



Yewstock School

Policy for Educational Visits: Health and Safety on Residential Visits and Off-site Activities

Introduction

Every pupil at Yewstock School has an entitlement to a wide range of educational experiences. As part of this entitlement the Staff and Governing Body recognise the significant educational value of visits and activities which take place away from the school, out in the community of North Dorset, and beyond.

Programmes of work which include visits and off-site activities:

- support, enrich and extend the curriculum in many subject areas,
- encourage learning,
- encourage the development of co-operation, team work and problem solving skills.
- help develop independence and self confidence.
- test the development of life-skill acquisition.

Residential opportunities, physical challenge and adventure have a significant role to play in the development of personal and social qualities of all young people, where pupils/parents/staff/professionals are in agreement as to the benefits and needs of the residential experience.

The management of visits and off-site activities involves particular responsibilities for health, safety and welfare of all participants, whether they be pupils and their parents, members of staff or volunteers. The school also has responsibilities to other members of the public and to third parties. This policy on visits and off-site activities should both stand alone and complement the wider school Health and Safety Policy.

Dorset County Council, as employer, provides a framework of guidance within which the school operates. This is summarised within the document:

“Health and Safety of pupils on educational visits DFES. Dorset County Council Outdoor Education Service school pack.”

As part of their management of visits and off-site activities The Governing Body of Yewstock School endorses the use of the above document. A reference copy is held centrally, in the school office. Any variation in practice from the Dorset County Council policy should be agreed between the Headteacher and nominated officers of the County Council.

The Department for Education and Employment provides similar guidance to LEAs and schools, contained within the following document:

“Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits,” DfEE 1998.

Policy and practice within Yewstock School will be based on accepted good practice outlined within the above documents, copies of which are held centrally in the school office.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers all off-site visits and activities organised through the school and for which the Headteacher and Governing Body carry responsibility.

Implementation

This policy is based on the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), DfEE guidance and other relevant statutory requirements and common law principles.

The Role of the LEA

The LEA will:

- Provide written guidelines for governors, Headteachers and teachers, including advice on risk assessment.
- Help assess proposals for certain types of visits.
- Provide access to named staff for advice.
- Maintain appropriate third party insurance cover for LEA schools.
- Provide emergency telephone contact for the duration of visits.
- Have in place procedures to help schools to monitor and review safety.

LEA Governors

- Produce and regularly review the school's health and safety policy for visits and off-site activities.
- Recommend to the Headteacher whether approval should be given for any residential trip before this is sent to the DCC for ratification.
- Receive a summary report from the Headteacher of the range of visits and off-site activities which are planned to take place and any issues or incidents of note arising from the previous term's visits and activities.
- Produce a brief annual report for the main Governing Body

The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Inform all members of staff and prospective accompanying adults, of the school policy and current procedures on visits and off-site activities.
- Ensure all visits and off-site activities have appropriate and stated educational objectives.
- Give outline approval for staff to organise the visit and prepare documentation for approval by the SLT (paperwork in offsite file.)
- Identify appropriate staff to lead, organise and participate in off-site activities.
- Ensure all visits and off-site activities are supported by suitable risk assessment and that adequate controls have been identified.
- Seek to ensure all visits and activities comply with the good health and safety policy, LEA guidance and recognised good practice.
- Seek additional guidance where there is uncertainty about the safe practice of any individual visit or activity.
- In conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team approve or otherwise, all off-site visits and activities.
- Where an off-site visit or activity becomes available at short notice for good reasons, and the Committee cannot meet the time, then the Headteacher may give approval if the proposal is relatively straight forward.
- Identify and prioritise associated training needs for staff and volunteers, including induction training in risk assessment.
- Be the first port of call for all staff contemplating an off-site visit and liaise between staff and Off-site Activities Committee.

The Role of the Off-site's Visits Co-ordinator

The off-site's visits Co-ordinator will:

- Provide advice to colleagues on the minimisation of risk when planning activities that take them 'offsite' on either a day or residential basis
- Produce, in conjunction with other staff, a Policy in relation to Health and Safety on Offsite Activities and ensure that this is updated in line with local and national trends on at least biennially
- Collate a file in which 'Risk Assessments' are kept and ensure that this is available to all staff for reference when planning trips or offsite activities
- Attend regular LEA update training courses, as provided, and ensure that information is disseminated to colleagues as appropriate
- To provide support to colleagues, as required, when they are planning offsite activities or residential experiences for the children/students in their care
- To ensure that the Governors are regularly updated on issues relating to Health and Safety on Offsite Activities
- To ensure that the necessary permissions/insurance covers are obtained from the Governors and LEA by the required timescales prior to activities taking place.

The Role of the Group Leader

The group leader will:

- Gain initial approval from the Headteacher to investigate an off-site activity and submit documentation to the Off-Site Activities Committee for approval.
- Have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit or off-site activity, with the support of a named deputy where necessary.
- Take account of the planning checklist for visits and off-site activities.
- Consider if supply cover is required for teachers on the trip and if necessary, include this in the charge* made for the trip (*do check legality of charging for the educational component of educational visits – see DCC Safety Booklet)
- Support the visit or off-site activity with appropriate recorded risk assessments, made available to the Headteacher as part of the proposal. – see attached form.
- Check that staff leading hazardous activities are appropriately qualified in the activity at the level identified by Dorset County Council or National Governing Body for that activity. If there is no NGB, check that the qualifications are recognised as competent by someone with appropriate technical expertise, eg LEA OE Centre Manager or someone else from outside the school. Where activities are undertaken that are beyond the limit of qualification of the party, specialist staff will be commissioned for the party e.g. climbing, mountain walking.
- Ensure parents have been given sufficient information to guide their decisions and that they have returned signed consent forms with all the necessary pupil information completed.
- It is important that all members of the staff accompanying the group raise any issues of concern with the group leader. It is then up to the Group Leader to make the final decision.
- Identify specific organisational factors which need to be made known to staff, volunteers and participants, especially pupil collection and dispersal procedures.
- Consider First Aid provision and medical needs of the group and check arrangements where necessary with the First Aid Co-ordinator. Named person in charge of First Aid.
- Ensure additional staff and volunteers have completed all necessary police and list 99 checks – liaise with Educational Personnel if you need to know more.
- Make it clear to pupils that they must not take unnecessary risks, must follow all instructions, must be sensitive to local codes and customs and that they must report any possible hazards to the group leaders.
- Make it clear to pupils that they are responsible for their own and their peers' safety.
- Ensure that the school's child protection policies are fully enabled during the trip – the leader should be aware of the possibilities of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse during the trip and of the possibility of disclosure. He/she must be aware of the best approved procedure and be prepared to implement them.

The Role of Additional Staff and Volunteers.

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Additional staff and volunteers will:

- Fully participate in the programme of activities which has been arranged for them in order to support the pupils and group.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of themselves and all group members, which includes not participating in activities beyond their physical capability, experience or skill.
- Follow agreed procedures and practice and the instructions of the group leader.
- Report to the group leader any incident which may compromise the health, safety and welfare of group members.

Risk Assessment

This Policy for Visits and Off-site Activities is based on a risk assessment approach. Risk assessments should be completed for all types of activities, programmes or areas of work, focusing on the significant hazards and associated risks arising from

- working with pupils, both singularly and as a group,
- the environment,
- the activity.

Risk assessments must be reviewed and amended as necessary in the light of previous experience and the circumstances that pertain to each particular trip. For hazardous activities a key control will be the employment of currently qualified or competent staff.

Risk assessment, by the group leader, needs to be ongoing throughout the activity in light of changing circumstances i.e. weather, behaviour, health concerns.

The management of health, safety and welfare for each individual visit should be based on a formal and sufficiently comprehensive risk assessment. Risk assessments must, by law, be carried out by a 'competent' person; i.e. someone with sufficient skills, knowledge and experience of the activity, being assessed to make a sound judgement.

Guidance on the completion of risk assessments can be obtained from J. Moise (Member of SLT with responsibility for off-site visits etc.)

Staff: student ratios

Each visit should be judged on the needs of the pupils taking part. This references medical needs, behavioural needs, Autistic spectrum disorders and physical disability. Class staff need to form the core of the team, with extra staff only being used as necessary. It is vital that our students are supervised by those that know them to provide continuity and stability.

Transport

The group leader must give careful thought to planning transport. LEA and school transport policies must be followed (see Yewstock School Minibus Policy.)

The group leader is responsible for ensuring that coaches and minibuses hired are from a reputable company which is licensed. They must ensure that seat belts are available for pupils and that seat belts are worn.

The law on driver licensing no longer permits car drivers who have passed their tests after January 1st 1997 to drive minibuses without passing a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) driving test or unless they are driving under a Section 19 Permit.

Drivers of any vehicle must ensure that they have the correct entitlement on their licence.

The main factors which must be considered before an adult takes a minibus are:

- Visual check of minibus (tyres, seat belts, mirrors etc.)
- Passenger safety.
- Competence of the driver and experience of driving “large” vehicles.
- Number of driving hours.
- Length of driver’s day – driving at the end of a long day at the end of a long half term may be very dangerous.
- Whether more than one driver is needed.
- Insurance cover.
- Weather and hours of day light.
- Journey and distance time.
- Stopping points on long journeys.
- Supervision of pupils.
- Contingency fund and mobile phones in the event of breakdown/emergency.

Nobody should drive a minibus which contains pupils unless they have a second adult with them. The driver should not be responsible for supervision.

All group members, adults and children, must be made aware of the position of the emergency door, first aid and anti-fire equipment. The rear door must be unlocked and 1 member of staff will need to sit in the rear of the bus near the exit door.

The safety of pupils is paramount and the group leader must ensure that pupils know how to observe the safety rules set out and to know where and when they can move.

Regular head counts must take place.

Emergency Procedures.

In the event of a serious accident or emergency the Group Leader should follow the procedure outlined below:

- Make an assessment of the situation.
- Safeguard the group.
- Attend to the casualty and alert the emergency services.
- Contact the Headteacher (or member of SMT if appropriate) and request they deal with phoning emergency numbers etc.
- Provide support to group members, including other adults.
- Complete an accident report on return.

The Headteacher (or member of SMT) will determine procedures for liaison with parents, Dorset County Council, the media and the Governing Body. Staff should not discuss details with others including parents or the media.

Accident Reporting

All accidents and incidents will be reported as described in the school Health and Safety Policy.

For all accidents or incidents requiring hospitalisation a verbal report should be made to the Headteacher (or member of SMT) at the earliest opportunity and a Dorset County Council Accident Report Form should be completed. Copies of the Form are held in the school office, where completed forms should be returned. A detailed written report should be completed and forwarded to the Headteacher within 24 hours, if possible. Parental contact should be discussed with the Headteacher.

