



## Planning and Leading Visits and Adventurous Activities

Guidance for Schools and Colleges  
Teaching Children and Young People from 5 to 18 years

**ROSPA**  
The Royal Society for the  
Prevention of Accidents

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Tom Mullarkey MBE

With a mission 'to save lives and reduce injuries', RoSPA has had a close involvement in safety in schools over many decades, both via our National Safety and Risk Education Committee and as a major provider of services that can help schools to teach safety topics and to manage their safety and health risks.



# Foreword

At RoSPA, we believe that adventurous and challenging school visits are vital to develop confidence and risk judgement among young people and to structure a society that is not excessively risk averse. Uncertainty is inherent in adventure, bringing the possibility of adverse outcome but a young person's development should not be stifled by the need to consider the worst consequence of risk, without estimating its likelihood and balancing this against the possible benefits. The concept of 'risk/benefit assessment' should be our guiding light.

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As previous generations have learnt by experience, it is rare that a well-planned exercise leads to accidental injury. It will instead be most likely to bring a sense of enterprise, accomplishment and fun, so vital for judgement, maturity and well-being, which must nearly always offset the residual and inevitable risk. Our mantra at RoSPA sums up this approach: *We must try to make life as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible.*

Schools are changing. Responsibilities for safety and health management are being refocused. The challenges involved need to be approached creatively and should never be seen as a legal burden or bureaucratic chore. A planned approach to managing risk should be an enabler in schools, helping to build a

culture of sensible risk management linked to teaching young people about risk – an unbroken thread running seamlessly throughout the curriculum.

Risk is part of life but 'accidents' do not have to be – most are easily preventable. So while schools need to make sure that staff, pupils and visitors are safe, they also need to make sure that the citizens and parents of tomorrow are helped to become risk aware. In this sense 'teaching safely' and 'teaching safety' go hand in hand.

This guidance, which we have developed in consultation with many stakeholders in the education sector, gives detailed information and advice on the things that need to be considered when planning and undertaking school visits. The aim is

to help teachers to develop a practical approach that maximises opportunities for enjoyment and learning while taking sensible action to avoid school students being hurt in avoidable accidents. Please do use it – and tell us how useful you have found it, so that we can continue to improve the advice we offer.

**Tom Mullarkey MBE**  
Chief Executive

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

This guidance is to help schools and colleges and their pupils to get the best out of opportunities to learn outside the classroom, including those which involve adventurous activities. It includes advice on steps you should take to manage the risks to staff, volunteer helpers, and importantly to children and young people.

The guidance is aimed at teachers and other staff involved with organising school visits.

## Benefits of school visits

As well as being a welcome break from the school routine, school visits enable pupils to learn new skills, gain fresh understanding and to develop positive attitudes to their environment, their peers and their teachers. School visits can be part of the curriculum (e.g. theatre visits or field trips); supplement the curriculum (for example Forest Schools); they can enhance the curriculum (such as visits to historic sites); and can promote personal development (e.g. adventurous activities). Some visits may be regular (e.g. swimming) or take place in other schools (e.g. sports fixtures). In some cases visits may be for purely leisure purposes.

A visit may be part of the school day or take place over a week or longer. Whatever the intended purpose or duration, the gains can be educational and personal and are often remembered long after the educational reason for the visit has been forgotten.

RoSPA believes children and young people benefit from being challenged to visit new places and try out new and exciting activities. Through these experiences they can develop self knowledge and understanding which can be of great value. If we always keep children as safe as possible, they may never experience the challenges involved in school visits, nor gain the associated benefits. Our aim in this guide and in our policy overall, is to help you to plan to keep children and young people as safe as necessary, while providing them with the opportunity for new experiences and challenges.



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## Concerns about school visits

HM Government estimates that, in the UK, school age children undertake 7-10 million days of activity outside the classroom each year, with all the potential benefits described above. This is likely to be a conservative estimate. In general, school visits are low risk activities – but this is because a lot of thought and planning has gone into assessing and managing any risks to the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff. We tend to remember examples of school visits where a child (or a member of staff) was seriously injured or killed because, rightly, these events receive a lot of attention in the national and local press, but these are rare occurrences. Even rarer, are examples of serious incidents on school visits where a teacher or member of staff was found to be legally negligent.

Aside from liability for negligence, schools and their governors or senior managers can face criminal liability for breaches of health and safety law. However, in the period 2005-2010 there were only two HSE prosecutions relating to school trips in the UK.

With any school visit, the focus should be on how real risks arising from such visits are to be managed, and not on trivial, hypothetical risks, or on burdensome paperwork. Where sensible and proportionate measures have been taken by those with responsibility for planning and organising school visits, and these can be demonstrated, the HSE state that it is highly unlikely that there would be a breach of health and safety law or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

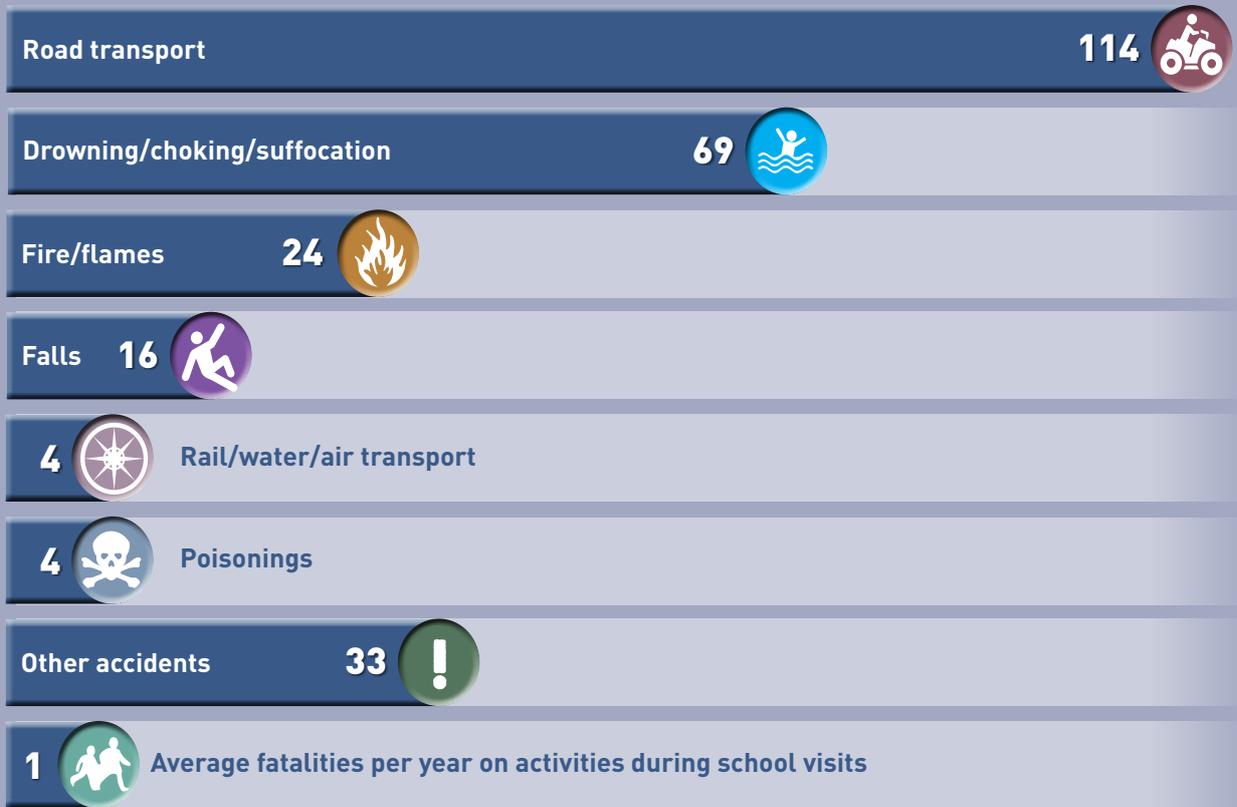
Accidents can happen, and health and safety law reflects this fact. Prosecutions invariably result from incidents where there has been recklessness or a clear failure to consider and adopt sensible measures. An accident happening does not necessarily mean there has been a breach of health and safety law.

Despite the benefits, those planning schools visits often focus on preparing for the hazards and associated risks, with the result that any intended benefits may be taken for granted or given insufficient attention.

### The risks associated with school visits

Although there are often concerns and misconceptions, the number of fatalities on school visits are very rare compared to road transport or fire.

#### Accidental deaths, children under 16, England and Wales, 2006



Sources: RoSPA, Adventure Activities Licensing Service

A 2010 study by The English Outdoor Council contextualises this risk:

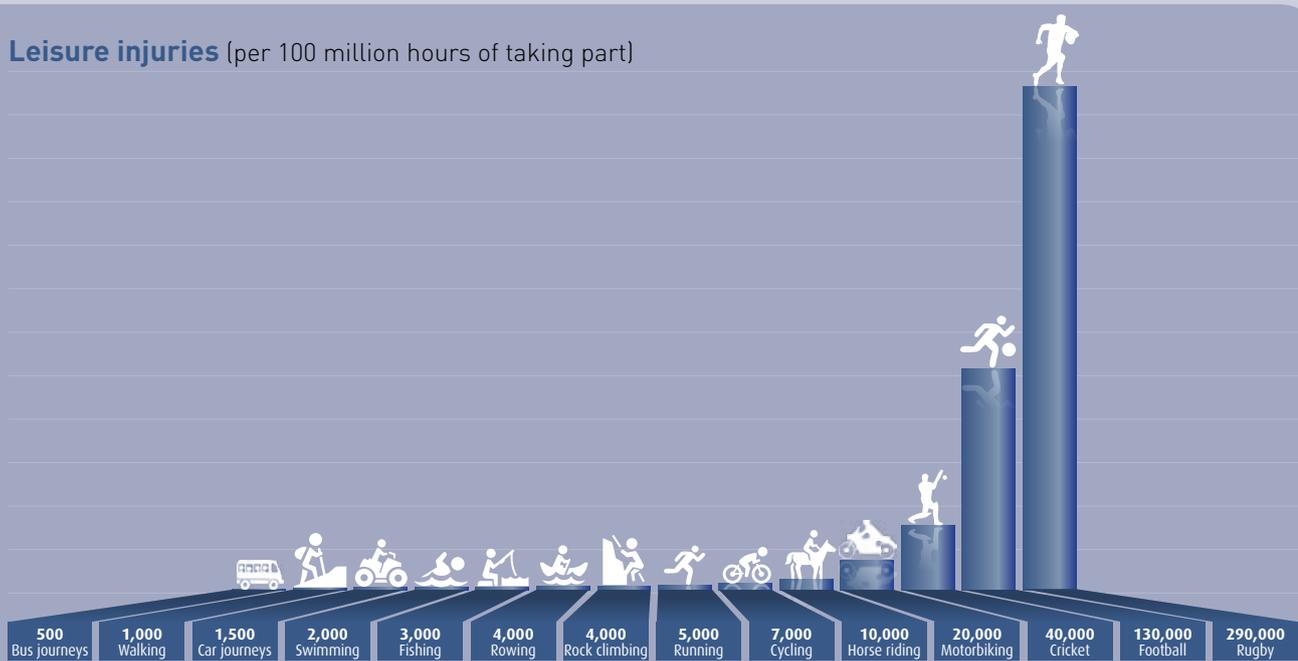
*"...on a typical school visit, the children who take part are at no greater risk of death than their schoolmates who have stayed behind".*

See <http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Nothing-Ventured.pdf>

Since 1996 (when these sorts of cases started to receive more official scrutiny) just two teachers have been convicted after failures relating to an accident on visits or outdoor activities. One other teacher had a conviction overturned on appeal.

Injuries from leisure activities show that children are far more likely to get injured playing football or rugby at school than going on a school hiking trip.

### Leisure injuries (per 100 million hours of taking part)



Sources: VECG/EsII

Children and young people are most at risk of injury at school between the ages of 10 and 14 as shown in the chart below.

### Injury rate (per 1,000 population)



Sources: AWISS data 2001

However this is related to the fact that they spend more time school rather than school being more risky venues than home or elsewhere.

## Scope

This guidance is aimed at head teachers, school staff, school governors, trustees, proprietors and other employers, school visit co-ordinators, parents and other interested groups.

It is aimed at educational organisation's teaching children and young people aged 5 to 18 and for visits outside the school, including sporting activities, cultural activities, field trips and any other off site activities.

RoSPA, through this guidance has drawn from guidance developed by statutory and other bodies. You should familiarise yourself with all guidance referred to in this document. (See School Policy Matters pg 18).

The use of the terms *should*, *consider*, *good* or *best practice* are the opinions of RoSPA's authors only and as such do not necessarily imply any legal compulsion.

# Definitions

<b>AALA</b>	Adventure Activity Licensing Authority
<b>ABTA</b>	Association of British Travel Agents
<b>afPE</b>	Association for Physical Education
<b>CLOC</b>	Council of Learning Outside the Classroom
<b>CRB</b>	Criminal Records Bureau
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DSI</b>	Department for Skills and Innovation
<b>HSE</b>	Health and Safety Executive
<b>HSWA</b>	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
<b>ISA</b>	Independent Safeguarding Authority
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>NGB</b>	National Governing Body (sports)
<b>NUT</b>	National Union of Teachers
<b>OEAP</b>	Outdoor Education Advisors Panel
<b>Ofsted</b>	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
<b>RoSPA</b>	The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
<b>STF</b>	School Travel Forum



# Legal Context

**It is important that those organising pupil or students visits are fully aware of their responsibilities and crucially their employer's responsibility. The definition of employer will vary according to the governance arrangements of a school or college.**

## Legal Responsibilities

Many school heads, teachers and other colleagues fear the consequences of an injury to a child following an accident which occurs on a school or college trip – including the possibility of civil litigation for damages and criminal prosecution for health and safety offences e.g. under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Schools and their staff have a duty of care to ensure all visits are conducted in a suitably supervised and safe environment for the children and so far as is reasonably practicable to minimise any risk which the activity may entail. Teachers who have taken all reasonable practicable steps to prevent any foreseeable injury are unlikely to be found liable for the injury and would have a strong defence to any civil claim or threat of prosecution arising from an accident or from a negative incident. This means that a teacher should be able to show that all necessary preparations have been made prior to and during a school or college visit.

Before undertaking any school visit, schools and colleges are legally required to carry out a written risk assessment in accordance with Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The risk assessment should detail any significant risks associated with the activity and what precautions must be taken. For some regular activities (e.g. swimming lessons and school sports fixtures) this need not be done every time, but should be in place and reviewed on a routine basis. A teacher's duty of care on a school visit is not confined to normal school hours. It lasts throughout the time away and can only be put aside at times when responsibility for the care of the children can be reasonably delegated to some other person or persons.

Teachers must be able to show they have met their duty of care by providing clear instructions to the children about health and safety issues relating to the activity in question, informing the children of health and safety issues regarding the activity and ensuring that all children understand the information.

Where third party supervising agents are engaged (such as those who work at education or activity centres not employed directly by the school), teachers must complete all necessary checks of the supervising agents which will include an enhanced CRB check and confirmation that all necessary licenses are in place for the applicable activity or trip. Teachers must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. This assessment may well include a check to ensure that any activities planned are carried out carefully, by competent people and in accordance with approved practices and health and safety requirements. Teachers should ensure that the children are suitably supervised when the activities are conducted.

**For example:** *A teacher could reasonably allow children to be supervised by the staff from an activity centre provided that those staff are competent and qualified and that the teacher is satisfied that the other person(s) can do so safely.*



## Health and Safety Responsibilities

As part of their response to the legal health and safety duties, schools or colleges will need to show that there is effective communication at all levels.

The HSE states: *The key legislation is the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The Act requires employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees and others, who use their premises, so far as is reasonably practicable [Section 2, 3 and 4]. The Act also places duties on individual employees to take care for the health and safety of themselves and others [Section 7].*

Governors, head teachers and senior managers may be guilty of an offence under the Act if an accident or damage to health occurs as result of as a result of their 'consent, connivance or neglect'. Individual teachers can also be charged with health and safety offences if they have acted recklessly or been negligent in carrying out their responsibilities, for example, in the light of their instruction and training.

The Act is supplemented by regulations which make the general requirements more explicit.

### Key regulations include:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that schools make suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk to health and safety of staff, pupils and others. If pupils will be involved in an activity where there is an element of risk you will need to show that you have taken "all reasonably practicable precautions".

### In addition organisers should be aware of:

- The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 which states that an offence of corporate manslaughter is committed if the way in which an organisations activities were managed or organised caused or contributed to the death of a person to whom the organisation owed a duty of care and this amounts to a gross breach of that duty of care owed to the deceased.
- The Young Person's Safety Act (1995) which gave rise to the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004, requires certain providers of facilities for adventure activities to be licensed.

Under health and safety legislation therefore, teachers are obliged to take all reasonably practical measures to ensure that every child under their control and supervision is safe and protected from any unacceptable risks. The teacher must be CAREFUL not CARELESS. Being careless is, in legal terms, being negligent; and being negligent means that you might be liable.

Overall the responsibility for health and safety however lies with the "employer". The HSE gives the following guidance about this for different kinds of schools, including those managed by local authorities:

### In England the local authority is the employer in:

- community schools;
- community special schools;
- voluntary controlled schools;
- maintained nursery schools; and
- pupil referral units.

**In England the governing body is the employer in:**

- foundation schools;
- foundation special schools;
- voluntary aided schools;
- Academies; and
- free schools.

The proprietor is the employer in independent schools. Although overall accountability lies with the school employer, other senior school managers involved in the day to day running of the school also have responsibility for the health and safety of staff and pupils.

**In Scotland:**

The majority of schools are state owned and operated by local authorities. The local authority is the employer.

There are a few grant aided schools, which are independent of local authorities, but which are supported financially by the Scottish Government. The governing body, or equivalent, is the employer.

For independent schools, the proprietor, Board of Trustees or equivalent, is the employer.



### Further guidance for schools which are managed by the local authority:

#### The Local Authority:

- Is responsible for the negligence of any teacher which arises in the course of their employment.
- Is under a duty to determine policies to ensure schools deliver the requirements of the national curriculum. It should state which school visits need governors' consent e.g. overnight stays.
- Should provide guidelines for procedures on school visits, including staff:pupil ratio.
- Should offer advice on insurance.

#### Governors:

- Are responsible for the general conduct of the school.
- Can modify Local Authority policy for the school curriculum, including extra-curricular activities.
- Need to be sure that a school visit has a clear educational and/or other benefits.
- Must ensure that arrangements are in accordance with Local Authority guidelines and other regulations e.g. professional bodies, subject associations.
- Must ensure that the school can run efficiently in absence of anyone on the visit.

#### The Headteacher:

- Is responsible for seeing that the Local Authority and/or governors' policy is implemented (in accordance with her/his own conditions of employment).
- Has a responsibility to ensure that all school visits comply with Local Authority and school regulations in every respect and if this responsibility is delegated, it must be to a "competent" person.

- Must ensure that activities are properly planned and supervised and that the pupils' safety is paramount.
- Is responsible for allocating responsibility to competent staff and volunteers and providing them the necessary training to undertake these responsibilities.

#### Teachers, educational visits co-ordinator and other school staff:

- Have a common law duty to act as a "reasonably careful parent".
- Must ensure that the careful planning and preparation of the school trip includes and assessment of the risks and benefits of all activities.
- Are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all pupils in their care throughout the entire trip.
- Must take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health and safety of pupils both on the school premises and in authorised activities elsewhere.
- Must maintain good order and discipline at all times.

#### Volunteers:

- Must accept the normal common law duty of care to act as a "reasonable parent" towards the children.
- Are not held as accountable as teachers.

In addition, teachers and non-teaching staff must feel competent to carry out the role expected of them. If they do not, they should inform the senior management and request appropriate training.

### Further guidance for academy trusts, foundation, voluntary-aided and free schools:

You will find the guidance on pg 16 a useful guide. However, the proprietor, employer, or governing body, rather than the local authority, has responsibility for the management of health and safety in schools. This responsibility may be delegated to the head teacher or other senior member of staff.

[NB The Government is considering legislation to transfer responsibility for health and safety to governors of all schools, including those run by Local Authorities. (House of Commons Debate 19-21 December 2011)]

### Specific regulations relevant to visits abroad

The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 (SI 1992 No.328) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly DTI).

These regulations implement the EC Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Directive (90/314/EEC) requiring organisations to provide fair and guaranteed conditions and operate a bonding scheme to protect any pre-payments made. One of the fundamental reasons for the introduction of these regulations is to prevent financial loss in the event of the solvency of a tour operator. In 1993, a number of school travel companies did collapse. (none of them were members of the School Travel Forum).

A package is defined as the pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following: transport, accommodation and other tourist services. Whether a school chooses to use a tour company or to organise its own trip abroad, it must take account of the provisions of the 1992 Regulations.

The Regulations offer three choices for protection of pre-payments, one of which must be used by the organiser:

1. Bonding
2. Insurance against insolvency
3. Trust accounts

For schools making their own arrangements, trust accounts are the only real option. The fund should be separate from the general school fund, the monies being placed in a separate account under the control of a trustee. This will also be under the scrutiny of the school's auditors. It may mean considering taking legal advice.

# School Policy Matters

All schools have a responsibility to produce guidelines on the procedures for visits, transport and outside activities relating to the age and stage of development of the pupils which should help those planning and/or leading visits to organise and deliver positive experiences for children and young people.

A school visits policy should include a clear statement about the benefits of school visits but also make clear that pupils' safety is paramount at all times. Your LA or local outdoor education adviser may be able to provide advice and support in developing or updating policies, but beware of off-the-shelf policies which may not apply in your setting.

## A school policy should include:

- If an educational visits co-ordinator has been appointed, who this person is and when to involve them in planning visits.
- A statement of what kinds of visit are acceptable, to whom they should and should not be accessible. As a general rule children should not be excluded on the grounds of disability and you may want to cross refer to your policy on inclusion.
- A requirement that visits should have clear aims and objectives, evaluation procedures and follow-up work, in line with the aims of the curriculum and for pupils' personal development.
- An expectation that pupils will be involved in any risk assessment and risk management as part of their preparation for and learning during the visit.
- Consent requirements as specified by the DfE: [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools)
- Consultation requirements (LA, governing body, school personnel, parents, pupils etc.)
- Training requirements for staff and volunteer helpers e.g. minibuss driver training.
- Safeguarding requirements for volunteers or additional adult helpers.
- Planning and organisation procedures e.g. checking the health and safety accreditation of transport providers, the venue and activity; emergency contact procedures; risk assessment.
- Financial procedures. This includes which activities can be organised by the school without having to enter into independent arrangements for the protection of moneys paid. Check your trip is covered by the EC directive on package travel [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons\\_int/safe\\_shop/pack\\_trav/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/pack_trav/index_en.htm)
- Insurance requirements.
- Safety and discipline codes for pupils, staff and volunteers.
- Staff:pupil ratios for different kinds of visits and activities.
- Links to other policies e.g. inclusion and safeguarding.



It is important that when developing a school policy that this is informed by national and statutory and non-statutory advice and guidance. This includes:

- The DfE's recently published new simplified guidance for schools [www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools) and a universal consent form for school visits and visits [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/parental-consent](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/parental-consent)
- The HSE has also published information about the health and safety myths concerned with school visits [www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf)
- HSE also publishes guidance on the reporting of deaths and serious injuries in schools, which includes school visits in the UK, [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/edis1.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/edis1.pdf)
- Schools may find previous, more detailed guidance known as Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HASPEV), which was published in 1998 useful although no longer endorsed by DfE.
- Local Authority guidelines (where applicable)
- Organisations which licence or accredit activities for schools such as Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (AALA<sup>1</sup>: [www.hse.gov.uk/aala/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/index.htm)) and Learning Outside the Classroom (LoTC: [www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk)). LoTC also provides comprehensive guidance for planning and managing activities of all kinds which take place beyond the classroom walls.
- The Association for Physical Education (AfPE) publishes guidance on safety for specific sporting activities ([www.afpe.org.uk](http://www.afpe.org.uk)).
- Unions, other professional bodies and relevant trade associations
- The British Activity Providers Association [www.thebapa.org.uk](http://www.thebapa.org.uk)

#### And advice from:

- The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) which publishes national guidance for employers <http://oeapeg.info/>. (Employers who adopt this guidance should have a policy document that directs staff to use this guidance, and sets out their specific arrangements for staff training, access to advice, notification or approval of visits, and monitoring. Employees should be sure that their employer has adopted this guidance before using this site.)
- Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) [www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)
- School Travel Forum (STF) [www.schooltravelforum.com](http://www.schooltravelforum.com)
- School Journey Association of London (SJA) [www.sjatours.org](http://www.sjatours.org)
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice for travellers [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country)

#### See also:

- Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) [www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)
- School Travel Forum (STF) [www.schooltravelforum.com](http://www.schooltravelforum.com)
- School Journey Association of London (SJA) [www.sjatours.org](http://www.sjatours.org)
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice for travellers [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country)

For overseas visits you should also consider self evaluation against BS8848:2007+A1:2009:Voluntary specification for organisers of visits, including fieldwork, expeditions, cultural exchanges and adventurous activities, outside the United Kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Following the Young report (Common Sense, Common Safety, 2010) the Government has considered the abolition of AALA in England and the repeal of The Activity Centre (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995. In July 2012 the HSE announced that there would be a further period of consultation in England. Scotland and Wales have already announced plans to retain licensing in its current form.



# Planning a School Visit

**It is essential when planning a visit that the needs of participants have been clearly identified and that there is sufficient suitably experienced supervision. It is also crucial that a specific risk assessment has been carried out covering all aspects of the planned activity.**

## **This section covers:**

- School trip planning checklist
- Information to parents
- Information from parents
- Staff/adult: pupil ratios
- Safeguarding
- Getting your head around risk assessment
- Insurance

Preparation and planning are the key to a successful and safe school visit. Safety depends to a large extent on the leader's ability to carry out a suitable risk assessment, to identify all the hazards and difficulties and to make plans to avoid them. Many LEAs and other organisations offer on-line planning and approval tools. As with school policies, simply downloading a risk assessment from a website is not sufficient to ensure the safety of a particular visit. Here are some questions to help you with your planning:

## **School trip planning checklist**

- What is the purpose of the trip or visit (aims and objectives)? Is it linked to the curriculum?
- Where are you going and for how long?
- How big a group do you want to take? Who do you want to take?
- What are the ages of the pupils who will be involved in the trip or visit?
- Do you need the governors' or other form of internal approval for the visit? Have you allowed enough time to get approval?
- Do you know all the pupils you will be taking out of school? Who has special needs, including special dietary or other requirements? Who suffers from travel sickness? Who can take responsibility? Who has special skills (e.g. first aid)?
- Do you have the DfE, local authority and other guidance on school visits? Do you need any further advice? e.g. from teaching union, professional body, sport national governing body).
- Who are the leader and the deputy leader of the trip? Normally, the leader will be a teacher. Are the leader and deputy leader competent people?
- Do you need to make a preliminary visit? Have you been before? Do you know anyone else who has been to the same place?
- What activity/activities will be involved? Make a list.
- Have you done a suitable risk assessment for all the activities? What are the significant hazards and risks? Have you planned to avoid them? Can you avoid them? Do you need professional advice?
- What are the travel arrangements? Have you done a risk assessment for them? Have you planned food and rest stops?
- Have you involved pupils in the risk assessments?
- What supervision levels (staff/adult: pupil ratio) do you need and why? Have you recorded all details of your decision with regard to this? See adult:pupil ratios on page 24.



Preparation and planning are the key to a successful and safe school visit.

- Have you got parental consent for each child? Have you given parents all the essential information? What, if anything, do you need to know from the parents?
- Is your communication network in place (now and for the duration of the trip)? Who will keep copies of all the details? Where will they be kept?
- Do you have adequate insurance to cover the trip if needed? Consult your local authority for guidance if applicable.
- Are the financial arrangements in order? What protection of payments is in place? Do you need advice?
- What is the first aid provision? Is the first aid kit in good working order? Who will look after the first aid kit? Is there a first aid trained adult on the trip?
- Do any of the pupils require medication? Who will look after it? Who will administer it? Take advice.
- What are the emergency procedures if anything should go wrong? Does everyone know them? Have they been understood and rehearsed?
- Is the programme for the trip now agreed by all relevant parties?
- How will you evaluate the trip? What is the follow-up work?

Although this seems like a lot of work, advance planning could reveal that to allow a particular activity or trip could expose children to unacceptable levels of risk. Although it is very disappointing for a leader to cancel a trip, it is the only responsible course of action to take if the level of risk is unacceptable.

### Information for parents

A universal consent form from the DfE is a useful starting point, especially for regular activities such as swimming lessons and where the risks are similar to everyday life [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/parental-consent](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00191759/departmental-advice-on-health-and-safety-for-schools/parental-consent)

However, you will still need to inform parents when children are not in school and check that contact details are kept up to date.

Although it may not always be necessary to have specific parental consent for short visits which are part of the curriculum, school routine and children's normal work patterns, it is very important for parents and carers to be told when children will not be in the school. Parents retain the right to withhold consent for school visits.

For visits further afield, the school will require written consent from parents and in order for parents to give consent, they need all the available information – suitable for their own needs. Parents should also be given full details of the insurance cover you have in place which covers their children.

**Information to parents should be clear and specific about:**

- the purpose, destination and location of the visit;
- the programme, including details of activities;
- supervising staff (including third party agents);
- relevant dates and times;
- travel and accommodation arrangements;
- standards of behaviour expected of children;
- staffing; special clothing required;
- insurance cover;
- contact telephone numbers; and
- emergency procedures for contacting parents.

For some visits you might arrange a meeting to cover relevant information and to give parents the opportunity to raise issues of concern to them.

**Information from parents**

Parents are also a source of information for the school when a visit is being organised. Exchanges of information should, ideally, be done in writing. Where this is not possible, keep written records of details given orally. Sign and date them.

**Written records should be kept of:**

- Updated information about medical conditions and any emergency medical treatment.
- GP's address.
- Dietary requirements.
- Home telephone number/address.
- Emergency contact details.

**Staff /Adult: Pupil Ratios**

Many questions are asked about staff/adult: pupil ratios for school visits and there is no definitive answer to be given. The correct staff/adult: pupil ratio for school visits is dependent upon the results of the risk assessment of the visit, the activities involved within the visit and the number of children participating. On school visits teachers should retain primary responsibility for supervising the group at all times, so in all decisions about ratios, at least one teacher should accompany any group and be able to manage and supervise the group with their full attention.

A review of previous and existing guidance reveals that where ratios have been suggested, some (such as RoSPA and DfES – now DfE) refer to adults, which could include parents and other volunteer helpers, while others (including from some teaching unions) refer to 'school staff' or teachers. The decision you make about ratios, and the qualifications of the accompanying adults must be based on your assessment of the risk of harm to the children and young people participating in each visit. On school visits teachers should retain primary responsibility for supervising the group at all times, so in all decisions about ratios, at least one teacher should accompany any group.

Bear in mind that it is not uncommon for children of members of staff who are not pupils at the school to accompany their parents on residential or other visits, *so the total number of children and young people taking part should always be taken into account.*

*Remember that ratios in themselves do not guarantee safety. A judgement can only be made when all the risks have been assessed. Keep a written record of that assessment and the reasons for the final decision.* If in doubt, increase the number of adult supervisors and, in mixed groups, have at least one male and one female teacher.



In all cases, the duty remains with the headteacher and leader to ensure adequate supervision for the particular group and for the particular activity. If applicable, consult your local authority for further guidance.

The ratio you select will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The age, sex and ability of the pupils.
- The number of pupils involved.
- Pupils' special educational or medical needs.
- Pupils' previous experiences of being away from school/home and of the activities involved.
- The degree of responsibility and discipline shown by the group.
- The type of visit and the nature of the activities involved.
- The level of risk.
- The location and travel arrangements.
- The time of year.
- The experience, training and quality of the staff and other adults available (e.g. if swimming is involved is one of the adults in attendance a qualified lifesaver?).
- Requirements of the organisation or location to be visited.
- The availability of a qualified First Aider.
- The past experience of organising visits of the same or similar nature.

If the pupils have special educational needs, there should be a higher staff/adult to pupil ratio as an extremely high level of care and wider safety margins are necessary.

### Early Years and Foundation Stage

There is a specific legal requirement for ratios in this age group which apply to on and off site activities and visits. These are set out in the Early Years and Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

[www.education.gov.uk/education/a0068102/early-years-foundation-stageeyps](http://www.education.gov.uk/education/a0068102/early-years-foundation-stageeyps)

### Some examples to consider:

As an indicative guide, you should consider the following **adult: child ratios for primary schools**, based on the assumption that the leader of the group is a qualified teacher. Bear in mind that some local authorities suggest a minimum number of teachers in addition to a minimum number of adults:

- 1:15** for all visits where the element of risk is similar to the risks encountered in daily life.
- 1:10** for all residential visits, including going abroad, with a minimum of 2 adults of opposite sexes if the group is a mixed party.
- 1:6** for children under eight and/or where the children have special needs.
- 1:5** or less for younger children or high risk activities (See section on specific high risk activities on page 38).

Suggested **adult: pupil ratios for secondary schools and colleges**, based on the assumption that at the leader of the group is a qualified teacher. Bear in mind that some local authorities suggest a minimum number of teachers in addition to a minimum number of adults:

- 1:15** for a short local visit (perhaps during a lesson or to attend a local sports fixture) where one teacher might be considered sufficient even for a mixed party.
- 1:15** for day visits outside the walking distance of the school with a minimum 2 adults of opposite sexes if the group is a mixed party.
- 1:15** for residential visits (where centre staff are resident) with a minimum of 2 adults of opposite sexes if the group is a mixed party.
- 1:10** for visits abroad with a minimum of 2 adults of opposite sexes if the group is a mixed party.
- 1:5** or lower for high risk activities.

Other guidance published by the DfES (now DfE)<sup>2</sup> used to recommend the following adult:pupil ratios as a general guide for visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks:

- 1 adult for every 15-20 pupils in school year 7 onwards.
- 1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6.
- 1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3 (under 5s reception classes should have a higher ratio).

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has issued guidance for its members [www.teachers.org.uk/briefings](http://www.teachers.org.uk/briefings) and recommends that the previous DfE guidance (above) on adult:pupil ratios should be interpreted as teacher:pupil ratios. The NUT also recommends that newly qualified teachers should not normally lead school parties in their first year of teaching.

### Adults or teachers?

All the examples above are for guidance only and the decision about how many staff and other adults should accompany a group of children should be considered as part of the risk assessment for the visit. Some LAs recommend that all groups should be accompanied by two members of staff (which could include competent non-teaching staff) and that all mixed gender groups should be accompanied by one male and one female member of staff. For small groups of 3-4 boys and girls this ratio may prohibit pupils from taking part in worthwhile activities; you should always use your judgement when deciding on ratios and the role of the accompanying adults.

*Overall, it is essential that you take into account the type of activity, age and ability of the pupils and the competence, experience and qualifications of the leader (who should always be a teacher) when deciding the adult/staff to child ratio. The greater the risk, the more supervisory staff are needed.*

## Safeguarding

Your risk assessment should take into account who will be accompanying children and young people, the adults that they will meet at centres they visit and/or places they will stay.

It would be unreasonable (and impractical) to expect parents to undergo Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks if they are accompanying children on occasional school visits. However, other volunteers should have an enhanced CRB check if they have regular contact with children. Schools should consider how volunteers are used and adults without CRB checks should not be left alone with pupils.

*Where the visit involves an overnight stay, all volunteers (including parents) should be asked to undergo an enhanced CRB check.*

Centres providing activities for children should be asked to provide evidence that staff who have substantial or unsupervised access to children have been checked. If the centre is open to members of the public, managers should be asked what their policies are with regard to child protection. Children should not be left unsupervised in any centre that is not able to provide evidence of appropriate checks.

You should always check whether any volunteers (including parents if an overnight stay is involved) or supervisors (including third party agents) are barred from working with children. You can apply to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) for this information, but it should be noted on the enhanced CRB check if the person is barred.

<sup>2</sup> Now archived but accessible at [http://tna.europarchive.org/20030731072630/http://www.dfes.gov.uk:80/h\\_s\\_ev/hspv.pdf](http://tna.europarchive.org/20030731072630/http://www.dfes.gov.uk:80/h_s_ev/hspv.pdf)

## Getting your head around risk assessment

There is no such thing as absolute safety or zero risk. This is an important concept to grasp, especially when undertaking a risk assessment. Indeed, in order to present pupils with beneficial challenges we should not be seeking zero risk. Nevertheless, decisions have to be made about whether the taking of particular risks is justified. If the risks are justified, are existing control measures sufficient to keep risk levels within tolerable bounds? Is there an appropriate balance between the extent of the risk and the cost of reducing it even further?

Your educational visits co-ordinator (if appointed) should be able to provide you with any risk assessment documents required by your school policy. However, risk assessment is more than simply completing the paperwork, identifying hazards and applying standard risk control solutions. It is more than going through the motions to satisfy legal requirements. Risk assessment is a way of structuring and recording the hazards you have identified and the judgements you make to satisfy yourself that the risk to those likely to be harmed is adequately controlled. It is, therefore, vital to follow a clear risk assessment process:

### Consider:

- What are the activities?
- What are the benefits of the activities?
- What are the hazards?
  - Are the hazards easy to recognise?
- Who will be exposed to the hazards?
- How likely is it that someone will come to harm (probability)?
- How serious might the consequences be (severity)?
- How adequate are the existing measures to manage the risk?
  - Are the children likely to understand and follow the suggested controls?

- Are suitable arrangements in place to deal with emergencies?
- Should anything else be done and by whom?

### Remember:

- To consider both the benefits and the risks.
- Risk is the product of probability and severity (Risk=probability x severity of consequences).
- A risk assessment carried out at the planning stage is not a safeguard against all eventualities. Group leaders should also be aware of changing circumstances and conditions which could increase the risk of harm at the time when the activity is about to begin or is underway. They should be prepared to act to minimise the risks at the time. This is known as dynamic risk assessment.
- Pupils can and should be involved in risk assessment prior to and during an activity or visit as part of their preparation for the visit. During the visit children and young people should be encouraged to alert adult group leaders if they feel unsafe and to take an active part in keeping themselves and others safe. However, the responsibility for health and safety of pupils remains with the group leader and the employer at all times.
- Your activity centre or educational visit provider may have carried out risk assessments but you should always satisfy yourself that these have been done to an appropriate standard and that you are aware of the risks they have identified. When dealing with activities and hazards where the consequences of harm are severe, it is always advisable to re-visit the case for the justification of the risky activity, even if the same activity has been carried out before by you or your school. The risk assessment process provides a framework to help determine the right level of preventive and protective action to be applied in specific circumstances – from the half-day year group visit to a museum to a week-long skiing trip abroad (See section on outdoor and adventurous activities).



Careful attention to health and safety issues does not have to stifle the adventurous spirit of school visits; rather, it should create an environment where the significant physical and psychological risks are well managed. This approach will enable children and young people to develop their self confidence and a sense of achievement.

A 5 steps approach to risk assessment is available through the HSE: [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm#\\_=\\_1347283135681&dnt=true&id=twitter-widget-3&lang=en&screen\\_name=H\\_S\\_E&show\\_count=false&show\\_screen\\_name=false&size=mat](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm#_=_1347283135681&dnt=true&id=twitter-widget-3&lang=en&screen_name=H_S_E&show_count=false&show_screen_name=false&size=mat)

## Insurance

No school visit can go ahead unless there is adequate insurance. Where applicable the local authority can advise you on this crucial element of a school trip. You should also contact your union for guidance.

### Your insurance should cover:

- **Personal injury** – covers death, major injury, loss of limbs or eyes, permanent or partial disability. Check that insurance covers pupils as well as staff.
- **Public liability** – covers against the risk of an award of compensation where a legal claim is made against the organisers/supervisors of the school trip for the death, injury or illness of a person.
- **Medical and related expenses** – covers expenses following an injury or illness.
- **Extra expenses** – covers expenses reasonably incurred because of enforced extension or abbreviation of the trip - e.g. strike, civil commotion, natural disaster or extreme weather.
- **Personal effects** – covers loss or damage to luggage, clothing, personal effects and loss of money.
- **Hired equipment** – if you have hired any equipment for the trip, check under the terms of hire agreement whether you are required to arrange insurance cover for the equipment for the period of hire.
- **Special activities** – separate insurance will be necessary when the trip includes high risk activities – check the insurance policy.
- **Cancellations** – covers loss caused by the cancellation of the trip.

# Outdoor and Adventurous Activities

Schools and colleges have a crucial role to play in enabling their students to experience adventurous activities. Research shows that young people are increasingly spending more time indoors and are not learning about risk through experience.

The whole point of adventurous activity is to experience challenge! Schools and colleges play an important role here as increasingly children and young people spend less time outside of their home experiencing what were once considered everyday risky activities such as climbing trees. Well planned and properly conducted outdoor and adventurous activities can have a positive and lasting effect on a young person's personal and social development. While no adventurous activity can be completely risk free, the vast majority of young people who take part in outdoor courses and more adventurous activities during school visits do so without incident. However, risk assessment becomes even more important when your visit includes outdoor or adventurous activities.

## Learning from past experience

For every successful school trip that takes place, and there are thousands every year, the public remembers the ones that went wrong. Three tragic events from the 1980s and 1990s contributed to significant changes in legislation:

- Four children lost their lives when they were swept out to sea from the rocks at Land's End (1985).
- Twelve children and a teacher died when their minibus crashed into the back of a maintenance vehicle on the hard shoulder of the M40 (1993).
- Four sixth formers died in a canoeing accident at Lyme Bay in Dorset (1993).

More recently in August 2011: A polar bear mauled a 17 year old boy to death and left 4 others (2 leaders and 2 trip members) badly hurt in an attack on the remote Norwegian island of Svalbard.

As a result of any tragic incident involving school children, questions are asked, procedures are tightened, and new legislation may come into force. The *Activity Centres (Young Person's Safety) Act 1995* and the *Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996* both followed the Lyme Bay incident.

It would be a mistake to think that all outdoor activity centres were unsafe before the Lyme Bay incident. The safety record for such centres was good, considering the high risk activities taking place there. What the Lyme Bay incident did, however, was to highlight certain deficiencies in regulation and practice. This is also true of the M40 minibus crash. Regulation and practice for transporting children in minibuses is now considerably tighter as a result of the tragedy. See RoSPA guide to minibus driving: [www.rospace.com/roadsafety/advice/minibus/info/Minibus\\_Code\\_2008.pdf](http://www.rospace.com/roadsafety/advice/minibus/info/Minibus_Code_2008.pdf)

It is also a mistake to believe that all activities are automatically safe since the Adventurous Activity Licensing regulations came into force. The awarding of an AALA licence does not absolve activity leaders of responsibility for preventing accidents, as the events at Glenridding Beck in 2002 showed ([www.hse.gov.uk/aala/glenridding-beck-investigation.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/glenridding-beck-investigation.pdf)).



Important components for a successful activity programme involving young people in risk assessment, learning from experience and developing a thorough understanding of the geography and terrain of the location where the activities are planned to take place.

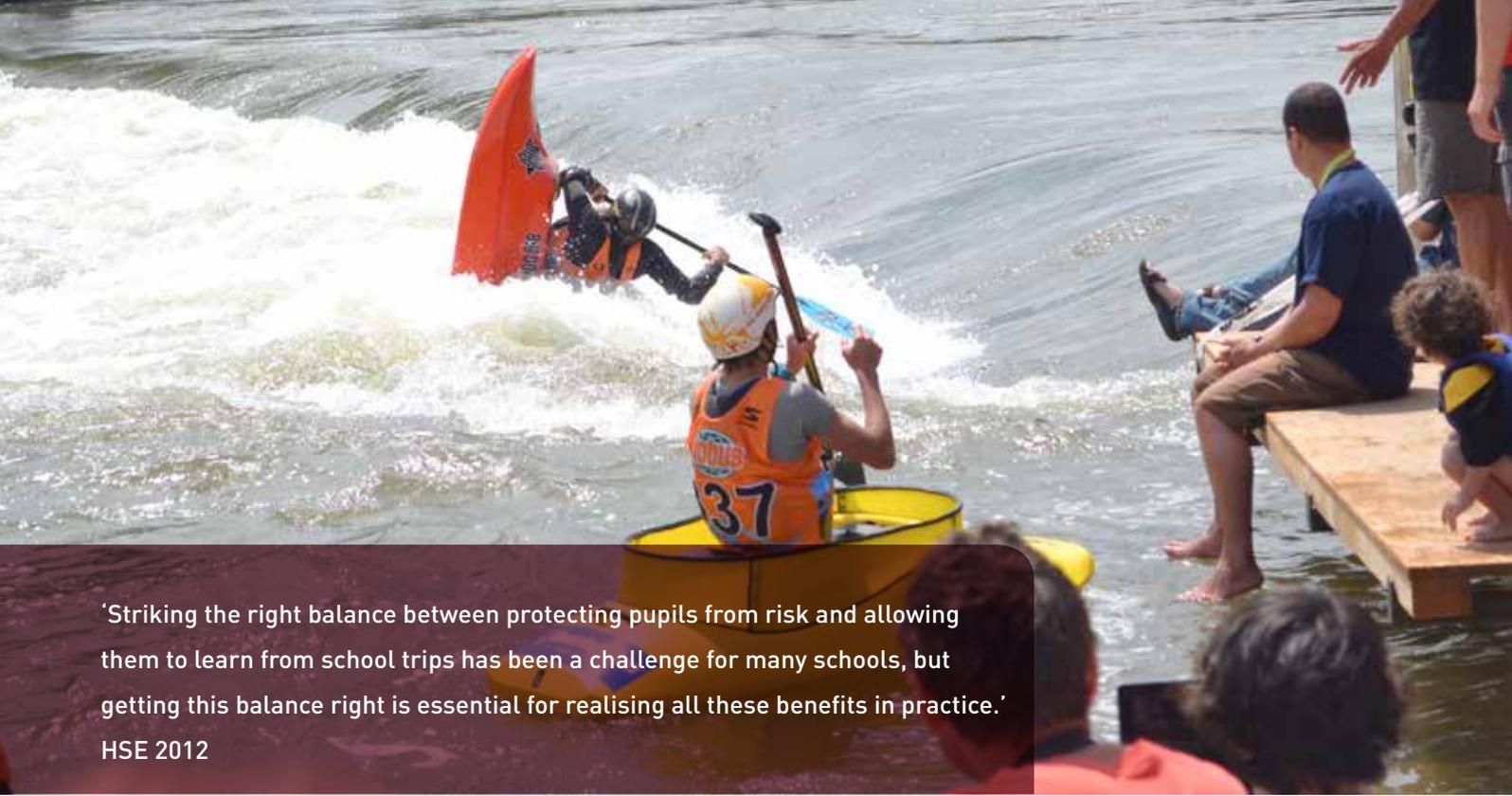
In this tragic incident a 10 year old boy was overcome by hypothermia and died after he jumped from rocks into a beck in cold weather and while it was in spate. Two other party members, including his mother who tried to rescue him, also suffered hypothermia and had to be airlifted to hospital.

There is an increasingly diverse range of adventurous activities and visit organisers need to have policies and procedures which cover the eventuality of groups wanting to do activities for which there might be no National Governing Body (NGB) standards or qualifications, such as 'plunge pooling' in this case.

The subsequent investigation into the Glenridding Beck incident identified the following aspects of good practice, for planning adventurous activities, not all of which were followed on that occasion:

- Competence is wider than just the holding of qualifications. Competence to lead a particular activity needs to be assessed by a technical expert. The fact that somebody has done an activity before does not necessarily mean that they are competent.
- Identifying appropriate the correct supervision ratios is not just a matter of applying a simple numerical calculation of leaders to participants but must be based on proper consideration of both the activities and the participants.
- Generic and site-specific risk assessments should identify "cut-off" points to inform dynamic risk assessments.
- There is a need for policies and procedures in respect of leaders and helpers wanting to bring additional children.
- Leaders and others should never create unrealistic expectations.
- The need for a "Plan B" to provide alternative activities if the main objective cannot be delivered.
- Where water activities are involved, the need to give due consideration to the foreseeability of 'panicking swimmers' and to provide the necessary precautions.
- There should be high levels of participant involvement in decision-making to ensure that risks and control measures are properly discussed and participants learn to be "risk aware" rather than "risk-averse".
- Managers should provide clear monitoring arrangements for both administrative procedures and activities in the field.

**Remember: before undertaking any school trip schools are legally required to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to determine if preventive and protective measures (including emergency arrangements) are adequate and to record your findings about any significant risks. Schools have a duty of care towards pupils and so in an activity where such risks are present, you will need to show that you have considered them and taken "all reasonably practicable' precautions". The results of the assessment need to be properly communicated and as part of your legal health and safety duties, the employer or organiser of the activity will need to show that there is effective communication at all levels.**



‘Striking the right balance between protecting pupils from risk and allowing them to learn from school trips has been a challenge for many schools, but getting this balance right is essential for realising all these benefits in practice.’  
HSE 2012

### Adventurous activity checklist

Adventure activities are those activities which not only contain an inherent risk, but which also take place in environments from which it is difficult to escape quickly should an accident occur. The quality of leadership is important in all out of school activities but, in adventure activities, the competence and experience of the party leader is crucial. Advance planning and an accurate risk assessment could reveal that to allow a particular activity to take place – or even the whole trip – could expose the children to unacceptable levels of risk.

#### Before proceeding, ask yourself:

1. What are the educational aims of the visit? Is the visit appropriate for these aims?
2. Do I fully understand my legal duties and obligations? (You may also care to consider whether or not you are willing to accept these. You cannot go ahead, especially as party leader, unless you do).
3. Do I have the necessary expertise or specialist knowledge and skills required for this visit? Do I understand the risks involved – or have access to those that can work through them with me? (Consider here your first aid knowledge and training.)
4. Do I need to take someone with me who has the knowledge, competency and skills I lack? (Consider someone with First Aid Qualifications who holds a valid certificate).
5. Who should I take with me as co-leader? (e.g. If going abroad, someone who speaks the language of the country to be visited; someone who has led a similar visit before).

6. Can I obtain expertise and help on site?
7. Do I know others who have already been on this visit? (It is a good idea to contact other schools who have used the same venue).
8. Am I able to make a preliminary reconnaissance of the site?
9. Do I know how to do an accurate risk assessment which identifies and records the significant risks, and helps to identify action to minimise the risks? How are children and young people involved in risk assessment, before and during the activity?
10. Do I need further advice and from whom? (Consider taking advice from a variety of sources: from your LA; LA outdoor education advisers; PE advisors; teaching union; sports NGB's; other professional bodies etc.)

If your visit 'provider' has the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge your local authority or employer may accept this without additional evidence.

For overseas visits, consider self evaluation against BS8848:2007+A1:2009: voluntary specification for organisers of visits, including fieldwork, expeditions, cultural exchanges and adventurous activities, outside the United Kingdom.

## Reconnaissance

It is very important that you try to make a preliminary reconnaissance of the venue in order to assess the risks. If this is not possible, make as many enquiries as you can about the venue and contact other schools who have used the same site. Even if you do make the preliminary visit, do not assume that this is a “once and for all” check. You will need to re-assess venues that have been used on previous occasions. Things can and do change.

**When carrying out your risk assessment consider the following:**

- The type of activity and level at which it is being undertaken – e.g. beginners, intermediate, advanced etc.
- The location – e.g. mountainous terrain; near water; urban setting etc.
- The competence, experience and qualifications of the on-site staff.
- The age, competence, fitness, experience and character of the students.
- The staff: student ratio.
- The quality and suitability of available equipment.
- Seasonal conditions such as weather and time of year.

Most accidents result from a combination of these factors having been inadequately assessed or even overlooked entirely.

Risks should not only be assessed in the initial planning stages; but also throughout the duration of the visit. Risk assessment should be an ongoing process undertaken by staff accompanying the school trip in liaison with on-site staff.

## Outdoor Activity Centres

Before visiting any activity centre you should seek assurance about the safety standards, including any quality marks or licenses they hold for adventurous activities and for the competency of their staff. You should request a full list of centre staff which should detail their experience and qualifications.

### Key questions

- Does the centre operate a policy for staff recruitment, training and assessment which ensures that all staff with any responsibility for the safety and welfare of participants are competent?
- Does the centre carry out enhanced criminal record checks as part of its recruitment procedures?
- Does the centre have a clear chain of responsibility set out in writing?
- Does the centre have written local operating procedures for each programme or activity offered?
- Does the centre guarantee that there is at least one responsible person with first aid qualifications on site?
- Is the equipment used at the centre safe, appropriate, correctly sized and correct for the intended purpose?
- Is the equipment frequently checked and the results recorded (internal audit)?
- Has the centre produced a written document on accident and emergency procedures, including fire safety, and is this available?
- Does the centre provide sufficient insurance cover?



All details should be confirmed in writing as far as possible. An established written system will help to ensure that all procedures and precautions are taken. No contract should be entered into until you are satisfied about the safety provision.

In particular, the responsibility for the safety of each pupil must be clearly defined at all times. This is particularly important when the responsibility is divided between school and centre during a residential course. Never assume that “someone else” is doing it. Adults, including school staff, volunteers and centre staff should always know which pupils they are responsible for and when. It is also essential that pupils know who is responsible for their safety at any time, including what they should do in the event of an emergency.

Under common law, although others in the chain of care have responsibilities, ultimately it is the teacher who has responsibility for acting ‘in loco parentis’. Where a teacher is a qualified instructor they have additional responsibility to act on that training. A teacher may delegate responsibility to a competent and appropriately qualified member of centre staff for e.g. a high risk activity (caving, climbing, sailing etc.) which requires special skills. But for the rest of the visit, the responsibility remains with the teacher – even at night. Where possible, a teacher would be assigned to each group to accompany them during the activities.

When a teacher takes part in an activity alongside the children under the guidance of centre staff, the teacher should only overrule the instructor if they consider that the children’s safety is threatened in any way. The teacher may then take action on behalf of the pupils and withdraw them from the activity. Such a decision must then be recorded and reported to the party leader, head teacher and centre manager.

### Effects of specific legislation

The Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995 and the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 have set up a licensing scheme for adventure activity providers in England, Scotland and Wales (this is currently being reconsidered by the Government in England). Those who provide specified adventure activities, (caving, climbing, trekking, water sports), in return for payment, to young people under 18 years of age must be registered, hold a licence and abide by the conditions. Since October 1, 1997, providers must hold a licence before they can operate. Before a licence is granted, the centre will be inspected. All licences, which can be valid for up to three years, have safety conditions attached.

#### The licence holder is required to:

- keep risk assessment and safety arrangements up-to-date;
- have sufficient competent instructors;
- have suitable first aid and emergency arrangements;
- give information on risks and precautions to those who need it; and
- have appropriate equipment properly maintained.

#### Beware the exclusions

The AALA licensing scheme does not cover teacher-led trips which are based at outdoor activity centres. The preparation and arrangement for these trips must be in line with good practice and any specific guidelines produced by the school or the LA where relevant. Neither does the scheme cover activities offered by voluntary associations to their members or to young people accompanied by their parent(s) or legal guardian(s).



The licensing scheme only guarantees basic health and safety standards and procedures. It does not give school party organisers and leaders the green light to go ahead without the usual careful planning, checking procedures and liaison.

## Ten High Risk Activities

### Some key considerations:

You will need to take advice and seek further information from specialists on each area listed below. There is only room here for a few basic pointers and this list should not be considered exhaustive:

1. **Minibus driving:** Travel to and from activities can be the most hazardous part of the visit. However, sensible precautions ensure that these risks can be managed to ensure everyone arrives safely at their destination. If travelling by coach, always use reputable companies. See RoSPA's guidance on minibus safety.
2. **Camping:** Fire is always a potential hazard – mainly as a result of cooking activities. Other hazards include carbon monoxide poisoning from the incomplete combustion of gases and charcoal from single use barbecues. The party leader must be an experienced camper. Careful, precise planning plus good order and discipline are essential. See RoSPA guidance on camping safety [www.rospa.com/leisuresafety/adviceandinformation/leisuresafety/camping-safety.aspx?nf=103](http://www.rospa.com/leisuresafety/adviceandinformation/leisuresafety/camping-safety.aspx?nf=103)
3. **Mountain Walking:** Many accidents occur in mountainous country as conditions can and do change rapidly - even in the summer. A high quality of leadership is vital. Anyone taking part should be physically fit, mentally prepared and know standard procedures for dealing with becoming lost.
4. **Rock climbing:** A high quality of leadership is vital. There should be a leader:pupil ratio of at least 1:4 on single pitch climbs (one pitch point usually at the top of the rock controlled by party leader) and 1:3 on multi-pitch climbs (more than one pitch point).
5. **Swimming outdoors:** Statistically, this is the most risky outdoor activity for children. An accident in any depth of water can be fatal unless prompt action is taken. Being able to swim well in a swimming pool does not guarantee safety in outdoor water. The cold water temperature is always a potential hazard.
6. **Caving, potholing and other high risk sports:** This type of adventure can never be completely safe, but leaders have a clear responsibility to make sure that the hazards that the pupils encounter are kept within "acceptable limits". For example, when caving the party leader must be an experienced caver holding a Cave Leader's Certificate. The assistant leader must be able to bring the party back to the surface safely in an emergency. For these high risk sports, the maximum recommended party is 2:10. Every group must consist of at least four people and any school party must include at least two adults.
7. **Skiing:** The party leader must be a competent and qualified skier with a recognised certificate or award. Any pupil taking part must be physically fit and mentally prepared.
8. **Riding:** There are strict safety procedures which must be followed - these include standards of equipment, qualifications for group leaders and codes of behaviour. The British Horse Society provides extremely useful guidance.
9. **Cycling:** Bicycles should always be checked for safety and any faults corrected. Party leaders must ensure that all the children are proficient cyclists with a thorough and working knowledge of the Highway Code. Cycle helmets and high visibility clothing should be worn.
10. **Water-based activity:** Effective water safety training should be incorporated wherever possible into all water activity programmes. Leaders of any water-based activities must consider all of the following before proceeding:
  - the water temperature, weather forecast and tidal conditions;
  - the swimming competency in "real conditions" of all members of the party;



- the “kitting out” of the group with proper clothing and equipment and the checking of life saving equipment;
- the group’s mastery of the capsize drill and other emergency procedures;
- the ability of at least one member of the group to carry out expired air resuscitation; and
- the ability of the group to recognise the symptoms of hypothermia, fatigue or stress and the ability to respond appropriately.

*All of the activities described on the left can be adversely affected by a change in the weather conditions e.g. heavy rainfall or strong winds. Leaders must act on any advice or signs of these changes and be prepared to make alternative arrangements.*

If travelling abroad, leaders should be aware of and apply any country specific regulations with regard to personal protective equipment and kit for any adventurous activity to be carried out.

# Going Abroad

Visits abroad offer students a unique opportunity to experience different cultures and apply their language studies to real life situations. All of the issues in this guidance apply to trips overseas but there are additional considerations, in particular travel arrangements, language and country specific legislation.

School visits abroad provide further opportunities for pupils to experience challenge, but also call for even greater care, organisation and planning than visits and adventures at home.

**There are three options open to schools planning a trip abroad:**

- Using a commercial travel agent specialising in school journeys, who will organise travel, hotels, visits and all necessary details. Travel Agents who are members of ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) are governed by ABTA's code of conduct.
- Using the services of one of the voluntary bodies established to promote school journeys, such as The School Journey Association of London (SJA). Wherever possible, schools should use companies which are members of the School Travel Forum. Member companies must abide by the Forum's code of conduct.
- Do-it-Yourself (A school may decide to make all, or most, of its own arrangements).

Information on specific legislation relating can be found in the legal context section of this document.



Using reputable and experienced tour operators can be an advantage, but school trip organisers should not see this as a substitute for the careful investigation and planning that all school trips require.



## Ten key points for visits abroad

1. **Travel documentation:** Allow plenty of time to organise travel documentation. Check all passports are valid for the date of travel and that you have the relevant visas. Note that some countries require passports to be valid for at least 6 months after the date of entry to the country. Take advice from your local authority or employer and/or Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department if you are unsure about any aspect of obtaining the correct documentation. The British Council provides forms and supporting letters for non EU citizens who wish to travel to an EU country as part of an educational visit without getting a visa. Please note that the form cannot completely guarantee entry into a country. It is used instead of a visa but even a visa does not completely guarantee entry into a country. ([www.britishcouncil.org/home-information-centre-list-of-travellers-scheme.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-information-centre-list-of-travellers-scheme.htm)). Know where the nearest British Embassy is situated in relation to where you will be staying.
2. **Foreign language and culture:** At least one adult member of the party should be competent in the language of the country. It is desirable if everyone knows the basics of the language, including 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me'! Encourage the children to sample the country's cuisine before the visit and teach them something about the country's culture, especially laws and customs.
3. **Health, fitness and general safety:** Be familiar with potential health and safety risks. Be aware of the medical needs of members of the group and check that medicines are clearly labelled and stored safely and appropriately. Party members must have recommended vaccinations. Warn of the dangers of drinking tap water in some countries. Take insect repellent and water sterilising tablets together with a basic first aid kit. Know how to avoid sunburn, sunstroke and dehydration. Inform the children about rabies. Be clear about the circumstances when pupils will be allowed out unaccompanied either alone or in small groups. Everyone in the group should know what to do in the event of an emergency whether accident or illness, including how to contact the emergency services. Leaders should be aware of, and apply, any additional country specific regulations relating to any adventurous activity to be carried out as part of the visit.
4. **Residential centres and hotels:** As many checks as necessary should be made to ensure that the centre is suitable. It is recommended that team leaders make enquiries about security and fire safety checks in the accommodation to be used and ensure the fire evacuation procedure is explained on arrival at the hotel or centre.
5. **Identification of group members:** It is recommended that each child is given a distinctive badge to wear and should carry a card giving the address of the group's accommodation written in the language of the country being visited.
6. **Travel:** Always use reputable companies. If travelling by coach the company and the drivers should be able to prove that they have the required knowledge and experience and that they are aware of the specific legal requirements of the country(ies) to be visited.
7. **Immigration, Security and Customs:** Know how to get through Immigration, Security and Customs with groups of young people, making sure that an adult member of the party is the last to leave the customs hall on arrival at your destination.
8. **Leader's Information:** The party leader will need to carry all necessary information. This will include:
  - The head teacher's home address and contact telephone number.
  - The names of parents and addresses and telephone numbers at which they can be contacted.
  - Copies of a list of group members.
  - Full details of the visit should also be retained at the school while the visit is in progress.
9. **Insurance:** Double check that your insurance cover is appropriate to the visit.
10. Have fun and enjoy your trip!

### Local Laws

While you are abroad you and your pupils will be subject to local laws and culture. It is important that you familiarise yourself with the basics laws and cultural requirements of the country which you are visiting, and clearly communicate any prohibited acts to the pupils. What is acceptable in the UK or EU may be a criminal offence in the country which you are visiting. In particular, certain countries have strict laws regarding decency and conduct, and older pupils in particular may, in all innocence, fall foul of these laws.

You should familiarise yourself with the address and telephone numbers for the British Embassy in the country which you are visiting. If there is an issue you should contact the embassy for advice without delay.



# Help and Advice

If you need some initial free help or advice on any health and safety related issue in your school or college please contact RoSPA's Schools and Colleges helpline on:

Tel: **0121 248 2235** or email **[educationenquiries@rospa.com](mailto:educationenquiries@rospa.com)**

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