



Off-Site Activities and Visits April 2022

Introduction

Pupils can derive a great deal of benefit from taking part in off-site activities or visits with their school. For children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) they are particularly useful in terms of accessing facilities not available at a small, specialist school and in learning and practicing skills in real-life contexts. Such visits are also important in helping our pupils overcome the great difficulty often found in generalising what is learnt across contexts.

Visits may range from a half-hour walk to the local shops through to longer lasting visits to venues a greater distance away. The range of activities is also wide, from a regular trip to the local swimming pool to one-off adventurous activities in the countryside.

No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally incident free but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the risk of accidents. The management of Health and Safety on visits is part of the school's overall policy on Health and Safety.

Responsibilities

It is important that everyone involved is aware of their role and responsibilities. These are laid out in detail in **Appendix One**.

As the employer the Directors are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and, so far as is reasonably practical, the health and safety of anyone affected by their activities. Although the Directors are responsible for the health and safety of employees, decisions about visits are usually delegated to the Principal, Head of Therapy and Business Manager (SLT).

Firstly, the Business Manager will assess all proposals for visits and, following any necessary discussions and/or adaptations to the plans, give approval, or not, for visits to take place; approval from the Head of Therapy will also be given, or not, for those visits by those pupils whose behaviour may pose a higher degree of risk or concern. The SLT gives approval, or not, for the named member(s) of staff responsible for the visit (NMS) to take charge of an off-site activity. All staff involved are responsible for ensuring that any relevant policies are implemented.

A NMS going on the visit will have overall responsibility for the planning, including issuing parents with information about the trip/visit, ensuring the appropriate consent forms are

completed, supervision and conduct of the visit and should have regard to the health and safety of the pupil/group.

Other adults on the visit will do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and speak to the responsible member of staff if they are concerned. They will fulfil their tasks and responsibilities as outlined by the responsible member of staff.

Parents should be able to make an informed decision as to whether their child should go on the visit and therefore will need information about the visit. They also need to make school staff aware of any emotional, psychological and physical factors concerning their child that may be relevant to the visit, to sign the necessary consent forms and give emergency contact number/s.

Procedure

School staff who are taking part in off-site visits need to ensure that the following procedures are followed:

- **Objectives**

Each pupil will have objectives connected to the visit. These **may** be related to:

- social/communication goals e.g. to learn to ask the swimming attendant for a ticket at the pool
- self-help skills e.g. to learn to find items for a meal in the supermarket.
- giving a pupil opportunities to experience environments not available in school e.g. using soft-play centres
- giving pupils opportunities for inclusion with ordinary peers e.g. attendance at other local schools.

Consideration should be given as to whether the particular visit is the best way of achieving that pupil's objective. The objective forms will be completed for each pupil for each visit

- **Date, duration and venue**

This may be influenced by many things, including opening times and staff availability, but it is important to take into consideration the specific needs of the individual pupils and how they are able to access what is on offer.

- **The pupil group and staffing**

Some visits will be more appropriate for some pupils than others and a pupil/group needs to be identified on the basis of knowledge of the pupils and of the potential venue. Staffing ratios for visits are difficult to prescribe as they will vary according to the activity and the pupils involved. Once the pupil/group is known, the number of adults, the sorts of skills and experience required by them and the type and level of supervision needed is considered. It is *likely* that for most off-site activities, in view of their complex needs, pupils will require 1:1 supervision. If a group of pupils all visit the same location there must be one named school staff member approved by the SLT who will be in charge of the group. An appropriate number of other adults will also be present to cope

should an emergency arise. If non-school staff are used they should be carefully selected and known to the school and the pupils. It is important that they have been appropriately vetted (DBS checked) and anyone not checked should not be left in sole charge of any pupils.

All adults must understand their responsibilities and their roles as directed by the NMS for the visit. ***School staff retain responsibility for the group at all times.***

- **Transport**

Depending on how the number in the party the transport options consist of using the vehicles belonging to the school, or, on rare occasions pupils may be transported in other private cars insured for business purpose.

- **Costs**

Regular routine trips are funded via the yearly fees, however, it is important that a careful estimate of the cost is made during the planning procedure to ensure that it does not exceed the budget.

- **Exploratory Visit**

It is sensible for the named responsible member of staff to have visited the venue to assess its suitability in fulfilling the objectives for the visit. This provides an opportunity to carry out parts of the risk assessment needed (see below). If an exploratory visit is not possible the NMS must obtain as much information as they can from other sources.

- **Risk Assessment**

PHS is legally obliged to draw up Risk Assessments for any trip/visit/activity undergone by pupils and/or staff. Members of Staff should familiarise themselves with all of these, **and sign** before going out on a visit/trip/activity, to ensure they are aware of the risks involved in any particular visit.

Risk assessments are based on looking at:

- what the hazards are
- who might be affected by them
- what safety measures need to be in place to reduce the risks to an acceptable level
- whether the members of staff can put them in place
- what steps will be taken in an emergency

The NMS should take the following factors into account when assessing the risks:

- the type of activity
- the location, routes and modes of transport
- the competence, experience and qualifications of the supervisory staff
- the ratios of adults to pupils
- the individual characteristics of the pupils
- the medical needs of the pupils
- the quality and suitability of the available equipment

- seasonal conditions: weather and timing
- emergency procedures
- how to cope when a pupil becomes unable or unwilling to continue
- the need to monitor risks throughout the visit

Following their assessment the NMS will sign the back of the Risk Assessment Form to make it clear that they have made themselves aware of any risks. This will **not** need to be completed on every occasion for regular trips; **however** the members of staff should indicate on the form, if necessary, whether it needs reviewing and updating. It will also be reviewed automatically on an annual basis by the Business Manager.

Availability of first aid is relevant to the risk assessment. **At a minimum** all adults should know how to contact the emergency services, if going out in a group, one person should be appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements and there should be a suitably stocked first-aid box to hand. Members of staff should carry reminder cards which has emergency contact details clearly stated.

Emergency Procedures

In spite of good planning and leadership an unforeseen emergency may arise. If it does the NMS will take charge and:

- assess the situation, inform the other adults of the problem and clarify actions to be taken by whom
- account for all group members and ensure their well-being
- establish who has been involved in the incident and get immediate medical attention if necessary.
- if someone needs to go to hospital to ensure that they are accompanied wherever possible by an adult who knows them
- notify the school contact who will have all the necessary information about the visit
- as soon as possible write down all the details of the incident, including:
 - the nature
 - date
 - time
 - location
 - names of the casualties
 - details of their injuries
 - names of others involved
 - any witnesses
 - also any action taken
 - and by whom
- Avoid direct dealings with the media

Obtaining Approval

Proposals for a visit need to be approved by the SLT. The proposal will need to include a completed Risk Assessment. The Principal/Directors approval may be necessary for any high risk activities, any trip involving an overnight stay or trips abroad.

Inform Parents and obtain the relevant consents

Once approval for the visit has been granted the NMS will give information to the parents about it and seek consent for their child to participate. Parental consent should be sought for:

- any **non-routine** visits involving pupils
- adventure activities
- visits abroad
- other residential visits
- remote supervision (or independence trips likely to involve reduced supervision or an element of increased risk)

Several signed consents may be required e.g. for the pupil's participation in the activity, authorisation for emergency medical treatment should it be necessary, and agreement that a pupil may be carried in a private car belonging to school or non-school staff.

Visit and Evaluation

Immediately prior to every trip the NMS should make a pre-visit check to ensure that all necessary procedures have been carried out before the pupils leave the school.

Off-Site Trip and Visits

Specific Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal has a duty to ensure:

- that there is a written policy covering trips/visits/activities
- that risk assessments have been carried out by a person competent to do so
- that adequate safety measures are in place
- that training needs have been adequately addressed
- that adequate insurance cover is put into place and maintained

He/She assesses proposals and gives final approval (or not), **if necessary**, for visits involving:

- high-risk activities,
- an overnight stay or
- travel outside the UK.

He/She may provide an emergency telephone contact throughout the visiting period if necessary,

The SLT have a duty to ensure:

- that all visits are properly planned and appropriately supervised
- that the NMS is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit
- that adequate child protection procedures are in place and that non PHS staff supervisors are appropriate people to have contact with children,
- that the risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place
- that training needs have been assessed by a competent person and the needs of staff and pupils have been considered
- that the NMS has experience with the pupil(s) and will organise the group effectively
- that the NMS or another adult is familiar with the venue
- that there has been sufficient time to organise the visit properly
- that the ratio of adults to pupils is appropriate
- that the Director(s) have approved the visit if necessary
- that parents have signed consent forms
- that arrangements have been made for the special needs of the pupils
- that adequate first aid provision will be available
- that mode of travel is appropriate and travel times are known
- that there is adequate insurance cover
- that they have the address and phone number of the staff and venue
- that a school contact has been nominated and is available for the duration of the visit
- that the NMS has a copy of the emergency procedures
- that the NMS and the school contact have names of all the adults and pupils in the group and contact details of parents
- that there is a contingency plan for any delays, including late return hom.

The NMS should:

- be approved by the SLT
- be competent to lead the activity and be familiar with the pupils and location
- be aware of child protection issues
- undertake the planning of the trip
- familiarise themselves with the risk assessment and sign it prior to leaving the school
- if necessary, complete an evaluation sheet after each visit and advise where adjustments may be necessary
- ensure that parents and other adults involved have sufficient information
- have enough information about the pupils to assess their suitability
- ensure that supervision is appropriate for the group
- define each adult's role during the visit and allocate tasks
- ensure that adults have details of the school contact, ensure that adults have access to a copy of the emergency procedures
- ensure that adequate first aid will be available
- ensure that the adults have details of pupil's special educational or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively