

WICKHAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATIONAL VISITS GUIDELINES

As part of the broad balance of learning experiences at Wickham Church of England Primary School, opportunity is frequently taken to enrich and enhance our curriculum through outdoor learning, which includes off-site activities and educational visits. These guidelines outline our principles and operational procedures in these contexts.

The school's policies and procedures are formulated in conjunction with the advice, guidance and training provided by the Hampshire County Council Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service and their documentation and guidance.

Rationale

We believe that learning outside the classroom provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to transfer and generalise skills. Quality learning experiences in 'real' situations have the capacity to raise achievement and deepen understanding across a range of subjects and to develop better personal and social skills.

When these experiences are well planned, safely managed and personalised to meet the needs of every child they can:

- ☞ Improve learning and achievement
- ☞ Promote higher order learning
- ☞ Develop skills and independence in a widening range of environments
- ☞ Make learning more engaging and relevant to young people
- ☞ Develop active citizens and stewards of the environment
- ☞ Nurture creativity
- ☞ Provide opportunities for informal learning through play
- ☞ Improve behaviour and attendance
- ☞ Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation
- ☞ Develop the ability to deal with uncertainty
- ☞ Provide challenge and the opportunity to take acceptable levels of risk
- ☞ Improve attitudes to learning

Learning outside the classroom provides a powerful route to fulfilling our vision to "ensure all our children are inspired and enabled to become successful, lifelong learners who achieve their full potential" and to promoting the key educational themes of enjoying and achieving, staying safe and being healthy.

Activities

Much learning outside the classroom will take place within the school grounds and in the local environment within walking distance of the school. Other activities will take place further afield for whole or part days or for up to a week on residential visits.

Our programme of activities provides a planned progression throughout the school. Activities are linked to the school curriculum and are planned to provide appropriate challenge and opportunity in relation to the age and stage of children's development. When planning opportunities for learning outside the classroom, consideration is given to the school's Charging and Remissions Policy. This establishes systems to secure value for money and for the collection of voluntary contributions.

Residential activities are provided for children in Key Stage 2 as we believe that staying away from home for one night or more is a powerful way of developing key life skills, building confidence, self-esteem, communication and team working. Our programme provides a carefully planned progression from a one night stay at school, through two night and four night stays at Hampshire residential centres to a four night stay with more adventurous activities.

Organisation and Management

Following the guidelines set by Hampshire County Council (HCC), principally through the documents 'Off site activity and educational visits' and 'Safety in adventurous activity' and also via the Local Authority websites and support services, comprehensive procedures for the organisation and management of learning outside the classroom are in place.

Educational Visits Co-ordinator

An Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) is always in post and keeps up to date with legislative and good practice guidance from the Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service. All learning outside the classroom activities are fully integrated into the ethos and culture of the school and all key policies are considered alongside the school's principles and practice for promoting learning and wellbeing.

In particular, our Promoting Positive Behaviour principles and practice detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy are applied to all outdoor learning activities. When activities take place off-site, school staff use stickers to replace the yellow and red cards used in class. When children are issued with a yellow or red sticker during an outdoor learning activity this acts as a reminder to the child, other children, staff and adult helpers that additional support is needed to help secure positive behaviour choices to promote safety and wellbeing.

Approval

All off-site activities and educational visits are subject to specific approval and planning procedures. At a very early planning stage, a number of aspects are checked against the Local Authority database to ensure full health and safety compliance. These include the centre or activity provider, the travel company, the location and the activity.

Stage One Approval - local, non-residential and non-hazardous activities:

The Headteacher, supported by the EVC and in liaison with the governors, approves the venture, its aims, leaders and management after checking that all the key responsibilities have been met.

Stage Two Approval - adventurous or unusual activity that is classified as potentially hazardous (defined in HCC's Safety in Hazardous Pursuits: Regulations and Guidance) and for residential visits:

The Headteacher, supported by the EVC and in liaison with the governors, provides initial approval for the venture, its aims, leaders and management after checking that all the key responsibilities have been met. Further approval is then sought by the Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service.

Parents and carers are given information at the start of the school year and each term about the planned programme of activities for all areas of learning, including opportunities for learning outside the classroom. When children join the school, parents and carers are asked to give permission for local, non-residential and non-hazardous activities within walking distance of the school on the understanding that written notice of such activities will be provided to parents before each event. When other off-site activities and educational visits are planned which involve transport, entrance fees or hazards, full written details are provided to parents and carers who are then asked to complete a permission form to confirm that they have seen and agreed the details. The Hampshire recommended medical form is collected when children join the school with a request to parents and carers to keep the school updated with any changes.

When residential visits are planned, detailed information is provided to parents at a meeting and by letter. On these occasions visit-specific consent and medical forms are also completed by parents and carers. Copies of Local Authority off-site insurance details are provided to parents and carers.

Risk and benefit assessment

When planning all off-site activities and educational visits staff carry out an analysis of the benefits of the activity translated into clear objectives and expected learning outcomes. An assessment of the risk of harm and its likelihood is made in line with Local Authority guidance and as a result, clear control measures are put in place so that they can be satisfactorily managed. A pre-visit by staff is carried out as an essential part of reviewing the location and its ability to realise the benefits and be managed.

Transport

When off-site activities and residential visits take place beyond the immediate locality, a variety of transport is used following Local Authority guidance. The type of transport chosen will be based on the group size, location and costs and could include coach, minibus, parents' cars, buses and trains.

Supervision

Supervision strategies are taken from *Off-site activities and educational visits* and includes agreements on ratios, which are never exceeded and frequently improved. Strategies include close or direct supervision where the activity undertaken with children is in close or direct contact with their leaders. Where this has been successful direct contact with leaders can be changed to allow the children to work in small groups with the leaders continuously monitoring the group and intervening where necessary. This is most likely to be applied when visiting a museum or the time in between activities at residential centres, often referred to as 'down time'.

The strategies to be used are dependent on typical risk factors of the group or individuals concerned, the site or location, the leaders present (including ratios) and other factors such as transport or weather etc. These are agreed as part of the planning process and can be adapted to changing circumstances, for example 'Plan B' where clear alternatives are planned when it is necessary or prudent to do so.

Adult helpers are provided with a comprehensive briefing before supporting outdoor learning activities. This briefing includes both health and safety and learning priorities and a written summary is provided for reference throughout the activity.

Inclusion

Wickham Church of England Primary School is an inclusive school and as such we endeavour to ensure that all children are able to participate in all planned learning out of the classroom. Where activities are provided as part of the National Curriculum, the inclusion of all children is statutory. Where activities are planned to enhance or enrich the National Curriculum and participation by all is desirable but not required, suitable alternatives are provided at school.

When considering whether a child can be included in an outdoor learning activity, in contrast to curriculum-focused discussions, those of the health and safety of the child concerned and their effect on other

children, as well as staff should also be taken into account. Any decision on inclusion when such factors are included must, take 'every reasonable step' to include that child. However, if those reasonable steps cannot ensure their safety and/or that of others, then that may be the reason they cannot attend that particular venture.

Safeguarding

The school's Child Protection Policy follows and includes off-site activity, including residential visits. In particular, suitable 'employment' checks are made on volunteers and other responsible adults who support these ventures in line with guidance. External providers or outdoor centres are drawn from the Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service's vetted database, which confirms that safety management checks are in place.

Incidents and emergencies

The school's Critical Incident and Emergency Plan follows and includes off-site activity, including residential visits and guidance from the Local Authority Health and Safety department and the Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service has been used to ensure effective incident and emergency procedures are in place. Off-site Emergency Procedures Cards are used by the Group Leader and Base Contacts for all off-site activities and educational visits.

Appendices

- ☞ Off-Site Activities and Educational Visits Approval Form
- ☞ Sample Letter and Permission Form for Parents and Carers
- ☞ Sample Risk-Benefit Assessment and Risk Management Record
- ☞ Off-Site Activities and Educational Visits - Travel Details
- ☞ Off-Site Activities and Educational Visits - Guidelines for Adult Helpers
- ☞ Off-site Emergency Procedures Card - Group Leader and Base Contact

Guidelines written by the Headteacher - Maria Ackland
Based on Hampshire County Council Outdoor Education, PE and Sport Service guidance (2011)

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