

NORTH CESTRIAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

POLICY ON HOLIDAYS AND EXCURSIONS

(This policy takes account of the DfE “Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies” Feb 2012)

Introduction

School visits and journeys are a very important part of the life of North Cestrian Grammar School. The Headmaster and Governors are conscious of, and grateful for, the amount of their own time which our staff devote to extra curricular activities.

The object of this document is to encourage and support staff who organise holidays and excursions, rather than to constrain them. It is hoped that the procedures outlined herein will help members of staff to plan and organise visits, so that all reasonable care will have been taken to ensure the safety and well-being, as well as the enjoyment, of all participants.

Aims and Objectives

All out-of-school visits should have a clearly identified educational purpose (or purposes) which justifies any loss that there may be of normal teaching, both for those going on the trip and for those who would otherwise be taught by those taking the trip.

It should be possible to relate the purpose(s) of a trip to the wider aims of the School, namely the pursuit of the highest standards in academic work, sport, service and cultural and intellectual extra-curricular activities

The development of appropriate social skills and greater self-confidence are also important reasons for out-of-school visits. Nevertheless, given the centrality of academic achievement to our purposes, discretion will be needed in deciding whether the value of a particular visit justifies any disruption to teaching that it may cause.

As well as having an educational motive all visits should be:

- a) safe
- b) of a reasonable cost (especially if taking place during normal school time).
- c) reasonable in the demands they make on the time of staff, students and parents.

The answer to the question “*does the visit achieve its aims in the most efficient and effective way and provide value for money?*” should be “Yes” on all counts.

The Legal Framework

The landmark case of *Fitzgerald v Northcote* in 1865 clearly established that the authority (and responsibility) of a teacher in relation to a pupil is broadly the same as that of a parent in relation to a child, while the pupil is under the teacher’s control – in *loco parentis*.

The Courts take the view that staff should act as a careful parent would; if we are aware of special factors that are not known to the parents, the Courts would expect us to exercise

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the appropriate amount of care – which could well be higher than that exercised by parents.

A member of staff who takes a party away from school remains in *loco parentis* throughout the trip. The responsibility cannot be delegated to anyone else. If a member of staff charged with the care of pupils is careless about supervision, she/he may be liable for negligence. However, Courts only expect staff to take *appropriate* care having regard to the nature of the visit – the more hazardous or demanding the trip and the younger or less able the pupils, the greater will be the level of care needed.

Party leaders carry a profound responsibility for the safety of their charges. Ensuring parents sign an indemnity form stating that the trip is being undertaken at the pupil's risk is not permissible. Any agreement to exclude or restrict liability for injury or death is unenforceable by virtue of the Unfair Contract Terms 1977

Early planning for all outdoor educational visits is essential. Approval of the Headmaster is required for all visits and activities off the school site. Guidelines and appropriate approval forms, in the main body of this handbook, must be used.

Planning

The ATL recommends that schools/teachers arrange trips in such a way that they do not act either as *organiser* (i.e. a direct purchaser of services that make up a package[e.g. flights, ferry crossings, hotel bookings], direct from the service provider), or *retailer* (defined as a person who sells, or offers for sale, the package put together by the organiser.) Provided the school and /or its teachers are purchasing, the package on behalf of a group of specific pupils who have agreed to participate on the trip, it is most unlikely that the school or the teachers will be acting as retailers).

The success of a school trip often depends upon careful planning in advance. All preparations for a trip , including arrangements for initial consent and information to be provided to parents are detailed in section 5.10i – 5.10vi of the Staff Handbook.

Staffing a Visit

The Headmaster has overall responsibility for the planning and arrangements made for any day or residential visit. The Headmaster usually delegates this responsibility to a member of staff who may be assisted by one or more colleagues.

Voluntary Helpers

Voluntary helpers may be used to assist with the organisation and supervision during the visit. They need to be carefully selected and their role must be clearly defined. A voluntary helper should not be placed in a situation where they are not acting under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher. A voluntary helper must be expected to act towards the children as a careful parent would in similar circumstances and the responsibility is not lessened because the duty is undertaken voluntarily.

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Ratios

There is no standard staff/pupil ratio laid down in any statute and, as always, the concept of **reasonableness** is important. It should be noted that ratios alter according to the type of visit being proposed, a judgement has to be made when all the risks have been assessed. A ratio of 1:12 should be appropriate for most visits, with 1:5 for visits involving greater risk. Staff are also reminded to avoid any 1:1 situation which might be open to misinterpretation.

Pupil Control

Staff must remember that they are *in loco parentis* at all times on the visit and thus are legally responsible for the well-being and safety of the children. A system to ensure which pupils are present at any time is essential when working in an open environment. Children should always walk or play in groups, never alone. Close supervision of the pupils in the hotel or centre during the night should be ensured by responsible adults sleeping in close proximity to the children's rooms. Pass keys will be needed to gain access to all self-locking doors.

On unaccompanied camping expeditions, the teacher in charge must meet the children en route during the day and at the camp site in the evening and early morning.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs

The consumption of alcohol, smoking or the taking illegal drugs by any pupil on any trip is strictly forbidden. This should be made clear to all pupils in the details they are provided with prior to going away.

Competence & Qualifications

Appropriate leadership is absolutely vital to the safety of participants on any trip and suitable arrangements for staffing must be approved before any trip can go ahead. The Headmaster recognises that, whilst relevant qualifications are not of themselves an absolute guarantee of competence in a particular activity, they do provide some measure, often recognised nationally, of a person's ability. Notwithstanding this, of equal and vital importance is the relevant experience of a member of staff organising an activity. For this there can be no substitute.

Specialist Qualifications and Higher Risk Activities

Where specialist activities form part of the visit, it is essential that staff involved in teaching the particular activities are appropriately experienced or qualified. If a trip involves higher risk activities (especially if water sports or heights are involved) then specific approval from the Headmaster must be sought before the trip can go ahead. The School publishes special guidance on Higher Risk Activities (Staff Handbook 5.10v – 5.10vi) which is available to parents on request.

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Activity Centres

It is essential that the party leader ascertains the qualifications and experience of the staff working at the centre to be visited and receives guarantees that these qualified staff will be leading the activities. A check must be made to ascertain that the Centre is registered under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (2004).

Health and Personal Safety

Apart from careful planning of the educational aspects of the visit, the other key to a successful visit is a careful review of all health and safety requirements.

The School has regard to DfE Guidance Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HASPEV) and in particular, the ten important areas outlined below:

- a) responsibilities for visits, including pupils' behaviour.
- b) planning visits, including risk assessments and first aid.
- c) supervision, including ratios and vetting checks
- d) preparing pupils, including special and medical needs.
- e) communicating with parents.
- f) planning transport.
- g) insurance.
- h) types of visit.
- i) visits abroad (if applicable).
- j) emergency procedures, including contact details and permission for emergency medical treatment if the parents cannot be contacted.

Outdoor and Adventurous Activities

This is a wide field and all members of staff proposing such a visit are asked to read Safety in Outdoor Activity Centres: Guidance before they plan further. They should not vary from its recommendations without the Headmaster's agreement. (The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme has its own regulations and health and safety provisions which should be followed by those organising D of E activities).

Personal safety of all participants is of paramount importance and should be given specific attention within the trip Risk Assessment and reviewed throughout the trip. Parents must be made aware of important regulations and procedures on school trips prior to departure. Participants must also be given clear guidelines in advance with updates as appropriate throughout the trip. Key issues might include:

- Safety issues whilst travelling
- Fire and escape procedure in accommodation.
- Emergency contact details.
- Appropriate and safe behaviour.
- Response if separated from party.

A First Aid Kit should be taken on any a residential trip and all staff should be aware of any individual health issues or issues related to a child's special educational needs.

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Emergency Procedures

In spite of good planning and organisation, emergencies may occur which require immediate response by the leaders. If possible share the problem; advise all other group staff that the accident/emergency procedure is in operation.

Make sure **ALL** members of the group are accounted for.

If there are injuries, immediately establish the names of the injured people and the extent of their injuries.

Ensure that the injured are accompanied to hospital (preferably by an adult they know).

Ensure that the rest of the group are adequately supervised and have understood what has happened and the implications for the rest of the programme.

Typical problems that need contact with Appointed Person at School

- a) Death.
- b) Serious injury which will require the parents to be called to the hospital.
- c) Any incident that is likely to draw media attention (eg group lost on hills).
- d) A lost boy or boys who have not reappeared after one and a half hours, when outside agencies are likely to be contacted.
- e) Abduction by an estranged parent or other.
- f) Any incident involving the police which will lead to caution or prosecution.
- g) Bad behaviour or illness when a child is to be sent home for the well-being of the rest of the party.
- h) Motor vehicle accident that makes the vehicle inoperative.

Control of information and communication

News travels very quickly. Where possible restrict access to telephones until you have made contact with the Headmaster or emergency contact point. Give details of the accident or emergency.

The Head or his Deputy will:

- inform the Chairman of Vice-Chairman of the Governors
- inform parents, guardians or relatives of
- students who have been involved in the incident
- students who have been members of the group, but not hurt or directly affected
- teachers who have been involved
- send a report to the police or Health and Safety Executive if it is a reportable incident
- control the release of information to the media (N.B. this should not be done by the person in charge of the visit)
- protect students from the over-zealous attention of the media
- arrange support and counselling of students and staff where necessary

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- Arrange for interviews and accurate recording of statements from all those who are involved in the incident (N.B. it may be necessary to have parents or guardians present while such interviews take place).

If comment at the scene of the accident or emergency is requested by the media, enquiries should be addressed to the designated person. The names of participants injured should **NOT** be released. Caution is required in the preparation of any statement as legal proceedings may follow an accident (e.g. against a coach company, travel operator, hotel etc.) You should prepare a written report for the Headmaster of the accident or emergency at the earliest opportunity and while events are readily recalled. Note the names, addresses and telephone numbers of any independent witnesses.

The Health and Safety at Work Act has implications regarding the reporting of accidents. You should be familiar with the current regulations as outlined in the School's Health and Safety Policy. Leaders should contact immediately the appropriate emergency/rescue service, whilst controlling and supervising the rest of the group and, as soon as possible, make contact with the designated person back at school.

EVC and Risk Assessment

The EVC (Educational Visit Co-ordinator) has ultimate responsibility for every off site trip or visit. This is an onerous responsibility and staff planning a trip (Group Leaders) are expected to co-operate efficiently and willingly with the EVC.

Responsibilities of the EVC include:

- ensuring a Risk Assessment is completed and approving it
- confirming the experience and suitability of the Group Leader
- ensuring parents are aware of the trip and give appropriate approval
- recording "near misses"
- reviewing good practice
- securing Governors' approval where appropriate

Group Leaders must provide a completed Risk Assessment for each trip out of school. They also have a responsibility to re-assess risks continually during the trip and must have a Risk Assessment card to hand in at the completion of the trip or visit.

The EVC is the Deputy Headmaster

Further details on Risk Assessment are kept in the HSE File.