



The Birtenshaw Group

Transforming Lives

Birtenshaw Education Services

Community and Educational Visits Policy

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Rationale:

The aim of Birtenshaw is 'Transforming Lives'. In order to *achieve this aim* it is our policy to provide pupils/learners with support to regularly access the local community and plan educational visits and activities which enhance the curriculum; support learning outcomes; provide enrichment and encourage independence.

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/learners.

Planning off-site visits:

Whenever a visit off site is planned, even if it is considered routine, it is essential that careful planning takes place. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to avoid them.

Each Head of Service is ultimately responsible for ensuring that off-site visits are well planned, risk assessed, suitably staffed and have educational purpose and merit. In practice, the detailed planning is delegated to the organiser of the visit, usually the class teacher. Each Head of Service must be satisfied that the person planning the visit is qualified to do so and has the necessary experience.

Risk Assessment:

A risk assessment should always be carried out before setting off on a visit, using the standard School/College Risk Assessment Form.

- 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 staff to children and adults for this visit?
- Identify the individual children or adults who are at risk

Supervising staff should continually reassess the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action if pupils/learners are in danger. At all times, a named member of staff must be responsible for each child or adult.

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 and learners with medical needs or physical needs;
- The quality and suitability of available equipment;
- Seasonal conditions, weather and timing.

Exploratory visit:

In the event of a visit being planned to a location not previously visited, wherever possible, a pre-visit should take place in order to confirm that the location is suitable and to determine any risk factors.

In all events the venue should be asked to provide their own risk assessment to inform planning.

First Aid and Medication:

There should always be a trained first aider with the group and for children and adults who require medication, there should also be a person suitably trained to administer medication in accordance with the Medication Policy.

Medication/Emergency Contact Cards must be carried for all pupils/learners.

Supervision:

It is important to have a sufficient ratio of adult supervisors to pupils/learners for any off-site visit. No visit should take place if the required staffing level, as determined by the pupil/learner's assessed level of need cannot be met.

All adult supervisors, must understand their roles and responsibilities at all times. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils/learners 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.

Preparing pupils/learners:

Pupils/learners should always be prepared for any activity which is outside of their routine. When a visit has been planned that is not a normal weekly activity, pupils/learners should be prepared in class using strategies such as social stories, now, next, later schedules.

Pupils/learners should also be told about any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own and other's safety.

Participation:

Pupils/learners should be encouraged to participate in activities, however, they should never feel any pressure to take part in any activity they are concerned or frightened about.

Transport and pupils/learners:

The organiser of the visit **MUST** take into account the individual transport risk assessments for each pupil/learner and ensure that transport requirements are adhered to.

Pupils/learners with special educational and medical needs:

Pupils/learners with complex special needs or medical needs will not be excluded from educational 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

Parental consent for children under the age of 18.

For routine visits, such as accessing the local community, pony riding, visiting the library, general consent is given at the start of each year.

For any other visit, Birtenshaw will seek consent and ensure appropriate information about the visit is provided:

- Dates of the visit;
- Times of departure and return;
- Mode(s) of travel;
- 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.

If parents/carers withhold consent absolutely the pupil/learner should not be taken on the visit, but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil/learner in some other way, wherever possible.

Coastal visits

Supervising staff should be aware that many of the incidents that may occur by or in the sea. The following points should be considered when carrying out a risk assessment of a coastal activity:

- Tides and sandbanks are potential hazards so timings and exit routes should be checked;
- Pupils/learners should be supervised in groups at all times
- 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 educational groups even during daylight. The group should keep to the path at all times.

Swimming

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

Swimming in the sea on a coastal visit, is not allowed. Paddling will only be allowed as part of a supervised activity, preferably in recognised bathing areas which have official surveillance. Pupils/learners should always be in sight of a named member of staff.

Farm visits

Taking children or adults 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.

We will never let pupils/learners:

- 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

Routine Community Visits

As part of our commitment to “ordinary life principles”, staff regularly support children and adults to access the local community, this might be for a library/museum visit, a trip to a local park for recreation, pony-riding, a shopping trip to learn how to use money etc.

Staff should be aware that even when a visit is routine, the risks increase when children and adults are away from school/College. Risk assessments for each visit **MUST** be in place.

Procedure

An off-site activity form must be completed, signed by The Head of Service and left at the reception office with contact details for the group leader. The group leader must also take a pool phone with them so they can be contacted whilst offsite.

Equal Opportunities:

Birtenshaw supports the rights of all pupils/learners to equal access and opportunities regardless of age, culture, religion, gender, ability, disability or sexuality.

Birtenshaw promotes an ethos of respect for everyone.