

# **St Columba's PS (Newbuildings)**



## **EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY**

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## **1. Introduction**

This school acknowledges the integral part educational visits play in the development and education of our pupils, providing them with opportunities to participate in activities and gain from experiences not available in the normal school setting. This policy is based upon the **EA Educational Visits Interim Guidance for Schools 2017**

The purpose of this policy is to support those members of staff planning and managing educational visits by;

- Identifying key roles and responsibilities;
- Establishing clear procedures to be followed when planning and managing a visit;

## **2. Definition**

The term “educational visit” refers to any academic, sporting, cultural, creative and personal development activities which take place away from the pupils’ school and make a significant contribution to the learning and development of those participating.

## **3. Legal/Policy Context**

The safety and welfare of children on educational visits is addressed by the Health and Safety at Work (N.I.) Order 1978, the Children (N.I.) Order 1995, DE Education Visits Best Practice 2009 and the common law “duty of care.”

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Principal**

The Principal will give permission for a visit to take place and designate a member of the teaching staff as Group Leader and a Deputy Group Leader who will act up in the absence of the Group Leader.

### **4.2 Educational Visits Coordinator**

The Group Leader will be responsible for planning and organising the educational visit and should ensure that the visit complies with best practice. To that end he/she should ensure that:

- All necessary arrangements and preparations have been completed including risk assessment before the visit begins and that all proper procedures have been followed
- All relevant checks have been undertaken if an external provider is to be used
- The Group Leader has taken reasonable steps to familiarise him/herself with the location/centre where the visit will take place
- The ratio of leaders to pupils is appropriate
- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover
- The Group Leader is aware of the agreed emergency contingency arrangements
- Arrangements are in place for the early return of individual participants

The Principal will also act as a school contact for the duration of the visit. In this role he should:

- Retain details of the place to be visited including contact personnel and telephone number
- Retain a copy of the contact details of all the participants’ parents/guardians
- Have a contingency plan in place to be implemented in the event of a serious incident

### **4.3 Group Leader**

The Group Leader will have overall operational responsibility for the organisation, supervision, discipline and conduct of the pupils for the duration of the visit.

The Group Leader should:

- Obtain prior approval from the Principal for the visit
- Completing an appropriate risk assessment where necessary
- Undertake and complete the planning and preparation for the visit including the briefing of supervising staff
- Take reasonable steps to become familiar with the location where the activity will take place
- Inform parents in writing of the purpose of the visit and the arrangements in place for travel to and from the venue, dress code, lunch, supervision, time of return to the school and arrangements for collection of pupils
- Obtain written consent of parents for their child to participate, including medical details and special dietary needs Ensure that accompanying staff have details of group members special educational or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively
- Ensure the ratio of leaders to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group and the nature of the activity
- Assign clear roles to each member of supervising staff
- Ensure that adequate supervision is provided at all times during the visit
- Ensure that the Codes of Conduct for both staff and pupils are adhered to
- Ensure that Child Protection procedures are followed
- Ensure that, during the visit, leaders have up to date emergency contact details of school contact and parents/guardians
- Ensure seat belts are worn on the bus
- Make pupils aware of emergency exits at venue where visit is taking place
- 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

#### **4.3 Supervising Staff**

Supervising staff are responsible to the school whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours.

Supervising staff should:

- Follow the instructions of the Group Leader
- Assist with the organisation of activities and discipline of the young people
- Ensure that the code of conduct for leaders and participants is adhered to
- Notify the Group Leader if they think that the risk to the Health and Safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

#### **4.4 Parents**

Parents should be given sufficient information in writing about the visit and, where appropriate, invited to a briefing session. Parents should:

- Sign the consent form
- Provide an emergency contact number
- Provide relevant medical/dietary details, including any medication being taken (by means of the consent form) and any other relevant information about their child which may affect their participation in the visit.
- Prepare their child for the visit by reinforcing the importance of high standards of behaviour and full cooperation with supervising teachers for the duration of the visit
- Make appropriate arrangements for the collection of their child on return from an educational visit
- Agree the arrangements for a member of the group returning home for unforeseen circumstances

#### **4.5 Pupils**

Before any visit pupils should be made aware of their responsibilities and that the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and other associated policies will apply for the duration of the visit even though it is not on school grounds. Pupils should:

- Participate fully in the activities provided;
- Follow the instructions of the Group Leader, supervising staff and those at the venue of the visit
- Act in accordance with expected standards of behaviour at all times
- Alert a supervising teacher if they observe a potential risk or if someone is missing or in difficulties Avoid taking any risks
- Respect property of others

## 5 Dealing with unexpected situations

Dealing with unexpected situations will be aided by the Principal, who will act as a contact person for both the group and the participants' families. The Principal will act as the emergency school contact for each visit. All major incidents should immediately be related to him, especially those involving illness or injury to a pupil.

All incidents and accidents occurring on a visit will be reported back to the Principal immediately on return.

The Group Leader should also legislate for the possibility that a planned supervising teacher is forced to pull out of a visit at the last minute by having a back-up teacher in place who is able to attend as a supervising teacher on an educational visit at short notice.

## 6. Returning from an Educational Visit

Pupils should always be brought back to the school after an educational visit. The Group Leader or supervising teachers should not make ad hoc arrangements to set down pupils at alternative locations on their way back to the school.

If it is anticipated during the visit that the group will be returning to the school significantly before or after the designated time, the Group Leader should contact the Principal with a more accurate time of arrival. The Principal will advise the pupils' parents/guardians of the revised time through the school texting service.

A teacher should remain with the pupils until they have been collected from the school.

## 7. Educational Visits – Procedures

Educational visits vary in terms of location, duration, complexity and regularity. Consequently, different procedures and approval arrangements are appropriate for different types of visit. For this purpose, visits are classified into different categories:

- **Routine local educational activities** that are part of the regular curriculum and life of the school and take place locally by walking or a short vehicle journey. They will include events such as going to the local church, attending sporting fixtures, swimming pool visits, theatre visits. These activities **may not** require the completion of a consent form if they fall within the scope of consent already given by parents when they register their child with the school.
- **Non-routine visits and activities.** These include visits which involve a residential element, visits abroad or hazardous activities.

As part of the risk assessment, the Principal and the Group Leader should decide which category the proposed visit belongs to, what information should be provided to parents and the manner in which consent should be obtained. It is envisaged that in all cases the following procedure will be applicable.

### 7.1 Educational Activities - Procedure

**Step 1:** A teacher identifies an educational visit

**Step 2:** The Principal's approval for the visit is sought. The Principal appoints a Group Leader (usually the class teacher) for the visit

**Step 3:** The Group Leader meets with the Principal and undertakes an appropriate risk assessment

**Step 4:** The Group Leader informs parents and obtains written consent and appropriate information for each child

**Step 5:** If payment is required, the Group Leader arranges the fee and collection in conjunction with the school secretary

**Step 6:** The Group Leader briefs supervising staff on arrangements for supervision of the pupils and individual roles **(See Appendix 1)**

**Step 7:** The Group Leader or other appropriate person will address the pupils to stress appropriate standards of behaviour for the visit **(See Appendix 1)**

**Step 8:** Completed forms are retained by group leader and taken on visit if necessary. List of pupils attending visit and their contact details given in to school office and retained by the school

**Step 9:** On return to school, a supervising teacher must remain with the pupils until they have all been collected. In the event of an incident or an accident occurring, relevant documentation should be completed and passed to the Principal.

Risk Assessment should be updated in the light of experience gained from the visit.

## **8. Risk Assessment**

Educational visits cannot be entirely risk free but care must be taken to ensure that risks are contained to acceptable levels. Risk assessment allows schools to make a reasoned judgement about the level of risk involved and what needs to be put in place to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Risk assessment comprises:

- Identifying the hazards
- Identifying the people who may be at risk
- Evaluating the potential risk
- Establishing additional safety and/or control measures

**The school has the right to refuse any pupil from participating in the visit, whose involvement may be considered to be a danger to him/herself or to the group or may bring the school into disrepute**

## **9. Supervision and Staff Ratios**

### **9.1 Staff-Pupil Ratio**

At the Risk Assessment stage of planning a decision will be taken as advise in the guidance Foundation Stage (P1/2) 1 adult to a maximum of 10 children and KS1/2 1 adult up to a maximum of 15 children

For residential trips, the ratio will be no greater than 1 to 10.

For outdoor pursuit activities the ratio will be 1 to 8.

Other Activities organised should take note of the ratios advised by the company being used if it is less than those stated

### **9.2 Supervision During Visit**

Details of the visit will need to be given to all of those involved - to the participating pupils, to any accompanying teachers, and, where applicable, to any officials who will receive and perhaps work with the school party.

**Each pupil should:**

- know who their supervisor is at any given time and how to contact him or her;
- have been given clear, understandable and appropriate instructions;
- rarely if ever be on their own;
- alert the supervisor if someone is missing or in difficulties;
- have a meeting place to return to if they become separated from the group;
- understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour;
- be made aware of the visit's relevance to their education, and will need to know what will be expected of them at the venue in terms of their work and behaviour;

**Teachers should:**

- know and adhere to the responsibilities as specified by the group leader:
- carry a list/register of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times;
- regularly check that the entire group is present after each break of the journey
- ensure that all pupils are aware of rendezvous points;
- ensure that all pupils know what to do if they become separated from the group.
- need to know their specific role and how this is intended

**9.3 Supervision on Overnight Visits Group leaders**

**should ensure that:**

- all supervisors understand that their supervisory role continues for 24 hours, even though rotas are established;
- the group's accommodation should be assigned to one area of the hotel/hostel etc
- teachers have sleeping accommodation on the same floor immediately adjacent to the pupils' accommodation;
- there is a teacher present on any floor where our pupils are sleeping;
- child protection arrangements are in place to protect both pupils and staff;
- where hotel/hostel reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, ensure security arrangements are in place to stop unauthorised visits;
- in the absence of 24 hour staffing of reception, external doors must be made secure against intrusion and windows closed as necessary to prevent intrusion;
- where possible, internal doors are lockable but staff must have reasonable access to the pupil accommodation at all times;
- where pupils' doors are locked, teachers have immediate access, as necessary, to a master key;
- all staff and pupils know the emergency procedures/escape routes in the event of an emergency. Where windows and doors are locked against intrusion at night, ensure that alternative escape routes are known and that all fire doors function properly.

**NB:** Don't be lulled into a sense of false security by local assurances, such as "no need to lock doors in this part of the country". The presence of the group may attract unwelcome attention that is unusual in the locality.

## **Appendix 1 Briefings - Checklist**

Prior to any educational visit the Group Leader should brief supervisory teachers, pupils and parents. The following checklist recommends issues to be addressed in each briefing.

### **Teachers**

The briefing of teachers should include;

- The educational purpose of the visit
- The make up of the participating group
- Details of planned activities
- Arrangements for supervision, including any rotas
- Health and safety rules
- Emergency procedures

### **Pupils**

Information to pupils should include:

- The educational purpose of the visit
- Dates
- Transport arrangements including departure and return times
- Address/location/accommodation
- Details of planned activities
- Health and safety rules
- Responsibility for themselves and others
- Supervision arrangements
- Expectations regarding behaviour and the continued operation of relevant school policies including the Positive Behaviour Policy and associated policies for the duration of the visit
- Prudent precautions to ensure security of personal item (the school has no liability for items that go missing)
- Expectations regarding the completion of set tasks
- Appropriate guidance in relation to smoking, drinking alcohol, use of illegal drugs
- Appropriate guidance as to relationships between participants and others they may come into contact with
- Special clothing or equipment needed, if appropriate
- Recommended maximum pocket money needed, if appropriate
- Cash handling arrangements if necessary

### **Parents**

Information provided to parents should include:

- The educational purpose of the visit
- Dates
- Transport arrangements including departure and return times/location for the pick-up and set down of pupils
- Address/location/accommodation
- Details of planned activities
- Consent form, including:
  - permission for their child to participate in activities with emergency number
  - details of any medical/behavioural condition which may affect participation

-advance permission for urgent medical treatment if this is judged to be necessary by medical authorities

### **Health and safety rules**

- Responsibility for themselves and others
- Supervision arrangements
- Expectations regarding standards of behaviour expected from their child and the continued operation of school policies for the duration of the visit
- Special clothing or equipment needed
- Recommended maximum pocket money needed, if appropriate
- Cash handling arrangements if necessary