

RATIONALE

For many years it has been accepted by teachers that not all planned pupil-learning takes place within the confines of the school itself. The wider community and the world beyond school provide rich and varied opportunities for young people to extend their education. The Northern Ireland Curriculum recognises this fact and in many programmes of study there is a requirement to provide occasions for pupils to be involved in activities which are designed to enhance their learning beyond the school site.

While the benefits of off-site learning, in the form of educational visits, are well recognised and fully accepted, it is essential that everyone involved in organising and supervising such visits should adhere to the school's code of practice for educational visits, in order to promote and safeguard the well-being of everyone who is involved.

Following the school's code of practice will give everyone the security of knowing that agreed procedures are in operation. However, it must be acknowledged that in any activity involving young people there is a possibility of some unforeseen occurrence despite the fact that all reasonable precautions may have been taken by those obliged to exercise care. Codes of practice and detailed guidelines cannot guarantee absolute safety; they are designed to ensure as far as possible the security and well-being of everyone

involved in off-site activities.

CODE OF PRACTICE

AIMS

- To encourage the use of educational visits to enhance the quality of pupils' learning experiences across the curriculum
- To create and establish a code of practice for everyone involved in the organisation of educational visits beyond the school site
- To reach an understanding of the need for all staff to abide by this code of practice, and the reasons for its existence
- To reassure staff that they will be supported by the management of the school when provided they operate within the school's code of practice

OBJECTIVES

- To detail the steps in the procedure for organising and supervising educational visits including what to do in case of emergency
- To delineate clearly the responsibilities of those in charge of educational visits to ensure the safety of all involved
- To create and provide a set of standard documentation for use by everyone involved in educational visits

STRUCTURES AND ORGANISATION

THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors, while wholeheartedly supporting the provision of educational journeys/visits, requires that every journey/visit which is organised by the school shall:

- have an educational purpose related to the curriculum which the school provides to meet the needs of its children

- be organised in accordance with procedures
 - be approved, prior to the journey/visit taking place by the Principal and, in the case of the visit involving any of the following -
 - (a) overnight stays or
 - (b) travel by air or sea or
 - (c) hazardous activities
- by the Governors.

THE PRINCIPAL

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that:

- all school journeys/visits should have an educational objective and should complement the curriculum provided for the pupils
- the journey/visit is planned and organised in accordance with the school's agreed procedures
- that those adults who accompany school parties are fully competent to do so
- that all accompanying adults have been appropriately vetted
- that the supervision ratio of teachers to pupils will, as far as possible, ensure the safety of the pupils at all times

It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Governors (where appropriate) to decide whether or not a specific visit goes ahead. For this reason it is essential that the Principal is consulted at the earliest opportunity when any educational visit is envisaged. Staff who are considering the organisation of an educational visit of any kind should complete form EV1 and submit it to the Principal, giving as much notice of the proposed visit as possible. The details contained on form EV1 will enable the Governors and/or the Principal to decide whether the proposed activity should go ahead. The completed form will be returned to the organiser after it has been signed by the Principal. A copy will be kept for the record.

The Principal will also liaise with the Finance Manager to ensure that insurance cover is in place for the activity involved. Permission to go ahead with the trip will indicate that insurance arrangements are adequate. While it is essential that every school visit is carefully planned and supervised, only one EV1 form will be necessary where a programme of regular visits or a series of visits is planned provided full details are included on the form.

Organisers MUST have the approval of the Principal before undertaking any off-site visit and MUST take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the pupils involved.

STAFF/PUPIL RATIOS

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that the supervision ratio of teachers to pupils will, as far as possible, ensure the safety of the pupils at all times.

The diversity of visits and journeys and the factors governing supervision make it difficult to prescribe the precise levels of supervision which cover all circumstances. However the teacher-pupil ratio must be appropriate to the planned activity, taking into account:

- the nature of the activity
- the degree of the danger likely to be encountered
- the experience and expertise of the staff involved
- the ages and competences of the pupils

It is recommended that no lengthy journey/visit should be undertaken without a minimum of two adults in attendance, one of whom must be a teacher. (Professional bus drivers should not be

considered as supervisors).

Where a trip is organised to a centre with its own supervisory staff, supervision levels may be adjusted to take account of the level and type of supervision provided by that staff.

The staff/pupil ratios suggested by BELB for visits where the element of risk to be encountered is similar to that normally encountered in daily life, eg visits to sites of historic interest, most field work, local walks, etc are:

- **Key Stage 1** **P1 and P2** **1:6 children**
 P3 and P4 **1:8 children**

- **Key Stage 2: 3: 4** **1:15 children**

For all visits abroad the ratio should be

- **1 adult to 10 children**

When these staff/pupil ratios are not met an appropriate risk assessment must be made prior to the activity.

THE ORGANISERS OF THE OFF-SITE VISIT

It is the responsibility of the organiser of an off-site visit:

- to provide for the Principal detailed information about the proposed visit/activity, in good time for a decision to be taken about the viability of the trip [EV1(A) or EV1(B)]
- **A minimum of 4 weeks may be necessary for the completion of appropriate vetting procedures for accompanying adults.**
- to ensure that detailed information is then forwarded to the parents of pupils involved in the visit

- to receive **IN ADVANCE OF THE TRIP** a parental consent form containing
 - (a) the written agreement of the parent/guardian permitting their child to participate in the proposed activity (Form EV2 *see below). [Details of date, time, venue, etc. should be written on the form by the Organiser of the visit, with sufficient copies made of this version for issue to the pupils. This ensures that a uniform version of the details of the visit is sent to all parents]
 - (b) details of any illness or disability and approval for any medical treatment necessary including emergency treatment (Form EV3)
- to provide a detailed itinerary for the Principal well before departure
- to provide the Principal and all accompanying adults with a list of names of all those in the party prior to departure. In the case of overnight stays this list should include addresses and contact telephone numbers. **2 copies of this list and 1 copy of the itinerary should be given to the Principal's P.A. who will deliver 1 copy to the Principal and the 2nd copy to the Designated Teacher together with the itinerary and school mobile phone and charger.**
- to make adequate arrangements for any pupil with specific medical problems

Pupils who have a particular medical condition should be warned of the need for their parents to inform the teacher in charge of the correct procedures to follow with regard to their condition. They should also bring with them appropriate supplies of necessary medication

After receiving form EV3 the organiser may wish to contact a pupil's parents to request a Doctor's letter giving more specific information about the girl's condition

- to report immediately, or as soon as is practicable, to the

Principal or designated member of the Senior Management Team in the event of an emergency occurring. Appropriate incident/accident forms should be taken on the visit and should be completed on site

- * **It is essential that the completed parental consent form is received for each pupil BEFORE the time of the journey/visit. If a pupil does not bring the completed form before the journey/visit she must not be allowed to take part.**
- **After the visit, completed EV2 and any EV3 forms should be sent to reception to be filed in the pupils' files.**

ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITS INVOLVING OVERNIGHT STAYS; LIAISON WITH PARENTS

1 Parental Consent

Parents/guardians of pupils who wish to participate in an overnight school journey/visit must be informed about it, in writing, at the earliest possible date and given details of the purpose, destination, dates, travel arrangements, planned activities and insurance. Organisers must obtain parental consent, in writing, concerning:

- the participation of their daughter in the visit and in all planned activities
- the administration of medicine should the need arise during the period of the visit/journey

2 Pupil/Adult Profile

The organisers should require parents/guardians to complete form EV3(A). All accompanying adults must complete form EV3(B).

3 **Register of Pupils and Adults**

When the organisers have obtained all the necessary information a register should be compiled giving details of all pupils and adults. A copy of this register or form EV3 (for all persons on the visit) must be given to the Principal and the designated member of SMT. All adults should have a copy of this register or form EV3 (for all persons on the visit) in their possession at all times during the trip.

When the above information is received it must be treated with professional care and divulged only to anyone with a proper need to know.

4 **E111 Form**

When travelling abroad an E111 form must be completed for each member of the group by the parent of the pupil and by each accompanying adult.

5 **Itinerary**

Prior to the departure of the group a detailed itinerary should be prepared. This should include contact numbers of the party in case of an emergency. The itinerary should be given to the pupils AND to their parents as well as the Principal and the designated member of SMT.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The organiser of a school journey/visit must give careful consideration to how pupils will be transported to and from the chosen destination(s). In making travel arrangements considerations of cost and convenience must never outweigh those of safety. When

travelling by car or bus organisers should be especially careful to avoid any form of overcrowding on the vehicles.

In most instances travel will be by the school bus or some form of public transport. In the latter case it is the responsibility of the vehicle hire company to ensure that vehicles are safe and that drivers are competent. Use should only be made of reputable firms. If the organiser is in doubt about any aspect of the operation of the firm in question, alternative transport should if at all possible be found. The school bus can only be operated by authorised drivers specifically covered by the school's insurance arrangements.

Many private motor insurance company policies do not permit the transport of pupils under certain conditions and teachers may not use their private cars or permit the same to be used unless specifically insured to do so.

Where the travel arrangements are the responsibility of the parents, teachers should not intervene in the organisation of the travel arrangements.

If a pupil who is a car driver wishes to use her own car she must bring to the organiser a letter from her parents in which they accept responsibility for this decision. Pupils who are themselves car drivers should **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** be allowed to drive others as part of the school's travel arrangements for an organised visit or trip.

Full details of travel arrangements should be given, in writing, to parents whose children are taking part in a school visit/trip.

INSURANCE

It is essential that organisers of school journeys ensure that the parents of the pupils involved fully understand the situation regarding insurance.

Parents should be required to sign a declaration which clearly shows that they have been informed of the position regarding insurance, that

they understand the implications of the situation and that having understood they agree to their children participating in the trip and the activities planned (see Form EV2).

Organisers should always obtain additional travel insurance for proposed visits involving travel outside Northern Ireland. This may be obtained through travel agents or tour operators and the cost is added to the price which the child pays for the trip. Should such insurance need to be obtained the details, e.g. rates of compensation or limits of cover, must be made clear to parents in advance of the trip.

DUTIES OF TEACHERS IN CHARGE

For every trip there will be an organiser. During the trip one member of staff will be the designated teacher in charge. This should be clear to all those involved in the journey, both teachers and pupils. This person is the central figure in the trip and takes prime responsibility for the smooth running of the venture and the well-being of those participating.

It is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of a school visit to ensure:

- that the pupils are adequately supervised at all times and that parents are aware of the nature of the supervision arrangements (See page 8)
- that all other supervisors and group leaders are aware of their individual and collective responsibilities
- that as far as possible and in advance of the pupils being admitted to it, the intended site for a visit is suitable for the pupils involved
- that the activities to be undertaken are suitable for the nature of

the site and the weather conditions existing at the time

- that all supervisors and group leaders have the appropriate, valid, up to date, recognised qualifications
- that (s)he is alert to potential hazards, ensuring that the pupils are made aware of these and that any necessary steps are taken to avoid or minimise the risks attendant upon such hazards
- that (s)he is thoroughly familiar with the character and capabilities of the pupils in her/his charge
- that (s)he is thoroughly familiar with all emergency procedures and acquaints all members of the party with these
- that there is a clear insistence that all pupils behave at all times in a manner that is both acceptable and consistent with their safety
- that in the case of the PE Department, the Duke of Edinburgh Award etc, where specific guidelines are available, these should be operational during the course of such activities

DUTIES OF ACCOMPANYING ADULTS

Every teacher (and supervisory adult) has a statutory responsibility to ensure, as far as is possible, the safety and welfare of the pupils in his/her care. The teacher must take the same reasonable care of the pupils, as a responsible parent would take of his/her children, having regard to all the circumstances.

Where overnight stays are involved this means that the teachers in charge are in the position of responsible parents, who sleep knowing that they have taken every possible precaution to ensure that the young people in their care are safe and, as far as is possible, free from risk.

In the context of an educational visit the pupils must have appropriate supervision * (see note below) at all times. They must not be left without appropriate supervision at any venue, whether it be indoors or out of doors. No location, including overnight accommodation, can be guaranteed to be risk free and therefore no location may be regarded as being one in which pupils may be left without appropriate supervision. When, for any reason, a group splits up, each sub group must be placed under the supervision of a specified adult at all times.

The level of supervision must be adequate, taking into consideration:

- the number of participants in the group
- the nature of the site
- the age, experience, capabilities and limitations of the pupils involved
- the experience and capabilities of the supervisors and the tasks which the supervisors are undertaking

* This includes both **direct** supervision, where the adults in charge are in immediate contact with the pupils, and **indirect** supervision, where adequate and appropriate arrangements have been clearly drawn up and are understood by the pupils, who can use these to make contact with the adults when necessary. In cases of indirect supervision, parents should always be informed beforehand. The appropriate **Staff/Pupil Ratios** will be determined by the Principal in the light of the details of the trip which are included on the EVI form. (See Page 3)

DUTIES OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

The main role of the designated teacher is to liaise between the group, the school and parents in the event of an emergency and to give whatever assistance is possible given the distance between them.

Prior to a Visit

- the name of a school contact should be identified (a designated member of the Senior Management Team). The school contact should be accessible as far as is practicable at all times throughout the visit. The Principal acts as reserve contact. The school telephone number and the school mobile phone number should be given to all persons on the visit as emergency contact numbers. Contact lines may become busy in the event of an incident and alternative numbers may be useful
- the designated teacher and the Principal should receive copies of:

the register of names and contact numbers of all persons on the visit

OR

form EV3 for all persons on the visit. The designated teacher and the Principal should be able to access these forms at all times

the itinerary of the visit

- the school mobile and charger should be taken by the designated teacher for the duration of the visit

During a Visit

The main factors for the school contact to consider include:

- completing the EV Incident Form (EV4(B))
- ensuring that the group leader is in control of the emergency and establishing if any assistance is required from the school base
- contacting parents. Details of parents' contact numbers need to be available at all times while the group is on the visit. The school contact should act as a link between the group and parents.

Parents should be kept as well informed as possible at all stages of the emergency . Parents of the remainder of the party may need to be contacted, informed of the incident and reassured that their daughter was not involved, particularly if the incident would attract media attention

- liaison with the Principal and/or Chairman of the Board of Governors. The school contact should act as a link between the group and the Principal and/or Chairman of the Board of Governors and arrange for the group to receive assistance, if necessary
- notifying the insurers and/or the tour operator. The Group leader may request this is done by the school contact
- liaison with the media contact. If a serious incident occurs, the school contact should liaise with the designated media contact as soon as possible

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

General

Teachers in charge of pupils during a visit have a duty of care to make sure that the pupils 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 life-saving action in an extreme situation.

If an accident happens, the priorities are to:

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

Emergency procedures framework during the visit.

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the main factors to consider include:

- establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible
- ensure that all the group are safe and looked after
- establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention for them
- ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident and that all group members are following the emergency procedures
- ensure that a teacher accompanies casualties to hospital and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together
- notify the police if necessary
- notify the British Embassy/Consulate if necessary
- inform the school contact. A school contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit
- details of the incident to pass on to the school should include: nature, date and time of incident; names of casualties and details of their injuries; names of others involved so that parents can be reassured; action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom)
- contact the provider/tour operator (this may be done by the school contact)
- notify insurers, especially if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the school contact);
- write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence by completing an Accident Report Form and a Follow Up Accident Statement Form as soon as possible
- keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident
- no-one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to a designated media contact in the home area
- no-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other

parties

Media Contact

The principal should liaise with the school contact, the group leader and, where appropriate, the emergency services. In the event of an emergency all media enquiries should be referred to the principal. The name of any casualty should not be given to the media.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The most vital element in contingency planning is the setting out of clear and well known procedures in the event of an emergency. For example, it is essential to prepare a “lost” and “recall” procedure before embarking on a trip. The actual procedure will be dependent on the environment e.g. in a building the instruction may be to stay put until found, while out of doors there may be a designated rendezvous point.

Actual procedures will vary according to the circumstances of the visit, but certain prerequisites are common:

- the procedure must be well known to all and it must be planned in detail in advance
- in the case of overnight stays it is essential to ensure that pupils are made aware of evacuation procedures as soon as possible
- the teacher in charge of the party must be alerted at the earliest opportunity when an emergency arises
- the specified adult who has control of a sub group shall take responsibility for that group

In any emergency common sense should be the guiding principle. Where previously agreed procedures prove inoperable then each adult should take any necessary action, guided by:

- a knowledge and full understanding of what are the

specific roles of each adult who is involved

- the need to keep communication lines open

Comments or interviews should not be made to or with the media.

It is not possible to lay plans that will cover all eventualities that may happen during a journey or visit. This, however, is not an argument against the need for contingency planning. There are areas and circumstances which can be anticipated:

- **Weather conditions** - Any programme whose implementation depends on fair weather should be supported by an alternative programme of activities which is independent of weather conditions
- **Travel arrangements** - In the nature of journeys, delay, re-routing and cancellation are always a possibility. Anticipation of these variations will involve consideration of how to engage the pupils during lengthy delays and how to inform their parents if such delays occur on the homeward bound journey
- **Illness/injury to staff or pupils** - If one of the party has a first aid qualification this should be known, and, in any event, one adult should be allocated the role of tending to the unwell/injured. When trips involve overnight stays, the location of clinics/hospitals should be noted, and, where medical systems are different to those at home they should be known, preferably before arrival or as soon as possible thereafter. Where a member of the party requires hospitalisation, or needs to be brought home, the liaison person at school (the designated member of the Senior Management Team) must be contacted so that parents can be alerted

EV FORMS

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- EV1 (A) Application for approval to organise an EV
- EV1 (B) Application for approval to organise an EV that involves
- (a) overnight stays
 - (b) travel by air or sea
 - (c) hazardous activities
- EV2 (A) Parental Consent Form: School Providing Transport
- EV2 (B) Parental Consent Form: Parents Providing Transport
- EV2 (C) Parental Consent Form: Sixth Formers not accompanied by teacher
- EV3 (A) Medical Form: Strathearn Pupils
- EV3 (A) (*Penrhyn*) Medical Form: Penrhyn Pupils
- EV3 (B) Medical Form: Accompanying Adults
- Notification of an EV (for Staffroom notice board etc)
- EV4 (A) Incident Form: Group Leader
- EV4 (B) Incident Form: Designated Teacher
- Register of pupils and adults on a school visit
- Accident Report Form
- Follow-Up Accident Statement Form
- Incident Log

The group leader of an educational visit that includes (a) overnight stays, (b) travel by air or sea, or (c) hazardous activities **must** bring copies of the following forms on the visit:

EV4 (A) Incident Form
Accident Report Form
Follow-Up Accident Statement Form
Incident Log

Group leaders of other educational visits may also wish to bring copies of the above forms.