

School and College Trips at a Time of Heightened Security

Every school and college will already have their own procedures and risk assessments, however, in the light of recent terrorist attacks, detailed planning of trips becomes more important.

In this paper, we have provided some additional sources of information, together with some suggestions for communicating with parents and carers.

Planning a visit

These are unprecedented times, when extra thought will need to be given to 'what if?' scenarios.

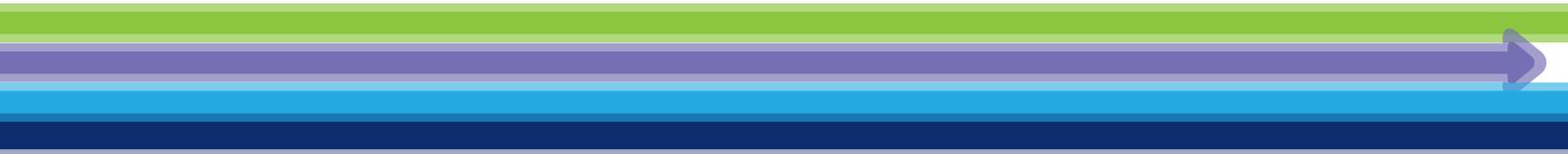
- The National Counter Terrorism Office collects its guidance for crowded places here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>
- We particularly welcome this detailed advice from Hampshire County Council:
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/outdoor-education-importantannouncement.htm>
- We recommend also this detailed set of frequently asked questions from the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel:
<http://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/6k-faqs-visits-and-the-threat-from-terrorism/>
- Review existing policies, documentation and insurance agreements relating to all school and college trips, both residential and non-residential, and for trips at home and abroad. Consider payment and cancellation terms and their impact on the budget, both for the trip and on the wider school or college budget, particularly if a student is withdrawn from a scheduled trip if full or part payment has already been made.

Communicating with parents and carers

Following terrorist and other incidents, parents and carers will, understandably, be more worried about trips and visits, especially to urban venues. School and college leaders can play an important role in maintaining a calmly proportionate response to risks.

We recommend:

- when communicating with parents and carers, you give particular attention to the risk assessment process that underpins each trip at an early stage to reassure them that safety is the priority and has been carefully considered by the school



- you consider providing links to the national advice and guidance that you have referred to (eg the links above), as a way of reassuring parents that special consideration has been given to the visit in the light of recent events. In respect of trips abroad, another source of information is from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- you give particular attention to the team of staff who will be accompanying the trip – their names, their experience of accompanying trips, and the additional guidance they have received in case of any incident. NB Staff accompanying pupils on school trips should be aware of the school's crisis management plan/policy and what steps to take in the event of a security incident on visit

Ultimately, it will be the decision of parents or carers whether their children will go on the trip. If several decide not to, then many trips will become unviable. This, of course, is a source of considerable frustration, however, these are unprecedented times of collective nervousness.

We therefore strongly recommend that if some parents and carers choose to withdraw children from a trip, no questions are asked, no disappointment is expressed, and certainly nothing is said to the children themselves.

In doing all we can as school and college leaders to run trips and visits as normal (in times which can feel anything but normal), we are fulfilling an important and wider social function. We are demonstrating that the quality of our national life and the values that underpin it won't be undermined by those determined to wreak havoc.

The additional care in planning and the additional time spent communicating will help to reassert the sense that ordinary life must continue.

ASCL General Secretary Geoff Barton