



‘Improving the quality of family life’

Off-site Visits Policy

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INTRODUCTION

This policy should be read in conjunction with all Snowflake School policies, but especially the Health and Safety Policy and the Educational Visits Policy.

Off site visits are central to the teaching at Snowflake School. The Health and Safety of all staff and pupils is paramount. Most school visits take place without incident however it is acknowledged that extra vigilance will be needed to assist all pupils to remain safe. Pupils will require individual risk assessments and behaviour plans that ensure their safety when outside school premises.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and, in 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.

Each visit must be adequately researched and assessed for risks and hazards by the Group Leader and an individual risk assessment carried out for each pupil participating in the activity. Although the Trustees are responsible for health and safety - decisions about visits are delegated to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher's agreement must be obtained before a visit takes place. Parental permission must be obtained for each visit. Additional permission is required where the activity involves swimming or takes place on or near water.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TRUSTEES should:

- Ensure that training needs have been met
- Maintain appropriate cover
- Have in place procedures to monitor and review safety during off site visits and activities
- Ensure that they are informed about less routine visits well in advance
- Assess proposals for certain types of visits, which should include visits involving an overnight stay or travel outside the UK

The **HEAD TEACHER** should:

- Ensure that the Group Leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit
- Oversee all the arrangements to ensure they comply with the school Health and Safety Policy
- Be clear about their role if taking part in a visit as a group member. The Group Leader will have sole charge of the visit.

The Head Teacher should ensure that:

- adequate child protection procedures are in place
- all necessary actions and permissions have been obtained before the visit
- the risk assessment has been completed, and appropriate safety measures are in place
- training needs have been assessed by a competent person and the needs of the staff and pupils have been considered
- the Group Leader has experience of 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
- all staff on the visit are appropriate people to supervise pupils
- the ratio of staff to pupils is appropriate
- parents have signed the consent form
- arrangements have been made for the medical and special educational needs of all pupils
- adequate first aid provision will be available
- the mode of transport is appropriate
- there is adequate insurance cover
- a school contact has been nominated, and the Group Leader has the details
- the Group Leader and nominated school contact have the contact details of parents and details of the adult's next of kin
- the Group Leader and all other adults have a copy of the agreed emergency procedures
- a school contact and an alternative school contact has been identified

GROUP LEADER

The Group Leader should have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit. He or she should:

- obtain the Head Teacher's prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place
- appoint a deputy
- clearly define the role of each adult
- 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 briefing group members and parents
- undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment
- review regularly undertaken visits/activities and advise the Head Teacher where adjustments may be necessary
- complete individual risk assessments for each pupil participating
- ensure the ratio of staff to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group and the activity to be undertaken
- consider stopping the visit if the risk to health or safety is unacceptable
- ensure that all adults have details of the school contact
- make contingency plans in the event of an emergency and ensure that all adults and the school contact are fully briefed
- ensure that parents are given sufficient information in writing and are invited to any briefing sessions. Special care must be taken to inform parents for whom English is a foreign language.

STAFF

All staff participating in off site visits act as employees of Trustees regardless of whether the visit extends beyond normal hours of employment.

All staff accompanying an off-site visit should:

- 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
- follow the instructions of the Group Leader and help with control and discipline
- notify the Group Leader if they think the risk to health and safety is unacceptable

ADULT VOLUNTEERS

The duties of all adult volunteers should be clearly defined.

They should:

- 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 had been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment
- follow the instructions of the Group Leader and staff
- bring any concerns to the attention of the Group Leader

PUPILS

Every effort will be made to ensure that visits and activities are available to all who wish to participate, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, sex, religion etc.

Whilst every effort will be made to include all pupils in off site visits, any pupils whose behaviour is deemed to pose a danger to themselves, or others may be subject to alternative plans. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils will be fulfilled in other ways wherever possible.

PARENTS

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

They must sign a consent form before any pupil is allowed to undertake an off-site visit. The Group Leader should tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

A risk assessment for a visit need not be complex but it should be comprehensive. It does not generally need technical formulae or professional health and safety expertise. But specialised information for some visits may be necessary and people assessing the risks must be competent to do so.

Copies of all risk assessments should be given to the Head Teacher, school contact and all the teachers/supervisors on the visit. Trustees may also wish to receive a copy for certain activities, particularly those lasting more than one day or being undertaken outside the UK.

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. Risk assessments for these regular activities should be undertaken at least once a term and read prior to each visit.

Detailed advice on risk assessment can be obtained from the Local Education Authority's Health and Safety Officer, and from the Health and Safety Executive which has issued a revision of its booklet *Five steps to Risk Assessment*.

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN ASSESSING RISKS

(see Risk Assessment Form)

- **Place to be visited:** e.g. park
- **Potential hazards:** e.g. walking in city streets; swings; water
- **List of groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards identified:** e.g. pupils; helpers; group leader
- **List existing controls or note where the information might be found:** e.g. use zebra crossing; avoid late afternoon
- **How will you cope with hazards which are not currently or fully controlled under (3)?** List hazards and measures to control them
- **First aid requirements**
- **Continual monitoring of hazards during visit:** Adapt plans and then assess risks as necessary
- **Individual pupil risk assessment:** (Appendix 9)

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit. If an accident happens, the priorities are

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

The Group Leader would usually take charge in an emergency; the deputy should take charge if the Group Leader is involved; the most senior member of staff if both are involved. All adults, and pupils in so far as possible, should be clear about the chain of command at the outset of the trip.

The school contact should be updated at the earliest opportunity, and they will liaise with the pupils' families as necessary (Appendix 12) including reassuring those families who are not involved.

If an emergency occurs additional factors to consider include:

- establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention for them
- ensure a competent adult accompanies casualties to hospital
- notify the school contact of the following details
 - nature of emergency
 - date and time
 - names of casualties and details of their injuries
 - action taken so far
 - action to be taken
- ensure that Insurance Companies have been notified by a responsible person

- write down accurately, 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 the incident
- complete the accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or Local Authority contact, if appropriate
- **no-one in the group should speak to the media.** The school contact might arrange for a press release through the Head Teacher. Names of casualties should not be released until next of kin have been informed.
- **no-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties**

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. It may be necessary to contact local community support services and to seek professional advice on how to help individuals and the school community cope with the effects of a tragedy.

ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE ON OR NEAR WATER

COASTAL / NATURAL WATER VISITS

The Group Leader should bear in mind the following points when assessing the risks of a coastal activity:

- tides, rip tides and sandbanks are potential hazards; timings and exit routes should be carefully checked
- ensure that staff, and pupils in so far as possible, are aware of warning signs and flags look out for hazards such as broken glass, sewage outflows etc
- cliff tops can be highly dangerous even during daylight. The group should always keep to the paths.
- swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities. One supervisor should always stay out of the water for better surveillance
- a qualified lifeguard must always be present - many children who drown are strong swimmers
- be aware of local hazards – such as currents, weeds, a shelving or uneven bottom
- a safe area should be designated for the group and a rendezvous point in case of emergency
- ensure that the pupils have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming adopt and explain the signals of distress and recall

SWIMMING POOLS

Appropriate risk assessments should be in place for swimming pools (see Risk Assessment Form)

FARM VISITS

Farms can be dangerous places. Farm visits must 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.

The following basic safety rules should be observed. Never let pupils:

- place their faces against the animals or put their hands in their own mouths after touching or feeding the animals
- eat until they have washed their hands
- sample any animal foodstuffs
- drink from farm taps (other than those designated for drinking)
- ride on tractors or other machines
- play in the farm area

Further advice is contained in the DfES's letter dated 9th June 1997: *Pupil Visits to Farms: Health Precautions* and HSE's *Avoiding ill health at open farms: advice to teachers*

VISITS ABROAD

A visit abroad will require additional detailed risk assessments. Such a visit should be preplanned, researched and visited and appropriate advice and guidance should be sought.

The following points should be carefully considered:

- methods of transport
- staffing
- transport
- the reputation of tour operators, including their affiliation to a body approved by the Department of Trade and Industry
- vaccinations
- visas and passports
- foreign legislation
- communication (eg language barriers in an emergency)
- emergency medical facilities
- accommodation (eg vetting host families)
- emergency provision

SUPERVISION

In deciding supervision ratios, the following considerations need to be kept in mind:

- sex, age and ability of the group
- special educational and medical needs
- nature of activities
- experience of adults in off-site supervision
- duration and nature of the journey
- competence of staff, both general and on specific activities

- requirements of the organisation/location to be visited
- first aid cover
- the means of transport

For a one-day visit it might be considered necessary to have at least one adult in excess of staff/pupil's ratios. More will be necessary for residential visits when staff will need adequate cover for rest periods and night cover.

For regular visits it might be deemed appropriate for a 1:1 staff ratio, or less. In any case, where pupils are transported by car there must be the driver and at least one other adult accompanying the journey in any one vehicle.

Regular head counts will be necessary, particularly before leaving any venue.

TRANSPORT

The employer (the Trustees) should satisfy themselves that all travel arrangements, including the hire of private coaches or buses, are suitable for the nature of the visit. In practice, the Head Teacher will normally carry out these checks.

Where staff or volunteers' cars are used to transport pupils the Head Teacher must be in possession of the driver's Insurance certificate clearly stating that they may use the vehicle on school business. Staff and others who drive pupils in their own car have a legal duty to ensure their passengers' safety. The vehicle must be roadworthy and be properly licensed.

The driver is responsible for the vehicle during the visit.

Seat belts should be worn in accordance with the law. For further information contact the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR).

Should the school own their own means of transport this policy will need to be amended to take into account current legislation and standards of maintenance.

INSURANCE COVER FOR VISITS

Insurance policies are legal documents. They will impose conditions, limit the cover, and exclude certain people or activities. Insurance companies/travel firms can advise on types of insurance.

The following are examples of cover which may be appropriate:

- employer's liability
- public liability
- personal accident covers for teachers, other adults, and pupils
- costs of medical treatment
- specialised risk activities (often excluded from standard policies) and the costs of evacuation for medical reasons when travelling abroad
- damage to or loss of hired equipment (check the wording of the hire agreement)
- transport and accommodation expenses in case of emergency
- compensation for loss of baggage and personal effects including money
- legal assistance in the recovery of claims
- failure of bankruptcy of the centre of travel company.

- additional cover may be needed for participants with medical conditions

Revision

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