

Appendix 2

Notes for teachers leading their own outdoor learning activities outwith school grounds

Selecting a location

Visit potential locations within the country park or your local area. Check the appropriateness of sites in terms of: suitability for lesson, distance, ground conditions, health and safety issues, parking (if taking a coach), litter and other users. You can get advice from the countryside ranger service about the best sites within the country park to use. Their contact details can be found in appendix 4. Outwith the country park you can talk to local people, community groups and businesses to get tips on potential locations.

Plan your route and teaching locations within the site. Have alternative options in case the conditions you find are different from your previous visit. The more you familiarise yourself with an area, the more confident you will be about taking your group there.

Risk assessments

A full risk assessment, including emergency procedures, should always be completed before your trip. An example risk assessment for outdoor learning is included in appendix 3. This example is a general risk assessment and can form the basis of your own. There will be additional potential hazards related to specific transport arrangements, sites, groups and variables which are not included in the example and must be included in yours. Blank risk assessment forms can be downloaded from www.damstodarnley.org/pack. Additional advice on risk assessment can also be sought from the countryside ranger service even if they are not going to be leading your group. Remember to inform other leaders and the group of emergency procedures.

Weather

Check the weather conditions on the lead-up to a visit and do not rely on one source. This does not mean just looking out for rain, ice, snow or wind. Sunshine can be hazardous too. Make sure your group are prepared. If the weather is extreme or ground conditions are too dangerous your trip may need to be cancelled. Always have an alternative plan.

Clothing

Give parents/guardians and children plenty of warning (and reminders) before an outdoor visit. If some children are unlikely to have suitable clothing at home ask the school if they will provide wellies and waterproofs. A change of clothes in case your group gets very wet is a good idea. In cases of sunshine make sure children are covered up; sun hats are extremely beneficial. Sun lotion is useful if required, but remember to check for any allergies as part of your trip planning.

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Equipment

Leaders should have the necessary equipment required for all planned activities. Additionally you should have a:

- Mobile phone with emergency numbers saved on it. Staff in school should have this mobile number. All leaders and helpers should have each other's numbers also.
- First aider with first aid kit suitable for the size of the group and its needs. This should include required medication for any participants. Children should carry their own medication in some cases e.g. inhalers.
- Register of participants and any relevant medical conditions and allergies.

Food

Participants should carry their own food and water. Make sure everyone has enough food and water for the length of the activity. Behaviour and therefore learning can decline when children are hungry and/or thirsty. Take additional snacks. Check for any allergies before giving children food. If it is cold a flask containing a warm cordial can help heat everyone up.

Toilets and hygiene

If toilets are available then plan stops into your trip. If there are no facilities follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code's 'leave no trace approach'. Do not forget child protection procedures and privacy for pupils. With young children it is also advisable to carry a change of clothes in case of 'accidents'.

Health Protection Scotland advises children wash their hands with soap and running water before eating. You can carry a bottle of water for hand washing and some soap. Where there is no visual contamination gels and sanitisers are effective.

Transport

Try to select a site that can be walked to. This not only connects children with their local area but also has health benefits and saves money. When walking next to roads follow the Highway Code for pedestrians. High visibility vests can also be worn, especially in dark or foggy conditions. Be realistic about walking times and distances. You want the group to enjoy themselves and this may involve a degree of exploring and resting enroute.

If you are taking a coach make sure there is parking available. Some country roads are narrow and coaches may have difficulty accessing them or turning. Seek advice on this from the coach company and driver.

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Management and behaviour

Outline the behaviour expected from your group when outside the school at the outset. Highlight the potential hazards that have been identified through the risk assessment and reinforce these when they arise. Highlight emergency procedures to your group and identify a meeting point if anyone gets separated. If a group member does not know how to get back to the meeting point they should stay still, attract attention to themselves and wait until they are found. Everyone should be informed how to stay warm if they become isolated from the group.

Working with other leaders

Make sure that all leaders understand the planned activities and experiences and outcomes. Brief all leaders on their roles and responsibilities, together with emergency procedures, hazards and any children or young person with additional support needs and behavioural and/or medical conditions.

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Everyone has access rights established by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. You can exercise these rights, provided you do so responsibly, over most land and inland water in Scotland. You can exercise these rights for recreational and educational purposes. The Land Reform Act also requires land managers to recognise access rights and to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to these rights. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides more detailed guidance on the responsibilities of those exercising access rights and of those managing land and water. There is a link to the code in appendix 4.

It is important that children understand the basics of the access code as well. The code is based on three key principles:

- Respect the interests of other people.
- Care for your environment.
- Take personal responsibility for your own actions.

Responsible access is particularly important within the country park as much of it remains as working farmland in private ownership, so everyone visiting it has an important duty to act responsibly.