

## **MARY DEAN'S C. of E. PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **OUTDOOR EDUCATION VISITS AND OFFSITE POLICY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy forms a framework for all Outdoor Education Activities at Mary Dean's C. of E. Primary School. It takes into account guidelines provided by Plymouth City Council in its own policy for Outdoor Education Visits and Offsite Activities.

This policy sets out the specific commitments and responsibilities of all staff, volunteers and pupils involved in outdoor activities at this school.

#### **RATIONALE**

At Mary Dean's C. of E. Primary school we seek to ensure that the National Curriculum is delivered to all children, regardless of social background, race, gender or differences in ability. All are entitled to the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. To enrich the curriculum for our pupils, we also offer a range of educational visits and other activities that add to and complement what they learn in school.

The school believes that these outdoor educational activities not only extend the pupils personal horizons through greater appreciation and understanding of the environment, but also provides them with valuable opportunities to take on personal responsibility, co-operate with and respect others and to develop their own self esteem.

#### **CHARGING FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

All education during school hours is free. We do not charge for any activity undertaken as part of the National Curriculum. There are some circumstances when the school can make a charge for certain activities. The governing body has a 'Charging and Remissions' Policy that details the full range of activities where a charge can be made. A copy of this is available from the school office.

#### **PRE-VISITS**

In order to undertake a full and comprehensive assessment of risks, a pre-visit is essential. In rare cases information can be obtained from another user school or from a trusted provider when the costs or practicalities of a pre-visit are arguably prohibitive. Risks should be re-assessed from time to time on an agreed frequency. It is the responsibility of the visit organiser to ensure that a pre visit is carried out or that suitable information on both quality and safety is obtained as part of the risk management planning. Staff undertaking a pre visit should make up a list of questions in advance of the visit to make best use of the time.

#### **MINIMUM RATIO OF ADULTS TO PUPILS**

At Mary Dean's C of E Primary School we follow LA Guidance on minimum staff/pupil ratios:

Age 4 and under (Nursery)	1:6
Age 5-7 (R, Y1, Y2)	1:6
Age 8-9 (Y3, Y4)	1:15
Ages above, in the UK	1:15

All students who travel abroad 1:10  
Category B activities – ratios specified for different activities.

In all cases one adult included in the above ratios must be a teacher. It must be stressed that these are minimum ratios and that visit organisers must consider under risk management the following factors when deciding on the final adult/child ratio: SEN and medical needs; type of activities to be undertaken; experience and competence of all adults accompanying the visit; duration of the visit; competence and behavioural history of the group of children/young people.

### **VOLUNTARY HELP**

At Mary Dean's C of E Primary School, we are aware that many educational visits could not take place without the goodwill of volunteer helpers. Volunteers will normally be people well known to the school as either parents or governors (per LA policy).

Volunteers will be told that they have the responsibility to follow the instructions of the visit organisers (Party Leader) and that the visit organiser (Party Leader) retains overall responsibility.

The school will appoint volunteer helpers as far in advance of the visit as practical and will provide opportunities for those volunteers to meet the pupils, for whom they will have responsibility, learning their names and getting to know them.

The school retains the right to make the final decision as to which volunteers accompany a visit, as not all volunteers may be suitable.

The visit organiser is responsible for ensuring that each volunteer knows precisely what his or her role is and understands that they have a responsibility to carry out that role.

Where children are organised in small groups, a child will not generally be placed in a group for which his/her parent is responsible.

All volunteers accompanying a residential visit will be required to obtain an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

Volunteers who accompany a group on a day trip but who do not have a CRB check must only work with a group alongside a member of staff. Such Volunteers should not work alone with a group.

### **GAINING INFORMED CONSENT**

For visits and activities that usually take place within the school day, the governing body approves all such visits in advance. We follow the Local Authority's guidelines relating to health and safety, and we ask parents to give written permission for their child to take part in any activity that takes children off the school site. If we do not receive this written permission, the child will be unable to participate. When joining the school, each parent is asked to sign a document giving permission for their child to take part in activities within the locality during their time at the school.

Some activities are planned that naturally require higher levels of risk; continue on after the school day or normally active period; some overnight. When this is the case a specific risk assessment is carried out that forms the basis of the briefing to parents and is therefore an integral part of the consent they give. Consent from the Headteacher and in some cases the Local Authority is required. Refer to Plymouth City Council's 'Outdoor Education Visits and Offsite Activities'. The Headteacher has a copy.

## **KEEPING RECORDS**

To maintain a record of the planning for any significant offsite activity, including the risk assessment, a file will be produced containing all the key evidence. This copy will be kept by the Educational Visits Co-ordinator Mrs Tracey Jones. Separate copies of planning for each significant offsite activity (e.g. residentials) will be kept in the School Office while groups are offsite.

Managers should always be able to gain access to this information, day and night and in any emergency. The internal form **PSOE1** provides a planning checklist and consequently should be used from the very beginning. When any further assistance is required, copy the form in its current state and send the copy to the Outdoor Education Manager together with your questions. This form requires at least two different people to sign it and therefore affords some protection each double-checking each other.

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

The school follows the guidelines on Risk Assessment in the LA Guidance. Further support for staff planning for risk management is available from the Educational Visits Co-ordinator Mrs Jones.

A risk assessment is used to help plan all educational visits and offsite activities. The EVC delegates this responsibility to the member of staff organising the visit or activity. This must then be approved before the visit/activity is allowed to go ahead. The risk assessment will include the SEN/medical needs of the specific group of children participating. In completing a risk assessment consideration will be given to the companies and organisations, that could provide service.

Many now provide information to help with this task and will complete questionnaires that seek a commitment from them. The practice of requesting large amounts of risk assessments is not considered a reliable measure and should be discontinued in favour of the use of **Form PSOE5**.

A provider's risk assessments will not be relied upon as meeting the requirements expected of a Party Leader.

The school has a standard format for risk assessment (**PCC version – PSOE1**).

Many aspects of a trip are covered by generic risk assessments and these should be referred to rather than be repeated.

Specific aspects of a trip will be assessed and this work, wherever possible, will be carried out by the small group of staff who will attend the visit.

Risk Assessments are then amended when further visits are organised.

## **TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS**

Parents will always be informed as to the type of transport being provided for an educational visit.

The school will only use hired transport approved by the LA. Seat belts must be provided on all seats and it is school policy that each child will wear a seat belt whilst travelling on a school visit. The visit organiser is responsible for the conduct and behaviour of the children whilst they are travelling. The school must ensure that there is sufficient supervisory staff to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children whilst travelling (two adults to each vehicle minimum – must meet supervision ratios). An adult will sit at the emergency exit at the back of the coach.

Public transport will only be used in exceptional circumstances. An increased adult/pupil ratio must be considered and close supervision of the children must be ensured.

Private cars will only be used in exceptional circumstances. When it is used, the school will ensure that each driver has:

Valid driving licence

Vehicle road fund licence and MOT certificate

Vehicle insurance valid for carrying passengers on a school offsite visit

Volunteers will be asked to sign a declaration that all these requirements are in place.

Where teachers offer to use their own vehicles for transporting children, they must ensure they have appropriate insurance cover (business use) for conveying pupils during the course of their professional duties.

## **APPROVALS**

In addition teachers/staff and governors/managers agree the corresponding programme of visits and activities at the beginning of each academic year.

Specific approval for trips is obtained by:

Initial approval from the Headteacher / or EVC prior to any commitment (refer to any form used for this purpose).

To gain approval visit organisers should:

- Outline of the event with objectives
- Impact assessment on schools procedures
- Cost
- Party leader capability
- Risk

Approval of the main arrangements prior to departure (5 weeks).

Approval from the DfLL Outdoor Education Manager for Category C events (3 weeks prior to departure).

## **ACTION PRIOR TO DEPARTURE**

### **Prior to your departure the following must be in place:**

- A copy of the arrangements with the programme (itinerary), risk assessment, contact details and a full list of participants, lodged in the school office.
- An Emergency Contact sheet which highlights the links between the remote site and the school site procedures. Additionally a cascade phone call system to contact the homes of participants, should the need arise, may be useful for larger events. A contact list for mobile telephones.
- Procedures for ensuring that groups working away from the main base and from the remote sites if they are residential have returned safely or are noted over due and appropriate action is taken.
- A copy of the risk assessment together with all the management issues it highlights. All copies of any providers quality and safety assurance, their **AALA License** and Insurance Certificate.
- The insurance detail with all the emergency and incident contact numbers for when help is required.

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