

EVC News Spring Term 2005

Electronic copy also available www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits.

Support for Educational Visits Co-ordinators in Sheffield LEA Schools, contact Adge Last or David Armstrong at Thornbridge Outdoors, Great Longstone, Derbyshire DE45 1NY Tel: 01629 640491 Fax: 01629 640494 edvisits@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits.



This is the first in a series of newsletters designed to keep Educational Visits Co-ordinators up to date with developments in the organisation, management and conduct of visits. Contributions to future editions are most welcome. Please send information for inclusion to: EVC News, Thornbridge Outdoors, Great Longstone, Derbyshire, DE45 1NY or edvisits@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk.

CURRENT POSITION

The first major round of EVC training has been completed and all schools should have a named Educational Visits Co-ordinator. You will be aware that additional EVC training events are being run for those new to this role or for those who wish to find out more. Next event 14 April 2005 at Thornbridge.

Following the establishment of EVCs in schools, the LEA's written guidelines (Health and Safety Code of Practice 14) have now been revised. This was made necessary due to revised national guidance from the DfES for educational visits. All Sheffield schools, along with many others were invited to make comment on the revised document during the consultation process. Many thanks to those who contributed to this process.

REVISED EDUCATIONAL VISITS GUIDELINES



The new LEA guidelines and a range of supporting documents are now provided on CD. This makes the guidelines more accessible, easier to copy, allows them to be put onto school computer networks, makes it much easier to find the information you want, enables approval forms to be completed on-screen if required, allows a range of supporting information to be provided for reference purposes and....takes up much less shelf space! Information contained on this CD also at www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits.

CD AND COVERING LETTER SENT TO ALL SCHOOLS

A copy of the CD and an explanatory letter dated 10 January has now been provided to all schools. The letter was addressed to the head teacher and marked for the attention of the EVC. You should now have received a copy of the letter and CD. If you have not, please try to find it in school and, if this fails, contact Thornbridge at the address given at the start of this newsletter to obtain a copy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SLIPS FOR NEW GUIDELINES

We have now received acknowledgement slips from most schools to confirm that the revised guidelines have arrived in school. If you have not already returned yours, please do take the time to do so – this will help us to ensure that you all have a copy.

MAIN CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS EDITION

There are a number of significant changes from the previous edition which staff need to know about. The major changes are:

New visit approval form

The "risk assessment" form (Appendix 6), used previously to notify the LEA about certain categories of visit, has now been replaced by a "visit approval" form.

Certain visits now require LEA approval

Unlike the previous system, where information on visits involving adventure, residential or hazardous environments, needed to be copied to the LEA for notification only, certain categories of visit now require LEA approval before they can take place.

Visits now requiring LEA approval *in addition to head teacher approval* are those involving:

- all residential visits;
- international visits;
- adventure activities or hazardous environments.

Timetable for gaining approval

Where possible the visit approval form should be sent to Thornbridge for LEA approval at least six weeks before the visit is due to take place. This should not normally present problems as most visits in these categories require a very much longer period of planning.

Early notification of visits both in-school and, where necessary, to the LEA allows time to provide support and assistance well in advance of the visit when required.



ACTIONS TO TAKE ON RECEIVING NEW GUIDELINES



In order to ensure that your colleagues are clear about the revised guidance, please take the following actions outlined in the explanatory letter:

- replace copies of the previous edition of the guidelines (published December 2001) with the new one;
- replace copies of the old "risk assessment" form (Appendix 6), used to notify the LEA about certain types of visit, with the new "visit approval" form;
- brief all staff on the new guidelines and ensure they have ready access to a copy;
- ensure that those involved in the management of visits are briefed;
- complete and return the acknowledgement slip to confirm receipt of the guidelines.

DATE OF NEXT EVC TRAINING EVENT

The next EVC training event will be held at:

Thornbridge Education Centre on
Thursday 14 April 2005.

For further information please contact Thornbridge using the details provided at the top of this newsletter.



RISK ASSESSMENT

The CD containing the new guidelines also contains copies of the LEA's generic risk assessments which you will already have a copy of on CD following your EVC training event (there are a couple of additions on the guidelines CD – "Theme Parks and Large Public Attractions" and "Angling").

You will recall that the regular process of risk assessment involves:

- > referring to relevant generic risk assessments (considering the usual hazards associated with your activity or environment);
- > completing event-specific risk assessment (considering your particular visit and group);
- > conducting on-going risk assessment (continuing to make good judgements throughout the planning and conduct of the visit).

VISIT APPROVALS - REDUCING BUREAUCRACY

To reduce the paperwork involved in gaining approval for an educational visit, the new visit approval form can be sent to the LEA without any additional supporting information. The form asks for information and assurances about key aspects of planning and conducting the visit. However, copies of additional information do not need to be sent in with the form. Supporting information, such as risk assessments, needs to be kept on file in school for future reference.

To operate effectively, this system requires that all information requested on the approval form is provided clearly and unambiguously.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

A wide range of leadership training opportunities are provided at Thornbridge Outdoors including:

- > Centre Familiarisation
- > Single Pitch Climbing
- > Walking Group Leader
- > Mountain Leader
- > First Aid
- > Mountain Biking Leader
- > Low Ropes Course



For more information go to www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/courses.

BRIEFING ON NEW GUIDELINES

Should you require an in-school briefing on the revised guidelines, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the contact details provided at the bottom of this newsletter.



USING A PROVIDER (OR TOUR OPERATOR) FOR ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

If you use an outside provider or tour operator for specialised activity provision, for example, whilst visiting a multi-activity centre or for a ski visit abroad, you will need to obtain a range of assurances from them about safety and quality of provision.

A quick way of doing this is to use the new Provider Form contained in the revised guidelines. You should send the form to your activity provider, ask them to read it and place ticks against the relevant assurances, then sign it and send it back to you.

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

It is encouraging to see that there is strengthening national support for outdoor education and educational visits emerging at the moment:

- > The Education and Skills Select Committee have recently been considering educational visits and outdoor education. Their report entitled ***Education Outside the Classroom*** was published on 10 February. It contains many positive and helpful recommendations. The report is available from www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmeduski.htm.
- > One of the outcomes of the Education and Skills Select Committee report referred to above is the proposed development of a national ***Manifesto for Outdoor Education***. This is supported by government and the DfES. Further details from the DfES at the following web address www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0021.
- > The **Health and Safety Executive actively support educational visits** - *"HSE believes that school trips are a vital part of a child's education. Misplaced risk aversion should not deprive them of valuable opportunities. On the contrary, adventure activities provide the ideal opportunity to make children "risk aware" by involving them in practical decision making in challenging environments."* More information here: www.hse.gov.uk/press/2005/e05022.htm.
- > Written by members of the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel and published by the English Outdoor Council, ***A Guide to Recognising and Achieving High Quality Outdoor Education*** is due to be released soon. We will provide information when it is published.
- > A positive Ofsted report entitled ***Outdoor Education – Aspects of Good Practice*** was published in September 2004. The report concentrates on the opportunities provided for students of age 9-16 years, in outdoor education, linked to aspects of the National Curriculum in PE. It is available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications.

THORNBRIDGE NOW OPEN AGAIN

You will now be aware that Thornbridge has now re-opened following the extensive programme of refurbishment made possible by funding from the New Opportunities Fund and Sheffield City Council. Further information on the range of improved facilities is available on the Thornbridge web site at www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk



FURTHER INFORMATION

If you require any further support, advice or guidance in relation to educational visits and activities, please do not hesitate to contact Adge Last or David Armstrong at Thornbridge Outdoors using the contact details provided at the top of this newsletter.