

5.0 Supervision & Staffing Ratios

For every Educational Visit there should be a designated Group Leader who oversees the entire visit and has the overall responsibility for supervision during the visit.

It may be necessary for groups to be split during the visit when undertaking particular activities. Each sub-group should have a competent supervisor, who will normally be a teacher or other competent member of school or Youth Service staff. Supervision will be most effective, when all supervisors and pupils clearly understand the aims and objectives of the visit and supervisors have a reasonable knowledge of the pupils, (including any special educational, medical needs or disabilities), and when the visit and activities are carefully risk assessed and managed safely. This includes laying down clear guidelines for standards of behaviour, which all on the visit must adhere to. This section needs to be read in conjunction with others, in particular the earlier sections that regard individual responsibilities. The DfES Guidance document 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational visits' (1998) and its supplementary Part-3 handbook (2002) are useful references.

As long as there is adequate supervision not all supervisors need be on duty at any time, however duty supervisors need to be able to respond appropriately to emergencies.

Duty supervisors must not consume alcohol or be under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

5.1 SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

There are three types of supervisory strategy described within this section. Although the strategies are not age related, older, more experienced pupils should be expected, under normal circumstances, to understand and achieve more. In all cases the identities of all Group Members must be known to all supervisors and the Group Leader. The overall group management, routes of communication and headcount procedures must be agreed and known. The destination location must be known, pre-visited where possible and risk assessed along with any activities to be undertaken.

1/ Close or Direct Supervision

Here the activity undertaken by Group Members is in close or direct contact with their Group Leader/supervisors. Large groups should have a simple communication system in place that allows the Group Leader to be free of immediate supervision, so as to allow time to check all is well with all group members and permit immediate intervention when necessary (e.g. during emergencies). Examples that require this level of supervision may include visits involving young or inexperienced Group Members, Group Members with special educational or behavioural needs, when undertaking particularly hazardous activities or when it is identified as necessary by the visit risk assessment.

Group movement management systems must be agreed, known and suitable instructions given to all pupils/young people e.g. getting on and off transport, collection points and rendezvous places, crossing roads, walking in urban contexts, provision of buffer zones between the group and any hazards.

Behaviour management systems must be known and suitable instructions given to all pupils/young people e.g. reinforcement, reward strategies; incident intervention strategies; codes of conduct (general and particular to activities). This may involve the final sanction of returning to base or returning to the parents.

2/ Distant Supervision

Where there has been a history of a particular group/type of visit working well using the above strategy and the visit risk assessment identifies it as an acceptable control, a distant supervisory strategy may be employed. Before considering distant supervision there must be a reasonable expectation of suitable behaviour by pupils/Group Members (evidenced from working with them previously or elsewhere, not just hoped for). Group Members may work in small parties with leaders or supervisors continuously monitoring the group and intervening where necessary. Examples may include visiting a museum or non-hazardous fieldwork (e.g. away from water).

The geography/physical area of location visited should be clearly defined. It may be necessary to introduce the group to the area and its boundaries before exercising distant supervision. Group numbers must be clearly established (e.g. minimum of 4 members but not so large as to be intimidating). Group Member behaviour and code of conduct must be reinforced along with expectations for the group prior to the visit.

All Group Members must know who the Group Leader and Supervisors are and where they will be; some should be in a known location, others should be monitoring or moving through the activity area. Group Members must be clear about what to do if lost or if there is an incident or emergency.

'Down time' during a residential visit usually requires distant supervision. Poor systems can cause serious incidents or create the possibility for them to occur. All Group Members should know their responsibilities and what the behavioural expectations are. Parents must be informed before the visit if any form of distant supervision will take place.

3/ Remote Supervision

The aim of Educational Visits for older pupils may be to encourage independence and the development of investigative skills. Some adventurous activities such as those under the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme require pupils to work in small groups without direct supervision. Some academic fieldwork may be remotely supervised.

Remote supervision entails the Group Leader or Supervisors not being with the group during stages of the venture; it often involves monitoring from a distance as well as agreed meetings or rendezvous. Remote supervision is technically harder to manage than other supervision strategies and this requires a well qualified and experienced leader to provide suitable Group Member training in the activity prior to the visit. Particular attention needs to be given to information provided to pupils/young people before direct/distant supervision can be withdrawn. Training given to pupils/young people must be sound and thorough and individual capabilities should be assessed.

The Group Leader must establish during the visit's planning stage whether each pupil/young person is competent for remote supervision. The Group Leader must be satisfied that all pupils have acquired the necessary skills and have the necessary experience, confidence, physical ability and judgement to be left without direct or distant supervision. Remote supervision should normally only be implemented at the end of a phased development programme.

The withdrawal of direct supervision should be a gradual four-stage process; the group's success in coping at each stage should be reviewed before proceeding to the next stage. The four stages include the Group Leader/competent Supervisor: -

- Accompanying the group.
- Shadowing the group.
- Checking regularly at agreed locations.
- Checking occasionally at agreed locations.

The Group Leader remains responsible for pupils/Group Members whether or not they are in direct contact with the group. Any monitoring system must allow for intervention if or when needed. Group support systems should be in place locally as well as at home-base should an incident or emergency take place.

Parents must be informed before the visit if any form of remote supervision is to take place. For further information see the DfES Guidance document 'Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational visits' (1998) Chapter 4 'Remote supervision during adventurous activities'.

In addition when supervision is remote: -

- Groups must be sufficiently trained and assessed as competent for the level of activity to be undertaken including any first aid and emergency procedures, will be familiar with the environment or similar environments and have details of the rendezvous points.
- Clear and understandable boundaries are set for the group.
- There must be clear lines of communication between the group, the Group leader and the school. They should not rely exclusively on mobile phones.
- The Group Leader or competent Supervisor should monitor the group's progress at appropriate intervals.
- The Group Leader or competent Supervisor will be in the activity area and be able to reach the group promptly should the group need support in an emergency.
- There should be a recognised point at which the activity is completed/terminated.
- There should be clear arrangements to terminate the activity when it cannot be completed safely.

5.2 HEADCOUNTS

Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils must take place. Headcounts must be taken by a responsible member of staff using a checklist of names. Headcounts must be taken at every departure and at suitable times during a visit. When undertaking the headcount the checker must physically see the person before ticking their name on the checklist. All Supervisors should carry a list of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times. Pupils, particularly in years 1 to 3 should be easily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area. Brightly coloured T-shirts or caps may help, but pupils should not wear name badges. However it may be useful to provide badges displaying the name of the school or an emergency contact telephone number.

5.3 SUPERVISORY AGREEMENTS WITH ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

Many groups attend day or residential visits to centres or organisations that provide activity sessions. It is important to remember that overall pastoral care for the group remains with the Group Leader and competent Supervisors with the support of designated responsible adults.

Activity coaches and instructors must be qualified and competent. They are responsible for the technical care of the group during any activity sessions they manage. It is vital to agree a handover of responsibility for pupils/young people at the start and end of an activity session. To avoid problems the handover should be explicit to all Group Members and instructors, be in a known place and involve the Group Leader.

5.4 STAFF TO PUPIL RATIOS

The required staffing levels will vary depending on the activity, age of participants, group size, location of the visit and the efficient use of resources. The DfES guidance suggests as a general guide for visits to low risk sites; for example, a museum under normal circumstances, staffing ratios might be: -

- 1 adult for every 6 pupils in school year 1 2 3 (under 5 year olds would have a higher ratio).
- 1 adult for every 10 to 15 pupils in school year 4 5 and 6. (8-11 years)
- 1 adult for every 15 pupils from year 7 onwards. (11-18 years)
- Please note when organising residential visits or visits abroad there should be an absolute minimum of 3 staff; in case a member of staff is injured, taken ill or requires to be accompanied to hospital.

The table below offers more detailed guidance which applies where the Group Leader and Supervisors are experienced and competent:

Activity	Maximum Ratios	Notes
Local visits Day Visits (minimum of two supervisors required)	As above Under 5 years > 1:6 Under 8 (year 4) 1:6 Between 8 and 18 1:10 to 1:15 (one supervisor per activity or supervision group)	A minimum of one qualified and competent Group Leader is needed for each class or group. Supervisors should reflect the gender of the group.
Residential Visit, UK or abroad (minimum of three supervisors required)	Under 5 > 1:6 Under 8 (year 4) 1:6 Between 8 and 18 1:10 (one supervisor per activity or supervision group, in addition to any centre residential staff)	As well as the above requirements for every one/two unqualified supporting adults there should be one qualified and competent Supervisor. There should be a minimum of three competent Supervisors.
Open Country Working by water or away from a road or building	Under 5 >1:6 Under 8 (year 4) 1:6 Between 8 and 18 1:10	Overall group sizes above 20 are not recommended at any one location at a time (supervision and sustainability issues). The numbers of qualified leaders will depend on the risk assessment.

Parents and volunteers may be asked to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school. Anyone who has not had a Criminal Records Bureau check should never be left in sole charge of pupils. Teachers, staff and other adult-supervisors should ensure that when ever possible they are not alone with a pupil. This serves as protection for all parties.

The ratios and supervision strategies outlined should provide adequate supervision, but any strategy needs to be complemented by a clear knowledge of the quality of those supervisors, volunteers and other responsible adults.

The Need for a Higher Level of Supervision

Aside from the generic advice given on ratios within this section, the Visit Risk Assessment (having given due regard to the visit venue, its environment, the Group Leader's and Supervisor's qualifications, competencies and experience, as well as those of the group itself), should identify a suitable Staff Group member ratio.

The number of staff should be increased if: -

- It is found that the environment or location of the visit site or activity presents particular hazards; e.g. poor visibility, poor security or prevailing physical hazards.
- If it is known that a group's, or an individual group member's behaviour or needs (education, physical or medical), requires particular management. This could mean a ratio as low as 1:1 in some circumstances with additional staff not being tied into other agreed staffing ratios.
- Teachers/Youth Leaders are inexperienced and are accompanying the group as part of an 'apprenticeship' to gather experience; this may mean them not being included in calculated staff ratios.

5.5 CROSSING ROADS

This is undoubtedly one of the more dangerous activities that Group Leaders and supervisors will manage. Technically within the UK only the police, traffic wardens and officially designated crossing patrols have the right under law to control traffic. It is therefore important that there is a clear and agreed procedure that can be applied to reduce the risks. If possible there should be three Supervisors present if crossing a group across a main road.

The following control measures may be used in drawing up such a procedure: -

- Where possible pre-visit the location; map out the intended walk route, so as to avoid the need to cross busy roads as far as is practicable.
- Where crossing a road is unavoidable, a safe crossing site must be chosen; where visibility is good in both directions (at least 100 metres) and there is a suitable collection point on both sides of the road; an area off the road preferably a pavement area.
- Gather the group on the inside of the pavement area at least one metre from the kerb.
- A wave of group members in controlled numbers crossing the road is recommended over the "crocodile approach" as the actual crossing takes the same time as for one person walking alone.
- Decide on a manageable number of pupils/young people that can cross in a controlled line, line them up parallel to the kerb.
- One Group Supervisor should be positioned over the road before crossing the group. The group should approach the roadside on a suitable signal or command.
- The supervisors confer and agree when the crossing is possible and the group cross using vigilance.
- If there are three Supervisors present, one should remain in control of the group at the set off point, one should remain at the collection point and one should cross the road with the group. Where there are two Supervisors, one supervisor should walk the group half way across the road to be met by the other supervisor who will continue walking the group to the collection point. The first supervisor will return to the remainder of the group at the set off point.
- Great emphasis must be placed on crossing roads and understanding traffic direction when abroad.

5.6 THE BUDDY SYSTEM

The buddy system is a way of creating a culture of partnership between staff and pupils/Group Members. This is ideal for residential based visits or activities that may last for more than one day. A 'Visit Council' may be set up involving more mature pupils/Group Members from each visit group/class, who will help to make decisions on how the visit or activity is run and feedback any concerns the rest of the group may have. To be successful, meetings should be held with the Group Leader on a regular basis. Assigned pupil/Group Members may offer limited support to staff at break and lunchtimes, as monitors. This does not remove any responsibility for the pastoral care of the group from the Group Leader or Supervising Members of staff.