



WOODCOTE HOUSE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

At Woodcote House 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 the boys' 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 to support the curriculum in all subjects. There are regular theatre trips for pupils of all ages.

There are regular Geography field trips that have included visits to Lulworth Cove & the Thames Barrier for Year 6, Cadbury World for Year 7 and to the Test Valley for pupils from Year 8. In History, the boys in Year 7 visit the World War 1 battlefields of Belgium & France in May each year. There are also History trips to Hampton Court (Year 6) and Windsor Castle (Year 5). At the bottom end of the school, the Juniors (Years 3 & 4) have made trips to the Roald Dahl Museum, a local Farm, the Lookout, and the parish church. Every two years the Juniors enjoy an overnight stay at Ufton Court.

We also run an annual School Ski trip for boys and their parents in April. There is an annual U11 sports tour to the Geneva English School. This is either in the form of a football tour or an athletics meet and we host their rugby tour in February.

We have a year-round Sunday programme of activities for boarders, including visits to Museums, Rugby matches, Racecourses, Wildlife Sanctuaries, etc. as well as giving them a taste for 'extreme' sports such as mountain boarding and mountain biking.

After Common Entrance, the Leavers have a full programme of trips and visits, culminating in a Leavers Trip, the location of which varies from year to year. In 2018 it will be to Polzeath in Cornwall.

INFORMATION ON PLANNED TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

The boys' school calendar 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. Parents will always be notified in advance:

- If their 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 their 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 the parents' permission if the visit involves an extra charge or late return to school.

We send details of planned trips and activities well in advance to all parents of pupils of the relevant year group or team.

CONSENT

We require specific, individual written consent if we are to take the boys on a trip or visit that involves an overnight stay, an overseas visit or extra cost to the parents.

SAFETY

Safety is top priority for us. We expect parents to support the school in ensuring that their 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 at their parents' expense, if they decline to follow reasonable instructions given for their own safety, or do not follow the school's code of behaviour.

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL VISITS

INTRODUCTION

We have a large number of trips, out of school activities and visits at Woodcote House 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 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

Andrew Monk, the Deputy Headmaster, is our Education Visits Coordinator (EVC). He supports the Headmaster in the process of approving visits, ensuring that they are spread through the different age groups, and the school year. This involves working closely with Tim Ramage, Head of Boarding, who coordinates the weekend programme of activities.

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 in 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.

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," 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 Woodcote House 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.

Any member of staff organising an adventurous or hazardous activity should check, via the Bursar, whether or not the activity is covered by the school's insurance policy. An extension usually can be arranged.

PREPARATORY ARRANGEMENTS

Staff/Pupil Ratios

The DCSF has previously recommended staff to pupil ratios for visits and off-site activities as follows, although we do try to keep the ratios down to 1:10 for Yr 7 and Yr 8 too.

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 at Woodcote House school are trained in conducting risk assessments on the potential hazards involved in a visit, trip or activity that they are planning. The risk assessment should include:

- A list of the boys and staff involved
- Details of the site to be visited
- Contact details for the site, group leader & other staff
- The potential hazards of the place being visited.
- Any boys that are especially at risk from significant hazards – allergies, medical requirements etc.
- All Timings

The school ensures that when the boys undertake any adventurous activity that the provider has a suitable license as required by the Adventure Activities Licencing Regulations 2004. 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 of these and provided that he is satisfied, it will meet the requirements of Woodcote House School for the activity part of the visit. Additional risk assessments may 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 Woodcote House School, the EVC maintains a dossier of generic risk assessments that cover sports fixtures, theatre and museum visits and most of our regular visits.

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 circumstances. He/She 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.
- 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).
- Give all pupils the number of the school's mobile if they are going to be allowed out in small, unsupervised 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, the Group leader, or another member of staff will take him to the local hospital or clinic. If the trip is outside the UK, s/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 Woodcote House 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 medical treatment – as opposed to minor cuts and bruises.

MISSING PUPIL

Please see Missing Child Policy

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of a serious accident resulting in the death or injury of one or more of the pupils or 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 Headmaster 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 Headmaster 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 Woodcote House School, depending on the nature of the incident, we may implement our own 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 (clarion call (email to all parents), messages on our web, local radio) for communicating with those whose children are not affected.

Where possible, communication with the media should be left to the Headmaster. 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 Master on Duty, or the Head Master (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

The Group Leader is responsible for returning any unused cash or travellers' cheques to the Bursary. The pre-paid foreign currency card and the school credit card 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.

Each Group Leader is asked to provide the EVC with a verbal report on the visit, reports of accidents and near misses on his/her return. Personal observations and lessons learned are always valuable. Boys are asked to make a presentation during Assembly to the rest of the school outlining their experiences on the trip.

September 2023