

Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

Staying safe on school trips

THE BUSIEST time of year for school trips is fast approaching.

The Government says it wants to "rip up the health and safety red tape surrounding school trips". GMB is concerned about what this could mean for staff and pupil safety.

But the Government's new "simplified" advice isn't ready yet. So for the time being, schools will carry on using Department for Education guidance first published in 1998. Here are some of its key points. If you need more information, there is a weblink at the bottom or ask your local GMB rep for help accessing it.

Department for Education,

"Health and safety of pupils on educational visits: A good practice guide" (1998)

The law requires **employers** to ASSESS the risks of activities, INTRODUCE measures to control those risks, and TELL their employees what these measures are.

Employees must TAKE reasonable care, CO-OPERATE with their employers over safety matters, CARRY OUT activities in accordance with training and instructions, and INFORM the employer of any serious risks.

Head teachers should ENSURE, among other things, that:

- the risk assessment has been completed
- appropriate safety measures are in place
- training needs have been assessed by a competent person
- there is adequate and relevant insurance cover
- the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate

The **appropriate ratio** of supervisors to pupils will depend on a number of factors, including the nature of the activities, pupils with special educational or medical needs, and the experience of adults in off-site supervision. **Group leaders** should ASSESS the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group. There should be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency.

A formal **risk assessment** should have the aim of preventing the risks or reducing them. Pupils must not be placed in situations which expose them to an unacceptable level of risk. Safety must always be the prime consideration. If the risks cannot be contained then the visit must not take place.

Your school and local authority may have their own guidance documents. You can also currently find lots more detail and advice about specific activities at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/responsibilities/a0013767/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>.

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