

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS ON EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Purpose of this guide

This guide is designed to offer advice and guidance to INTO members on the range of professional and other issues that can arise in the planning and delivery of educational visits involving children.

Throughout this guidance reference is made to advice from Employing Authorities or other statutory agencies. **INTO advises that where a member is not able to obtain satisfactory information from the relevant body, they should ensure that the Principal and Board of Governors will indemnify them for any professional matters relating to the trip. This indemnification should be secured PRIOR to the trip commencing.**

Introduction

Pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom. Visits help to develop a pupil's investigative skills and longer visits in particular encourage greater independence. This guidance is designed to help INTO members ensure that pupils stay safe and healthy on school visits.

The booklet does not seek to replace local or other professional guidance or regulations. Where appropriate, the relevant Employing Authority should be the first source of advice.

Most school visits take place without incident and it is clear that teachers are already demonstrating a high level of safety awareness. But, following a number of tragic incidents involving schoolchildren in the last few years, there is a growing concern amongst school staff and parents about further ensuring the safety of pupils on school visits. This guidance has been produced in response to that concern.

The potential hazards which the guidance refers to should not discourage teachers. No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally incident free, but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do happen nonetheless. The management of health and safety on visits is part of a school's overall policy on health and safety. The guidance therefore sets out principles, rather than trying to cover every eventuality, leaving it to teachers' professional and local judgement how to apply those principles.

This leaflet is guidance. It should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law. That is for the courts.

Legal framework

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Order (NI) 1976 employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty 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 includes participants in off-site visits.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, made under the Health and Safety at Work (1976) NI Order, require employers to:

- assess the risks of activities
- introduce measures to control those risks;
- tell their employees about these measures.

Also under the Health and Safety legislation employees must:

- take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety;
- co-operate with their employers over safety matters;
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions;
- inform the employer of any serious risks.

These duties apply to all school visits. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils also have a common law duty to act as any reasonably prudent parent (*in loco parentis*) would do in the same circumstances.

Approval for visits

Schools should have a written procedure for arranging visits which teachers should follow. This will normally include procedures for the approval of certain types of visit.

Although the employer is responsible for health and safety, decisions about visits are usually delegated to the principal. The principal's agreement must be obtained before a visit takes place.

Responsibilities

Boards of Governors

The Governors' should satisfy themselves that:

- a risk assessment has been carried out;
- that appropriate safety measures are in place and that training needs have been addressed;
- the visit has a specific and stated objective.

Principal

Principals should ensure that visits comply with regulations and guidelines provided by the Employing Authority or Board of Governors and the school's own health and safety policy. Principals should ensure that the group leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit.

Principals should be clear about their role if taking part in the visit as a group member/supervisor. They should follow the instructions of the group leader who will have sole charge of the visit.

Principals should ensure that:

- adequate child protection procedures are in place;
- all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
- the risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place;
- training needs have been assessed by a competent person;
- the needs of the staff and pupils have been considered;
- the group leader has experience in supervising the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively;
- the group leader or another teacher is suitably competent to instruct the activity and is familiar with the location/centre where the activity will take place.
- group leaders are allowed sufficient time to organise visits properly;
- non-teacher supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children.

Group leader

One teacher, the group leader, should have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit and should have regard to the health and safety of the group. The group leader should be appointed or approved by the principal. The group leader should:

- obtain the principals prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place;
- follow Employing Authority regulations, guidelines and policies;
- appoint a deputy;
- clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned;
- be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range;
- be suitably competent to instruct pupils in an activity and be familiar with the location/ centre where the activity will take place.

- be aware of child protection issues;
- ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including the briefing of group members and parents;
- undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment;
- review regularly undertaken visits/activities and advise the principal where adjustments may be necessary;
- ensure that teachers and other supervisors are fully aware of what the proposed visit involves;
- have enough information on the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability or be satisfied that their suitability has been assessed and confirmed;
- ensure the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group;
- consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health;
- or safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality;
- ensure that group supervisors have details of the school contact;
- ensure that group supervisors and the school contact have a copy of the emergency procedures;
- ensure that the group's teachers and other supervisors have the details of pupils' special educational or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively;
- observe the guidance set out for teachers and other adults

Teachers

Teachers on school-led visits act as employees of the school, whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours, by agreement with the principal and governors. Teachers must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances.

They should:

- follow the instructions of the group leader and help with control and discipline;
- consider stopping the visit or the activity;
- notifying the group leader, if they think the risk to the health or safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.
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Adult volunteers

Non-teacher adults on the visit should be clear about their roles and responsibilities during the visit.

Non-teacher adults acting as supervisors must:

- do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- not be left in sole charge of pupils except where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment;
- follow the instructions of the group leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline;
- speak to the group leader or teacher supervisors if concerned about the health or safety of pupils at any time during the visit.

Responsibilities of pupils

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

- not take unnecessary risks;
- follow the instructions of the leader and other supervisors including those at the venue of the visit;
- dress and behave sensibly and responsibly;
- if abroad be sensitive to local codes and customs;
- look out for anything that might hurt or threaten themselves or anyone in the group and tell the group leader or supervisor about it.

Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils should be fulfilled in other ways wherever possible.

Parents

Parents should be able to make an informed decision on whether their child should go on the visit.

The group leader should ensure that parents are given sufficient information in writing and are invited to any briefing sessions. Parents should be informed how they can help prepare their child for the visit by, for example, by reinforcing the visit's code of conduct. Parents should also be asked to agree the arrangements for sending a pupil home early and who will meet the cost.

Parents will need to:

- provide the group leader with emergency contact number(s);
- sign a consent form;
- give the group leader information about their child's emotional, psychological and physical health which might be relevant to the visit (usually by means of the consent form).

Planning

Whether the visit is to a local park, museum or swimming pool, or includes a residential stay in the UK or abroad, it is essential that formal planning takes place before setting off. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to reduce them. In practice, the principal who is responsible for planning visits - will often delegate the detailed planning to the organiser of the visit or the group leader.

Principals must satisfy themselves that the person planning the visit is competent to do so and has the necessary relevant experience.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment for a visit need not be complex but it should be comprehensive. It does not generally require technical formulae or professional health and safety expertise. Specialised information for some visits may be necessary and Principals should ensure that the person assessing the risks is competent to do so.

The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- what are the hazards?
- who might be affected by them?
- what safety measures need to be in place to
- reduce risks to an acceptable level;
- can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- what steps will be taken in an emergency?

Frequent visits to local venues such as swimming pools may not need a risk assessment every time. Nevertheless, it is essential not to become complacent. A generic assessment of the risks of such visits should be made at regular intervals, and careful monitoring should take place.

First aid

On any kind of visit the group leader should have a good working knowledge of first aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken. For adventurous activities, visits abroad or residential visits it is sensible for at least one of the group's teachers to be a fully-trained first-aider. All adults in the group should know how to contact the emergency services.

The minimum first-aid provision for a visit is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box;
- a person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

All minibuses are required by law to carry a first aid kit.

Ratios

It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- sex, age and ability of group;
- pupils with special educational or medical needs;
- nature of activities;
- experience of adults in off-site supervision;
- duration and nature of the journey;
- type of any accommodation;
- competence of staff, both general and on specific activities;
- requirements of the organisation/location to be visited;
- competence and behaviour of pupils;
- first aid cover.

Some Employing Authorities set their own levels of supervision for off-site visits,. Decisions must be made, taking the above factors into consideration as part of the risk assessment. Staffing ratios for visits are difficult to prescribe as they will vary according to the activity, age, group, location and the efficient use of resources. However, a general guide for visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances, might be:

- 1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3 (under 5s reception classes should have a higher ratio);
- 1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6;
- 1 adult for every 15-20 pupils in school year 7 onwards.

The above are examples only. Group leaders should assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group. There should be a minimum of one teacher in charge.

Where a high adult: pupil ratio is required, it is not always feasible to use school staff alone.

Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school and the pupil group. Anyone who has had a criminal conviction should **never** be left in sole charge of pupils.

Pupils with medical needs

Additional safety measures to those already in place in the school may be necessary to support pupils with medical needs during visits. Arrangements for taking medication and ensuring sufficient supplies for residential visits may be required.

Pupils with special educational needs

Schools will already be familiar with the nature of a pupil's special educational needs. Any limitations or problems the pupil may have should be taken into account at the planning stage and when carrying out the risk assessment. Off-site visits may pose additional difficulties for a pupil with SEN and the behaviour of some pupils may prove challenging. The following factors should be taken into consideration:

- is the pupil capable of taking part in and benefiting from the activity?
- can the activity be adapted to enable the pupil to participate at a suitable level?
- will additional/different resources be necessary?
- is the pupil able to understand and follow instructions?
- will additional supervision be necessary?

Parental consent

Principals or group leaders should seek consent for non-routine visits involving pupils in school years:

- 1 to 3 (no matter how short the visit);
- adventure activities;
- visits abroad;
- other residential visits;
- remote supervision.

If parents withhold consent the pupil should not be taken on the visit but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent the principal will need to consider whether the pupil may be taken on the visit or not.

A parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group.

Medical consent

This should form part of the parental consent form. Parents should be asked to agree to the pupil's receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not agree to this, Principals may decide to withdraw the child from the visit - given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.

Other consent

Parental consent should be obtained specifically for the transporting of pupils in the private vehicle of a non-teacher adult or another pupil on the visit. Head teachers should consider whether consent should be obtained before pupils can be carried in a teacher's private vehicle.

Seat belts

All minibuses and coaches, which carry groups of three or more children aged between 3 and 15 years inclusive must be fitted with a seat belt for each child. The seats must face forward and seat restraints must comply with legal requirements.

Hiring coaches and buses

The group leader is responsible for ensuring that coaches and buses are hired from a reputable company. Professional operators of buses and coaches are legally required to be licensed. Schools using operators to transport pupils should ensure that the operators have the appropriate public service vehicle (PSV) operators' licence. When booking transport, the group leader should ensure that seat belts are available for pupils. Whilst seat belts must be fitted on coaches which carry groups of children, they are not legally required on buses. Buses where seat belts are not fitted are not normally appropriate for visits involving long journeys. If any of the group use a wheelchair, the group leader should ensure that transport used has appropriate access and securing facilities.

Private cars

Teachers and others who drive pupils in their own car must ensure their passengers' safety, that the vehicle is roadworthy, and that they have appropriate licence and insurance cover for carrying the pupils.

Transport in the school minibus

Many schools use their own minibuses for short frequent journeys and sometimes for longer trips. Minibuses have a maximum capacity of 16 seated passengers plus the driver. They must comply with the various regulations about construction and fittings. The driver is responsible for the vehicle during the visit. The minibus driver must be qualified to drive a minibus and have a valid and clean driving licence.

Swimming pools

Schools will be aware of their local swimming pool facilities for curricular activities. Group leaders should follow the recommended safe supervision levels at the pool for their pupils. A minimum ratio should be 1 adult to 12 pupils in school years 4 to 6, and 1 adult to 20 for school years 7 onwards. For pupils in school year 3 and below the ratio should be higher. Teachers should monitor the risks of regular swimming activities and adjust supervision levels for their individual groups as necessary.

Farm visits

Farms can be dangerous even for the people who work on them. Taking children to a farm should be carefully planned. The risks to be assessed should include those arising from the misuse of farm machinery and the hazards associated with *E coli* 0157 food poisoning and other infections.

Field studies

Field studies associated with a range of subjects including geography, biology, geology and history might take pupils to industrial sites and other urban areas as well as into the countryside and to the coast. The scope of

field studies means that the group leaders, who will usually be subject specialists, should also be competent to lead and instruct their pupils within urban and non-urban environments at minimal risk.

Residential visits

A good rule of thumb ratio is 1 teacher for every 10 pupils. Issues for the group leader to consider include the following:

- the group should ideally have adjoining rooms with teachers' quarters next to the pupils'
- the leader should obtain a floor plan of the rooms reserved for the group's use in advance;
- there must be at least one teacher from each sex for mixed groups;
- there must be separate male and female sleeping/bathroom facilities for pupils and adults;
- the immediate accommodation area should be exclusively for the group's use;
- ensure there is appropriate and safe heating and ventilation;
- ensure that the whole group are aware of the lay-out of the accommodation, its fire precautions/exits;
- security arrangements - where the reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visitors;
- the manager of the accommodation should be asked for assurances that the staff, including temporary workers, have been checked as suitable for work with young people.

Travel by air

Taking a school group on an aircraft requires careful planning and preparation. The airline/travel agent will be able to advise on particular requirements. If the group includes any members with disabilities, it is advisable to check that the airline has a wheelchair service and lifting facility etc, if appropriate. The group leader should resist any attempt by the airline to split the group between different aircraft.

Emergency Procedures

Teachers in charge of pupils during a visit have a duty of care to make sure that the pupils are safe and healthy. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation. Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit.

If an accident happens, the priorities are to:

- assess the situation;
- safeguard the uninjured members of the group;
- attend to the casualty;
- inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident.

Who will take charge in an emergency?

The group leader would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged.

Emergency procedures framework

All those involved in the school trip, including supervisors, pupils and their parents, should be informed of who will take charge in an emergency, the named back up cover and what they are expected to do in an emergency.

Emergency procedures framework during the visit

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the main factors to consider include:

- establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible;
- ensure that all the group are safe and looked after;
- establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention for them;
- ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident;
- ensure that a teacher accompanies casualties to hospital and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together;
- notify the police if necessary;
- inform the school contact. The school contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit;

- write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve
- any vital evidence;
- keep a written account of all events, times and contacts

After a serious incident

It is not always possible to assess whether group members not injured or directly involved in the incident have been traumatised or whether other pupils or staff in the school have been affected. In some cases reactions do not surface immediately. Schools in this situation have sometimes found it helpful to contact local community support services and to seek professional advice on how to help individuals and the school as a whole cope with the effects of a tragedy.

Dealing with the Media

Employing Authorities usually have a designated person to deal with media enquiries. The media contact should liaise with the school contact, the group leader and, where appropriate, the emergency services. In the event of an emergency all media enquiries should be referred to the media contact. The name of any casualty should not be given to the media.

INTO members who require further support and information should contact their Northern Committee or CEC representative or the Northern office on 028 9038 1455.

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