

## SHERRARDSWOOD SCHOOL

### EDUCATIONAL TRIPS AND VISITS POLICY

#### PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

##### INTRODUCTION

At Sherrardswood 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 your son's or daughter's 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, farms and Roman remains and other subject areas to support the curriculum. There are regular theatre trips for pupils of all levels.

We run Modern Foreign Language trips abroad for pupils from Year 6 upwards. We run Geography field trips, Art trips and other trips to support the learning of students undertaking public examinations at GCSE, AS and A2 level.

We have an annual ski trip and the destination varies from year to year.

##### INFORMATION ON PLANNED TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Your son's or daughter's school calendar lists the trips and visits that are due to take place over the coming term/academic year. You will always be notified in advance:

- If your child has been selected for a sports team, and will be given a list of fixtures. 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, or collection from another place, such as a theatre.
- 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 always 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 or on a day trip abroad, which is likely to involve a very early departure and a late return.

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### CONSENT

We require your specific, individual written consent if we are to take your son or daughter 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 your son or daughter 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 you to support the school in ensuring that your son or daughter follows the instructions given either by a member of staff, or by a qualified instructor, and uses 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).

## **PART 2: GUIDANCE FOR STAFF INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL VISITS**

### INTRODUCTION

We have a large number of trips, out of school activities and visits at Sherrardswood School, which are an important part of our educational ethos. We expect that every member our 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 EDUCATION VISITS COORDINATOR

The Bursar, Health and Safety Manager, is our Education Visits Coordinator (EVC). He supports the Headmistress in the process of approving visits. He helps staff involved with organising the finance to support a trip and other matters connected with Health and Safety. Records are kept. All new staff have a session on planning school visits as part of their induction training.

### ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

Every trip or visit, no matter how short, must be planned in advance by the member of staff who is 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. At Sherrardswood School the group leader is expected to see the Bursar to cover practical guidance on conducting risk assessments, emergency procedures, the school's insurance cover, budgeting for visits and the circumstances under which a visit might be terminated or curtailed, for instance if weather or sea conditions suddenly deteriorated. With the exception of the very shortest visits, such as to our

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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. A Deputy Leader is nominated for all trips. S/He may not hold the qualifications of the Group Leader; but is nevertheless capable of taking over that role, if necessary.

No one should drive the school minibus unless s/he has qualified as a minibus driver. For any minibus journey that lasts for longer than 30 minutes, there should be a second member of staff who is also a qualified 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.

### PERSONAL LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

The law places the Group Leader "in loco parentis". The DCSF Guidance "The Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide," ([www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)), should be read by all Group Leaders. It explains that their responsibility is to "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 Sherrardswood 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.

Sherrardswood School has £25 Million of Employers' Liability Insurance and £25 Million 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 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.

Sherrardswood 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

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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.*

- Obtain advice from the Headmistress on suitable dates, precedents etc
- Discuss preliminary plan, including purpose, location, transport, hotels, activities, itinerary, number & age of participants with Headmistress
- 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). See the Bursar
- 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 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. See the Bursar*
- 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. Office staff may assist with day trips and theatre visits. We do not usually encourage parents to accompany school visits, although we welcome them at all sports fixtures.
- *If parent volunteers participate: Arrange for any volunteers participating in the trip to obtain an enhanced CRB disclosure. (The Bursar'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)*

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- *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 headmistress and Bursar Staff/Pupil Ratios

The DCSF recommended staff to pupil ratios for visits and off-site activities is:

Ratio	Pupils' Year Group
1:6	1- 3 inclusive (with a higher ration for the under 5s)
1:10	Years 4 – 6
1:15/20	Years 7 upwards (with a larger ration permitted for over 16s)
1:10	All visits abroad

### The Risk Assessment

All Group Leaders conduct risk assessments on the potential hazards involved in a visit, trip or activity that they are planning. The steps that they should follow are set out in the model risk assessment form that is part of DCSF Guidance "The Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A Good Practice Guide," ([www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)). This form can be downloaded and guides the user in:

- 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 Sherrardswood 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. At Sherrardswood School, the Bursar maintains a dossier of generic risk assessments that cover sports fixtures, theatre and museum visits and most of our regular visits.

After Permission is Granted, but well in advance of the trip,

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- 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/acceptance*, together with a *deposit by a specific date/payment*. *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 Medical data held on PASS. Discuss with the Bursar concerns about special arrangements that may be required for handling any specific medical or SEN issues.
- Payments are collected by the Finance staff who set up a unique cost centre in the school accounts for the trip.
- Arrange for the Finance staff to pay *deposits on hotels, flights, activity centre etc*, the costs of tickets.

### *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 Bursary to bill parents for the balance of the cost of the trip*
- *Arrange for the Bursary to pay the balance to the airline, hotel, travel company etc.*
- *Arrange with the Bursar for loan of school mobile with pre-paid SIM card valid for the country to be visited to be available on a specific date.*
- *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).*

### *Six Weeks in Advance*

- *Give the Bursary details of requirements for foreign currency/travellers' cheques/pre-paid foreign currency card. Agree collection arrangements. (Group Leaders will normally be required to collect and counter-sign their own travellers' cheques from the bank or airport terminal and will be required to produce their passport details for a pre-paid foreign currency card).*
- *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 number of the school mobile phone issued to the Group Leader.*

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- *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 traveling.*
- *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 traveling first aid kit from the office

### *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*
- *Collect travellers' cheques from bank (if not collecting from airport terminal). Note their serial numbers before storing in safe until collection, with the foreign currency ordered by the Bursary/Store pre-paid foreign currency card in safe. Give copy to Bursary.*
- 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, the School Site Manager 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,*

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- Emergency contact numbers for the Headmistress/Deputy Head/, Member of the SMT designated to be on-call, the Bursar
- Out of hours contact details for the School Caretaking or Security Staff.
- *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
- *Copies of the serial numbers of travellers' cheques.*

### The Day Prior to Departure/The Day of Departure

- Collect tickets, *and any currency needs form the finance office staff.*
- 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 traveling first aid kit(s). Check contents.
- Collect packed lunch
- Collect School Mobile and charger.

### 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.

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- Looking after – or reminding pupils to look after – passports and valuables
- Storing cash, travellers' cheques 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 headmistress or bursar, in the first instance, who will then inform 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. The Group Leader is expected 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 Headmistress or on-call member of the SMT 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 Headmistress 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 Sherrardswood 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 web, local radio) for communicating with those whose children are not affected.

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Where possible, communication with the media should be left to the Headmistress. 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, or the Bursar (out of school hours). The Group Leader will then instigate the 'telephone tree' and staff on the trip will then 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 Headmistress with a report on the visit, and any 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 and:

- *Instruct all pupils to delete their records of the school mobile*
- *Remind all staff to delete any records of pupils' mobile numbers that they may have acquired during the visit,*

### Expenditure

The Group Leader is responsible for returning any unused cash or travellers' cheques to the Finance Office. Any unspent foreign currency 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.

### Report for Governors

The Headmistress reports to the Governors a synopsis of all the school trips and visits that have taken place.

Consent and Guidance Documents are available separately