

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS DURING EDUCATIONAL VISITS

**Report By: OUTDOOR EDUCATION ADVISER AND
SCHOOLS' HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER**

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To report on the action taken to ensure the safety of pupils and young people engaged in off-site activities and visits.

Financial Implications

2. The costs of the advisory service to schools are met from within the budgets for Education and the Youth Services.

Report

Information available

3. Herefordshire Council provides written guidance, including policy and good practice, for all LEA schools involved in off-site trips and activities. The guidance was previously revised in 2001.
4. In August 2003, a comprehensive review of the guidance took place in discussions involving schools, the Community Youth Service, Duke of Edinburgh Award Leaders and Council officers. The review took into account guidance issued by the Department of Education and Skills in 2002. This updated guidance on "Off-Site Activities and Visits" was published in March 2004 and distributed to all LEA schools, the Youth Service and Duke of Edinburgh Awards groups. The document will be further reviewed in October 2004.
5. An advisory service is available to schools, the Youth Service and Duke of Edinburgh Awards group via the Outdoor Education Adviser and the Schools' Health and Safety Officer.

For further information on the subject of this report is available from
Giles Smith, Outdoor Education Adviser, on 01432 383027 or
Martin Danks, Schools' Health and Safety Officer on (01432) 260860

The Advisory Service

6. In order to comply with new national guidance, an advisory service is provided to schools, the Youth Service and Duke of Edinburgh Award leaders by an Outdoor Education Adviser (jointly appointed and funded by Education and Youth Services) and the Schools' Health and Safety Officer. One of the advisory services duties is to monitor visits, as the national guidance requires, by scrutinising the notifications that schools, youth centres and Duke of Edinburgh award leaders are required to provide before visits take place. The advisory service is also available to teachers and Education Visits Co-ordinators (EVCs) which all schools and youth organisations must appoint, in a variety of ways –
 - in person – the OEA or the SHSO will arrange a meeting or, on occasions, visit as an observer
 - by telephone, email, post or fax
 - electronically - guidance documents and forms are available on a CD-Rom, or can be downloaded from the Education website or the Intranet
 - by courses – advice and support is provided in the form of specialised training courses
7. The advisory service is also looking at ways to reduce the amount of paperwork required for a trip to take place. Improvements already achieved includes –
 - reducing the types of off-site visits that require notification – further details are provided at Appendix 2
 - reducing the notification paperwork required for visits and activities
 - simplifying risk assessment
8. Further planned developments include:
 - generic risk assessments for a range of popular off-site visits, to assist party leaders organising such visits.
 - electronic notification of off-site trips, though the forms requiring a signature still need to be sent on paper until all schools and youth centres have e-pads.

Training

9. In 2003, the DfES and the Outdoor Education Adviser's Panel (OEAP) launched a national programme of training for Educational Visit Coordinators (EVC). This was in response to DfES recommendations, made in 2001, that all schools should have an EVC whose role is *"to be involved in the planning and management of educational visits including adventure activities led by school staff"*.

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10. The Outdoor Education Adviser and the Schools' Health and Safety Officer attended a "*Training the Trainers*" course before delivering seven one-day training courses for organisations running off-site visits, including all LEA schools and the statutory Youth Service. The courses ran from October 2003 to April 2004. Appendix 1 to this report outlines the course content. All training costs were covered by a DfES Standards Fund grant of £15,000 given to each LEA to pay for the cost of the training, including 50% of supply cover costs for teachers who attended.
11. There are currently 100 registered EVCs in LEA schools. All high schools, special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) have a registered EVC. There are 7 primary schools without an EVC and the designation will fall to the headteacher. They will be specifically invited to Group Leader training in the Autumn 2004.
12. More specific training has also been offered to teachers at cost price, including:
 - basic Expedition Leader Award (for staff taking groups out on day walks/overnight expeditions)
 - 6-hour first aid course (for staff running non-adventurous off-site activities)
 - 16-hour Outdoor First Aid course (for staff running adventurous activities)
13. Further training is also being developed to meet the needs of schools and the youth service. The main drive is to provide training for group leaders (existing and new) in organising, running and evaluating off-site visits.
14. Other training options currently being explored include:
 - further risk assessment workshops
 - specialist training for particular types of visits (e.g. ski trips, exchange visits, overseas expeditions)
 - adventure activities: National Governing Body qualifications (the industry standard for that individual activity, e.g. canoeing, sailing, hill walking)

Monitoring Off-Site Activities and Visits

15. Off-site visits are currently monitored through a system of approval and notification outlined in Appendix 2. In summary, off-site visits require the approval of the Head Teacher or Youth Services Manager. Notification is required if the visit is –
 1. 50 miles or more from a school; or
 2. over 8 hours in duration; or
 3. involves an overnight stay or outdoor adventurous activities; or
 4. overseas.

16. Such notification requires details of the trip and any relevant risk assessments. Information is entered onto a database and weekly updates are sent to the Education Management Team, Outdoor Education Adviser, Schools' Health and Safety Officer and the Emergency Planning Unit.
17. The next development for monitoring off-site visits is for the advisory team to observe trips with the following objectives –
 1. provide feedback to the party leader and supervisors
 2. provide feedback to the EVC and Head Teacher
 3. support the development of new teachers, inexperienced party leaders/teachers, NQTs
 4. disseminate good practice across all schools

This form of monitoring has already taken place in both primary and secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee consider this report and identify any areas of concern.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.

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