

Ratios

69. It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- ▼ sex, age and ability of group;
- ▼ pupils with special educational or medical needs;
- ▼ nature of activities;
- ▼ experience of adults in off-site supervision;
- ▼ duration and nature of the journey;
- ▼ type of any accommodation;
- ▼ competence of staff, both general and on specific activities;
- ▼ requirements of the organisation/location to be visited;
- ▼ competence and behaviour of pupils;
- ▼ first aid cover.

70. Some LEAs set their own levels of supervision for off-site visits, which county and controlled schools must adhere to. In other schools decisions must be made, taking the above factors into consideration as part of the risk assessment. Staffing ratios for visits are difficult to prescribe as they will vary according to the activity, age, group, location and the efficient use of resources. However, a general guide for visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances, might be:

- ▼ 1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3 (under 5s reception classes should have a higher ratio);
- ▼ 1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6;
- ▼ 1 adult for every 15-20 pupils in school year 7 onwards.

71. The above are examples only. Group leaders should assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group. There should be a minimum of one teacher in charge. For advice on ratios for swimming see Chapter 8, paragraphs 185 and 187.

72. In addition to the teacher in charge there should be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency. When visits are to remote areas or involve hazardous activities, the risks may be greater and supervision levels should be set accordingly. The same consideration should be given to visits abroad (see Chapter 9 paragraph 207) or residential visits (see Chapter 8 paragraph 195). Some non-residential visits with mixed groups will need a teacher from each sex.

Parents/Volunteers

73. Where there is more than one teacher/supervisor a group leader should be appointed who has authority over the whole group. If more than one school is involved an overall group leader should be identified, usually the person with the most experience in leading such visits.

74. Where a high adult:pupil ratio is required, it is not always feasible to use school staff alone. Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school and the pupil group. Anyone who has not had a criminal conviction check should never be left in sole charge of pupils.

Vetting suitability

75. The group leader needs to be clear about procedures for vetting volunteers who wish to be supervisors or drivers, in particular for residential visits. The suitability of potential supervisors should be assessed by the group leader and the head teacher at an early stage of the planning process. Where there is any doubt about suitability further investigations should be made and if any doubt

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remains the adult should not be allowed to help supervise the visit. Similar considerations should be made for adults who have no supervisory role but who wish to take part in the visit.

76. The Education (Teachers) (Amendment) Regulations 1998, which came into force on 1 August 1998, made changes to the law with the aim of preventing people who are barred by the Secretary of State from being directly employed by an LEA, school or further education college from getting round the ban by either:

- ▼ working as a volunteer; or
- ▼ working in a business that is contracted to provide services to schools, further education institutions, or pupils attending them.

77. The amendment means that List 99 checks should be carried out on volunteers and staff employed by contractors who will have regular contact with children and young people attending the school or college either on or off the premises. Voluntary Aided and LEA maintained schools can ask LEAs to check a copy of List 99, which they hold. Independent schools and further education institutions can ask the DfEE to carry out the List 99 check. The DfEE are also willing to consider making direct arrangements with those contracted by schools. See Annex B for address details.

78. For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone with a pupil wherever possible.

Supervisors responsibilities

79. All adult supervisors, including teachers and parent/volunteer helpers, must understand their roles

and responsibilities at all times. It may be helpful to put this in writing. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision, such as those with special needs or those likely to cause trouble. Teachers retain responsibility for the group at all times.

Competences if leading an adventure activity

80. If the school is leading an adventure activity, such as canoeing, the LEA or governing body must ensure that the group leader and other supervisors are suitably competent to lead or instruct pupils in the activity, bearing in mind that some pupils may be novices. Competences should be demonstrated by holding the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) award where it exists. Some LEAs have their own procedures for approving the competences/ experience of instructors. Where this is not the case the relevant NGB can normally advise. Names and addresses of NGBs are at Annex B.

Head counts

81. Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils should take place, particularly before leaving any venue. All supervisors should carry a list of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times. Pupils, particularly in school years 1 to 3, should be easily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area. Brightly coloured caps, T shirts or a school uniform can help identify group members more easily. Pupils should not wear name badges. But some schools find it useful to provide pupils with badges displaying the name of the school and its emergency contact number. The group leader should establish rendezvous points and tell pupils

what to do if they become separated from the group.

Remote supervision

82. The aim of visits for older pupils may be to encourage independence and investigative skills, and some of the time on visits such as trips abroad and fieldwork may be unsupervised. The group leader should establish during the planning stage of the visit whether the pupils are competent in remote supervision and should ensure parents have agreed this part of the visit. The group leader remains responsible for pupils even when not in direct contact with them.

83. Parents should be told, before the visit, whether any form of remote supervision will take place.

84. See Preparing pupils for remote supervision in Chapter 4 paragraphs 95 - 96 and for Remote supervision during adventurous activities see Chapter 8 paragraphs 176 - 179. For Supervision on transport see Chapter 6 paragraphs 127 - 129.