

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, environmental, financial, health, legal and human rights, personnel and property considerations

Derbyshire County Council

Improvement and Scrutiny Committee Education Panel

2 February 2005

Report of the Chief Executive

Review into the Regulation of School Trips

Final Report

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the findings of the Improvement and Scrutiny review into Regulations on School Trips

Information and Analysis

Background

This review was instigated with the aim of ensuring that trips and excursions organised by Derbyshire LEA Schools were run as safely as possible, whilst avoiding an over-restrictive regime that might unduly limit the number of trips organised by schools. The scoping report determined that the review would look at how the County Council currently regulated trips and excursions and would identify any potential improvements that could be made to the system.

During the course of the review, the following information has been gathered.

- The Department for Education and Employment (now the Department of Education and Skills) has published a good practise guide on the health and safety of pupils on educational visits. It is a comprehensive document, covering the responsibilities for visits of LEAs, Governing Bodies, Head Teachers, other teachers, volunteer helpers, parents and pupils. Advice is given on planning visits, supervision, preparing pupils, communicating with parents, planning transport, insurance and emergency procedures. The guide also

differentiates between the various types of visits and advises on extra requirements for visits abroad.

- Cllr Janet Hill, who is a member of the working group for this review, and the Improvement and Scrutiny Officer accompanied a class of 7 & 8 years olds from Ashover Primary School on their trip to the Magna Science Adventure Centre in June 2004.
- A questionnaire survey of all secondary schools was carried out to ascertain the variety of excursions undertaken over the last year. Schools participate in a large variety of day trips and excursions over a year, and the vast majority undertake at least one residential visit abroad, usually for a week's duration. Visits include trips to theatre and sporting events, historical venues and events linked to curriculum activities (for example, a visit to the Clothes Show exhibition for pupils studying design/textiles). Teaching staff value the benefits pupils gain, both from links to the curriculum and the social aspects of excursions away from school.
- Cllr Hill and the Improvement and Scrutiny Officer met with the Principal Health and Safety Adviser in the Education Health and Safety Section, and, subsequently, two other officers of that section, to discuss the current situation regarding the safety of educational visits.
- The manager of the Education Health and Safety Section and one of his colleagues, made a presentation to the meeting of the Improvement & Scrutiny Committee on December 16 2004 when certain recommendations were suggested to improve the use of the advisory service.

The Department for Education and Skills Guide for Health and Safety on Educational Visits.

The DfES has published a 68 page document which offers a good practice guide for health and safety on school trips. The legal framework which sets out the responsibilities for health safety and welfare of individuals on educational visits is contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Although this legislation relates primarily to employers' responsibilities to employees, it does set out responsibilities and duties relating to the care of children on educational visits.

For most, but not all schools, the LEA is the employer on these occasions and has a duty to:

- Assess the risk of activities
- Introduce measures to control those risks
- Inform employees about these measures

The LEA is the employer in Community Schools. Teachers and other school staff are the employees and must:

- take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety
- co-operate with the LEA/Governors over safety matters
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions
- inform the employer of any serious risks

For voluntary aided, non-maintained and grant-maintained schools, the governing body is the employer. The LEA Health and Safety Section offers a full approval and advisory service for educational visits as part of their traded service for health and safety with these schools.

The duties of the employing body apply to all school visits. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils also have a common law duty to act as any reasonably prudent parent would do in the same circumstances.

Approval for Visits

The LEA should have a written procedure for arranging visits which teachers should follow. This will normally include procedures for the approval of certain types of visits. In Derbyshire, this responsibility is currently undertaken by the Education Department's Health and Safety section

Although the LEA is responsible for health and safety, decisions about visits are usually delegated to the head teacher. The head teacher's agreement must be obtained before a visit takes place.

LEAs have the following main roles:

- provide written guidelines for governors, head teachers and teachers including advice on risk assessment
- assess proposals for certain types of visits
- provide emergency telephone contact for the duration of the visit where necessary
- ensure training needs have been addressed
- provide access to named staff for advice
- maintain appropriate insurance cover

- have in place procedures to monitor and review safety during off-site visits and activities

The DFES guidance document sets out further specific duties for Governing bodies, head teachers, teachers, group leaders, volunteers and pupils and parents.

**Site Visit by Cllr Janet Hill and the Improvement & Scrutiny Officer
Accompanying class visit from Ashover Primary School to "Magna"
Science Adventure Centre, Rotherham - Friday 18 June 2004**

As a means of assessing issues involved in undertaking a primary school trip, Cllr Janet Hill and the Improvement and Scrutiny Officer accompanied a class of Year 3 pupils on their annual day trip. This year the venue chosen by the class teachers was the Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham.

The trip took place on Friday, 18 June 2004, the class and accompanying adults being transported by coach from the school at 9.15am, with a planned return at around 3.15pm.

A pre-meeting was held in the staff room where the class teacher set out the routine for the day with a description of the facilities available at Magna. He outlined potential hazards and areas where some children may have difficulties. An important aspect here was that the teacher had visited the venue a week or so before the trip to ascertain how the trip should be structured. This provided him with invaluable first hand experience of the duration of time the class should/could spend in each area of the venue and, more importantly, allowed him to assess for himself the potential hazards during the visit. This was particularly helpful in considering any special needs of individual children, for example, the entrance to one section of the venue involved a dark tunnel with flashing lights. One child in the class was potentially vulnerable to being upset by this type of lighting and the teacher informed all accompanying adults of this fact and ensured that he was able to attend to the child during this section of the visit.

The venue, in keeping with most others open to school trips, supplied the teachers with an information pack which included it's own risk assessment document. This details all potential hazards and control measures and strongly recommends that all teachers make a pre-visit before taking their class.

For the whole of the day, each adult was allotted a group of 6 children. The children had been drilled to stay in their groups, with their adult leader and this worked well. During the time at Magna, the children were allowed to roam around each section and this enabled them to have a "hands-on" experience with the different exhibits and displays. They readily assembled into their groups when asked, in order to move around the Centre.

Some of the exhibition areas held more potential hazards than others. For example, the Water Hall had wet, slippery flooring and there were opportunities for the children to use water for different purposes, which inevitably allowed some to get wet. The teaching staff left this area until last and immediately prior to the group entering, set down some ground rules for the children.

A decision had to be made at the end of the visit regarding the outside play area. It was originally planned that the children would be allowed half an hour or so here but the wet weather prevented this.

Throughout the whole day it was apparent that a pre-visit to the venue is vital. This should be taken a short while before the school trip (ie. a week or two before, as opposed to taking different groups one year after the next). This not only enables the maximum benefit for the children of using each area of a facility, but also allows, at first hand, staff to assess potential dangers for their own individual group of children.

The Magna venue also played a part in ensuring the group's safety. The coach was met at the door by a dedicated member of the Magna staff, who addressed the children prior to them disembarking. A few basic rules were given before the group left the coach and proceeded to the foyer area.

The Magna risk assessment document was extensive and the venue allowed teachers to make a pre-visit free of charge. A copy of this document is appended to this report (**appendix 1**)

In conclusion, this particular trip was to a venue which was originally a steelworks. Part of the theme of the venue is to maintain a feel for the vastness and the atmosphere of the steel-making days. As a result, the venue has areas which are dimly lit and has high level walkways. Other potential hazards are inherent in the exhibits themselves (for example a tornado of flame). These are all perfectly safe whilst visitors adhere to safety regulations. Adults accompanying children have to maintain a balance between allowing children the freedom to explore the venue's facilities whilst ensuring their safety. The staff's pre-planning and a briefing session for accompanying adults prior to departure was sufficient in this case.

Visit Planning by Unstone Junior School

An example of how Unstone Junior School planned a visit to Lea Green, to attend a Friendship Day, was also obtained. Everyone involved with the visit had a copy of an information document which listed the reasons for the trip, which staff and volunteers were involved and the groups for which they were responsible, a timetable of sessions, risk assessment information and ground rules.

Meeting with Education Principal Health & Safety Advisor

A meeting was held with Jerry Sanderson, Education Principal Health & Safety Advisor, Cllr Janet Hill and the Improvement & Scrutiny Officer to discuss the processes employed by the Education Health and Safety team to promote the safety of educational visits made by Derbyshire schools.

The Education Health and Safety Team has offered guidance on school trips and excursions for the last 2 years and Jerry Sanderson, along with colleagues from the Council's White Hall activity centre and the Youth Service undertook a review of the Council's policy. This coincided with the publication of the DfES guide " Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits".

In order to avoid duplication, the Derbyshire review adopted the DfES document and gave it a Derbyshire "slant".

Originally, the LEA operated a three tier risk assessment scheme. *Low risk* trips were trips which did not involve "adventure" type activities in the local area and required only the approval of a school's headteacher. *Medium risk* trips were those with a slightly higher risk due to the location to be visited or the distance travelled but were only of a maximum duration of one day and required the Governing Body's approval and *high risk* trips were residential visits, visits abroad, work on or near water, visits to the coast or those which involved adventure-type or other specified activities. These high risk activities needed the approval of the LEA Health and Safety team.

The issue of safety on school trips and excursions has become a bigger priority over the last few years, not least because of recent incidences of fatalities (seven in one recent year, nationally, and 53 over the last 15 years). Whilst there have been no serious incidents affecting Derbyshire schools, national media interest has raised the profile considerably and LEAs are more and more under pressure to work against these incidents occurring. As well as the moral obligation, LEAs are also aware of the growing litigation risk should accidents occur.

As a result of the review of the LEA's policy after its first full year of operation, the medium risk category was removed as the Governors' role was not really to comment on the safety of particular visits but to ensure the visit was appropriate in terms of its educational outcomes. The Governors should however ensure that there is an appropriate system in place for approving visits. There is now a two-tier system, with approvals given by the headteacher for low risk visits (this includes those visits that were previously categorised as medium risk), and the LEA health & safety team for high risk visits.

The DfES advises that there is an Educational Visit Co-ordinator (ECV) for each school to co-ordinate all educational visit activities. The LEA has and continues to run training courses to support those people in schools who have been given this role. The Health and Safety team have also given a lot of individual support to EVC's and carried out some specific group leader training in some schools to support the EVC's in those schools.

Under the current system, the LEA asks schools for 3 months notice for approving a high risk trip. This is not unreasonable as most of these excursions have to be booked months in advance for accommodation, transport etc. This amount of notice allows the LEA Health and Safety team to properly assess the trip and gives plenty of time to suggest adjustments to a school's plans if necessary. Approval to the trip can then be given in good time for the departure date. There are occasions when schools are offered "last minute deals" and in order to take advantage of these, the LEA needs to react swiftly to approve the excursion. If all other trips are approved in advance, this prevents a backlog during the summer (the excursion season) and allows the LEA team to help these genuine last minute applications.

*** One issue for this review could be to tackle some school's disregard for the deadline**

The Youth Service has a dedicated staff member who deals with adventure activity risks (for a vast array of activities such as rock climbing, canoeing etc.). The LEA is also able to tap into the expertise of activity leaders at Lea Green and Whitehall, the County Council's own activity centres, for advice on any particular activity. As these are the Council's own centres, they are not repeatedly risk assessed as they are reviewed regularly. Schools are encouraged to use these facilities as the LEA advisors know they are effectively risk assessed.

A whole raft of generic risk assessments has been developed to simplify the process for schools. If schools follow these they will meet the LEAs minimum standards. However, there is a danger that this is becoming a paper exercise. Schools know that if they complete the forms they will have satisfied the LEA requirements. The process needs monitoring to ensure the schools have actually given thought to the safety of their trips, rather than just being satisfied to receive permission from the LEA for the trip to go ahead.

The Health and Safety Team are about to begin a monitoring process in that they will attend some trips. Advisers have carried out some pilot visits but tend to get "roped" into helping with the children, which can detract from their observational role.

The team is therefore about to begin some "on the spot" visits. Although this is relatively easy for day trips, it is more difficult for residential excursions or trips abroad and it is these trips which are the most risky. For example, a group on a week's skiing trip would benefit from a one-day monitoring visit from someone within the LEA with the necessary competence to ensure that all reasonable health and safety procedures are being followed. This may seem a large burden on time and resources, but if schools were aware that an inspection may take place unannounced, it may encourage tighter safety. In the arena of growing litigation, such an inspection regime would add strength to any case the LEA may have to defend.

The LEA team also visits companies who provide residential/adventure type holidays to obtain information on how the centre manages their health and safety. This information is then passed onto any school which seeks to use any of these providers.

Some travel companies who specialise in organising school visits have organised themselves into the School Travel Forum and work together to offer better trips at specific locations abroad. They have offered to do training tours for teachers to get the most out of a visit to a specific place.

The Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority undertakes vetting of visits at certain venues in the UK. These are venues that offer certain specified adventurous activities to young people on a commercial basis

Theme parks are regarded as low-risk venues as they are generally day-excursions and are heavily regulated for health and safety already.

The Health & Safety team would also like to implement a series of training courses for teachers/group leaders, targeted at specific issues such as foreign exchange trips, emergency contact training etc. Whilst it may be difficult for schools to release staff for this training, it is vital if safety on trips is to be improved.

Transport for School Journeys

The County Council doesn't hold an approved list of transport operators but there is a list of operators who do the daily "school-runs". The LEA encourages schools to use these operators for their school trips. Alternatively, schools may seek advice from the County Transport division who do assessments of bus companies.

Where parents transport groups of pupils, the school should ask to see a driving licence, insurance certificate and proof of road tax from the volunteer driver. In addition, the parental consent of those children who will be travelling with another parent should be obtained in writing. There are also child protection issues to consider when using this type of transport.

The Health and Safety Section of the Education Department has recently assessed how schools work with the H & S Section under the Out of Classroom Learning Approval System. A progress report was submitted to the Improvement & Scrutiny Committee in December, when Jerry Sanderson and Don Stennett of the Health & Safety Section also made a presentation on their findings.

The report is reproduced below.

Education Department (Health and Safety Section)

Progress report on the Out of Classroom Learning Approval Systems.

The intention and purpose of this report is to examine the effectiveness of the Education Department (Health and Safety section) out of classroom learning activities approval systems and Derbyshire schools' conformity to D.C.C's Health and Safety requirements for Educational Trips, Visits etc.

N.B. It is not the intention of this report to purely criticise poorly performing schools but rather to examine apparent failures and deficiencies on both sides and to suggest practical and pragmatic improvements to the process and to promote good practice.

The approvals process is managed by two members of the Health and Safety Section, their title is Health and Safety Adviser (school visits) and they are: Charlie Stephenson and Don Stennett and their activities are overseen by the Principal Health and Safety Adviser, Jerry Sanderson.

The remainder of the Health and Safety section team are more closely involved with the schools as Health and Safety Advisers delivering various training courses, auditing the Schools' Health and Safety provision/management and advising via face to face meetings, telephone conversations, and e-mails, although they will be involved in approving visits during peak times due to the significant increase of visits, particularly during the summer terms.

The report will discuss the following topics:

- 1. Number (%) of trained Educational Visits Coordinators EVCs).***
- 2. Communication systems.***

- 3. Number of schools going on educational trips/visits with/without approval.**
- 4. Schools' level of achievement in fulfilling D.C.C's trips/visits health and safety requirements.**
- 5. Late submissions of required approval application documentation.**
- 6. Quality of required approval application documentation.**
- 7. The way forward (9 Recommendations to improve the systems/service).**
- 8. Should the Local Education Authority have means of censure available to them for schools that continually fail to meet the basic requirements of County Education Health and Safety for schools policy?**

1. The number of school personnel who have attended EVC training:
 - Three hundred and seventy five (375).
 - A further eleven (11) persons left early before completing the course and the end test.
 - 24 schools sent two persons on the course
 - 347 passed the end test (pass rate of 92%)
 - 28 Failed the end test.
 - 43 Youth Centre personnel attended EVC training
 - 39 passed the end test. (pass rate of 91%)
 - 4 Failed the end test.
2. The means of communication between Health and Safety section and the County's Schools usually involves the exchange of information via telephone conversations, faxes and e-mails. There is less opportunity for face to face meetings other than when delivering the EVC training courses or if a particular school requests assistance from either School Visits Adviser. For whatever reason, some schools, when sending in their trip documentation, profess not to know the address of the Health and Safety section or the telephone extension numbers of the Visits Adviser, regardless of the fact that the information is readily available on the County's extranet site. The communication process could be greatly improved by reminding schools of the services that are offered (possibly by mail-shot) thereby re-establishing close ties/partnerships. Suggested improvements will be discussed in Point 7.

3. Since the scheme's inception in March 2002 there have been 1339 applications for trip approval. 1231 trips have been approved and 108 trips gone without approval (8.6% of the total) and while the unapproved figure may at first appear to be small, it should also be considered that it is 108 opportunities for major incidents to occur together with the resulting publicity. There are possibly a number of schools that have organised and undertaken educational trips/visits without applying for approval, for a variety of reasons. These schools may continue to undertake these unapproved trips until they are reminded of their moral and legal duties.

4. Schools' level of achievement in fulfilling D.C.C's trips/visits health and safety requirements.

Of the 434 schools in the county, we have contact with approximately 300 (64%) of the schools. The reasons for the lack of contact with the other 130 schools (34%) are varied i.e. Their trips do not require County approval; They don't go on trips/visits; Lack of knowledge with regard to their legal responsibilities; Lack of commitment, the mistaken belief that health and safety legislative requirements don't apply to them but in the event of a serious incident and the resulting publicity, their moral and legal responsibilities could be called into question.

Generally, the 300 schools' actions toward fulfilling the County's trips/visits health and safety requirements may be categorised as:

- a) Those who can and do it well (15%) i.e. Plan future trips; give the required three months notice; submit sufficient and suitable documentation; ask sensible and logical questions concerning the process, respond promptly if we request additional information and/or clarification and are concerned with the qualitative process and the safety of their colleagues and pupils.
- b) Those who can and do it reasonably well but could do better (40%). This is apparent from the continually repeated mistakes and/or omissions that occur in their trip approval submissions.

A small minority of the schools send their documentation within the required clearing period which, fortunately, allows us sufficient time to contact them if their submission is found wanting.

Unfortunately many of the EVC's often repeat the same errors for the greater percentage of their trips.

Not all of the EVCs have received health and safety training but rather they have been given the role by their head teacher but are not adequately

supported i.e. insufficient time to: Produce qualitative risk assessments, attend training/re-training courses and team meetings with the trip members.

- c) Those who can but don't do it well (45%) i.e. Submit trip approval documentation shortly before they are due to leave on the trip (home and/or abroad) and expect instant approval; if the trip approval documentation is insufficient and/or unsuitable, do not appreciate being asked for additional information and/or clarification and certain individuals have, at times, become argumentative, obstructive and even aggressive. From our conversations with many teachers/EVCs, they object to what they see as the onerous, time consuming and bureaucratic health and safety requirements but fail to appreciate that the LEA's Visits approval system is a necessary part of a planned and qualitative out of classroom learning experience.*

5. Late submissions of required approval application documentation.

The stated time requirement for trip approval is three months. Approximately 25% of the schools applied for their trip/s approval giving three months or more notice.

The amount of notice the remainder (75%) of the schools gave varied wildly between ten weeks and one day! The reasons for the fluctuations of the schools' notice period were manifold i.e.:

- Staff sicknesses*
- Change of personnel*
- Mislaid documentation*
- Fax out of order*
- Thought another member of staff was dealing with the trip*
- Holiday*
- Forgetfulness*
- Pressure of work and insufficient time to complete the paperwork*
- Believed they had sent the paperwork weeks/months ago*
- Insisted they had sent the paperwork weeks/months ago*
- Believed their documentation to be sufficient and suitable*
- Strongly insisted that their documentation was sufficient and suitable regardless of our repeated requests for additional information and/or clarification*
- Believed that it was the Health and Safety Section's function to complete their incomplete/incorrect documentation*

- *Last minute special travel offers*
- *They were given short notice of the proposed trip by their head teacher/their governors*

Undoubtedly, many of the reasons were genuine and we dealt with their late requests as a priority and many of the schools expressed their gratitude but a large number of the schools repeatedly and regularly offered similar reasons/excuses while failing to achieve the minimum standard for approval.

Occasionally a school would disagree with our assessment of their documentation and insist that we should accept and approve their application and we would spend an inordinate amount of time and effort trying to convince them that their documentation didn't achieve the required minimum standard.

We do visit schools, when they request assistance, to enable them to complete their trip application.

Our visits serve two purposes. First, to introduce ourselves so we are no longer a disembodied voice on the end of a telephone and second, the visit enables us to support and reinforce good practice.

6. Quality of the completed required approval application documentation

Required:

- I. Application forms.*
- II. Risk assessments (may be D.C.C's generic assessments or designed by the EVC or school staff provided they meet all the management of health and safety criteria).*
- III. Any relevant additional information.*

There is a wide variation in the quality of the application documentation i.e.

Below Minimal:

Missing application forms; Missing risk assessments; Insufficient additional information

Unsigned documents (Risk assessments & Application forms)

Above Maximal:

Enclosed First Aid books; Copies of Tourist books; Insurance Certificates; Travel company's receipts, Documents photo copied twice (or more!)

List of Trips/Visits Application Forms

Items in **bold** type are essential. The remainder may be required depending on the type of trip.

- 1 Application for approval information**
- 1a. Application for approval & signatures**
3. Off-site swimming pool checklist.
4. Parental trip consent form (incl. swimming permit).
5. Parental consent for administration of medicine
- 6. Emergency contact information (form 6 is not required with the original approval documentation but is required before the trip takes place)**

N.B.

Form 2 is a visit form not requiring Education Services approval but does require approval by the Head teacher/Youth Worker and will be kept on file at the school (the information in form 2 is a combination of Forms 1 & 1a).

Forms 7, 8 are optional forms for the schools to utilise if they wish to do so.

- Form 7 is a Trips information checklist for pupils to use.
- Form 8 is an Evaluation of the Visit for the group leader to complete for future information/reference.

Common mistakes associated with the application forms:

- Still using the old-format forms (now defunct). The new type has been available on the Intranet since October 2003.
- On form 1, not fully completing part 4, the size and composition of the group and incorrectly calculating the adult to pupil ratio.
- On form 1 (part 9), completing the details of any hazardous activities and not including the associated risk assessments.
- On form 1a in the Supervising Adults section signatures confirming that risk assessments have been seen (and understood!) are often omitted.
- Form 3 is sometimes omitted when it should be included.
- Form 6 is often sent incomplete.

The risk assessment forms from the health and safety department are available in Word format to download and complete. The risk assessment forms are traded service documents and are only available to schools purchasing the Health and Safety Traded Service.

Risk assessments (may be D.C.C's generic assessments or designed by the EVC or school staff provided they meet all the management of health and safety criteria)

INTRANET GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENTS AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS

N.B. If a school is planning an activity and a generic risk assessment is not available, the Health and Safety Section can be contacted and, in consultation with the school and if the activity is not extremely hazardous, will produce a generic assessment to address the school's needs.

Generic Risk Assessments - Visits	Generic Risk Assessments - General
Accommodation - Self Catering	Adverse Weather Conditions
Air Travel	Art/Pottery Rooms
Boat Trips	Blank Risk Assessment Form
Car Travel	Cleaning and Caretaking Duties
Camping	Electrical Safety
Cliff Top Walking	General Admin Offices
Coach Travel	General Teaching Areas
Countryside Walks	Lone Working
Crab Fishing	Stage Equipment Lighting
Cycling/Mountain Biking	Storage
Farm Visits	Use of Hand Tools
Ferry Travel	Working at a Height
Hotel and Hostel Accommodation	
Local Orienteering	
London Tube Travel	
Minibus Travel	
On-Piste Skiing and Snowboarding	
Pond Dipping	
Remote Supervision	
River Work	
Swimming in Hotel Pools	
Swimming in Public Pools	
Train Journeys	
Visits to Castles and Churches	
Visits to Museums (and Similar Buildings)	
Visits to Parks	
Visits to Quarries	
Visits to Show Caves	
Visits to Skate Parks	
Visits to the Beach	
Visits to Theatres/Cinemas	
Walking in Groups	

Generic Risk Assessments - Slips and Trips

External Areas
Internal Teaching Areas
Internal Traffic Routes
Kitchen and Canteen Areas
Sports Areas

Generic Risk Assessments - Events

Barbecue Safety
Bouncy Castles
Bowling Alleys
Cash Handling
Donkey and Horse Rides
Fairground Rides
Productions, Concerts and Open Evenings
Quad Bikes, Motor Cycles and Go-Karts
Sale of Prepared Foods

Common mistakes associated with the schools 'completed' risk assessments.

- Missing risk assessments!*
 - Has the name of the school on the front page but not the signature.*
 - Control measure boxes not ticked.*
 - No names entered in the column "Control measures to be implemented by whom".*
 - Areas not crossed out that do not apply.*
- Points c, d, e indicate that the EVC hasn't read and considered the health and safety requirements of the trip and is purely 'going through the motions'!*

The essential practical requirements of any risk assessment are that it:

- Identifies the hazards associated with the task/activity/equipment etc.*
- Estimates the degree of risk (Affected by: the activity/number of persons/location/time etc).*

- *Drafts suitable and sufficient control measures.*
- *Implements the control measures by the named/nominated supervisory staff.*

Additionally, the person/s with responsibilities for implementing/managing health and safety also has a responsibility to:

- *Monitor the effectiveness of the control measures and amend where the control measures prove to be ineffective*
- *Review existing and ongoing risk assessments regularly.*

Additional information that would be useful:

- ❖ *Cultural/religious beliefs that may affect medical/health and safety provision.*
- ❖ *Behavioural/medical difficulties of certain pupils (if it affects the trip/staff/pupils).*
- ❖ *Any last minutes changes.*
- ❖ *Alternative arrangements because of weather/travel/illness/accidents.*
- ❖ *Cancellation of the trip/visit.*
- ❖ *Substitution of supervisory staff.*

7. The way forward

Recommendations to improve the systems/service:

I. Create improved communication systems

e.g. e-mail contact (if schools have access to the necessary equipment); A bi-annual news

letter from the Health and Safety Section to all schools containing examples of good practice

i.e. Correctly completed suitable and sufficient approval of Educational Visits documentation

(the required forms, risk assessments and any additional and appropriate information) and also examples of bad practice (incorrectly filled in forms and/or risk assessments; last minute applications; failures to submit additional requested forms/information).

Encourage feedback from the EVCs/Group Leaders/Visits Staff.

II Online approval system

A significant development which would lead to a reduction in the current level of paperwork exchange would speed up the approval process and potentially allow the LEA to monitor all visit activity, not just high risk visits, would be the introduction of an online approval system. This system would require a significant change in current working methods and would rely heavily on schools informing the LEA that paperwork such as risk assessments are in place without the LEA seeing all of them (% Sampling).

In order for this system to work effectively and for the LEA to be assured that it is meeting its own requirements, there will need to be a vigorous auditing and monitoring system as outlined in VII and VIII below. This would be a better use of the Health and Safety Adviser (School Visits) resource than the current "heavily administrative role." The LEA are aware of such a system that is currently being used by a number of other LEA's and would like to investigate the feasibility of such a system further.

III EVC Re-training

Schools should cooperate with the LEA by allowing their EVCs to attend an annual refresher course which, it is suggested, would be of half day duration. The course would cover educational visit staff's responsibilities, the basic principles and practical examples of hazard and risk identification, suitable and sufficient control measures, methods of applying the control measures, appropriate safety management systems applied by adventures activities centres and their interaction with visiting school groups; Q & A session, discussion and feedback.

Although the re-training courses would be offered at no cost to the schools, the suggested re-training would raise certain issues for the schools management to address i.e. The cost of providing teaching staff cover for their employee/s; Curricular timetabling; Staff workload and absences but the courses are designed to be flexible with regard to times/dates and locations.

These courses should be considered as mandatory according to the LEA's Health and Safety requirements.

IV School visits Group Leader training.

Because of the greater burden of responsibility involved with the planning, execution and, sometimes, the need to receive/update and apply specialist training and the need to be able to make dynamic risk assessments to deal with situations as they arise the Group Leader should be given support to be able to provide and maintain essential qualitative health and safety provision. This support should start with specific Group Leader training.

At this time, there are no School visits Group Leader training courses available.

It is proposed that a group leader training course be developed and delivered.

This would involve both the health and safety staff and specialist staff from Lea Green and White Hall.

It is intended that the structure of the courses will be modular with each course including a number of core learning units e.g.:

- Visits planning;*
- Group Management,*

- *Emergency plans/actions;*
- *Communication;*
- *Reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements of the most recent visit and, if necessary modifying existing arrangements and provision.*
- *Transport*

Over and above these core modules would be individual modules relating to different types of visit for example exchange visits, residential visits, adventurous activities, local studies visits etc. These would allow the courses to be tailored to groups with similar problems and similar experiences thus making them more relevant and effective. It would logical to utilise Lea Green and White Hall as venues for many of these courses, particularly those where there is a residential unit in the course.

In addition to the above, Lea Green currently run the BAALPE (British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education) “Off Site Safety Management” Course. This is a more detailed 2 day course relevant to school’s EVCs who run a lot of trips or group leaders who run a variety of trips or more complex trips. There is also the possibility of extending this provision.

V Training for the Education Health and Safety Visits/trips team members.

In order to maintain the team’s high standards of health and safety provision and professionalism, it is essential that the team attend appropriate information input meetings and an agreed selection of relevant training courses which may include:

- *OEAP and British Association of Advisors and Lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE) meetings and courses.*
- *The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) courses.*
- *In-house training courses.*
- *External providers training courses.*
- *Sign up to the NVQ Assessor/Verifier (A1/A2/V1) Accreditation programme.*

The attendance of the meetings and training courses is also central requirements in maintaining an individual’s Chartered Membership/Registered Safety Practitioner (RSP) status of IOSH and the mandatory CPD system.

Also what needs to be considered here is the need to maintain the qualifications of specialist outdoor staff already employed within the LEA and to use them as a source of expertise for the areas of their qualifications.

VI Health & Safety NVQ accreditation

*The Education Health and Safety Team discussed future and innovative developments which we believe, will greatly promote the principles and benefits of health and safety in the learning environment with the introduction of Health and Safety NVQs accreditation for school staff and/or pupils, which will also involve instruction/training sessions (varying levels) to all school staff and/or pupils
(Information and NVQ assessment/verification would be provided by the Education Department Health and Safety Section).*

VII Audit the schools management of educational trips/visits systems, with information feedback.

This process will be introduced in 2005

The audit process will be conducted by the Educational Trips/Visits Advisors and will be accompanied by the School's EVC or nominated person and will consist of the following activities:

- o The examination of previous educational trips/visits documentation and existing policies.*
- o A review of the documentation with questions based on the Approval system requirements.*
- o A discussion of the audit findings and, with the use of open questioning, suggest, if required, the necessary/essential improvements to the school's Visits process.*
- o Reminder of the Education Health and Safety Team's support availability and the means of access.*
- o A written report of the audit's findings.*

The document review could take up to 2 to 3 hours and a further hour allowed for discussion and questions/answer session and examining the means of improvement.

The majority of nursery, infant, junior and primary and secondary school audits could normally take half a day on-site, however this may vary depending on the size of the school.

To assist the school with their workload/timetable the audit could be split into two 2 hour sessions on separate days.

Any issues that might arise during the audit would be openly discussed as they occur.

On completion of the report, copies would be sent to the Head teacher and the Chair of Governors.

The intention of the report would be to provide an assessment of the current levels of Visits health and safety management and advise if any improvements are required.

N.B. The result of the audit could determine a re-visit and or/a letter of concern.

VIII Monitor a percentage of School trips/visits (Home and abroad), with information feedback.

This process will be introduced in 2005

The monitoring process will be carried out by the Health and Safety Advisers (school visits) and also specialist staff from Lea Green and White Hall depending on the type of visit and the specialist knowledge/skills required to monitor the visit effectively. Monitoring visits is in line with DfES to LEA's on their role in educational visits.

Only by employing an effective, rigorous, considered and transparently fair monitoring process can we ensure that the principles of health, safety and welfare are being effectively and suitably observed and practiced by the schools throughout the educational trip/visit process!

This means monitoring a selection of visits across the whole spectrum of visits delivered and across all locations including visits abroad.

To effectively monitor the school's health and safety performance/provision during their trip, we intend to go to the site of the visit and to observe the conformance and effectiveness of the school's control measures.

To begin with we will contact the intended school and agree the monitoring date/s and location/s but eventually we mean to 'Drop in' uninvited.

The group leader will be informed of the results of the monitoring, and if any areas of concern are evident, the monitor will inform the group leader of the immediate action to be taken to establish acceptable levels of safety.

All findings will be recorded and entered onto the school trips data base and a report of the trips 'success' i.e. Conformity to the County's educational trips/visits health and safety requirements and suitable observance of their own submitted risk assessments and control measures.

As the number of monitored schools rise, the cost of monitoring will obviously increase exponentially.

IX Gold Star awards for the better performing schools with associated publicity.

Initially, to decide on a selected number of schools to receive the Gold Star award/s, the Educational Trips/Visits Advisors will examine the 2003/2004 School Trips/Visits files to determine the best performing schools who are worthy of recognition and the award/s.

However, once the Auditing of the schools management of educational trips/visits systems

and the Monitoring of school trips/visits (Home and abroad) processes are in place, and

have proven to be valid and satisfactory; the use of the auditing and monitoring statistics,

school visit statistics together with use of the School Trips/Visits files, will prove to be a

more reliable method of selection.

The Gold Star/s would be awarded to the best performing schools.

X Use of specialist travel companies.

Recently a particular Sheffield-based travel company approached the Education Department (Health and Safety Section) with an interesting proposal that could potentially help greatly to improve the attitude, knowledge and professionalism of school staff who take part in education trips and visits abroad. For the School/s in general and pupil/s in particular, the positive aspects of this proposal are that it could enhance the health and safety provision and the pupil's enjoyment and value of the educational experience

The main points of the proposal are:

- *The offer of planning instruction i.e. Use of risk assessments, Locations (types, educational suitability, accommodation suitability), methods of travel, travelling time and distance.*
- *Useful local knowledge (a country's laws/rules/customs, accommodation, no-go areas, local travel companies, local businesses/companies that are amenable to visiting schools etc).*
- *Pre- trips visits/checks*
The conditions linked to the offer of a pre-visit are:
 1. *The school will pay the initial costs of their staff taking part in the pre-visit but these costs will be refunded to the school if they book the Educational visit with this particular company.*
 2. *The school staff taking part in the pre-visit will visit all the planned locations and carry out risk assessments. This will allow staff to assess the educational value of area/s and locations and provide first-hand knowledge of the associated hazards and risk.*
 3. *The pre-visiting staff should look upon it as valuable experience that will be reflected in the quality of the planned actual educational visit.*

XI. Establishment of an LEA Outdoor Education Group

The LEA should look to establish a formal Outdoor Education Group whose remit is to oversee the ongoing work relating to outdoor education and to look at future developments. This group should comprise staff from the Health and Safety Section, Lea Green, White Hall, the Youth Service and Sports Development.

8. *Should the Health and Safety Section have means of censure available to them for schools that continually fail to meet the basic requirements of County Education Health and Safety for schools policy?*

Report Conclusions

The DfES actively encourages schools to undertake trips and excursions as they are educationally beneficial. The number of accidents and fatalities over recent years, nationally, has led to many teachers deciding not to undertake trips and excursions. It is widely accepted that pupils do benefit from school trips (or Out of Classroom Learning) and these are an important part of the curriculum. Derbyshire schools participate in a wide variety of excursions, both at home and abroad.

Schools should be encouraged and assisted to continue their educational visits programmes and the Education Department's Health and Safety Division is attempting to strengthen its working methods with individual schools to ensure that all trips are undertaken as safely as possible.

The assessment of the efficiency of the current approval system, recently undertaken by the Health and Safety Division, identified a number of areas where there was capacity to improve. A progress report on this assessment was submitted by the Head of the Health and Safety Division during a presentation to this Committee in December 2004.

The report submitted a number of recommendations to address the weaknesses in the system and Members are asked to consider these recommendations as a result of this Scrutiny review.

Officer recommendations

1. That all LEA controlled schools be encouraged to continue to participate in a programme of school trips and excursions.
2. That the assessment of the approval system, undertaken by the Education Health and Safety Division, be noted.
3. That the following recommendations, resulting from the Health and Safety Division's assessment be approved by this Committee:

- (i) Improve communication with schools using e.mail, news letters, highlighting examples of good and bad practice and feedback from Educational Visits Co-ordinators/school staff
- (ii) Develop an on-line approval system to speed up the approval process
- (iii) Develop the programme of training for Educational Visits Co-ordinators, as outlined in the assessment report.
- (iv) Instigate training for School visits group leaders.
- (v) Develop training for the Health and Safety team members to help maintain the standard of the advisory service they provide
- (vi) Promote Health and Safety NVQ accreditation in school for staff/and or pupils
- (vii) Endorse the introduction of auditing of how schools manage educational trips
- (viii) Support the introduction of a monitoring system by the Health and Safety Division and specialist staff from the Youth Service and the Lea Green and Whitehall Centres.
- (ix) Introduce an award system to recognise school which perform well in planning and undertaking educational trips.
- (x) Further explore the use of specialist school travel companies to assist schools in managing educational visits.
- (xi) Establish an LEA Outdoor Education Group to oversee work relating to outdoor education, covering schools, Youth Service, Lea Green, White Hall and sports development within the County Council's remit.
- (xii) Education Department Senior Management Team be asked to determine the best means to assist those

schools which need to improve the management of their school trips.

4. That the Education Health and Safety team raise the profile of the service they provide, and the importance of adhering to the approval system, with primary and secondary school governing bodies. This to be undertaken in conjunction with the School Governor Support Unit.

Nick Hodgson
Chief Executive