
Education Visits Policy

Recommended by:

Head of Estates

Ratified by:

**Education & Standards
Committee**

Signed:



Position on the Board:

Chair of Education and Standards
Committee

Ratification Date

04.12.2024

Next Review:

Autumn Term 2026

Policy Tier (Central/Hub/School):

Central

1. Rationale

Central Region Schools Trust (Trust) aims to deliver social justice through excellent education; well-planned and well-executed school visits provide enrichment and broaden our pupils'/students' experiences to enhance their school learning and improve their life chances. 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 a good school curriculum.

1.1 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, staff 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.

1.2 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/students.

The following guidelines support the planning and implementation of educational visits organised by member schools of the Trust.

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal will ensure:

- to appoint an appropriate Education Visits Coordinator (EVC);
- that they have appointed a suitable group leader;
- all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
- the risk assessment is complete and that it is safe to make the visit and all schools authorisations have been approved;
- all training needs have been met;
- all trips are planned in line with age specific and key stage staffing ratios;
- the visit leader has experience in supervising and controlling the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively;
- the visit leader has relevant skills, qualifications and experience if acting as an instructor, and knows the location of the activity;
- all supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children and have appropriate clearance;
- the Local Academy Governing Board (LAGB) has approved the visit if necessary-eg foreign trips ;
- parents have signed consent forms, unless routine and regular;
- arrangements, within reasonable adjustments, have been made for all the medical needs and special educational needs of all the children after consultation with SENCO;
- the mode of travel is appropriate and all appropriate insurance and safety checks in place;
- the travel times are known and shared with key staff;
- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover, including appropriate public liability insurance for the venue or provider
- they have the address and phone number of the visit's venue and a contact name;
- they have the names of all the adults and pupils/students in the travelling group and they have been shared with school emergency contacts;
- they have the contact details of all the relevant parents/carers and they have been shared with school emergency contacts; and
- they have the names and contact details of the next of kin of all staff and volunteers next of kin and they have been shared with school emergency contacts.

The EVC will ensure:

- there is a clear purpose for the trip linked to the objectives of the school preferably sanctioned by governors;
- there is a suitably competent and experienced person designated as the visit leader who understands the requirements of the role;
- there is a comprehensive risk management plan and that all participants are aware of the detail where it impacts on them;
- there is evidence that a logical planning process has been used to prepare for the visit;
- national and local guidance has been followed and applied where it needs to be;
- parents/carers are fully informed of the nature of the trip and particularly any risk entailed before consent is sought;
- any external provider has at least a similar commitment to risk management and quality assurance as the Trust;
- there is clarity over who holds responsibility;
- there is clarity of process, procedures and authorisation before any trip can take place;
- there are emergency contingencies, alternative options, and that necessary details have been left at key locations and with key staff;
- they have undertaken monitoring visits of all types of visits which take place. Records should be kept of this. Any issues which arise as a result of the monitoring visit, will be followed up with appropriate actions.
- oversee the use of the EVOLVE trip reporting mechanism and ensure that each trip is recorded on the school's system. Higher risk trips (eg residential, foreign, risky activities, trips over 50 miles from school) must be recorded on EVOLVE.
- ensure that Principal/LAGB authorisation is in place before the trip commenced; and
- ensure that a full evaluation has taken place after each trip, particularly if an incident has occurred.

The visit leader is overall responsible for the group at all times. In delegating supervisory roles to other adults in the group, it is good practice for the visit leader to allocate supervisory responsibility to each adult for named pupils/students and ensure that each adult knows which pupils/students they are responsible for. The role of the visit leader is to ensure:

- that all risk assessments have been completed, insurance has been checked and verified, the venue and school specific process is followed (see school specific process);
- ensure that each pupil/student knows which adult is responsible for them;
- ensure that all adults understand that they are responsible to the visit leader for the supervision of the pupils/students assigned to them;
- ensure that all adults and pupils/students are aware of the expected standards of behaviour;
- regular and prompt updates and communication are provided to the EVC/emergency contacts if there are any issues on the visit;
- an assessment of the complete cost of each visit is completed which clearly identifies the charge to either the relevant school budget or parents/carers;
- they are aware of safeguarding and the importance of vigilance within any trip and ensure advice is sought from the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school immediately if there are any safeguarding concerns;
- that the Trust's financial procedures have been adhered to; and
- that a full evaluation takes place after each trip, particularly if an incident has occurred

It is good practice for each additional adult to:

- have a reasonable prior knowledge of the pupils/students including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities;
- carry a list/register of all group members and ensure that each vehicle has the same list;
- directly supervise the pupils/students (except during remote supervision). This is particularly important when they are mingling with the public and may not be easily identified;
- regularly check that the entire group is present;
- have a clear plan of the activity to be undertaken and its educational objectives;
- have the means to contact the visit leader/other additional adults and emergency contact if needing help;

- have prior knowledge of the venue. The visit leader should ideally have made an exploratory visit and/or been in regular communication with the provider or venue, see *Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits*;
- anticipate a potential risk by recognising a hazard, by arriving, where necessary, at the point of hazard before the pupils/students do and acting promptly where necessary;
- continuously monitor the appropriateness of the activity, the physical and mental condition and abilities of the group members and the suitability of the prevailing conditions;
- be competent to exercise appropriate control of the group and ensure that pupils/students abide by the agreed standards of behaviour;
- clearly understand the emergency procedures and be able to carry them out;
- have appropriate access to First Aid; and
- know when to ask for further advice and guidance.

Each pupil/student should:

- know who their appropriate adult is at any given time and how to contact him or her;
- have been given clear, understandable, and appropriate instructions;
- rarely if ever be on their own e.g. Duke of Edinburgh (DoE);
- alert the appropriate adult if someone is missing or in difficulties;
- have a meeting place to return to, or an instruction to remain where they are, if separated; and
- understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour.

2. Head counts etc.

Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils/students should take place, particularly before leaving any venue. It is good practice for all appropriate adults to:

- Always carry a list/register of all pupils/students and adults involved in the visit;
- ensure that pupils/students are readily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area. Brightly coloured caps, T-shirts or a school uniform can help identify group members more easily;
- avoid identification that could put pupils/students at risk e.g. name badges (though some schools find it useful to provide pupils/students with badges displaying the name of the school or hotel and an emergency contact number, or for visits abroad a note in the language of the country being visited);
- ensure that all pupils/students are aware of rendezvous points and have access to emergency contact numbers if remote supervision; and
- ensure that all pupils/students know what to do if they become separated from the group.

3. 'Buddy' system

Each child is paired with a buddy. Each regularly checks that the other is present and is OK. A variant of this is the 'circle buddy' system where the pupils/students form a circle at the start of the visit so that each pupil/student has a left side buddy and a right-side buddy. He or she will check on these when asked. Therefore two pupils/students cannot vanish together and not be missed (as might happen with paired buddies).

4. Remote Supervision

Supervision can be close or remote but is always 24 hours:

- close supervision occurs when the group remain within sight and contact of the supervisor;
- remote supervision occurs when, as part of planned activities, a group works away from the supervisor but is subject to stated controls (e.g. during certain Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions). The appropriate adult is present though not necessarily near or in sight, but his or her whereabouts are known;
- down time or recreational time (eg during the evenings) may involve close or remote supervision, but should not be unsupervised - the appropriate adult continues to be in charge; and
- it is essential that everyone involved in the visit understands the supervision arrangements and expectations.

When supervision is remote:

- groups should be sufficiently trained and assessed as competent for the level of activity to be undertaken, including first aid and emergency procedures. Remote supervision will normally be the final stage of a phased

development programme;

- pupils/students will be familiar with the environment or similar environments and have details of the rendezvous points and the times of rendezvous;
- clear and understandable boundaries will be set for the group;
- there must be clear lines of communication between the group, the appropriate adult and the school. Do not rely exclusively on mobile phones;
- the supervisor should monitor the group's progress at appropriate intervals;
- the supervisor will be in the expedition or activity area and able to reach the group reasonably promptly should the group need support in an emergency;
- there should be a recognisable point at which the activity is completed; and
- there should be clear arrangements for the abandonment of the activity where it cannot be safely completed.

5. Rearranging Groups

Potential danger points can occur when rearranging groups. In particular:

- when a large group is split into smaller groups for specific activities;
- when groups transfer from one activity to another and change appropriate adult;
- during periods between activities; and
- when small groups re-form into a large group.

It is therefore important that the supervisor:

- clearly takes responsibility for the group when their part of the programme begins, particularly making certain that all group members are aware of the changeover.
- clearly passes on responsibility for the group when their part of the programme is concluded, together with any relevant information ensuring that the group members know who their next leader is.

6. Down Time

Visit leaders should ensure that pupils/students continue to be properly supervised during downtime before, between and after activities, including the evenings on residential visits. A group occupied in study or activity is far safer than a group left to its own devices in an unfamiliar environment. Too much unstructured free time in a residential programme can allow time for mischief, bullying, homesickness and wandering off from the body of the group.

It is good practice to:

- ensure that all staff and pupils/students understand the standards of behaviour that apply at all times, not just during activities;
- ensure that handover between activities is properly supervised, with a named appropriate adult responsible for the group if there is down-time between activities;
- ensure that all appropriate adults understand that their supervisory role continues in the evening – however hard a day it has been, that it is not a time to relax in the bar or in front of the TV;
- use down-time in the evening or at the beginning of the day to brief the group on the planned activities for the day to come, e.g. the planned learning outcomes, specific health and safety issues, meal and break times etc;
- use down time after activities for individual reflection on personal learning outcomes, and group discussion about the highs and lows of the day;
- apply the advice contained in "Remote Supervision" above, adapted as necessary, if it is felt reasonable to allow pupils/students some time without close supervision; and
- occupy the group with mildly active, non-academic activities in the evening-eg craft activities, environmental activities, quizzes, team challenges, led walks.

7. Night Time

Visit leaders should ensure that:

- the group's immediate accommodation is exclusively for the group's use;
- members of staff (of both genders where appropriate) have sleeping accommodation on the same floor immediately adjacent to the pupils'/students' accommodation;

- there is a member of staff present on that floor whenever the pupils/students are there;
- safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect both pupils/students and staff;
- where hotel/hostel reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visits-eg secure fobbed doors;
- in the absence of 24-hour staffing of reception, external doors must be made secure against intrusion and windows closed as necessary to prevent intrusion;
- where possible, internal doors are lockable, but staff must have reasonable access to the pupil accommodation at all times;
- where pupils'/students' doors are locked, staff have immediate access, as necessary, to a master key; and
- all staff and pupils/students know the emergency procedures/escape routes in the event of a fire. Where windows and doors are locked against intrusion at night, ensure that alternative escape routes are known and that all fire doors function properly.

Don't be lulled into a sense of false security by local assurances, such as "no need to lock doors in this part of the country". The presence of the group may attract unwelcome attention that is unusual in the locality.

8. Travel

A driver cannot safely drive and supervise children at the same time. Visit leaders should ensure that:

- transport by road has seat belts and that the pupils/students wear them;
- there is always adequate supervision when travelling;
- adults are reserved seats that allow them to supervise properly; adults should be placed at the front of the coach/vehicle;
- pupils/students are supervised when boarding and leaving;
- extra care is taken when leaving a vehicle in a country that drives on the right as some doors may open onto the roadside;
- standards of behaviour are met, and that drivers are not distracted;
- smoking/alcohol etc. bans are observed;
- pupils/students are occupied on long journeys. This will help the journey pass quickly;
- evacuation procedures are clearly understood by everyone, luggage is securely stored, and emergency exits are kept clear;
- there are adequate rest stops for drivers; and
- head counts are carried out when the group is getting off or onto transport.

9. Ongoing Risk Assessment

HASPEV chapter 2 paragraphs 37-46, and *Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits* deal with risk assessment. Risk assessment does not end when the visit begins. Changes to the itinerary, changes to the weather, incidents (whether minor or major), staff illness – all or any of these may bring pupils/students face to face with unexpected hazards or difficulties and give rise to the need to re-assess risk.

The visit leader (and other adults with responsibility) prepares ongoing risk assessments while the visit is taking place. These normally consist of judgements and decisions made as the need arises. They are not usually recorded until after the visit. They should be informed by the generic and visit or site specific risk assessments.

It is good practice to have briefings each night to take stock and assess the circumstances for the next day, and to spend time early the next morning explaining arrangements to the pupils/students.

For example:

- Check the local weather forecast to
 - inform decisions on appropriate clothing;
 - be aware of whether water activities might be in areas prone to flash floods, high winds etc; and
 - be aware of whether trekking or climbing at altitude might be subject to dramatic changes of weather; potential for fallen trees, avalanches etc.

- Seek local knowledge of potential hazards-eg
 - rivers/streams prone to sudden increases in flow'
 - difficult terrain;
 - crossing points for road, rail, or water; and
 - unstable cliff.

- Plan B

Good forward planning will always include alternative plans in case the itinerary needs to be changed. A flexible itinerary can allow activities from later in the visit to be substituted for earlier activities if those are prevented by unexpected circumstances. Visit leaders faced with potential difficulties will feel more confident to change the itinerary if a pre-assessed alternative is available and regardless of whether alternatives have been pre-assessed, should always take time to reassess risks if the itinerary changes. On arrival at an alternative site or activity that has not previously been risk assessed, we recommend that the visit leader should risk assess the situation before allowing the pupils/students to disembark from the transport. An unknown location might involve hazards not covered in the original risk assessment, for example if the original intention to visit a land-only site has to be changed at short notice to a lake or seaside location.

10. Behaviour of pupils/students selected for trips

All schools within the Trust will always monitor the pupils'/students' behaviour and review the suitability of pupils/students who would like to go on trips on a case by case basis. The Trust and its schools reserve the right to exclude, without refund, any pupil/student from a trip whose behaviour inside or outside of school preceding the trip might cause the Principal serious concerns for the safety of the other pupils/students.

For any trip or visit, the relevant school's 'Behaviour Policy' are applied and all schools have the same expectation of behaviour in and out of school. Under the Education and Inspections Act (2006) the Principal or an authorised member of staff have a statutory power to search a pupil/student or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil/student may have a prohibited item.

Pupils'/students' behaviour on any trip is expected to meet the same expectations placed upon them in the school environment. If the standards are not met sanctions will be put in place on the trip. If it is deemed necessary sanctions will also be put in place on return to school. Examples of necessary actions on a trip might include:

- moving students groups;
- placing them to be supervised by a number of staff; moving their seats on a coach; and
- removing a ski pass for an identified period.

It is rare that such sanctions have to be put in place. However, pupils/students and their parents/carers must understand that running a trip is a huge responsibility and pupils/students not behaving appropriately place everyone at risk which is completely unacceptable. Examples include:

- making unnecessary noise on a coach;
- not listening to instructions from adults;
- failing to check in at the designated time or meeting place;
- being late to depart; and
- rudeness.

In extreme examples where a pupil/student is placing the trip at significant risk or an incident is deemed serious enough the pupil/student may have to be excluded from the trip. In this instance a parent/carer might have to make arrangements to arrange transport to return the pupil/student home.

11. Behaviour problems, illness or injury on the trip

- Poor behaviour may be reduced by ensuring that all pupils/students are signed up to agreed standards of behaviour before (or at least at the beginning of) the visit.
- Educational visits can be a good opportunity for school staff to get to know pupils/students away from the confines

of the school. However, the visit leader should resist any temptation to accept lower standards of behaviour. The different hazards that pupils/students may be exposed to away from the school will require them to observe standards of behaviour that are at least as high as, or higher than, in the classroom.

- If one adult has to give prolonged attention to one group member, the visit leader should reassess the supervisory roles of the other adults to ensure that all members of the group know who is responsible for them. Activities may need to be amended until the other adult returns all of his or her attention to the group.
- Visit leaders should trust their own knowledge of the young people and use their own professional judgement. This may include challenging an activity leader where the visit leader's knowledge of the group is superior or intervening to prompt a change of plan.

12. Emergency Procedures

Preparation

See *HASPEV* Chapter 10 and *Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits*. By their nature, emergencies are usually unexpected. However careful emergency planning can mitigate the trauma of being caught up in an emergency. It is good practice for the visit leader to:

- agree an emergency action plan, which includes 24-hour (i.e. constant cover) contact points at the school/critical incident team and clear roles for the visit leader, school contacts, Principal e.g. managing media interest, supporting parents of an injured pupil, transport arrangements etc;
- ensure that all members of the group know what action to take if there is a problem;
- hold evening briefings with appropriate adults to discuss issues for the next day;
- spend time early the next morning explaining arrangements to the pupils/students;
- hold, or ensure that other adults in the group hold, up-to date competence in first aid and other lifesaving competence as necessary for the activities;
- ensure that the first aid kit is properly stocked and accessible-see Guidance on First Aid for Schools, paragraph 60 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/268803/guidance_on_first_aid_for_schools.pdf;
- ensure that all pupils'/students' medical needs (e.g. asthma, diabetes, anaphylaxis) are known and that staff are competent to handle them-see Supporting Pupils at school with Medical Conditions: A Good Practice Guide https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277025/draft_statutory_guidance_on_supporting_pupils_at_school_with_medical_conditions_for_consultation.pdf;
- be aware that some diseases are more common in some countries and know what preventative action to take and what to do if a group member becomes infected;
- recognise that many of the health problems of pupils/students on longer visits are caused by lack of food, of liquid or of sleep;
- if appropriate, advise group members about the dangers of over-exertion in the heat and of dehydration, which can cause headache, dizziness, and nausea;
- know that in warm climates it is important to keep fluid levels high, take extra salt and wear loose, lightweight clothing (preferably made of cotton or other natural fibres) and use suitably factored sun protection creams and sun hats/glasses;
- ensure that drivers take adequate rest breaks on long journeys;
- ensure that all pupils/students understand and follow the code of conduct;
- practice emergency drills-eg evacuation of minibus; and
- if abroad, know where the nearest British Embassy or Consulate is located and the telephone number. Depending on the age of the pupils/students, it may be appropriate to ensure that they have this information to hand.

Emergency procedures framework during the visit

If an emergency occurs on a school visit the visit leader should maintain or resume control of the group overall. The main factors to consider include:

- establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible;
- ensure that all the group are safe and looked after;
- establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention;
- ensure that an appropriate adult accompanies casualties to hospital with any relevant medical information, and

- that the rest of the group are always adequately supervised and kept together;
- inform the EVC/Emergency Contact and provider/tour operator (as appropriate). The school contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit;
- notify the police if necessary;
- ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident;
- ensure that all group members are following the emergency procedures and the roles allocated to them. They may need to revise procedures and re-allocate roles as necessary;
- details of the incident to pass on to the school should include: nature, date and time of incident; location of incident; names of casualties and details of their injuries; names of others involved so that parents can be reassured; action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom);
- school contact should notify parents, providing as full a factual account of the incident as possible;
- school contact should notify Critical Incident Team providing as full a factual account of the incident as possible;
- notify insurers, especially if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the school contact);
- notify the British Embassy/Consulate if an emergency occurs abroad;
- ascertain phone numbers for future calls. Try not to rely solely on mobile phones;
- write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence;
- keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident;
- complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or local authority inspector, if appropriate;
- no-one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Refer media enquiries to a designated media contact at school;
- no-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties, nor sign anything relating to accident liability without clear advice from their school and insurers; and
- keep receipts for any expenses incurred as insurers will require these.

Hierarchy of Risk

Emergencies can be considered in four categories, depending upon the nature of the incident. Planning and preparation for off-site visits should ensure an appropriate response to an emergency in any of these categories, at any time of day or night.

1. Incident: a situation that is dealt with by the visit leadership team. This may, perhaps, involve some communication back to the establishment (e.g., a school) or to parents, and some support from the establishment, but the Visit Leader remains in control and is able to cope.
2. Emergency: an incident which overwhelms the coping mechanisms of the visit leadership team and which requires the establishment's Emergency Plan for offsite visits to be initiated. This may, perhaps, involve some communication with the employer and support from it, but the establishment takes control of the situation and is able to cope.
3. Critical Incident: an incident which overwhelms the coping mechanisms of both the visit leadership team and the establishment, and which requires the employer's Critical Incident Plan to be initiated in addition to the establishment's Emergency Plan. The employer takes control of the situation and supports the establishment and the visit staff and participants. Where the establishment is also the employer, or where the employer has limited capacity to provide support, the establishment's Emergency Plan should include alternative support arrangements to increase its resilience, e.g., through clusters of schools, which should be agreed in advance
4. Major Incident: an incident which (if in the UK) is declared as a major incident by the police, who will take control and a Major Incident Plan is initiated, or where (if outside the UK) the relevant authorities take control. Both the establishment's Emergency Plan and the employer's Critical Incident Plan will be required in order to coordinate with the police or other authorities.

Key Points

- Deciding what to do in the event of an accident or emergency should form part of the planning and preparation of every off-site Visit, and be written down as Emergency Procedures for the visit - all members of the visit leadership team should be familiar with these;
- Emergency Procedures for individual visits should be written in the light of the establishment's Emergency Plan, which in turn should be written in the light of the employer's Critical Incident Plan;
- Where there are only one or two leaders on a visit, participants should also be familiar with the Emergency Procedures, or at least should be able to contact the establishment to get help;
- Plans must take into account the possibility of an incident occurring out of normal working hours, including overnight, at weekends or during holiday periods – a nominated competent Emergency Contact must always be contactable and available to implement the plan;
- The initial information about an incident may come to a non-specialist, such as a school receptionist or someone else who happens to answer the phone – it is essential that they know what to do (i.e., to alert the Emergency Contact);
- All those involved in off-site visits, whether part of the visit leadership team, acting as an Emergency Contact, or having a role in the Emergency/Critical Incident Plan at either establishment or employer level should:
 - o Be competent to fulfil their role - this includes having the ability to function effectively in a crisis; o Be familiar with the relevant plan and have easy access to key information and resources;
 - o Receive appropriate briefing, training and support (e.g., crib cards);
 - o Have regular opportunities to engage in practice scenarios; o Be available.

Training and Testing Emergency/Critical Incident Plans can never provide a step-by-step guide to responding to an emergency: they must be implemented and adapted by competent people. Thought should be given to the provision of appropriate training for relevant staff. Whatever initial training is provided it is essential that periodic scenario-based training and testing of the system (at all levels from visit leadership team to employer) is undertaken in order to keep people fresh, build adaptability and problem solving skills and highlight any flaws and weaknesses.

13. Advice on specific activities

Coastal visits

HASPEV chapter 8 "Types of Visit" has advice on coastal visits at paragraphs 181-2. HASPEV states: "...many of the incidents affecting pupils/students have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming". The visit leader will want to bear the following points in mind when assessing the risks of a coastal activity:

- tides, rip tides and sandbanks are potential hazards; timings and exit routes should be checked;
- group members should be 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. Visit leaders should consider which areas of the terrain are out of bounds, and whether the risk assessment allows swimming in the sea;
- cliff tops can be highly dangerous for school groups even during daylight. The group should always keep to a safe distance from the cliff edge-i.e a "buffer zone" between the pupils/students and the hazard. Be aware that cliff falls can mean that cliff paths stop abruptly at the cliff edge;
- visit leaders should not normally allow pupils/students to ride mountain bikes on any route that is near a sheer drop-eg coastal path or canal towpath. If the risk assessment indicates that the risk could be managed adequately, then there should be a small known group of skilled and experienced riders accompanied by appropriately qualified staff; and
- the local coastguard, harbour master, lifeguard or tourist information office can provide information and advice on the nature and location of hazards.

Swimming in the sea or other natural waters

Swimming and paddling or otherwise entering the waters of river, canal, sea or lake should never be allowed as an impromptu activity. The pleas of children to be allowed to bathe (eg because it is hot weather or after a kayaking exercise) should be resisted where the bathing has not been prepared for. In-water activities should take place only when a proper risk assessment has been completed and proper measures put in to control the risks. The activities should be formal and supervised.

It is good practice that, wherever possible, visit leaders seek out recognised bathing areas that have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. However, even then, group leaders should be aware that pupils/students might mingle with members of the public and be lost to view. Pupils/students should always be in sight and reasonable reach of their supervisors.

The visit leader should:

- be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers;
- ascertain for themselves the level of the pupils'/students' swimming ability;
- check the weather;
- be aware of the local conditions (eg-currents, weeds, rip tides, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom) using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbourmaster, police or tourist information office;
- beware of rocks, breakwaters and other potential hazards;
- look out for warning signs and flags: a red flag means it is unsafe to swim; yellow flags mean that lifeguards are on patrol in the area between the flags; a black and white flag means it is an area used by surfers and not suitable for swimming;
- designate a safe area of water for use by the group;
- brief the group about the limits of the swimming area;
- avoid crowded beaches where it is harder to see pupils/students;
- be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water;
- be aware of the dangers of paddling especially for young pupils/students;
- ensure that pupils/students have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming;
- ensure the activity is suitable for the pupils/students, especially any with special needs or disabilities;
- adopt and explain the signals of distress and recall;
- ensure that buoyancy aids, lifejackets etc. are used where appropriate;
- carry out regular head counts; and
- be aware that it is not always possible to tell when someone is in difficulties.

Appropriate adults should:

- have clear roles – at least one appropriate adult should always stay out of the water for better surveillance, even where lifeguards are on duty;
- take up a best position from which to exercise a constant vigilance;
- divide their careful watching between staff who stand in the sea and look landward towards the group and staff who stay on land and watch the group from that vantage point;
- give the children their full, undivided attention;
- always follow the advice or directions of a lifeguard;
- never swim themselves unless it is to help a child in distress;
- not join in any of the children's games;
- ensure that no child is allowed to wade out or swim further than his or her waist height;
- nevertheless, be aware that it is possible to drown in one's own depth, and to act immediately when a child appears to be in difficulties;
- ensure that children leave the water immediately if they get too cold, especially if toes and fingers look blue or feel numb. This could suggest the onset of hypothermia; and
- recognise that a child in difficulty is unlikely to wave or shout – all their energies will be in trying to keep afloat.

It is good practice for the visit leader, or another designated adult in the group, to hold a relevant life saving award, especially where lifeguard cover may not be available. For further advice contact the: The Royal Lifesaving Society UK, River House, High St, Broom, Warwickshire B50 4HN (Tel: 01789 773994) <http://www.lifesavers.org.uk/>

Farm Visits

"There is a seasonal increase in the number of cases of E. coli 0157 infection, and there is a link between farm visits and infection in young children. This means that some simple and sensible precautions should be taken." - Chief Medical Officer -12 April 2000

The visit leader should check the provision at the farm to ensure that:

- eating areas are separate from those where there is any contact with animals;
- there are adequate clean and well-maintained washing facilities; and
- there is clear information for visitors on the risks and the precautions to take.

The visit leader should ensure that:

- there is adequately trained adult supervision wherever children can come into contact with animals and need to wash their hands;
- all children wash their hands thoroughly immediately after touching animals and before any eating or drinking; and
- shoes are cleaned and then hands are washed on leaving the farm.

The visit leader should never let pupils/students:

- place their faces against the animals;
- put their hands in their own mouths after touching or feeding the animals;
- eat or drink while going round the farm;
- eat or drink until they have washed their hands;
- sample any animal foodstuffs;
- drink from farm taps (other than in designated public facilities);
- touch animal droppings. If they do then they must wash and dry their hands;
- ride on tractors or other machines; and
- play in the farm area, or in other areas that are out of bounds such as grain storage tanks, slurry pits etc.

The Chief Medical Officer's guidance suggests:

- individual supervision by an adult for every child younger than 12 months.
- a supervision ratio of one adult for two children for children between ages one and two.
- gradually increasing ratios up to one adult for eight children for children between ages five and eight.
- higher standards for washing facilities.

14. Regular and Routine Visits

When an activity is part of a planned curriculum in normal curriculum time and no parental contributions are requested, then a formal consent is not necessary. However, in the interests of good relations between the Academy and home, it is good practice to ensure that those in a position of parental responsibility are fully informed.

At the beginning of each academic year, as part of the routine mailing, parents will receive notification that as part of their time at the school, students could be taken to visit a range of local establishments. As this is part of the school routine, permission is not required; however, any parent/carers who has any objections may notify the school of their objections.

If no objections are received, it is thereby deemed that parents have accepted the policy and their son / daughter may take part in visits to these establishments. Parents/carers will be advised of the importance of informing the school of any changes to medical conditions and/or contact details.

- **KS1 and 2 Guidance**
 - At Key stage 1 and 2 it is important to be aware of the arrangements specifically for drop-off and collection prior to and at the close of an educational visit. Any concerns relating to this should be discussed with the safeguarding officer-eg if a parent has ticked that a year 5 should go home alone in the dark.
 - The ratio of staff to pupils/students must be carefully thought of with this age group. Especially on a trip that includes any adventurous activity or a residential period.

- **Regular or Routine Visits**

Visits which are deemed to be regular or routine are:

- Members of the Central Region Schools Trust visiting other schools in the Trust;
- Sporting fixtures within the local authority for each school;
- Local venues within the 5 miles of each school; and
- Christmas church services within 5 miles of the school.

Including trips for Sixth Form students to the following venues

- Birmingham University;
- Warwick University;
- Worcester University;
- Birmingham Library; and
- The Hive Library, Worcester.

- **Unsupervised break / lunchtimes:** Sixth Form students have permission to leave the academy site during their lunch and breaktimes, unsupervised, and parents are made aware of this when their son / daughter joins the Sixth Form. This is referred to in the Sixth Form Code of Conduct which is signed by parents and students. Students sign in and out of school at these times.
- **University Visits / Taster Days:** As part of their preparation for application to university, students may ask permission for leave of absence to attend university open days. Parents/carers must request this in writing prior to the day and confirm that they are responsible for ensuring their son/daughter has appropriate transport to / from the venue and will be responsible for their wellbeing during the day.

15. Sporting Fixtures

Sporting fixtures form part of the curriculum and enrichment opportunities provided by the Trust. Fixtures may run during the school day or extend beyond the school day. They may be home fixtures or away at another provider (school or sport centre / ground). At the beginning of the academic year, parents will receive notification that their son / daughter could be selected to represent the school in a fixture or series of fixtures. As this forms part of the regular and routine visits, parental permission is not required if this is during the school day, however parents will be notified. If the visit extends beyond the school day, then parents/carers will be notified and one consent obtained for the series of fixtures.

For each type of fixture there is a requirement for a Risk assessment for that activity and of all participants, staff and pupils/students must be passed to the EVC before they leave school

16. Public Liability Insurance

It is important that the level of public liability insurance of a provider and/or venue, is checked and approved prior to the visit proceeding. A copy of the public liability insurance must be included in the visit pack and passed to the EVC. The guidance for levels of insurance are:

- £5 million for low risk activities-eg venue with no risky activity-eg theatre, cinema, museum etc
- £10 million for high risk activities-eg theme park, outward bound activity centre, residential providers, swimming or activities involving water.