

ERYC Educational Visits Update September 2011

New DfE advice regarding Educational Visits

You may be aware that the DfE has recently published a new policy statement regarding educational visits (see websites below for details). The DfE makes it clear that this policy statement replaces all previous government guidance – i.e. “Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits” (HASPEV) and its accompanying supplements. The new statement clarifies how health and safety law applies to school visits and is designed to reassure schools that where sensible and proportionate precautions are taken in planning and running school visits, then teaching staff should not fear prosecution by the HSE. Schools are encouraged to strike the right balance between protecting pupils from risk and ensuring that they can learn from the stimulating challenges and valuable experiences that school visits provide. The statement also encourages school employers and dutyholders to remove any wasteful bureaucracy in organising visits and activities.

The East Riding Council welcomes the general sentiments of the new guidance, and especially the call for reduced red tape and more sensible and proportionate attitudes towards health and safety, but schools should note the following:

The new DfE advice provides a useful summary of health and safety laws, but it does not include any practical guidance regarding the planning, leadership, and management of educational visits

It has been reported that the DfE “guidance” has been condensed from over 150 pages down to only 8. However, please note that this shortened document ONLY provides a brief summary of existing health and safety laws relevant to schools. It does NOT include any of the excellent practical guidance regarding the planning, organisation, and leadership of visits that has been developed over many years from the accumulated experience and wisdom of teachers and outdoor learning experts. Many visit leaders and headteachers have found this guidance to be invaluable in helping to plan and lead visits sensibly and safely, and East Riding Council (along with most LAs) believe it would be foolhardy to ignore or dispense with this practical advice.

The DfE statement contains no change in Health and Safety laws and legal responsibilities.

The new DfE document does not announce any changes to the existing Health and Safety laws. These laws still place ultimate responsibility and liability upon employers (i.e. the LA in most cases), and it is also still the legal duty of employees to follow the guidance and procedures provided by their employers.

The ERYC Code of Practice and Safety Guidelines for Educational Visits still remain as the employer’s guidance, but they are currently being revised and updated

Please remind staff that the LA's Educational Visits Code of Practice and Safety Guidelines continue to be the primary source of guidance regarding the planning, leadership, and management of educational visits, and that employees should comply with these. Please make sure that staff know where to access the guidelines in school and online http://www.eriding.net/educ_visits/index.shtml. The aim of the ERYC Educational Visits Guidelines has always been to encourage and support educational visits by providing employees with simple and sensible guidance, and by recommending only reasonable and proportionate procedures. The East Riding Council therefore plans to retain the existing Safety Guidelines for Educational Visits (published Sept 2005), as it is still regarded as relevant and fit for purpose. However, the ERYC guidance is currently being reviewed and updated, so any helpful suggestions for reducing or updating the content, or simplifying procedures, will always be warmly welcomed and carefully considered.

Schools should continue with existing consent procedures, using blanket parental consent when reasonable

The new DfE guidance proposes that schools ask parents to sign a one-off consent form (a proposed template is provided by the DfE) for all offsite visits and activities when a child enrolls at school. The DfE propose that this form will cover a child's participation in ALL educational visits (including residential visits and adventure activities) throughout their whole time at the school, without the need

for further consent to be given. This has led to considerable confusion and concern as the initial guidance seems to be contradicted later with statements that “parents should be told where their child will be at all times” and sent “information about each trip or activity before it takes place” and that parents can, if they wish, “tell the school that they do not want their child to take part in any particular school trip or activity”. Local Authorities, unions, teachers, and parents have all expressed doubts and concerns about the practicality of this DfE proposal, and ERYC recommends that schools continue with existing procedures - using blanket consent wherever reasonable for local/day visits (N.B. consent is not legally required for curriculum-linked visits during school hours), and informing parents/guardians (and requesting their written consent) for residential and “high risk” visits. Concerns have also been expressed about the space and wording given in the proposed DfE consent form for information about a child’s medical conditions. Only minimal space is provided for parents to give details of any "medical conditions" that a child "suffers from" (!) and it makes no request for other relevant information that the school should be made aware of (e.g. impaired mobility/sight/hearing etc.... or tendency to sleepwalk/bedwetting etc.).

Reduce red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy surrounding the organisation of visits

The DfE are keen to reduce red tape and remove any unnecessary bureaucratic burdens that might hinder teachers from organising educational visits and outdoor learning. ERYC fully support this aim, and encourage all schools to consider carefully how current policies and procedures within the LA or the school could be simplified or made more efficient (please notify Taff Bowles with any ideas!). Most East Riding schools now record their visits online using a simple checklist on ROVER so the need for paperwork is minimal. When appropriate, visit organisers can also save time when starting new visit forms by copying the responses given from a previous visit (this can be simply achieved with the single click of a button), before making any necessary amendments.

Maintain a proportionate and sensible approach to risk management

Hopefully most East Riding staff are already aware, through the guidance and training that the LA provides, that they should not be risk averse, and should adopt a balanced, proportionate, and sensible approach to risk management. However, it is encouraging that the DfE and HSE seem to be increasingly supportive of this approach. LA training has always explained that the risk of personal litigation is extremely low, and that staff need not fear legal action when organising visits, providing they plan and lead visits sensibly, and do not show reckless disregard for established guidance and procedures. Concern has been expressed nationally with the recent DfE statement that “teachers should assume they only need to carry out a written risk assessment in exceptional circumstances” – especially as there is no guidance as to what these “exceptional circumstances” might be! The LA provides schools with detailed generic risk assessments that usually only need completing once (and reviewing annually) so that specific risk assessments for each visit usually only require a few additional lines. If used correctly, this should be a robust and effective system which is not onerous or difficult to operate. Whilst feedback regarding the current visit risk assessment procedures within the East Riding is generally very positive, it is important that we continually review and try to improve and simplify existing procedures, so please notify Taff Bowles of any suggested amendments.

It is not a legal requirement for each school to have its own Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) but it is still considered good practice, which is reflected in ERYC’s policy

The new DfE advice states that “there is no requirement to have an EVC” in schools, but there is a clear acknowledgement of the importance and value of this role within schools. This is not new, as there has never been a legal requirement to have an EVC. The previous government guidance clearly stated that “it is good practice for each school to have an EVC”, and it would appear that most schools in the East Riding find it very useful to have someone within school who is specifically designated and trained to oversee visits. As it is still East Riding policy for all schools to have their own trained EVC, schools should ensure that they comply, but please contact Taff Bowles if you feel that this should change, or if you have any queries about the role.

Minibus driver qualifications

The new DfE advice states that “school staff can drive the school minibus without any special licence” as long as certain conditions are met. This again is not new, but it reinforces the guidance that the DCSF made several years ago, along with the DVLA and the Dept for Transport. However, many of the UK’s local authority’s legal teams and the Association of Chief Police Officers have warned schools to be wary of accepting this guidance as there has been no test case yet to establish this in law – and the consequences for the driver of having the incorrect licence (D1) could potentially be very serious. It is an issue that will be raised again this autumn with the ERYC legal team and the Transport Services team, following further discussions with MPs and Chief Police Officers. Hopefully, sufficient reassurances given to all those concerned so that this situation can be finally resolved.

The Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS) is to be replaced by a code of practice

The DfE has announced their intention to abolish AALS and replace licensing with a code of practice. This has raised concerns from many quarters, and there is currently a public consultation in progress to discuss how standards can be maintained, and how compliance to a code of conduct can be ensured without an inspectorate such as AALS. Further information will be forwarded once decisions have been made.

Details of the DfE’s health and safety guidance for Schools can be viewed at <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/f00191759/departamental-health-and-safety-advice-on-legal-duties-and-powers-for-local-authorities-headteachers-staff-and-governing-bodies>

The HSE have provided additional statements which aim to dispel myths about health and safety on school visits - can be viewed at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm>

Additional issues for consideration:

Farm visits – extra hygiene care is needed following cases of E Coli at an East Riding farm

Over the summer, several cases of E Coli 0157 occurred amongst children who visited Cruckley Farm in the East Riding. There were 6 cases reported in 4 different households and one child (who was on a school trip from outside the county) became seriously ill. Following a thorough investigation, the owners have since decided to permanently close the farm for school visits. Visits to farms provide children with immensely valuable learning experiences, and such visits should not be discontinued, but staff who are planning farm visits should be particularly careful to check hygiene arrangements. Visits organisers are advised to read the LA’s generic risk assessment for “Visits to Farms”, together with the revised HSE AIS23 guidance (see www.hse.gov.uk) and the recent Health Protection Agency leaflet “Avoiding infection on farm visits” (see www.hpa.org.uk). In particular, staff should ensure that all participants do not touch animals whilst eating or drinking, and do not eat or drink until they have thoroughly washed their hands with soap and water (N.B. Hand gels or wipes do not remove E Coli 0157 in dirt, and therefore are not considered an adequate substitute for washing hands with soap and running water).

Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training required for all minibus drivers

For several years now, ERYC policy has required all minibus drivers to be MiDAS trained (requiring a 1-day training/assessment course). Existing minibus drivers (including those who passed their test before 1/1/97 and already have D1 on their licence) should now all be MiDAS trained, but they are required to undertake MIDAS refresher training (involving a 1-day course) every 4 years. MiDAS courses can be booked via the LA Transport Services team (call 01482 395576). Hessle High School also now offer MiDAS training courses (contact Steve Benson 01482 648604). School managers should also carry out annual checks to ensure and record that minibus drivers are still suitable and fit to drive.

First Aid training requirements and provision

There are so many different types of first aid training course available that it might be helpful to clarify which courses are most likely to be of relevance and value to schools, and where to access training.

The 2 main statutory requirements are:

1. 3-day First Aid at Work (FAW) or 1-day Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW)

All employers have a duty of care to deal with illnesses/injuries to their employees. Most schools have relatively few employees, and can be regarded as “low risk” environments, so it should normally be acceptable for schools to have 2 or 3 staff with an Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) qualification (6 hours specific training). The full 3-day First Aid at Work training course is designed for higher risk environments, and should not normally be necessary for schools.

Note: FAW and EFAW courses are directed at provision for your adult employees, and do not include training to deal with many of the illnesses or injuries that may be common in a school context, such as outside on the school playground, sports pitch or offsite visit. Therefore if schools need training that will be relevant for pupils as well as their adult employees, it would be sensible to ask trainers to provide an additional module (1-2 hrs) to cover additional child/school-related issues.

2. Paediatric First Aid

Early Years/Foundation Stage establishments require at least 1 person with a Paediatric First Aid qualification (12 hrs specific training) to be present with their children at all times, either on or off-site. In order to allow for possible absences, it would be sensible for most EY/FS establishments to have 2 or 3 staff with the Paediatric qualification.

Other recommended (but non-statutory) first aid training:

3. Educational Visits leaders

The ERYC Educational Visits Safety Guidelines recommend that offsite visits should normally be accompanied by at least one staff member with an appropriate level of first aid training (a minimum day’s course of 6 - 8 hours). This could be the EFAW course (see above), preferably with an additional 1-2 hrs child-related training, or a bespoke 1-day course (e.g. “Emergency Action First Aid for Schools”) which includes consideration of first aid scenarios in contexts other than the workplace (e.g. whilst outside or offsite on educational visits or school fixtures). For educational visits and offsite activities that take place in more remote locations, or where emergency services are likely to take longer than 15 minutes to arrive, a 2-day Outdoor First Aid would be more appropriate.

First Aid Training Providers

There are a number of suitable training providers in the region, and it is the responsibility of school managers to source the most appropriate courses for their needs. Taff Bowles (Educational Visits Officer) continues to offer a limited number of 1-day courses each year (these can be booked via the CPD website www.eriding.net/CPDdata/). The East Riding Council’s Leisure Services also now offer a wide range of courses (contact Louise Waite 01482 395232).

Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation scheme

LOtC Mark is a national accreditation scheme recognising schools, and other organisations working with young people, which have a strong commitment to providing frequent, continuous, and progressive LOtC for their pupils. As well as recognising exemplary provision, LOtC Mark will provide a framework to support schools in developing their LOtC offering to the benefit of their young people. For further information, see www.lotc.org.uk

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Teacher Packs and training opportunities

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) is offering a range of Teacher Packs which provide practical lesson ideas that have clear links to the curriculum. The Teacher Packs each contain 6 lesson ideas linking to the science & maths and English curriculum from EYFS to Key Stage 5. CLOtC is also offering half day training courses to schools on “Planning an LOtC Curriculum”. The training can be tailored to a school’s specific needs, and will enable staff to develop a whole-school approach to LOtC. For more information contact elaine.skates@lotc.org.uk

The ERYC Educational Visits Officer is also offering a range of twilight training courses next summer term to explore how to make the most of learning opportunities outside the classroom – using the school grounds, gardens and ponds; using woods and parkland; using the beach; using ponds and streams; and using teambuilding/problem solving activities (these can be booked via the CPD website www.eastriding.net/CPDdata/).

All of the above packages of support are designed to inspire and motivate teachers to overcome the barriers to learning outside the classroom, and give them practical solutions to offering high quality educational experiences.

LOtC Teacher Taster event at The Deep in Hull (09.30 – 13.30 Wed 12th October 2011)

This event has been organised by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, and is aimed at giving ITT/PGCE students, NQTs and teachers (of both primary and secondary phases) the opportunity to find out more about how learning outside the classroom (LOtC) can enhance their teaching skills and improve children's attainment, development and motivation. The event will offer hands-on practical activities that are designed to inspire creative lesson planning. It should be an excellent opportunity to network with like-minded people, and to find out more about the benefits of LOtC and the support available to schools. Details and booking forms can be found at <http://www.lotc.org.uk/2011/04/lotc-teacher-taster-session-yorkshire/>

Free canoe/kayak coaching for ERYC teachers/youth leaders

A series of 3 coaching sessions (10.00 – 13.00 on Saturday mornings 1st, 8th, 15th October) has been arranged for any ERYC teachers and youth leaders who may be interested in developing the skills and qualifications to teach canoesports to young people from the county. There is no cost for the use of the equipment or coaching (provided by Taff Bowles, BCU Level 4 Coach), but participants will be asked to contribute £3 per session directly to Allerthorpe Lakeland Park near Pocklington for use of the venue and facilities. Previous canoe experience would be helpful but not necessary, but it is more important that participants are committed to developing their skills and moving forward to gain instructional qualifications next year so that they can introduce young people to canoesports through their work. Places are strictly limited and will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information or to book a place, please email taff.bowles@eastriding.gov.uk

Notification of changes to ROVER email addresses

- If your school has changed the format of its email address in the past 12 months, please could you send details of the school's current email address to julie.anderson@eastriding.gov.uk
- If the format of the school email address has changed recently, please also confirm the up-to-date work email addresses of all your staff who are registered on ROVER to record visits online.
- Please send the names and work email addresses of any NEW members of staff who need to be registered on ROVER. N.B. All staff who organise and lead visits should have their own ROVER log-in and should NOT use another staff member's username/password (staff are individually accountable for the information and assurances that they provide). This also enables staff to record details of their own visit leadership experience, training and qualifications in "My Details" (an important facility which helps EVCs/headteachers/managers/LA to objectively assess the competence and suitability of staff to lead visits)
- Please confirm whether you prefer ROVER users to be registered with their own work email address (in which case approval responses are emailed automatically back to the user) OR with the email address of the School Office/ Educational Visits Coordinator (in which case approval responses must be forwarded to the user, after an initial check by the office/EVC, if required).
- Please state if you would prefer the option of registering BOTH the work email address of the user and of the School Office/ EVC (N.B. this option is NOT available at present, but is under consideration). This would ensure that both users and managers are automatically informed of the approval responses and feedback of all visits.