

Ashgrove Primary School

Policy
for
Fieldwork
&
Educational Visits

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Version 2:3

Policy for Fieldwork and Educational Visits

Rationale

Ashgrove Primary School has a duty to broaden the experience, skills, understanding and attitudes of the children in its care. Visits out of school can add considerably to the range of possible learning opportunities. Benefits include being outdoors, first-hand experience of natural and man-made environments, opportunities to develop leadership, self-confidence, initiative and co-operation, and the linking of planned classroom learning to the outside world.

This policy operates in conjunction with the school's policies on pastoral care, child protection, volunteers, discipline and good behaviour, health and safety, risk assessment and charges and remissions.

It exists in line with the principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum; the guidance of the multi-agency working group, "Educational Visits: Policy, Practice and Procedures" (NEELB, 2004); and the recent working party document, "Educational Visits: Best Practice" (2009).

The policy defines educational visits as "all academic, sporting, cultural, creative and personal development activities, which take place away from the young person's school or youth setting, and make a significant contribution to learning and development of those participating" (Working Party, 2009, p6).

Basic Principles

Out of school visits are extensions of the teaching and learning that take place in school and will therefore have clear benefits in terms of educational and/or social development.

Prior to each visit:

- the aims of the visit will be clearly defined;
- careful planning will be carried out under the supervision of a suitably experienced teacher-leader;
- all necessary approval will be obtained; and
- parents and children will be prepared for the trip and informed about the roles and responsibilities that apply before, during and after the visit.

The school principal will have the ultimate responsibility for any visit.

The governors will ensure that visits have specific educational objectives and that risk assessments confirm acceptable levels of safety and risk on all visits. Ongoing risk assessment will be the responsibility of the group leader and will be supported by other leaders.

NEELB/ESA will be consulted in relation to insurance, emergency procedures, any potential hazards and/or overnight stays three weeks in advance of such a visit.

All visits will be conducted in line with the principles of child protection: the child's welfare is paramount; children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm;

they have a right to be heard, to be listened to and to be taken seriously; and their special educational needs must be considered.

Categories of Educational Visits

Category 1: Visits which take place on a regular basis: non-hazardous and occurring largely within establishment hours, e.g. sporting fixtures, swimming pool visits and outings

Category 2: One-off day or evening excursions: non-hazardous, e.g. field study trips, theatre visits, business/education visits, regional sporting fixtures

Category 3: Residential visits of one or more nights within the UK or Ireland: non-hazardous, e.g. visits to residential centres, field centres, school exchanges

Category 4: Residential visits outside the UK or Ireland: non-hazardous, e.g. international exchange visits, sporting events, cultural activities and international community work

Category 5: Hazardous Activities, residential and non-residential as exemplified below:

- Hill walking
- Fieldwork
- Cycling/ mountain biking
- Orienteering
- Rock climbing/abseiling (*)
- Caving and potholing (*)
- Kayaking
- Open canoeing
- Windsurfing
- Dingy sailing
- Sub-aqua
- Skiing/ Snowboarding
- Horse riding
- Angling
- Waterskiing
- Rafting
- Rowing
- Surfing
- Bouldering/ Gorge walking
- Swimming in open water

(* Presumed to include the use of artificial caving networks and climbing walls)

Staffing and Supervision

In Ashgrove Primary the principal is the educational visits co-ordinator.

The group leader of any visit will be judged by the principal to have the necessary training, experience and abilities for overall responsibility. The group leader will have visited each venue beforehand or will have been in full consultation with

someone with recent, firsthand experience. The cost of staff familiarisation visits will be included in the overall cost of the trip.

Normally the teacher will lead a class visit. On visits involving more than one class, and particularly on residential visits, additional leaders (teachers and/or classroom assistants) will be selected by the following criteria:

- ability to provide competent supervision of all events;
- possession of a broad range of skills relating to events, the smooth running of the trip and the care of the children;
- appropriate male/female care for boys and girls; and
- training for future visits.

The staff team will be made aware of the aims of the visit and who has ultimate authority as group leader. They will work within clear roles to maintain safety and established disciplinary and behavioural routines. They will act “in loco parentis”. The group leader may permit supervisors to take breaks in rotation but only whenever appropriate levels of supervision can be maintained. At no time will children be unsupervised.

The following staff/pupil ratios will apply:

Foundation Stage, non-residential, non-hazardous: minimum of 1:10

Key Stages 1 & 2, non-residential, non-hazardous: minimum of 1:15

Key Stage 2, residential and/or including hazardous activities: minimum of 1:10

Any variation to these ratios will be done in order to increase the number of adults as determined by a number of factors:

- the number and ages of pupils;
- the duration of visit;
- the previous experience of staff and pupils;
- the nature of the activities;
- the environment into which the children will be taken;
- the expertise of staff at the venue to be visited (though neither centre staff nor transport drivers can be counted as supervisors); and
- recommendations from NEELB/ESA.

Volunteers who are neither teachers, nor classroom assistants may be included in a staff team. References will have been provided and a criminal record search will have been carried out in compliance with child protection legislation and our volunteers policy. They will have been given guidance relating to all aspects of their role as a member of the team.

The group leader will know at all times where the members of the group are, what they are doing and the level of supervision (close or remote). The group will only subdivide within a venue or within sight of the group leader. Any necessary changes to this arrangement will be with the group leader’s endorsement.

An overnight visit will include a full programme for the period between waking and the end of each evening. Supervision will be planned to cover all of the time away from school. Whenever visits involve more than one school, the children, parents and staff will plan and/or be informed about agreed, common applications of the above.

When moving on foot, a group will remain together, with leaders at front and rear. Regular head-counts will be made and any subdivisions of the group clearly planned in terms of re-assembly place and time.

No person acting on behalf of the school is permitted to sign an indemnity for any outside body against liability without it first being checked and approved by NEELB/ESA

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors should:

- ensure that visits have specific educational objectives;
- satisfy themselves that risk assessment has been carried out and that appropriate safety measures are in place;
- ensure that all arrangements comply with the school's child protection and health and safety policies;
- ensure that the principal demonstrates how proposals comply with best practice;
- assess and approve visit proposals; and
- contribute to the establishment of an acceptable code of conduct for both leaders and young people.

The educational visits co-ordinator (principal) should ensure that:

- there is an acceptable code of conduct for leaders and participants;
- the visit complies with best practice;
- a competent group leader is selected;
- child protection procedures are adhered to in the planning process, including the vetting of volunteer supervisors;
- all necessary arrangements and preparations, including risk assessment, have been completed before the visit begins;
- all relevant checks have been undertaken if an external provider is to be used;
- the group leader has experience in supervising young people of similar age and ability to those participating and will manage the group effectively;
- the group leader or one of the other leaders is suitably qualified and competent to supervise and/or instruct the young people during activities;
- the group leader has taken reasonable steps to familiarise him/herself with the location or centre where the activity will take place;
- voluntary supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children;
- the ratio of leaders to young people is appropriate;
- proper procedures have been followed in planning the visit;
- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover;
- the group leader has the address and phone number of the venue to be visited and has a contact name;
- a school contact has been nominated and the group leader has details;
- the group leader, accompanying staff, volunteer supervisors and nominated school contact are aware of the agreed emergency contingency arrangements;
- the group leader, other leaders and nominated contact have all relevant information on the group members; and

- any arrangements are established which may be required for the early return of individual participants.

The group leader should:

- obtain prior agreement and approval before any off-site visit takes place;
- appoint a deputy, if appropriate, with the consent of the principal;
- adhere to best practice;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation for the visit including the briefing of leaders, group members and parents;
- ensure that all relevant checks have been undertaken if an external provider is to be used;
- take steps to become familiar with the location or establishment where the activity will take place;
- inform parents of the terms and conditions of insurance cover;
- undertake and complete an appropriate risk assessment;
- collect relevant information on the young people proposed to participate;
- to assess and confirm their suitability;
- ensure the ratio of leaders to young people is appropriate for the needs of the group and the nature of the activity to be undertaken;
- clearly define the role of each member of accompanying staff and volunteer supervisors and ensure that all tasks have been clearly assigned;
- have proper regard to the health and safety of the young people and ensure that adequate supervision is provided at all times;
- ensure that the established code of conduct for both staff and young people is followed;
- ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available;
- ensure child protection procedures are followed;
- ensure that, during the visit, leaders have up-to-date emergency contact details of the central contact and parents/guardians;
- ensure that accompanying staff and volunteer supervisors and the central contact are aware of the emergency procedures;
- ensure that the group's leaders have the details of group members' special educational or medical needs, which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively;
- consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health or safety of the young people is unacceptable; have in place procedures for such an eventuality; and
- regularly review visits and activities.

Accompanying staff should:

- remain responsible to the school whether the visit takes place inside or outside normal hours;
- accept the authority and follow the instructions of the group leader;
- under direction of the group leader, assist with the organisation of activities and discipline of the young people;
- ensure that the established code of conduct, for leaders and participants is adhered to;
- consider stopping the activity and notify the group leader, if they think the risk to the health or safety of the group members in their charge, is unacceptable.

Volunteers should:

- endeavour to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- not be left in sole charge of group members except where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment;
- follow the instructions of the group leader (which may be provided in writing) and other accompanying staff, and help with control and discipline;
- speak to the group leader or accompanying staff if concerned about the health or safety of the young people, at any time during the visit; and
- endeavour to ensure that the established code of conduct, is adhered to.

Central contact should:

- retain details of the place to be visited, contact personnel and telephone number, and mobile number, if appropriate;
- retain a copy of the contact details of all the participants' parents/guardians or next of kin;
- retain a copy of the contact details of the principal; and
- be fully briefed and aware of his/her responsibilities including the action to take in the event of a serious incident.

Parents should:

- sign the consent form;
- provide the group leader with emergency contact numbers;
- (by means of the consent form) provide the group leader with written relevant medical/dietary details, including any medication currently being taken and any other relevant information (about their child's emotional, psychological and physical health) which may affect their participation in the visit;
- help prepare their child for the visit, eg, by reinforcing the visit's code of conduct; and
- agree the arrangements established for a member of the group returning home due to unforeseen circumstances.

Children should:

- act in accordance with the established code of conduct at all times;
- avoid taking unnecessary risks;
- follow the instructions of the group leader and leaders, including those at the venue of the visit;
- dress and behave sensibly and responsibly;
- respect the property of others;
- be sensitive to local codes, customs, and the environment; and
- look out for anything that might hurt or threaten them or anyone in the group and tell a leader of their concern.

Code of Conduct: Staff

All members of staff (including volunteers) operate in loco parentis. As within school, they are expected to "act reasonably in all circumstances" and to avoid

compromising the personal safety, well-being and educational opportunities of those within their duty of care, or the good reputation of Ashgrove Primary School.

Staff will behave towards colleagues and staff without prejudice and with regard to equality of opportunity.

Staff will demonstrate appropriate respect for the privacy of colleagues, for children and for their belongings.

It is school policy that children must not be exposed to any member of staff smoking or drinking alcohol or taking illegal drugs; or to any member of staff under their influence.

Nobody other than official group members will be allowed to join the party.

Code of Conduct: Children

As within school, the underlying expectations are of behaviour that is safe, respectful and conducive to enjoyable learning for all. This code of conduct will be part of the condition of booking by parents.

A child may be withdrawn prior to a visit if the group leader and principal have evidence to suggest that the child cannot be trusted to behave appropriately. In the event of the school refusing to include a child on a visit, any payments made by his/her parents will be refunded.

- Children will be expected to do what they are told immediately.
- Children should be aware that they will be representing Ashgrove Primary School and should do all they can to further improve its good reputation. Acceptable noise levels, settled behaviour, care with litter, good manners, etc are expected at all times. Clothes, bags, accessories and comments that might be considered provocative or controversial should be avoided.
- Group members must stay with their leader when required. During a task each member will be expected to help out until everyone is finished.
- Nothing should be eaten within half an hour of a meal. Fizzy drinks should not be consumed during coach or train journeys and only small amounts of snacks should be eaten.
- Children moving on foot must remain in the line or group established by the accompanying leader and be vigilant to traffic, members of the public, local hazards and further instruction.
- Children must remain seated and belted while travelling by car, coach or plane.
- Teachers will look after a stipulated maximum amount of pocket money for each child. It is recommended that children use the “bank” each morning and do not keep large amounts of cash on them. They will be responsible for looking after their own possessions.

- On residential visits bedrooms must be kept tidy. No child is to enter another child's room unless somebody from the room is present. No child is to leave his/her bedroom during the night other than to use the bathroom, or speak to a teacher. All lights must be out by 11.00pm after which children will be expected to be quiet and allow others to sleep.
- In order to minimise disruption and homesickness, children are expected not to bring mobile phones and to refrain from phoning home.
- Nobody must leave the group or any building without permission.
- Children must not possess or consume alcohol, tobacco or drugs (as proscribed in the school's drugs policy).
- Children must demonstrate appropriate relationships with others.

A child may be withdrawn during a visit if safety is compromised or if the child's conduct warrants either suspension or expulsion from school. If any child on a visit is involved in behaviour that warrants immediate suspension the child's parents will be required to collect the child from the educational visit without cost to the school.

Preparation

Preparation will always include the following steps:

1. identification of educational value and aims;
2. formal proposal for approval by the principal/educational visits co-ordinator and the board of governors (using form EV0);
3. research into and/or familiarisation with the locations and centre to be visited, risk assessment of any hazardous activities and/or situations (NEELB/ESA procedure), booking of approved transport, venues and events, insurance checks, arrangement of any necessary substitute cover;
4. informing parents, completion of loco parentis consent forms accepting details and procedures relating to activity and venue, dates and times, transport arrangements, urgent medical treatment, and the code of conduct. Parents will confirm any medical conditions and/or special educational needs and declare that children are fit for the activities planned for their children;
5. completion of planning checklist (using form EV1);
6. collation of information for ease of use; and
7. filing of copies of all information with the principal.

Preparation for residential visits and/or hazardous activities will also include:

- a meeting for all children and parents (residential trips) to outline details of trip, including educational purpose, activities and venues (including any that might be hazardous), dates and times, the code of conduct, health and safety rules, supervision (both close and remote), transport, suitable clothing, recommended maximum pocket money and cash-handling arrangements, first aid and emergency procedures (including contact information for parents and staff), insurance arrangements (copies provided for parents) and arrangements for the possible early return of children; and
- submission of completed proposals to NEELB/ESA (using form EV2).

NEELB/ESA public liability insurance cover will extend to all aspects of our school programme. NEELB/ESA will be consulted in relation to any additional cover required for transport, accommodation and activities.

Transport

All transport arrangements must meet statutory requirements. The group leader will ensure that the form of transport is appropriate, roadworthy, fitted with the correct number of seatbelts, insured, well supervised (not including the driver) and driven with the relevant licence. Parents will be asked to consent to the arrangements.

Emergency and Contingency Arrangements

Contingency arrangements will be prepared in anticipation of unsuitable weather, transportation problems, cancellation of events, illness, etc.

One member of staff will have responsibility for carrying an appropriately stocked first aid kit; for keeping the medical information relating to individual children; for administering any necessary medication and/or liaising with the trained first-aider at any venue.

In the event of any injury, special help will be accessed as required and parents informed as soon as possible. The principal will be informed immediately of any serious injury. In turn, the principal will inform NEELB/ESA.

Each child and member of staff will be made familiar with the appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of becoming separated from the group, where to find assistance and how to notify the group of safe return. Such arrangements may vary according to location and activity.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, details will be reported to school as soon as practically possible. The school authorities will take immediate steps to inform parents of the facts. NEELB/ESA will be informed by the principal, and in advance of any media interviews.

If it is necessary for parents to visit a child or children the principal will make arrangements for them to do so.

Following the Visit

Upon completion of the visit the group leader will submit a brief report to the educational visits co-ordinator. Where appropriate this will include an account of finance.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.