



RISK
VS.
REWARD

**Don't be held back by
HEALTH & SAFETY!**

School trips are an incredible way for students to grow and develop. Foreign visits have long been considered crucial for curriculum enrichment and personal development and, as a result, life-changing trips abroad are becoming increasingly common. No longer are school trips limited to local museums or factories; children are routinely offered trips to previously unimaginable locations such as Kenya, Ghana and Zanzibar.

EXAGGERATED RISK

With almost every school across the UK offering adventurous school trips, the newspapers would have you believe that incidents of injury are on the rise. To set your mind at ease right from the outset, this is untrue; tragedies that occur during school trips are increasingly rare. Risk exposure should remain in proportion and educational outcomes should continue to be valued as a matter of priority. If proper, sensible and simple risk procedures are followed, the chance of an accident occurring is significantly diminished.

Despite what you may think, the Health & Safety Executive encourages adventurous activities. Don't believe us? The Health & Safety Executive state the following:

“
Well-managed school trips and outdoor activities are great for children. Children won't learn about risk if they're wrapped in cotton wool.
”

“
Teachers should expect their schools to have procedures that encourage participation, are proportionate to the level of risk and avoid bureaucracy.
”

“
Those running school trips need to focus on the risks and benefits to people – not the paperwork.
”

“
Accidents and mistakes may happen on school trips – but fear of prosecution has been blown out of all proportion.
”

RISK vs. REWARD

There is an element of risk involved in any overseas trip. Whether it is volunteer work in Africa or a ski trip in the Alps, there is risk involved. However, this should not be reason for avoiding such a trip as it means denying students a potentially life-changing opportunity. More importantly, teachers should be aware of the risks but keep risk versus reward in mind.

THREE COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS:

1

“
*I'll be held responsible if
something goes wrong.*
”

Proper risk management, risk assessments and risk awareness will ensure that the chances of an accident occurring are incredibly low and may even grant you legal protection in the extremely unlikely event of an incident.

2

“
*There will be a mountain
of paperwork.*
”

The Health & Safety Executive actually works to reduce bureaucracy "so that focus is on how the real risks are managed and not on the paperwork". Travel organisations should work closely with schools' senior management team (SMT) to ensure that paperwork is not a tiresome burden.

3

“
*It's better to err on
the side of caution.*
”

Potential educational enrichment and outcomes far outweigh the potential risk involved, assuming sensible precautions are followed and you have a sense of risk awareness. Denying students opportunities based on risk sets a dangerous precedent for the future of learning outside the classroom.

WHO TO TRAVEL WITH?

Consider travelling only with organisations who are accredited by, or members of:



ATOL



ABTA



Learning Outside
the Classroom
(LOTC)



Student
Travel Forum
(STF)

These accreditations ensure the correct health & safety procedures, risk assessments and risk management policies have already been validated by independent adjudicators.

A good travel organisation will work with teachers to inform them of potential risks and make them more risk aware. Knowledge of possible risks allows teachers to make informed decisions when planning to lead an adventurous trip.

WHY RISK DOING IT YOURSELF?

Another common myth is that organising trips internally, or 'DIY' trips, is a safer and superior method of risk reduction. While it is a nice idea, unfortunately it is just not true. Most educational institutions are unable to offer the same health & safety guarantees that so many travel providers can. ATOL protection is essential for any trip and the LOTC quality badge is another crucial accreditation to look out for.

Ultimately, many travel organisations have the necessary experience, partnerships and training to deal with a crisis effectively, should it occur. Schools are all-too-often unprepared and ill-equipped to react effectively in a crisis. Why risk it?

CONVINCE THE SMT!

If you know that a trip abroad is right for your students, don't let health & safety or a fear of rejection hijack your amazing idea!

1

Be confident in the benefits of the trip you wish to run. Keep educational outcomes as the key reason to forge ahead with your plan to go on a trip.

2

Be prepared. Your SMT and governors will most likely ask for evidence of risk management. Make sure your travel provider is able to provide risk management procedures, risk assessments and health & safety documents. If they can't, ask why not!

3

Ask your travel provider for help. Don't be afraid to ask for a risk or health & safety presentation. It is their job to reassure their customers that any risk is minimized.

4

Stick to the rules. Your school should have a regularly-revised Educational Visits Policy. If you stick to this and show respect for its recommendations, you can't go too far wrong.

5

Focus on real risk. Too often, critics of your proposals will focus on risks that are fanciful or far-fetched. Remind them of the real risks and demonstrate how these risks will be minimised or negated; don't allow trivial risks to derail your amazing opportunity.



For more information, or to book a no-obligation meeting in your school, please get in touch.

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