

# **Mount Grace School**

Committed to Excellence

<b>Policy</b>	<b>School Visits</b>	<b>Responsibility of</b>	<b>A Lawrence</b>
<b>Date of Ratification</b>	<b>Autumn 2010</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Autumn 2012</b>

**The Governing body at Mount Grace School adopts CSF Policy and Procedures and delegates authority for approving and authorising visits to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Ann Lawrence)**

## **Off Site School Visits Policy**

### **Introduction**

Visits and adventurous activities are an essential part of a child's development, helping them to learn about assessing and managing risk, and to gain skills in leadership and team working. They also build self-esteem and allow children to experience a range of normal social experiences.

This policy outlines the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department's arrangements for organising visits for children. The policy, which replaces Section T of the Education Health and Safety Manual and the Social Services policy "Going Places", has been based on guidance on educational visits produced by the DfES.

This policy forms part of the council's arrangements for managing health and safety risks and complying with health and safety law. Managers are reminded of their duty, to ensure it is implemented in their area of responsibility.

The policy is supplemented by the following guidance for use by those involved in the organisation of visits:

- *Guidance for organisers of visits for children*
- *Guidance for group leaders*
- *Additional guidance for organisers of adventurous activities and overseas visits*

The guidance, forms and sources of further information can be found in the *Offsite Visits Manual*.

### **Note to Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools**

Hertfordshire County Council has no legal responsibility for the health and safety of Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools. Health and safety responsibility in these schools rests with the governing body and it is their responsibility to make their own policies in this area, taking advice from their appointed competent person for health and safety. However, Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools may use this policy and Offsite Visits Manual as guidance. Where HCC responsibilities are assigned in this policy, they would fall to the governing bodies of those establishments.

**Within this policy the following definitions will be used:**

<b>Establishments:</b>	Includes schools, children's homes, family centres, youth clubs, units or teams who may organise visits.
<b>Visits:</b>	Includes trips, holidays, and adventurous activities taking place away from the establishments' normal location.
<b>Manager:</b>	Managers of the establishments defined above.
<b>Line Manager:</b>	Someone who manages a group of establishment/unit or team managers e.g. may be a head of service, assistant director.
<b>Visits Co-ordinator:</b>	A competent person appointed by the manager, to assist in the planning and management of visits. The visits co-ordinator must have attended the Offsite Visits Management Course.
<b>Offsite Visits Adviser:</b>	A person appointed by CSF to monitor, and provide advice on, offsite visits organised by establishments.
<b>Technical Adviser:</b>	A person with a high level of competence in a particular activity. Typically they will have a record as a trainer and assessor in the activity and would hold a recognised qualification issued by the National Governing Board (NGB) for the activity.
<b>Group Leader:</b>	The person who is in-charge/responsible for and present at the visit. Leadership can be delegated, but line of command and responsibilities need to be clearly defined.
<b>Competent Person:</b>	A person who has the relevant experience, training, qualifications and knowledge.
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Someone who has been given responsibility for the safety and well being of a group of children.
<b>Other Staff:</b>	Those staff on the trip who are employed by HCC.
<b>Children:</b>	Includes children and young people participating in the visit.
<b>Parent:</b>	Includes anyone with parental responsibility for the child or young person. This will either be the mother, father (if married to the mother) or someone who has been given parental responsibility by court order or agreement (ratified by the court).
<b>Group:</b>	The party which is going off-site.

**Adventurous Activity:**

Includes the core activities defined in the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (climbing, caving, remote trekking, waterborne activities) and other activities that present hazards over and above those in everyday life. Such activities would normally require supervision by a competent person with specialist skills in the activity.

**Emergency contact:**

This is the person who will deal with any emergency at the establishment (by supporting the group leader and informing those that need to know). He/she will hold the second set of emergency contact details for the group.

**Providers:**

Includes activity centres, tour operators, expedition providers, venues, hotels, etc.

**Risk Assessment:**

Statements produced to comply with Health and Safety law, which identifies hazards, their associated risks and suitable and sufficient control measures.

Abbreviations used in this guidance:

CSF: Children, Schools and Families

HCC: Hertfordshire County Council

NGB: National Governing Body (i.e. for specific activities)

This policy is concerned with issues of safety and supervision and must always be considered alongside the guidance documents that relate to such events.

Offsite

**1.1 Legal Framework**

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Hertfordshire County Council\*, as employer, has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees and others affected by their work activities. This includes participants in off site visits.

The Council is also required, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to:

- assess risks arising from activities;
- implement suitable control measures;
- provide information, training and supervision;
- monitor their arrangements for controlling risk.

There are also the following specific legal requirements for looked after children and children in residential schools.

- The Children's Home Regulations 2001 (Regulation 23) requires that any activities in which children participate are, so far as is reasonably practicable, free from avoidable risk.
- The National Minimum Standards for Care require that activities organised for looked after children are risk assessed. High risk activities must also be supervised by someone holding the relevant qualification for that activity.

Although the ultimate responsibility for health and safety rests with the Council, specific tasks are delegated to competent individuals. This would include the organisation of visits within the Children, Schools and Families Department (CSF). This policy outlines the responsibilities of those involved in the organisation of visits, standards of competence and the arrangements for assessing risk and implementing suitable control measures. It also outlines how the council will monitor the arrangements.

Managers and employees involved with organising or supervising visits also have a legal duty to take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety and to co-operate with the Council to enable it to meet its health and safety responsibilities. This will be achieved through complying with the policy and following the associated guidance.

*(\*For Foundation and Voluntary Aided Schools the employer is their governing body).*

## **2 Responsibilities**

### **1.2.1 Hertfordshire County Council (The LEA)**

Hertfordshire County Council will:

- provide guidelines for managers organising visits, to assist them with assessing risk and identifying suitable control measures;
- specify training and competence requirements of managers and visit organisers and ensure suitable training is provided;
- provide access to competent persons for advice;
- provide emergency support and contacts;
- maintain appropriate insurance cover;
- monitor and review arrangements for visits;
- employ an Offsite Visits Adviser to monitor and give advice on offsite visits.

### **1.2.2 Governing Bodies**

(Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools should refer to the note on the first page of this policy).

Where an establishment has a governing body, it must:

- ensure that the establishment is following the CSF Policy and guidance on visits and other relevant Council policies;
- check that those organising visits have the required level of competence for the type of visit;
- check proposals for certain types of visit, including those involving an overnight stay or travel outside the UK. Where necessary seek further specialist advice;
- check that establishment managers can demonstrate that their plans:
  - comply with the Council's and establishment's safety policy;
  - have specific and clearly stated educational objectives;
  - include reasonable measures to include those with special needs;
  - are provided early, to allow plenty of time for pre-visits etc. (Complex ventures may require up to 2 years planning).
- ensure that those organising visits have sufficient support, time and resources to fulfil their responsibilities;
- be aware that their role is to ask questions, not to advise or become directly involved in risk assessments.

It is not expected that governors should check arrangements for every visit. Section 5.2 details the kind of monitoring checks that should be carried out.

### **1.2.3 Managers**

Managers of establishments that organise visits must ensure:

- they comply with the council's policy and associated guidelines on establishment visits and other relevant policy documents (e.g. those covering use of minibuses, critical incidents etc);
- that they, and other staff involved in organising or supervising the visit have the required level of competence. This should take account of their supervisory ability and their competence in relation to the specific activity;
- sufficient time and resources are allocated to the planning stages;

- sufficient time and resources are allocated to meeting identified training needs including attendance at courses run by CSF;
- a full risk assessment has been carried out and suitable control measures are in place; - this should be based on a knowledge of the location/centre where the activity will take place;
- where required by the policy, only activity providers who are licenced for adventurous activities and/or accredited under non-statutory schemes are used and that the safety arrangements of other providers (e.g. farms, museums) are assessed prior to use;
- that arrangements are in place for the governing body to be informed of non routine visits in good time, so that questions can be asked;
- child protection procedures are in place;
- all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
- suitable emergency arrangements are in place, including ensuring a contact with the authority to make decisions, is available at all times;
- visits are monitored and evaluated, to inform operation of future visits, future training needs etc;
- they comply with the arrangements in this policy to enable CSF to monitor visits.

Managers may delegate these tasks to a competent visits co-ordinator (VC), however ultimate responsibility remains with the manager. Visits co-ordinators for level 3 visits (*see section 2*) may be appointed at divisional or service rather than establishment level.

Managers must ensure that they formally approve visits by completing form OV 1 or OV 3 (*Part E: Offsite Visits Handbook*).

Line Managers must monitor visits organised by the establishment/unit or team manager. They may also set their own local arrangements provided the standards in the policy and guidance are met (for instance line managers may wish to authorise level 3 visits).

#### **1.2.4 Teachers/other Employed Supervisors**

Teachers or other HCC employed supervisors on visits act as employees of the county council or of the governing body, whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours, by agreement with the manager and/or governors.

Teachers/HCC employees must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group as they have a duty of care to the young people in their charge. **These, and staff dealing with pupils with additional needs (SEN), owe a higher duty of care than parents due to their specialist knowledge and training.**

They should:

- follow the instructions of the group leader and help with control and discipline;
- notifying the group leader or, where appropriate stop the visit or activity, if they think the risk to the health and safety of the children in their charge is unacceptable.

### 1.2.5 Others

Group leaders will have specific responsibilities relating to the organisation of the visit. Adult volunteers, children and parents/carers should also be made aware of their responsibilities during visits. Refer to *Section 3 of Guidelines for Organisers of Visits (Part B)* for further information.

## 2. Categories of Visit & Authorisation

All visits must be authorised by a competent manager. This would normally be the head of establishment unless local service arrangements require a higher level of authorisation. For the purpose of this policy and associated guidance visits have been classified into **three** levels. The following table outlines the levels, authorisation and training requirement for the organisation of the visit. Also further specific checks/monitoring which must take place for the level of visit.

Level	Type of visit (examples)	Authorisation	Training required: Manager & Visits co-ordinator	Further checks/monitoring
1	Activities that would not expose those taking part to greater risk than than experienced on a day to day basis. Regular visits of one day or less duration (swimming, theatre trips, environmental studies,etc)	Manager Single, annual authorisation	CSF Offsite Visits Management Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessment to be reviewed annually by Group leader.</li> <li>• Visit organisation to be checked by Managers annually using Level 1 audit checklist (Form OV1)</li> </ul>
2	Non routine activities and residential stays. Adventurous and hazardous activities run by licenced/accredited centres.	Manager Each visit	CSF Offsite Visits Management Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each visit organisation must be checked by Manager using audit checklist.</li> <li>• Providers of adventurous and hazardous activities must be licenced for adventurous activities and/or accredited under non-statutory schemes.</li> </ul>
3	These would include overseas visits and adventurous activities, except those covered by level 2.	Manager Each visit	CSF Offsite Visits Management Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit organisation must be checked by Manager using Level 2 and 3 audit checklist, (Form OV2)</li> <li>• Risk assessments for adventurous activities must have been assessed by a Technical adviser<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Providers must be licenced for adventurous activities and/or accredited under non-statutory schemes.</li> <li>• Audit checklists and approval forms must be forwarded to the Offsite Visits Adviser for monitoring purposes</li> </ul>

1. Please note exemption may be possible. See Part D, section 1.2

### **3. Training and Competence**

#### **3.1 Managers and Visits co-ordinators**

CSF has set up Offsite Visits Management courses. These courses are provided to ensure that the council meets its legal duties with respect to health and safety training and that managers fully understand CSF's procedures and requirements with regard to offsite visits.

At least two senior members of staff from an establishment must attend the CSF Offsite Visits Management Course (e.g. manager and visits co-ordinator).

NB: for certain service areas (e.g. Youth Service), it may be more appropriate for the head of service to nominate a single visits co-ordinator to advise and assist their establishments with level 3 visits. In such cases only one person from each establishment needs to attend the Offsite Visits Management Course.

#### **3.2 Visits Organisers/Group leaders/Supervisors**

Those leading and organising or supervising visits must be competent to do so. The manager or visits co-ordinator must assess competence, taking account of their staff's ability to lead, manage and control the children partaking in the visit. Competence on specific activities may also be necessary, as well as knowledge of the venue being visited.

#### **Adventurous Activities**

If the establishment is leading an adventurous activity, (see definition on page 2), the manager must ensure that the group leader and other supervisors are suitably competent to lead or instruct the children in the activity, bearing in mind that some children may be novices. Competences should be demonstrated by holding the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) award where it exists. Where there are concerns regarding the competencies/experiences of instructors the Offsite Visits Adviser or relevant NGB should be contacted for advice. Standards of competence for certain activities can be found in *Part F, section 2* of the *Offsite Visits Manual*. Guidance on assessing competence, particularly for adventurous activities can be found in *Part D: Guidance for Organisers of Adventurous Activities and Overseas Visits*.

#### **Other Areas**

Staff competence in first aid, minibus driving, life saving etc may also be needed, depending on the activity. Volunteers will also require induction training prior to a specific visit. Training requirements in these areas should be identified as part of the risk assessment process.

### **4. Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment and risk management are legal requirements. For visits they involve the careful examination of what could cause harm during the visit and whether enough precautions have been taken or whether more should be done. The aim is to make sure no one gets hurt or becomes ill. The control measures should be understood by those involved.

Risk assessments should explicitly cover how special needs (e.g. educational, medical) are to be addressed. The programme of a visit, as set out in the risk assessment and the consent form, should not be deviated from and should include details of emergency/contingency measures.

There are three levels of risk assessment for visits:

**Generic:** Apply to the activity wherever or whenever it takes place. The information provided in this policy and associated guidance is based on a generic risk assessment.

**Visit/Site Specific:** Will differ from place to place and group to group. Those organising visits are responsible for carrying out visit /site specific risk assessments. Managers must ensure an adequate risk assessment is carried out.

For level 1 visits it will be sufficient to carry out a single assessment to cover several visits, however it should be reviewed annually, **or if circumstances change significantly**.

For level 2 and 3 visits it would be necessary to carry out an assessment for each visit. Where practicable the assessment should be based on first hand knowledge of the location. This would normally entail an exploratory visit being made. If it is not possible to visit the site beforehand, alternative arrangements must be sufficient for an assessment to be made.

**Ongoing:** The group leader should reassess risks while the visit is taking place, making judgements and decisions as the needs arise. The CSF *Guidance for Group Leaders* gives further advice on this.

In addition to the above, **individual risk assessment** of children whose vulnerability, behaviour or other factors may put them or others at greater risk should be carried out. This should normally form part of their existing care planning process.

Further guidance on risk assessment can be found in *Part B: Section 4.2 Risk Assessment* and *Part F: Section 1 Risk Assessment Guidance and Examples*. *Part E* also includes forms for recording assessments (**OV 4 & OV 5**).

## **5. Monitoring & Review**

The following arrangements must be in place to ensure that visits and the arrangements for organising them are effectively monitored. These are the minimum requirements. Managers and Governors may also set their own monitoring standards.

### **5.1 Managers**

- Use the Level 1 Visits Audit Checklist and Approval (Form OV 1) to carry out an annual check on arrangements for level 1 visits.
- Use the Level 2 & 3 Visits Audit Checklist (Form OV 2) to carry out a check on all level 2 and 3 visits.

- Send a copy of the Level 2 & 3 Visit Audit Checklist OV 2 and completed Application for Approval (Form OV 3) to the Offsite Visits Adviser for all level 3 visits, at least three months in advance of the visit.
- Ensure that risk assessments for regular visits are reviewed at least annually.
- Ensure that review/debrief meetings take place after level 2 and 3 visits and that information from the review is used to inform the operation of future visits.
- Pass on information (particularly concerns) following a review to the Offsite Visits Adviser.

## **5.2 Governors/Line Managers**

- Regular review of the establishment's procedures for visits to ensure they comply with the policy (see Governor Responsibilities, section 1.2.2). This may include checking paperwork during inspections and/or requesting annual reports from the visits co-ordinator or manager.

Governors/line managers may also request that they be informed of specific types of visit (e.g. level 3) well in advance, so that they can check specific arrangements.

## **5.3 Offsite Visits Adviser**

The County Council has appointed an Offsite Visits Adviser to monitor the implementation of this policy and guidance, and to provide best practice advice to establishments. The Offsite Visits Adviser will:

- Review a sample (at least 10%) of the audit checklists for level 3 visits submitted by managers.
- Monitor safety arrangements of licenced /accredited providers.
- Audit establishment arrangements for organising visits, as part of routine health and safety audits by the CSF/HCC Health and Safety teams and by curricular advisers. This will include checking assessments and approvals for all types of visit.
- Provide advice to CSF establishments, including a guide to where support may be obtained.

## **5.4 Review**

The Offsite Visits Adviser will continue to review the effectiveness of the policy and guidance on visits and will revise it in the light of experience and new information.

## **6. Emergencies**

Emergency procedures must be drawn up as part of the planning stage. This must include nominating someone as an emergency contact at establishment level and linking into the council's existing critical incident procedures.

**The group leader** would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged. The group leader should liaise with the representative of the tour operator if one is being used.

**Pre-arranged contacts.** The Emergency Contact at establishment level should have all the necessary information about the visit. *Forms OV 8 and OV 9 in Part E: Forms* should be used for this purpose.

In the event of notification of an emergency:

- Schools and other Educational Establishments should follow guidance in the **Schools Emergency Response Plan (replaces Critical Incident Recovery Plan for Schools)** ([http://www.thegrid.org.uk/downloads/info/healthandsafety/critical\\_incident.pdf](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/downloads/info/healthandsafety/critical_incident.pdf));
- Non school establishments should follow Service guidelines **Need to Know Procedure - Essential Reporting For Children, Schools and Families** (<http://connect.hertscc.gov.uk/infobase/docs/pdfstore/csf3067.pdf>).

Emergency support is available from the county council via a phone number (published in the **Schools Emergency Response Plan** and available on [www.thegrid.org.uk](http://www.thegrid.org.uk)).

In situations where the media may become involved advice should be sought from the CSF Communications Unit as quickly as possible. Where appropriate a press officer will be allocated to respond to media enquiries and produce a press release.

Further guidance on planning for and dealing with emergencies can be found in Part B: *Guidance for Organisers of Visits for Children*.

## **7. Insurance**

Managers must ensure that, well before the departure date, there is adequate insurance cover for the visit, taking account of the activities being planned.

Insurance policies are legal documents. They will impose conditions, limit the cover, and exclude certain people or activities. Insurance companies/travel firms can advise on particular types of insurance. However, the following are examples of cover which may be appropriate to many types of visits:

- Employers' liability (this is covered by HCC);
- public liability;
- personal accident cover for teachers/staff/other adults and children;
- cost of medical treatment.

Further guidance on insurance for schools can be found in *Section 9 and Appendix 2 of Part B: Guidance for Organisers of Visits for Children* and in *the Financial Handbook for Schools, Section 5 Control of Assets and Security*. Further advice is also available from the County Insurance Section.

## **8. Providers/Contractors**

Managers must ensure that checks are made on the health and safety competence of providers. This involves checking their safety policy, standards of competence, risk assessments etc.

For level 2 and 3 visits involving adventurous/hazardous activities, schools must ensure providers meet the standards for adventurous activities in Part F, Section 2 of the Offsite

Visits Manual, or have appropriate qualifications and meet the safety standards of the activities National Governing Body. Where no standard exists, advice should be sought from the Offsite Visits Adviser.

Further guidance on vetting providers and suitable accreditation schemes can be found in *Part B: Guidance for Organisers of Visits for Children*. (esp. 4.3, 10.1 & 10.2)

The use of providers that are licensed for adventurous activities and/or accredited under non-statutory schemes does not replace the need for the Manager to carry out a thorough risk assessment, based on knowledge of the location.

## **9. Agencies**

Where visits are carried out in partnership with, or through, other agencies, who may have their own guidelines, there must be an agreement to follow whatever guidelines are considered to achieve the higher level of safety. If the agency does not have their own guidelines, the CSF policy and guidelines must be adhered to.

## **10. Supervision and Child Protection**

Managers must ensure that supervision levels for the visit are adequate, taking account of the nature and age of the group, proposed activities, child protection arrangements and any individual care plans. As a minimum, levels must comply with those given in Section 5 of *Part B: Guidance for Organisers of Visits for Children* or levels specified in Division/Service procedures where they are higher. Risk Assessment may identify that a higher level of supervision is appropriate.

Managers must also ensure that providers, agencies or volunteers who will have regular contact with children (e.g. through overnight visits) or will be supervising children alone have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. CSF Human Resources has published guidance on Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure, which should be followed.