

THOMAS WILLINGALE SCHOOL



SCHOOL VISITS POLICY

September 2022

Introduction:

'Learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development.' Learning Outside the Classroom – How far should you go? (Ofsted 2008).

Educational visits provide a context for learning, rehearsing skills, knowledge and understanding in real life situations. This helps children to remember what they are learning about.

At Thomas Willingale School we feel it is important to enhance our children's experiences through educational visits. Each academic year, from Nursery to year 6, children will be expected to attend at least one visit either by coach or tube which parents may be asked to contribute to (see our Charging Policy) and they will carry out a local visit.

In Year 6 we organise a residential trip for two nights. This is a fantastic experience for the children where they get to experience adventurous activities such as rock climbing, cycling, archery but they also develop their independence, confidence and personal skills.

The school has a strong commitment to the added value of learning beyond the statutory school day and beyond the school premises.

Visits may include:

- Inter school team sports, such as football and netball
- Regular nearby visits (libraries, parks, shops, places of worship)
- Day visits for particular year groups (theatres, museums, art galleries, environmental activities)
- Residential visits and activities, which might be classed as adventurous.

The aims of our visits may include many of the following:

- The opportunity to reinforce learning from the classroom or apply skills they have learnt in the classroom.
- Participating in an activity they may not otherwise experience.
- Build confidence.
- Have fun.
- Develop an awareness of their environment. Learn about different areas, habitats and living things.
- Develop new skills.
- Increase their personal qualities such as initiative, self-reliance, problem solving, leadership and team work.
- Improve their health and fitness.
- Have an increased motivation/appetite for learning which will contribute to raised levels of attainment.
- Broaden their horizons which could lead to greater life chances.
- Improve their social skills. Children often interact differently with the adults and other children when on visits.

Roles and responsibilities:

‘Well managed school trips and outdoor activities are great for children. Children won’t learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.’ (School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities, HSE 2011)

At Thomas Willingale School, the **Headteacher and Governing Body** have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that trips have a clear educational purpose, are planned well and that risks have been assessed and balanced against the benefits.

Outdoor Education Adviser – this is a representative from the Local Authority who provides training for school staff regarding trips and oversees visits in schools. For all trips that are residential, overseas or adventurous the EVC must inform the Outdoor Education Advisor and complete a risk assessment.

Visit Leader – This is usually the class teacher who organises the visit. They are responsible for:

- Ensure that the planned visit and activities are suitable for the children.
- Inform the Headteacher and the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) and obtain their approval prior to the visit. (A form is included in appendix 1 for this purpose.)
- Liaise with the office staff regarding transport, if needed, and costs.
- Inform parents of the trip, date and timings; gain their permission, if needed, and give advice of the costings of the trip.
- Ensure permission for each child is returned (in the case of local visits the school ask for this permission on an annual basis so will not be sought again).
- Ensure the ratio of staff to children is appropriate depending on **staff** (numbers, competence and experience), **activities** (intended learning outcome, suitability, range, prior training needed, special equipment needed), **group** (age, prior experience, abilities, behaviour, maturity, medical/dietary needs) and **environment** (urban, rural, remote, distance from base, transport, season, time of day). This may be done in liaison with the EVC and/or Headteacher.
- Complete a risk assessment prior to the visit – in this they should identify and record significant hazards and safety measures required to reduce the risk to a tolerable level. Make known to parents, EVC, Headteacher and other adults the level of residual risk that needs to be managed. Follow the risk assessment measures whilst on the trip.
- Copies of the risk assessment should be sent to the EVC for approval at least two school days prior to the visit. (This may be done through the Evolve website managed by Essex CC. or paper copies **NB for residential, overseas or adventurous activities the risk assessment must be completed on the Evolve website and sent to Essex CC for approval.**)
- Undertake the planning and preparation for the visit (this may include a pre-visit if they or anyone else in the establishment has not visited the site before).
- Brief all other adults who are accompanying the children, including parent helpers, about the arrangements for the visit and speak to adults as necessary if they do not adhere to the protocols.
- Collect the school mobile phone and any tickets/payment needed for the trip.
- Make appropriate and adequate preparations for emergencies in conjunction with the EVC and ensure all accompanying adults are familiar with these procedures. Ensure all adults are given a contact telephone number in case of an emergency with their group; this may be the school mobile telephone number which the visit leader will hold and the school mainline number.

- On the day of the trip, leave copies of the children who are attending the trip with both offices and the EVC and collect the school mobile phone and any payment/tickets as necessary for the trip.
- Carry out dynamic risk management whilst on the trip. Consider modifying or stopping the trip if the risk to the health or safety of the children or adults is unacceptable and have in place procedures/alternative arrangements for such an eventuality. Inform the EVC/school if this is the case.
- If the trip is out of school hours they should ensure they have the landline and mobile number of the EVC in case of emergencies.
- Complete head counts of all the children and adults at critical times eg departure, before and after lunch.

See appendix 2 for the Visit Leader Checklist

Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) – Mrs Lynda Collins

The EVC has to attend update training every three years.

- Liaises with the Headteacher and governors to support approval of trips.
- Ensures the visit leader is competent.
- Assess the general competence and supervisory ability of leaders and other adults proposed for a visit in collaboration with the class teacher.
- Check risk assessments - benefits out-weigh any risks and liaise with visit leader where necessary regarding risks. Ensure there is effective supervision of the children whilst on the trip and give advice regarding this.
- Where a provider is being used, ensure that appropriate checks are made and a clear contract/agreement is in place about who is responsible for what.
- Carry out occasional monitoring visits to identify further training needs.
- Organise the selection, induction and further training of leaders at the establishment.
- Work with the visit leader to provide parents with information about the visit and ensure consent is sought where needed.
- Keep records of individual visits including what worked well, what didn't and any accident/incident reports.

See appendix 3 for EVC checklist.

Accompanying adults – any adult, including parents, who attend the trip:

- Are responsible for following the protocols of the visit, following the Visit Leader's instructions including timings and liaising with the Visit Leader as necessary.
- They are responsible for the health and safety of children in their group.
- They are responsible for ensuring the behaviour of children in their group is good and if not advise the Visit Leader who will decide on a course of action.
- They must seek medical assistance if necessary and inform the Visit leader at the earliest convenience.
- If the adult is also a parent they should adhere to the visit boundaries with all children, including their own. This may include not visiting a gift shop or purchasing food for their child.
- They should behave in an appropriate manner at all times in front of children, this will include refraining from smoking and using inappropriate language.
- They should carry the emergency contacts given to them by the Visit leader and use them if necessary.
- They should carry out head counts of their group regularly and definitely at critical times eg before the departure of a coach or train, before and after lunch.

Pupils – are expected to follow instructions and procedures in line with the risk assessment.

As long as the school and local authority guidance is adhered to, any problem resulting in injury will normally be considered an accident.

Behaviour:

Our children are normally extremely well behaved on school visits. This is something we are all proud of.

Class teachers will be expected to talk to all of the children about their behaviour, expectations, safety and routines prior to the visit. Where a child is known to have behavioural difficulties thought should be given to the adult/child ratio and risk assessments should be carried out both prior to and during the visit.

For some children it may be necessary for a parent to accompany them 1:1 to ensure not only their safety but the safety of the rest of the group.

If a child seriously breaches safety or behaves inappropriately the Visit Leader should be informed immediately. They should decide on the best course of action, this may be moving them to be into a different group, sitting out of activities or in extreme circumstances contacting school to collect them early from the trip.

Approval Procedure:

All matters regarding each visit outside school – feasibility, planning, safety, organisation etc – will require the prior approval of the head teacher and EVC. The Governing Body are kept informed of all visits.

In addition, visits that are either:

Overseas
Residential or
Involving adventurous activity

will require the additional approval of the LA. Further approval will also be required from the governing body for visits of these types.

Parental Consent

Parents should be made fully aware of any likely risks of the visit and their management, so they may consent or refuse on a fully informed basis (known as 'Acknowledgment of Risk').

The letter to parents should therefore give full details of the visit, the reason for the visit (educational aims), supervision arrangements and the transport arrangements, and ensure that the detail of other incidental activities is included. The letter should also state the cost of the visit per child. (Please see charging policy for further details)

For day visits only, where written consent has not been received, verbal consent to the class teacher and/or a member of the admin team can be accepted.

Staffing

a) Competence

Any member of staff leading a visit will need to have their 'competence to lead' assessed before approval for the visit is given. For the majority of visits this will be assessed by the Head teacher and/or EVC.

b) Ratio

As a general guide and in normal circumstances, the adult /child ratio may be

Age 4 – 1:4
 5- 6 - 1:6
 7-11–1:10

However, a professional judgement must be made for **each visit**, by the Visit leader, EVC and Headteacher, as a range of characteristics relevant to the particular visit should determine the ratio. These are:

Type, duration and level of activity
Needs of individuals within the group – medical, SEN, behaviour
Experience and competence of staff and accompanying adults
Nature of venue
Weather conditions at that time of year
Nature of transport involved

The competence of supervisors and the supervision arrangements are more important than ratios.

c) Supervision

Pupils must be supervised throughout all visits.

Supervising parents must be fully briefed on the programme, venue, activities, supervision arrangements and their responsibilities. They must also be given a written list of the pupils in their immediate care and be given emergency contact numbers.

During longer residential visits it is essential that staff work closely with external staff (when appropriate) to maintain supervision of the children. It is acceptable for staff, who it has been agreed are 'off duty', to drink a small amount of alcohol, but this should not interfere with responsibilities and supervision on subsequent days activities or when driving. An off duty rota could be arranged with the visit leader so that a minimum of 2 adults are on duty at all times.

Risk Assessment

'Risk assessment' is a careful examination of what could cause harm to pupils, staff or others, together with an identification of the control measures necessary in order to reduce risks to a level which, in the professional judgement of the assessor, is deemed to be acceptable (i.e. low).

In considering risk, there are 3 levels of which visit leaders should be mindful:

- Generic Risks - normal risks attached to any activity out of school. These will be covered by reference to the 'Educational Visits Checklist', and the school's generic self-assessment.
- Event Specific Risk - any significant hazard or risk relating to the specific activity that is not covered in the generic policies
- On-going Risk – the monitoring of risks throughout the actual visit as circumstances change.

Staff must be aware of the needs and risks associated with individual pupils and not adopt a complacent attitude as a result of previous risk free visits.

Pupils should be involved in risk assessment and management. This may include identifying potential risks and discussing their role in reducing risks. Through this they will develop risk awareness – an educational issue as well as a safety issue. It is an essential life skill.

The publication 'Group Safety at Water Margins' must be consulted when assessing risks where the visit involves walking along the seashore, collecting samples in ponds or rivers, or paddling in shallow water.

The health and safety of those involved in a visit overrides any disability act.

On the day of the Visit

Refer to the checklist

Collect first aid kit(s)

Take asthma pumps and Epi-pens as necessary

Brief supervising adults, including parents

Collect the school mobile phone and ensure it is working.

Count number of pupils regularly and always when changing locations

Plan B

Despite the most detailed and careful pre-visit planning, things can go wrong on the day, e.g. parent helper is unavailable, member of staff is ill, transport fails to arrive, museum have lost booking. To avoid having to make important decisions under pressure, it is important that some advanced thinking is done to cater for any foreseeable eventuality. This takes the form of a Plan B this could be consideration for additional/reserve adults where staff absence could be an issue.

Transport

Travel arrangements should be included in the risk assessment. If public transport is to be used, all pupils and supervisors must be fully briefed as to procedures on platforms, at bus stops, on busy streets etc.

If travel is by coach or minibus, all pupils must wear a seat belt. Staff must ensure that pupils comply with this rule.

If any pupils are to travel by car, the driver must hold fully comprehensive insurance. The school's insurance policy will cover any incidents. This is also relevant to sports fixtures, and applies to both staff and parents' cars. A new form must be completed every academic year. Where parents transport their own children or organise to take other children between parents, insurance checks are not needed.

First Aid

The level of first aid provision should be based on risk assessment. On all visits there should be a responsible adult who has a good working knowledge of first aid.

First aid kits are available from the medical room. If the visit involves the party splitting up, a kit should be taken for each group.

Sick buckets/bags should be taken on all coach journeys.

Water 'Margin' Activities

Where pupils might participate in learning activities near or in water, such as a walk along a riverbank or seashore, collecting samples in ponds or streams, or paddling or walking in gentle, shallow water, then the guidance contained in DfES 'Group Safety at Water Margins' is relevant. All staff, including parents, should be provided with a copy of this guidance prior to the visit.

Evaluation

Within a week of a visit, the visit leader should evaluate the visit with the other supervising adults and inform the EVC of any aspects to be considered in future planning.

Emergency Procedures:

All adults on the trip will be issued with emergency contact numbers, these will include the school mobile number which the Visit Leader will carry with them and the school landline number.

If the trip is out of school hours the EVC mobile and landline number will be given to school staff.

School will be informed of an emergency and parents will be contacted by school staff. The EVC has access to the school text alert system at home and will take emergency contact numbers home for out of hour's visits.

A telephone pyramid will be made prior to residential and overseas trips so that contacts are quickly informed of delays or emergencies.

For visits that take place in school time, the office and EVC hold visit information including itinerary, venue details, names and emergency contact details for all participants including staff. For visits outside school hours, the EVC must also hold this information or be able to access it quickly.

Critical Incident – please see the policy 'Critical Incident Plan' this will be followed in the case of a serious incident.

Booking Procedure

Please inform the following people about proposed visits out of school before booking:

Headteacher
Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC)
Admin Officer

Procedures

- Inform the headteacher, check that proposed dates are convenient and put in diary.
- Complete trip booking form from admin office at least 3 months in advance or as early as possible, and copy to EVC and headteacher.
- Liaise with the Admin office with regards to booking transport, cost, letter to parents and, if necessary, additional insurance
- Inform parents using standard letter from admin officer. (Where own letter is used, email a copy to Admin office)
- Complete details of visit on Evolve if adventurous, overseas or residential.
- Attach Risk Assessment and letter to parents to Evolve or complete a paper copy for day visits.
- Carry out pre-visit if possible and necessary

- The Admin team will keep a record of payments made by parents and issue receipts where necessary.
- Use the educational visit leader checklist as an aide memoir before and on the day of the visit

If the headteacher and EVC have not agreed to the visit, and the necessary forms are not completed, then **THE VISIT MUST NOT GO AHEAD.**



FORM OV 4

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

(Focus on the things over which you have control)

Establishment: THOMAS WILLINGALE SCHOOL

ACTIVITY:

Group Leader:

Visit Details:

Date of Visit:

Assessment by:

Date:

Target Date for review:

Approved by:

Position:

Date:

Significant Hazards and Associated Risks

Those hazards which may result in serious harm or affect several people

Those who might be harmed

Persons at risk from the significant hazards identified

Control Measures(CM's):

Controls, including relevant sources of guidance (e.g. Generic Risk Assessment, CSF Offsite Visits Manual, Guidance from Provider, etc.). Specific CM's not included in the generic RA (e.g. briefings, actions by leaders / participants, qualifications / experience of supervisors)

Additional CM's required?

If existing CM's cannot be met or circumstances have changed

Residual Risk Rating (H / M / L)

Appendix 1, 2 and 3

Visit Booking Form, Visit Leader and EVC Checklists