**Oscott Academy**

**School Trips and Visits Policy**

September 2024

Introduction

An educational trip or visit has enormous potential for enriching the school curriculum and, in some cases, it is an essential requirement of examination courses.  Such enterprises, though demanding, can be enjoyable experiences for both students and staff.  Thousands of school trips and visits take place every year, the vast majority safely and without incident.  However, we are all aware that very occasionally things can and do go wrong.  It is therefore very important that all trips and visits are properly planned and organised and that all staff involved with school trips and visits take all reasonable steps to ensure that risks are minimised. This policy has been written with regard to the Health and Safety Executive ‘School trips and outdoor learning activities’, June 2011 and the Department for Education ‘Advice on Legal Duties and Powers For Local Authorities, Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies.’ Essentially this new document summarises the existing health and safety law relevant to schools and how it affects governing bodies, head teachers and other staff.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy, a school trip or visit is defined as any occasion when a student or group of students are away from the school campus, undertaking a school activity and under the supervision of a member of staff.  In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the word ‘trip’ will largely be used throughout this policy but where this occurs, please understand ‘trip and/or visit’, as appropriate.

This policy pays attention to the following guidance:

* children should be able to experience a wide range of activities. Health and Safety measures should help them to do this safely, not stop them;
* it is important that children learn to understand and manage the risks that are a normal part of life;
* common sense should be used in assessing and managing the risks of any activity. Health and safety procedures should always be proportionate to the risks of an activity;
* staff should be given the training they need so they can keep themselves abd the children safe and manage risks effectively.

There is no longer any requirement by law for schools to have an EVC. However, the Head of the centre has the role of Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) and is level 4 IOSH managing safely trained.  He can give advice about all aspects of school trips and visits.  He has copies of relevant documentation from the DCSF and other agencies Staff are asked to consult as fully as possible with the EVC before, during, and after a school trip or visit.  Feedback from trips and visits is an important mechanism for ensuring against future incidents.

The EVC **must** therefore be notified of all occasions when a student or group of students leave the school premises, either accompanied by members of staff or to meet members of staff at a pre-arranged location.  This forms a key part of the duty of care we owe to students.  It is not easy to give a definitive list of such trips but examples include trips to museums, galleries and theatres, trips to educational conferences, trips for boarders, both in the evenings and at weekends, residential trips such as skiing holidays or CCF camps, and all sports fixtures and sports tours.  If staff are in doubt about the nature of a trip or visit then they should seek the advice of the EVC.

**All staff must complete a School Trip Information Form before departing on a school trip and give the form to the Head of centre.**

The EVC **must** also give permission before any trip can take place.  Staff wishing to organise a trip **must** complete a School Trip Proposal Form and submit it **as far in advance as possible**.  (Copies of the relevant Trip Proposal and Trip Information forms appear at the end of this document.)  After the calendar has been checked for clashes, and after the Senior Deputy Head has been consulted where relevant, the EVC will give approval for ‘routine’ day trips.  Any residential visits, or visits likely to have a significant impact on the day to day running of the school, need to be approved by the EVC in consultation with the Head Teacher. Where possible, proposals for residential trips should be made to the Second Deputy Head for approval, one full academic year in advance of the trip so that parents can be given fair warning of any significant additional costs.

**Staff must not spend any money or inform students or parents that a trip or visit is going ahead until it has been formally approved.**

Planning and Preparation

The Timing of Trips and Visits

It is essential to the smooth running of the rest of the school that school trips are properly planned and arranged to ensure minimal disruption to all, both those on the trip and those left behind.

Departments are strongly encouraged to plan their pattern of trips and visits for the coming academic year as early as they can, preferably by May half term. This allows clashes to be kept to a minimum.  Trips and visits planned well in advance must be included in the termly school calendar.  Events listed in the school calendar take priority over non-calendared events.  The earlier a trip is planned, the more likely it is to be approved.  If two events clash then the Second Deputy Head will resolve the matter.

**Students must miss lessons as rarely as possible.**  While it is often easy to justify a trip from the benefit to one’s own subject, lessons missed in other subjects need to be considered.  Obviously, there will be times when it is impossible to avoid taking students out during lesson time, but full consideration must be made of alternative times before making such a decision.

Staff organising a trip must consult as widely as possible with colleagues who might be affected and think carefully about the possible impact of a trip.  For example, as far as possible, trips should not be organised on busy games afternoons, and residential trips should take place during school holidays to avoid a loss of teaching time.

Informing Other People

It is essential that all people concerned with the trip are fully informed at appropriate times. Once the planning has been completed and the trip has been approved, the full details of the trip must be prepared.  These details, together with copies of letters for parents, must be submitted to the EVC before being sent out.

Communicating with parents

Parents must be informed in writing about all trips.  Written consent is not required for students to take part in the majority of off-site activities organised by a school (with the exception of nursery age children), however this School operates a policy where **Parental permission is required for all trips**.  It is acceptable for this permission to be gained through an ‘opt out’ system rather than by asking parents to complete a consent form and send it back.  For example, a phrase along the lines of ‘*It will be assumed that you are happy for your son/daughter to go on the trip unless we hear otherwise*’ is acceptable.  This method might be easier where whole Year groups are being taken out and/or when a trip takes place during normal school hours. However, where smaller numbers are involved, where a trip leaves very early or returns very late, and **for all residential visits**, specific signed permission must be obtained from parents. Trip leaders must have an alternative option planned for any student whose parents decline permission to go on a trip.

If a trip involves overnight accommodation, parents must be given full details of the type of accommodation provided and the security arrangements which are in place to ensure the safety of their child.  They must be fully informed as to the nature of the trip, with a clear indication if the students may be unaccompanied while away from school.  Parents must acknowledge that their child is fit enough to go on the trip, outline any health problems and authorise the leader of the party to act on their behalf in an emergency.  They must also provide a contact number for the duration of the trip.

For longer trips, particularly those overseas, it is a good idea to hold a Parents’ Information Evening a few weeks before departure.  This allows information to be shared, questions to be asked and answered, and reassurance to be given where appropriate.  The publication of an information booklet for parents and students is also strongly advised.  The EVC can give advice about the best way to organise such events and to prepare such booklets.

Informing the School

The school must also know all the relevant details for a trip.  The School Trip Information Form **must** be completed in full and given to the Head of centre, in his role as EVC, well in advance of the departure date. For days trips this should be at least one week before the trip departs. For residential trips, where possible the School Trip Information Form should be handed in at least 2 weeks prior to departure so that any concerns or problems that may arise can be sorted out. This form, when properly completed, must contain all the information required about a trip.  It will also include a basic risk assessment procedure (see below).  The Second Head of centre Head will ensure that copies of the relevant information are given to the Head Teacher, to reception staff and are pinned on the notice board in the staff common room.

The trip leader **must** ensure that he/she is in possession of all parental consent forms and all contact number details throughout the trip.  The School Secretary can help with the production of contact numbers if consulted in due time.

The EVC acts as the school contact for the trip.  If the EVC is unable to do this, for example for a residential trip during the school holidays, he will ensure that another senior colleague is designated as the school contact.

The Cost of School Trips

Staff must think carefully about the cost of a school trip.  Some parents have financial constraints and it must not be assumed that all parents can simply add extras to their school bill.  Costs should be kept to a minimum and parents must be given the chance to decline a trip on financial grounds.  In such a case provision must be made for the student who cannot go on a trip.

**It is very important that the cost of trips is recovered by the school, via the Accounts Department, as quickly as possible.**  Indeed, if it is possible to charge for a trip before it has taken place then this should be done.  For example, where a cheque is raised by the school to pay for a trip in advance, the trip leader must pass a list of the students on the trip, together with a copy of the letter sent to parents, to the Accounts Department at the same time as the request for the cheque, so that charges can be added to school bills quickly.  Once final numbers are known, any changes must also be passed through to the Accounts Department. Delays and/or errors in this process have the potential to create significant problems.  **The trip leader must take responsibility for all financial arrangements in connection with the trip.**

It is not good practice for members of staff to handle cheques and cash brought in by students. If money goes missing for any reason then this can lead to unnecessary difficulties.  As far as possible, it is recommended that the cost of a school trip be added to the school bill.  The letter sent to parents must make clear the method of payment.  If cheques are requested then they must be made payable to Ratcliffe College, not to individual members of staff, and handed in or sent to reception.  The letter sent to parents must be clear on this point.

Any money left over at the end of the trip cannot be carried forward to the next financial year or to future trips.  It must either be credited to parents or, if the amount is too small for this to be practical, credited to the relevant academic department budget.

Supervision, including ratios and vetting checks (for example, CRB checks for volunteers on overnight stays)

There are no exact ratios for school trips.  The trip leader must ensure that the staffing for a trip is ‘reasonable’.  This will depend on the age, gender mix, ability and behaviour of the students involved.  It will depend on the type of activity undertaken, the nature of the journey and the type of accommodation if the trip is overnight.  The competence of the adults supervising a trip must also be considered, together with the need for first aid cover.

**The School advises the following ratios for general activities such as visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances:**

* **1 adult for every 3 pupils in Nursery School/EYS (however, a higher ratio may be required depending on the nature of the visit);**
* **1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3**
* **1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6;**
* **1 adult for every 15-20 pupils in school year 7 onwards.**

However, it is stressed that these are only examples.  Trip leaders must assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular trip.

Trips to remote areas or those which involve more hazardous activities will clearly require a higher level of supervision.  It is also the case that many institutions which are open for visits by school parties have their own staffing guidelines which need to be adhered to.  Staff taking trips must always check with the locations they are visiting about such matters.

When trip leaders are considering the staffing for their trips they must always bear in mind the consequences of staff absences on those left behind.  If several people are required to staff a trip then consideration should be given to using Graduate Assistants and/or Language Assistants as additional helpers.  However, in these cases suitable cover must be available for anyone on a trip.  Staff must not assume that Graduate Assistants and Language Assistants can simply leave school for a day without any consequences for cover arrangements.

If a school trip is taking place which involves several members of staff, each person going on the trip must ensure that the relevant paperwork has been completed.   The composition of the staff involved with a trip often changes from the time the initial permission form is submitted.  It is very important that the Head of centre Head and the Curriculum Co-ordinator know exactly who will be out on trips and that sufficient cover arrangements, for lessons and duties, have been put in place.  The trip leader must co-ordinate this process, but **all staff who go on trips must take responsibility for ensuring their lessons and duties are covered appropriately**.

If a trip cannot be fully covered by members of staff, there are circumstances where parents can be used to supervise trips.  All adults who supervise school trips should have completed a Criminal Records Bureau check. A letter is sent to all parents at the beginning of each school year asking those who wish to volunteer with school trips to complete the necessary paperwork and arrange to come into school to receive training on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Staff who need further guidance and clarification on this matter should discuss it with the Head of centre during the planning stages for a trip.

**Equally, any concerns with regard to staffing or staffing ratios on trips should be referred to the Head of centre who can give further guidance and advice.**

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

It is not a legal requirement to complete a risk assessment for every activity or trip. Some activities, especially those happening away from school, such as mountaineering, canoeing and sailing, involve higher levels of risk. In these cases an assessment of significant risks should be carried out. The School must ensure that the person assessing the risk understands the risks and is familiar with the activity planned. School employers should take a common sense and proportionate approach, remembering that in schools the purpose of risk assessment and management is to help children to undertake activities safely, not to prevent activities from taking place.

The School Trip Information Form contains a section on risk assessment.  For most ‘routine’ trips the thorough completion of this section is a sufficient process of risk assessment.  Any trips involving high risk activities and all trips involving overnight stays require a full, separate risk assessment.

The risk assessment must be based on the following considerations:

What are the hazards?

Who might be affected by them?

What safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?

Can the trip leader put the safety measures in place?

What steps will be taken in an emergency?

While every trip will have its own particular risks that must be assessed, research has shown that the following are the most commonly found dangers, so are worthy of particular consideration when doing a risk assessment for any trip away from school.

For trips that will involve outdoor or adventurous activities or indeed residential trips, staff are reminded to request copies of risk assessments from the service provider well in advance of the trip and to make reference to these in their own risk assessments.

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| **Hazard** | **Risk** | **Control measures** |
| Separation from the party | Getting lost | Regular head count, small groups. Must stay with an adult. |
| Leaving party member behind | Risk of assault or abduction | Check numbers before every departure. |
| Road crossing | Being hit by vehicle | All groups to line up parallel with kerb and cross as one.  Ensure good sight line.  Staff to arrive first at kerbside. |
| Road traffic | Falling off path into traffic | Keep buffer zone between group and kerb. |
| Sea/lakes | Drowning | Adults always on waterside.  Group maximum of 6.  Adults trained. |
| Sand | Damage to eyes | Students briefed and strong action at first sign of throwing. |
| Sun | Sunburn | Hat, sun block, parental letter, supervised use. |
| Heat | Heat stroke or dehydration | Pre-visit and establish access to shaded area.  Plentiful supply of liquids. |
| Trains | Falling into the path of a vehicle | Keep buffer zone between group and train. |

Reconnaissance Visits

If possible an exploratory visit should be made by a teacher before any trip is undertaken.  A key factor in reducing risk is knowledge of the place to be visited.  Whilst such visits may not always be practical, staff should make every effort to consider such an undertaking.

A member of staff who is to lead a group abroad, on a residential visit or on an outdoor activity should make a special effort to carry out a reconnaissance visit.  If this is not possible then a minimum measure would be to obtain specific information by letter from the venue and from reputable organisations who can provide such information.

It is important to remember that places such as outdoor pursuits centres, leisure centres, museums, theatres, etc., have to carry out their own risk assessments for the facilities they provide.  If copies of these are obtained by members of staff then this will reduce the burden of the risk assessment process.

Factors to Consider in Planning a Trip

The following list is not exhaustive, but it tries to summarise what needs to be done during the planning and organisation of a trip. The list also gives further ideas about areas for risk assessment.

* Facilities/equipment the group will need to take
* Facilities/equipment provided at the venue
* Staff training needs
* Designating someone to record the visit and carry accident forms, etc
* Transport arrangements, including meeting arrangements for trips which leave before the start of morning school and collection arrangements for trips which return after the end of normal school
* Insurance arrangements
* Communication arrangements
* Supervision ratio
* Contingency plans for enforced changes of plans or late return
* Information to parents
* Information to school
* Preparing students
* Arrangements for sending students home early
* Emergency arrangements

Emergency Procedures

Teachers in charge of students have a duty of care to make sure that the students are safe and healthy.  They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would.  Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation.

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit. If an emergency happens the priorities are to:

* Assess the situation
* Safeguard the uninjured members of the group
* Attend the casualty
* Inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident

Guidance on Emergency Procedures

A copy of the following guidelines must be taken by all party leaders and their deputies.

* Establish nature and extent of the emergency.
* Make sure that all other members of the party are accounted for and safe.
* If there are injuries, establish their extent and administer first aid (if you have been trained or feel capable – but be aware of consequences that might follow were you to give incorrect treatment).
* Establish names of the injured and call relevant emergency services.
* Advise other party staff of the incident and that emergency procedures are in operation.
* Ensure that an adult from the party accompanies casualties to hospital.
* Ensure that the remainder of the party are adequately supervised throughout and arrange for their early return to base.
* Arrange for one adult to remain at the incident site to liaise with emergency services until the incident is over and all children are accounted for.
* Control access to telephones until contact is made with the Head Teacher and until they have had time to contact those directly involved.  Pass full details of the incident (name, nature, date and time of incident, location of incident, details of injuries, names and telephone numbers of those involved, action taken so far).
* Telephone numbers for future communication identify alternate telephone numbers in case telephone lines become jammed).
* The school will arrange to contact the parents of those involved.  In serious incidents the parents of all party members should be informed.
* Media:
  + A designated person should act as the point of contact with the media to whom all involved should direct questions.
  + Under no circumstances should the name of any casualty be divulged to the media.
  + The Party Leader should write down as soon as practicable all relevant details.  A record should be made of any witnesses.  Any associated equipment should be kept in its original condition.
  + Legal liability should not be discussed or admitted.
  + All accident forms should be completed and insurers and HSE or Local Authority inspectors should be contacted.
  + Inform parents of any delays that will be necessitated.

**NB.**  Copies of DCSF guidelines are kept by the Head of centre.

Additional Procedures for Visits Overseas

Prior to the visit the tour leader should obtain and take with them:

* European Health Insurance Card (where appropriate) and significant medical histories.
* Details of insurance arrangements and the company’s telephone number.
* Location of local hospital/medical services.

In the case of an emergency the framework outlined above should operate.  In addition the group leader should notify the British Embassy/Consulate.

Procedures for language exchange visits

Prior to the exchange visit the tour leader should check:

* Personal details of all host parents through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBC), against the Protection of Children’s Act list and the DCSF’s list of restricted personnel. Oscott Academy cannot place students with anyone who is included on either list.
* A letter to the Head Teacher of Oscott Academy from the headteacher at the host school giving his reassurance that host families have been vetted appropriately.

After the Trip

The trip leader must inform the EVC (or whoever has been delegated as the school contact) that the party has returned safely and ensure that all the students are safely collected from school by a responsible adult, such as a parent or guardian.

If any difficulties or incidents occur on a school trip, the EVC must be informed as soon as possible after the trip returns to school so that appropriate follow up action can be taken quickly.

Additional Guidelines

Residential Trips Involving Mixed Parties

Staff organising such trips should try to ensure that a male and female member of staff accompanies the party. If this is not possible the spouse of a member of Staff who is willing to accompany the party is acceptable, but this should be discussed in advance with the Head Teacher. If this is not possible then the matter should be discussed in good time with the

Head Teacher before plans are finalised. All adults involved in residential trips require a

CRB disclosure before accompanying pupils. This will have been processed on appointment for school staff. Volunteers and other adults will need to have a disclosure application processed in good time before departure. Group leaders must seek permission for adults who are not employed by the school to accompany a trip. This must be sought at least **three months**before the date of departure. Failure to seek such permission is a serious breach of school discipline.

6th Form Trips – Making own way to and from venue

Staff organising trips for 6th  Form who make their own way to and/or from a venue must state this fact to parents either in writing or by telephone stating that pupils will not be supervised when they are travelling. Parents need to accept responsibility for the pupils at this time by signing correspondence to that effect or providing consent verbally by telephone. This conversation should ideally be logged.

Medical Treatment on Trip abroad

In case of medical treatment required abroad, please contact the Insurers emergency helpline for advice, 01444 458 144, (Policy ref: 54UK429190/TR/41643/09). If you have to pay any medical costs whilst on the trip, please settle at the time and the school will reimburse on your return.

As with staffing ratios, there are no exact figures for the number of staff who should be involved in a minibus journey.  The level of supervision depends on the type of journey involved.  As always, the trip leader must ensure that the staffing for a journey is ‘reasonable’.  This will depend on the age, gender mix, ability and behaviour of the students involved.  It will depend on the nature of the journey and its distance.  The competence of the adults supervising a journey must also be considered, together with the need for first aid cover.

TRANSPORT OF CHILDREN IN A CAR/MINI-BUS BY A MEMBER OF STAFF

It is an acknowledged practice that teachers, from time to time, transport students in their cars to various external events. However, before doing so staff must seek permission from the Head Teacher or the Senior or Head of centre, together with written permission from the child’s parents. Staff should refer closely to the school’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to ensure that they are not putting themselves or the student at risk of harm or of allegations of risk of harm to a student.

Before a member of staff uses his/her car for transport of children in connection with a school activity for the first time then such action should be discussed with the teacher’s insurers.  Clarification **must** be sought that the cover is wide enough to embrace the use of the vehicle in connection with the teacher’s/employer’s business.  Should the answer be in the negative then **in no circumstances** must the vehicle be used to transport children on behalf of the school and the matter should immediately be referred to the Proprietor.