



St. Mary's College

Preparatory School

Offsite Visits Policy

Date Written: August 2016
Reviewed: September 2024

St Mary's College Preparatory School – The Prep
Policy on Off-Site Visits

(This policy includes EYFS Reception, KSI and KS2)

This policy has been written in consultation with staff and governors of The Prep and with due regard to the school's mission statement:

Our Mission is to provide an independent Catholic education for boys and girls of all faiths aged 0-18; to provide individual challenge towards holistic and balanced development, service and achievement for life and beyond; and to try to show our Faith by the way we live, showing care and consideration for each other, those around us and the environment.

Legal Framework

This policy is written in accordance with the DfE Departmental Advice on Health and Safety for Schools and Advice on Legal Duties and Powers February 2014. The latter replaced Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HASPEV 1998).

The amended Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2015, no longer require us to take into account the above DfE documents but we refer to it in the interests of ensuring best practice in safeguarding our children and young people as well as our staff. (DfE Health and Safety: Advice on legal duties and powers, February 2014).

Reference is also taken from the HSE School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities: Tackling the health and safety myths first published 06/11 and Early Years Statutory Framework 2024.

Reference is also to be taken from Guidance on First Aid for Schools February 2022.

1 Introduction

Off-site visits are activities arranged by or on behalf of the school, and which take place outside the school grounds. The governors and teaching staff believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities must serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our children's learning experiences.

In this policy, we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of all pupils at all times. Within these limits, we seek to make our visits available to all pupils, and wherever possible to make them accessible to those with disabilities. The visits usually take place within the school day.

2 Aims and objectives

The aims of our off-site visits are to:

- enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils;
- provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone;

- promote the independence of our children as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments.

These visits begin with short excursions into the local area in the Early Years, and progress to residential experiences in Key Stage 2.

3 Curriculum links

For each subject in the curriculum, there is a corresponding programme of activities (which includes visits to the school by specialists):

- English – theatre visits, visits by authors, poets and theatre groups;
- Science – use of the school grounds, use of Senior School labs, visits to botanical gardens;
- Mathematics – use of shape and number trails in the local environment;
- History – castle visits, study of local housing patterns, local museums;
- Geography – use of the locality for fieldwork, village trails;
- Art and design – art gallery visits, use of the locality;
- PE – a range of sporting fixtures, extra-curricular activities, visits by specialist coaches;
- Music – a variety of specialist music teaching, extra-curricular activities, local schools' orchestra, concerts for parents and carers to hear;
- Design and technology – visits to local factories or design centres;
- ICT – its use in local shops/libraries/secondary schools, etc;
- RE – visits to local centres of worship, visits by local clergy.
- PSHE and citizenship – visit to the fire station or an old people's residential home, visits by local police officers and health workers.

4 Residential activities

Children in Years 4 - 6 have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit. This activity is linked to the National Curriculum. We do make a charge for board and lodging, insurance and specialist instruction for activities.

5 How visits may be authorised

The Headmaster will appoint a party leader to be responsible for running the activity. This will normally be a teacher employed at the school.

The party leader and the Headmaster will be involved in the planning and management of off-site visits.

S/he will:

- ensure that risk assessments are completed;
- support the headmaster and governing body in their decisions on approval;
- assign competent staff to lead and help with trips;
- organise related staff training;
- verify that all accompanying adults, including private car drivers, have had satisfactory police checks, and that the letter from our coach company (see 6.5) assures us that their drivers, too, have had police checks;
- make sure that all necessary permissions and medical forms are obtained;

- keep records of visits, and ensure that there are regular generic assessments of the risks (e.g. road-crossing) where there are frequent visits to local venues (e.g. a swimming facility).
- ensure that non-staff volunteers can attend the visit and make sure they have a current DBS. Without a DBS volunteers cannot attend a residential trip.
- Ensure at least 1 member of staff will have a current Paediatric First Aid Certificate if the trip includes Reception pupils

Staff arranging or otherwise involved in off-site activities must familiarise themselves with the regulations, advice and procedures published by the governing body (and available from the school office). All off-site activities must take place in accordance with the governing body's instructions.

Where staff are proposing to arrange an off-site activity, they must seek and obtain the approval of the Headmaster before any commitment is made on behalf of the school. A comprehensive visit plan should be provided by the member of staff to allow for an informed decision to be made.

Where the activity involves a period of more than 24 hours, an overnight stay, or a journey by sea or air, the Headmaster must have given approval before permitting the activity to take place.

It is our policy that all children should be able to participate in educational visits. Where a child with a disability is eligible for a trip, we will make every effort to ensure that s/he is included. We may seek guidance from parents or carers to help us to adapt our programme, and we will make any reasonable adjustments to our itinerary to include a child with disabilities. Any such adjustments will be included in the risk assessment.

6 Risk assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment is carried out by the group leader before the proposed visit. It will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit, and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. It will also consider the Missing Child Policy as a potential risk on all outings and also include Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Accident and Injury. Child sickness and emergency procedures will also be planned for. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures are needed to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?

Staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment. It is important to take into account the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip, and the party leader should take careful account of the facilities available, with due regard to the proposed size of the group. S/he should also assess the site's suitability with regard to the age and any particular needs of the children. S/he will also consider the venue's own approach to security and to health and safety. Venues providing instructor-led activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments may be adopted if it is impractical for the group leader to experience the activity beforehand, or if s/he lacks the

skills required to make informed judgements about the risks it may involve. The headmaster will not have given their approval for the visit unless it is satisfied with the venue, its instructors and their risk assessment procedures.

It is important to assess and record any health, safety or security issues that are identified during the preliminary visit. Any such issues will be taken into account when the final decision is taken on whether the visit should proceed, and the Visit Plan must state both the extent of any risks involved, and the measures that will be taken to reduce or eliminate them. The cost of these preliminary visits will be borne by the school, and should be built into the overall financial arrangements for the visit itself.

An activity should normally have sufficient adults taking part to provide the following minimum ratios:

- 1 adult to between 10 and 15 pupils in Years 4 to 6;
- 1 adult to 6 pupils in Years 1 to 3;
- 1 adult to 4 pupils in Early Years.

Any trip will require a minimum of two adults. However, these are minimum requirements, and may not provide adequate supervision in all cases.

A risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. The coach company we use on a regular basis has provided us with a letter detailing all the health and safety measures it routinely takes, including:

- the provision and required use of seat belts;
- proper vetting of the driver by the police;
- proper insurance for the driver;
- details of first aid and emergency equipment;
- breakdown procedures.

The group leader will double-check that all adults helping to supervise the trip have been subject to DBS checks.

A copy of the completed risk assessment will be given to the Headmaster and all adults supervising the trip.

7 Transport

The costing of off-site activities should include any of the following that apply:

- transport;
- entrance fees;
- insurance;
- provision of any special resources or equipment;
- costs related to adult helpers;
- any refreshments that the school has opted to pay for.

Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party. It is our policy only to use coaches fitted with seat or lap belts, and to insist that they be worn by all those participating in the visit.

Where private cars are used for transport, the group leader is responsible for checking that the insurance of each driver covers such journeys, and double-checking that each driver has been subject to a DBS checks).

Our minibus meets governing body guidelines, and each seat has a belt. Only approved drivers will be used who have completed their ROSPA driving certificate.

The College minibus can be driven by staff providing they have completed the relevant paperwork and have had a series of induction driving lessons.

We instruct all children, whether travelling by car, minibus or coach, to attach their seat belts.

8 Communication with parents and carers

The parents/carers of children taking part in an off-site activity should be provided with all appropriate information about the intended visit. Parents or carers must give their permission in writing or via email before a child can be involved in any off-site activities.

Funding for off-site activities is provided mainly by parental contributions. This must be made clear to parents in all correspondence about an educational visit at the planning stage.

The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the Headmaster to make a decision about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

9 Further health and safety considerations

All adults accompanying a party must be made aware, by the party leader, of the emergency procedures which will apply. Each adult should be provided with an emergency telephone number. This will normally be the school number, but where an activity extends beyond the normal school day, the home telephone number of a designated emergency contact should be provided.

Before a party leaves school, the school office should be provided with a list of everyone, children and adults, travelling with the party, together with a programme and timetable for the activity.

Children should be organised into groups to ease counting on a regular basis.

Children are monitored in toilets by staff.

The safety of the party, and especially the children, is of paramount importance. During the activity, the party leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that children are both safe and well looked after at all times.

A central point must be arranged on arrival if the group is splitting up

Staff will remain professional at all times and their behaviour will be in accordance with a professional code of conduct. Any member of staff reported to have acted in opposition of this will face disciplinary action.

The headmaster or person in charge of the school must be informed of the trip's progress and whereabouts in order to inform parents if they call for information.

Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise the safety of others or the good name of the school, the party leader should discuss with the headmaster the possibility of excluding that child from the activity.

Any complaints regarding external tips must be made in accordance with the school's complaints procedure.

10 Group leaders' planning

Group leaders must read thoroughly the appropriate guidance for off-site activities.

11 Visit Plan

The Visit Plan for intended educational visits must include the following:

- risk assessment;
- report on preliminary visit;
- applications for approval of visit;
- general information;
- names, ages, contact details, permission forms, medical records and other relevant details of all those going on the visit;
- travel schedule;
- accommodation plan (if applicable);
- full plan of activities;
- fire precautions and evacuation procedures;
- intended arrangements for supervision;
- insurance arrangements for all members of the group;
- emergency contacts and procedures;
- general communications information;
- guidance for party leaders;
- guidance for the emergency contact and headmaster;
- medical questionnaire returns;
- first-aid boxes and Accident Book

12 Monitoring and review

- 12.1 This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every year, or before if necessary.