

# 26. EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

## PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

### Introduction

At Westminster Cathedral Choir School not all learning takes place inside a classroom: we believe that educational visits are an important component in our curriculum. Visits give our pupils opportunities to develop resourcefulness and initiative, whilst spending time together more informally. Each trip is different: some are directly related to the curriculum, others are designed to promote social awareness, or enhance physical skills, self-reliance and team-work. Others will extend their knowledge of the world. The common factor is that they all broaden the educational experience of boys at WCCS.

### Our trips and visits

We regularly take pupils on day trips to historic sites, museums, galleries, natural features, etc. to support the curriculum. There are also regular opportunities to travel overseas, particularly during the school holidays. You can find more about the trips, visits and activities that are available to each year group from our website and our termly diaries.

### Information on planned trips and activities

The termly Diary lists the trips and visits that are due to take place over the coming term, together with a list of planned home and away sports fixtures. You will also always be notified via the Head Master's weekly newsletter. Often in addition we send details of planned trips and activities (particularly those involving overnight stays) well in advance to the relevant parents. Specifically, you will receive information for the following:

- If your child has been selected for a sports team; we 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 your child is engaged on an overseas trip, parents are often invited into the school for a briefing before their son 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

## 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 without signed consent, details of where you may be contacted in an emergency and your son's medical and dietary requirements. The majority of this information is imparted during your son's registration and medical registration. Consent is given by signing the clubs and trips letter at the start of each term; the clubs and trips letter contains a section for parents to inform the school of any changes to their son's medical history. This is sent to you well in advance and must reach the school at least 1 working day before the start of the trip. For overnight or overseas trips a separate letter and permission slip may be used as additional information may be required.

## Safety

Safety is top priority for us. We expect parents to support the school in ensuring that your son 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, or ask him to sit out activities, 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 Westminster Cathedral Choir School, which are an important part of our educational ethos. We expect that every member of our staff endorses the educational value of activities outside the classroom. We encourage everyone 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

Alexander Thomas is our Education Visits Coordinator (EVC). He supports the Head Master in the process of approving visits, ensuring that they are spread through the different age groups, and the school year. He helps staff involved with organising tours, with checking parental consent forms and keeps records of all the appropriate paperwork. He also keeps reports of any accidents or near misses. All staff receive inset training on planning school visits.

## 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 Westminster Cathedral Choir School we arrange for the EVC to hold a training session with all potential Group Leaders, which covers practical guidance on conducting risk assessments, emergency procedures, budgeting for visits and the circumstances under which a visit might be terminated or curtailed; for instance, if weather conditions suddenly deteriorate. With the exception of the very shortest visits, such as to the Cathedral, we expect all Group Leaders either to hold a valid First Aid certificate, or ensure that one of the other teachers accompanying the visit holds one. A Deputy Leader is nominated for all trips; they may not hold the qualifications of the Group Leader, but should be nevertheless capable of taking over that role, if necessary.

## 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 Westminster Cathedral Choir 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.

Westminster Cathedral Choir School has Employers’ Liability Insurance and public liability insurance, as well as a group travel policy that covers most visits inside the UK and overseas. This cover includes that vast majority of activities that could possibly occur on school trips. However any member of staff organising an adventurous or hazardous activity should check, via the Finance Department, whether or not the activity is covered by the school’s policy. An extension can usually be arranged. The Group Leader should ensure that She/he takes a copy of the school’s travel insurance with him/her on all but the shortest of visits.

Westminster Cathedral Choir 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).

### **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 group of pupils to the Cathedral, spending an hour there and walking back. 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. (Group Leaders may draw upon the EVC's stock of existing background material when planning regular repeat visits to familiar destinations, such as museum visits).

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.*

### **At least one term in advance**

- Obtain advice from the EVC on suitable dates, precedents etc
- Discuss preliminary plan, including purpose, location, transport, hotels, activities, itinerary, number & age of participants with EVC
- Calculate the staff to pupil ratio (see below)
- Prepare a draft itinerary, fully costed, to be sent to parents when they sign permission
- 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)
- 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*
- Find other members of staff who are willing to participate in the trip. It is desirable to have at least one member of staff who speaks the language of the country to be visited. We hope that Sports Coaches and Visiting Music Staff will participate in sports and music tours. They are also welcome to help with other visits. 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, and the Head Master or his Deputy deems it necessary. (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)*
- *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*
- *If necessary attend a First Aid course beforehand*

## Staff/Pupil Ratios

The DCSF recommended staff to pupil ratios for visits and off-site activities is shown below. However this may be adjusted in consultation with the EVC given the nature of certain activities and the pupils involved.

| Ratio   | Pupils' Year Group |
|---------|--------------------|
| 1:6     | Year 3 inclusive   |
| 1:10    | Years 4 – 6        |
| 1:15/20 | Years 7 upwards    |
| 1:10    | All visits abroad  |

## The risk assessment

All Group Leaders at Westminster Cathedral Choir School are trained in conducting risk assessments on the potential hazards involved in a visit, trip or activity that they are planning. The School uses a set pro-forma (see Annex 3) approved by the Governors and clerk of works at the Cathedral complex. The steps that they should follow are explained at Staff meetings and a number of previous examples are available on the Staff drive. Further guidance is set out by the DCSF: “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 or 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 or she is satisfied, it will meet the requirements of Westminster Cathedral Choir School, for the activity part of the visit. Any uncertainties should be referred to the EVC. 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 Westminster Cathedral Choir School, the EVC 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 (*one month in advance for overseas or overnight trips, one week in advance for daytime visits*)**

Group leaders will:

- For overnight or overseas trips, a *preliminary* letter will be sent to parents and guardians of the target age group, outlining the purpose of the trip, the programme and the expected maximum cost. At Westminster Cathedral Choir School, we expect that these letters should always be cleared in advance with the EVC. The letter will:
  - seek expressions of interest and/or acceptance, together with a deposit by a specific date or full payment
  - Mention that parents will be invited to a briefing meeting prior to 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 Head Nurse ('Matron'). Discuss with EVC concerns about special arrangements that may be required for handling any specific medical, behavioral or SEN issues
- Collect payment/deposits and arrange with the Finance Department to set up a unique cost centre in the school accounts for the trip or use the appropriate Department budget
- Arrange for the Finance Department to pay appropriate costs
- 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 Finance Department to bill parents for the balance of the cost of the trip/ collect the balance directly from the pupils and hand to the Finance Department for crediting to the trip account
- Arrange for the Bursary to pay the balance to the airline, hotel, travel company etc.
- Arrange with EVC that the Group leader and deputy have mobile phones that work at the proposed location
- 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)

## For overseas trips (four weeks in advance)

Group leaders will:

- *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 mobile phone used by the Group Leader*
  - *The money, kit and equipment that the pupils need. The appropriate dress code of the country*
  - *The medical and visa requirements*
  - *The expected standards of behaviour, and the potential risks of irresponsible behaviour*
  - *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
- Arrange traveling first aid kit with the EVC

## The week of the trip

- Chase parents who have not returned their consent forms. Remind them that their child cannot participate unless the form is received within 1 working day of departure
- *Obtain photocopies of each pupil's passport*
- Check all tickets for accuracy. Store them in the school safe until collection
- 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 EVC 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 number of the mobile phone used by the Group Leader
  - 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*
  - Emergency contact numbers for the Head Master/the EVC, and any Member of the SMT designated to be on-call
  - *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

### **The day prior to departure/ day of departure**

The Group Leader will:

- Collect tickets
- 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

### **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. She/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)
- Setting agreed times and locations for checking pupils when they work or are allowed out unsupervised in small groups
- Enforcing expected standards of behaviour
- 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, a member of staff will take him to the local hospital or clinic. If the trip is outside the UK, She/he will notify the 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. At Westminster Cathedral Choir School we expect the Group Leader to phone the pupil's parents if their child has suffered an accident or injury that is serious enough to require professional medical treatment.

### **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 Head Master 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 Head Master are maintained. He or 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 Westminster Cathedral Choir 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) for communicating with those whose children are not affected.

Communication with the media should be left to the Head Master. 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, and the EVC (out of school hours), who will in turn 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 EVC with reports of accidents and near misses on his/her return. Personal observations and lessons learned are also valuable. The group leader should return all school property, together with a report of any lost or damaged property. He or she should also:

- Instruct all pupils to delete their records of any staff mobiles
- 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 monies to the Finance Department. The school credit card should be returned (if it was taken), 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.

## COVER SHEET

*This cover sheet should be attached to the final paperwork (pupil list, contact details and itinerary) relating to the visit and be given to the Deputy Head Master at least two days before departure*

1) DESTINATION: .....

2) DATES of VISIT: FROM ..... TO

.....

3) TEACHER IN CHARGE TRAVELLING WITH VISIT GROUP

Name.....Phone No

(emergency).....

4) TEACHER SECOND IN CHARGE TRAVELLING WITH VISIT GROUP

Name.....Phone No

(emergency).....

5) ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY CONTACT NO(S) FOR CONTACTING VISIT GROUP

Name.....Phone No

(emergency).....

Dates/ times.....

Name.....Phone No

(emergency).....

Dates/ times.....

6) For visits that extend beyond the school day (8.45 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. during term time) and those that take place during school holidays:

NOMINATED CONTACT

Name.....Phone No

(emergency).....

7) Attached are the following details



(2) [Youth Hostel in .....for ....nights where there is simple dormitory accommodation]

---

Transport: (1) School to [ ] by coach /school minibus  
(2) Outward Flight No [ ] on [ ] hours on [ ], Air [ ] to [ ]  
(3) Coach to hotel  
(4) Inbound Flight No [ ] on [ ] hours on [ ], Air [ ] to [ ],  
arriving at [ ] hours.

*[Please note that although it is school policy always to book coaches fitted with seat belts, this is not always possible outside the UK]*

### **Medical Information**

Any allergies or sensitivities to food, medication, pets or to insect stings:

Any chronic or recurring medical conditions needing regular or occasional medication or treatment:

Does he suffer from travel sickness? If so, may we have your permission to give him a travel sickness tablet?

Do we have your permission to give him a prescription pain reliever, such as paracetamol?

To the best of your knowledge, has he been in contact with any infectious disease over the past four weeks? If so, please give brief details.

Does he suffer from any phobia which might make it unsafe for him/her to participate in any of the planned activities?

Date of last tetanus injection?

### **CONSENT TO EMERGENCY TREATMENT**

I/ We authorise the Group Leader, or an authorised deputy acting on his/her behalf to *consent* on the advice of an appropriately qualified medical specialist *to my/our child receiving emergency medical treatment, including general anaesthetic, blood transfusion and surgical procedure* [under the NHS]/[ under the school's travel insurance cover] if He or she is unable to contact me/us time.

Signature of both parents: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ or Guardian

**Contact Details for the period covered by the trip:**

NAME:..... Tel .no:.....Mobile: .....

Email: ..... Work no:.....

NAME:..... Tel .no:.....Mobile: .....

Email. :..... Work no: .....

FAMILY DOCTOR:..... Tel  
.no:.....

Address: .....

**Behaviour code:**

I understand that my son will be subject to the normal school rules of behaviour throughout the visit. I agree to him following the guidance on health and safety given either by a member of staff [or by an Instructor at the Activity centre] at all times. I accept that where his disregard for the code of behaviour either causes danger to him/herself and to others, or is a serious breach of school discipline, that he may be sent home forthwith at our expense.

Signed: ..... Signed.....

Name: ..... Name:.....

Date: ..... Date: .....

*Please note that your son/daughter will not be allowed to participate in this visit unless this form is completed and returned to [     ] School by [                     ] and returned to [     ] School by [                     ]*