

IRIS School Educational Visits Policy

Effective Date: October 2024

Review Date: October 2025

Educational visits are activities arranged by the school, and which take place outside the school grounds. The governors and teaching staff believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities must serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our children's learning experiences.

In this policy we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of all pupils at all times. Within these limits we seek to make our visits available to all pupils. The visits usually take place within the school day, but on occasions, take place after school.

Aims

The aims of our off-site visits are to:

- enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils;
- provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone;
- promote the independence of our children as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments.

Curriculum links

For each subject in the curriculum there is a corresponding programme of activities (which includes visits to the school by specialists).

- English – theatre visits, visits by authors,
- Science – use of the school grounds, visits to botanical gardens; Science Museum.
- Mathematics – use of shape and number trails in the local environment;
- History – castle visits, study of local housing patterns, local museums;
- Geography – use of the locality for fieldwork, village trails;
- Art and design – art gallery visits, use of the locality;
- PE – a range of sporting fixtures, extra-curricular activities, visits by specialist coaches;
- RE – visits to local centres of worship, visits by local clergy.
- PSHE and citizenship – visit to the fire station or an old people's residential home, visits by local police officers and health workers.

How visits may be authorised

The IRIS School will appoint a party leader to be responsible for running the activity. This will normally be a teacher employed at the school. The school's educational visits coordinator, who may be the headteacher, will be involved in the planning and management of off-site visits. S/he will:

- ensure that risk assessments are completed;
- support the headteacher and governing body in their decisions on approval;
- assign competent staff to lead and help with trips;
- organise related staff training;
- verify that all accompanying adults, including private car drivers, have had satisfactory police checks;
- make sure that all necessary permissions and medical forms are obtained;
- keep records of visits, and ensure there are regular generic assessments of the risks (for example road-crossing) where there are frequent visits to local venues (for example local parks).

Risk assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment is carried out by the group leader before the proposed visit. It will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit, and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures are needed to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?

Staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the unknown venues, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment. It is important to consider the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip, and the party leader should take careful account of the facilities available, with due regard to the proposed size of the group. They should also assess the site's suitability with regard to the age and any particular needs of the children. They will also consider the venue's own approach to security and to health and safety. Venues providing instructor-led activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments may be adopted if it is impractical for the group. The School will not have given its approval for the visit unless it is satisfied with the venue, its instructors and their risk assessment procedures. It is important to assess and record any health, safety or security issues that are identified during the preliminary visit. Any such issues will be considered when the final decision is taken on whether the visit should proceed, and the Visit Plan must state both the extent of any risks involved, and the measures that will be taken to reduce or eliminate them.

An activity should normally have sufficient adults taking part to provide the correct ratios. Any trip will require a minimum of two adults. However, these are minimum requirements, and may not provide adequate supervision in all cases.

Transport

The risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. Coach companies have to provide a letter detailing all the health and safety measures they routinely take, including:

- the provision and required use of seat belts and booster seats (if required);
- proper vetting of the driver by the police;
- proper insurance for the driver;
- details of first aid and emergency equipment;
- breakdown procedures.

Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party. It is our policy only to use coaches fitted with seat or lap belts, and to insist that they be worn by all those participating in the visit. Where private cars are used for transport, the group Leader is responsible for checking that the insurance of each driver covers such journeys, and double-checking that each driver has been subject to the normal police checks. We instruct all children, whether travelling by car, minibus or coach, to attach their seat belts.

The group leader will double-check that all adults helping to supervise the trip have been subject to police checks.

Costing

The costing of off-site activities should include any of the following that apply:

- transport;
- entrance fees;
- insurance;
- provision of any special resources or equipment;
- costs related to adult helpers;
- any refreshments the school has opted to pay for.

Communication with parents

The parents of children taking part in an off-site activity should be provided with all appropriate information about the intended visit. Parents must give their permission in writing before a child can be involved in any off-site activities.

Funding for off-site activities is provided mainly by parental contributions (voluntary except in the case of residential visits). This must be made clear to parents in all correspondence about an educational visit at the planning stage. The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the Headteacher to decide about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

Further health and safety considerations

All adults accompanying a party must be made aware, by the party leader, of the emergency procedures which will apply. Each adult should be provided with an emergency telephone number. This will normally be the school number, but where an activity extends beyond the normal school day the mobile number of a designated emergency contact should be provided.

Before a party leaves school, the school office should be provided with a list of everyone, children and adults, travelling with the party, together with a programme and timetable for the activity.

The safety of the party, and especially the children, is of paramount importance. During the activity the party leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that children are both safe and well looked after at all times.

Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise the safety of others or the good name of the school, the party leader should discuss with the headteacher the possibility of making additional arrangements for that child.

Visit plan

The visit plan for intended educational visits must include the following:

- risk assessment;
- names, ages, contact details, permission forms, medical records and other relevant details of all those going on the visit;
- full plan of activities;
- fire precautions and evacuation procedures;
- intended arrangements for supervision;
- emergency contacts and procedures;
- general communications information;
- guidance for party leaders;
- guidance for the emergency contact and headteacher;
- first-aid boxes.

Monitoring and review

Visit leaders are encouraged to review visits, considering the successful and less successful parts of the visit, and considering ways in which the visit could have been improved. Informal conversations might take place between the visit leader(s) and the Headteacher regarding the outcome of the visit. This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.