

# **Hulme Hall Grammar School**

## **School Visits Policy**

### **General Principles**

The school recognises the importance of school visits for the educational, social and moral development of pupils. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that school trips are undertaken as safely as reasonably possible while retaining the enjoyment and educational or social nature of the activity. To this end, the careful preparation and supervision of school visits is essential. Many of the roles detailed below overlap to some extent to ensure that all aspects are fully considered before the start of the visit.

Whilst accidents cannot be prevented, the aim of this policy is to ensure that visits are well planned in advance, that all foreseeable risks have been considered and safety measures put in place. All staff on a visit owe a duty of care to act in the manner of a prudent parent in exercising supervisory responsibilities for the pupils. The golden rule is at all times; safety first.

Reference may be made to the booklet 'Health & Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits', published by the DfES in November 1998, as revised in 2002.

### **Role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible in law for the safety of pupils who participate in school visits. The Governing Body has delegated the immediate operational responsibility for authorising school visits to the Headmaster.

The Governing Body will wish to :-

- ensure that guidance is available to inform the school's policy, practices and procedures relating to the health and safety of pupils on school visits;
- be satisfied that school procedures ensure that school visits are well-planned in advance;
- satisfy themselves that the necessary assurances have been obtained from any external contractors about competence and insurance cover;
- ensure that any children with special needs or a disability are included as far as is reasonably possible in the visit;
- allocate funding for staff training as required.

### **Role of the Headmaster**

The Governing Body has delegated the operational responsibility for authorising school visits to the Headmaster.

The Headmaster will :-

- act as the school's Educational Visits Co-Ordinator;

- satisfy himself that appropriate risk assessments, including pre-visit assessments (where practicable) have been undertaken – this also includes the competence and insurance cover of any external agencies involved in the trip;
- approve a Group Leader for the trip; the Headmaster will consider the Group Leader's competence and ability to maintain discipline;
- approve the attendance of all staff and volunteer helpers on the visit and ensure that CRB clearances are in place where necessary;
- ensure that supervision ratios are appropriate (see Appendix 2);
- approve all correspondence relating to the visit;
- ensure that parents have been fully informed about the trip, have provided their written consent and that they can be contacted throughout the duration of the visit;
- ensure that emergency plans are in place in the eventuality of an accident (see Appendix 8) ;
- approve the visit once he is satisfied with the plan and risk assessment;
- keep a record of all school visits, associated planning documentation, post-visit evaluations, including details of accidents and 'near misses';
- review practice in the light of any lessons learned during a particular visit.

### **The Role of the Group Leader**

The Group Leader for any off-site visit must be approved and appointed by the Headmaster. In practice, the person proposing the trip is likely to be the one best qualified to act as Leader. However, there may be situations where the Headmaster does not feel that the proposer is either qualified and/or experienced enough to lead the visit. In such cases, the Headmaster reserves the right to refuse permission for the trip, or to allow it to proceed with a more appropriately qualified/experienced Leader.

The Group Leader is responsible for;

- the planning, organisation and itinerary of the trip;
- producing a full risk assessment and emergency plan (see Appendices 1 and 8);
- producing draft copies of letters to parents (must be sent to the Headmaster for approval);
- ensuring that consent forms are returned for all pupils participating in the visit;
- ensuring that health lists, personal medication and first aid kit are taken on the visit;
- carrying out a pre-visit inspection of the venue/residential premises where this is practicable;
- ensuring that staffing ratios are sufficient for the numbers of pupils on the trip and that supervision is provided at all times in the itinerary (see Appendices 2 and 4)
- briefing pupils and staff before the visit;
- briefing parents (residential and trips abroad);
- producing an evaluation of the visit, including behaviour, accidents or 'near misses' for the Headmaster

The Group Leader should :-

- be familiar with the nature of the conditions likely to be encountered; where appropriate, contact should be made with local agencies, wardens, the Foreign Office etc, in order to ascertain local conditions;

- ensure that pupils and staff helpers are suitably clothed and equipped for particular activities and the conditions that are likely to be encountered;
- ensure that any specific qualifications that staff may hold are up to date and valid;
- in a case where an external agency is being used (travel agency, activity centre), establish the competence of the agency's staff in advance. Doing so may require a visit to evaluate the site from an educational and safety viewpoint, and an inspection of the centre's risk assessment and accident log. Where the centre is an activity centre, as defined in the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, the Group Leader should check that the centre holds a current licence. Where this is impractical, the Group Leader may refer to a reputable travel agent's package to demonstrate that sufficient preparation has taken place (see Appendix 5);

The Group Leader has the ultimate responsibility for the safety of the group during the visit. The Headmaster will delegate authority to the Group Leader to take such action as is necessary to ensure the safety of the group or its individual members. This could involve making changes to the itinerary during the visit if circumstances indicate that this is the best course of action in the interests of health and safety'; ie, a change in weather conditions. Disciplinary sanctions may be applied against any pupil whose behaviour constitutes a threat to the safety of the party. (see Appendix 7 ).

The Group Leader will have the authority to cancel the trip (in consultation with the Headmaster) if this proves necessary ie, weather, war or a state of emergency or non-viable numbers.

## **Guidance for Staff Planning an Off-Site Visit**

### **Scope**

The range of activities that fall within the definition of an off-site visit include :-

- outdoor activity centres;
- overseas visits, exchange programmes;
- visits to museums, theatres, exhibitions, festivals and concerts;
- camping, hillwalking and Dof E expeditions;
- fieldwork and other curriculum linked visits;
- trips to National Parks and zoos;
- trips to rivers and coastal regions;
- visits to farms, factories, and other places of work, including work experience;
- visits to swimming pools, leisure centres and away fixtures.

Please note that this list is **not** exhaustive.

### **How much planning will be involved ?**

The nature of the trip will govern the degree of risk and the amount of planning involved. For example, a trip to the local museum is inherently less risky than a rockclimbing activity. Overseas and residential trips involve the greatest amount of planning.

Visits that are organised entirely 'in house', are usually easier to arrange and will, constitute the vast majority of school visits. However, there are occasions where external agencies ie, specialist

staff, activity centres, travel companies will need to be used. In such cases, close liaison is required between the school and the external agency throughout the planning stages.

### **Planning Procedures**

Before any detailed planning is undertaken by the teacher or department proposing a visit, approval in principle should first be sought from the Headmaster (and in some cases, from the Governors).

Colleagues should plan visits well in advance. The Headmaster may not approve a visit if the dates clash with other events in the school calendar or where he feels that insufficient consideration has been given to a particular aspect of the visit, particularly those relating to health and safety.

### **Steps in Planning an Off-Site Visit**

- 1/ Obtain approval **in principle** for the visit from the Headmaster.
- 2/ The Headmaster will appoint a Group Leader for the proposed visit.

The Group Leader will :-

- carry out a reconnaissance of the venue, route or activities where practicable;
- write a full risk assessment for the visit, including an emergency plan.
- write an itinerary for the visit.
- check insurance arrangements with the Bursar and/or with external agencies ie, travel agents.
- select an appropriate number of staff helpers / volunteers.
- submit the full plan, including health lists, itinerary and other supporting material to the Headmaster for **final approval**.

### **Once the visit has been approved, the Group Leader should :-**

- Ensure that parents are fully informed of the visit and that written consent forms have been returned for all pupils participating in the visit. ( All letters should be approved by the Headmaster before circulation to parents)
- For residential and/or overseas visits, the Group Leader should arrange an information evening for parents (usually in conjunction with a representative from the external agency)
- Brief all members of staff who will be assisting on the visit and allocate specific duties where practicable.
- Confirm transport arrangements (usually with Hulme Hall Coaches) and packed lunches where applicable (with Mrs Peak).
- Inform the SLT regarding the date, times and accompanying staff, so that cover arrangements can be made in good time.
- Ensure that all school equipment is in good working order and that all pupils and staff have correct personal clothing/equipment for the trip. The essence of good planning is not to leave things until the last minute, don't discover that there are serious problems with equipment on the day of departure. Keep the Headmaster fully informed of progress and ask for assistance if problems arise.

### **On the Day of the Visit**

- The Group Leader must ensure that the final list of pupils attending the visit (accounting for absences and withdrawals) is placed on the staffroom noticeboard and that copies are forwarded to the Headmaster and Office.
- The Group Leader must ensure that he/she has a copy of the visit plan and all necessary contact numbers before departure.
- Packed lunches must be collected from the Kitchen. Note that Mrs Peak requires one week's prior notification for the provision of packed lunches.
- Ensure that all necessary equipment has been loaded onto the coach and that pupils and staff have the necessary personal equipment and documentation ie, passports, in the case of overseas visits.
- Check and double check numbers on and off the bus, especially where the trip will contain several stops and disembarkations. Don't leave anyone behind, it's easy to do, this includes colleagues!

### **On Your Return**

- During the return journey, contact the school in order to advise of any changes to your expected time of arrival.
- Where pupils are being collected from school or some other pre-arranged meeting place, the Group Leader **must not leave until the last pupil has been collected by their parent or other nominated person.**
- The Group Leader must submit an evaluation of the visit to the Headmaster within seven days of return.
- Ensure that all injuries are recorded on the usual Accident Forms and filed in pupils' records and Accident File (see First Aid Policy). Also record any near misses that may inform future planning.

## APPENDIX

The purpose of this section is to provide more detailed guidance on key aspects of school visits procedure.

### Appendix 1 Risk Assessment

This aspect of planning is perhaps the most important. It is crucial to the school in the discharge of its duties under civil and criminal law. There are essentially three key objectives in a risk assessment :-

- To ensure that potential safety risks are understood;
- To check that existing measures are adequate;
- To identify extra control measures that might be applied to reduce risks even further.

Risk assessment should be a fluid process, operating up to and throughout, the duration of a visit, so enabling the Group Leader to respond to changing circumstances.

The following notes identify some of the issues that may need to be considered when producing a risk assessment :-

- **Identify the risks** – ie, during the journey or hazardous activities. Try to identify as many potential risks as possible.
- **Are any members of the party more at risk than others ?** – Be aware of any special needs or medical conditions that may render some members of the party more vulnerable than others. Be aware of the limitations (physical or otherwise) of the individuals in the party and tailor activities as far as practicable.
- **What precautions are in place to minimise risk ?** – ie, codes of conduct on school transport, behavioural codes or appropriate clothing/footwear.
- **Are any extra measures required ?** – Such may be required in order to cater for pupils with specific medical needs. It may be necessary to produce a separate code of conduct to limit foolhardy behaviour ie, sanctions applied against those who ski off piste.
- **Ratio of staff : pupils.** – see Appendix 2 for details.
- **The competence of school supervisory staff.** – The Group Leader must be aware of his/her own competence and that of accompanying colleagues and to use these as effectively as possible. If in doubt, the Leader must be prepared to accept advice from experts. First Aid qualifications are a relevant consideration here.
- **Checking the competence of external providers.** – see Appendix 5 for details.
- **Transport.** – Virtually all school visits from HHGS will use vehicles from the school's own fleet (Hulme Hall Coaches Ltd). Leaders must be aware of the regulations governing transport companies ie, the number of driving hours permitted and the numbers of drivers that might be required. This could have implications ie, upon the cost of the visit. The normal bus codes of conduct will apply (see School Guide). Members of staff are permitted to transport children in their own vehicles if they have firstly sought the permission of the parents and if they are covered by their own car insurance policy to do so. As the only school nationally to operate its own bus company, we are uniquely placed to have greater control over this aspect of planning than most other schools.

- **Ongoing risk assessment.** – Risk assessment must not be viewed as something that is done exclusively before a visit. The approach to risk assessment should be fluid and ongoing during the visit itself. The Leader should indicate the intention to review his/her assessments in the light of changing circumstances ie, weather, injury to a pupil or a key member of staff. Record any changes, with reasons and add to your risk assessment. The Headmaster delegates the authority to make such decisions to the Group Leader.

## **Appendix 2 Supervision**

- The level of adult supervision must realistically reflect the purpose and nature of the visit. Hence the size of the group, age, ability, gender, health, behaviour, special needs and disability must be taken into account. The duration of the journey and the organisation of the accommodation could also be crucial factors. Ultimately, it is best to ‘play safe’ and be generous with staffing.
- While each trip must be judged on its merits, the school recommends the following **minimum** staff:pupil ratios :-

Nursery & Kindergarten	1 : 4
Years 1 – 3	1 : 6
Years 4 – 6	1 : 15
Years 7 – 11	1 : 20

Where the school is visiting abroad and/or a remote area or is undertaking a high risk activity, a higher staff : pupil ratio will be required.

Where a mixed visit is being undertaken, both male and female teachers must accompany the visit.

- For trips abroad, at least one member of staff should be fluent in the local language.
- The Group leader should explain clearly and preferably in writing, the responsibilities of each member of the accompanying staff. A briefing session is considered best practice.
- All staff should carry a list of pupils on the visit. Checks and roll calls should be frequent and a roll call must always be called when pupils rejoin the transport before departure.
- According to context, pupils must not wander around unsupervised, but in groups of at least 2 or 3. Where appropriate, maps of the local area could be distributed.
- Non-contracted adult volunteers (ie; parents) can only accompany visits with the express consent of the Headmaster. CRB disclosure will also be required, depending upon the nature of the visit.
- To identify members of the group, each pupil must be given a card showing the name, address and telephone number of the group’s accommodation, as well as the name of the school and Group Leader.

## **Appendix 3 Informing Parents and Obtaining Consent**

- Once approved, the Group Leader must inform parents in writing of the visit, its purpose, duration and content. The Headmaster must approve such letters before they are issued to pupils.

- In the case of residential or overseas visits, the letter will need to be followed up by a briefing/meeting at which parental queries can be answered. A representative from the tour company or centre should attend this meeting.
- Parents should understand what is expected of their children in terms of behaviour, activities etc, and be reassured of the school's plans to contact them in the case of an emergency.
- Parents should be informed of equipment that will be provided by the school/centre and that which they need to provide themselves.
- Parents may wish to see a copy of the risk assessment. The Group Leader should have a couple to hand at the briefing session.
- Medical questionnaires should be issued to parents so that health records are fully updated ie; to take account of current medication.
- The school must show **'informed consent'** by parents. Therefore, the letter to parents must clarify the activities involved. The consent reply slip should ascertain further information regarding abstention from certain of the activities.
- **Under no circumstances must a pupil be taken off site unless parental consent has been obtained in writing on a suitably drafted consent reply form. In the absence of such, the Group Leader must decline to take the pupil on the visit, irrespective of whether payment has been received.**

**Permission granted via telephone, e mail or otherwise is not an acceptable substitute for written parental consent.**

**If there is any doubt regarding the authenticity of a 'parental signature', the Leader must contact the parent immediately (and before the visit takes place) to clarify the situation.**

#### **Appendix 4 The Itinerary**

- A succinct itinerary provides a timetable for the activities during the visit (include travel time). A fundamental issue is the demarcation of responsibility between the school and centre staff (where applicable). The Leader must know when he/she is responsible for pupil safety and when the centre's staff will assume the responsibility ie;

10.00 -11.00 'free time' - school staff to supervise

11.00 -13.00 canoeing - specified members of centre staff to supervise.

The demarcation of responsibility must be indicated clearly in the risk assessment.

- Parents must be provided with the itinerary for residential, adventure and overseas visits, before the visit takes place.

#### **Appendix 5 Using External Agencies**

There are occasions ie, adventure holidays, residential and overseas visits, where an external agent, such as a travel company or activity centre, will need to be used, in such cases, especially when using the agency for the first time, it is important to carry out a preliminary investigation.

## **Appendix 6 Insurance**

- The school carries an extensive insurance policy covering all activities both on and off site. However, it is prudent to consult the Bursar, who will confirm that the proposed activities are covered by the school's brokers.
- Parents must be made aware of any insurance cover that has been arranged. Copies of travel insurance arranged through the Bursar's office must be sent to parents.
- Confirm the insurance cover held by activity centres and travel agents. The Bursar will be happy to do this on your behalf.
- The school's insurance policy does **not** cover the transport of pupils in staff vehicles. Staff should check that their car insurance permits them to do this, since liability will be theirs in the case of an accident.

## **Appendix 7 Discipline and Sanctions**

- Normal school rules will apply on all school visits. Such rules will be vigorously enforced and any breaches dealt with at the time under the terms of the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. The Group Leader should brief pupils to remind them of their responsibilities.
- Pupils should be given clear instructions regarding any rules that are specific to the visit ie. dress code, out of bounds areas and lights out.
- No pupil under the age of 18 years will be permitted to consume alcohol. Pupils over the age of 18 years can do so with the written permission of the Headmaster and the relevant parents/guardians.
- Smoking is strictly forbidden.
- The use and/or possession of illegal drugs is strictly forbidden.
- Breaches of discipline on visits will be reported on return and dealt with under the terms of the Behaviour and Discipline policy. Pupils must be reminded not to assume that standards of behaviour will be allowed to 'slip' on a visit and that normal sanctions, up to and including permanent exclusion, still apply.
- Should a pupil's behaviour be deemed so bad (ie; drunkenness, abusive language, refusals to accept the instructions of adults, et al) as to be intolerable and/or a risk to the safety of others on the trip, he/she will be sent home. Any additional costs in such instances are to be met by the parent, including those of an accompanying adult where the pupil is under 16 years of age.
- Parents and pupils need to be fully informed about the range of sanctions which can be used on a visit. Should either a pupil or a parent indicate that they are reluctant or unwilling to accept these sanctions, the pupil must not be allowed to go on the visit.
- Such sanctions may include: -  
loss of free time, cleaning duties, confiscation of money, 'grounding', sending to bed early, prevention of participation in all or any part of visit, sending home.  
On return, incident reports will be entered into the pupil's file and parents will be informed in writing by the Group Leader.

## **Appendix 8 Emergency Procedures**

Despite the best planning and risk assessments, there may still be incidents requiring an immediate response ie. an injury to a pupil or member of staff. Prior to the visit, the Group

Leader and Headmaster will need to have an agreed action plan to cope with such situations. The details of this plan will vary according to the nature of the visit and the seriousness of the incident.

- Group Leaders must ensure that a first aid kit is taken on every visit (see First Aid Policy). At least one member of staff on the visit should be a qualified first aider.
- Group Leaders must ensure that pupils are fully briefed about the local condition/surroundings. Pupils must also be told what to do if they encounter any difficulty or emergency and that they know where to find the Group Leader or other adult member of the party.
- All adults on the visit should have a full list of pupils and their parents' emergency contact numbers.
- Parents must be informed at the earliest opportunity if an emergency occurs.
- In the event of injury or illness, parents should be contacted as soon as possible. Details should be entered onto an accident form, take any eyewitness statements etc, as in accordance with normal procedures (see Health and Safety and First Aid Policies).
- The Headmaster will act as the point of contact at school in order to transmit information to parents in certain circumstances ie. late returns. On residential visits, a contact telephone number ie. the hotel, must be given to parents before the visit.
- Adults on the trip are encouraged to take mobile phones. The Headmaster should be given these numbers before the visit.
- In conjunction with the Group Leader, the Headmaster will help to arrange contingency plans for eventualities that may occur ie. the early return of pupils for health or disciplinary reasons.
- The Headmaster will be available to the Group Leader for emergency contact.