

School trips policy and procedures

The value and purpose of school visits and ventures

A great deal of attention is now paid to the quality and effectiveness of the learning opportunities offered to children and young people and the strategies used to promote best practice. Attempts to enhance learning or provide realistic situations to use and apply knowledge, skills and understanding are at the forefront of good practice.

Learning in its broadest sense, frequently turns to the exciting and stimulating environments that are provided outdoors. This may be just outside and beyond the classroom or group based, through journeying far and wide.

Where these opportunities are well planned and structured, the values have been shown to be clear.

The children have the opportunity to:-

- Use and apply their knowledge and understanding outdoors, in a different and often more stimulating environment.
- Focus on specific environments, from geography trails to problem solving and team challenges, to develop their organisational, team working and leadership skills.
- Develop an awareness and understanding of environmental and sustainability issues, through fieldwork studies.
- Raise their awareness and understanding of the wider safety issues through opportunities to become involved in risk assessment and risk management.
- Learn new skills.
- Reinforce existing skills and knowledge by putting theory into practice and through interaction with others.
- Enjoy the experience and learn from it.

Understanding the risks

Serious accidents during educational visits and adventurous activities are rare as they take place in controlled and safe environments. However, when school visits or ventures do go wrong, they hit the media headlines, going straight to the top of national and local coverage, whilst similar and far more frequent incidents in other contexts do not. It is necessary, therefore, to have a realistic and balanced view.

The key roles and responsibilities of the School, The Headmaster, The Senior Management Team, The Teachers and support staff/helpers, when taking children on out of school activities are set out in this policy.

We have a duty to ensure that:

- We make our children more risk aware and able to manage themselves.

Bluewater School Trips Policy

- Parents and others with that responsibility are:-
 1. made fully aware of the risks involved in educational visits and adventurous activities.
 2. shown how these risks are managed.
 3. informed of what strategies are to be put in place to make them manageable.
- Once this information is in place, parents are able to make an informed decision about giving their consent.

Explanation and parental consent does not remove the responsibilities of the School and Headmaster.

Equal opportunities and inclusion

Everyone concerned needs to ensure that every effort is made to include all children. The challenge is to make these activities available and accessible in some form to all who wish to participate or are required to take part. This would be irrespective of their special educational or medical need, disability, ethnic origin, sex or religion. It needs to be remembered that this must be done whilst maintaining the safety of all those concerned, the integrity of the activity and the ability to manage the visit or venture. These are significant factors to be managed, which may over-ride other considerations.

Establishing the educational value of all visits, ventures and activities

All activities organised through the School are expected to have a clear educational value. It is important that this is identified and understood by everyone concerned, in order that:

- High expectations are to be set and codes of behaviour agreed.
- Roles and responsibilities are to be clearly identified and determined.
- Appropriate strategies are used to realise the aims.
- Parents and others are fully informed of the nature of the venture.

The Head, The Senior Management Team and Teachers must each, in their own way, satisfy themselves that the appropriate strategies are in place to make them happen. At an appropriate stage, aims, objectives and expectations should be shared with the group. Without such a focus, the key elements of the venture and its full potential are unlikely to be realised. The more positively they are thought through and planned for, the more successful the outcomes.

Individual responsibilities for visits

The headmaster

This is the key role for ensuring that the management of visits and ventures meets the schools regulations and policies. This management process needs to be in conjunction with a clear picture of expectations and standards that can be achieved by making the most of the positive learning opportunities presented.

Any delegation of responsibilities must be done with a clear rationale, derived from a good knowledge of the people concerned; the visits and activities; the aims and objectives; and the risk assessments you require.

The Head of School

The Headmaster may delegate some of their duties to the appropriate Head of School.

The Group Leader

This is the person with overall responsibility for the administration, programme, supervision and conduct of the venture. They are therefore an important part of the health and safety and good practice support system, and should both understand their own responsibilities and those of the other people in the process who contribute to their support, success and confidence.

Members of the group with specific responsibilities

These people will assist the Group Leader in all their tasks and activities and will need to demonstrate person specific, pastoral, technical and management expertise. The list of responsibilities and competencies for the members of the group will need to be supplemented according to circumstances.

Responsibilities of the children

- It is essential that all groups are made as aware and active in the process of managing the visit or venture as they can be.
- Procedures, group and supervision strategies must be explained and understood.
- Individual and group responsibilities need to be clear, as well as the rewards and sanctions for ensuring they are kept to.
- A Code of Conduct, negotiated and agreed in an acceptable way, is a key component of educational visits e.g. communication, behaviour, dress, group supervision and “down time”.
- It may be necessary to have individual behaviour contracts with some young people, signed by themselves and their parents.
- Everyone should be as risk aware as is realistic.

Any children whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils should be fulfilled in other ways wherever possible.

Approval systems

The Headmaster is responsible for approving all visits or ventures that take place. Before approval is given, information is gained from the Centres/Providers of the activities to ensure that health and safety, risk assessment and operating procedures are in place.

Centres/Providers will be checked for their appropriateness, their leader’s qualifications and basic operating procedures. These checks will be carried out annually where repeat visits are planned.

Risk assessment and risk management requirements

“Working in the outdoors” encompasses many activities, from using the local environment as an ‘outdoor classroom’ through to taking part in recognised ‘hazardous’ activities. What they

Bluewater School Trips Policy

all have in common isto use an exciting and stimulating environment to promote learning and personal development. However, if personal development and increasing self-reliance are to be achieved, then we must properly assess, prepare for and manage any significant hazards in these environments and the risks they present.

The process of risk assessment involves the Group Leader and his team in :-

- Looking for and at the hazards involved.
- Identifying and assessing the risks.
- Deciding what control measures need to be put in place to eliminate or minimise the risk.
- Recording the findings.

The risk assessments are carried out before the visit, during and after the visit to ensure that the assessment is still relevant.

A database of this documentation is compiled by the Group Leader to ensure that everyone learns and shares the information gained from visits and ventures.

Supervision

Supervision is a key element in the success of any venture. It will determine not only the health and safety of the children and their leaders, but also the quality of the overall experience, enabling learning to take place as well as allowing all those concerned to enjoy the experience and derive satisfaction from it. Good supervision requires everyone involved knowing what strategies are to be used and what their roles and responsibilities are, as well as having a clear picture of the expectations placed upon them. It is a team effort and shared responsibility, based on small manageable tasks and relationships building into a larger successful system and partnership.

The ratio of competent adults to children for trips is determined by the Group Leader in consultation with the Headmaster.

Equal opportunities and inclusion

The Schools ensure that every effort is made to include all children in all activities. We strive to make these activities available and accessible in some form to all who wish to participate or are required to take part irrespective of their special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, sex or religion. The needs of the child will, however, be balanced again maintaining the safety of the group as a whole.

Communicating with parents or persons with parental responsibility

Communication with parents will be clear, as full as required and interactive, so that questions can be asked and queries answered. Parents' consent to a visit or venture should be based on a good understanding of the purposes, nature and programme for a visit or venture.

Parents should be kept informed of any off-site activity (simply defined as outside the school or school gates).

Bluewater School Trips Policy

First Aid

The Schools Health and Safety Policy ensures that, as far as possible, the school is an accident-free environment. The same standards apply to off-site, including all forms of visit and ventures. The provision of a first-aider does not prevent accidents, but it is an important part of the control measures.

- The School provides adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel at its locations to enable employees, pupils and visitors to be given first aid.
- Cover is proportional to the risk, rather than to group numbers or similar criteria.

Recording and reporting incidents and accidents

Accidents to children, leaders and volunteers will be recorded or reported in accordance with the established procedures. All accidents and emergencies will be recorded, no matter how minor.

In the case of a serious injury, the parents and the Headmaster will be informed as soon as possible.

Transport

Transport arrangements are an essential part of school visits or ventures. The Schools own minibuses and list of approved bus companies provide most of the local off-site road transport services. Where off-site visits and ventures involve long distance travel by road, it may be necessary for the Group Leader to contact other companies or other travel providers.

The Use of Private Cars

If private cars are used to transport children, as they will not be covered under the schools insurance. Some insurance companies regard this type of use as for business purposes, which may be outside the use permitted by the car owner's policy. The vehicle must not be used if adequate cover cannot be confirmed.