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Guidance

Health and safety on educational visits

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1. The 2 main types of trips

1.1 Routine visits

These involve no more than an everyday level of risk, such as slips and trips and are covered by a school's current policies and procedures. They only need a little extra planning beyond the educational aspect of the trip. They can be considered as lessons in a different classroom.

1.2 Trips that need a risk assessment and extra planning

These are trips not covered by current policies. This could be due to things like:

- the distance from school
- the type of activity
- the location
- needing staff with specialist skills

Sometimes a school may just need to review its current plans or arrangements that were successful on previous trips. However, some trips will need risk assessments, detailed planning and informed approval of headteachers or governing boards. The person given the job of managing this should:

- have the skills, status and competence needed for the job
- understand the risks involved
- be familiar with the activity

Plans should be proportionate and sensible, focusing on how to manage genuine risks.

2. When to get consent from parents

A school must always get written consent for nursery age children.

For children over nursery age, written consent is not needed for most trips, as they're part of the curriculum. However, it's good practice to tell parents about them.

Written consent is usually only needed for trips that:

- need a higher level of risk assessment
- are outside normal school hours

Ask parents to sign a copy of our consent form (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-for-school-trips-and-other-off-site-activities>) when their child enrolls. This will cover them for their whole time at the school.

Schools should still tell parents about these trips and give them the opportunity to withdraw their child.

3. Using outside organisations

Schools using an outside organisation to provide an activity must check they have appropriate safety standards and liability insurance.

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>) to organisations who meet nationally recognised standards.

Schools can check if an organisation holds the LOtC Quality Badge (<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>).

If an organisation does not hold the badge, the school must check that they're an appropriate organisation to use. This could include checking:

- their insurance
- that they meet legal requirements
- their health and safety and emergency policies
- their risk assessments
- control measures
- their use of vehicles
- staff competence
- safeguarding
- accommodation
- any sub-contracting arrangements they have
- that they have a licence where needed

The school should have an agreement with them that makes it clear what everyone is responsible

for. This is especially important if they'll be taking over supervision of the children.

4. Adventure activities: caving, climbing, trekking, and watersports

These kind of activities should be identified and risk assessed as part of the visit beforehand. Staff managing or leading visits must not decide to add such activities during the trip.

Always consider the abilities of the children when assessing risk.

Organisations need a licence to provide some adventure activities. Organisations who hold the LOTC Quality Badge should hold a licence for the activity they provide.

Find out more about licensing (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/public-information.htm>) on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website.

Watersports

When planning watersports, consider the need for:

- instructors
- lifeguards

Schools should take particular care when using hotel swimming pools and other water leisure activities which may not have a trained lifeguard. Although there are no swimming pool specific health and safety laws, the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) provides advice when undertaking adventure specialist activities, including swimming.

5. Trips abroad

Trips abroad can have extra risks and need a higher level of risk assessment.

Schools should make sure any organisation that is providing activities holds the LOTC Quality badge or similar local accreditation.

The HSE does not cover incidents overseas. However, it can investigate work done in Britain to support the trip, like risk assessments. School staff could also be liable under civil law for any injuries to the children due to negligence.

If the trip includes significant risks, such as challenging terrain, going to remote places or extreme climates, follow the guide to the British Standard for adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom (<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/what-is-the-national-standards-body/why-standards-matter-for-consumers/consumer-resources/>) as the basis for the planning and risk assessment. Organisations employed by the school should follow this too. If they have LOTC Quality Badge then they follow this standard.

Schools should consider the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's detailed guidance on safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas (<https://www.gov.uk/safer-adventure-travel-and-volunteering-overseas>) when organising adventure visits abroad. A teachers' pack (<https://www.gov.uk/teachers-pack>) is also available.

6. Knowing what to do in an emergency

Schools should have an emergency response plan that covers what to do if there is an incident away from school. Schools should also have a communications plan that covers how routine communications should be handled, including regular check-ins and calls to reassure people.

Trip leaders should be familiar with these plans.

Schools can get advice on these plans from their outdoor activity adviser or the OEAP website (<https://oeapng.info/>).

7. Evaluating trips

Set up a clear process for evaluating all visits once they have been concluded from the planning through to the visit itself. Schools should keep a record of any incidents, accidents and near misses.

This will help the school:

- evaluate whether its planning has worked
- learn from any incidents which took place

8. Educational visits coordinators

Schools should appoint an educational visits coordinator and make sure they have the training they need. The headteacher has this duty if there is no coordinator. Local authorities or academy trust outdoor education advisers can advise on appointing and training coordinators.

The coordinator works with the local outdoor education adviser to help their colleagues in schools to assess and manage risks.

The coordinator should:

- be an experienced visits leader
- have the status to be able to guide the working practices of other staff
- be confident in assessing the ability of other staff to lead visits
- be confident in assessing outside activity providers
- be able to advise headteachers and governors when they're approving trips
- have access to training, advice and guidance

Coordinators can also get guidance on the OEAP website (<https://oeapng.info/>).