

# **Thorpe Primary School Educational Visits Policy**

## **Rationale**

Well planned and executed educational visits provide our pupils with valuable experiences which enhance their learning at school. Providing a variety of ‘real-life’ opportunities for our children enables them to achieve a fuller understanding of the world around them through direct experience. Educational visits are an essential element of good primary practice.

## **Purposes**

Educational Visits can provide stimulus and support to work being covered as part of the school curriculum. It may be that a visit provides an effective stimulus at the start of a unit of work; alternatively teachers may decide to use an educational visit at any time during a project to enhance and support the curriculum.

Wherever or whatever the venue, teachers should ensure that the educational benefits to the children are maximised.

## **Guidelines**

The organisation of an educational visit is crucial to its success. With rigorous organisation and control, a visit should provide a rich, learning experience for the pupils.

A visit constitutes any trip off the school grounds, including local walks, sporting fixtures and residential.

The following guidelines support the planning and implementation of educational visits organised at Thorpe Primary School Primary School. This is a summary only. Full guidelines should be consulted in the ‘Learning Beyond the Classroom’ file, available from Emma Anderson, the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC).

## **Responsibilities**

### **General**

1) This section clarifies the major responsibilities of all parties involved in the visit.

It should:

- help to ensure that no vital issue is overlooked
- clarify organisational responsibility
- encourage awareness of the vital issues of safety and well-being
- ensure appropriate support for leaders

### **The visit leader**

2) In addition to the responsibilities implicit in the above paragraphs, the visit leader will have overall responsibility for management of the visit and must:

- follow LA and governing body regulations, guidelines and policies
- recognise that whilst leading the visit he / she is representing the Headteacher, school and LA
- ensure that all accompanying adults, whether employees or volunteers, are fully briefed on their roles and responsibilities
- ensure the overall maintenance of supervision, order and discipline at all times
- make adequate arrangements for the safety and well-being of all persons, particularly young people at all times
- introduce appropriate child protection measures
- make appropriate and adequate preparations for emergencies in conjunction with your EVC and ensure that all accompanying staff are familiar with these procedures
- arrange for clearly understood delegation in the absence of the visit leader
- ensure that the visit and activities are suitable for the group
- ensure that accompanying adults are aware of any special educational or medical needs
- prepare & organise a comprehensive risk management system including obtaining the EVC written approval

### **Leaders / employees**

3) In addition to the general responsibilities outlined above, leaders must recognise that they act as employees, whenever the visit takes place. They have a responsibility for:

- maintaining order and discipline
- safeguarding the health, well-being and safety of the young people in their care
- informing the visit leader of any relevant incidents affecting, or likely to affect, group members

### **Adult volunteers**

4) Volunteers who are not employees at the school must:

- understand and agree to the expectations of them
- understand their relationship to the young people, staff and visit leader
- recognise the limits of their responsibilities
- ensure they are not left in sole charge of young people unless this has been formally agreed through a risk assessment process

- follow instructions from staff
- raise concerns for young people's welfare with the visit leader

5) Adult volunteers must understand that the principle of 'duty of care' will apply to all who are in a supervisory capacity, though it is likely that courts would expect a greater level of care from staff than from voluntary helpers.

### **The educational visits co-ordinator**

6) The functions of the EVC are to:

- work as delegated on behalf of the governors
- support the headteachers and governors with approval decisions
- ensure the competence of the staff and volunteers to lead or otherwise supervise a visit
- organise the training of leaders and others accompanying a visit
- ensure CRB checks are in place as necessary
- ensure that parental consent (or refusal) is obtained
- organise the emergency arrangements and ensures emergency contact for each visit
- review systems and monitor practice

### **The Head Teacher**

7) The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that governing body and LA policy is implemented. Under his / her conditions of employment is a responsibility for ensuring that all activities are properly planned, appropriately supervised and risks assessed by a competent person.

In particular heads must ensure:

- that they delegate tasks to EVC as appropriate
- that the visit leader is an appropriately experienced and competent member of staff
- the suitability, number and competence of all adults accompanying or instructing the party
- that adequate child protection measures are in place
- proper and effective support structures are in place in the event of difficulty or emergency, including means of contacting the Education Officer (schools) and the LA
- notification approval of the visit to the LA, where required, and that appropriate insurance cover is in place
- that visits are evaluated to inform future visits

8) Headteachers are encouraged to review visit procedures with their governing bodies on an annual basis in order to ensure that they reflect the current thinking of the governing body and are up-to-date in relation to staff changes.

### **Governing bodies**

9) As part of its responsibility for general conduct, each governing body must:

- ensure that a policy exists for the co-ordination of visits and for their effective and safe management
- assure itself that appropriate risk management procedures are in place
- ensure that the LA is notified when appropriate
- determine what types of visit may require its specific attention
- determine its procedures for responding to a major emergency
- have a Charging Policy

## **The LA**

10) As employer, the Local Authority is responsible for the actions of its employees whilst acting in the course of their employment. By association this includes responsibility for the safety and well-being of young people in its care and volunteers assisting in the delivery of educational visits.

11) To ensure these responsibilities are met, the Authority provides this guidance document as a statement of good practice and will continue to provide up-to-date advice, a system of monitoring certain activities, training opportunities for leaders and an emergency support service.

## **How to organise a visit**

A safe and successful visit is started at early stages with good planning. The Section is presented in 5 parts :

- Planning and organisation
- Managing risks
- The visit
- Ratios and supervision
- Forms and checklists

In following this Section's guidance, staff will have already completed the first stage of risk management which is concerned with good planning and following appropriate guidance.

### **A. Planning and organisation**

#### **Management of risk**

1) When a visit is planned effectively, combined with good leadership and fully informed parents who give consent on that basis, then risks are managed and thereby reduced.

Risk assessment is a legal responsibility of employers and is usually undertaken by the visit leader. Risk management is the process that commences as soon as the visit is first conceived and risk assessments are part of this planning phase, being put into action during the visit.

#### **Purpose of visit**

2) Aims and objectives of the visit should be clearly identified at an early stage. These should be relevant to young people and curriculum needs, taking account of

age, ability, previous experience and resources available. Clear, appropriate objectives will contribute significantly to the safety and well-being of young people as well as to the educational outcomes. They will ensure:

- an appropriate contribution to the overall educational aims of the school
- an appropriate structure and discipline for the visit
- maximum motivation of young people
- a choice of environment and activity appropriate to the maturity and experience of young people
- consideration of appropriate training, staffing and resources

### **Approvals**

- 3) Approval in principle should be sought from the EVC as soon as possible and before any financial commitment is made.
- 4) Certain categories of activity require the approval of the LA.
- 5) LA policy requires that defined adventure activities and all visits to 'wild country' be approved by the Outdoor Education Adviser. All such activities must be notified to the LA using the online 'Evolve' system.
- 6) Where commercial or external providers are used to deliver adventure activities, early consultation is advised. Some of these activities may be subject to the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations, 1996. Organisers should avoid any financial commitment until clarification has been obtained, either directly or through the Adviser for Outdoor Education.

### **Preliminary visit and research**

- 7) A preliminary visit, by the visit leader at least, is considered highly desirable on both educational and safety grounds. In some cases a preliminary visit must be undertaken. Such cases will include:
  - visits to be led by less experienced staff
  - visits to unfamiliar terrain or location, especially where activity is to be teacher-led
  - work with very young persons or those with special needs
  - visits to locations where there may be special hazards
- 8) In situations where an advance visit is not possible, every effort should be made on arrival to check that prior assumptions about the area are accurate. Depending on location this check may need programming and staffing. A preliminary visit should seek to:
  - check the appropriateness of the venue to young persons needs and to the objectives of the visit
  - identify potential hazards
  - check timings (local services, lengths of walks, tides etc.)
  - establish local contacts

- check accommodation, especially for fire-risk and evacuation procedures
- agree in advance, between visit leader and all staff, the division of supervisory responsibility
- obtain information on local services (eg toilets, telephone, location of doctor, dentists, hospital for example)
- establish an appropriate emergency action plan

9) All other means of researching the area should be explored. Sources of information may include: District Councils, tourist offices, National Parks' information services, other county schools, other LAs.

### **Staffing**

10) Educational visits involve considerable responsibility on the part of staff and, in the case of residential stays, require a duty of care for young people for 24 hours every day. To facilitate this, the visit leader **MUST**:

- ensure that the overall party size be restricted to that which is manageable in all circumstances
- ensure that staff have specific abilities to cope with all planned activities
- ensure that staff and supervisory adult numbers are based on the guidelines

and **SHOULD**:

- recognise that large parties create special supervisory problems and should be sub-divided for activity purposes
- be aware that small parties with minimum staffing are very vulnerable to staff illness or accident. This eventuality needs serious consideration at the early planning stage, especially for overseas or extended visits
- have advance notice of any disabilities, health or fitness concerns amongst staff, pertinent to their role on the visit or any part of it eg. a predisposition to serious travel sickness
- allow for the likely reduction in effectiveness of any member of staff who is accompanied on the visit by a close relation (for staffing ratios, such volunteers may constitute 'half' an adult).

### **Staffing numbers**

11) The ratios in shown in this Section are the recommended **MINIMUM** supervisory ratios; **ACTUAL** ratios of adults to young people may need to be in excess of this, but will depend on a variety of factors – group, age and size, nature of the visit, time of year, group and staff experience etc. The use of suitable parents or other adult helpers should be considered.

## **Use of volunteers**

12) Adults, other than teachers and support staff based at the school can make a valuable contribution to the success of the Visit. The LA values and recognises this contribution, provided that:

- any visit is led by a teacher or competent employee, approved by the EVC/Headteacher
- staff at the school or centre normally form not less than 50% of the minimum required staffing complement. (For under-5 years of age children, where especially high levels of adult supervision are required, it is recommended that there should be at least one staff member for every 20 young people, supported by a balance of approved adult helpers to the ratio given in Section 2)
- volunteers are competent for their allotted tasks
- each individual is approved by both the headteacher and visit leader and is entered on the voluntary helpers list kept by the school
- they have been carefully briefed on the scope of their responsibility

13) Where individual volunteers regularly help with school activities or are assisting with a residential visit, a full CRB check will be needed.

14) Headteachers/EVCs should be aware of the potential for conflict of interest if a parent of one of the young persons on the visit is included as a volunteer helper.

## **Preparation of young people**

15) Adequate and appropriate preparation of young people will significantly enhance enjoyment, educational value and safety. The age, maturity and ability of young people will determine the nature and extent of such preparation but it should include:

- information and guidance on what the visit involves
- a clear understanding of what is expected of them, including standards of behaviour and the need to follow rules
- a knowledge of potential dangers and how to avoid them
- appropriate and inappropriate personal conduct
- what to do if approached by strangers
- details of meeting places
- action if separated from the group
- knowledge of emergency procedures
- the need to follow instructions of teachers, supervisors and instructors

## **Participation**

16) If the activity has been well chosen, most young people should be capable of undertaking it, perhaps with some effort. Young people should rightly be encouraged to undertake appropriate challenges during adventure activities but not be coerced where they have a genuine fear.

17) Where young people's behaviour has implications for their safety, or that of the group, then the young person should be withdrawn from the activity.

18) Young people and parents should be made aware, before the visit, of arrangements for dealing with consistently bad behaviour, how a young person will be returned home early and who will be expected to meet the cost.

## **Selection of young people**

19) Visits and residential stays offer valuable educational experience and should, wherever possible, be made available to all relevant young people subject to any limitations on numbers due to staffing or limited facilities.

20) Organisers are reminded of the need to use a non-selective method to limit numbers for visits in curriculum time, where facilities or staffing require this

21) It may be necessary for schools to refuse to accept on the visit any young person whose behaviour is considered a potential danger to themselves or others. Alternative means of fulfilling the curricular aims of the visit must be provided for such young people.

## **Protection of children**

22) Visit organisers must consider and apply as necessary the Child Protection Procedures as outlined in the school CP policy.

Headteachers must initiate a CRB check of volunteers and staff who may have regular contact with children, either on or off site.

**FOR RESIDENTIAL VISITS EVERY VOLUNTEER MUST BE CRB CHECKED.**

23) Organisers should:

- as part of the visit preparation advise staff and volunteers, that for the mutual protection of adults and young persons, they should avoid being alone with a young person whenever possible. Supervision should be structured to reduce such possibilities
- inform parents, as part of verbal briefing and written information, of the general measures taken to minimise risk to young people, that the school takes the issue of child protection very seriously and that 'best practice' guidelines are being followed
- check with the headteacher the procedure to be followed in the event of suspected or reported abuse
- recognise the limitations of police and CRB checks and that most child offenders escape detection



- accept that constant vigilance and the maintenance of a protective ethos during the visit is essential

### **Insurance**

24). Adequate insurance cover must be provided for any off-site visit.

### **Information for parents/carers and consent**

25) Activities which take place regularly and in the immediate locality of the school (eg swimming at Jack Hunt) should not require written parental information on each occasion. Parents will complete a permission for the whole programme of visits

26) For all other visits, agreement must be sought. Parents should be informed about the programme of events and the educational values of the visit.

27) Residential stays require full and detailed written information for parents. information should be comprehensive whilst retaining an appropriate amount of flexibility to cope with a change of circumstance. It is important that the above information should identify:

- general arrangements for the supervision of young people, including any circumstances in which young people may be left unaccompanied
- specific activities/situations which carry an element of risk beyond the normal risks of every day living
- expected standards of behaviour and conduct of young people
- arrangements for the early return of a young person due to unacceptable behaviour during the visit

28) Information should:

- be sent as far in advance of the journey as practicable
- be followed up by a parents' meeting to clarify detail if needed (good practice for a residential visit)
- include the following information:
  - dates, times and location of departure and return
  - destination with full address
  - activities planned and how risks will be managed
  - supervisory arrangements, including occasions of 'remote' supervision
  - name of travel company and method of travel
  - cost and what it does and does not cover
  - methods of payment and cancellation arrangements/penalties
  - insurance arrangements, what it covers - be unambiguous (a photocopy of the schedule is useful)
  - advice on pocket money and allocation/care on journey
  - accompanying staff
  - agreed arrangements for non-emergency contact during the visit for parents of young people

- emergency contact arrangements to and by parents
- items prohibited on journey/visit
- clothing requirements
- a request for written information regarding special medical problems and their treatment/medication, consent for emergency medical treatment and details of special dietary requirements

### **Parental consent**

29) The written consent/agreement of parents/carers should be sought for all visits.

30) Where parents withhold consent the young people must not be taken on the visit and attempts should be made to deliver the visit aims through alternative means.

### **Programme**

31) A detailed programme should be established with adequate and effective supervision at all times. Leaders should:

- be aware of being diverted unintentionally from the planned programme
  - not be led astray by group enthusiasm into unplanned situations
  - not depart from the programme without full consideration of the safety and educational implications.
- In this context it is helpful to have an alternative programme, planned in advance and commensurate with the purpose of the visit, to cope with unforeseen circumstances

All supervisory staff should have a copy of the detailed programme. Young people will need to be aware of the general programme.

### **Special educational needs**

32) Students with special needs require additional consideration; their inclusion may have staffing and programme implications. Some or all of the following considerations may apply:

- environmental factors may increase the ‘risk’ level above that applying to other members in the group
- a higher level of staffing will normally be needed and it may be necessary to include specialist staff to facilitate supervision, communication and encouragement
- medication and dietary requirements should be known and monitored
- check on the suitability of buildings and terrain for those with physical disabilities
- ensure that activities offered are appropriate to the student: mental and physical disabilities may require

activities to be adapted or additional or alternative ones provided

### **Special medical needs**

33) All teachers involved in the visit should be provided with written details of the medical needs of individuals. Arrangements for the administration of medicine by a trained staff volunteer should be made where necessary.

34) In circumstances where special care is necessary to ensure safety, the young person's care assistant or parent should be encouraged to attend the visit.

35) The suitability of transport, accommodation and the manual handling skills of staff should be checked where young people in wheelchairs are involved.

36) Organisers should seek advice from the LA where doubt exists and should ensure that all accompanying staff have the opportunity to discuss how best to support any affected child.

### **First aid and medical care**

37) First aid provision should be appropriate to the nature of the visit. Organisers should:

- ensure an adequate first aid kit is carried on all visits, appropriate to the nature of the visit and identified. A good knowledge of first aid is a minimum standard.
- identify the location of professional medical help which should be known to all staff and to group members when appropriate
- with large groups, recruit an adult with appropriate first aid or nursing skills
- ensure that a current first aid certificate is held when visiting remote areas
- identify health risks associated with the proposed location and appropriate action taken
- consider the possibility of excessive exposure to the sun. Where such exposure is likely, participants should provide high-factor protective cream and hats as part of their equipment. Leaders should encourage adequate application of sun protection. Protection of the eyes from sunlight or glare with suitable glasses or goggles is also important
- ensure that all adults involved must know how to contact the appropriate emergency services

### **Safety issues**

38) A thorough understanding of matters affecting safety is essential for all accompanying staff. Please refer to the specific advice in Section 3, with reference to adventure activities, field visits, camps etc. Organisers must carry out an appropriate risk assessment, the extent of which will depend on the nature of the visit. The key issues for consideration are:

- identification of areas, times and activities of potential risk
- standards of behaviour and conduct
- organisation (communication, meeting times, group movement skills)
- supervision arrangements
- duty rotas
- emergency procedures and first aid arrangements
- implications of weather change

39) The special risks associated with transport, particularly by private car, need serious consideration and should form part of the risk assessment process.

40) Organisers are strongly advised to retain a written record of risks identified, and action taken, in the event of mishap. This is particularly important where specific types of risk exist, eg adventure activity

### **Emergency communication**

41) It is essential that a nominal roll of the parents of all party members, including next of kin of accompanying adults, be left at school with two named members of staff. These staff are to act as emergency contacts, one of whom must be, by joint arrangement, accessible by telephone at all hours, for the duration of the visit:

- these emergency contacts must be provided with the home telephone numbers of the headteacher and a deputy
- Parental contact in the event of an emergency should be through the school emergency contact
- In the unlikely event of a major emergency the emergency procedures, should be initiated.

### **Clothing and equipment**

42) Clothing, footwear and equipment appropriate to the visit should be considered at the early planning stages. Unsuitable clothing can markedly detract from the educational value of the visit and may prove hazardous in exposed situations.

A detailed kit list should be sent to parents well before departure.

### **Medicines**

43) Visit leaders should continue to implement and review procedures for the recording of medical needs and storage and distribution of medicines. The procedure for use and administration of medicines on school visits is set out in the school's Medicine Policy.

### **B. Managing risks**

The management of risk does not occur solely when you are at the visit location. Reducing risks to young people and staff begins at the planning and preparation stage, and continues until everyone arrives back at the school following the visit.

44) A visit that contains some or all of the following elements can therefore be viewed as a visit that has a good risk management process:

- Clear aims & objectives

- A venue/location(s)/provider that will meet these aims
  - A planning phase appropriate to the duration and nature of the visit
  - Using appropriate information, guidance and advice in the preparation
  - Possibly a pre-visit to the location
  - Fully informed parents/guardians and consent for some visits. This may include a parents meeting
  - Involving young people
  - Briefing accompanying competent staff and competent adults, defining roles and responsibilities
- Approval of the visit by the EVC and/or Outdoor Education Adviser
- Alternative plans in the event of the planned programme not being possible
- On the visit – the correct people undertaking the correct role at the correct time with the correct people in the correct place
- Monitoring of the programme, staff, pupils and environment during the visit to ensure the activity matches intentions

When these aspects have been part of the visit then risks have already been significantly reduced. Therefore a final question remains – “What have we not considered or still need to take action upon?”

These items will probably form the basis of your final risk assessment.

- 45) Risk assessment must be a simple record of your thoughts and planning process. The purpose is to identify the SIGNIFICANT risks and plan to take measures to reduce or avoid the risks to an acceptable level.

### **Risk assessment process**

46) Good planning, following guidelines automatically starts to manage risk. Using checklists also help ensure nothing is missed.

47) Risk assessments carried out by visit leader (a competent person) and shared with the staff team on the visit.

48) The school’s proforma for risk assessments should be used. The risk assessment (RA) should identify the significant hazards by:

- listing the significant hazards
- identifying control measures – what can we do to reduce these risks?
- then record, share, review, fix, review again

49) Consider:

- The Environment - The area/situation that the

- group are going to
- The Group - The collection of individuals, behaviours, issues and any hazards you can identify and then how you will manage these
  - The Leadership and Activity - What activities will you be doing with the group in the environment, have all the leaders done this before, or are the leadership team relatively new?
  - The Transport Arrangements - How the groups get to and from the activity site.

### **Requirements**

51) Every visit or off-site activity must have an associated risk assessment. This can either be a specific document or for journey of a regular nature, a more generic document could be appropriate. For example, school sports matches, walking visits in the close locality may have a generic risk assessment and this could be sufficient. However, if there is a generic document it must be accessible and used by all staff who are working to it, and it must be regularly reviewed. For some visits, they will require specific risks identified and the following forms, or others provide a format for recording.

### **Ongoing risk assessments**

52) Circumstances may change during a visit and staff on the visit will alter and change their plans accordingly. These changes are not usually recorded at the time but the changes do need to be recorded. This assists the planning process for a subsequent visit, and in reviewing the completed visit.

### **Near misses/incidents**

53) If circumstances change significantly that avoiding action is required, it may not just be only a simple note on the ongoing risk assessment but require the submission of an Incident / Accident form. The form is used not to target individual staff but to identify where incidents have occurred and where can other people learn from this experience. The form required for this information is Form IRF96 and can be completed on line.

### **Using Outside Organisations**

54) Communicate with the organisation, ask them do they have established risk assessments, and safety measures in place. Define what they are responsible for (ie activities/leading the session) and what your staff are solely responsible for (ie lunchtime supervision, travel to and from supervision) and then risk assess what you are responsible for. There may be grey areas and these need to be resolved by further discussion

## Ratios and supervision

These recommendations are designed to assist the school to decide upon the appropriate level. Headteachers will need to satisfy themselves that a lower adult: pupil ratio is acceptable as, in the event of an accident, divergence from the recommendations may need to be justified.

Pupil age	Nursery & Reception	Years 1 – 3	Years 4 – 6
Adult : Pupil Ratios	See Note 61 - 65	1 : 6 – 10	1 : 10 – 15

55) The number of adults should be determined by applying the relevant ratio and rounding up to the nearest whole number of adults.

56) Mixed sex groups of pupils should normally have at least one male and one female adult. Obvious exceptions may be groups of very young children or special needs pupils with all female staff.

57) Each group must be led by a qualified teacher or LA employee approved by the headteacher, in the ratio of one such leader for approximately every 30 pupils. See note 7 for under-5's staffing.

58) In normal circumstances at least 50% of the above recommended adult numbers should be employees (eg teachers or learning support assistants) approved by the headteacher. The balance of adult numbers will normally be volunteers (parents, governors) approved by the headteacher. Such volunteers must be placed on the volunteers insurance register (see Section 8).

59) The higher adult to pupil ratios are recommended for:

- younger pupils in the age range
- circumstances of above average hazard

60) Schools will need to consider increasing the general adult: pupil ratio depending upon the circumstances of the visit eg:

- residential visits to ensure 24 hour supervision
- adventure activities: see Section 3
- qualifications / experience of adults
- difficulties which may be encountered en route
- special needs of pupils
- visits abroad: see Section 5

## **Nursery & Reception Classes**

61) For children under five years of age, it is recommended that, due to the especially high levels of adult supervision required, there should be at least one teacher or approved LEA employee for every 20 pupils, supported by a balance of approved adult helpers.

62) Nursery classes - 1 adult : 2 - 3 children

For under 5s the ratio of 1 adult to 2 children should be adopted in hazardous situations eg visits to water, busy shopping and traffic areas. A ratio of 1 : 3 should be acceptable in normal situations.

63) Reception classes (or yr1 pupils in mixed age classes) - 1 adult : 3 – 5 children

Specifying an appropriate ratio for reception classes is particularly difficult. However, the higher ratios of adults to pupils should be used for activities which:

- involve younger children or those who are less sensitive to danger
- involve exposure to greater hazards (eg adjacent to water or near traffic)
- involve fewer trained adults (ie depend on volunteer helpers with limited experience)

64) However, it should be noted that the LA's advice should not be seen as encouraging the involvement of very young children in hazardous activities. The educational benefit of an activity is unlikely to justify exposing young children to especially hazardous locations.

65) A ratio of 1 : 5 may be appropriate in environments planned for very young children which are free of particular hazards such as traffic and water and where there is no danger of children wandering into less safe areas.