

Out of school activities and trips

Policy on school visits and all activities undertaken off school premises

The School sees visits and outings as an important part of the education of girls at More House, both in giving a context or focus to work done in the classroom and also as an important and often memorable part of a well rounded general education. This policy is drawn up with due regard to DfES Guidance 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits'.

1. All visits undertaken under the auspices of the school must have a clear educational purpose.
2. Whatever decision is taken about funding, all visits germane to a taught syllabus should be accessible to all pupils involved unless health and safety considerations intervene.
3. Teacher-organisers have a general common-law duty to act as a reasonable parent would in looking after pupils in their care in the particular circumstances of the visit. They also have a responsibility for maintaining good order and discipline among the pupils and safeguarding their health and safety.
4. A high standard of behaviour is expected on school visits from all girls. The girls must be made aware of this, especially where this differs (as it will) from the way they would normally behave out of school.
5. In the planning and in accompanying school visits, staff should be sensitive to the religious and cultural constraints that may be involved with some pupils. This includes dietary arrangements and the freedom to worship.
6. School uniform should be worn on all one-day visits, unless there is a special reason why this should not be so. Days on which there is to be sporting activity may be undertaken in school track suits.
7. Separate notes are provided at the end of this section for trips involving swimming in the sea or other natural waters, coastal visits and visits where there may be contact with animals, such as farms or zoos. Please read these notes when planning any relevant trips.
8. All Staff, including any volunteers who may be used, must be CRB checked.

The School reserves the right not to take a pupil whose parent or legal guardian does not return the completed consent form. The consent form provides for permission for emergency medical treatment for a pupil to be authorised by a member of Staff or volunteer accompanying the trip in the event that the pupil's parent cannot be contacted at the time.

Procedure (*There is now a check list issued with the form, to help you prepare for a trip. Please let the Deputy Head know if there is something that should be added to this*)

When planning an outing:

1. Obtain as much information about the trip as possible. If sessions are to be run by others, do you know that the content is worthwhile? In some cases a preliminary visit to reconnoitre may be necessary;
2. Check the suitability of the date by checking the diary in the staff room and seeing the Deputy Head;
3. See the Head to obtain permission; at this time a budget must be provided, having been discussed with the Finance Officer first, and payment details arranged.
4. Get a trip Form. This must be completed at least one week in advance of a trip in the vicinity of the school (e.g. V&A Museum), one month in advance of a day trip elsewhere, and two months in advance of a trip abroad or one involving an overnight stay.
5. Risk assessment must be undertaken – see form and also the handout *Five Steps to Risk Assessment*. Where activities are run by a separate organisation, we need to know that they are licensed by the **Adventure Activities Licensing Authority**. Their risk assessments do not need to be seen but risk assessment must be undertaken for other aspects of the trip such as accommodation and travel* .
6. Risk assessment should also include decisions that take into account the possibility of terrorist action if there is a state of alert in London or other cities.
7. Ensure that a letter with the appropriate forms (indemnity/consent and medical/dietary) goes to the parents of all girls involved. Matters to be addressed in the letter should include the purpose of the visit, the time of departure and arrival and what food, money or clothing may be needed as well as details of any payment. For some trips, this letter should be distributed with the weekly school newsletter. In particular a return time must be stated. This letter must be OK'd for sending out in the usual manner.
8. See the Deputy Head about the staffing of the outing. The DfES suggests the following ratios:
 - one adult to 15 pupils for visits where the risk is low level, e.g. visits to historic houses, local field work;
 - one adult to 10 pupils for all visits abroad.
 - For higher risk activities, schools should consider higher ratios.
9. Swimming or boating can only take place when there is a qualified lifesaver present, trained and examined at least to the level of the RLSS UK bronze medallion. Before any swimming activity girls

* Adventure activities. Centres licensed under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 can be considered safe in the leading, instructing and equipping of the activities stipulated on the licence. These will have been inspected. There is no need to risk assess that part of any visit. They will wish to assess other aspects of the school's planning for a visit - for example, accommodation catering, transport, activities not stipulated on the licence For non-licensable adventure activities, proof of competence from an NGB award or assessment by a technical adviser may be sufficient.

must be asked if they can swim. Non-swimmers may not enter the water, even if it is shallow. [*See also notes on coastal visits and sea swimming at the end of this section.*]

10. If the activity goes over lunch time, the Catering Manager must be seen about packed or early lunches. If an activity is not starting in school, the Catering Manager should still be informed to let him know how many girls will not be attending lunch on a particular school day.
11. A notice must be posted in the staff room - names/forms of girls, which lessons will be missed &c.; (if a whole form or year group is involved there is no need for a list of names.) This must be done seven days before the activity;
12. Full details of the trip, *including a list of names*, the address of the venue and contact phone numbers etc. must be handed in to the Office;
13. You must make sure that you have a contact point at all times of the trip so that someone at school can be contacted immediately. This includes emergency numbers for overnight stays, of course, but it also includes day trips that might return to school after 5.00 pm when the answering machine is switched on.
14. Tell girls to see relevant subject teachers about lessons that will be missed, if any. This will not be necessary when a whole year will be absent.
15. If girls of Years 9 and above are to make their own way home from anywhere other than school, parental consent must be obtained. Younger girls should always be brought back to school unless met by parents at a pre-arranged meeting place. After an activity or trip, no girl below the Sixth Form should be left unsupervised.
16. Take a first aid kit with you, other than for trips where better medical attention will be provided at all points on the journey.

If the required forms are not received, the girl must not take part in the activity concerned.

The only exception to the above are games lessons.

The following notes are specific to More House. You must also consult the DfES “good practice guide” *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits* available at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/visits/>

Notes on Conduct and Discipline on Outings

The following are needed for satisfactory control:

- **good planning and reconnaissance**

Wherever possible an advance visit should be made to a previously un-visited venue.

- **stringent control arrangements and rules**

There must be one member of staff in charge of a trip and they must ensure that other teachers are properly briefed. A large party should be split into manageable small units and staff should be clear as to which girls they are responsible for and girls should know to whom they are responsible. The system where one person is in charge of a large group of girls with other teachers in attendance but without specific responsibility for a part of the group is unacceptable.

Staff should:

have a reasonable prior knowledge of the girls in their care, especially those with medical needs. Reference must be made to the list of medical problems in the staff room.;

carry with them a list of group members and regularly check that they are present;

have the means to contact the member of staff in charge of the group who must themselves be able to contact school;

continually re-assess the appropriateness or safety of any activity and the physical and mental condition of the group members in the light of local conditions (including weather).

Girls should:

know who their supervisor is at any given time and how to contact them;

never be on their own;

know when and where they have to be at any given time;

know where they can find a member of staff.

There are many ways in which checks can be made that all girls are present. With large groups one member of staff should be at the front of the group and another at the back. In crowded places, school uniform can be a great help. Girls may be given a number to call out in order; this is useful on coaches etc. A “buddy” system is worth trying; here each girl is responsible for the one before her on the list and the one after. From time to time everyone is asked to check that their two buddies are present. Bear in mind that these systems are not a substitute for staff physically checking the presence of their girls.

Please remember that staff are still responsible for the girls in breaks and time off.

It is easy to forget the importance of a girl never being on her own when, say, one asks to go to the lavatory at a motorway service station, or asks to rush back to a shop.

The best trips – whether those of a few hours or those of a few days – are those without unstructured breaks.

Statistically, the most likely danger to girls is when crossing a road. Girls in groups do not show the same level of care as when they are crossing a road on their own. With groups of girls up to Year 9, a member of staff should be at each crossing point while all the girls cross. Therefore, every precaution must be taken. In Continental Europe and America, girls need to be constantly reminded of the importance of looking left first when crossing a road.

Procedure for outings using coaches

1. When booking a coach for an outing stipulate that the coach should have seat belts.
2. Girls may not share a double seat between three, whatever the age of the girls concerned.
3. Once the girls are seated in the coach, remind them to fasten their seat belts and then check that this has been done. It is then the girls' own responsibility to keep the belt fastened throughout the journey.
4. No girl or member of staff may leave his/her seat while the coach is moving except in an emergency.
5. If a girl becomes ill or otherwise needs help she must call to a member of staff, who should then ask the coach driver to stop as soon as it is possible to do so. The member of staff should not leave their seat until the coach has stopped. It is sensible to ensure that girls who are likely to be coach-sick should be sitting near the front!
6. Every effort should be made to enable girls to step from the coach onto the pavement and not the road side of the coach. If the road side has to be used, a member of staff must supervise.

The use of minibuses and other vehicles

1. Procedures for coaches (seat belts etc.) also apply to the use of minibuses.
2. All seats on minibuses must be forward facing.
3. All staff minibus drivers must have satisfied the Deputy Head that they have been sufficiently trained by RoSPA for the size of vehicle concerned. If you are trained for a 12-seater minibus, you cannot drive one with 16 seats, even if four seats are unoccupied. On a journey, they are allowed a maximum of nine hours daily driving to a maximum of four and a half hours in any one session, followed by a break of at least forty-five minutes.
4. Teachers' cars are not to be used without the express permission of the Head. If they are used, parents must be informed. The teacher should check the insurance to ensure that driver and owner are covered for journeys in connection with the teacher's employment. Any receipt of money for the trip for mileage expenses may affect insurance cover.

Mobile Phones and "walkie-talkies"

Staff are encouraged to make use of mobile phones on trips. The school's own mobile phone or personal phones may be used. In the latter case, please make sure that the school office has a note of the phone number. The school walkie-talkies are useful with large groups in crowded venues. Bear in mind, however, that there are many places to which groups will go that are out of reach of mobile phones. You should always have a back-up strategy. If using mobile phones when abroad, check that the requisite international roaming facility is in place.

Notes for journeys on public transport

1. Travel to many London venues may be undertaken free after 10.00 a.m. Forms are available from the Office and in the travel box file in the Staff room. The use of public transport is to be encouraged as part of the School's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.
2. If this is not practicable, ascertain in advance which girls have season tickets, or Oyster cards, for all or part of the journey concerned;
3. Purchase all tickets in advance. For bus journeys, saver tickets for adults and children should be purchased.
4. Divide the group into small units with one member of staff. These groups must travel together in the same bus or train carriage. All staff on the trip must have full knowledge of the trip's destination and route, (e.g. which route on the Underground).

Notes for overseas journeys and those involving staying overnight

Wherever possible, a travel company should be used and a range of quotations from different companies should be obtained.

While self-arranged trips are becoming increasingly popular for personal holidays it should be noted that they are not normally to be used for school trips. For example, air tickets booked direct with airlines, low-cost or scheduled, are not protected by any refund scheme.

At a month before the visit there should be a briefing meeting for parents and the girls going on the trip. All adults accompanying the party should attend.

Each member of the party should be provided with a comprehensive guide to the visit. It should contain:

- names of the leaders, staff and any other adults;
- places to be visited with useful notes;
- dates and time of departure and arrival;
- addresses and telephone numbers of hotels and hostels and other contact numbers;
- food and drink to be brought;
- method of travel and name and phone number of transport company;
- itinerary and programme;
- clothing and luggage advice;
- procedure for contacting parents in an emergency;
- details of insurance cover;
- details of final payments and cancellation requirements, if any;
- suggestions for pocket money;
- details of documents required. (see below.)

A copy of this guide should be given to the school office, together with parents' contact numbers during the visit. With trips abroad, photocopies should be taken of the photo and passport number page of the girls' passports. One set of copies should be kept by one of the staff on the trip; another left with the school office.

The requirement for visas for all passports carried by those going on a visit abroad needs to be checked with the embassies or high commissions of all countries to be visited or passed through. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office can be contacted about re-entry procedures for those with non-British passports.

For trips in the EU:

The Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges (10 Spring Gardens, SW1A 2BN (☎ 0171 389 4004; 📠 0171 389 4426) administers a scheme to secure visa exemption for school pupils who are “nationals of third countries” (i.e. pupils who are nationals of countries other than those in the European Union*.) They must, however, still take their own passports with them.

In most cases, the responsibility for sorting passports and visas is best placed with parents, who have the necessary documentation. It will be necessary, however, to check that everything has been sorted well in advance of the departure date.

On recent trips, the problem has not been visas for entry to other countries, but correct paperwork for the girls’ re-admission to the UK. It must be stressed to parents, therefore, that they must ensure girls have the correct paperwork for entry to other countries *and* re-entry to the United Kingdom. Please note that younger Portuguese girls re-entering UK from Portugal need a letter of permission from both their parents together with a photocopy of their passport page – contact the Portuguese embassy for details.

All teachers on the trip must have easy access to all medical and dietary information. They should also have copies of contact telephone numbers and room lists for the girls’ accommodation, as soon as this is feasible.

Younger girls should hand in large amounts of personal cash for safe keeping.

Group leaders are responsible for ensuring that they and the whole group are familiar with emergency procedures in their hotel or hostel.

Wherever possible, accommodation should be exclusively for the group concerned – e.g. the floor of a hotel.

There must be at least one woman teacher for twenty girls on the trip and they should be placed as close as possible to the girls’ sleeping quarters, preferably on the same floor. The girls must be aware where they can find a teacher.

When there are girls in a hotel or hostel, there must be a teacher present.

In accommodation without 24 hour reception cover, adequate security arrangements must be made.

If a travel company is used, it must be bonded by ABTA and ATOL and should preferably be a member of SAGTA (the School and Group Travel Association).

All girls on trips to EU countries*, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway or Switzerland must carry an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). Despite recent anecdotal evidence of problems with them in France,

* The countries of the European Union are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

in many EU countries the card may allow medical procedures to be carried out before receiving guarantees from insurance companies. (An EHIC was useful on a school trip in February 2002). The form can be downloaded from www.dh.gov.uk/travellers but you still need to complete it and take it to a Post Office for approval, The *Health Advice* section of this website also provides the latest health updates, advice and risks around the world.

Health advice for countries visited should also be checked. On some trips it may be advisable to ensure that all girls have up-to-date tetanus protection.

In the event of an incident, it is easy to forget the importance of contact with the school. While the group leader is dealing with the problem, a member of staff should be designated to telephone school and to be available to any phone enquiries from school. This is one of the best ways of countering the exaggeration that rumour often produces. **If an incident merits press attention, do not answer any questions, but give the school's details so that the press is dealing with school and not with you.**

There is a useful Bibliography in the Appendix to this section in the staff handbook.

If members of staff are running an activity trip, with or without the assistance of trained helpers, they must refer to the notes in the Appendix where the specific topics of Farm Visits, Coastal Visits and Swimming in the sea or other natural waters are dealt with.

Further notes on particular locations or trips

Policy on making 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 have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming."

A full Risk Assessment must be completed prior to a coastal visit. This should not be done as a spur of the moment activity. The group 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. Group 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 keep to a safe distance from the cliff edge at all times -a "buffer zone" between the pupils and the hazard. Be aware that cliff falls can mean that cliff paths stop abruptly at the cliff edge;
- group leaders should not normally allow pupils to ride mountain bikes on any route that is near a sheer drop e.g. 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;

- the local coastguard, harbour master, lifeguard or tourist information office can provide information and advice on the nature and location of hazards.

Policy for 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

Group Leaders 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;
- there is clear information for visitors on the risks and the precautions to take.

Ensure that:

- there is adequate 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;
- shoes are cleaned and then hands are washed on leaving the farm.

Never let pupils:

- 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 wash and dry hands;
- ride on tractors or other machines;
- play in the farm area, or in other areas that are out of bounds such as grain storage tanks, slurry pits etc.

Policy on 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 – because it is hot weather, for example, 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, group leaders seek out recognised bathing areas that have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. But, even then, group leaders should be aware that pupils might mingle with members of the public and be lost to view. Pupils should always be in sight and reasonable reach of their supervisors.

The group leader should:

- be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers;
- ascertain for themselves the level of pupils' swimming ability;
- check the weather;
- be aware of local conditions – such as currents, weeds, rip tides, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom – using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbourmaster, police or tourist information office;
- be aware 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;
- be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water;
- be aware of the dangers of paddling, especially for young pupils;
- ensure that pupils have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming;
- ensure the activity is suitable for the pupils, 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;
- be aware that it is not always possible to tell when someone is in difficulties.

Supervisors should

- have clear roles – at least one supervisor 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 to 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 – could suggest the onset of hypothermia;
- recognise that a child in difficulty is likely to wave or shout – all of their energies will be trying to keep afloat.

Before any swimming activity girls must be asked if they can swim. Non-swimmers may not enter the water, even if it is shallow.

The group leader, or another designated adult in the group must hold a relevant life-saving award, where lifeguard cover is not available. For further advice contact the: The Royal Lifesaving Society UK, River House, High St, Broom, Warwickshire, B50 4HN (Tel: 01789 773 994) <http://www.lifesavers.org.uk>

This policy is next due for review: September 2011