

## 5.7 College Handbook for Group Leaders



**Llandovery College**

**Educational Visits -  
Handbook for Group Leaders**

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## **COLLEGE HANDBOOK FOR GROUP LEADERS**

This document has been produced by the College Education Visits Coordinator (EVC), who has the overall responsibility for overseeing all College Educational Visits, and advising group leaders on their planning and supervisory responsibilities. The responsibility for ensuring that the Educational Visit rules are obeyed rests in the first instance with every individual pupil, but the overall and greatest responsibility must rest with the group leader. All adults on a visit have a duty of care for pupils throughout the duration of such, and all actions must be taken with this responsibility in mind.

Rules and procedures, however numerous or comprehensive, are unlikely to cover every eventuality and so are not a substitute for common sense. When confronted with a situation not covered by this document, both adults and pupils should use their common sense in avoiding unnecessary dangerous situations liable to lead to accidents.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical information that might be helpful to group leaders and others, day to day, whilst taking part in an educational visit. It adds to and brings together in one place, the advice for group leaders that is spread throughout the Good Practice Guide "*Health & Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits*" (HASPEV).

This handbook is not a substitute for training. It is recommended that all group leaders have access to training before taking pupils on educational visits, this can take place within teacher training or otherwise as an understudy on previous visits. Advice on suitable training can be sought from the EVC. An initial overview on School trips, including general procedures and risk assessments can be found at section 2.12 of the Staff Handbook. However, prior to any Educational Visit, Group Leaders are to read and adhere to this guide, utilising Annex A as the framework for gaining authority for a trip.

This handbook does not seek to replace local or other professional guidance or regulations. No guidance should be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law. That is for the courts.

This handbook includes advice on planning, supervision, ongoing risk assessment and emergency procedures. Advice on specific visits can be sought from the EVC. The printed version of the handbook will be in loose-leaf style, which will allow for easy amendment when new information comes to light and for additional pages to be added on new topics. Amendments and any new topics will be issued by the EVC as and when appropriate and printed for inclusion in this handbook.

Enquiries about the contents of this handbook should, in the first instance be addressed to the College EVC. Further guidance can be sought from The Department for Education and Skills Pupil Health and Safety Team on 020 7925 5536.



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## PLANNING

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Whether the visit is to a theatre, museum, or includes a residential stay within the UK or abroad, it is essential that careful planning takes place. Any member of staff wishing to organise a trip is to gain initial authorisation for the visit from the Deputy Warden using the form at Annex A to this guide.

### Responsibility

Legally, the trustees are responsible for all off-site visits, but the task of ensuring Group leaders complete the correct measures for such visits has been delegated to the Deputy Warden. The EVC is responsible to the Deputy Warden is giving Group Leaders advice on running such visits.

### The process

Group leaders are to complete the following steps (where appropriate) as part of the planning process:

- ◆ Draft an initial plan for the proposed visit including;
  - Purpose of the visit
  - Size of party and composition of such (a Y13 visit is very different to a Y7 visit).
  - Consider issues such as travel, insurance, food, accommodation, equipment, cost, qualifications, venue, pupil (and staff) preparation and emergencies
- ◆ After discussing the above proposal with the EVC, gain initial approval for the visit from the Deputy Warden using Annex A.
- ◆ Now starts the detailed planning process, which includes:
  - Discuss plan with bursary so that the correct pricing can be agreed
  - Discuss plan with bursary to ensure transport, catering and other logistic issues are considered and booked
  - Ensure the plan is feasible eg is Hotel Accommodation available?
  - Assemble you staff team and agree roles
  - Advertise the visit well in advance
  - Send parental information letter requesting written permission and deposits (where appropriate)
- ◆ Finally the Group Leader is required to prepare all paperwork to ensure the plan is understood by all. Confirmatory approval should now be gained from Deputy Warden using Annex A. The paperwork to include:
  - Initial Approval (Annex A) plus notes of any amendments to original plan
  - Risk Assessment
  - Emergency Contact Information
  - Nominal roll of group, inc home contact numbers
  - Parental consent forms

- Medical consent forms
- Confirmatory letter home to parents (if appropriate)

## Consent

Many short visits take place during the school day in connection with work being done by pupils. Equally, there are many activities after school or on Saturdays which come within the school's regular programme. Such visits and activities are accepted as a matter of routine and do not involve parents / guardians being asked to give consent.

Where the nature of a visit or journey makes it appropriate to ask for consent, it is important that the parents / guardians should know what is involved. Information should be sent to the parents / guardians in writing when they are asked to agree to their children taking part in a visit.

## Go / No go

At the very last moment, prior to departing on a visit, the Group Leader **must** gain a 'go or no go' decision from the Deputy Warden (or member of SMT if not available) if any circumstance has changed since full approval was given. A typical example is a substantial change in the weather.

## SUPERVISION

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*HASPEV* Chapter 3 and *Standards for Adventure* give advice on supervision ratios, vetting suitability of supervisors and brief advice on responsibilities, competence, head counts and remote supervision. This section aims to give more practical advice on supervision "in the field". A Copy of *HASVEP* is available from the College EVC.

## Responsibility

The Group leader is responsible overall for the group at all times. In delegating supervisory roles to other adults in the group, it is good practice for the group leader to:

- ◆ allocate supervisory responsibility to each adult for named pupils;
- ◆ ensure that each adult knows which pupils they are responsible for;
- ◆ ensure that each pupil knows which adult is responsible for them;
- ◆ ensure that all adults understand that they are responsible to the group leader for the supervision of the pupils assigned to them;
- ◆ ensure that all adults and pupils are aware of the expected standards of behaviour.

It is good practice for each supervisor to:

- ◆ have a reasonable prior knowledge of the pupils including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities;
- ◆ carry a list/register of all group members;
- ◆ directly supervise the pupils (except during remote supervision) -

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 group leader/other supervisors if needing help;
- ◆ have prior knowledge of the venue – the group leader should normally have made an exploratory visit, 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 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 to ensure that pupils 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;

Each pupil should:

- ◆ know who their supervisor 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;
- ◆ alert the supervisor if someone is missing or in difficulties;
- ◆ have a meeting place to return to, or an instruction to remain where they are, if separated;
- ◆ understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour.

### **Head counts etc.**

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

- ◆ carry a list/register of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times;

- ◆ ensure that pupils 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 at risk e.g. name badges (though some schools find it useful to provide pupils 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 are aware of rendezvous points;
- ◆ ensure that all pupils know what to do if they become separated from the group.

### **'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 – the pupils form a circle at the start of the visit so that each pupil has a left side buddy and a right side buddy. He or she will check on these when asked. Thus two pupils cannot vanish together and not be missed (as might happen with paired buddies).

### **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's Award expeditions). The supervisor is present though not necessarily near or in sight, but his or her whereabouts are known;
- ◆ down time (or recreational time) – for example during the evenings – may involve close or remote supervision, but should not be unsupervised - the supervisors continue to be in charge;
- ◆ 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 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 supervisor 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;
- ◆ there should be clear arrangements for the abandonment of the activity where it cannot be safely completed.

### **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 supervisor;
- ◆ during periods between activities;
- ◆ 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.

### **Down Time**

Group leaders should ensure that pupils 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 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 supervisor responsible for the group if there is down-time between activities;
- ◆ ensure that all supervisors 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 some time without close supervision;
- ◆ occupy the group with mildly active, non-academic activities in the evening, e.g. craft activities, environmental activities, quizzes, team challenges, led-walks.

## **Night Time**

Group leaders should ensure that:

- ◆ the group’s immediate accommodation is exclusively for the group’s use;
- ◆ teachers (of both genders 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’ doors are locked, teachers have immediate access, as necessary, to a master key;
- ◆ all staff and pupils 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.

## **Travel**

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

- ◆ transport by road has seat belts and that the pupils wear them;
- ◆ there is adequate supervision at all times when travelling;
- ◆ supervisors are reserved seats that allow them to supervise properly
- ◆ pupils 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 road side;
- ◆ standards of behaviour are met, and in particular that drivers are not distracted
- ◆ smoking/alcohol etc. bans are observed;
- ◆ pupils 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;
- ◆ head counts are carried out when the group is getting off or onto transport.

## **ONGOING RISK ASSESSMENT**

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*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 face to face with unexpected hazards or difficulties and give rise to the need to re-assess risk.

The group 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.

### **Check the local weather forecast**

- ◆ to inform decisions on appropriate clothing;
- ◆ to be aware of whether water activities might be in areas prone to flash floods, high winds etc.;
- ◆ to 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, e.g.**

- ◆ tides;
- ◆ rivers/streams prone to sudden increases in flow;
- ◆ difficult terrain;
- ◆ crossing points for road, rail or water;
- ◆ unstable cliffs.

### **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;

- ◆ group leaders faced with potential difficulties will feel more confident to change the itinerary if a pre-assessed alternative is available;
- ◆ regardless of whether alternatives have been pre-assessed, 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 group leader should risk assess the situation before allowing the pupils 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.

### **Behaviour problems, illness or injury**

- ◆ poor behaviour may be reduced by ensuring that all pupils 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 away from the confines of the school. But the group leader should resist any temptation to accept lower standards of behaviour. The different hazards that pupils 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 group 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;
- ◆ group 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 group leader's knowledge of the group is superior, or intervening to prompt a change of plan.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

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### **Preparation**

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

- ◆ agree an emergency action plan, which includes 24-hour (i.e. constant cover) contact points at the school/LEA and clear roles for the group leader, school/LEA contact, deputy warden 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 supervisors to discuss issues for the next day;
- ◆ spend time early the next morning explaining arrangements to the pupils;
- ◆ hold, or ensure that other adults in the group hold, up-to date competence in first aid and other life saving competence as necessary for the activities;
- ◆ ensure that the first aid kits are properly stocked and accessible, see Medical Centre for further advice.
- ◆ ensure that all pupils' medical needs (e.g. asthma, diabetes, anaphylaxis) are known and that staff are competent to handle them, again see College Medical Centre for further advice.
- ◆ 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 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;
- ◆ in warm climates, 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 understand and follow the code of conduct;
- ◆ practice emergency drills e.g. evacuation of mini-bus;
- ◆ if abroad, know where the nearest British Embassy or Consulate is

located and the telephone number. Depending on the age of the pupils, 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 College visit the group 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 a teacher accompanies casualties to hospital with any relevant medical information, and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together;
- ◆ 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 – revise procedures and re-allocate roles as necessary;
- ◆ inform the College contact and provider/tour operator (as appropriate). The College contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit;
- ◆ details of the incident to pass on to the College 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);
- ◆ College contact should notify parents, 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 College 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 in the home area;
- ◆ no-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties, nor sign anything relating to accident liability without clear advice from the College;
- ◆ keep receipts for any expenses incurred – insurers will require these.

**VISIT APPROVAL FORM**

**Purpose of visit:**.....

**Venue:**.....

**Dates:**.....

**Group Leader:**.....

**SMT initial approval:**.....

**Bursary approval:**.....

**EVC approval:**.....

**Deputy Warden's approval:**.....

**Go / No go:**.....

