

ADVICE & GUIDANCE

School Trips

Overview

The purpose of this advice paper is to provide all school leaders with a practical guide to managing effective school trips. Inevitably, school trips will trigger some associated risks and this paper will also provide school leaders with guidance on how these may be best mitigated.

Relevant legislation

The principal legislation covering school trips is the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and its subsequent regulations. Under this act, a school must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety, on or off school premises. Under common law, staff have a duty to take care of pupils in the same manner as a prudent parent.

In addition, and in relation to school trips, employers are required to:

- Assess the risks to staff and pupils in order to identify the health and safety control measures that are necessary and to keep a record of the significant findings of that assessment;
- Put control measures in place to manage the identified risks;
- Tell staff about the risks and mitigating control measures;
- Ensure that adequate health and safety training is provided to all staff.

Most claims for negligence are brought against 'the employer' (which has public liability insurance) and not against individual members of staff. Legal action against schools is only likely to be successful if:

- A school has not taken care of a child in the manner of a prudent parent;
- As a result, the child has been injured; and
- The injury was a foreseeable consequence.

A recommended planning approach

Employers should always take a common sense and proportionate approach, remembering that, in schools, risk assessment and risk management are tools to enable children to undertake activities safely; they are not there to prevent activities from taking place.

- All school trips and their Trip Leaders must be approved by the head teacher.
- Any school trip must have a Trip Leader who has overall responsibility for the trip and for the health and safety of everyone on the trip.
- The Trip Leader must appoint a deputy and a sufficient ratio of adult supervisors to pupils and also conduct a risk assessment for the trip.
- Pupils should be told to behave responsibly and to follow the instructions of their designated supervisors.
- If a pupil may cause a potential risk to themselves or others, they must be withdrawn from the trip and alternative arrangements for learning made.
- Every effort should be made to make school journeys accessible to all those who wish to participate and should make reasonable adjustments to enable the participation of disabled pupils.
- Finally, it may also be prudent to include pupils in the planning of a trip.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment for any trip need not be complex nor include what are, arguably, insignificant risks; professional judgement can be exercised for these. Paperwork should also be minimised to avoid an overly-bureaucratic process.

Certain trip and / or activities can involve higher levels of risk. If there is a pre-existing risk assessment, a review of that assessment may be all that is needed. If, however, it is a new trip, a specific assessment of significant risks must be carried out and a record should be made of the identified significant findings.

A Risk Assessment amounts to a straightforward document, usually drawn up by the Trip Leader and head teacher. The principal elements include the following:

1. What is the risk?
2. Who's at risk?
3. A judgement of the likelihood and impact of the identified risk;
4. A control measure for the identified risk.

All accompanying school staff and volunteers should be provided with a copy of the Risk Assessment.

Let's consider a trip to The Shard in London – the significant risks are likely to be:

- Children getting lost / the group being split;
- Inappropriate pupil behaviour;
- Sickness;
- Strangers;
- Petty theft (especially of mobile phones / cash);
- Trips on stairs (or similar);
- Fear of heights.

Trips to London require very careful consideration. The challenges of coping with the congestion (traffic and pedestrian) and travelling around London can be quite overwhelming for staff and pupils unfamiliar with life in a city of 8 million inhabitants. These challenges however can be overcome with careful planning.

The key to safeguarding children on a school trip to London is to:

- Contain children to designated areas and try to keep them occupied;
- Minimise travel arrangements between venues (and supporting paperwork);
- Minimise times when children are unoccupied, waiting, queuing, etc...

For example, travelling by coach will enable children to be safely taken from a designated pick-up point (normally the school) to a safe drop-off point that is outside or near to the trip destination. If free time is to be granted, again, it is best to ensure that children can be contained in a designated area where it is less likely that the identified risks will prevail. Using the above example, it would be practicable to take the children, by coach, from The Shard to an area where they can play and exercise, such as a public park, say, Regents' Park / London Zoo (same venue), or an alternative attraction with grounds, where children can burn some energy, especially if the journey home is long.

For a field trip to a local wood:

- Children getting lost / the group being split;
- Inappropriate pupil behaviour;
- Sickness / dehydration;
- Inappropriate clothing and footwear;
- Inadequate protection from the sun;
- Trips / falls and minor accidents;
- No ability to navigate safely.

There will be a number of universally common risks (e.g. the top three in each of the above examples) irrespective of the nature of the school trip; a generic risk assessment can simply be adjusted to account for the precise nature of each school trip and its likely and associated risks.

Other considerations – Adult:Pupil Ratios

The ages of pupils on a school trip are likely to be relevant in an assessment of risk. Primary school children will require close supervision, whereas secondary school children will require 'lighter touch' supervision, especially if one of the objectives of the school trip is to coach children to manage their own safety.

Government guidelines recommend the following adult:pupil ratios for school trips:

School Year Groups	Pupil numbers	Adults recommended
Years 1 – 3	6 pupils	1 adult
Years 4 - 6	10-15 pupils	1 adult
Years 7 and above	15-20 pupils	1 adult
Adventure activity trips	20 pupils	2 adults

Early Years & Foundation Stage

The EYFS statutory framework sets out specific legal requirements for minimum ratios in this age group which apply in and outside the school. The requirements are for a minimum of 2 adults with each group including at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate with minimum ratios as follows:

- Age under 2; 1:3
- Age 2; 1:4
- Age 3+; 1:8 or 1:13 depending on setting, time of day and staff qualifications

Site visit

A site visit to the trip location will often help the Trip Leader plan for the trip, identify any particular risks and mitigate for such risks. When planning a trip that will involve 'adventure activities' (e.g. caving, climbing, trekking, skiing or water sports), schools must check that the venue provider holds an appropriate licence as required by the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2014 (applicable in England, Wales and Scotland).

Getting the experts in

If the nature of the school trip requires 'technical' expertise that would ordinarily be beyond the capacity of the Trip Leader or others, the hiring of 'an expert' with the requisite qualifications must be brought in to help (e.g. a local guide).

The role of parents

A pre-trip review of the final trip plan and a post-trip evaluation of it will help to build the employer's capacity and the reassurances it can provide to staff, pupils and their parents.

Written consent from parents is not required for pupils to take part in most off-site activities organised by the school (with the exception of nursery-age children) as most of these activities will take place during school hours and are a normal part of a child's education at school. However, parents should be told where their child will be at all times and of any extra safety measures required.

The DfE has prepared a one-off consent form that schools can ask parents to sign when a child enrolls at a school and that covers participation in all nature of school trips throughout their time at the school. Here is the link to the consent form:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-for-school-trips-and-other-off-site-activities>

Parents must still be told, in advance, of each activity and must be given the opportunity to withdraw their child from any particular school trip or activity.

Pupil behaviour

The school's Pupil Behaviour policy applies, in full, on all school trips.

Transport

The Trip Leader must ensure that all transport arrangements on a school trip are compliant with appropriate regulations (e.g. driving licences, insurance, vehicle breakdown cover and so on...).

Transport checks are particularly relevant on journeys where there are multiple stages and consequent connections and / or waiting periods when children are likely to grow restless.

Staff and pupil health & First Aid

Trip Leaders must ensure that any particular health needs can be met without condition. Special consideration will need to be given to those with known disabilities and medication needs, especially if such needs are to be met throughout the duration of the school trip.

A fully-stocked First Aid box must be available throughout duration of the school trip and a designated First Aider/s must be identifiable to everyone on the trip.

Volunteers

If the head teacher and Trip Leader decide to invite adult volunteers to accompany school staff and pupils, then appropriate DBS (aka CRB) checks will be required.

Contingency Plan

A contingency plan is also recommended so that everyone is made aware of the consequences of a school trip being placed at risk – say, by poor weather conditions or an unforeseen incident that makes travel impractical.

The threat of terrorism (following recent events in London and Manchester)

Following the recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, there has been understandable concern from parents and schools regarding trips that have already been planned. Advice from the police is that there is currently no need to cancel any such visits.

Schools will have already undertaken a risk assessment for planned school trips and should continuously update their assessment as appropriate. Schools should expect to find increased levels of security at all public places and some delays during entry to public venues.

It is likely to see more police officers patrolling public areas as a precautionary measure. Police advice to the public is to remain alert but not alarmed and to report anything that causes concern or raises suspicion to the police on **0800 789 321** and to dial **999** in an emergency. Further information on what to look out for can be found at www.gov.uk/ACT

The British Transport Police's security campaign "See it. Say it. Sorted" can support school trip leaders in the event that school trips are taken by rail or coach and can be found here: http://www.btp.police.uk/latest_news/see_it_say_it_sorted_new_natio.aspx

Finally, the National Counter Terrorism Security Office provide security advice at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>

Frequently Asked Questions – the threat of terrorism

What should we do about visits that are already planned?

First of all, consider the likelihood of the destination, venue or transport hubs being at risk of a terrorist attack.

- Be aware of the latest news relating to your destination;
- Be aware of the current threat level – <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>
- If travelling abroad, check the FCO website www.fco.gov.uk at regular intervals and shortly before your scheduled departure;
- Consider safe areas or venues, near where you intend to be, that could be used in an emergency or as an alternative meeting place;
- If possible, minimise waiting and queuing times at busy venues;
- Ensure that mobile phones are fully charged and that numbers are shared;
- Ensure that supervisors have all the trip information they need;
- Provide everyone with a 'contact card' with a number to call if they are separated from the group and the name and contact number of the venue;
- If the planned transport is no longer available, is there an alternative plan and the available funds to cover any alternative means of transport?
- Be prepared in the event that the group needs to be split into two groups;
- At the venue, be aware of the designated exit and meeting points.

The [Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel](#) (OEAP) supports Local Authorities, schools and Academy Groups in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It provides a forum for sharing and developing good practice in Off Site Visits, Outdoor Learning and Learning outside the Classroom.

The OEAP believes that it is good practice for all establishments to have access to specialist advice about outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom. The [OEAP website](#) has a search function to allow you to find your adviser, or, if there is no adviser for your local area, your nearest adviser.

The NAHT fully endorses the OEAP's guidance – it is enormously comprehensive and is generally regarded as the definitive source of professional information, advice and guidance for managing outdoor learning, school trips and learning outside the classroom.

If things go wrong!

If an incident on a school trip leads to a serious injury or even a fatality, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will usually investigate. An injury or fatality that happens outside of GB will normally be subject to the law of the land in which the incident happened.

A school could still be liable, under civil law, for injuries to children that happen abroad as a result of negligence on the part of the school or its staff.

HSE has prosecuted in cases where there was evidence of recklessness or a clear failure to follow sensible precautions. Such cases are however, rare.

Certain injuries to a member of staff or a child must, by law, be recorded and reported. The reporting requirements are to be found in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). Typically, School Business Managers will be familiar with the responsibility for schools in such cases.

Further guidance on safety management of school trips has been published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE's 'high-level statement' ***School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities*** is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf>

In addition, the HSE has published **5 school trip case studies** that can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/case-studies.htm>

And finally, the HSE has developed some **school trip frequently-asked questions**: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/faqs.htm#school-trips>

Should you need to discuss any of this information, advice and guidance with a member of the Advice Team, then please get in touch either by telephone on 0300 30 30 333 (option 1) or alternatively, you can e-mail us at specialistadvice@naht.org.uk We're here to help.