Hill Croft School
Educational Outings Policy

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to assist those involved in the planning and management of educational visits in Hill Croft School, through the clarification of policy and procedures, identification of roles and responsibilities and the exemplification of best practice.

The term **'Educational Visits'** refers to:
'all academic, sporting, cultural, creative and personal development activities, which take place away from the young persons' school, and make a significant contribution to learning and development of those participating'.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Young people derive considerable benefit from taking part in educational visits. In particular, they have opportunities to participate in activities and gain from experiences not available in the normal classroom setting. Such educational visits help young people to develop a wide range of valuable personal, social and functional skills.
The majority of educational visits take place without incident and it is clear that those involved in planning and managing such visits are already demonstrating a high level of care, competence and safety awareness and schools should ensure that all educational visits undertaken by their staff conform to best practice.
Potential risks should not discourage teachers from undertaking educational visits. However, good planning and attention to safety will reduce the likelihood of accidents and lessen the seriousness of any that may occur.
This document has been revised in order to further underpin the planning and implementation processes required for the successful and safe completion of educational visits and therefore adherence to this document should reassure teachers that they have followed best practice.

For further clarification the following publications may be consulted:

Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection – DENI (1999), DENI (2001) and supplements (2002).

Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits - DFEE (1999) and DFES supplements (2002).

Supporting Pupils and Mediation Needs 2008

Safeguarding & Child Protection- A Guide for Schools DE 2017.

CATEGORIES OF EDUCATIONAL VISITS

CATEGORY 1 Basic

•Visits which take place on a regular basis and occur largely within establishment hours e.g. sporting fixtures, swimming pool visits and outings

CATEGORY 2 One-off day /evening excursions (non-hazardous)

•e.g. field study trips, theatre visits, business/education visits, regional sporting fixtures

CATEGORY 3 Residential visits of one or more nights within the UK or Ireland. (non-hazardous)

•e.g. visits to residential centres, field centres and school exchanges

CATEGORY 4 Residential visits outside the UK or Ireland (non-hazardous)

e.g. international exchange visits, sporting events, cultural activities and international community work

CATEGORY 5 Hazardous activities – residential and non-residential as exemplified below:

- Hill walking
- Fieldwork
- Cycling/mountain biking
- Orienteering
- Rock climbing/abseiling
- Caving and potholing
- Kayaking
- Open canoeing
- Windsurfing
- Dingy sailing
- Sub-aqua
- Skiing/snowboarding
- Horse riding
- Angling
- Water-skiing
- Rafting rowing
- Surfing
- Bouldering/gorge walking
- Swimming in open water
- Coasteering
- Stand-up paddle boarding

Category 1 and Category 2 recurring and one-off (non-hazardous) visit

Step 1 Identification of Educational Visit - Objective
The school identifies an area or areas of the curriculum for which an educational visit(s) may be an essential or relevant component.

Step 2 Approval
Details of the proposed visit(s) are submitted, by the group leader, on the EVA Form to the principal/ vice principal for approval. They should be approved before they proceed.

Step 3 Implementing Appropriate Risk Management
It should be ensured that all visits are organised in accordance with relevant school policies (e.g. Health and Safety and Child Protection) and take cognisance of best practice, as set out in this document. All outings must be risk assessed using the **Hill Croft School EOA1, steps to follow when assessing risk** form. These should be retained in each class and also stored in the Staff pastoral folder under Educational outings. Before each outing takes place the **Hill Croft School EOA2, record of educational outings form** should be completed stating the teacher in charge, venue and date of the outing. A copy of this EOA2 should be located with each EOA1 form. All required behavioural risk assessment and risk reduction plans should be addressed in pupils' **Pupil Profile Extension** (PPExt)

Step 4 Informing the Parents
Parents should be informed at the beginning of each school year about the educational visits their children will participate in. Once parents have been informed of these visits, they should be asked to give their consent via the annual consent form.

Step 5 Maintaining Records
Copies of all forms (e.g. EVA and Consent Forms) and any other relevant information should be filed.
In the case of an incident/accident occurring, all appropriate documentation from the Employing Authority must be completed.

Procedures Step by Step for Visits in Categories 3, 4 and 5

Step 1 Identification of Educational Visit - Objective
The school identifies an area or areas of the curriculum for which an educational visit(s) may be an essential or relevant component.

Step 2 Initial Approval
Details of proposed visit should be submitted by the group leader to the principal for consideration in consultation with the board of governors. The EVP should be used for this purpose and any relevant information attached e.g. details of the residential centre to be used. It is the responsibility of the principal in consultation with the board of governors, to decide whether a visit should proceed. It is essential, therefore, that they are consulted at the earliest opportunity. Under normal circumstances, a minimum period of notice of not less than 4 weeks is recommended. Detailed planning can proceed once initial approval has been granted.

Step 3 Completion of Planning Checklist
The appropriate sections of the planning checklist should be completed by those with key responsibilities for the visit. See EV1 Planning Checklist

Step 4 Briefings
Staff, volunteers, parents and pupils, should be briefed about all aspects of the educational visit (see Appendix 7). Once parents are fully aware of the visit details, they should be asked to give their consent in writing. The exemplar Consent Form may be used for this purpose. In the case of young people over the age of 18, with severe learning difficulties or vulnerable adults, consent is also required.

Step 5 Information Collated
It is important to gather together all relevant information about the pupils participating in the visit. This should be collated by the group leader and the originals retained by the school. An Educational Visits Group Details Form should be used for this purpose.

Step 6 Final Approval Secured
Visits in this category can only proceed once final approval has been secured from the principal and the board of governors. The EVP form should be signed by both the principal and the chair of the board of governors to confirm approval and endorsement of the arrangements for the visit.

Step 7 Maintaining Records
Copies of all forms and relevant information should be filed.
Any changes to the original approved visit must be agreed, as appropriate, prior to the event taking place.
An exemplar Educational Visit Incident/Accident Form can be found in annex ?. This form may be used by accompanying staff to keep a record of the pertinent information required of any incident or accident that occurs during an educational visit.
The group leader should also ensure that all documentation required by the employing authority in relation to any incidents or accidents is completed as appropriate. This must be forwarded to the employing authority as soon as is practicable.

Step 8 Evaluation
On return it is important to undertake an evaluation of the key aspects of the visit. The completed evaluation should be forwarded to the relevant personnel and maintained for future reference. A Post Visit Review Form may be used for this purpose.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

Whatever the visit it is essential that planning takes place to identify the major issues that need to be addressed.

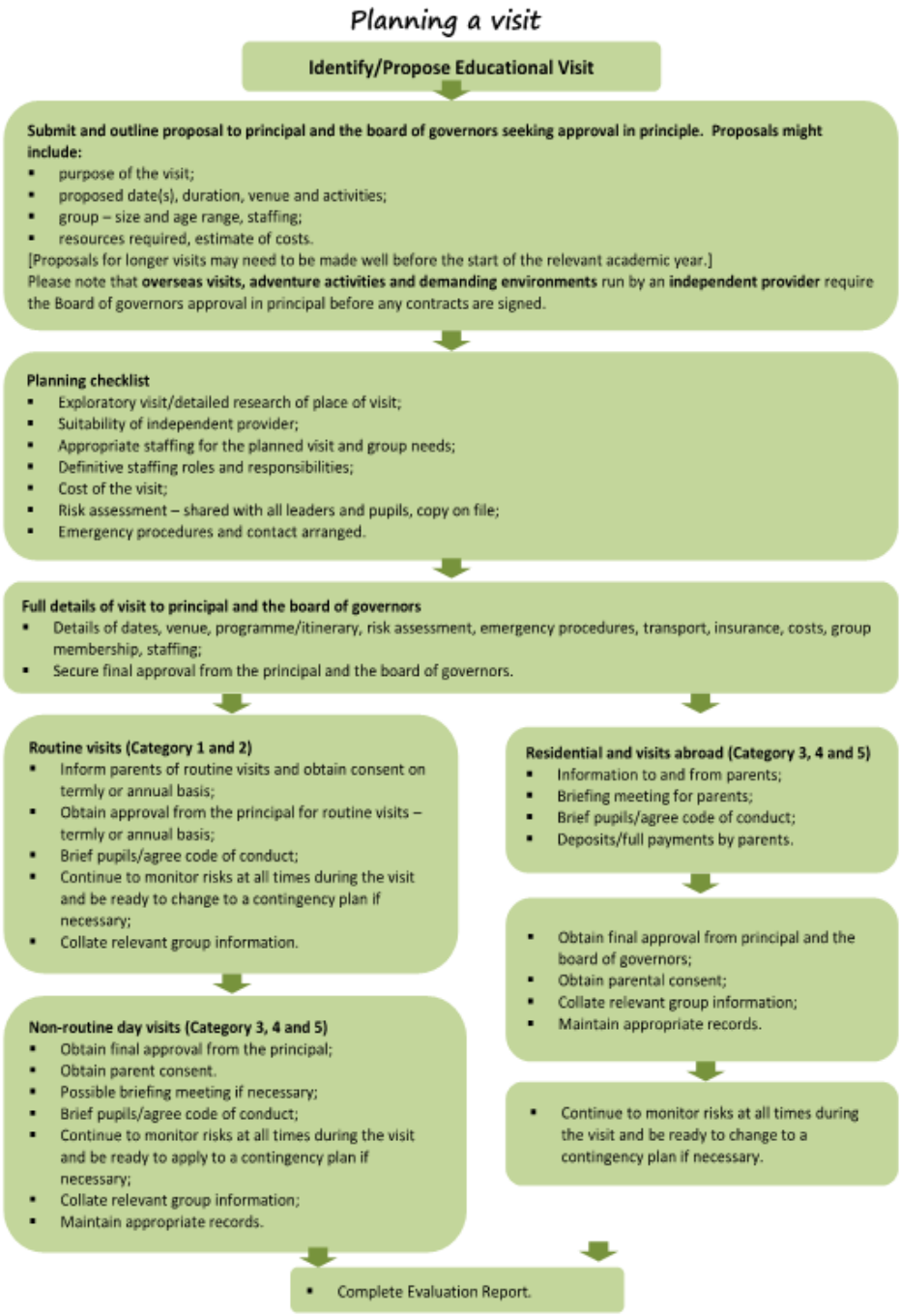
This involves considering the educational aims, the programme and itinerary to support these aims, the risks that may arise and the measures necessary to reduce these.

The terms risk assessment and risk management are used to describe the process of addressing the risks of any visit/activity and the steps taken to counter them. The process of risk management is paramount in the overall planning of any educational visit.

The flowcharts overleaf will outline the major issues which should be taken into consideration when planning a visit:

a) Overview of Planning Process;
b) Planning a Visit – Key Questions.

a) Overview of Planning Process



Planning a Visit – Key Questions

Purpose of the visit

1. What are educational objectives?
2. What is the nature of the visit?
3. Target group identified?

Choice of venue/activities to be undertaken

1. Does the venue/activity meet the educational objectives of the visit?
2. Is the age profile of the pupils suitable for chosen venue/activity?
3. What is the competence, experience of staff?
4. What environmental factors do we need to consider e.g. time of year, weather?
5. Venue facilities?
6. Venue accessibility?
7. Clothing equipment requirements?

Exploratory visit and research

1. Appropriateness of venue?
    - facilities
    - activities
    - location
    - access to tele communication
    - venue staff
    - first aid/medication/emergency action plan
    - accommodation in relation to security/emergencies
    - access to local services
2. If visit is not possible how can we fully research the appropriateness of the venue?
3. Has the independent provider all the appropriate insurances and risk assessments in place?

Programme of activities

1. Suitable detailed itinerary agreed?
2. Appropriate supervision of qualified staff?
3. Any proposed changes to the agreed programme to be agreed with the EVC to assess risk?

Staffing

1. Appropriate?
2. Competent/qualified e.g. first aider?
3. Staff/pupil ratios?
4. Training?
5. Clear roles and responsibilities?
6. Volunteer staff considerations?
7. Communications protocol in place and understood by all staff?

Emergency procedures/ First aid

1. Clear roles and responsibilities of main staff?
2. First aider identified?
3. Familiarisation with educational visit venue to include location/first aid equipment/ emergency procedures and the responsible staff identified?
4. Arrangement of first aid/emergency procedures meeting with staff/pupils on arrival at venue?
5. Immediate access to parental consent form information (telephone numbers etc.) especially for all pupils but especially for those with medical conditions?

RISK ASSESSMENT

Educational visits cannot be entirely risk-free. The aim, therefore, must be to contain risks within acceptable levels. This is achievable provided that organisers give careful consideration to the guidance in this policy. Effective risk management will enable new experiences and will maximize the impact of educational visits, whilst poor risk management may suppress opportunities for learning.

Care must be taken not to expose the child to unacceptable physical or psychological risk, particularly on those occasions when the educational visit aims to exercise the individual's sense of adventure.

Fundamental to the planning process of any educational visit is the process of risk assessment.

Risk assessment enables Hill Croft School to make a reasoned judgement about the level of risk involved and what actions need to be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level which permits the visit to go ahead.

This is achieved by either:

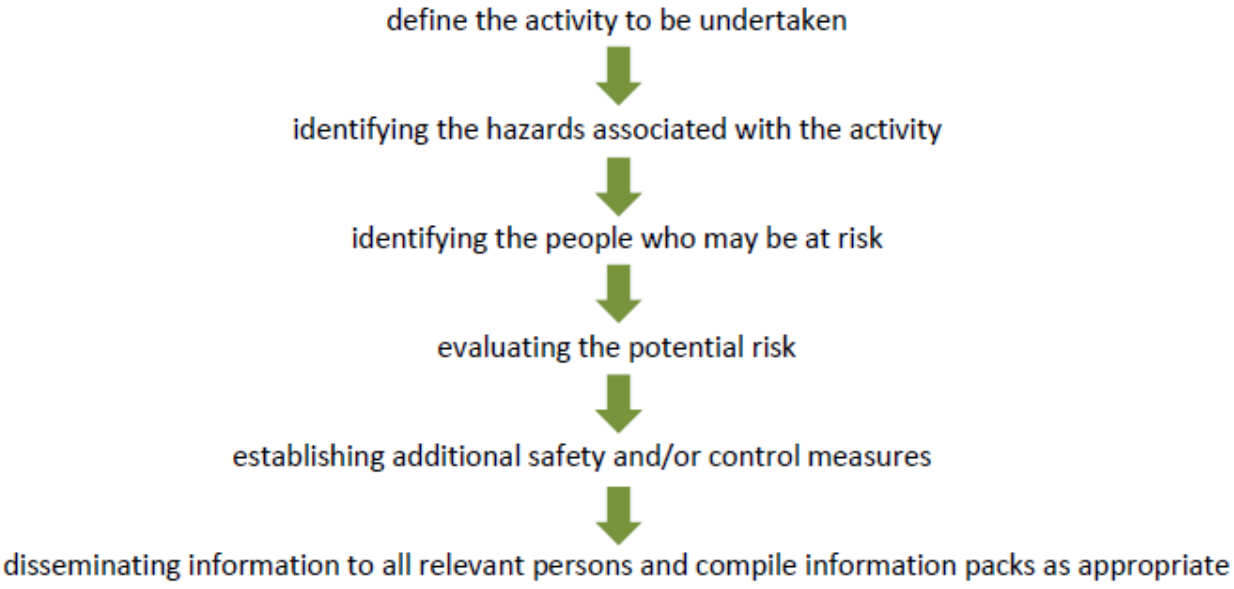
i) eliminating the identified hazards altogether: -

for example, by choosing not to use a water sports centre if the centre staff do not possess current life-saving qualifications or

ii) managing hazards by introducing effective control measures: -

for example, by ensuring that participants are led by competent and experienced instructors when participating in adventurous activities

Risk Assessment comprises the following steps:



The vital issue is whether the risk can be managed. If there are doubts that the risk is manageable, then it is advisable to change the activity and/or the location.

Where there is considerable concern as to the outcome, it is better to abandon and redesign the educational visit than to expose pupils to an unacceptable level of risk.

Group leaders must fully record their risk management decisions on paper.

As with much health and safety legislation and regulations, the paper at the end of the process is of minor significance compared to the professional judgement of the group leader.

The group leader should understand that risk assessment is a dynamic process and therefore must carry out on-going risk assessments during an educational visit and ensure that appropriate action is taken as necessary e.g. cancelled public transport, pupils or staff illness, closed venue, adverse weather conditions. The ability to re-assess and manage changing risks whilst the visit is taking place is a key element of the competence for leaders of educational visits.

An example of an approach to risk assessment planning for a category 3 visit is contained in Appendix 1a.

SUPERVISION AND STAFF RATIOS

Supervisory roles should be closely aligned to the roles and responsibilities undertaken by staff on a visit. **Pupil to staff ratios for educational visits are not prescribed in law.** Those planning visits, on the basis of risk assessment, should decide the ratios taking into account the range of variables which are determined through an informed risk assessment. Supervision ratios should relate to:

- the category of the educational visit;
- the specific educational objective(s) and;
- the outcome of a risk assessment.

On the basis of a risk assessment, it is likely that additional supervision may be required, particularly in relation to categories 3, 4 and 5 with reference to residential visits and hazardous activities.
Risk assessment may include the assessment of individual pupils, particularly within the special schools sector, and those with behavioural considerations in receipt of a medical care plan. This will have a direct influence on supervision ratios.

The key factors which should be taken into consideration in the establishment of appropriate ratios are as follows:

- nature and location of activities to be undertaken;
- age and ability of the group;
- pupils with special educational and/or medical needs;
- day visit or overnight stay;
- mixed or single gender group;
- experience of supervisory staff in off-site supervision;
- duration and nature of the journey type of any accommodation;
- competence of supervisory staff, both general and in relation to specific learning activities;

- requirements of the organisation/ location to be visited;
- competence and behaviour of the pupils;
- prevailing weather conditions and time of year;
- duration and location of planned activities;
- first aid cover.

The following issues should also be considered when establishing ratios:
Under normal circumstances in post primary schools and where it is possible in primary schools, at least one male and one female leader should accompany mixed sex groups, where an overnight stay is involved. Where this is not possible, parents must be made aware and give their consent to the proposed arrangement prior to the visit.

Arrangements should be made to ensure that appropriate ratios are maintained if a staff member needs to leave the group e.g. to accompany a pupil to hospital, escort a pupil home, personal illness or attend to a personal emergency.

Supervision can be close or remote, but it is always for the duration of the visit.

Close (direct) supervision occurs when the group remains within sight and contact of the supervisor.
Remote (indirect) supervision is planned and is subject to stringent controls, while the group is not necessarily within direct contact or vision of the leader at all times. Both the leaders and the group will know of each other's whereabouts and clear lines of communication including rendezvous points will have been established. Leaders are required to remain in the area, in which the indirect supervised activity takes place, throughout period.

The need to involve volunteers e.g. parents or governors with clearly defined roles and responsibilities is an accepted practice.

VETTING

In the context of educational visits, it is essential that the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures are followed.

This includes the requirement to ensure that staff who work with or have access to pupils have been subject to appropriate vetting procedures through Access NI.

The need to vet volunteers should be made on the basis of their having 'substantial access to children'. Participation in an educational visit, particularly those with a residential element, would provide such access. Schools should refer to the ***DE Circular 2012/19*** regarding the vetting requirements for school volunteers as part of the new Access NI Disclosure and Barring Arrangements. Also refer to ***DE Safeguarding and Child protection – A Guide for Schools (April 2017) document.***

Therefore, it is required that all adults, who accompany groups of pupils under the age of 18 are vetted in line with ***DE Circular 2012/19*** with regards to vetting checks for volunteers working in schools.

The procedure is relatively straightforward. The adult in question provides relevant details and gives permission for relevant checks to be carried out. The school should deal with this information in the normal manner.

In addition, schools need to be satisfied that places to be visited, particularly residential centres, have similar procedures in place for their own staff, who also have substantial access to pupils.

TRANSPORT

The management of the school must be satisfied that all the transport arrangements meet the legal statutory requirements for the type of journey proposed.

Areas to Consider:

- that the operator holds a valid Operator's Licence (this can be checked out by contacting the Department of Infrastructure or looking at their web site);
- the mode of transport is appropriate to the needs of the pupils;
- there is adequate supervision during transit;
- those involved in driving hold the relevant licence to drive the vehicle;
- those involved are insured appropriately;
- guidance on the transport arrangements relevant to the particular group, e.g. age and/ or developmental needs.

Where schools require the use of outside operators to provide transport, it is crucial that they are satisfied that the operator(s) can demonstrate how they meet the above criteria.

Where leaders or parents choose to transport pupils in their cars, organisers of the visit should:

- satisfy themselves that the vehicle is licensed and insured for purpose – this could involve asking for a copy of the insurance details;
- seek the agreement of the parents of the pupils involved – this should be in writing;
- satisfy themselves that private car users do not carry more passengers than the number of seat belts available;
- do so in accordance with the organisation's Child Protection Policy.

INSURANCE COVER

The school must ensure, well before the group departs, that adequate insurance arrangements are in place.

The Education Authority will cover the legal liability of controlled and maintained schools in respect of personal injury claims. It is however, recommended that schools should take out additional travel insurance in relation to educational visits outside of Northern Ireland. Other schools should check with

their insurance broker as to the extent of cover provided under their public liability insurance policies. Parents should be advised as to the extent of any additional insurance taken out by the school.

The Education Authority or insurance broker can advise on particular types of insurance requirements and other arrangements:

- medical cover for leaders and group members;
- specialised risk activities;
- activities abroad;
- participants with medical conditions;
- cancellation or other emergency situation.

The group leader should scrutinise carefully the conditions, list of exclusions, and limits on cover in any policy provided by an outside organisation. If there is any doubt, the insurer should be asked for clarification before departure. The group leader may need to seek further advice from the employing authority or insurance company if not completely satisfied with the insurance cover.
No person acting on behalf of a school should sign an indemnity for any outside body against liability without it first being checked and approved by the relevant employing authority.

USE OF INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS

The term independent providers refers to other organisations or companies which provide a service that is outside the direct control of the employing authority e.g. tour operators, specialist activity providers, residential cent res etc.

Where a school has opted to use the services of an independent provider the principal must ensure that:

- employing authority policy and procedures are followed in relation to the use of such providers;
- providers are reputable and have the necessary insurance in place for the services they provide;
- staff involved in the delivery of the service are competent and are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the group and child protection;
- risk assessments are available for the activities the group will partake in;
- adequate emergency and contingency plans and procedures are in place in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

These prerequisites should be ascertained in writing from the external provider as part of the school risk assessment.

Note:
A compulsory licensing scheme for Outdoor Activity Providers, which endorses the provider's competence to deliver activities to young people (under 18s) exists in England, Scotland and Wales. Group leaders should therefore take cognisance of their chosen provider's licence and note the activities which they are licensed to offer. Not all activities require a licence. Further details can be obtained from the Adventure Activity Licence Authority.
There is no such requirement or structure in place at present for the licensing of outdoor activity providers in Northern Ireland

CODE OF CONDUCT

The establishment of a code of conduct for all pupils participating in educational visits is an effective basis upon which to ensure the achievement of safe and successful outcomes.

The code, which would apply equally to all pupils, should be drawn up in consultation with staff, if appropriate, and be agreed by the board of governors. Please see example of a model code of conduct in Appendix 5.

In advance of an educational visit, accompanying staff, volunteer supervisors, pupils and parents should all be made fully aware of the code, including possible outcomes. All pupils participating in an educational visit must agree to abide by the code of conduct at all times during the visit.

The code should aim to ensure that respect for the individual is maintained at all times and that neither peers nor others expose the pupils to risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or harassment.
It is the responsibility of the leaders to maintain standards of behaviour and discipline while on educational visits. Leaders cannot avoid setting an example to group members in everything they do or say.

While on a residential, leaders remain responsible for the conduct and safety of pupils 24 hours a day. This should be taken into consideration when deciding on appropriate behaviour, practice and supervisory arrangements.

It may be necessary to devise a duty rota in order that staff can have a break away from supervisory duty, while ensuring that an appropriate level of supervision is maintained at all times.

In developing and agreeing a code of conduct, the aim should be to reflect the ethos of the school, the nature of the place(s) visited and/or the activities undertaken.

The code of conduct should address issues relevant to the age and development level of the group members.

After carrying out a behavioural risk assessment, the school has the right to refuse any pupil from participating in the visit, whose involvement may be considered to be a danger to him/herself or to the group. In such circumstances the pupil's PPExt should clearly identify any reasonable measures required to ensure acceptable levels of safety or the reasons why it is unsafe for them to participate.

Under no circumstances should persons other than official group members join the party.

Model Code of Conduct for Visits

The group should edit the model code of conduct so that it is appropriate for their group(s).
It may be useful to have a generic code of conduct for routine visits and a specific one for other visits, such as residentials, which includes details specific to those visits.

It can be good practice where appropriate to the level of understanding to involve pupils and their parents in the process of drawing up the code of conduct: this is a useful way of getting them to think though the issues and to understand the reasons behind the requirements, and is itself a process of risk assessment.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

An effective, two-way communication process between the school, centre and parents is important for all visits. Effective communication will ensure that parents are made aware of the purpose and nature of the visit and will ensure that parents inform the school about any particular needs and issues of their child relevant to the visit.

Information to parents may include:

• the aims and benefits of the visit;

• dates of the visit or series of visits;

• destination details;

• times of departure and return and whether parents will be required to meet their children on return;

• the location where the pupils will be collected and returned;

• mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company;

• the size of the group and the level of supervision;

• details of accommodation;

• details of provision for special educational or medical needs;

• names of leader, of other staff and of other accompanying adults;

• the planned programme of activities;

• agreed arrangements for non-emergency contact during the visit;

• arrangements/protocols for parents to make contact with the child;

• arrangements/protocols for the school or pupils to make contact with their parents;

• a list of potential circumstances when a parent will be contacted by the school e.g. when a pupil:

- reports feeling unwell and the symptoms/condition is giving cause for concern;
- requires medical attention;
- is injured as a result of an accident or emergency;
- is involved in a serious breach of the established code of conduct for the educational visit.

• the code of conduct for the visit detailing expected standards of behaviour and sanctions;

• arrangements for the early return of a pupil for any reason during the visit;

• details of insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, cancellation, medical cover, any exceptions in the policy and whether parents need to arrange additional cover;

• clothing and equipment to be taken;

• what pupils should not take on the visit or bring back;

• advice on pocket money and how it is allocated during the visit;

• the information required from parents about their child;

• details on the cost of the visit;

• the risks associated with the visit (but tempered with information about the school's good safety record, and the overall benefits to the participants).

Information should (where relevant):

• be sent as far in advance of the visit as practicable;

• involve convening a meeting to clarify detail if appropriate. This is particularly important for residential visits, or when the pupils are to travel abroad or engage in adventure activities or visits to demanding environments. Where a briefing meeting is required, alternative arrangements might need to be made for parents who cannot attend or who have difficulty with communication.

Parent Consent

Parental consent must be obtained for educational visits. This may be done on a blanket basis for regular visits or on a one-off basis for non-regular visits. The contents of a consent form for a parent to sign will vary according to the type of visit.

Medical Consent

For visits that require parental consent, parents should be asked to agree to the young person receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not agree to this, the principal may decide to withdraw the child from the visit given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.

Contact with Parents during the Visit

All parents of pupils taking part in an educational visit should be briefed (category 3, 4 and 5 visits) or provided with (category 1 and 2 visit) with a copy of the communication procedure in advance of the visit. These should be clearly defined arrangements/protocols for parents to make contact with their child.

Parents should therefore:

• know the destination details;

• be aware of the emergency contact arrangements.

Pupil Contact with Parents

There should be clearly defined arrangements/protocols for pupils to make contact with their parents. Parents should be made aware of and consent to the mobile phone protocol if applicable.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The successful planning and implementation of an educational visit requires a contribution from a number of key personnel and groups. Careful co-ordination and clarity of roles are vitally important.

The duties, roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined in advance of any educational visit, articulated, recorded in writing and understood by all those leading and/or assisting with such visits. This includes those responsible for the provision of first aid, administration or medication and communication with parents.

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of each.

School
The responsibility for any educational visit rests with the school organising the activity.

The Principal
It will normally be the principal, with the agreement of the board of governors, from whom permission must be obtained before a visit takes place.

Senior Leadership Team
Under the direction of the senior leadership a designated Educational Visits' Co-ordinator (EVC) will have a central role to play in endeavouring to ensure that the best practice, in relation to educational visits, is developed and implemented within the school.

In pursuance of this aim the EVC should:

- ensure that visits have specific educational objectives;
- be satisfied that risk assessment has been carried out and that appropriate safety measures are in place;
- ensure that all arrangements comply with the organisation's Child Protection and Health and Safety Policies;
- ensure that the principal demonstrates how proposals comply with best practice;
- assess and submit visit proposal for board of governor approval;
- ensure that an acceptable code of conduct for pupils is in place.

Educational Visits' Co-ordinator (EVC)
The principal may assume the role of the EVC or designate this role to the group leader for any educational visit. This person will have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit, the health and safety of the group and ensure that clear lines of accountability are established.

Whichever the case, it is recommended that the responsibility for ensuring that the criteria outlined below are addressed, rests with the person designated as the EVC.

Ultimately, it is the principal, with agreement of the board of governors, whose permission must be obtained before a visit takes place.

The EVC should be satisfied that:

- there is an acceptable code of conduct pupils;
- the visit complies with best practice as outlined in this guidance document;
- a competent group leader is selected;
- child protection procedures are adhered to in the planning process, including the vetting of volunteers;
- all necessary arrangements and preparations have been completed including risk assessment, before the visit begins;
- all relevant checks have been undertaken if an independent provider is to be used;
- the group leader has experience in supervising pupils of similar age and ability to those participating and will organise and manage the group effectively;

- where relevant, the group leader or one of the leaders is suitably qualified and competent to supervise and/or instruct the pupils during specific activities;
- the group leader has taken reasonable steps to familiarise him/ herself with the location/centre where the activity will take place;
- prior to any educational visit, all volunteers should be clearly advised of their role and responsibilities during the visit and this should be communicated in writing to them and all accompanying staff;
- the ratio of leaders to young people is appropriate;
- proper procedures have been followed in planning the visit;
- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover;
- the group leader has the address and phone number of the venue to be visited and has a contact name;
- a school contact has been nominated (normally the principal) and the group leader has details;
- that an emergency contingency and critical incident plan has been created and that the group leader, accompanying staff, volunteers and nominated school contact are aware of the agreed emergency contingency arrangements;
- the group leader, leaders and nominated contact have all relevant information on the group members;
- establish any arrangements which may be required for the early return of individual participants.

The principal should be clear concerning their role if taking part in the visit as an accompanying staff member. **The group leader should remain in overall charge of the visit.**

Group Leader
A member of staff should be designated by the principal as group leader. This role should be allocated to a senior member of staff.

The group leader will have overall operational responsibility for the supervision, discipline and conduct of the participants for the duration of the visit and should be experienced in organising such visits, the supervision of pupils, and all relevant health and safety matters.

They should be able to direct and supervise pupils, and be suitably qualified/competent to instruct them in activities, as appropriate.

The group leader has a crucial role to play in the successful and safe completion of an educational visit.

The group leader should:
- obtain prior agreement and approval before any off-site visit takes place;
- appoint a deputy, if appropriate, with the consent of the principal;
- adhere to best practice as outlined in this guidance document;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation for the visit including the briefing of leaders, pupils and parents;
- ensure that all relevant checks have been undertaken if an independent provider is to be used;

- take steps to become familiar with the location/establishment where the activity will take place;
- inform parents as to the terms and conditions of any additional insurance cover taken out by the school;
- undertake and complete an appropriate risk assessment;
- collect relevant information on the pupils proposed to participate in the visit to assess and confirm their suitability;
- ensure the ratio of leaders to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group and the nature of the activity to be undertaken;
- clearly define the role of each member of accompanying staff and volunteers and ensure that all tasks have been clearly assigned;
- have proper regard to the health and safety of the pupils and ensure that adequate supervision is provided at all times;
- ensure that the established code of conduct for both staff and pupils is adhered to;
- ensure child protection procedures are followed;
- ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available;
- ensure that, during the visit, leaders have up-to-date emergency contact details of:
    - nominated contact
    - parents
- ensure that accompanying staff and volunteers and the nominated contact are aware of the emergency procedures;
- ensure that the group leaders have the details of group members' special educational or medical needs, which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively;
- 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;
- regularly review visits/activities.

Accompanying Staff

Accompanying staff on educational visits are responsible to the school whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours.

Accompanying staff must endeavour to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances.

'In Loco Parentis' applies to all adults who work with pupils.

Accompanying staff should:

- accept the authority and follow the instructions of the group leader;
- under direction of the group leader, assist with the organisation of activities and discipline of the pupils;
- ensure that the established code of conduct, for leaders and participants is adhered to;
- consider stopping the activity and notify the group leader, if they think the risk to the health or safety of the group members in their charge, is unacceptable.

Volunteers in a Supervisory Role
To satisfy staffing ratios, it may be necessary to involve persons other than staff members as volunteers, e.g. parents. These adults can play a very valuable part in ensuring the safety of group participants while on a visit. However, prior to any visit they should be clear about their role and responsibilities during the visit.

Volunteers should:

- be vetted on the basis of having substantial access to children;
- participation in an educational visit, particularly those with a residential element, would provide such access;
- endeavour to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- not be left in sole charge of group members except where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment;
- follow the instructions of the group leader (which may be provided in writing) and other accompanying staff, and help with control and discipline;
- speak to the group leader or accompanying staff if concerned about the health or safety of the pupils, at any time during the visit;
- endeavour to ensure that the established code of conduct, is adhered to.

Nominated Contact at School Base
Dealing with unexpected situations can be aided by a central figure, (possibly the principal if not on the visit, or another senior member of staff if not on the visit) who will act as the contact person for both the group and the pupils' families.

Nominated contact should:

- retain details of the place to be visited, contact personnel and telephone and mobile numbers as appropriate;
- retain a copy of the contact details of all the pupils' parents;
- retain a copy of the contact details of the principal/group leader;
- be fully briefed and aware of his/her responsibilities including the action to take in the event of a serious incident.

Parents
Parents should be able to make an informed decision as to whether their child should go on the visit. However, in the interests of the overall safety and success of the visit the ultimate decision as to who participates rests with those involved in organising the visit. The group leader should ensure that parents are given sufficient information in writing and are invited to a briefing session, where appropriate.

Parents should:

- sign the consent form;
- provide the school with an emergency contact number(s);
- provide the school with relevant medical/dietary details, including any medication currently being taken in writing (by means of the consent form) and any other relevant information

(about their child's emotional, psychological and physical health) which may affect their participation in the visit);
- help prepare their child for the visit, for example, by reinforcing the visit's code of conduct;
- agree the arrangements established for a member of the group returning home due to unforeseen circumstances.

Special arrangements may be necessary for parents who have particular or special needs, for example, those who are hearing impaired or whose first language is not English.

Responsibilities of Pupils
The group leader should, when briefing the pupils, make it clear that they have to act in accordance with the code of conduct at all times.

Where appropriate, pupils should be fully involved in the planning process.

Please refer to the Model Code of Conduct in Appendix 5. Further consideration may need to be given to this matter when dealing with pupils with behavioural issues.

The employing authority will generally retain a number of responsibilities:

The employing authority may provide:
- advice and support for governors, principals, teachers and other appropriate staff;
- guidance on best practice;
- training, as appropriate;
- insurance cover, as appropriate.

EMERGENCY/CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS
Establishing emergency procedures is an essential part of planning an educational visit. Everyone involved in the educational visit should be aware of the procedures that are to be followed in the event of an emergency.

Such procedures should outline clearly what is to be done during the actual emergency and after the event. An examplar framework to follow is set out in Appendix 2.

Contingency planning relates to areas and circumstances which should be anticipated in advance of an educational visit, e.g. unsuitable weather, transportation problems, cancellation of an event, illness or injury etc. It should also define roles and responsibilities for all staff involved in the organisation of the trip including senior managers remaining in school.

Those responsible for organising educational visits should familiarise themselves, and others involved, with relevant contingency arrangements.

Visit organisers should ensure that a clear communications plan is established with key contact numbers available. All staff members and parents of those taking part in the visit should be briefed

and be provided with a copy of the procedure. It should clearly define the circumstances where contact should be made.

In the event of a medical emergency designated staff responsible for managing first aid/ medical emergencies should have knowledge of:

- medical conditions;
- parental advice relating to a medical condition;
- an emergency contact number for parents;
- how to access any medical equipment e.g. the defibrillator at the facility;
- the emergency procedures within the facility.

Critical Incidents

"A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school." (Every School a Good School. A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools).

In the event of a critical incident (as defined above) occurring during a school visit the school's critical incident management plan should be implemented. Advice and guidance on the development and implementation of such a plan can be found in the Department of Education's document, "Every School a Good School. A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools". The local critical incident response team may also be contacted for additional advice and support. Contact details for each team can be found on the Education Authority website.

CONTACTS

General Advice and guidance on the planning and implementation of educational visits can be accessed from the following personnel and organisations.

EA Antrim Office 17 Lough Road
ANTRIM BT41 4QH
Tel: 028 9448 2200 Fax: 028 9446 0794
e-mail: info@neelb.org.uk

CSSC Controlled Schools' Support Council
Second Floor Main Building
Stranmillis University College
Stranmillis Road
BELFAST BT9 5DY
Tel: 028 9531 3030
e-mail: info@csscni.org.uk

Glossary of Terms

Accompanying Staff

Members of staff, other than the group leader, who participate in the visit in a supervisory capacity.

DE

Department of Education

Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC)

The person within the school (also may be the principal) who has responsibility to ensure that the visit meets all requirements. The person who has operational management responsibility for the visit.

Employing Authority

This refers to the employers of the staff within schools for example:-

Controlled schools - The Education Authority;

Catholic Maintained schools - The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;

Other Maintained Schools – The Board of Governors;

Voluntary schools - The Board of Governors;

Grant Maintained Integrated Schools – The Board of Governors;

External Provider

An organisation or company outside the direct control of the employing authority of the visiting group, which provides all or some elements of the programme or services required by the group, e.g. tour operator, residential centre, leisure centre etc.

Governing Body

Refers to a school's board of governors.

Group Leader

The accompanying member of staff who has overall responsibility for the group for the duration of the visit.

Hazard

The potential for anything or anyone to cause harm.

Independent Provider

An organisation or company outside the direct control of the employing authority of the visiting group, which provides all or some elements of the programme or services required by the group, e.g. tour operator, residential centre, leisure centre etc.

In Loco Parentis

The standard of care expected of all school staff when exercising a duty of care to all pupils when under school regulations is described as being 'in loco parentis': in place of a prudent parent.

Leaders

The collective term for the adults who have responsibility for the pupils, for the duration of the visit. (this includes group leader, accompanying staff and volunteers).

OEAP

The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel exists to ensure the effective leadership and management of high-quality outdoor education, offsite visits and adventurous activities, for the benefit of young people.

Parents

Those with parental responsibility including guardians.

Pupils

Children and young adults between the ages of 3 and 18 years.

Pupils with Special Needs

Children and young adults under the age of 18 years with special needs who require specific supervision and attention.

Risk

The likelihood that harm will in fact result if nothing were done to either eliminate or in some other way control the hazard to limit its harmful potential.

Volunteers

Adults other than staff members who participate in the visit, in a supervisory capacity.

Review: The Board of Governors will review this policy every 3 years

Reviewed: April 2025