

EDUCATIONAL VISITS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

Rikkyo School in England believes that pupils have a unique opportunity during their time at the School with its proximity to London and the main centre of the UK Government, to learn a great deal about the history, artistic and other achievements of one of the world's most important nations. There are also many historic houses within a short distance of the School, most of which are open to the public.

Accordingly, it has been the policy of the School since its foundation in 1972 to arrange accompanied trips twice a year to London, Oxford, Cambridge and other towns for the students. However, this brings obligations on the School to ensure the health and safety of its employees and students when not on the School's premises. To enable this to be done, assessments of the risks associated with outside activities must be made, hazards identified and eliminated or controlled to an acceptable level and staff, students and parents made aware of the risks and accepting them. This procedure has been drafted with the assistance of a publication issued by the DFE entitled 'Health & Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits', and is divided into the following five sections:

1. PLANNING AND PREPARATION
2. APPROVALS PROCESS
3. INFORMATION FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS DURING VISIT
4. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
5. POST EVENT EVALUATION
6. FORMS

1. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Each visit must be treated separately. Where the nature of the Visit is similar to another one the Risk Assessment can be duplicated but each must relate to the actual premises involved, which will differ materially: one Museum is not exactly like another.

Once the "target" for a possible Visit has been selected it is always beneficial to contact the administration of the "target" and discuss with them their experiences of school visits. They will generally not only have good advice, but probably also a printed Guide describing the facilities (toilets, restaurant, access by private and public transport, etc.) and giving helpful hints on how the students can best benefit from a visit.

Sometimes they will offer staff as guides on the day of the visit and, particularly for the younger students, questionnaires for them to complete by observations made during their Visit. This not only engenders a competitive spirit, but also makes the visit more challenging and interesting for the students.

- 1 -

The School then needs to decide what the main objective of the visit is to be. If it is planned as a teaching aid – to amplify class work, for example – it is important that the students have appropriate pre-preparation in class so that they can gain the most benefit from their visit. Material provided by the institution needs to be carefully examined to ensure that it focuses on the matters the School wishes to highlight. It is a matter of judgement by the leader of the visit whether or not the institution's Guide is used or only relevant extracts. It is advisable to discuss with the institution's staff at an early stage the main purpose of the visit. They may be prepared to offer a specific guide to the relevant exhibits and would certainly be likely to instruct any of their assisting staff on the School's focus of interest.

2. APPROVALS PROCESS

Having made the preliminary decision to proceed with a particular visit, the proposed Visit Leader should then complete the Application Form set out as Appendix I. This Form is designed as an Application to the Headmaster for approval to proceed with the proposed visit, and is largely self-explanatory. Apart from the need to carry out a Risk Assessment, and attach a copy to the Application, there are two other important aspects which must not be overlooked. These are: parental consent and insurance. Both are referred to in specific questions on the Application Form, but some preliminary comments might be helpful.

On parental consent, it is for the Headmaster to decide whether or not he believes that the parents have effectively given consent to their child participating in the visit proposed. If the Leader believes that, because of the nature of the potential risks associated with the proposed visit, the Headmaster may require each parent's individual consent, the Leader must factor this in to the programme by allowing sufficient time to contact the parents and secure their response.

On insurance, there should not normally be a problem. For unusual events, such as flying in a helicopter or boarding an active service warship, the (third party) organiser of the event will generally want confirmation from the School that insurance cover is in place. This is normally achieved by notifying the School's insurers of the proposed activity, who will then progress cover with the policy underwriters and confirm cover in writing with or without a charge for an additional premium. Here, again, it is important to ensure that enough time is allowed to complete these necessary preliminaries.

The School Business Manager/Deputy Bursar is the first point of contact on this, who should obtain an early indication from the School's insurers if there is likely to be an additional premium charge for covering the risk.

RISK ASSESSMENT forms a very important part of the planning process. A suggested format is attached at Appendix II with guidance notes as Appendix IIa. A completed sample Form for a typical School Visit is attached as Appendix IIb for assistance. The completed Form must be attached to the Application when given to the Headmaster for approval.

- 2 -

The Headmaster may wish to discuss some aspects of the proposal in detail and the Leader may wish to have a preliminary discussion with him to clarify his view on marginal issues. In the normal course, assuming there are no problems, the Headmaster will issue Permission for the Proposed Visit to proceed in the form set out as Appendix III.

3. INFORMATION FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

A vital part of executing a successful Visit is to ensure that all participating are aware well in advance of what the Visit is aiming to achieve, how the aim is to be achieved, and what emergency arrangements are in place should something go wrong or the unexpected occur. The purpose of the Risk Assessment is to tease out such possibilities, and provide a practical solution, but not every eventuality can be foreseen and not everyone can be fitted with an appropriate solution. So it is important that all those participating, including the students, are fully informed of what is planned and what to do if something goes wrong.

First there should be a comprehensive list of those attending the visit. A Form for completion is attached as Appendix IV. This should be given to every staff member on the Visit with at least two copies left at the School, one for the Headmaster and one for the Headmaster's Secretary. Additional copies may be circulated by the Headmaster's Secretary to those who need to know, e.g. the School Matron. It is important that the list is checked immediately before departure and any changes notified to the Headmaster's Secretary BEFORE departure.

Students also need to have basic information about the visit. This should be set out in the Form shown as Appendix V.

Finally, an Emergency Contact Information Sheet (Appendix VI) should be completed.

4. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of a serious accident resulting in death or injury of one or more of the students 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 accompany members of staff should accompany the injured student(s) to hospital. Ensuring that the rest of the group were safe and looked after, and informing the Headmaster or Duty Teacher of what had happened would be the next task of the Group Leader, who would need to give as full, calm and factual account of 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. A full record should be kept of the incident, the injuries and of the actions taken.

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. Students should be discouraged from talking to the media.

- 3 -

5. POST-EVALUATION OF THE VISIT

Within 14 days of the completion of the Visit, the Post-Evaluation Form (Appendix VII) should be completed by the Leader and given to the Headmaster. This is an important opportunity to review whether the initial aims of the Visit were achieved, in whole or in part, and what (if any) lessons can be learnt from any untoward incidents which occurred. It is particularly important that past Evaluation Forms be available to future potential Leaders of Visits so that they can benefit from the previous experiences.

6. FORMS

These are as follows:-

Appendix I – Application to School Headmaster for Approval of an Educational Visit (model Form 1)

Appendix II – Risk Assessment (Form 2)

Appendix IIa – Risk Assessment – Guidance Notes (Form 2A)

Appendix IIb – Risk Assessment Completed Sample Form (Form 2)

Appendix III – Headmaster's Permission to Proceed (Form 3)

Appendix IV – List of Participants Form 4)

Appendix V – Basic Information for Participants (Form 5)

Appendix VI – Emergency Contact Information Sheet (Form 6)

Appendix VII – Post-Visit Evaluation Form (Form 7)

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