



Educational and Off Site Visits Policy

Overview

Friars Foundation Primary School acknowledges the great value of Educational Visits in broadening and enhancing both the learning and social experience of young people.

Under statutory guidance which came into effect on 1st March 2004, all schools and by extension other provision within Children's Services are required to have a named Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC), who will ensure that the planning and supervision of all visits and adventurous activities meet the DfES (now DCFS) Requirements and LA guidelines.

The EVC for Friars Foundation Primary School is: Jo Wratten (Deputy Headteacher)

The role of the EVC is detailed in the publication 'London Borough of Southwark – Off Site Visits Policy 2011 edition'. This has been compiled by the LA's Outdoor Education Adviser as is downloadable from the EVOLVE site. www.southwarkvisits.org.uk

All Visit Leaders are required to read the document in conjunction with Friars Foundation Primary Schools policy. All forms referred to in this policy are available from the EVC, or may be downloaded from the site.

Approval for Visits

All matters regarding each visit Off Site – feasibility, planning, safety, organisation etc – will require the prior approval of the EVC.

Approval of 'normal' day visits is at the discretion of the Headteacher. However, visits that are either:

- overseas
- residential or
- involving an adventurous activity (as defined in the Off Sites Visits Document)

Will require the additional approval of the LA (online through EVOLVE). The governing body will also need to be informed about these visits prior to a commitment being made.

If an external provider or tour operator is being used, they must complete the detailed Form EV4 at the time of the provisional booking. The procedures to be followed in this case are outlined in Section AA of the booklet.

Competence to Lead

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 EVC. In assessing competence to lead, the EVC and Head teacher will take account of the factors stated in the EVC File. In the case of the leading (i.e. instructing) of adventurous activities the assessment is undertaken by the LA by means of Form EV3 (Risk Assessment), using the procedures and criteria in Set out at the EVOLVE online site.

Reasons for Visits

It is essential that all visits have sound and clearly stated educational aims. Trips 'for the sake of it' will not receive approval although events that reward participation or achievement are to be encouraged.

Assessment of Risk

'Risk assessment' is a careful examination of what could cause harm to Pupils/Participants, 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 (ie. 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 careful completion of the 'Educational Visits Checklist', available from the EVC file or online via EVOLVE.
- Event Specific Risk – any significant hazard or risk relating to the specific activity and outside the scope of item 1 above.
- Ongoing/Dynamic Risk – the monitoring of risks throughout the actual visit as circumstances change. *This is why Leader competence is a critical factor.*
- Risk assessments using the school wide EV RA forms available on the school's network are completed in advance of the EV

Further detail on risk assessment will be found in the EVC File and at the EVOLVE online site.

Plan 'B'

Despite the most detailed and sedulous 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, etc. To avoid having to make important decisions under pressure, it is important that some advanced thinking is done to cater for any foreseeable eventuality.

Staffing Ratios

A professional judgement must be made by the Visit Leader, Head teacher/Service Manager and Deputy as to the appropriate ratio for each visit.

This will be determined by:

- type, duration and level of activity
- needs of individuals within the group (SEN)
- experience and competence of staff and accompanying adults
- nature of the venue
- weather conditions at the time of year
- nature of transport involved

Please also refer to the "London Borough of Southwark – Off Site Visits Policy 2011 edition" for further guidance on staff/pupil ratios.

Supervision

Pupils/Participants must be supervised throughout all visits. However, there are circumstances when they might be unaccompanied by an adult (remote supervision). The decision to allow remote supervision should be based on risk assessment and must take into account factors such as:

- prior experience of Pupils/Participants
- age of Pupils/Participants
- responsibility of Pupils/Participants
- competence/experience of staff
- environment/venue

Role of Supervising Parents

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/Participants in their immediate care, and be shown the completed RA.

First Aid

The level of first aid provision should be based on risk assessment. On all visits, there should be a member of staff who has a good working knowledge of first aid. The One Day Emergency First Aid Work for the appointed person is the minimum requirement for residential visits and specific Paediatric or Activity First Aid qualifications may be needed for Early Years or Adventurous Activities.

First aid kits are available from Friars Foundation Primary School directly. If the visit involves the party splitting up by any distance, a kit should be taken for each group.

Transport

Travel arrangements should be included in the risk assessment. If public transport is to be used, all Pupils/Participants 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/Participants must wear a seat belt. Staff must ensure that Pupils/Participants comply with this rule; Pupils/Participants may also be asked to check the seat belt of their neighbour. If a minibus is being borrowed or hired, the driver must have passed the London Borough of Southwark test for the driving of council vehicles.

Pupils/Participants of sufficient maturity may well be able to travel to venues independently provided that such journeys are Risk Assessment based, well planned and specific consent given from Parents/carers. Solo travel is unlikely to be appropriate.

Water 'Margin' Activities

Where Pupils/Participants 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. A copy of this is downloadable from EVOLVE and in the EVC File.

Educational Visits Checklist

This checklist is an essential part of the risk management process and is applicable for all visits. It may be downloaded from EVOLVE and a copy is available in the EVC File.

Seeking 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 'Acknowledgement of Risk').

The letter to parents should therefore give full detail of the visit, the reason for the visit (educational aims), supervision arrangements and the transport arrangements. Ensure that detail of other incidental activities is included, together with Plan B if appropriate. The letter should also state the cost of the visit per child.

The reply slip should read:-

"I give permission for my child _____ to take part in I have read and understand the information about the visit. I enclose my voluntary contribution."

In the case of sports fixtures, the reply slip should read:-

"My child _____ is able to play in the match (at) on
I have read and understand the information in the letter, and give permission for my child to take part."

Before the Visit

- 1a) Discuss the proposal with the EVC/Head teacher.
- 1b) Complete an on line visits application through EVOLVE www.southwarkvisits.org using login details supplied by the Establishment EVC (Jo Wratten).

If approved:-

2. Complete Form EV5
3. Complete school RA
4. Book Visit
5. Book Transport
6. Send letter home
7. Complete Educational Visit Checklist and give a copy to your EVC

On the Day of the Visit

Be sure to:-

- Collect first aid kit(s)
- Collect other items (Consents, Medications, Venue Information, Tickets, and Maps etc.
- Brief supervising parents
- Give supervising parents their lists of Pupils/Participants
- Ensure that a minimum of one mobile phone is working, and that the 'Home Contact' has the number(s)
- Count Pupils/Participants and record the number/gender of each category

During the course of the visit, Pupils/Participants should be counted regularly as appropriate, and always when changing locations. **Always 'double-count'.**

The mobile phone(s) should be switched on during the entire homeward journey and the Home Contact advised of any delays etc. as soon as possible and updated regularly so they can update waiting parents etc.

After the Visit

It is important that after each visit a proper debrief takes place. This should take place within a week of the visit date, and should involve the Visit Leader, accompanying staff and, if appropriate, the supervising parents and/or participants. The purpose of the debrief is to identify what went well and what could have been done better, in order to inform future planning.

Advice and guidance

Southwark Children's Services has an Outdoor Education Advisor who can be contacted for any matter concerning off site visits and experiential learning and a Health & Safety Team for all matters concerning safety.