

Beech Lodge School

Educational Visits Policy

Aims

At Beech Lodge School we aim to:

- Educate our pupils to become independent learners;
- Provide a stimulating, challenging and caring environment;
- Share an enriched curriculum which ensures continuity, progression and opportunities for all our pupils;
- Engage pupils actively in all stages of the learning process;
- Work with families to prepare pupils for life beyond our school
- Motivate and inspire our pupils to realise their full potential;
- Ensure the safety and enjoyment in learning of all our pupils.

Off site visits are activities arranged by or on behalf of the school and which take place outside of the school grounds. The Proprietor and teaching staff believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible.

In this policy, we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of all pupils and staff at all times. Within these limits, we seek to make our visits available to all pupils, and wherever possible to make them accessible to those with disabilities. The visits will usually take place within the school day.

Aims

The aims of our off site visits are to:

- Enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils;
- Provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone;
- Promote the independence of our children as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments.

For each subject in the curriculum, there is a corresponding programme of activities which could include:

- Literacy – theatre visits, cinema visits, visits by authors
- Science – use of the school grounds, visits to the planetarium, museums
- Numeracy – use of shape and number trails in the local environment
- History – visits to castles, local area, local museums
- Geography – use of local area for fieldwork, village trails
- Art and design – art gallery visits, use of locality
- PE– a range of sporting fixtures, extra curricular activities, “team” visits
- Music – extra curricular activities, theatre visits
- Design and technology – visit to local area, local industry

- ICT – its use in local shops/libraries etc
- RE– visits to local centres of worship e.g. synagogue, Mosque, temple
- PSHE and citizenship – visit to fire station, old people’s residential home, community centre and use of the local area

Authorisation of Visits

The Head teacher will approve the appointment of a group leader to be responsible for the running of the activity. This will be a teacher employed at the school.

The Head teacher is the school’s educational visits co-ordinator and she is involved in the planning and management of off-site visits in the following way:

- ensuring that risk assessments are completed and checked prior to the activity taking place.
- supporting the Proprietor in her decisions
- assigning competent staff to lead and help with trips
- advising group leaders on staff:pupil ratio
- organising related staff training
- verifying that all adults accompanying visits who will be in sole charge of children have had satisfactory safeguarding checks and that any remaining adults on the visit will be closely supervised and will not be left unaccompanied with a child other than their own at any time
- liaising with the group leader prior to the activity to ensure that all medical and/or permission slips have been obtained.
- keep records of visits and ensure there are regular generic assessments of the risks where there are frequent visits to local venues (e.g BCA)

Where staff are proposing to arrange an off-site activity, they must seek and obtain the approval of the Head teacher before any commitment is made on behalf of the school. A comprehensive risk assessments must be provided by the member of staff to allow for an informed decision to be made.

Where the activity involves a period of more than 24 hours, an overnight stay, or a journey by air or sea, the Head teacher will seek the approval of the Proprietor before permitting the activity to take place.

It is our policy that all children should be able to participate in educational visits. Where a child with a disability is eligible for a trip, we will make every effort to ensure that he/she is included. We may need to seek help/advice/guidance from parents to help us adapt our programme and we will make any reasonable adjustments to our itinerary to include a child with disabilities. Any such adjustments will be included in the risk assessment.

Risk Assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment is to be carried out by the group leader before the proposed visit. It will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the hazards?

- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures are needed 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?

Staff planning an off site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue in order to carry out an on site risk assessment. It is important to take into account the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip, and the party leader should take careful account of the facilities available, with due regard to the proposed size of the group. They should also assess the site's suitability with regard to the age and any particular needs of the children. They will also consider the venue's own approach to security and health and safety. Venues providing instructor lead activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments may be adopted if it is impractical for the group leader to experience the activity beforehand, or if he/she lacks the skills required to make informed judgements about the risks it may involve.

It is important to assess and record any health, safety or security issues that are identified during the preliminary visit. Any such issues should be taken into account when the final decision is taken on whether the visit should proceed, and the Risk Assessment must state both the extent of any risks involved, and the measures that will be taken to reduce or eliminate them.

Any trip will require a minimum of two adults. However, these are **minimum** requirements, and may not provide adequate supervision in all cases.

A risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. The coach company used on a regular basis should be LA approved.

The group leader will check with the Head teacher that all adults planned to **supervise** the visit have been subject to appropriate safeguarding checks. It may be appropriate on some visits for adults without full safeguarding checks to accompany the children (e.g. family learning days, activities which promoting community cohesion and involvement in children's learning). On these occasions, the party leader must be aware that these adults cannot count towards the provision of adequate supervision ratios and should plan wisely, in collaboration with the school diary and staff timetabling, to ensure appropriate ratios are available. Adults without CRB/DBS clearance will not be responsible for any groups of children, nor be left unattended with pupils at any time.

For non-residential visits, a copy of the completed risk assessments must be given to the educational visits co-ordinator at least two days prior to the actual activity to allow the co-ordinator to check the risk assessment and hold further discussions with the party leader if required. For residential/adventurous activity visits, this must be more than 6 weeks in advance.

A file containing all risk assessments will be kept in the school office. A new file will be created for each new academic year and the old file archived in the school office.

Costings

The costing of any off site activities should include the following that apply:

- Transport
- Entrance fees

- Insurance
- Provision of any special resources or equipment
- Costs related to adult helpers (admission fees etc)

Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party. The school will only use coaches fitted with seat or lap belts and insist that all members of the party wear the belt when on the coach. The group leader will ensure all members of the party are wearing the seat belts appropriately prior to setting off on the journey. The group leader will ensure the driver does not move the vehicle prior to this checking process.

Where private cars are used for transport, the group leader is responsible for ensuring the driver presents evidence to the Head teacher that their insurance covers such journeys prior to the transport taking place. The group leader should also ensure that there are at least two members of staff in the vehicle at all times when children are present.

Communication with Parents

The parents of children taking part in an off-site activity should be provided with all appropriate information about the intended visit. Parents must give their permission in writing before a child can be involved in any off-site activity.

A generic local off site activity permission slip will be completed by parents at the beginning of each academic year which gives permission for children to be taken out into the local area. In addition to this, group leaders should ensure that a courtesy slip is sent to parents informing them when these activities will take place.

Funding for off site activities is provided mainly by the school although occasionally by parental contributions (which can be waived at the discretion of the Head teacher). This must be made clear to parents in all correspondence about an educational visit at the planning stage.

No child may be excluded from any activity because of the unwillingness or inability of the parent to make a contribution. Parents will be informed of this principle through the school prospectus and letters sent home about intended visits.

The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the Head teacher to make a decision about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

Further Health and Safety Considerations

Group leaders must ensure that all adults attending the off site visit are made aware of the risk assessments and that whilst they may be accompanying their children, the group leader is still ultimately responsible for the overall health and safety of all group members.

Group leaders must ensure that risk assessments are shared with children prior to the visit (at a level appropriate to the age of the child) to enable the children to assist with managing risk and understanding how to promote their own safety.

Each adult member of the group must be provided with the group leader's number, the school number and a number of a designated emergency contact where possible. A list of mobile telephone numbers will be shared amongst the group (and kept securely).

Before leaving school, the group leader will ensure that they have a list of emergency contact numbers for all adults.

Pupils' medical and consent forms will be taken on all educational visits.

A first aider will be present on all off site visits. The only exception to this is when the group leader can provide evidence that there is adequate first aid cover on transport and at the event. The group leader is responsible for ensuring that a first aider is arranged for the visit.

The safety of the party, and especially the children, is of paramount importance. During the activity, the party leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that children are both safe and well looked after at all times.

Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise the safety of others, or the good name of the school, the party leader should discuss with the Head teacher the possibility of excluding that child from the activity. Where this is the case, the child's parents must be contacted to discuss this prior to the visit; however, all possible steps must be taken to adapt activities to help ensure that all pupils can be involved safely.

Group Leaders' Planning

Group leaders are advised to read the appropriate guidance for off site activities:

- Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide – (DfES 1998) and its supplements
- A Handbook for Group Leaders (DfES 2002)
- Group Safety at Water Margins (DfES 2002)

Visit Plan

Together with the risk assessments educational visits must include the following:

- general information
- names, ages, contact details, permission forms, medical forms and other relevant details of all those going on the visit
- travel schedule
- accommodation plan (if applicable)
- plan of activities
- intended arrangements for supervision
- emergency contacts and procedures
- general communication arrangements
- medical questionnaire returns
- first aid arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as required by legislation.