activity.

## 2. Policy

- a. Where the DfE or L A has issued guidance concerning the conduct and organisation of off-site visits, activity organisers should ensure that they pay due heed to such guidance.
- b. Visits in the following categories are to be approved by the Curriculum Committee of the Governing Body:
  1. Residential activities
  2. Adventurous or hazardous activities
  3. Overseas activities
- c. Responsibility for off-site visits
  1. The Governing Body is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all their employees and all those who use their premises. This responsibility, made under the Health and Safety at Work, etc, Act 1974, extends to employees working off site. Within the terms and conditions of employment of all teaching staff is the requirement for a duty of care to be demonstrated to the students. This is stated in the "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document" at paragraph 58.7 "Discipline, health and safety: maintaining good order and discipline among the students and safeguarding their health and safety both when they are authorised to be on the school premises and when they are engaged in authorised school activities elsewhere."
  2. The governing body requires the headteacher to ensure that the policy is fully and properly implemented each and every time a group of students leaves the premises. The legal responsibility of the Governing Body for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of staff and students is not delegated by this process.
  3. Should there be a need to investigate an incident or accident that has occurred during the course of an off-site visit, the way in which the school policy has been implemented will form a substantial part of the evidence used to determine culpability.
  4. The headteacher is responsible for full compliance with any regulations and guidelines provided by the Governing Body. The headteacher must also ensure that the activity leader is competent to undertake the activity and understands the nature of the responsibilities related to that activity.
  5. The activity leader has full responsibility for the safe running of the activity including prior agreement for the activity to take place, following guidance laid down and ensuring that all participants are aware of their roles.
  6. Teachers, volunteers, students and parents all have responsibilities during the course of any off-site activity in which they are participating.
- d. Risk assessment
  1. The Risk Assessment policy outlines all risk assessment requirements and areas that require a risk assessment. The five major considerations for risk assessment are
    - identification of hazards;
    - who might be affected;

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- how can risks be reduced to an acceptable level;
- if these measures can be implemented;
- what contingency plans can be put into place if all else fails.

## 2. Pre-visits

In order to undertake a full and comprehensive assessment of risks, it will be essential in most cases to undertake a pre-visit. Even where the visit is made regularly, risks should be reassessed from time to time. When undertaking risk assessment, a number of variables need to be taken into account:

- the number of students involved;
- the age of the students, their gender, ability and general behaviour;
- the previous experience of the group in undertaking off-site visits;
- the time of the day and the time of year;
- the travel arrangements;
- the hazards of the environment being visited;
- the numbers, experience and quality of accompanying staff and volunteers;
- the nature of the activity.

## 3. During the visit:

Throughout the visit, an ongoing assessment of risk should take place and unexpected or unplanned events or changes to circumstances should be considered using the principles outlined above.

## e. Ratios of adults to students

1. There are no statutory requirements regarding ratios of adults to students. The following minimum ratios have been adopted by the Governing Body and should always be closely adhered to.

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| • UK day/non-residential trips – non hazardous     | 1:20 |
| • UK day/non-residential trips – hazardous         | 1:15 |
| • UK residential – non hazardous                   | 1:15 |
| • Day/non-residential trips abroad – non hazardous | 1:15 |
| • Residential abroad – non hazardous               | 1:12 |
| • Residential abroad – hazardous                   | 1:8  |

2. When deciding upon appropriate numbers of adults to accompany the students, similar consideration should be made as in the section above related to pre-visits. The number of adults accompanying a visit will to a large extent depend on the specifics of that visit. Where, for example, the main party divides at some stage into smaller groups, there will be a need for greater numbers of adults than if the whole party stays together throughout the visit. The gender of the accompanying adults should be considered carefully, particularly where there is a mixed group of students and toilet or changing facilities will be required.

## f. Voluntary help

1. The success of an educational visit often relies upon the good services and willingness of volunteers to accompany the trip. The role of volunteers must be very carefully considered and their legal responsibilities clearly understood. To offer help voluntarily does not negate legal responsibilities.
2. Volunteer helpers must be approved by the headteacher and where they may have unsupervised access to students they must have completed a CRB check.
3. Volunteer helpers have the same responsibilities as teachers on the trip and are responsible to the activity leader and must follow his/her instructions.

# Off Site Educational Visits Policy

Approved by RET Board

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Revision due Every 2 years



4. Where the school has been able to identify volunteers well in advance of a visit, opportunities should be found for those volunteers to meet the students and get to know their names.
- g. Records
  1. Records of a visit can provide a very useful and informative way of demonstrating the accountability of the school towards the students as well as contributing to the safe and smooth conduct of future visits. Details of records to be kept are included in the procedures attached to this policy.
  2. When an incident occurs during the visit, details should be recorded. In some cases (e.g. under RIDDOR), details may have to be logged elsewhere.
- h. Communications.
  1. Parents should always be made aware when their children are leaving the school premises. In certain circumstances, parents may wish to exercise their right to refuse to allow their child to take part in a visit. Under such circumstances, the school must make alternative arrangements to ensure that the work that was being developed during the visit is made available in another form to the student in school. The refusal of the parent to allow the child to take part does not offer the opportunity for a day off.
- i. First-aid
  1. In all cases a first-aid box is to be readily available during the course of an off-site activity.
  2. The provision of first-aid must be considered fully in the activity risk-assessment.
- j. Supervision
  1. Factors that should be considered when deciding on appropriate levels of supervision:
    - the gender, age and ability of the group;
    - the special educational and medical needs of the students;
    - the type of activity being undertaken;
    - the experience and competence of all the adults accompanying the activity;
    - duration of the activity;
    - the type of accommodation when it is a residential activity;
    - competence and behaviour of the students;
    - first-aid cover available.
  2. The level of supervision will always depend upon the type of visit being made, the numbers and abilities of the students and other variables such as the weather, the time of day and the age of the students.
- k. Insurance
  1. When a trip is undertaken as a part of the normal school curriculum, even though it is conducted off the school premises, the insurance arrangements for the school will prevail. There are many types of insurance that it might be necessary to acquire depending on the type of activity to be undertaken:
    - public liability;
    - employers' liability;
    - personal accident cover for all adults including teachers;
    - medical treatment costs;
    - specialised activity risks;
    - evacuation for medical reasons when abroad;
    - loss or damage of hired equipment;
    - emergency costs including accommodation and transport;

# Off Site Educational Visits Policy

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- compensation against cancellation or delay, loss of personal possessions, baggage and money;
- legal assistance in the recovery of claims;
- failure or bankruptcy of an agent or travel company;
- travel abroad.

2. Much of this is covered by the school's main policy but activity organisers should always check to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is provided before a trip is undertaken.
3. Where a tour operator is used the type and extent of the insurance provided must be ascertained.

## l. Emergency plans and procedures

1. All staff and adults accompanying a visit should be familiar with the requirements of this policy and, where necessary, have practised the procedures involved.
2. Emergency plans must be made for every group making an off-site visit. Detailed guidance on this is provided in the procedures annexed to this policy.

## m. Behaviour

1. Out of school activities will always be conducted according to the school's behaviour policy. The need to ensure appropriate behaviour during an activity will be assisted by thorough preparation of the students, staff and volunteer adults taking part in the visit. Clear standards should be identified and adhered to. The legal responsibility of teachers towards the students (duty of care) is in no way diminished because the activity is taking place off the school premises. The increased risks likely to be encountered in a different environment may increase the opportunity for inappropriate behaviour.

## n. Students with special medical needs

1. Students requiring specific medical needs is to take part in an off-site activity, the school should ensure that any protocol established between the school, the parents and the student's GP extends to the differing circumstances of that activity. For example, it may not always be possible to ensure that the adult responsible for administering the medication is on hand during the activity. If it is not possible to ensure adequate risk protection for the student concerned, the school must give careful and serious consideration to the student being included in the activity.
2. When the school is undertaking a residential visit, parents should be asked to give their authorisation to the leader of the party to act for their child should the need arise for emergency medical treatment during the course of the visit. If parents are unable to give this authorisation, the headteacher may decide that the resultant risk to that child precludes them from taking part. If a student is included in the party where parents have been unable to give authorisation, a clear unequivocal statement should be supplied by the parent for any medical practitioner that may find themselves looking after the student's medical or surgical needs.

## 3. Other issues

### a. Licensed Activities

1. The Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995 and the associated Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (1996) require certain activities to be licensed when commercial companies sell them or where Local Authorities provide them with or without charge. The activities that require a licence are:
  - caving (including exploration of disused mines, cave diving and potholing);
  - climbing, which includes abseiling, but does not include activities undertaken on a purpose built wall or tower
  - trekking, including mountain biking, off-piste skiing and horseback riding when this is undertaken in a remote area (more than 30 minutes from the nearest road or refuge) of moor land or mountain country;

# Off Site Educational Visits Policy

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- watersports such as canoeing, rafting and sailing undertaken on the sea, in tidal waters or where water is more than 100 metres across or is known to be turbulent.
  - 2. A licence holder has demonstrated that the Licensing Authority are satisfied that appropriate safety measures have been taken for the provision of the activity licensed. The presence of a licence does not indicate any standard of accommodation or catering. Before undertaking an activity that falls into the licensing category, headteachers should ensure that the provider is licensed (see Appendix 1 for address of Licensing Authority).
  - 3. The school staff (and designated volunteers) accompanying the activity retain overall responsibility for the students throughout the visit even when the students are being instructed by a member of the provider's staff.
  - 4. The Licensing Authority is only required to license those activities that come under the auspices of the Act. Not holding a licence does not mean the activities offered by a provider are unsafe. However, where a provider is being used that does not require a licence, the school should be satisfied that the safety standards are appropriate and that where specialist staff are used they have appropriate experience and qualifications. In these circumstances, it is vital that a pre-visit is made to ensure that the safety standards are appropriate.
- b. Voluntary Contributions
- 1. Charging for School Activities (ERA 1988). The basic principle underlying the charging provisions of the 1988 Act is that education provided by any maintained school for its registered students should be free of charge if it takes place wholly or mainly during school hours. Whilst this provision applies to any school activity, it has particular importance in relation to off-site education. The school's charging and remissions policy indicates precisely how voluntary contributions should be treated.
- c. Visits organised by a third party
- 1. Package deals are often a very attractive option for schools when intending to undertake an off-site activity. This particularly applies when visits abroad are to be made. The headteacher must be sure that the package is appropriate to the needs of the school and that insurance cover is sufficient. If necessary, additional insurance should be bought. Parents should always be informed of the amount of insurance cover available through the agent. The option to purchase additional cover might be made available by the agency. The headteacher should ensure that where the journey is abroad the company is able to refund costs of repatriation in the event of insolvency and to provide for the return of advance payments.
- d. Transport
- 1. Parents should always be informed of the type of transport it is intended to use. Where there is particular objection, the school should make every reasonably practicable effort to accommodate the wishes of the parents. Under some circumstances, it may be impossible to fulfil the parents' requirements, leaving no alternative but to find another appropriate activity for the student concerned.
  - 2. Hired transport. Only reputable companies should be used. Seat belts should be provided on all seats and must be worn by all staff, volunteers and students.
  - 3. The driver of the coach has no responsibility for the conduct and behaviour of the students on the transport. The school must provide sufficient supervisory staff to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the students required under the school's duty of care.
  - 4. School mini-bus. Where the school mini-bus is being used the requirements of the school policy should be closely adhered to. The driver of the bus cannot reasonably be expected to supervise the passengers whilst travelling, nor would it be reasonable to expect emergencies to be dealt with effectively if the

# Off Site Educational Visits Policy

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driver is the only adult on board. If the other adult is not a minibus driver then care must be taken when planning the journey that driving times wither laid down in legislation or recommended by the government or the LA are not exceeded. Allowance must be made when planning journey times for unexpected delays.

5. Public transport. When public transport is to be used, close supervision of the students must be ensured. Students should be prepared in advance concerning expectations of their behaviour. Where it is considered inappropriate to include a particular student because there is serious doubt about his/her ability to behave, it is appropriate to find a suitable alternative occupation for that student on the occasion of the visit.
6. Private use of cars. Extreme caution should be exercised over the use of private cars, both belonging to parents and staff. Where such transport is to be used members should be confident that vehicles and drivers are legal. The following details need to be current:
  - valid driving licence;
  - vehicle road fund licence and MOT certificate;
  - vehicle insurance valid for carrying passengers on a school off-site visit.
7. Volunteer drivers should be asked to sign a declaration indicating that all these requirements are in place. This declaration needs to be kept up to date. Where teachers offer their services, they must ensure that they have appropriate insurance cover for conveying students during the course of their professional duties. When further insurance cover is required, it may be considered appropriate for the school to pay for this.
8. Schools should not reimburse parents or teachers for the use of their vehicles, as this will invalidate insurance cover unless the vehicle is specifically insured as a taxi.
9. Parents must always be informed when it is intended to use private transport to convey their children. If an objection is raised, suitable alternative transport should be provided where it is reasonably practicable to do so. In extreme cases, a student may have to be found a suitable alternative activity in school if a parent does not wish their child to be conveyed in a private vehicle.

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## Appendix A – Records

1. Itinerary
  - a. A precise itinerary should be left in school. Contact with school should be immediately available, if required.
2. Attendance lists
  - a. An accurate list of students and adults taking part in the activity should be left in school. Each teacher or helper accompanying the group should also have a complete list.
3. Parental Consent Forms
  - a. Signed parental consent forms giving contact and medical details are required for all off-site visits. More detailed forms are required for residential visits, hazardous activities and trips to the continent.
4. Immediate contact
  - a. A named member of senior staff contact must be available for each activity. This contact must have immediate access to all relevant information including lists of staff and participants and contact numbers.
5. Activity record
  - a. This document will identify the difficulties encountered as well as the benefits obtained. Apart from identifying possible dangers, it will act as a critical report on the quality and relevance of the activity
6. Reporting of minor accidents and near misses
  - a. A system should be established which ensures that minor accidents are reported in accordance with school procedures. A log book should also be kept of any near misses which occur. These should be discussed by all staff involved and changes made to the agreed systems if necessary.



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## Appendix B – Emergency Plans

Four fundamental matters must be considered:

1. Emergency action
  - a. Should an incident occur, action must be taken to retrieve any situation using the appropriate rescue services. When an emergency occurs, the teacher in charge should follow set procedures which will include:
    1. taking steps to safeguard against further incidents by isolating the group from the scene;
    2. administering first aid or immediate action to prevent further injury or trauma;
    3. accounting for all members of the party, by checking the group list;
    4. sending for immediate help;
    5. ensuring that all accompanying adults are informed of the accident and the action that has been taken;
    6. ensuring any injured student is accompanied to hospital by a responsible adult who has the authority to agree to treatment;
    7. making appropriate arrangements for the other students.
2. Communications
  - a. Immediately inform the headteacher and/or the link person giving full details of the incident. The group leader should control information by restricting access to telephones until communication has been made with the headteacher or link person.
  - b. Ensure all parents have been informed.
3. Media cooperation
  - a. Any incident may attract media interest.
    1. Only the group leader should make comments and only the basic facts should be given.
    2. Names should never be released.
    3. Care should be taken in the preparation of any statement as legal action might follow an incident. (An ill-considered statement from a young person or adult member of the group may be inaccurate, excessively emotional and may prejudice any later enquiry.
4. Reporting
  - a. As soon as possible, whilst events are still fresh in everyone's memory, the group leader should begin to compile notes ready to formulate an official report.
  - b. Note should be taken of the witnesses names and addresses.
  - c. A full and comprehensive report must be prepared and Health and Safety at Work reports should be produced as necessary. (RIDDOR.)