

# St. Martin's Catholic Primary School



## Educational Visits and Offsite Procedures

*This policy should be read in the light of our:*

- ❖ **Our Mission** to foster the personal development and academic achievement of each child by providing a caring and creative environment that adheres to the foundations and values of the Catholic Faith.
- ❖ **Our Vision** to inspire all to lead, through love and service, the life of purpose and excellence that God wants for us.

Approved by Committee:

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April 15

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Approved by FGB

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## **Educational visits and off-site activities policy**

### **Vision for the school:**

To inspire all to lead, through love and service, the life of purpose and excellence that God wants for us

Well planned and executed educational visits provide our pupils with valuable experiences which enhance their learning at school. Providing a variety of 'real-life' opportunities for our children enables them to achieve a fuller understanding of the world around them through direct experience. Educational visits are an essential element of good primary practice.

### **1. Purposes**

Educational Visits can provide stimulus and support to work being covered as part of the school curriculum. It may be that a visit provides an effective stimulus at the start of a unit of work; alternatively teachers may decide to use an educational visit at any time during a project to enhance and support the curriculum. Wherever or whatever the venue, teachers should ensure that the educational benefits to the children are maximised.

### **2. Guidelines**

The organisation of an educational visit is crucial to its success. With rigorous organisation and control, a visit should provide a rich, learning experience for the pupils.

The following guidelines support the planning and implementation of educational visits organised at St Martin's Catholic Primary School. [All planning for educational visits must also comply with the RBC regulations, advice and procedures for off-site and hazardous activities, which are published separately.](#)

### **3. Role of the Executive Head/Head of School**

The Executive Head/Head of School will ensure that an Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) is nominated to oversee and co-ordinate all educational visits.

Alongside the EVC, the Executive Head/Head of School will also ensure that:

- a suitable visit leader has been approved;
- all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
- the risk assessment is complete and that it is safe to make the visit;
- any training needs have been met;
- the group leader has experience in supervising and controlling the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively;
- the group leader has relevant skills, qualifications and experience if acting as an instructor, and knows the location of the activity;
- all supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children and have appropriate clearance;
- the governing body has approved the visit if necessary (in the case of residential trips or trips into London);
- parents have signed the relevant consent and medical forms;
- arrangements have been made for the medical and special educational needs of all the children;
- the mode of travel is appropriate;
- travel times out and back are known;
- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover;
- the address and phone number of the visit's venue is known and school has a contact name;

- the names of all the adults and pupils in the travelling group, and the contact details of parents and the staff's and volunteers' next of kin are recorded.
- that all relevant paperwork has been approved by Brian Mallett, Insurance & Risk Assessment Officer at Reading Borough Council.

#### **4. Role of the Visit Leader**

One teacher, the group leader, is responsible overall for the supervision and conduct of the visit, and should have been approved by the Executive Head/Head of School. The visit leader should:

- ensure that the Executive Head/Head of School has been fully informed about the trip prior to making the booking;
- follow the booking procedures below and as detailed in the Staff Handbook;
- appoint a deputy;
- be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range;
- be suitably qualified if instructing an activity and be conversant in the good practice for that activity if not;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including a preparatory visit to the venue if possible, and the briefing of group members and parents;
- undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment;
- have regard to the health and safety of the group at all times;
- know all the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability;
- observe the guidance set out for teachers and other adults below;
- ensure that pupils understand their responsibilities (see responsibilities of pupils below).

#### **5. Other teachers and adults involved in a visit**

Teachers on school-led visits act as employees of the Local Authority or of the Governing Body. They will therefore be acting in the course of their normal employment during their normal hours. They will be acting under an agreement with their Executive Head/Head of School and Governors if some of their time on the visit falls outside normal hours.

Teacher and other adults on the visit must:

- do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- care for each individual pupil as any reasonable parent would;
- follow the instructions of the visit leader and help with control and discipline. Nonteachers should generally not have sole charge of pupils except where risks to health and safety are minimal;
- consider stopping the visit or the activity if they think the risk to the health or safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

#### **6. Responsibilities of pupils**

The visit leader should make it clear to pupils that they must:

- not take unnecessary risks;
- follow the instructions of their group leader and other adults;
- dress and behave sensibly and responsibly;
- look out for anything that might hurt or threaten anyone in the group and tell their group leader about it;
- not undertake any task that they fear or that they think will be dangerous. Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils should be fulfilled in other ways.

## **7. Parents**

- The visit leader should ensure that parents are given information about the purpose and details of the visit and are invited to any briefing sessions for longer visits.
- The visit leader should also tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit by, for example, reinforcing the visit's code of conduct.
- Special arrangements may be necessary for parents for whom English is a second language. Parents must:
  - provide the visit leader with emergency contact number(s);
  - sign the consent form;
  - give the visit leader any relevant information about their child's health which might be relevant to the visit.

## **8. Planning off-site visits**

- Whether the visit is to a local park, museum, swimming pool, or includes a residential stay, it is essential that careful planning takes place. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to avoid them.
- The Executive Head/Head of School is responsible for planning all off-site visits. In practice, the detailed planning is delegated to the organiser of the visit or the visit leader, but the Executive Head/Head of School must be satisfied that the person planning the visit is qualified to do so and has the necessary experience.
- The organiser / visit leader must agree all plans with the Executive Head/Head of School

## **9. Risk Assessment.**

A risk assessment should always be carried out before setting off on a visit. The risk assessment will decide the adult-to-child ratio for each visit. (See guidance under 'Supervision').

The risk assessment should include the following considerations:

- what are the risks?
- who is affected by them?
- what safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- can the visit leader guarantee that these safety measures will be provided?
- what steps will be taken in an emergency?
- what is the acceptable ratio of adults to children for this visit? (See section on Supervision.)

The visit leader and other supervisors should continually reassess the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action if pupils are in danger.

The visit leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:

- the type of activity and the level at which it is being undertaken;
- the location;
- the competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff;
- the group members' age, competence, fitness and temperament;
- pupils with special educational or medical needs;
- quality and suitability of available equipment;
- seasonal conditions, weather and timing.

## 10. Exploratory visits.

Wherever possible the visit leader should undertake an exploratory visit to:

- ensure that the venue is suitable to meet the aims and objectives of the school visit;
- assess potential areas and levels of risk;
- ensure that the venue can cater for the needs of the staff and pupils in the group;
- ensure that the visit leader is familiar with the area before taking a party of young people.

If it is not feasible to carry out an exploratory visit, a minimum measure should be to contact the venue, seeking assurances about the venue's appropriateness for the visiting group. In addition, it may be worth seeking views from other schools who have recently visited the venue. In some cases, such as when taking walking parties to remote areas, it may be appropriate to obtain local information from the Tourist Boards.

## 11. First Aid

First Aid provision should be considered when assessing the risks of the visit. For adventurous activities, visits which involve overnight stays, or visits abroad it is sensible to have at least one trained first-aider in the group. The visit leader should have a working knowledge of first aid and all adults in the group should know how to contact emergency services. The minimum first-aid provision is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box;
- a person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

First-aid should be available and accessible at all times. If a first-aider is attending to one member of the group, there should be adequate first-aid cover for the other pupils. The Executive Head/Head of School should take this into account when assessing what level of first-aid facilities will be needed. The contents of a first-aid kit will depend on what activities are planned.

## 12. Supervision

It is important to have a sufficient ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any off-site visit.

The factors to take into consideration include:

- sex, age and ability of group;
- special needs pupils;
- nature of activities;
- experience of adults in off-site supervision;
- duration and nature of the journey;
- type of any accommodation;
- competence of staff, both general and on specific activities.

There should always be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency. When visits are to remote areas or involved hazardous activities, the risks may be greater and supervision levels should be set accordingly.

As general guidelines, the following ratio\* of adults to children should be used:

- Foundation Stage, visits off-site may be as low as: 1:2
- Key Stage One, visits off-site on foot: 1:10
- Key Stage One, visits off site involving public transport: 1:6
- Key Stage Two, visits off-site on foot: 1:20

- Key Stage Two, visits off-site involving public transport: 1:15
- Regardless of these suggested ratios, each visit will be assessed individually through the school's risk assessment procedure for educational visits.

\*These ratios do not include residential visits.

Where a high adult-to-pupil ratio is required, it is not always feasible to use school staff alone. Parents with appropriate clearance may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school and the pupil group.

All adult supervisors, including school staff and parent helpers must understand their roles and responsibilities at all times. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision, such as those with special needs or those with behavioural difficulties. Teachers retain responsibility for the group at all times.

For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone in a one to one situation with a pupil unless they have full enhanced DBS clearance.

If the school is leading an adventure activity, such as canoeing, the LA or Governing Body must ensure that the visit leader and other supervisors are suitably qualified to lead and instruct the activity before they agree that the visit can take place. Qualifications can be checked with the National Governing Body of each sporting activity.

Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils should take place. The visit leader should establish rendezvous points and tell pupils what to do if they become separated from the party.

### **13. Preparing Pupils**

Providing information and guidance to pupils is an important part of preparing for a school visit. Pupils should have a clear understanding about what is expected of them and what the visit will entail. Pupils must understand what standard of behaviour is expected of them and why rules must be followed. The lack of control and discipline can be a major contributory factor when accidents occur. Pupils should also be told about any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own and others' safety.

Pupils should be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating their own curricular work and have opportunities to take different roles within an activity. This could include considering any health and safety issues.

### **14. Participation**

- Pupils should be assessed to ensure that they are capable of undertaking the proposed activities. During the visit they should not be coerced into activities they fear. Pupils whose behaviour is such that the visit leader is concerned for their, or others' safety, should be withdrawn from the activity. On residential visits the visit leader should consider whether such pupils will return home early.

### **15. Information to pupils**

- It is for the visit leader to decide how to provide information, but they should be satisfied that the pupils understand key safety information. Pupils should understand:

- the aims and objectives of the visit / activity;
- background information about the place to be visited;
- how to avoid specific dangers and why they should follow rules;
- why safety precautions are in place;
- why special safety precautions are in place for anyone with disabilities;
- what standard of behaviour is expected from pupils;
- who is responsible for the group;
- what to do if approached by a stranger;
- what to do if separated from the group;
- emergency procedures;
- rendezvous procedures.

### **16. Transport and pupils**

Pupils using transport on a visit should be made aware of basic safety rules such as:

- arrive on time and wait for the transport away from the road, track, etc.
- do not rush towards the transport when it arrives;
- wear seatbelts and stay seated while travelling on transport;
- make sure bags do not block aisles on the transport;
- never attempt to get on or off the moving transport;
- never throw things out of the transport vehicle's windows;
- never get off a vehicle held up by traffic lights or in traffic;
- never run about while transport is moving or pass someone on steps or stairs;
- never kneel or stand on seats or otherwise impede the driver's vision;
- never distract or disturb the driver;
- stay clear of automatic doors / manual doors after boarding or leaving the transport;
- after leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move off before crossing the road;
- if children have to cross roads to get to the transport always wait for an adult to supervise crossing;
- if children feel unwell while travelling, make sure a teacher or the person who is otherwise responsible for the group is aware.

### **17. Pupils with special educational and medical needs**

Every effort should be made to accommodate children with special educational or medical needs whilst maintaining the safety of everyone on the visit. Special attention should be given to appropriate supervision ratios and additional safety measures may need to be addressed at the planning stage.

### **18. Communicating with Parents / Guardians**

Parents need to be aware that the teachers on the visit will be acting in their place – 'in loco parentis' – and will be exercising the same care that a prudent parent would. The following information on matters that might affect pupils' health and safety is useful to parents, and will be included in a letter to parents / guardians prior to a visit:

- dates of the visit;
- times of departure and return;
- mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company;
- details of accommodation with security and supervisory arrangements on site;
- names of leader, or other staff and of other accompanying adults;

- visit's objectives;
- details of the activities planned and of how the assessed risks will be managed;
- insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, cancellation and medical cover. Any cover to be arranged by the parents, if appropriate, will be requested;
- clothing and equipment to be taken;
- money to be taken;
- the information to be given by parents and what they will be asked to consent to.

## **19. Parental consent**

The school will seek consent for:

- any visits involving young children;
- any adventure activities;
- any residential visits.

If parents withhold consent absolutely the pupil should not be taken on the visit, but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way, wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent, the Executive Head/Head of School will need to consider whether the child may be taken on the visit or not.

## **20. Residential visits**

Hostels, Hotels, Campsites

The school will bear in mind the following:

- the visit leader and supervisors should ideally have rooms adjoining the young people's – we will endeavour to obtain a floor plan of the rooms reserved for the group's use in advance;
- the immediate accommodation area should be exclusively for the use of the group;
- access by staff to student rooms must be available at all times;
- separate male and female sleeping areas for pupils and adults;
- ensure that the whole party are aware of the lay-out of the accommodation, its fire precautions / exits, its regulations and routing, and that everyone can identify key personnel;
- security arrangements – where the reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visitors;
- \*ratios of adult to child supervision will comply with the requirements of the venue;
- ensure that locks / shutters etc. work on all the rooms used by the group;
- storage of clothes, luggage, equipment etc., particularly safekeeping of valuables;
- adequate lighting – it is advisable to bring a torch;
- provision for sick, disabled pupils or those with special needs
- safety in rooms (electrical connections, secure balconies);
- recreational accommodation / facilities for the group.

## **21. Coastal visits**

Visit leaders and other staff should be aware that many of the incidents affecting school children have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming.

The visit leader should bear the following points in mind in the risk assessment of a coastal activity:

- tides and sandbanks are potential hazards so timings and exit routes should be checked;
- group members must be aware of warning signs and flags;

- a base on the beach to which members of the group may return if separated must be established;
  - hazards such as glass, barbed wire and sewage outflows etc. should be identified;
  - any out of bounds areas should be agreed before any activity begins;
  - cliff tops can be highly dangerous for school groups even during daylight. The group should keep to the path at all times.
- Visit leaders should consider whether it is safe for pupils to ride mountain bikes on coastal paths.

## 22. Swimming

- Swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters can be potentially dangerous activities for a school group.
- Swimming in the sea on a coastal visit, will **not** be allowed for St Martin's pupils. Paddling will only be allowed as part of a supervised activity, preferably in recognised bathing areas which have official surveillance. Pupils should always be in sight of their teachers. One teacher should always stay out of the water for better surveillance.
- Where paddling is to be allowed on a visit, a ratio of 1 adult: 4 children is a minimum.

## 23. Farm visits

- St Martin's recognises that farms can be dangerous even for the people who work on them. Taking children to a farm will be very carefully planned, and the risks to be assessed should include those arising from the misuse of farm machinery and the hazards associated with E-coli 0157 food poisoning and other infections.
- The proposed farm will be checked to ensure that it is well managed, that it has a good reputation for safety standards and animal welfare and that it maintains good washing facilities and clean grounds and public areas. An exploratory visit should be carried out.

Pupils will not be allowed to:

- place their faces against the animals or their hands in their mouths after feeding them;
- eat until they have washed their hands;
- sample any animal foodstuffs;
- drink from farm taps (other than in designated public facilities);
- ride on tractors or other machines;
- play in the working farm area.