

DOWNSIDE

SCHOOL

POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION, VISITS AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer, i.e. Downside Abbey Trustees. It is a priority of this school that all visits and off-site activities are safe, well managed and educationally beneficial.

Introduction

This policy covers all off-site visits and activities organised through the school and for which the Governing Body and Head Master are responsible.

The Governing Body seeks to ensure that every pupil has access to a wide range of educational experiences as an entitlement. As part of this entitlement the Governing Body recognises the significant educational value of visits and activities which place away from the immediate school environment.

The Governing Body aims to enable this school to become an educational environment in which all members of the school community can thrive, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender or individual need. We intend to apply this aim to the planning and management of all visits and off-site activities.

Visits and off-site activities support, enrich and extend the curriculum in many subject areas, encourage co-operation, teamwork and the application of problem-solving skills and develop independence and self-confidence.

Residential opportunities, physical challenge and adventure can have a particular part to play in the development of personal and social qualities for all young people. Outdoor education helps young people to be physically active and to understand how to assess and manage risk.

The management of visits and off-site activities places particular responsibilities for the health and safety and welfare of all participants on the Governing Body, Head Master and the party leader, members of staff and volunteers, pupils and parents. The school also has responsibilities to other members of the public and to third parties. This policy on visits and off-site activities therefore complements the wider school health and safety policy.

Responsibilities of the Head Master

The Head Master will:

- ensure all visits and off-site activities have specific and appropriate educational objectives;
- approve all visits and activities, based on compliance with the school's health and safety policy, relevant national guidance and recognized good practice;

- ensure off-site programmes are led by competent staff who are appropriately experienced to assess the risks, manage the activity and manage the specific group;
- check that the staffing ratio is suitable for each visit;
- ensure party leaders have access to a planning checklist, based on the HASPEV model (page 12) and adapted as necessary to meet the particular needs of the school;
- check that risks have been assessed, significant risks recorded and any appropriate safety measures are in place.

Responsibilities of the Educational Visit Co-coordinator

In order to carry out the above responsibilities effectively the Head Master may delegate specified tasks to a suitable experienced and competent Educational Visit Co-coordinator (EVC). The EVC will normally be the Director of Activities. The EVC will be responsible for carrying out agreed tasks and attending relevant training provided by recognised training providers.

Approval of off-site activities

The Director of Activities, as Chairman of the Priorities Committee, will be responsible for approving all off-site activities. This includes approving the party leader for each visit or off-site activity.

Approval must be sought for all activities taking place off-site, including recurrent events, such as sporting fixtures, in order that they may be placed in the termly and weekly calendars.

The form entitled "Application for the Approval of an Educational Visit" must be completed and submitted to the Director of Activities, who will then present it to the Priorities Committee for discussion. Once approved, the Director of Activities will request the necessary risk assessments from the group leader.

A summary of the programme for the following categories of programmes, together with a risk assessment, will be sent to the Director of Activities, for endorsement:

- hazardous outdoor and adventurous activities;
- visits abroad;
- activities where there is significant concern about health, safety and welfare;

Recurrent events, such as sporting fixtures, are subject to the generic risk assessments produced by the Director of Activities.

The Governing Body should be informed by the Head Master about plans which involve:

- a residential element;
- any visit abroad and
- any visit where there is significant concern about health, safety and welfare.

The Head Master, or one of his deputies, will monitor off-site visits and activities and will provide a regular report to the Governing Body about the off-site activities which have taken place from the school.

Responsibilities of the party leader

The party leader will:

- have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit or activity;

- obtain the approval of the Director of Activities before any off-site visit or activity takes place;
- follow policy and procedures of the school;
- assess the risks involved and amend as appropriate any previously recorded risk assessment;
- use the school planning checklist to ensure all procedures have been followed;
- inform parents fully about the visit and gain their consent, where appropriate;
- reassess risks while the visit or activity takes place;
- ensure there is a contingency plan (Plan B) should a significant change to the programme be necessary owing to weather etc.

Responsibilities of additional members of staff taking part in visits and off-site activities.

Members of staff, volunteers and parent helpers should:

- assist the party leader to ensure the health, safety and welfare of young people on the visit;
- be clear about their roles and responsibilities whilst taking part in a visit or activity.

Responsibility of pupils

Whilst taking part in off-site activities pupils also have responsibilities about which they should be made aware by the party leader or other members of staff, for their own health and safety and that of the group. Young people should:

- avoid unnecessary risks;
- follow instructions of the party leader and other members of staff;
- behave sensibly, keeping to any agreed code of conduct;
- inform a member of staff of significant hazards.

Responsibility of Parents

Parents have an important role in deciding whether any visit or off-site activity is suitable for their child. Subject to their agreement to the activity parents should:

- support the application of any agreed code of conduct;
- inform the party leader about any medical, psychological or physical condition relevant to the visit;
- provide an emergency contact number;
- sign the consent form.

Supervision of Pupils on School Trips

The staff to pupil ratio will vary according to the activity, age, group and location. However, the following ratios are guidelines for non-residential trips.

Plunkett House (Years 7-8): 1 adult for every 15 pupils; a minimum of 2 adults. Main School (Year 9 upwards): 1 adult for every 20 pupils.

For residential trips, there must be at least two adults. For mixed sex groups, there must be at least one male and one female adult.

In some circumstances the use of young adults, e.g. GAP students, employed by the school is acceptable for supervision on trips out of school, but this should be done in consultation with the Director of Studies.

A member of staff who brings his/her own child on a trip cannot count as a supervising adult for the rest of the group, unless that child is a member of the School. Where the child is a member of the School, his/her parent may be a supervising adult for the group, provided that there is no compromise of the interests of the party as a whole, and provided that there is at least one other supervising adult. Other factors such as age and activity need to be taken into account. In cases of doubt, the advice of the Director of Activities should be sought.

Use of the School minibuses

Only those adults who have received familiarisation training with the school minibuses and whose names appear on the list of approved drivers produced by the Bursar may drive the school minibuses.

Drivers must ensure they are fit to drive and know what to do in an emergency. Particular care must be taken to avoid danger caused by driver fatigue.

Thought must be given as to whether the driver can effectively supervise the pupils being transported. Although this will often be possible, factors such as size and age of the group, length of the journey and the specific make-up of the group need to be taken into account. Advice should be sought from the Director of Activities where there is doubt.

Transportation of pupils in private vehicles.

The School's insurance policy covers the occasional use of staff private vehicles for the transport of pupils. Members of staff must, however, ensure that the current details of their vehicles, including make and registration number, are filed with the Bursar.

Pupils may not be transported in other private vehicles without the express written consent of parents.

Parental Consent

Parental consent must be obtained in writing, either by post or fax (e-mail and telephone messages are not acceptable), using the School's standard consent form when:

- significant cost is involved;
- an overnight stay is involved off the school premises;
- adventurous activities are being undertaken;
- a private car is being used for transport.

Contact Information

Group leaders will be expected to supply contact telephone numbers for the group whilst away. This includes residential and non-residential trips. This information is included in the "Application for the Approval of an Educational Visit" form, which is distributed to all House Masters, the Director of Activities, the School Office and the Common Room.

In an emergency during normal school working hours, the emergency contact at School is the School Office, who will then notify the members of senior staff. For trips which will be out of school outside normal working hours, including day trips which will be leaving or returning outside office hours, provision must be made for an emergency contact at school. This may be the duty House Master during the term, or the Head Master or one of his Deputies. For residential trips during holiday times, arrangements must be made for emergency contacts to be available 24 hours a day for the duration of the trip. These contacts may include a member of staff's spouse or partner, but should include a senior member of the School's staff i.e. a member of the Head Master's Council.

The Provision of Training and Information

A copy of this policy and associated school procedures will be made available to all staff within the school who may be responsible for leading off-site visits and activities and to any parent requesting a copy.

Appropriate training will be made available to leaders and other adults taking part in off-site activities in order to reflect identified school health and safety priorities and educational priorities.

The Head Master will maintain a record of the qualification held by staff and volunteers involved in outdoor activities including first aid, life saving, minibus driving and specific hazardous activities.

Action in the case of emergency

The Head Master will ensure that emergency arrangements are in place, known to staff and in line with the School's policy to cover the range of activities undertaken from the school and the times at which they take place. This will include emergency contact numbers for designated senior members of staff or the Governing body out of hours. First aid provision and training of staff will be in accordance with the School's expectations.

Accidents and Incidents

Any accidents and incidents that occur during off-site visits and activities will be reported and recorded in accordance with the School's health and safety policy. The relevant authorities will be informed of notifiable accidents and incidents. Accidents and incidents will subsequently be reviewed with the school to identify any learning points.

Monitoring and review policy and practice.

The Governors will review this policy:

- every two years
- at such time as there are significant changes to guidance from the DfES or other recognised bodies
- should significant issues be brought to the attention of the Governors through the report of the Head Master.

Outline proposal to Priorities Committee, using the “Application for the Approval of an Educational Visit” from. Proposal should include:

- Visit’s objectives
- Date, duration, venue
- Pupil group and staffing
- Resources, estimate of costs.

(Proposals for longer visits may need making well before the start of the relevant academic year)

Planning

- Contact venue. Is it suitable for the group?
- What are the transport options?
- Who would lead the group and who would help supervise it?
- Who would pay for the visit?
- Risk assessment. Exploratory visit.

Substantive proposal to the Director of Activities

- Final details of dates etc, completed risk assessment, emergency procedures, group, staffing etc.

Shorter visits

- Obtain parental consent where necessary
- Brief pupils
- Ensure parents of day pupils are aware of the changes to routine
- Continue to monitor risks at all times

Residential and abroad

- Obtain approval to prepare for the visit subject to satisfactory preparation

Final preparation

- Information to and from parents. Briefing for parents and pupils as appropriate. Deposits/full payments from parents

- Evaluate

- Obtain final approval from the Director of Activities

- Continue to monitor risks at all times

Policy reviewed August 2011 and confirmed as the current Policy

Dom Leo Maidlow Davis