

Thinking about organising your next school trip?

Here are a few pointers which will help you think about what is involved.

1. Why should I organise a school tour?

Taking pupils outside of their normal learning environment can involve a fair degree of work but, with the right planning, preparation and support, a school trip should be highly rewarding not only for your pupils but also for your colleagues and YOU!

Many schools view educational visits as an integral part of an effective and balanced curriculum, a view supported by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC). The LOtC website (www.lotc.org.uk/why/school-improvement) sets out many of the ways in which pupils, teaching staff and therefore the school benefit from educational visits.

In the view of UNESCO “Providing students with high quality learning activities in relevant situations beyond the walls of the classroom is vital for helping students appreciate their first hand experiences from a variety of different perspectives. Experiences outside the classroom also enhances learning by providing students with opportunities to practice skills of enquiry, values analysis and clarification and problem solving in everyday situations”¹

2. Where do I start?

If you want your trip to have a real educational benefit, as well as being enjoyable, rather than start by thinking about where to go, why not ask yourself ‘*what do I want my pupils to get out of this trip?*’ Once you know in your own mind what you want to achieve, then begin to think about which are the sites and locations which will best help meet your objectives.

If you need to take advice there are plenty of places to look, starting with the internet but be aware there are companies out there who will try and encourage you to visit an area simply because it is somewhere they are familiar with, rather than giving any real thought as to whether it is the best place for YOUR group. One place to start would be to check whether any potential provider has been awarded the LOtC quality badge, the nationally recognised indicator of good quality educational provision. You can check this on the LOtC website at:

<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>. Using a Quality Badge holder not only provides some assurance of quality it should also reduce the amount of administrative work you will need to do.

¹ http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod26.html



You should also seek out your Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) who will be involved in the planning and management of school trips. They should be able to:

- ✓ provide you with a copy of your school's policy for organising a trip
- ✓ explain the school's policy covering paying for school trips
- ✓ offer guidance on producing letters and communicating with parents
- ✓ offer guidance on how to approach the Head for approval.

3. Do I have to organise it all by myself?

That is really up to you. Many teachers enjoy the planning and preparation involved in putting a tour together. If that is what you decide to do you should be able to call on the help of your EVC. You may also have a colleague in your school who is happy to share their expertise, which will make life far easier.

If not, you might want to consider approaching a specialist schools' travel company. Many travel companies offer dedicated administrative support, experience and the ability to produce a tailor-made programme which will meet the needs of YOUR school so it is worth time looking around.

You might want to start by checking the company has been awarded the [LOtC Mark](#), the first national accreditation for schools which recognises and supports the development of learning outside the classroom across all subject areas. Not only does this provide some assurance of quality it should also reduce the amount of administrative work you will need to do.

4. How do I generate interest in the trip?

Whilst it is the pupils who will benefit directly from the trip it is usually parents / guardians who pay. So you need to offer a balanced programme which contains activities the pupils will find engaging, relevant and also fun: a programme which the parents feel will inspire their child and from which they will derive real educational benefit.

Mentioning the trip in assembly and placing posters around the school are both good ways to advertise it to pupils and distributing a letter to targeted pupils and parents / guardians will really help you gauge interest.

If you really want to stimulate interest why not organise a presentation for pupils and parents / guardians where you can explain exactly what the trip will involve and what it is likely to cost. If you choose to work with a specialist schools' travel company why not ask them to deliver the presentation for you? After all if they are going to be responsible for organising the tour it would be good for parents to have the chance to ask questions of them directly.



5. What are the key factors I need to think about?

Planning time: Detailed planning is key both to securing authority to organise a trip and to its being successful – and the secret to getting the planning right is to allow yourself enough time. You may have an ideal date in mind for your trip or you may only be permitted to travel at certain points in the year, so the first thing will be to check the school calendar and seek permission from the Head. Make sure you take into account how much time you will need to organise the tour. In our experience if you can allow roughly a year to organise your first residential tour, particularly if you are travelling overseas, that would be ideal, whereas for a non-residential tour six months should be sufficient.

Why not set out a timeline which includes the key planning dates? If you do so make sure you allow sufficient time to for pupils to speak to their parents/guardians before confirming an interest! To help with this you could provide them with a payment schedule in order to ensure you have the necessary funds in place in order to make any prepayments.

Safety:

Although you will be required to produce Risk Assessments which cover various aspects of the trip don't worry, there is plenty of guidance out there which can help.

Your first stop should be the school's EVC who will be able to advise you, not only on completing Risk Assessments, but also on matters such as: the various legal responsibilities of those organising trips; staffing and supervision ratios; emergency procedures etc.

In 2011 the Outdoor Education Advisors' Panel (OEAP) produced in-depth guidance which covers all aspects of school trips. This comprehensive document is available at:

<http://oeapng.info/guidance-documents/>

The Department for Education also provides advice on health and safety covering activities that take place on or off school premises, including school trips, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>

Useful guidance has also been issued by the:

- ✓ Health and Safety Executive <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf>
- ✓ Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
<http://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/school-college-safety/school-visits-guide.pdf>



For General travel advice the best place to start looking is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> The site offers you the facility to check the latest Governmental advice for travel to each country and is updated on a regular basis.

If you are looking to travel with a tour company you may wish to check they are an approved member of the School Travel Forum (STF). The STF is a group of tour operators who have developed a rigorous Code of Practice to which all its members must adhere. STF members must undergo an annual external validation of their safety system, which means you can be confident that the key components of your tour have been organised with Health & Safety as the chief concern. It is worth noting that this external validation automatically results in the operator being awarded the LOtC Quality Badge which, given one of the criteria for this addresses the management of risk, should help to streamline the paperwork that schools and Local Authorities will need. A list of STF Assured members can be found at:

<http://www.schooltravelforum.com/assuredmembers.aspx>

Whilst you are on the STF website why not take a look at their excellent document 'Demystifying Risk Assessments' <http://www.schooltravelforum.com/white-papers-guides>

You will also want to speak to your EVC to confirm that the group will be covered by the school or LEA travel insurance policy throughout the trip. If they are not don't worry most tour operators will provide cover as part of the tour package but make sure to check exactly what is provided for.

Financial Security

Your EVC, Bursar or Finance Officer should be able to provide you with guidance on the best way to collect money in from your students and also to arrange for payments to be made. It may be that there is administrative support in place which can help you with this. Where you part with money to private companies you will obviously want to be sure that it is safe in their hands and that the services you have paid for will be provided.

So why not check that the tour operator is a member of the Association of British Tour Agents (ABTA)? ABTA members are committed to abiding by the [ABTA Code of Conduct](#), which governs areas such as accurate advertising, fair terms of trading, changes to bookings and managing customer complaints.

If you are booking flight inclusive tours you should check whether these are covered by the Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL) scheme run by the UK Civil Aviation Authority:

<https://www.caa.co.uk/ATOL-protection/>

ATOL protects you when you book a holiday with a UK travel company. It ensures you do not lose money or become stranded abroad if your travel company collapses.



Passports & Visas:

If you are travelling overseas, even if your trip is within the European Union (EU), your students will need a valid travel document and some may well require a visa. Whilst many may already have their own travel document, you will need to allow time for those students who may not have one to apply.

If you prefer, and you are travelling to certain European countries you could consider applying for a collective passport. You need to be aware that there are limitations on who can use a collective passport:

- ✓ A collective passport can cover between 5 and 50 children on.
- ✓ If there are more than 50 in the group, you can split the group and apply for 2 or more passports.
- ✓ Everyone on the passport must be a British national and under 18 by the end of the trip.

The GOV.UK website currently advises that applications, which cost £39, take about 6 weeks. If you choose to submit an application you will need to allow additional time to gather in the relevant information required, so you may wish to consider whether it is preferable to simply follow the current advice given by GOV.UK which is 'Young people should travel on their own passports if possible'².

If you choose to travel with a tour company they should be able to offer advice on visa requirements but if you are organising the trip yourself you can find a list of the countries whose citizens must hold a visa if travelling to the EU at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy/apply_for_a_visa/index_en.htm.

You may also want to take a look at British Council website. They can issue a List of Travellers form for school trips to countries in the EU allowing pupils who are of a non-EU nationality to go on the trip without getting a visa. Advice on this can be found at:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/partner/list-travellers>

Don't forget that if, they do not already have one, students will need to register for their European Health Insurance Card. This is free and can be also be obtained via GOV.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>

² <https://www.gov.uk/collective-group-passports/overview>



6. Do I want to lead this trip myself?

You are the person best placed to know exactly what you want the focus of your visit to be and also how this links in to what your pupils have studied in class. So, if you know the places you are visiting, you might feel it best to lead the trip yourself and to organise the visit and activities which your students will undertake. If this is the option you choose, make sure you speak with your EVC just to be clear on the school's policies and to confirm you have all the necessary permissions.

If the area is new to you or you want to be able to enjoy the trip without having to find your way to each stop and liaise with restaurateurs and hoteliers you could look to secure the services of a guide. A good guide can really make a tour; equally a bad one can have an equally negative impact. No UK organisation offers an independent evaluation scheme, so before making a decision why not ask your prospective guide, or their employers for evidence of customer satisfaction and proof of their having previously worked, successfully, with UK school groups.

7. Summary

Whilst taking on responsibility for organising a school trip will involve additional work, particularly the first time you do it, the benefits which come from providing your students with the chance to expand their horizons and to appreciate the learning is not restricted to the classroom are huge.

We hope some of the advice contained in this document provides you with a few useful pointers and an idea of where to start. As with all things in education, the policies and procedures we have referred to here are liable to change, so please do check with your colleagues and your EVC to make sure you are familiar with the current position.

If we can be of any further help or provide any assistance please do not hesitate to contact us at:

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