

JUNIOR AND PRE-PREP OFF-SITE VISITS

Policy statement

Taking students off-site covers a vast range of activities, from visits to the local shops or @Bristol, to adventurous activities on Dartmoor or in France. There is no doubt that off-site visits enhance children's education greatly by developing their social awareness, their life and leisure skills, and their knowledge of the wider world.

However, following a number of high profile 'accidents' and court cases, it is vital that we follow an agreed set of procedures that adhere to commonly accepted good practice.

Our aim at Queen's is to provide advice and clarity for those people involved in taking children off-site in order to protect them and to ensure the health and safety of our staff and students.

The Queen's College Junior and Pre-Prep Off-Sites Procedures Handbook exists as a black ring file kept in the Staff Work Room. It is essential that all new staff (and existing staff from time to time) read through this file and refer to it when taking children off-site. It contains a hard copy of this document together with additional publications of interest.

What is an 'off site' visit?

An 'off-site' visit is any activity that involves taking pupils off the school campus.

Off-site visits can be categorised into a number of types to facilitate the appropriate implementation of standard procedures:

- Category A Sports fixtures/activities usually involving teams or small groups in minibuses or coaches for a few hours, returning to school later in the day
- Category B Curriculum-associated day or part-day visits, such as theatre trips, geography/history field trips, Forest School etc
- Category C Adventurous activities, such as climbing, horse riding, mountain biking.
- Category D Residential curriculum-related visits, such as trips abroad (e.g. Watersports, Ski Trips etc)

The procedures to be followed together with appropriate advice appear under separate sections at the end of this document in Appendix E.

Obtaining permission to take students off-site

When taking students off-site, three forms need to be completed:

- Proposal for Off-site Visit (Appendix A). This gives the reasons for the trip together with some key information about staffing and costs.
- Risk Assessment (Appendix B). (See below for further details)
- Parental Consent Form (Appendix C). This informs the parents about the trip (costs, timings, clothing, etc) and gives parents an opportunity to express any concerns (e.g. health issues).

Occasions may arise where an off-site visit is very localised and is for only a short period of time that such bureaucracy seems unnecessary. Whilst it may be reasonable to waive the need for a signed consent form (advice should be sought from the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) who is the Deputy Head. It is absolutely essential that for all visits, the 'Proposal for Off-site Visit' form and the Risk Assessment must be completed.

- Forms can be found either in the **Junior and Pre-Prep Health and Safety** folder on the shared area of the school network system under 'Junior' or as hard copies in the Junior Staff Work Room or in the Off Site Visits section of the green Risk Assessment file in the Pre-Prep Head's office.
- On completion, the three forms (together with any other pertinent information) should be passed to the EVC for checking. They will then be passed to the Estates Office (who will assess any insurance implications) and thereafter to the Headmistress for final approval. The forms will be returned to the member of staff running the trip.
- Copies of the completed forms for Junior should be placed in the yellow **Off-Sites Visit Folder** in the Junior Staff Room or for Pre-Prep in the Off Site Visit section of the **green Risk Assessment file in the Pre-Prep Head's office**

It is good practice to submit the forms well in advance of a proposed trip.

Risk Assessments

It is a **legal requirement** that a risk assessment should be conducted for **any** off-site visit.

- The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify any potential hazards, assess their possible impact on members of the party (taking account of any medical or educational special needs) and implement measures aimed at reducing the potential dangers. The aim is to make sure that no one gets hurt or becomes ill.

Definitions

Hazard	Anything that has the potential to cause harm
Risk	The likelihood that someone will be harmed by the hazard
Risk Assessment	The conscious process applied to the identification of hazards, the subsequent evaluation of the associated risks and the implementation of a series of control measures to minimise the risks highlighted

- A risk assessment should be carried out before a visit and then re-appraised both during ('ongoing risk assessment') and after the visit; it is a dynamic assessment of factors likely to influence the well-being of the party and it will need to reflect unexpected changes in circumstances during the trip itself, e.g. changes in the weather.
- The Health and Safety Executive have identified five steps to risk assessment:

Step 1

Identify the hazards created by the location/activity

Step 2

Decide who might be harmed and how

Step 3

Evaluate the risk and decide whether existing measures are adequate or whether more should be done

Step 4

Record your findings and retain for future reference

Step 5

Review the assessment from time to time (e.g. if the trip is to be repeated) and revise it if necessary

- It is good practice to have an alternative 'Plan B' in case the itinerary needs to be changed. If a site has not been visited before, the group leader will need to make an initial risk assessment before the pupils engage in activities at that site.

- Companies and organisations providing activities/trips are required to have their own risk assessments. **Such an assessment should be sought and obtained before a visit takes place.** Furthermore, companies should have a **public liability insurance for £3m.**
- Whilst there is no standard risk assessment form, we at Queen's have produced a form which seems to work for most trips (see Appendix C).; indeed, the huge range of off-site visits makes it impossible to produce a 'cover-all' standard form.

Every off-site visit from Queen's Junior and Pre-Prep will require a risk assessment to be made and then approved by the Headmistress.

- To carry out a risk assessment, it is advisable to make an exploratory visit if at all possible. If not, obtain as much information as possible from the site itself, local agencies, etc.
- Below is a simple matrix to quantify the level of risk (see below).

Levels of Risk

	Potential Outcome		
	Minor (1) e.g. cuts and bruises	Major (2) e.g. fractures, burns requiring medical attention	Severe (3) e.g. loss of limb, exposure, life threatening
Likelihood of event			
Unlikely (1)	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
Possible (2)	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Likely (3)	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

Notes

- Activities/locations with a high risk are generally unacceptable
- Activities with a medium risk should have clear measures aimed at reducing the level of risk

An example of a completed Risk Assessment can be found as Appendix D.

Competence and Supervision

- Group leaders need to be fully competent to run a particular trip, i.e. experienced, holding appropriate qualifications, etc.
- Supervisors also need to have an appropriate level of competence and should not be placed in situations where they feel unprepared or unqualified.

- Leaders and supervisors (i.e. all adults with a responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of pupils) have a 'duty of care'.

It is good practice for supervisors to:

- Have a reasonable prior knowledge of the pupils including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities (see black files)
- Carry a list of all group members and regularly check that the entire group is present
- Continuously monitor the activity, adjusting risk assessments where necessary
- Clearly understand emergency procedures and be able to carry them out
- Have an appropriate qualification in first aid (or have a qualified 'first aider' in the party or have the means of access to first aid)
- Identify a meeting place to return to in case someone gets lost
- Give clear instructions to pupils regarding the objectives of the trip and safety considerations

During 'free-time' (e.g. in-between activities, lunch breaks, evenings, etc) it is perfectly reasonable for a more remote form of supervision to take place. It is, however, good practice to:

- Remain within easy contact of the group or to specify where you can be found. Depending on the nature of the group, it may be appropriate to keep them in sight at all times, particularly in potential hazardous environments, such as near the sea, rivers or lakes.
- Ensure pupils stay in small groups and never wander off alone
- Make sure that pupils are aware of the required standards of behaviour (an example of a Code of Conduct is given in Appendix G)
- Make sure that pupils are aware of emergency procedures

Occasionally it is desirable for parents/guardians to meet to collect pupils at the venue or on the way home. Whilst this is quite in order, no pupil should normally be left unsupervised at any time; if a parent/guardian fails to show at an arranged meeting place, the pupil should be returned to school with the rest of the party. **It is good practice for the parent to put in writing a request of this nature.**

Group Leader Responsibilities

The group leader is responsible for the entire party at all times. He/she is responsible for ensuring that all procedures specified in this document are followed and that the group is adequately supervised. Responsibilities can be delegated as appropriate, including supervisory roles.

Staffing and Ratios

Staffing levels are difficult to prescribe, as they will vary according to the activity, age, group, location, etc.

- There is no golden rule, or indeed legal requirement, but it is important to ensure that there is adequate supervision in case of an emergency.

- It is good practice to have a minimum of 2 adults however small the group in case one adult is hurt or becomes unwell, or a situation arises where 1:1 supervision becomes necessary, for example if a child has to go to hospital.
- The ***DFES (2001) suggests that for low risk activities (such as museum visits) with pupils of Years 4 to 6 age, a ratio of 1 adult to every 10 - 15 pupils*** is reasonable. A ratio closer to 1 adult for every 10 pupils would be appropriate for trips to potentially hazardous environments, such as a coast or a river. For 'adventurous activities' the ratio is likely to be closer to 1:8. A similar ratio (or even lower) would seem appropriate for Years 1 to 3 children. Ratios need to be 'reasonable' depending upon the age group of the children and the activities involved.
- Ratios for Reception children is 1:8.
- For a residential trip involving a mixed party there should be at least one member of staff from each sex.
- It is perfectly reasonable to include other adults (school support staff including GAP Year students, parents*, etc) in a supervisory capacity where appropriate, i.e. usually for relatively low risk activities, such as accompanying a party to a museum. **However, it is necessary for all adults who will be in contact with pupils to have a satisfactory Disclosure.**

(* A parent of a child on a trip should not be counted as part of the staff:pupil ratio – see the EVC for advice on this issue)

Head Counts

It is good practice to:

- Conduct regular head counts, particularly before leaving a venue. Double-check, even if everyone appears to be there on the first count
- Split the entire group into smaller groups for 'roll-calls' if appropriate

Transport

Transportation is often the most significant hazard associated with a school visit.

- If driving pupils, staff should not drink alcohol
- Staff using their own cars to transport pupils must ensure that they have adequate insurance cover ('use in connection with business') and parents

must have consented to this. The school's insurance policy will cover staff using their private cars to transport pupils but staff do need to inform the Finance Office of their details.

- In using minibuses, it is essential that drivers follow the procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook.
- It is the responsibility of the driver to carry out the basic roadworthy checks and these must be done in accordance with the procedures laid down.
- Seat belts should be worn at all times when travelling and pupils should be reminded about this. Staff need to be vigilant in ensuring that seat belts are worn at all times.

Drivers must make reasoned judgements about their ability to drive safely, given the time of day, teaching load, likely travelling time, etc, and consideration should be given to the use of a co-driver or an outside commercial firm.

The ***DFES (2002) states that, "a driver cannot safely drive and supervise children at the same time"***. Whilst stopping short of actually stating it, this suggests that it would be good practice for there to be two adults in a minibus, one driving and one supervising the children. This recommendation may be waived depending upon the age and number of the party, the experience of the driver and the distance to be travelled. If a driver is unhappy about an arrangement, advice should be sought from the EVC.

Regarding coach travel, group leaders and supervisors should ensure that:

- A reputable firm is used
- Pupils are instructed (and reminded) about the wearing of seat belts (this should be checked by staff) and about emergency procedures
- Emergency exits must be kept clear
- Standards of behaviour are met so that the driver is not distracted
- The standard of driving is monitored and appropriate action taken if it is perceived that undue risks are being taken
- Pupils are supervised when entering or leaving; this is especially important in foreign countries where the exit door may open straight onto the road.

Medical and Related Issues

- It is good practice to have a first aid qualified member of staff on a school trip – all Junior School and Pre-Prep staff undergo training on a three yearly cycle.
- Leaders and supervisors should be aware of any special medical circumstances regarding the pupils in their care.
- Any accidents should be reported in the Accident Book in Matron's Room in the Junior School. It is also good practice to keep a record of 'near misses' in order to update Risk Assessments. 'Near misses' should also be recorded on a Trip Report form before being passed to the EVC in order that all staff can be made aware of any pertinent issues regarding pupil health and safety.
- All reputable companies and organisations involved in school trips or activity provision should have their own Risk Assessments. We should obtain them. If a company is reluctant to pass on its Risk Assessment, choose another company!
- A written statement of the sum insured under the organisation's Public Liability insurance must also be obtained. If it is under £3m, choose another company. (See the Financial Director for any advice in this area)

Home Contact Procedure

The Home Contact is via the school during office hours or a designated person acting on behalf of the school.

During Office Hours School Office: Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 4.30 pm. Thereafter contact the Junior Boarding House.

- All documentation relating to an off-site visit is displayed in the staff room.
- Should any amendments be made, for example return time, the school office or MoD should be informed to enable messages to be passed on to the appropriate parties.

Outside Office Hours

- A complete set of the relevant documentation is kept in the Boarding House during the course of a school trip. Outside normal office hours documents are left on display in the Boarding House.
- If a trip is expected to return outside office hours, or if there is a possibility that a trip might overrun, it is incumbent upon the trip leader to send a ClarionCall text or voicemail message to their relevant group of parents or to identify a home contact and to ensure that he/she has a

duplicate set of documents. The home contact could be the duty resident House Parent or Assistant, the Headmistress or member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), another school colleague or spouse/partner.

- The home contact number must be written on the Participation Consent Form
- Upon return, the home contact should be informed
- Any changes to timings, etc should be passed to the home contact and acted upon accordingly

Emergency Procedures

Group leaders and supervisors should be aware of the school's emergency procedure (**Critical Incident Contingency Plan**) in the event of an incident, such as a traffic accident. Whilst such incidents are mercifully rare, it is important to be aware of the main principles should an incident occur.

- In accordance with the procedures outlined in this document, the school office (or a named contact in the event of weekend/holiday visits) will hold information relating to all off-site visits. Therefore, the school is the first point of contact. If appropriate, a designated telephone number will be given to the group leader/supervisor to facilitate effective communication.
- Pupils should be asked not to use mobile phones if it is felt that this could lead to exaggerated accounts and cause unnecessary alarm.
- With foreign trips, group leaders and supervisors may need to contact the school's insurance company; this information should be included in the group leader's administrative file. There may be a need to contact the British Embassy or Consulate.

Careful planning can reduce the chances of being caught up in an emergency:

- Ensure that the first aid kit is properly stocked and accessible (see Sister for advice)
- Ensure that all pupils' medical needs are known and that staff are competent to deal with them
- Avoid situations where health problems may arise (e.g. avoid over-exertion in excessive heat, ensure pupils wear hats and sun protection creams in strong sunshine, avoid certain foods and liquids in some foreign countries, etc)

- Instruct pupils on safety procedures and conduct safety checks on accommodation, etc