

Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Newsletter – Sept 2009

Humber Bridge Country Park

Following a serious accident recently during a school visit to Humber Bridge Country Park, groups planning to visit the Park should be aware that the site is an old quarry, and that it includes steep slopes and cliffs which can be very hazardous, especially in wet conditions. The Park is a wonderful local resource that offers valuable learning opportunities, but visit organisers should inspect and risk assess the site carefully beforehand, and should make sure that groups are supervised appropriately.

New Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning website

The existing website www.eriding.net/educationalvisits has been improved and updated to provide a one-stop shop of information and resources for all East Riding staff who organise, lead and manage offsite visits. The new site will be launched shortly and should be fully operational by mid September. Please let me know of any further improvements you would like to see.

New Day Visits approval form

Many schools now seem to be using ROVER Online to record all their visits (including standard day visits that do not involve “high risk activities or environments). However, for those schools who do not use ROVER for recording standard day visits, the existing EV1 approval form has been updated and improved. This can be downloaded from www.eriding.net/educationalvisits This form is not fixed, and can be adapted to each school’s use, but managers should make sure that they have sufficient information about each visit to make informed judgements. “Blanket” approval can be given for day visits that are repeated frequently and regularly throughout the year, or over a series of days/weeks.

New Risk Assessment forms

The content and layout of the LA’s Generic Risk Assessment forms and the Specific Visit Risk Assessment form have been improved to make them simpler and easier to use. These can be downloaded from www.eriding.net/educationalvisits

It is not essential to change to the new forms immediately, but schools are advised to adopt the new forms this September as they review and update their risk assessments for the coming year

The following procedure is recommended:

- **Select and print off** - all relevant and helpful forms (according to the type of visits and activities normally organised during the year) – others (e.g. that apply to one-off visits) can be added later if required.
- **How many?** - one set of forms for small staff teams - or one set per department for large staff teams.
- **Complete draft forms** - initially by one or two staff with appropriate experience;
- **Staff meeting 1** - introduce and leave draft forms in a file for all relevant staff (i.e. those who organise or help lead such visits) to inspect and consider over a short period (e.g. a week).
- **Staff meeting 2** - discuss, amend, and agree main hazards and standard practice with all relevant staff (add names and initials in table below to indicate acceptance).
- **Staff members who cannot agree** with the general consensus may need to complete their own risk assessment.
- **Check and approve** - by line manager/head of dept and/or visits coordinator (add approval signatures in table below).
- **Store** - in a marked file in a clearly known and accessible place (e.g. staff room or dept office).
- **How often?** - forms that apply to all visits (e.g. “All Educational Visits”) or to regular/frequent visits (e.g. “Visits to Museums”) should be completed once, then reviewed, amended, signed and dated annually.

- **Additional forms** - that apply to occasional/one-off visits (e.g. “Overseas Visits”) can be completed when required – these should be reviewed, amended, signed and dated whenever such visits are planned.
- **Keep familiar**- with the agreed practice, and refer to forms as a reminder before visits if necessary (especially for activities that are less frequent or familiar to staff).
- **New leaders and volunteers** - should be asked to read all relevant forms and add their signed agreement before assisting with the organisation or leadership of a visit.
- **Review and amend** - by all relevant staff annually (or more often if necessary), and immediately if new hazards are identified or new precautions deemed necessary.
- **Specific Visit Risk Assessment** - is also usually required for each visit to address any extra issues relevant to the specific site/group/activities involved

Educational Visits Coordinators (EVC’s) and EVC training

It is essential that all schools appoint their own Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) - a suitably experienced and competent member of staff who is able to oversee the safety of visits, and to provide appropriate training, advice and guidance to other members of staff and to the Headteacher.

A member of the Administrative team can also be appointed to assist with the planning arrangements and to undertake general administrative tasks, but there must also be an experienced member of staff appointed as EVC to provide guidance regarding educational visits and to oversee safety.

The Visit Safety Guidelines state clearly:

"Each school must appoint or nominate a suitable Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC). The Headteacher may take this role or delegate it to another competent member of staff.

If there is no EVC the duties pass by default to the Headteacher.

The EVC has a crucial role and should ideally:

- have sufficient credibility to be able to influence colleagues;
- have experience and competence in leading and managing a range of educational visits similar to those run at the school;
- be able to support colleagues in formulating risk assessments and developing risk management processes;
- be able to support colleagues in providing suitable training, guidance and advice.

The competence required will vary according to the size of the school and type of visits and activities proposed. Evidence of competence should be through training and practical experience over a number of years."

The importance of this role should not to be underestimated, and it is vital that any newly appointed EVC's receive adequate training for their role. Whilst it is not mandatory for the EVC to be a member of the teaching staff, it may be difficult to find another member of staff who has the necessary authority, knowledge, and experience to fulfil the role.

In the event of a serious incident on a school visit, any investigation is likely to focus on the competence of those involved in the management of visits. It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that a suitably competent and experienced person fulfils the role of EVC. All staff involved with visits should be made aware of who the EVC is within the school, and of their role.

If there have been any recent changes to the person allocated to the EVC role, please ensure that the County Educational Visits Consultant is notified as soon as possible, and that sufficient time is allocated for training to take place. EVC training normally consists of a one-day course, but this can usually be shortened to a half-day if it is done individually within school.

Educational Visits training for Headteachers

Headteachers are required to approve all their school's educational visits, so it is essential that they are fully aware of the LA's current educational visits guidance and procedures, and are able to make sound judgements regarding acceptable practice. Educational Visits training for headteachers should be booked online via www.eriding.net/CPDdata (see Educational Visits Leadership and Management)

CPD - Educational Visits Leadership/Management, First Aid and Outdoor Learning 2009/10

A wide range of courses can be viewed and booked online via www.eriding.net/CPDdata (see Educational Visits). A poster with course details is also attached -please could you print this poster out and display it in the staff room. Thanks!

Increase in the number of Educational Visits from East Riding schools

Despite the recession and additional staffing pressures, the number of visits organised by East Riding schools has continued to rise (from 2611 visits in 2007/8 to 3121 visits in 2008/9). A total of nearly 94000 young people have participated during the past year - an annual increase of over 16%. Well done to all those who have organised and led so many successful and valuable visits.

Council for "Learning Outside the Classroom"

The LOtC Council has been newly created (and funded by DCSF until March 2011) to deliver the Manifesto Action Plan, to act as a single voice for providers, and advise on future policy. It will act as an umbrella body to support coherent risk management, planning, funding and communications advice on outdoor learning. For more information, see www.lotc.org.uk or sign up to their newsletter online at <http://extranet.ijack.com/lotc/index.html>

The "Outdoor Learning" Quality Badge Scheme (supported by DCSF)

A new national quality mark has been established that may help to identify organisations that provide high quality experiences and manage safety effectively. Route 1 (low risk) providers (e.g. museums) complete a self-evaluation form and receive spot check inspections. Route 2 (high risk) providers (e.g. outdoor activity centres) are externally assessed. Providers started applying in Jan 2009 but the scheme may not be fully operational for several years yet.

For more information, see www.lotcqualitybadge.co.uk

More outdoor activities in the East Riding?

A funding bid has recently been submitted to Sport England to help increase the provision of outdoor and adventurous activities within the county. This bid followed a recent survey of local residents that confirmed there is a significant demand for more outdoor activities locally. The funding available is limited but, if the bid is successful, the county may see more opportunities for activities such as canoeing, climbing, orienteering, and cycling. Successful bids should be notified by October.

Revision of HASPEV (Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits)

The DCSF is currently revising the national guidance for educational visits, and this should be available later this year. The East Riding will await the arrival of this new national guidance before updating our own LA guidance.

Charging for visits

Schools cannot charge for trips taking place during school hours (> 50% of time on visit) or for activities that are part of national curriculum, for public exams etc. Schools can request voluntary contributions, but they must be clear that this is voluntary. Schools may have to cancel visit if parent refuses to contribute, yet insists on their child attending. Charge can be made for board and lodging on

a residential visit, but not if child is eligible for free school dinners. Each school must have a clear charging policy, which must be agreed by the Governors.

Minibus driving

New staff wishing to drive minibuses should have D1 on licence and must attend and pass a 1-day MiDAS course (ERYC Transport Services arrange locally). Staff without D1 on their licence – discuss with Taff. Existing minibus drivers should renew their ERYC “qualification” to drive minibuses by attending a MiDAS course within the next 3 years, and thereafter every 4 years. N.B. new style (photo) driving licences need renewing every 10 years – and drivers should request to the DVLA that the D1 remains on new licence, or it may be removed.

First Aid

In order to comply with requirements set out in the new Statutory Framework for Early Years, all Early Years organisations and schools working with under 5’s must ensure that there is always a qualified Paediatric First Aider (with 12 hours of specific Paediatric training) available at all times, whether on or offsite.

The HSE have announced some important changes in October 2009 to first aid training requirements. The First Aid at Work (FAW) course will become a 3-day course (with 3hrs recommended refresher training every year, and a 2-day revalidation every 3 years).

A new 1-day Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) has been developed (with 3hrs recommended refresher training every year, and a 1-day revalidation every 3 years).

Schools should undertake a risk assessment, and decide what training will be most appropriate to their circumstances and needs.

Free AST support available to help develop Outdoor Education

Paul Barton, a PE teacher at South Hunsley School and an Advanced Skills Teacher in Outdoor Education, is available on Thursdays during termtime to provide free guidance, support and training to both Primary and Secondary schools. He has already helped many schools to develop activities such as orienteering, teambuilding/problem solving, climbing, caving, canoeing, and hillwalking. Paul can deliver either a one-off activity or a series of sessions over a period of weeks. Please request his services initially via email to taff.bowles@eastriding.gov.uk

Secondary Schools - Overseas Exchange Visits

The new ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority) and Vetting and Barring Scheme are due to start in Oct 2009 – although some aspects of the scheme may be delayed. This will have particular implications for those schools that arrange overseas exchange visits. The new scheme requires UK hosts to be registered with ISA, but the application is a one-off procedure and should be free for volunteers.

Secondary Schools - 14 – 19 Work Related Learning/ Diplomas/ Collaborative learning

Schools should ensure that arrangements are clearly in place for students who undertake learning at external locations, and that there is a shared understanding of each partner’s responsibilities. A good practice guide for the delivery of collaborative courses is available via the following weblink:

http://www.easting.net/14-19/collab_courses.shtml

Secondary Schools - Outdoor Team Challenge event

In June 2008, teams from most of the county’s secondary schools participated in a special Outdoor Team Challenge event at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park. Teams participated in a range of exciting outdoor activities such as climbing, canoeing, bridge building, and kayaking, together with a number of initiative/problem-solving tasks, such as rocket-making and lifesaving. The event was a great success, and a repeat event is planned for Thurs 8th July in 2010.