



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
“Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community”

Educational Visits Policy

Rationale

Well planned and executed educational visits provide our pupils with valuable experiences which enhance their learning at school. Providing a variety of ‘real-life’ opportunities for our children enables them to achieve a fuller understanding of the world around them through direct experience. Educational visits are an essential element of good primary practice.

Purposes

Educational Visits can provide stimulus and support to work being covered as part of the school curriculum. It may be that a visit provides an effective stimulus at the start of a unit of work; alternatively teachers may decide to use an educational visit at any time during a project to enhance and support the curriculum.

Wherever or whatever the venue, teachers should ensure that the educational benefits to the children are maximised.

Guidelines

The organisation of an educational visit is crucial to its success. With rigorous organisation and control, a visit should provide a rich, learning experience for the pupils.

The following guidelines support the planning and implementation of educational visits organised at St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School. Staff should also read this policy in conjunction with the ‘Staff Guidance for Off-Site Educational Visits’ (January 2019) which also cross references to The OEAP National Guidance.

Headteacher and Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC)

The Headteacher (who is also the EVC) will endeavour to ensure that:

- they have appointed a suitable group leader (in the case of a residential trip this will be a member of the Senior Leadership Team [SLT]);
 - the group leader has experience in supervising and controlling the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively;
 - the group leader has relevant skills, qualifications and experience if acting as an instructor, and knows the location of the activity;
- all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
- the risk benefit/assessment is complete and that it is safe to make the visit;
- training needs have been met;
- all supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children and have appropriate DBS clearance;
- the governing body has approved the visit, if necessary;
- parents/carers have signed consent forms;
- arrangements have been made for all the medical needs and special educational needs of all the children;
- the mode of travel is appropriate;
- travel times out and back are known;



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- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover;
- they have the address and phone number of the visit's venue and have a contact name;
- that they have the names of all the adults and pupils in the travelling group, and the contact details of parents/carers and the staff's and volunteers' next of kin.

Group Leader

One teacher, the group leader, is responsible overall for the supervision and conduct of the visit, and should have been appointed by the Headteacher. The Group Leader should:

- appoint a deputy;
- be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range;
- be suitably qualified if instructing an activity and be conversant in the good practice for that activity if not;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including the briefing of group members and parents;
- undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment (EVOLVE);
- have regard to the health and safety of the group at all times;
- know all the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability;
- observe the guidance set out for teachers and other adults below;
- ensure that pupils understand their responsibilities (see responsibilities of pupils below).

Other teachers and adults involved in a visit

Teachers and teaching assistants on school-led visits will be employees of the Governing Body. They will therefore be acting in the course of their normal employment during their normal hours. They will be acting under an agreement with the Headteacher and Governors if some of their time on the visit falls outside normal hours (they need to discuss this with the Headteacher before accepting the responsibility of attending the trip).

Teachers and other adults on the visit must:

- do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- care for each individual pupil as any reasonable parent would;
- follow the instructions of the leader and help with control and discipline. Non-teachers should generally not have sole charge of large groups of pupils except where risks to health and safety are minimal;
- bring to the attention of the group leader any concerns e.g. if they think the risk to the health or safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

Responsibilities of pupils

The group leader should make it clear to pupils that they must:

- be respectful, responsible, honest, trustworthy, fair, forgiving and caring (Character Education);
- not take unnecessary risks;
- follow the instructions of the leader and other adults;
- dress and behave sensibly and responsibly;
- look out for anything that might hurt or threaten anyone in the group and tell the group leader about it;
- not undertake any task that they fear or that they think will be dangerous.



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Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be excluded from the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils will be fulfilled in other ways. Pupils who exhibit poor behaviour whilst on the visit will be dealt with in line with the school Character Education Policy. If this behaviour becomes persistent and presents a danger to themselves and/or the wider group the individual will be removed from the visit and parents will be requested to collect their child and take them home. The child will be expected to return to school on the following day to resume their education.

Parents

The group leader should ensure that parents are given information about the purpose and details of the visit and are invited to any briefing sessions for longer visits.

The group leader should also tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit by, for example, reinforcing the visit's code of conduct.

Special arrangements may be necessary for parents who cannot speak English.

Parents must:

- provide the group leader with emergency contact number(s);
- sign the consent form;
- give the group leader relevant information about their child's health which might be relevant to the visit.

Planning off-site visits

Whether the visit is to a local park, museum, swimming pool, or includes a residential stay, it is essential that careful planning takes place. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to avoid them.

The Headteacher is responsible for planning all off-site visits. In practice, the detailed planning is delegated to the organiser of the visit or the group leader, but the Headteacher must be satisfied that the person planning the visit is qualified to do so and has the necessary experience.

The organiser / group leader must agree all plans with the Headteacher.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should always be carried out before setting off on a visit, using EVOLVE. The risk assessment will decide the adult: child ratio for each visit. (See Guidance under 'Supervision'). The risk assessment should include the following considerations:

- what are the risks?
- who is affected by them?
- what safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- can the group leader guarantee that these safety measures will be provided?
- what steps will be taken in an emergency?
- what is the acceptable ratio of adults to children for this visit? (See section on Supervision.)



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The group leader and other supervisors should continually reassess the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action if pupils are in danger.

The group leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:

- the type of activity and the level at which it is being undertaken;
- the location;
- the competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff;
- the group members’ age, competence, fitness and temperament;
- pupils with special educational or medical needs;
- the quality and suitability of available equipment;
- seasonal conditions, weather and timing.

Exploratory visit

If it is a new visit, wherever possible, the group leader (and if possible other teachers) should undertake an exploratory visit to:

- ensure that the venue is suitable to meet the aims and objectives of the school visit;
- assess potential areas and levels of risk;
- ensure that the venue can cater for the needs of the staff and pupils in the group;
- ensure that the group leader is familiar with the area before taking a party of young people.

If it is not feasible to carry out an exploratory visit, a minimum measure should be to contact the venue, seeking assurances about the venue’s appropriateness for the visiting group. In addition, it may be worth seeking views from other schools who have recently visited the venue. In some cases, such as when taking walking parties to remote areas, it may be appropriate to obtain local information from the Tourist Boards. Exploratory visits are always helpful for newly qualified teachers and for those that wish to increase their understanding of potential risks and benefits of the trip.

First Aid

First Aid provision should be considered when assessing the risks of the visit. For adventurous activities, visits which involve overnight stays, or visits abroad it is sensible to have at least one trained first-aider in the group. The group leader only needs a working knowledge of first aid, as their focus should remain on the majority while delegating care of the minority to others.

The minimum first-aid provision is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box;
- a person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

First-aid should be available and accessible at all times. If a first-aider is attending to one member of the group, there should be adequate first-aid cover for the other pupils. The Headteacher should take this into account when assessing what level of first-aid facilities will be needed. The contents of a first-aid kit will depend on what activities are planned. At St Thomas of Canterbury Junior School, first aid training is offered to all staff on a three yearly basis providing excellent levels of care.



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Supervision

It is important to have a sufficient ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any off-site visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- sex, age and ability of group;
- special needs and pupils with disabilities;
- nature of activities;
- experience of adults in off-site supervision;
- duration and nature of the journey;
- type of any accommodation;
- competence of staff, both general and on specific activities.

There should always be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency. When visits are to remote areas or involve hazardous activities, the risks may be greater and supervision levels should be set accordingly.

The local authority’s policy provides the latest information on recommended ratios. However, regardless of these suggested ratios, each visit will be assessed individually through the school’s risk assessment procedure for educational visits and we tend to ‘over compensate’.

Wherever there is more than one adult supervisor, a group leader, who has authority over the whole party, should be appointed.

Where a high adult: pupil ratio is required, it is not always feasible to use school staff alone. Volunteers (including parents) with appropriate DBS clearance may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school and the pupil group.

All adult supervisors, including school staff and parent helpers must understand their roles and responsibilities at all times. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision, such as those with special needs or those with behavioural difficulties.

Teachers retain responsibility for the group at all times.

For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone in a one to one situation with a pupil.

If the school is leading an adventure activity, such as canoeing, the LA and Governing Body must ensure that the group leader and other supervisors are suitably qualified to lead and instruct the activity before they agree that the visit can take place. Qualifications can be checked with the National Governing Body of each sporting activity (this sort of check is often undertaken on our behalf by the LA e.g. PGL).

Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils should take place. The group leader should establish rendezvous points and tell pupils what to do if they become separated from the party.



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Preparing Pupils

Providing information and guidance to pupils is an important part of preparing for a school visit. Pupils should have a clear understanding about what is expected of them and what the visit will entail. Pupils must understand what standard of behaviour is expected of them and why rules must be followed. The lack of control and discipline can be a major contributory factor when accidents occur. Pupils should also be told about any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own and other’s safety.

Pupils should be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating their own curricular work and have opportunities to take different roles within an activity. This could include considering any health and safety issues.

Participation

Pupils should be assessed to ensure that they are capable of undertaking the proposed activities. During the visit they should not be coerced into activities they fear.

Pupils whose behaviour is such that the group leader is concerned for their, or others’ safety, should be withdrawn from the activity. On residential visits the group leader will have the ability to send pupils home, as a last resort, if necessary.

It is not appropriate to organise a trip that a pupil cannot take part in and this would compromise our policies on equality and special needs.

Sometimes there are one or two families that choose not to send their children on a trip, particularly residential visits. In these cases, the school endeavours to meet the educational aims of the trip in other ways so that these children are not disadvantaged.

Information to pupils

It is for the group leader to decide how to provide information, but they should be satisfied that the pupils understand key safety information. Pupils should understand:

- the aims and objectives of the visit / activity;
- background information about the place to be visited;
- how to avoid specific dangers and why they should follow rules;
- why safety precautions are in place;
- why special safety precautions are in place for anyone with disabilities;
- what standard of behaviour is expected from pupils;
- who is responsible for the group;
- what to do if approached by a stranger;
- what to do if separated from the group and rendezvous procedures.
- emergency procedures;

Transport and pupils

Pupils using transport on a visit should be made aware of basic safety rules including:

- arrive on time and wait for the transport away from the road, track, etc.
- do not rush towards the transport when it arrives;
- wear your seatbelt and stay seated while travelling;
- make sure your bags do not block aisles;



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- never attempt to get on or off a moving transport vehicle;
- never throw things out of the transport vehicle’s windows;
- never get off a vehicle held up by traffic lights or in traffic;
- never run about while transport is moving or pass someone on steps or stairs;
- never kneel or stand on seats or otherwise impede the driver’s vision
- never distract or disturb the driver;
- stay clear of automatic doors / manual doors after boarding or leaving the transport;
- after leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move off before crossing the road;
- if you have to cross roads to get to the transport always use the good pedestrian skills;
- if you feel unwell while travelling, tell a teacher or the person who is otherwise responsible for the group.

Pupils with special educational and medical needs

The Headteacher will not exclude pupils with special educational or medical needs from school visits. Every effort should be made to accommodate them whilst maintaining the safety of everyone on the visit. Special attention should be given to appropriate supervision ratios and additional safety measures may need to be addressed at the planning stage.

Communicating with Parents / Carers

Parents need to be aware that the teachers on the visit will be acting in their place – ‘in loco parentis’ – and will be exercising the same care that a prudent parent would. The following information on matters that might affect pupil’s health and safety is useful to parents, and will be included in a letter to parents / carers prior to a visit:

- dates of the visit;
- times of departure and return;
- mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company;
- details of accommodation with security and supervisory arrangements on site;
- names of leader, or other staff and of other accompanying adults;
- visit’s objectives;
- details of the activities planned and of how the assessed risks will be managed;
- insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, cancellation and medical cover. Any cover to be arranged by the parents, if appropriate, will be requested;
- clothing and equipment to be taken;
- money to be taken;
- the information to be given by parents and what they will be asked to consent to.

Parental consent

St Thomas of Canterbury Junior School will seek consent for educational visits.

If parents/carers withhold consent without question the pupil should not be taken on the visit; but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way, wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent the Headteacher will need to consider whether the child may be taken on the visit or not. The School’s parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group.



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Residential visits

Hostels and Hotels

The school will bear in mind the following:

- the group leader should ideally have adjoining rooms with staff quarters next to the young people’s – we will endeavour to obtain a floor plan of the rooms reserved for the group’s use in advance;
- the immediate accommodation area should be exclusively for the use of the group;
- access by staff to student rooms must be available at all times;
- separate male and female sleeping areas for pupils and adults;
- ensure that the whole party are aware of the lay-out of the accommodation, its fire precautions / exits, its regulations and routing, and that everyone can identify key personnel;
- security arrangements – where the reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visitors;
- ensure that locks / shutters etc. work on all the rooms used by the group;
- storage of clothes, luggage, equipment etc., particularly safekeeping of valuables;
- adequate lighting;
- provision for sick, disabled pupils or those with special needs;
- safety in rooms (electrical connections, secure balconies);
- recreational accommodation / facilities for the group.

Coastal visits

Group leaders and other teachers should be aware that many of the incidents affecting school children have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming. At St Thomas of Canterbury Junior School, the group leader should bear the following points in mind in the risk assessment of a coastal activity:

- tides and sandbanks are potential hazards so timings and exit routes should be checked;
- ensure group members are aware of warning signs and flags;
- establish a base on the beach to which members of the group may return if separated;
- look out for hazards such as glass, barbed wire and sewage outflows etc;
- some of a group’s time on a beach may be recreational. Group leaders should consider which areas of the terrain and sea are out of bounds;
- cliff tops can be highly dangerous for school groups even during daylight. The group should keep to the path at all times. Group leaders should consider whether it is safe for pupils to ride mountain bikes on coastal paths.

Swimming

Swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities for a school group.

Swimming in the sea on a coastal visit, will **not** be allowed for our children. Paddling will only be allowed as part of a supervised activity, preferably in recognised bathing areas which have official surveillance. Pupils should always be in sight of their teachers. One teacher should always stay out of the water for better surveillance.

Where paddling is to be allowed on a visit, a ratio of 1 adult: 4 children is a minimum.



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Farm visits

St Thomas of Canterbury Junior School recognises that farms can be dangerous even for the people who work on them. Taking children to a farm will be very carefully planned, and the risks to be assessed should include those arising from the misuse of farm machinery and the hazards associated with E coli 0157 food poisoning and other infections.

The proposed farm will be checked to ensure that it is well managed; that it has a good reputation for safety standards and animal welfare; and that it maintains good washing facilities and clean grounds and public areas. An exploratory visit should be carried out.

The basic rules for a farm visit will be:

We will never let pupils:

- place their faces against the animals or their hands in their mouths after feeding them;
- eat until they have washed their hands;
- sample any animal foodstuffs;
- drink from farm taps (other than in designated public facilities);
- ride on tractors or other machines;
- play in the farm area.

Staff drinking alcohol on residential trips

The staff's duty of care towards pupils on trips and visits is “paramount” and must not be compromised. Staff are in charge of pupils throughout a trip and cannot delegate responsibility. At St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School we hold and promote the highest expectations of staff conduct and frequently remind staff of their duty of care to pupils.

Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards (Personal and Professional Conduct), which applies to most teachers in maintained schools, sets out expectations of teachers' conduct. Part 2 of the standards says that teachers are expected to “demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct”.

Drinking alcohol (not necessarily in front of pupils), or heavy drinking during the trip, could be seen as contravening the Teachers' Standards. Similarly, it is important that the behaviour of staff does not bring the school into disrepute. It is a potential disciplinary offence for a teacher to be affected by alcohol at work.

For these reasons the consumption of alcohol by staff members whilst on educational/residential trips is **strictly forbidden**.

Where **parents** are used to support staff: pupil ratios they are expected to follow the same guidance set out above.

Parental Support on Educational Visits

For many of our educational visits we rely on parent volunteers for support and supervision. We feel that the involvement of parents in children's education is vital and we encourage active participation in many ways.



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It is very important that all staff, parent volunteers and other adults working with children work within an understanding of professionalism and confidentiality. All volunteers, in a position of trust, are expected to maintain strict confidentiality at all times in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Parent volunteers will also be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) as set out in ‘Parental Support on Educational Visits (Residential)’ and ‘Parental Support on Educational Visits (Non-Residential)’.

Conclusion

School trips are incredibly important and provide memorable experiences for pupils and teachers. We seek to continue to run safe and successful trips for pupils. It is not possible to eliminate all risk, nor would this be beneficial for children. However, risk needs to be managed and considered and careful consideration of this policy will help all of us to do this.

The EVC will attend further training every three years (last updated in November 2019) and revisit this policy regularly in the light of any new advice. This policy supplements and compliments the Essex LA policy that is available in the Headteacher’s office.

This policy was revised in September 2019 and will be reviewed again formally by 2022.