

Health & safety on school trips is "dumbed down"

THE GOVERNMENT has cut back its guidance about health & safety on school trips.

As previously reported in *School Workforce News*, Tory Education Minister Michael Gove claims he wants to get rid of health & safety "red tape".

Controversially, Gove's new guidance says that staff "should assume they only need to carry out a written risk assessment in exceptional circumstances". The guidance also plays down the importance of formal training in health & safety issues at school.

GMB is concerned that the Government is encouraging schools to "dumb down" their approach. This could make health & safety on school trips ineffective.

GMB has pointed out that schools and local authorities still have a legal duty to ensure risks are assessed and measures are introduced to handle them.

The Government is going to review its new guidance next year. GMB will be making a robust response. Have your say by dropping us a line at sharon.holder@gmb.org.uk. What do you think is missing in the new guidance? What are your biggest health and safety concerns in and out of the classroom? You can find the Government's new guidance by going to www.gmb.org.uk and searching for "school trips".

GMB members, if you have a health & safety concern at school, you can raise it with your GMB health & safety rep or your local GMB officer.

Warning! Warning! Take care on Twitter and Facebook

MORE AND MORE school staff are running into trouble because of things they said or did on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Staff often don't realise how much trouble they can get into. GMB is warning members that careless talk can lead to disciplinary action! It can also damage your chances of landing a new job. Here are some do's and don'ts:

- Be sensible and mind your language! Don't make negative or inappropriate comments about colleagues, pupils or the school.
- Don't befriend pupils on Facebook. Keep a professional distance from them at all times.
- Set your privacy setting to "only friends" (but remember: embarrassing info may still leak out).
- Be especially careful about your email and internet usage at school: you may be being monitored. Check what it says in your school's IT and internet policy.
- Don't appear in inappropriate photos. On Facebook you can "untag" yourself from an inappropriate photo posted by somebody else. Ask for the photo to be removed.
- GMB members, if you are involved in disciplinary action, contact your local GMB rep or officer without delay for support and advice. Non-members, why not join GMB today.



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