

EVC News

Spring 2008

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

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

INTRODUCTION – LA CHANGES AND TERMINOLOGY



Regular readers (school EVC's) will notice a change in some of the language used throughout this newsletter. This is to reflect that the Local Education Authority (LEA) no longer exists and has been replaced by the Children and Young People's Services Directorate of the Local Authority (LA).

This of course was done to ensure greater co-operation and "joined-up thinking" on the part of all services that support young people in the city. We are therefore starting the process of changing terminology to reflect these changes.

The newsletter is no longer aimed solely at those working in schools and you will see that within this edition we are also using the term "establishment" and "Visits Co-ordinator" as well as EVC. We would value your feedback on the use of changed terminology and its appropriateness.

Email:
edvisits@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk

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FEEDBACK ON THE USE OF THE VISIT APPROVAL SYSTEM

We have analysed the use of the visit approval system last year and generated reports for EVC's about their school. This was sent out in the autumn term and we hope that it was helpful. It illustrated the numbers of visits requiring LA approval that came through to us in the past year and should enable you to see whether visit leaders are using the system appropriately. You will be able to see the compliance level with LA requirements on approval timescales and give positive feedback to colleagues where appropriate, or reinforce the need to comply where timescales have been missed (though note the changes to these being introduced, on page 4 and 5 of this Newsletter).

In some instances we will be arranging monitoring visits to discuss issues arising from the analysis provided, and offer support and/or advice, if necessary. If, however, you have not heard from us and would like to arrange a meeting, please email us at: edvisits@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk

As part of the above process we have asked schools to ensure we have up-to-date records of who the current Visits Co-ordinator is.

RECOGNITION FOR THE VALUE OF VISITS/OFF-SITE LEARNING

As mentioned in the last edition of EVC News, the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto was launched in November 2006. In this document the government "made the case" for off-site visits of all kinds. It was created by the DCSF and therefore aimed at schools but the case for learning opportunities beyond the establishment, are relevant to all establishments working with young people. If you have still not seen it, you can find "The Manifesto" at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/outsideclassroom/.

OFSTED SELF EVALUATION FORM PROMOTES OUTDOOR LEARNING

A further development that will reinforce the value of off-site visits is the inclusion, by Ofsted in the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) asking establishments to outline the school's contribution, through this aspect of the curriculum, to pupil enrichment, especially its contribution to enjoyment and achievement. This gives added credibility to those staff, like EVCs, heavily involved in making this form of learning available to youngsters. It may be a good opportunity to bring this to the attention of colleagues and talk about the added value and enrichment opportunities created by off-site visits and how this can be built into the SEF. This can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_Content/Shared_Content/IIFD/Files/BlankSEF/PR1.pdf refer to section 5b.

POLICY GUIDELINES

All establishments are advised to have an educational visits Policy. We have set out a series of questions which we hope will stimulate debate about appropriate content for such a policy. The full document is now available on the Educational Visits section of the website: www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits

ENHANCING THE (E)VC ROLE

It is evident that in some establishments Approval Forms are sent to us from the visit leader, via the headteacher or Head of Service and that the (E)VC is unaware of the planned visit. Sometimes issues arise with the approval that might have been avoided had this not been the case and we have therefore decided to ensure the (E)VC is “in the loop” for all visits that come to the LA for approval. We will return approvals and those ‘not yet approved’, marked for the attention of the (E)VC, as well as the visit leader. We have already implemented this change.

This may have implications for (E)VC’s in terms of logistics, but should ensure you know what is happening with visit approvals in your establishment, and will enable you to intervene and support as necessary. It may be necessary for you to speak to those colleagues who receive faxes, to ascertain how you want forwarding of Approval faxes to work in your establishment. Please let us know what you think about this change in communication for visit approvals: Email edvisits@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk

CHANGES TO TIMESCALES FOR VISIT APPROVALS THROUGH THE LA

There are 4 categories of non-routine visit that require approval from the LA Outdoor Education Adviser (OEA):-

- Residential visits (including overnight camping)
- Visits abroad
- Adventurous activities
- Visits to potentially hazardous environments & potentially hazardous activities (e.g. coastal locations, inland water)

Currently we ask for Approval Forms to be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the start of the visit. We are changing this, with effect from 7th April 2008 to:-

4 weeks - all visits within the British Isles

8 weeks – standard visits abroad

16 weeks - expeditions abroad

These are MINIMUM requirements. *(Please refer to the 2006/7 visits summary sent to you in Autumn 2007 for an evaluation of how many visits are sent for approval on time from your establishment)*

The change is being made on the basis of timescales required to resolve problems that may arise in relation to visits. It should be remembered that there are a number of days each week when no one is in the office to respond to approval requests or follow-up issues. However, for visits in Britain, language and communication issues are easily resolved and most problems can be rectified fairly quickly.

Sometimes the problems that relate to visits abroad can take longer to resolve and, together with the time delays for communication between establishments and Thornbridge Outdoors, there needs to be a longer period to ensure approval is achieved prior to the visit start date.

For expeditions, although we say 16 weeks minimum, we recommend the visit leader or EVC informs us, even if informally, as soon as the visit leader starts thinking about the

expedition, and before any commitment is made with an expedition company. This is especially important if the visit is to a new location for the school/establishment leader or the school/establishment is using the services of a new provider.

PLEASE ENSURE COLLEAGUES ARE AWARE OF THESE TIMESCALE CHANGES.

PROVIDER FORM

This is the form that gives you the questions you are advised to seek assurances about before using a Tour Operator or Activity Provider (see LA generic risk assessment 4). Note: you do not always need to use this form – it might be that you have used the same provider recently and can obtain updated assurances by telephone, or that the provider publishes these assurances in a different format. Colleagues often forget to refer to the Activity Providers Generic Risk Assessment and note this on the Approval Form when a provider is being used.

Like Risk Assessments, WE DO NOT NEED TO SEE copies of the Provider Form. To find a copy, go to: www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits then go to Provider Form.

LA GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENTS (GRAs)

We have amended some of the GRA's that visit leaders should refer to when planning visits. There are 10 additional GRA's, as shown below:-

- 33 Castles, Historic buildings, Museums**
- 34 Playgrounds and Adventure Playgrounds**
- 35 Fishing (Angling)** (previously no. 33)
- 36 Rowing**
- 37 Ice skating rinks**
- 38 Horse riding and Trekking**
- 39 Go Karting**
- 40 Quad biking**
- 41 Paintball**
- 42 Visits to Battlefields**
- 43 Zoo visits**

You will note that Fishing (which previously existed) is in amongst these – the reason being that we have also started a process, that we will extend in the future, of banding the GRAs into “families” of similar types.

As well as these new GRAs, we have added substantial additional sections to the following ones, to incorporate “related” activities, which require different control measures to ensure the safety of young people.

- 5 Ski trips and Artificial Ski Slopes**
- 12 Rock climbing and Indoor Climbing Walls**
- 15 Swimming and Paddling during visits**

Other GRAs have had additions/modifications and they are denoted in the index by **. The actual modifications are **highlighted in red** on the GRA itself.

When seeking LA approval (using the Approval Form) do not send copies of these generic risk assessments to us but you must note all the relevant ones that you have referred to – it is easier to simply note the numbers than type out the titles. All visits will require reference to numbers 1 & 2.

All new and amended GRAs can be found on the web site after the 1st April 2008 at: <http://www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/genericrisk.htm>

RECORD KEEPING



SCC Internal Audit have asked us to reiterate the following guidance about how long records of visits should be maintained.

“In order to optimise risk mitigation the following documents should be retained for six years from the end of the year in which the visit took place:

- *risk assessments;*
- *post trip evaluation;*
- *a sample of the information sent to parents;*
- *a list signed by two members of staff detailing pupils who actually participated in the trip.*

In the event of any untoward incident occurring during the trip then all original prime documentation relating to the trip, including the individual's parental consent slip, should be retained until at least the 25th birthday of the child, unless Sheffield City Council Legal officers advise otherwise. “

In summary records should therefore be retained:

- for all visits – six years (summary documents)
- for visits where an untoward incident occurred – until at least the child's 25th birthday (children have until their 25th birthday to decide whether to make a claim).

SNOWSPORTS & SKI VISITS

There have been a number of schools taking groups of pupils to European ski areas and beyond this term.

As indicated in the last EVC Newsletter, ski visits produced a range of issues last winter. The main one concerned supervision of pupils skiing outside ski lessons. We again wish to draw your attention to the following guidance:



“All skiing, snowboarding and all other activities on snow must be led by staff qualified to teach/supervise the specific activity, usually instructors, nationally qualified, employed by the local ski school. Schools must organise qualified supervision for any skiing which takes place outside instructed sessions.”



This is set out in LA Generic Risk Assessment number 5. Ski Trips and in the LA *Guidelines for Educational Visits*, Chapter 16, Visits Abroad, page 64, under the heading Ski Visits. Some ski companies offer discount ASCL courses for visit leaders – it is well worth checking these opportunities if you hope to supervise skiing next season.

The usual qualification which people gain to allow them to supervise skiing outside ski school is Snowsport England's Alpine Ski Course Leader (ASCL) Award, although there are a range of other suitable awards and methods of demonstrating competence.

Staff wishing to supervise skiing outside ski lessons should follow the above guidance.

ASCL course dates are available on Snowsport England's web site at:
http://www.snowsportengland.org.uk/coaching_officials_leading-248.html

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FIRST AID



"Risk assessment for educational visits must include consideration of first aid requirements: this will help to identify the level of first aid staffing and equipment which is required for the visit. At least one of the supervising staff on the visit should be a competent first aider." Visit Guidelines.

For those looking for first aid training courses, the following training is planned to take place at Thornbridge:

2-day rescue and emergency care

2008: 21 – 22nd April
17 – 18th May
11 – 12th June

1-day basic first aid

2008: 17th April

Other dates for 2-day, 1-day and half day courses can be arranged according to demand. If you would like to arrange a course for a group of staff on specific dates, please contact Dot Wales at Thornbridge on Tel: 01629 640491 Email: dot@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk.

Courses can take place at Thornbridge or in school.

EVC TRAINING

An essential training course for staff who fulfil the EVC function in schools. Forthcoming course dates are as follows: 2008: 15th March, 23rd September, 11th December.

For more information contact Dot Wales at Thornbridge on 01629 640491, email dot@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk.



GROUP LEADER TRAINING

A 1-day course dealing with group management in the outdoors during educational visits. This course will be of particular relevance to new and less experienced visit leaders working in urban or rural locations

Dates for 2008: 26th June, 24th September & 10th December

Course Objectives:

- To familiarise participants with current good practice in the supervision of young people on educational visits.
- To raise awareness about key guidance documentation and sources of advice and support.



- To provide training in risk management.
- To demonstrate strategies for the management of risks in specific environments.

Off-site visits training for group leaders continues to be available in a variety of other formats:

- Half-day training held at school, or at a suitable venue local to the school or at Thornbridge, which introduces participants to the principles of sound group management practices, including risk assessment for off-site visits.
- One-day training, at a suitable venue, composed of half-day group management training and half-day teambuilding activities.

OUTDOOR TRAINING COURSES

A range of activity-specific outdoor leadership training courses continue to be available from Thornbridge Outdoors, at a reduced rate for Sheffield staff.

Courses include:

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



For full information, go to www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/courses/index.htm

REMEMBER

All Sheffield LA guidance for educational visits is available on the CD provided to all schools in January 2005. Information is also online from the Thornbridge web site at www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/educationalvisits.htm

SHEFFIELD LA OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRES

THORNBRIDGE OUTDOORS

Location: Situated in 55 acres of grounds, close to the Monsal Trail in the White Peak, 2 miles from Bakewell and less than 30 minutes from Sheffield.

Facilities: Two self-contained residential units, Wyedale Lodge and Wyedale Farm, as well as a Campsite that can accommodate up to 40 people.

The Lodge accommodates a maximum of 32 people in 9 bedrooms with a dining room/kitchen, classroom/meeting room, shared recreation room and ample toilets, showers and washbasins. The kitchen is fully equipped, bedding is provided and the building is centrally heated. This building is fully wheelchair accessible.

Wyedale Farm is a Grade 2 listed 19th Century building with a charming roundhouse attached, accommodating a maximum of 29 people in seven bedrooms. Spacious dining room, fully equipped kitchen, showers, toilets and washbasins and a shared recreation/meeting room. Bedding is provided and all rooms are centrally heated.

Wyedale Camp: a beautifully situated and sheltered campsite with showers, washbasins and toilets. An added attraction of Wyedale Camp is the option of booking the Camp Block which has a large fully equipped dining room/kitchen.

Bookings: for bookings enquiries and further information, contact Jill Lomas Tel: 01629 640491, info@thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk or visit the website www.thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk

Centre Manager: Aidge Last, Thornbridge Education Centre, Great Longstone, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1NY.

MAYFIELD ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CENTRE

Situated in the heart of the rural Mayfield Valley, on the very edge of Sheffield, is an old Victorian village school, built in 1875. Since 1971 this has been the home of Mayfield Environmental Education Centre, providing countryside experience for Sheffield City children. The Centre is surrounded by a great diversity of habitat making it a superb location for environmental education and specific studies related to the National Curriculum

Mayfield Centre provides: Classroom facilities for up to 70 children; outdoor clothing and wellingtons for children and adults; fieldwork equipment; reference materials, slides, photographs and follow up activities; ground floor facilities accessible to wheelchair users; hot mid-day meals; coach transport to and from the Centre at a competitive price; training courses for teachers/leaders; a loan service for schools including photographs, cagoules and fieldwork equipment.

Bookings: made annually in February / March for the following school year. Telephone enquiries for vacancies are welcome any time.

Current Centre charges: Please contact the centre for current pricing

Contact: Jane Walker, Centre Manager, Mayfield Environmental Education Centre, David Lane, Sheffield S10 4PH. Telephone and Fax: 0114 2303119. Email: MayfieldEnvironmental@Centre-Sheffield.fsnet.co.uk

WHIRLOW HALL FARM

Schools within the Sheffield LEA have special rights for access to the farm as a learning tool for their children. A fully trained education department can deal with requests to bring pupils to an exciting working farm on the edge of the Peak District National Park.

Facilities: 130 acre mixed farm. Staff are available to support visiting groups. Classrooms, exhibition area, audio-visual room, livestock sheds, poultry sheds, pig unit and farm trails, all wheelchair accessible. Access trailer. Teaching resources including aerial photographs, OS map, seasonal videos of farm. Two residential units, one designed for groups with disabilities.

Bookings: All visits must be pre-booked using the contact details provided below.

Centre charges: Please contact the Farm for the current charging policy. The centre relies on charitable donations to continue to provide a service. If you would like to support Whirlow Hall Farm, please phone 0114 235 2678 or write to Whirlow Hall Farm Trust, Whirlow Lane, Sheffield S11 9QF

Contact: Anna Cowling, Whirlow Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S11 9QF Tel: 0114 236 0096
Fax: 0114 262 1015 Website: www.whirlowhallfarm.co.uk
Email: educationenquiries@whirlowhallfarm.co.uk