

EDUCATIONAL VISITS & OVERNIGHT STAYS

POLICY & PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

The school adopts the guidance issued in the Local Authority's Guidance Notes on Educational Visits and Overnight Stays. This policy is designed to meet the Governing Body's responsibility to ensure that all visits have a clear and appropriate educational purpose and are properly organised, planned and supervised to ensure that the highest levels of care and safety are maintained. The importance of educational visits to the development of students is acknowledged. However, when approving visits during the school day, consideration has to be given to the impact of the absence of the student and accompanying staff on learning and progress.

AIMS

- To enhance the learning of children by supporting activities that take place off-site.
- To support staff in the systematic planning (to specifically include safeguarding), communication and financing of educational visits.

APPROVAL AND CONSENT PROCEDURE

All educational visits must be approved in advance by the Headteacher. This role is currently delegated to the Deputy Headteacher. An experienced member of staff who has run many offsite visits, Mrs G Thomas, is currently nominated as the School's Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC). Application to organise a visit should be made to the relevant Departmental Leader in the first instance. The SLT link raises the visit with the SLT to discuss whether the visit can be approved. Visits during the school day will only be approved if it can be demonstrated that they have a clear educational purpose linked to progress in that particular subject area.

Initial Approval

Once approval has been given in principle, the organiser must check with the Cover Supervisor that there is no clash with other events, scheduled examinations or controlled assessments. The Cover Supervisor will also advise on whether sufficient cover is available to support the visit. Problems will be referred back to the organising member of staff or the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for the oversight of cover, but in most cases the visit will then be entered in the school diary.

Final Approval

The visit organiser must then enter the details of the proposed visit into the EVOLVE on-line system. This will require the basic details of the trip such as, date, venue, travel method, staffing and itinerary, plus a risk assessment and parental consent letter. Once submitted on EVOLVE, the Cover Supervisor will check the details and the EVC will authorise it and then send to Deputy Headteacher for final authorisation. If the visit is hazardous or involves an overnight stay, it will require further authorisation by the LA.

The timescales for gaining authorisation can vary but Evolve forms need to be submitted at least two weeks in advance of a day trip and four weeks in advance for a residential, overseas or adventurous activity.

The visit cannot take place without approval from the EVC and Deputy Headteacher and the LA (see above).

Finance on Approval

The visit organiser should collect a form from the Finance Office that is designed to help staff budget appropriately for every visit and meet the statutory regulations required by Audit (FMSIS regulations). Staff should be aware that if the school makes a charge for an activity it must conform to the provisions of the school's Charging Policy. The Finance staff will advise Visit Leaders on prudent financial planning, ensuring that visits do not incur a loss. The school does not have the funds to subsidise visits in general and it is the responsibility of the Visit Leader to ensure the visit is financially viable.

In the case of 'disadvantaged' students, when a visit is an important part of the curriculum, the Pupil Premium fund may be used to finance the visit.

In rare circumstances, certain off-site activities the school can offer a subsidy towards the cost, particularly if the event involves pupils representing the school in a competitive event that necessitates an overnight stay. Such activities might include national or regional sporting, musical or academic competitions.

Parental Consent

All off-site visits require full and detailed written information to obtain informed parental consent. (Regular events such as sports fixtures are covered by the written permission obtained from parents at the start of Year 7). There is a model consent form on the school system under, 'RMStaff/Educational Visits,' which should be used in conjunction with a letter that informs parents of dates and times of departure and return, destination (full address), planned activities, method of travel, costs, insurance cover, criteria for selection for oversubscribed visits, behaviour requirements, emergency contact arrangements, request for special needs information, including medical and dietary requirements and arrangements for supervision of the pupils during the visit.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment must be a major feature in the planning of an educational visit to ensure that any significant risks have been considered, addressed, precautions will be consistently applied, the actions proposed are proportionate to the risk and the assessment is sufficiently clear that it can be followed. The risk assessment must be specific for the visit being undertaken. A risk assessment should be provided for any SEND students accompanying the visit. In some cases it will be necessary for a Teaching Assistant to attend to support the student on the visit if that level of support would usually be offered in school and is necessary for the student to be able to access the visit in the same way as other students. The documentation to support risk assessment can be accessed under, 'RMStaff/Educational Visits,' but it is very important that all staff supervising visits understand that risk assessment should be a dynamic and ongoing process consisting of judgements and decisions that are made as situations arise. If a student suffers an injury that requires any sort of first aid on a visit, parents must be informed as soon as it is feasible to do so. If there is a risk assessment provided for a particular venue then this should also be attached to the EVOLVE form.

Staffing

Staff organising visits take on the responsibility of ensuring that the accompanying adults have the specific abilities to cope with the planned activities and are appropriately qualified and briefed on their roles. Staffing for educational visits must provide adequate first aid cover and knowledge appropriate to the visit, allow for reduction in effectiveness caused by accident, injury or illness and be guided by the minimum supervisory ratios advised by the Local Authority. Visit Leaders must communicate clearly to the staff when and where they are on duty (particularly during evenings on residential trips), what action to take in an emergency situation and the standards of conduct expected of staff on visits. Staffing of trips can include voluntary adult helpers, who have been DBS checked and approved by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or EVC. It is desirable for mixed parties of young people to be accompanied by adults of both sexes. If possible, even in situations of small group sizes, two adults should accompany a group so that if one adult is incapacitated the other can assume responsibility. If this is not feasible, clear reference must be made in the risk assessment to a contingency plan, should the only supervising member of staff become unable to continue with the visit. Trips involving a group of pupils of single gender should be accompanied by at least one member of staff of the same gender.

Codes of Conduct

Visit Leaders are responsible for conduct and discipline during the visit. These expectations will be communicated clearly to staff and pupils in the form of routines, rules, duties and responsibilities. Leaders must ensure the safety of the students by allocating staff to best supervisory positions, making sure group numbers are appropriate when a large party is subdivided and regular headcounts. The procedures for reacting to or communicating an emergency (particularly fire) must be clearly explained to pupils on arrival.

Accompanying staff will be required to model the behaviour expected of the pupils. Pupils on school trips are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol and serious breaches of discipline should be included in the evaluation report at the end of the visit. In addition to any consequences during the visit, follow up action may be required once the party is back in school.

Staff who accompany residential visits should not consume any alcohol when they are on the rota for supervision duty. There should be sufficient staff 'on duty' to meet the requirements of the appropriate ratios. i.e. if 50 children go on an overnight visit with 5 staff, the ratio is the necessary 1:10. This would mean that all staff would need to be alcohol free every evening. If not on supervision duty during an evening the consumption of a modest level of alcohol is permitted at the Leader's discretion. Modest would be defined as a level which would still enable the member of staff to legally drive a vehicle in the UK. Single day visits will be alcohol free.

During residential visits the Leader needs to make appropriate arrangements for 'down time.' Supervision will depend on young people's age and maturity but staff should know the whereabouts of the group and groups should know how to contact staff and the limits which they are expected to adhere to. Parents should have been advised, before giving permission for their child to attend the visit, how 'down time' is to be spent so that they have been able to give informed consent for this.

Evaluation

- On return to school all will need to be evaluated using the EVOLVE system. You will need to state whether the visit met the intended outcomes and

whether there were any incidents, accidents or near misses. This will inform future visits' planning. There can be no repeat of a visit unless an evaluation of the previous one has been carried out. This could simply be a few lines on the EVOLVE form on your return or you may wish to include the report you will submit along with photos for the website.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Risk assessments will need to be printed off in addition to attaching to the EVOLVE form and a hard copy must be signed and dated by the visit leader before the visit takes place.
- You are now able to add '**Event Specific Notes**' at several points in the form. You will find information describing how to add ESNs on Evolve. Whilst it is good practice to add ESNs, this is not essential **as long as the risk assessment is detailed and comprehensive.**
- Also, if you select 'Provider' when giving the destination of your trip, Evolve will automatically check if this provider holds the required LOTC (Learning Outside the Classroom) Quality Badge. If they don't, you will need to email a '**Provider Form**' to them for completion and then attach the completed form to Evolve before submitting to me. **The Evolve form cannot be submitted without this attachment.** Note: LOTC Quality Badge/Provider Form aren't necessary if your destination is a 'Venue' only.
- A copy of the blank forms can be found by logging onto Evolve and going to **Resources – Guidance, Policies & Documents - Forms**
- You must ensure that the visit is covered by school insurance.
- All visit records, including evaluations are legally required to be kept in school until the pupils involved in the visit are aged 21 (25 for SEND students). This is in case of retrospective claims of negligence.
- Please be reminded that no pupil will be allowed to swim in any water without a fully qualified lifeguard being present. Should your visit incorporate any time near water, this should be clearly risk assessed and if necessary, further advice obtained by the EVC from the LA.
- Where students and staff will be walking by main roads or in town centres with potential traffic risks, the group will all be required to wear high visibility waistcoats/jackets. The party leader will be responsible for assessing the need for this according to weather /light conditions on the day. This should be considered in the risk assessment for the visit. The jackets will be kept in pupil services and should be collected with the first aid kits. Staff should position themselves at the front (middle, if staffing allows) and rear of the group.

- Where a visit is shared with a third party provider e.g. PGL, Ski Company etc the official advice is that the overall duty of care remains with the party leader and school staff accompanying the visit at all times. The duty of care can never be handed over fully to a third party guide/instructor even though they may be leading an activity. As a guideline and piece of advice from the LA, if you cannot see your group then you do not have full duty of care. Members of staff should remain with their group and someone should be observing. Being away from your group may need to be explained/described at a later date if an incident occurs. If you are leading a visit with a third party element then:
- you must include the following statement in your letter 'whilst on the visit please be aware that there will be specific daily activities led by a specialist instructor and not by Helsby High School Staff. Overall duty of care will remain with school staff and they will supervise the group, but leadership of activities will be delegated to a ski/watersport instructor'
- you must include the following on your consent form 'I understand that some activities will not be led by Helsby High School staff directly, and leadership of these activities will be delegated to a specialist instructor. Overall duty of care and supervision will remain with school staff. I give my permission for my son/daughter to take part in such activities'.
- You must ensure you receive a signed reply slip from parents.

Contact back at school

Each trip should have two named contacts or 'base contacts'. The role of these colleagues is to provide support for the trip leader outside of school hours. One of these contacts must be a member of the SLT, in case decision making appropriate to that level of responsibility is required. The base contact should be consulted before their details are used on the EVOLVE form and should be aware that they need to ensure that they are contactable for the duration of the visit. If, for the purposes of a residential visit, the base contacts details are shared with parents, this should be a school mobile phone number only (e.g. a trip phone that is loaned for the duration of the trip). The base contacts will be supplied with copies of student medical forms, the risk assessment and itinerary and the critical incident plan. These should be kept in close proximity to the base contact for the duration of the trip and passed to the Cover Supervisor for shredding on their return.