

EDUCATION VISITS POLICY

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1. Purpose

The Purpose of this policy is to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of students and staff on educational visits or activities that take place off the school premises. It should be read in conjunction with the school's health and safety and first aid policy.

Health and safety responsibilities derive from the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated regulations. The school has a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- The health, safety, and welfare of students in school and on off site visits
- The health, safety, and welfare of staff in school and on off site visits

Employees have a responsibility under health and safety legislation too. In short this is to:

- Take responsible care of their own and others' health and safety.
- Co-operate with their employees over safety matters.
- Carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions.
- Inform the employer of any serious health and safety risks.
- Develop their own knowledge of health and safety issues and attend health and safety training.
- Assess the risks of activities.
- Introduce measures to control those risks.
- Tell their employers about these measures.

2. Educational Visits

Students can derive a great deal of educational benefit from taking part in trips and visits arranged by the school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences that may not be readily available within the classroom setting. Visits can help students to develop:

- Investigative skills
- Planning and reviewing skills
- Independence skills
- Social skills
- Relationships
- Knowledge of the world around them
- Knowledge of environmental issues
- Site specific knowledge

3. Roles in Organising an Educational Visit

Educational visits can take many forms including:

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- Day trips to places of interest
- Residential course
- Outdoor education activities
- Sports activities away from the school site
- Individual visits by pupils as part of their curriculum

For the planning and carrying out of an off site educational visit, the personnel involved should be the head teacher, the teacher who is organising the visit and the person with parental responsibility for the trip: the pupil's parent or caregiver, should give consent.

Any visit off site must be approved in advance by the head teacher. At Howard House School, a 'Summary of Information for Educational Visits' sheet must be submitted to the head teacher by the project leader. This will include details of:

1. The educational focus of the visit
2. The details of the visit including planned times and address of venue
3. The arrangements for transportation
4. Supervision of the pupil(s) when on an educational visit (supervising adults must be clear what to do in case of an emergency)
5. First aid provision for the visit
6. Emergency procedures

A completed risk assessment for the visit must accompany the 'Summary of Information for Educational Visits' sheet and this should be signed by the teacher leading the trip, as well as the head teacher. A staff led exploratory visit may also be necessary for this purpose.

The potential hazards which this policy refers to should not discourage teachers from arranging trips. No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally incident free, but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do happen nonetheless. The management of health and safety on visits is a crucial part of the school's overall policy of health and safety. The policy sets out principles, rather than trying to cover every eventuality, leaving it to teachers' professional judgement how to apply those principles.

The policy attempts to summarise the key points from the legislation listed below, but it cannot be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law.

4. Responsibilities for Visits

Legal Framework

1. Under Health and Safety at Work legislation employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty to ensure, 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.
2. These duties apply to all school visits. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils also have a common law duty to act as any reasonably prudent parent would do in the same circumstances.

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5. Approval for Visits

It is good practice for the school to have at least two members of staff involved in the planning and management of educational visits. This will usually be the head teacher and the teacher leading the trip (project leader).

6. The Role of the Head Teacher

The head teacher has the responsibility for the sanctioning and authorisation of visits and that the visit is organised within the guidelines stated in this policy. He/She should make sure that visits comply with the DfE guidelines.

Essentially, the head teacher must ensure that:

- All necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins.
- The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place.
- The project leader has experience in supervising the age group(s) 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.
- The ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate.
- Arrangements have been made for the medical needs and special educational needs of all the pupils.

7. The role of the Project Leader

The project should ensure that:

- Adequate first-aid provision will be available.
- There is a contingency plan for any delays including a late return home.
- The mode of travel is appropriate.
- They have provided adequate information about the visit to the pupil's care manager and gained the approval of the care manager for the completed risk assessment.
- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover.
- The 'Summary of Information for Educational Visits' sheet has been completed satisfactorily.
- A completed risk assessment form for the visit has been completed and attached to the 'Summary of Information for Educational Visits' sheet.
- They have obtained the head teacher's prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place.
- The purpose of the educational visit is appropriate to the pupils' age and level of understanding and forms part of their educational programme.
- They are familiar with the visit location/centre where the activity will take place.
- The visit is appropriately insured*
- They have taken account of relevant health and safety legislation.
- They review regularly undertaken visits/activities and advise the head teacher where adjustments may be necessary.
- The ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group.
- They consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health and safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality.

In short, the project leader must ensure that all adults taking part in the visit 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.

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8. Students

The group leader should make it clear to students that they must:

- Not take unnecessary risks.
- Follow the instructions of the leader and other supervisors, including those at the venue of the visit.
- Dress and behave sensibly and responsibly.

9. Parents and Caregivers

The project leader will need to inform parents and caregivers of all relevant aspects of the visit (only residential) in advance of it taking place and should ensure they have communicated with the parent and/or caregiver to complete the risk assessment form prior to making the visit.

The pupil's parent and/or caregiver should ensure that he/she:

- Provides the project leader with an emergency contact number.
- Signs the risk assessment/consent form.
- Give the project leader information about their child's emotional, psychological and physical health that might be relevant to the visit.

10. Risk Assessment

In practice, risk assessments will be carried out by the project leader. An assessment should be completed well before the visit, and should be approved by the head teacher and the pupil's care manager.

A risk assessment for the visit need not be complex but it should be comprehensive. It does not generally require technical formulae or professional health and safety expertise. But specialised information for some visits may be necessary.

A formal assessment of the risks that might be met on a visit should have the aim of preventing the risks or reducing them. Pupils must not be placed in situations which expose them to an unacceptable level of risk. Safety must always be the prime consideration. If the risks cannot be contained then the visit must not take place.

The risk assessment should 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 group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?

Frequent visits to local venues may not need a new risk assessment every time. Nevertheless, it is essential not to become complacent. A generic assessment of the risks of any such visits should be made at regular intervals, and careful monitoring should take place.

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11. Exploratory Visit

The group leader should undertake an exploratory visit, wherever that is possible to:

- Ensure at first hand that the venue is suitable to meet the aims and objectives of the school visit.
- Obtain advice from parents and/or caregivers where required
- Assess potential areas and levels of risk.
- Become familiar with the area before taking a group of pupils there.

If in the last resort an exploratory visit is not feasible then the group leader will need to consider how to complete an adequate assessment of the risks. A minimum measure would be to obtain specific information by email/letter from the venue.

12. Managing Risks

Students 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 students 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 will be given the full training they need so they can keep themselves and students safe and manage risks effectively.

Off-site activities and visits form an integral part of the curriculum at Howard House School. It is recognised that they form an essential vehicle for pupils to promote their cultural capital, enhance their learning and to prepare them better for post school life. However, it is essential that such activities and visits are carried out as safely as possible. Thus, they take place after significant and detailed planning and taking account of all risk factors involved and how they are best managed.

At Howard House School we take a common sense and proportionate approach, remembering that the purpose of risk assessment and management is to help children undertake activities safely, not to prevent activities from taking place.

Written consent is usually only requested for activities that need a higher level of risk management or those that take place outside school hours. Upon admission, the responsible parent/carer, needs to complete a consent form which covers a child's participation in any of these types of activities throughout their time at Howard House School. These include adventure activities, off-site sporting fixtures and educational visits linked to the curriculum.