

Parental consent for off-site visits and activities

Handbook for Educational Off-site Visits
and all Adventurous Activities
Section 1 Part 10

November 2014

Parental consent for off-site visits and activities

1. Consent and participant information. ^[1]

- 1.1. Consent forms for visits are often used to gain information about participants so that the visit leadership team can manage the welfare of children and young people. This typically includes emergency contact details, medical and dietary requirements and confirmation of swimming ability or water confidence.
- 1.2. This information can be obtained separately prior to any visit and be kept in a central information management system; however parents must be given regular opportunities to enable the school or service to keep this information up to date.
- 1.3. There is no requirement to carry copies of consent forms on visits within the UK; however the visit leadership team must have access to the 'need to know' information. Where information is transcribed to a summary sheet or a report is generated from an information management system there must be a process in place to ensure the information is accurate and up to date.

2. Individual and 'blanket' consent

- 2.1. Schools and services must obtain written parental consent on enrolment of a child or young person for routine local visits and activities which are a normal part of their educational provision. This can include visits and activities beyond the normal day such as after-school sports fixtures. ^[2]
- 2.2. Schools and services should inform parents via a prospectus, website or other appropriate method of the range of visits and activities which are likely to fall under this initial consent.
- 2.3. Schools and services must fully inform parents by whichever written method they deem appropriate of the nature of each visit, activity or series of a similar nature, remind parents that they have already consented, and give opportunity to update information and emergency contact details.

- 2.4. Schools and services must obtain written consent for every individual visit, activity or series of a similar nature which involve a higher level of risk including but not limited to longer journeys, residential visits and adventurous activities, those which fall outside of normal hours and non-routine activities which are not a normal part of educational provision.
- 2.5. Schools and services must fully inform parents by whichever written method they deem appropriate of the nature of each visit, activity or series of a similar nature. If they choose to also inform parents via a meeting there must be a mechanism in place to ensure that the same information is available to those who are unable attend.
- 2.6. Where the visit or activity involves a higher level of risk parents should be given the opportunity to provide specific medical and welfare details. It may be appropriate for parents to complete a medical consent form provided by the school or service ^[3] or by an external provider.
- 2.7. Visits and activities which involve a charge or contribution, or that include agreement to any payment or cancellation terms will need individual consent by parents to the financial arrangement.^{[4] [8]}

3. Electronic consent

- 3.1. Schools may use electronic payment systems to manage consent as long as the following is applied;
- Unique logons to the system must be attributable to an appropriate parent.
 - Where appropriate both parents must be informed that consent will be gained electronically.
 - Parents must be fully informed about the visit before giving consent and have access to all relevant information.
 - Consent must be given before any payments are accepted.
 - The establishment must ensure that all records can be fully audited and kept secure for the relevant period of time prescribed in the appropriate records retention schedule.

4. Data protection

- 4.1. Schools and service must comply with data protection legislation ^[5]. Sensitive information should be accessible and understood by those who need it including relevant leaders from other organisations. Consideration should be given to how that information is carried. This may include copies of consent forms, use of a printed summary sheet or electronic data storage. Schools and services should ensure that individuals' confidentiality can be protected and personal information securely disposed of when it is no longer needed.

5. Visits abroad

- 5.1. Proof of parental consent may be required by medical professionals before commencing treatment in some countries. For visits in some countries it may be necessary for a leader to be able to prove that they have responsibility for the children and young people with them. It is good practice for the visit leadership team to ensure that they have the appropriate information available including translated documents or access to translation as appropriate.

6. Withdrawal from visits and activities

- 6.1. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from religious education lessons ^{[6][9]} but not from the national curriculum. This means that parents do not necessarily have the right to withdraw their child from a visit to a place of worship if it forms part of the delivery of the national curriculum.
- 6.2. Schools must provide swimming instruction in either key stage 1 or key stage 2. ^[7] This is a statutory part of the national curriculum and parents do not have a right to withdraw their children from PE lessons involving swimming and water safety without an appropriate reason.
- 6.3. It is important for the visit leadership team to be clear about the purpose of a visit, including the wider personal, social and cultural benefits and its link to the national curriculum.

7. Examples of visits and activities which may fall under 'blanket' or individual consent

These lists are not exhaustive and schools and services will need to determine what is appropriate for their circumstances with regard to the type of activity and the extent of their local area.

7.1. 'Blanket' consent

Local walks
Local sports fixtures
Woodland activities
Swimming lessons
Bike ability training
Day visits within the local area
Local theatre trips beyond the school day as part of the curriculum

7.2. Individual consent

Sports fixtures beyond the local area
Day visits beyond the vicinity of the school or service involving longer journeys
Visits and activities falling outside the normal hours of the school or service
Non-routine visits or activities which are not part of normal educational provision
Adventurous activities led by an external provider or school or service staff either on or off-site
Residential visits
Visits abroad

References

Statutory legislation & guidance

Data Protection Act [1998]
<https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act>

- [7] National Curriculum [2014]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

Employer policies, procedures and guidance

- [3] NYCC Medical consent form
<http://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13975>
- [4] NYCC Schools Finance Manual Chapter 24
<http://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13975>
- [5] Information Governance for Schools
<http://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=21819>
- [9] North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education [2013]
<http://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13900>

Non-statutory advice

- [2] DfE Advice: Health and safety: advice for schools. Updated February 2014
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>
- [1] National Guidance for the management of outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom.
<http://oeapng.info>
- [6] DfE Advice: Religious education in English schools [2010]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>
- [8] DfE Advice: Charging for school activities [2014]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charging-for-school-activities>