

School Trips and Visits Policy

Introduction

Educational visits are an excellent opportunity to enrich the curriculum and, in some cases, are essential requirements of examination courses. Most visits take place safely and without incident, however, we are all aware that very occasionally things can and do go wrong. Therefore, it is very important that all trips and visits are properly planned and organised so that all staff involved take reasonable steps to ensure that risks are minimised. This policy has been written with reference to The Hertfordshire Policy Statement for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) and Offsite Visits (May 2012). The document summarises the current, relevant, health and safety law with respect to how it affects the Principals, staff and students of the College.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy, a college trip or visit is defined as any occasion when a student or group of students are away from the College site on an educational, and/or social, College related activity and under the supervision of a member of staff. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the word 'trip' will largely be used throughout this policy but where this occurs, please understand 'trip and/or visit', as appropriate.

This policy pays attention to the following guidance:

- Students should be able to experience a wide range of activities. Health and Safety measures should help them to do this safely, not prevent them
- It is important that students learn to understand and manage the risks that are a normal part of life
- Common sense should be used in assessing and managing the risks of any activity. Health and safety procedures should always be proportionate to the risks of an activity
- Staff should be given the training they need so they can keep themselves and students safe and manage risks effectively

There is no longer any requirement by law to have an Educational Visits Coordinator. However, the Principals of the College share the role of Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC). They can give advice about all aspects of school trips and visits. They have copies of relevant documentation. Staff must consult the EVC before, during, and after a College trip or visit.

The EVC **must** therefore be notified of all occasions when a student or group of students leave the College premises, either accompanied by members of staff or to meet members of staff at a pre-arranged location. This forms a key part of the duty of care we owe to students. It is not easy to give a definitive list of such trips but examples include trips to museums, galleries and theatres, trips to educational conferences, both in the evenings and at weekends, and sporting events. If staff are in doubt about the nature of a trip or visit, then they should seek the advice of the EVC.

All staff must provide complete information relating to a College Trip to the EVC.

The EVC **must** also give permission before any trip can take place. Staff wishing to organise a trip **must** meet with the EVC and discuss the trip in detail before permission is given. It is essential that the EVC also checks the College Calendar where trips have not previously been included. Any visits likely to have a significant impact on the day to day running of the College need to be approved by the EVC.

Staff must not spend any money or inform students or parents that a trip or visit is going ahead until it has been formally approved.

Planning and Preparation

The Timing of Trips and Visits

It is essential to the smooth running of the rest of the College that trips are properly planned and arranged to ensure minimal disruption to all, both those on the trip and those left behind.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to plan their pattern of trips and visits for the coming academic year as early as they can, preferably by May half term. This allows clashes to be kept to a minimum. Trips and visits planned well in advance must be included in the College calendar. Events listed in the College calendar take priority over non-calendared events. The earlier a trip is planned, the more likely it is to be approved.

Students must miss lessons as rarely as possible. While it is often easy to justify a trip from the benefit to one's own subject, lessons missed in other subjects need to be considered. Obviously, there will be times when it is impossible to avoid taking students out during lesson time, but full consideration must be made of alternative times before making such a decision.

Staff organising a trip must consult as widely as possible with colleagues who might be affected and think carefully about the possible impact of a trip.

Informing Other People

It is essential that all people concerned with the trip are fully informed at appropriate times. Once the planning has been completed and the trip has been approved, the full details of the trip must be prepared. These details, together with copies of letters for parents, must be submitted to the EVC before being sent out.

Communicating with parents

Parents must be informed in writing about all trips. Written consent is not required for students to take part in the majority of off-site activities organised by the College however St Albans Independent College operate a policy where **Parental permission is required for all trips**. It is acceptable for this permission to be gained through an 'opt out' system rather than by asking parents to complete a consent form and send it back. For example, a phrase along the lines of *'It will be assumed that you are happy for your son/daughter to go on the trip unless we hear otherwise'* is acceptable. This method might be easier where students are being taken out and/or when a trip takes place during normal school hours. However, where smaller numbers are involved or where a trip leaves very early or returns very late, specific signed permission must be obtained from parents. Trip leaders must have an alternative option planned for any student whose parents decline permission to go on a trip.

Informing the College

The College must also know all the relevant details for a trip well in advance of the departure date. For days trips this should be at least one week before the trip departs. When meeting with the EVC a basic risk assessment procedure should also take place (see below). Relevant information should be provided to the EVC, and to reception staff, prior to, during and after a trip as appropriate.

The trip leader **must** ensure that he/she is in possession of all parental consent forms, medical forms and all contact number details throughout the trip. Copies of these should also be left on the premises with reception staff or the EVC.

The EVC acts as the school contact for the trip.

The Cost of College Trips

Staff must think carefully about the cost of a College trip. Some parents have financial constraints and it must not be assumed that all parents can simply add extras to their College bill. Costs should be kept to a minimum and parents must be given the chance to decline a trip on financial grounds. In such a case provision must be made for the student who cannot go on a trip.

It is very important that the cost of trips is recovered by the College, via the Accounts Department, as quickly as possible. Indeed, if it is possible to charge for a trip before it has taken place then this should be done. **The trip leader must take responsibility for all financial arrangements in connection with the trip.**

Any money left over at the end of the trip cannot be carried forward to the next financial year or to future trips. It must either be credited to parents or, if the amount is too small for this to be practical, credited to the relevant department budget if appropriate.

Supervision, including ratios

There are no exact ratios for college trips. The trip leader must ensure that the staffing for a trip is 'reasonable'. This will depend on the age, gender mix, ability and behaviour of the students involved. It will depend on the type of activity undertaken and the nature of the journey. The competence of the adults supervising a trip must also be considered, together with the need for first aid cover.

The College advises the following ratios for general activities such as visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances:

- **1 adult for every 10 students where an activity is outdoors**
- **1 adult for every 15-20 students otherwise**

It should be stressed that these are only examples. Trip leaders must assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular trip.

Trips to remote areas or those which involve more hazardous activities will clearly require a higher level of supervision. It is also the case that many institutions which are open for visits by school/college parties have their own staffing guidelines which need to be adhered to. Staff taking trips must always check with the locations they are visiting about such matters.

When trip leaders are considering the staffing for their trips they must always bear in mind the consequences of staff absences on those left behind. Suitable cover must be available for anyone on a trip.

If a college trip is taking place which involves several members of staff, each person going on the trip must ensure that the relevant paperwork has been completed. It is important that the EVC is fully aware of who will be out on a trip and that sufficient cover arrangements for lessons have been put in place, where appropriate. The trip leader must co-ordinate this process, but **all staff who go on trips must take responsibility for ensuring their lessons and duties are covered appropriately.**

Staff must ensure they complete medical and emergency contact forms for themselves.

Any concerns with regard to staffing or staffing ratios on trips should be referred to the EVC who can give further guidance and advice.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

It is not a legal requirement to complete a risk assessment for every activity or trip. Some activities, especially those happening away from College, such as mountaineering, canoeing and sailing, involve higher levels of risk. In these cases, an assessment of significant risks should be carried out. The College must ensure that the person assessing the risk understands the risks and is familiar with the activity planned. The College should take a common sense and proportionate approach, remembering that the purpose of risk assessment and management is to help students to undertake activities safely, not to prevent activities from taking place.

It is important to remember that places such as outdoor pursuits centres, leisure centres, museums, theatres, etc., should carry out their own risk assessments for the

facilities they provide. If copies of these are obtained by members of staff, then this will reduce the burden of the risk assessment process.

The risk assessment must be based on the following considerations:

What are the hazards?

Who might be affected by them?

What safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?

Can the trip leader put the safety measures in place?

What steps will be taken in an emergency?

While every trip will have its own particular risks that must be assessed, research has shown that the following are the most commonly found dangers, so are worthy of particular consideration when doing a risk assessment for any trip away from College.

For trips that will involve outdoor or adventurous activities staff are reminded to request copies of risk assessments from the service provider well in advance of the trip and to refer to these in their own risk assessments.

Hazard	Risk	Control measures
Separation from the party	Getting lost	Regular head count, small groups. Must stay with an adult.
Leaving party member behind	Risk of assault or abduction	Check numbers before every departure.
Road crossing	Being hit by vehicle	All groups to line up parallel with kerb and cross as one. Ensure good sight line. Staff to arrive first at kerbside.
Road traffic	Falling off path into traffic	Keep buffer zone between group and kerb.
Sea/lakes	Drowning	Group maximum of 6. Adults trained.
Sand	Damage to eyes	Students briefed and strong action at first sign of throwing.
Sun	Sunburn	Hat, sun block, parental letter, supervised use.
Heat	Heat stroke or dehydration	Pre-visit and establish access to shaded area. Plentiful supply of liquids.
Trains	Falling into the path of a vehicle	Keep buffer zone between group and train.

Transport

It is worth making a special point about minibus, coach or train journeys. Most school trips will involve transportation of some type. It is extremely important that staff and students use such transportation safely. **Everyone must wear seat belts at all times when on a minibus or coach.** It is good practice for staff to remind all students of the need for good behaviour before all minibus and bus journeys. Staff must remember that the journey is an integral part of a College trip and appropriate risk assessments must be carried out.

The Wearing of Seatbelts in Vehicles

In order to ensure that all journeys are undertaken in the safest possible manner, it is the College's policy that **seatbelts must be worn at all times by all staff and students.** All staff and students are made aware of this and are asked to adhere to the policy strictly. We will do everything we reasonably can to enforce this policy.

Reconnaissance Visits

If possible an exploratory visit should be made by a teacher before any trip is undertaken. A key factor in reducing risk is knowledge of the place to be visited. Whilst such visits may not always be practical, staff should make every effort to consider such an undertaking.

A member of staff who is to lead a group on an outdoor activity should make a special effort to carry out a reconnaissance visit. If this is not possible then a minimum measure would be to obtain specific information by letter from the venue and from reputable organisations who can provide such information.

Factors to Consider in Planning a Trip

The following list is not exhaustive, but it tries to summarise what needs to be done during the planning and organisation of a trip. The list also gives further ideas about areas for risk assessment.

- Facilities/equipment the group will need to take
 - Facilities/equipment provided at the venue
 - Staff training needs
 - Designating someone to record the visit and carry accident forms, etc.
- Transport arrangements, including meeting arrangements for trips which leave before the start of morning school and collection arrangements for trips which return after the end of normal school

- Insurance arrangements
- Communication arrangements
- Supervision ratio
- Contingency plans for enforced changes of plans or late return
- Information to parents
- Information to College
- Preparing students
- Arrangements for sending students home early
- Emergency arrangements

Emergency Procedures

Teachers in charge of students have a duty of care to make sure that the students are safe and healthy. They also have a common-law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation.

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit. If an emergency happens the priorities are to:

- Assess the situation
- Safeguard the uninjured members of the group
- Attend the casualty
- Inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident

Guidance on Emergency Procedures

A copy of the following guidelines must be taken by all party leaders and their deputies.

- Establish nature and extent of the emergency.
- Make sure that all other members of the party are accounted for and safe.
- If there are injuries, establish their extent and administer first aid (if you have been trained or feel capable – but be aware of consequences that might follow were you to give incorrect treatment).
- Establish names of the injured and call relevant emergency services.
- Advise other party staff of the incident and that emergency procedures are in operation.
- Ensure that an adult from the party accompanies casualties to hospital.

- Ensure that the remainder of the party are adequately supervised throughout and arrange for their early return to base.
- Arrange for one adult to remain at the incident site to liaise with emergency services until the incident is over and all children are accounted for.
- Control access to telephones until contact is made with the College Principal and until they have had time to contact those directly involved. Pass full details of the incident (name, nature, date and time of incident, location of incident, details of injuries, names and telephone numbers of those involved, action taken so far).
- Telephone numbers for future communication identify alternate telephone numbers in case telephone lines become jammed).
- The College will arrange to contact the parents of those involved. In serious incidents, the parents of all party members should be informed.
- Media:
 - A designated person should act as the point of contact with the media to whom all involved should direct questions.
 - Under no circumstances should the name of any casualty be divulged to the media.
 - The Party Leader should write down as soon as practicable all relevant details. A record should be made of any witnesses. Any associated equipment should be kept in its original condition.
 - Legal liability should not be discussed or admitted.
 - All accident forms should be completed and other parties informed as appropriate.
 - Inform parents of any delays that will be necessitated.

After the Trip

The trip leader must inform the EVC (or whoever has been delegated as the school contact) that the party has returned safely and ensure that all the students are safely collected from College or have a means to get home.

If any difficulties or incidents occur on a College trip, the EVC must be informed as soon as possible after the trip returns so that appropriate follow up action can be taken quickly.

Additional Guidelines

6th Form Age Students on Trips – Making own way to and from venue

Staff organising trips for 6th Form age students, where they are able, or asked to make their own way to and/or from a venue, must state this fact to parents either in writing or by telephone. Parents need to be informed that pupils will not be supervised when they are travelling. Parents need to accept responsibility for the pupils at this time by signing correspondence to that effect or providing consent verbally by telephone. This conversation should ideally be logged.

Transport Supervision and First Aid Cover

As with staffing ratios, there are no exact figures for the number of staff who should be involved in a minibus journey. The level of supervision depends on the type of journey involved. As always, the trip leader must ensure that the staffing for a journey is 'reasonable'. This will depend on the age, gender mix, ability and behaviour of the students involved. It will depend on the nature of the journey and its distance. The competence of the adults supervising a journey must also be considered, together with the need for first aid cover.

The [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#) is reviewed annually by the College Principals. This policy was last reviewed in February 2017.