



Ruthin School

| EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY | |
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Educational Visits Policy

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

At Ruthin School we believe that learning outside the classroom is an essential component of our curriculum. It gives our pupils unique opportunities to develop their resourcefulness and initiative and to spend time together in an informal environment. Each trip is different. Some are directly related to the curriculum, some are designed to promote social awareness, or to enhance physical skills, self-reliance and team-working. Others will extend their knowledge of the world. The common factor is that they all make an essential contribution to pupils' development and education in the broadest sense of the word.

OUR TRIPS AND VISITS

We regularly take pupils on day trips to: historic sites, museums, galleries, natural features, and to support the curriculum in History, Art History, Geography, English, and Biology. There are regular theatre trips for pupils of all levels.

We have a year-round weekend and evening programme of adventure activities, including canoeing, climbing, trekking, horse riding and sailing. They take part in a number of different tournaments and an active community programme involving pupils from many of our neighbouring schools.

We have an active Duke of Edinburgh Award programme involving a range of outdoor activities, services and skills. Pupils take their bronze award, and many of our Sixth Form pupils pursue the more advanced silver and gold awards which involves a residential project.

You can find more about the trips, visits and activities that are available to each year group from our web site, our prospectus and our notice boards around the school.

INFORMATION ON PLANNED TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

The school calendar lists the trips and visits that are due to take place over the coming term, together with a list of planned home and away sports fixtures. Parents will always be notified in advance:

- We very much welcome family and friends at all our matches, both home and away.
- If your child is going to be out of school during the school day in order to visit a local museum, theatre, nature reserve or historic site. We will always seek your permission if the visit involves an extra charge, supplying a packed lunch or late return to school.

We send details of planned trips and activities well in advance to all parents of pupils of the relevant year group or cohort. Parents who opt for these trips are often invited into the school for a full briefing before their son or daughter departs on a trip or visit that involves an overnight stay, either in the UK or overseas.

CONSENT (Day Pupils only)

We require your specific, individual written consent if we are to take pupils on a trip or visit that extends beyond the normal school day, involves an overnight stay, collection from a different venue, an overseas visit or extra cost to you. Please note that we are unable to take pupils without a completed and signed consent form, which includes details of where you may be contacted in an emergency. This form will be sent to you well in advance and must reach the school at least 3 working days before the start of the trip.

SAFETY

Safety is top priority for us. We expect parents to support the school in ensuring that pupils follow the instructions given either by a member of staff, or by a qualified instructor and use the proper equipment. We reserve the right to send any pupil home early at their parents' expense, if they decline to follow reasonable instructions given for their own safety, (or do not follow the school's behaviour code).

INTRODUCTION

We have a large number of trips, out-of-school activities and visits at Ruthin School which are an important part of our educational ethos. We expect that every member of staff endorses the educational value of activities outside the classroom. We encourage everyone possible to participate in them and to help with the arrangements. We always welcome suggestions from staff for new trips.

ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

These are to be experienced members of staff, who will have the overall responsibility of a visit or trip, ensuring its smooth and safe running throughout. The Group Leader should have prior experience of the type of visit or trip being arranged; if not, any planning and ideas must be explained in consultation with the SLT before any proposals are made and implemented.

Group Leaders will have full responsibility for the documentation necessary both before and during the visit or trip. In the case of large parties involved in a residential or overseas visit or trip then a Deputy Leader should be specified who is fully informed of all necessary documentation and emergency procedures.

Every trip or visit, no matter how short, must be planned in advance by the member of staff who is in charge of organising and running it. He or she will always have had experience of accompanying school visits before taking on the role of Group Leader. With the exception of the very shortest visits, such as to our local library or museum, we expect all Group Leaders either to hold a valid First Aid certificate themselves, or ensure that one of the other teachers accompanying the visit holds one.

No one should drive the school minibus unless s/he has qualified as a minibus driver. The school will arrange and fund First Aid courses, as well as courses in driving minibuses for all staff who are involved in visits. At Ruthin School we expect every member of staff to complete a "Drivers' Declaration Form" before s/he drives pupils in a school minibus or privately owned vehicle. The completed forms are held by the Deputy Bursar.

PERSONAL LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

Staff should "act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances." Staff who take part in visits and activities outside school may feel concerned about the possibility of being held personally liable if an accident should occur. However, they can be assured that Ruthin School, as their employer, will always stand behind them in the unlikely event of an accident occurring, provided they have exercised reasonable care and followed the school's guidelines.

Ruthin School has £10,000,000 of Employers' Liability Insurance and £20,000,000 of public liability insurance, as well as a group travel policy that covers most visits inside the UK and overseas. Cover includes cancellation or delay, medical expenses, replacement of passports, personal possessions and money. The policy covers most school visits, including skiing holidays; but does not cover all adventurous activities, such as climbing or scuba diving. Any member of staff organising an adventurous or hazardous activity should therefore check, via the Deputy Bursar, whether or not the activity is covered by the school's policy. An extension usually can be arranged. The Group Leader should ensure that s/he takes a copy of the school's travel insurance with him/her on all but the shortest of visits.

Ruthin School's policy is to discourage staff from transporting pupils in their private cars and never to allow them to be transported in cars belonging to parent helpers (unless the parents make a private arrangement that does not involve the school). Where a member of staff transports a pupil in his/her car, insurance cover is automatically provided through the school's "occasional business use" motor policy. That ensures that motor insurance claims arising whilst a member of staff is using their own car for school business purposes can be settled without involving their own motor insurer.

PREPARATORY ARRANGEMENTS

The amount of advance preparatory work needed will obviously vary considerably with the type of activity. Very little preparation may be needed for walking with a group of pupils to a local museum, spending an hour there and walking back in time for school lunch. By contrast, a visit lasting a week or more to a country outside the EU, requires considerable research and preparation. Repeat visits and shorter visits will need less planning, and can be arranged at shorter notice, though it is always desirable to give parents as much notice as possible when planning visits for school holidays and half-terms.

The list that follows is designed to cover all the planning that a Group leader needs to undertake for a longer type of visit. It is designed to be as comprehensive as possible. Text in *italics* indicates that the action may not be required (or the timescale may be shortened) for: trips within the school day, theatre and museum visits, sports fixtures, or day visits using school transport.

At least twelve months in advance:

- Obtain advice from the Deputy Headmaster, on suitable dates, precedents etc
- Discuss preliminary plan, including purpose, location, transport, hotels, activities, itinerary, number and age of participants with the Deputy Headmaster
- Calculate the staff to pupil ratio (see below)
- Prepare a draft itinerary
- Decide mode of transport for all legs of the journey.
- Prepare fully inclusive costs for the visit, including an appropriate contingency for delays and emergencies (the costs of the accompanying staff must be included).
- Check that the provider of adventurous activities is licensed and the individual instructors possess a recognised qualification from a national body, such as the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.
- Obtain a clear statement from the centre about their responsibilities for the safety of the pupils before making any commitment. Ask for copies of their risk assessments
- Prepare the risk assessment(s), (see below)
- Check the school's insurance cover, (see above) if the visit involves hazardous activities
- Find other members of staff who are willing to participate in the trip, bearing in mind the need to have both male and female teaching staff when both sexes participate in a visit. It is desirable to have at least one member of staff who speaks the language of the country to be visited. At Ruthin School we are always happy to include volunteers from the medical team amongst the supervising staff. We hope that Sports Coaches and Visiting Music Staff will participate in sports and music tours. They are also welcome to help with other visits. Office staff may assist with day trips and theatre visits. We encourage parents to accompany school visits, and we welcome them at all sports fixtures.
- If parent volunteers participate: Arrange for any volunteers participating in the trip who may have unsupervised responsibility for children to obtain an enhanced CRB disclosure. (The Headmaster's office will make the necessary arrangements).
- Check that the tour company/airline is ATOL/ABTA bonded to provide cover in the event of the bankruptcy of the provider.
- Carry out a reconnaissance visit if the location is not one that the school has visited before. (If a reconnaissance visit is impossible, a reference from another school that has visited the site may suffice).
- Establish the minimum and maximum numbers for the visit to be viable (bearing in mind that the costs of the accompanying staff will be divided amongst the participants).
- Ascertain the medical and visa requirements
- Establish when the deposits are required by tour operators/airlines/activity centre etc, and ensure that the size of the deposit requested from parents is sufficient to cover these costs (including the costs of deposits for accompanying staff).
- Depending upon the destination: check with the Travel Advice Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Prepare a written case, to be counter-signed by the Deputy Headmaster, seeking the Headmaster's approval.
- If necessary, attend a First Aid and/or minibus driving course beforehand.

STAFF/PUPIL RATIOS

Recommended staff to pupil ratios for visits and off-site activities is:

| Ratio | Pupils' Year Group |
|---------|--|
| 1:15/20 | Years 7 upwards (with a larger ratio permitted for over 16s) |
| 1:10 | All visits abroad |

THE RISK ASSESSMENT

All Group Leaders at Ruthin School are supported in conducting risk assessments on the potential hazards involved in a visit, trip or activity that they are planning. These include, but are not exhaustive:

- Identifying the potential hazards of the place being visited.
- Listing the groups of people that are especially at risk from the significant hazards.
- Listing existing controls or notifying where the information may be found.
- Considering how he/she would cope with the hazards which are not currently identified or fully controlled.
- Carrying out continual monitoring of hazards throughout the visit.

Professionally operated licensed activity centres and tour operators specialising in school visits will conduct their own risk assessments. The Group Leader should ask for copies at the planning stage. Provided that he/she is satisfied, it will meet the requirements of Ruthin School for the activity part of the visit. Additional risk assessments will probably be needed to ensure complete coverage of all aspects of the visit. Risk assessments carried out by the school for previous visits can generally be updated and re-used, unless there has been a change of circumstances.

After Permission is Granted

- Write a preliminary letter to send to parents and guardians of the target age group, outlining the purpose of the trip, the programme and the expected maximum cost. Ask for expressions of interest, together with a deposit by a specific date. Mention that parents will be invited to a briefing meeting within six weeks of departure. Explain any restrictions on numbers.
- Brief the pupils about the visit, its dates and purpose.
- Check names of all pupils wishing to participate with the Medical Centre.

- Collect deposits and arrange with the Finance Department to set up a unique cost centre in the school accounts for the trip.
- Arrange for the Finance Department to pay deposits on hotels, flights, activity centre etc.

At least three months in advance

- Finalise the costs with travel company etc.
- Insist that all coaches are fitted with seat belts. (This may not be possible in every country).
- Work out the cost for parents (including contingency to cover delays etc).
- Inform parents of the medical and visa requirements. Advise parents of non-British passport holders that they are responsible for ascertaining the visa requirements of the country to be visited.
- Arrange for the Finance Department to bill parents for the balance of the cost of the trip.
- Arrange for the Finance Department to pay the balance to the airline, hotel, travel company etc.
- Brief and prepare the pupils in advance.
- Ensure that they are given plenty of advance notice if they need special equipment (e.g. for skiing).

At least six weeks in advance

- Give the Finance Department details of requirements for foreign currency. Agree collection arrangements.
- Arrange meeting with parents to brief them on all aspects of the trip, including:
 - The itinerary, including the meeting and collection points.
 - Contact details for the hotels/hostels/ names and addresses of the host families.
 - The money, kit and equipment that the pupils need. The dress code of the country.
 - The medical and visa requirements.
 - The expected standards of behaviour, and the potential risks of irresponsible behaviour.
 - The ground rules on consumption of alcohol, tobacco and illegal substances.
 - Remind parents those pupils who ignore or flout the behaviour code risk being sent home at their parents' expense. Pupils remain subject to school rules throughout the visit.
 - Arrangements for handling illness and accidents, and arrangements for informing parents in such circumstances.
 - Arrangements for communicating with parents in the event that the return is delayed.
 - The need to notify the school in the event of contact with an infectious disease within four weeks of travelling.
 - The reasons why a completed consent form is essential.

- The need for a copy of each pupil's passport.
- Send all parents a copy of the consent form (see annex) with specified return date.
- (If appropriate) book picnic lunch from Catering Department.
- Brief pupils on expectations of standards of behaviour and cultural differences.
- Book travelling first aid kit from the Medical Centre.

Two weeks in advance

- Chase parents who have not returned their consent forms. Remind them that their child cannot participate unless the form is received within 3 working days of departure.
- Obtain photocopies of each pupil's passport
- Check all tickets for accuracy. Store them in the school safe until collection
- Meet with the other members of staff to discuss the itinerary, the risk assessment, the respective roles of the Group Leader and other accompanying staff, and emergency procedures.
- Prepare packs for the School Office, and for each member of staff, that contain the following information:
 - The itinerary (including address, phone numbers etc of all locations where the party is staying).
 - The Group Leader's mobile number/[the school mobile],
 - Mobile numbers of all participating staff,
 - A list of pupils, together with copies of their parental contact forms (which includes details of each pupils' medical conditions)
 - Copies of all passports and travel documents
 - Emergency contact numbers for the Headmaster.
 - The address and contact details of the nearest British Consul.
 - A copy of the tickets, travel insurance document (including emergency contact details).
 - A copy of the risk assessment.
 - Location of local hospital

The day prior to departure/ The day of departure

- Collect tickets and foreign currency from the safe.
- Give trip information packs to designated school recipients and to other staff participants
- Give each pupil the names, addresses and phone numbers of their accommodation
- Remind pupils about the rendez-vous, dress code, standards of behaviour etc.
- Remind pupils of the potential risks of irresponsible behaviour
- Remind pupils to bring passports. Ask to see each passport.
- Collect travelling first aid kit(s). Check contents.
- Collect packed lunch

DURING THE VISIT OR ACTIVITY

Primary responsibility for the safe conduct of the visit rests with Group Leader. He or she has sole responsibility for amending the itinerary in the event of unforeseen delay or sudden deterioration in weather conditions. He or she will liaise with the partner school in the event of difficulties between a pupil and their host family. S/He may delegate part or all of the responsibility for the following to one or more of the accompanying staff:

- Carrying out a head count on getting on and off each form of transport, entering or leaving a museum, restaurant, activity centre, hotel etc.
- Checking that all pupils wear their seat belts.
- Checking the fire exits and escape routes at each hotel or hostel. Ensuring that every pupil walks through the emergency escape route at each hotel.
- Ensuring that sleeping accommodation is suitable and located together (preferably not on the ground floor).
- Setting times for pupils to be in their rooms at night. Conducting checks (using the other staff).
- Ask all pupils to write their mobile numbers on a sheet of paper. Give all pupils the number of the school's mobile if they are going to be allowed out in small, unsupervised groups
- Setting agreed times and locations for checking pupils when they work or are allowed out unsupervised in small groups.
- Enforcing expected standards of behaviour.
- Looking after - or reminding pupils to look after - passports and valuables
- Storing cash and tickets in the hotel safe.
- Keeping an account of all expenditure.
- Recording all accidents and near misses.

ILLNESS OR MINOR ACCIDENTS

If a pupil has a minor accident or becomes ill, the Group leader, or another member of staff will take him/her to the local hospital or clinic. If the trip is outside the UK, s/he will notify the insurers on their helpline to arrange (where possible) for the medical bill to be sent directly to the insurance company for settlement. If the accident is more serious (such as a broken leg when skiing), the school's medical insurers may arrange for the pupil, accompanied by a member of staff to be repatriated to the UK. At Ruthin School we expect the Group Leader to phone the pupil's parents if their child has suffered an accident or injury that is serious enough to require medical treatment - as opposed to minor cuts and bruises.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of a serious accident resulting in the death or injury of one or more of the pupils and staff, the Group Leader's first priority would be to summon the emergency services and to arrange for medical attention for the injured. One of the accompanying members of staff should accompany the injured pupil(s) to hospital. Ensuring that the rest of the group were safe and looked after, and informing the Headmaster of what had happened would be the next tasks for the Group Leader, who would need to give as full, calm and factual account as the circumstances permitted. Where the full facts had not yet emerged, he or she should say so, and ensure that follow-up communications with the Headmaster are maintained. He/she would also need to arrange (perhaps using the Deputy Leader or another member of staff) for the school's insurers to be contacted as quickly as possible, together with the British Consul, if the accident happened overseas. A full record should be kept of the incident, the injuries and of the actions taken.

At Ruthin School, depending on the nature of the incident, we may implement our own model communications plan for informing as swiftly as possible both the families of the injured, and the families of those who are unhurt. We recognise that in an era of instant communications, it may not be possible for us to be the first to break the news. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that we have an important duty to speak personally to the parents of any pupil who has suffered some injury or mishap. We will use mass communication methods (SMS, email, messages on our website, local radio) for communicating with those whose children are not affected.

Where possible, communication with the media should be left to the Headmaster. The Group Leader should refer the media to the school. If comment is unavoidable, it should be factual, calm and no attempt made to cover gaps in knowledge. Pupils should be discouraged from talking to the media.

DELAYED RETURN

If a visit is delayed, the Group Leader should phone the school office, who will in turn phone all the parents on their contact numbers to alert them to the delay and the revised time of arrival.

ON RETURN

Each Group Leader is asked to provide the Deputy Headmaster with a report on the visit, reports of accidents and near misses on his/her return. Personal observations and lessons learned are always valuable. The Group leader should return all school property, together with a report of any lost or damaged property.

EXPENDITURE

The Group Leader is responsible for returning any unused cash to the Finance Department. Any pre-paid foreign currency card should be returned, together with all related transaction vouchers. The Group Leader is also responsible for producing a schedule of all expenditure on the trip. Unused balances will be returned to the parents by way of credits shown on the next school bill.