

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS: VISITS AND TRIPS AUTUMN TERM 2020 (issued 14 August 2020 - updated)

Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has been a severe and sustained threat to human life in Scotland. The impact of the pandemic on public services, business and private lives has been profound. All of us have been required to make substantial adjustments to cope with these unprecedented times. The Scottish Government is particularly mindful of the impact which this has had on children and young people.

Scotland is currently in [Phase 3](#) in the Route Map out of Lockdown: *the Virus has been suppressed. Continued focus on containing sporadic outbreaks.* However, due to the ever evolving nature of the pandemic we must remain vigilant and continue to manage the inherent risks. It is also the case that we have no ability to predict whether the situation with COVID-19 will deteriorate in the future. If this was to happen and we were forced to lockdown again either nationally, regionally or locally, **there may be a return to earlier phases of the route map, which would impact upon the advice set out here.**

A key priority in Phase 3 is to see the re-opening of schools, with pupils returning full time, and blended learning becoming a contingency plan. The Scottish Government understands that a return to normality will not happen immediately on the return to school and that it will take some time for new arrangements to bed in.

School trips can be an effective method of curriculum delivery and it is therefore necessary to consider whether they can be undertaken, subject to current guidelines, as schools return for the autumn term.

Further to the advice issued on 13 March and 17 April, this advice sets out the current position in relation to school trips which are planned for the autumn term

Domestic school visits and trips

Non-residential:

In the autumn term, if they wish to, **schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits**, as long as all risk assessments and information gathering outlined below have been undertaken and used to reach a robust, evidence based decision on the balance of risk involved in the trip going ahead.

Residential:

The risk of transmission on a school trip which includes an overnight stay away from the place of normal residence, is seen to be greater than the risks associated with a day trip. This is due to children, young people and adults from different families and households mixing and sharing facilities. This risk is reduced if the groups remain separate, but it is still seen to be greater than that associated with non-residential trips.

Separately, we know that where local outbreaks occur, areas can be shut down at short notice. Should pupils be visiting such an area when that happens, this may result in them having difficulties leaving the residential setting.

Residential domestic school trips are therefore not recommended at this time, as the risks of transmission on a residential school trip are seen to be greater than the potential benefits to children and young people.

Once there is a greater understanding about the virus and viral transmission, these domestic residential trips can be reintroduced in an incremental manner. However, it is anticipated that this initial planning will not commence until later in the school year.

International educational visits

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office continue to advise against all but essential travel to most countries, except for a number of destinations with whom the UK Government has agreed a reciprocal air bridge policy. The arrangement is subject to change at short notice, meaning that people who travelled in good faith to countries on the “no quarantine” list, are subjected to a change of policy while out of the UK, meaning they have to quarantine for 14 days on their return.

Adding to the risks inherent in domestic residential trips (outlined above) the risk of taking a group of pupils and teachers abroad and potentially having to remain in that country for longer than planned or undertake an unplanned quarantine on return should not be underestimated. Such an outcome would impact significantly, not just on pupils but on teaching staff who would be unable to attend work. Furthermore, it is also unlikely that travel insurers would provide cover in respect of COVID-19 for any new or pre-planned international visits currently.

As a result, **we continue to advise against schools undertaking international visits at this time.**

Risk assessments for Non-Residential Domestic Educational Visits and Trips

Local authorities and schools will already have their own, well established risk assessment (RA) processes in place for school trips and, as normal, schools should undertake full and thorough RAs in relation to all educational visits to establish whether they can be done safely. As part of this process, schools will need to consider what control measures need to be used and ensure they are aware of wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues and the use of transport. The protective measures adhered to in schools, such as hygiene, grouping and physical distancing between adults, will also need to be considered in the context of the trip - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>

Schools should also assess whether the pupils undertaking the trip have the capacity to be compliant with the anti COVID-19 measures in place at the venue(s) being attended during the excursion. Establishing whether any insurance in place for the trip provides COVID-19 related cover is also essential.

Evaluating this information alongside schools' well established RA procedures provides the opportunity to balance the outcome of the risk assessment with the benefits the trip would provide for pupils' wellbeing and educational attainment informing a robust/well evidenced conclusion as to whether or not the visit should go ahead.

Advice

This advice is underpinned by the [guidance](#) issued by the UK Government, both from the Department for Education specifically on school trips and from the FCO in relation to international travel.

School residential trips were discussed at the Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID 19) Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues on 4 August 2020. Minutes of this meeting can be found on the webpage:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advisory-sub-group-on-education-and-childrens-issues-minutes-4-august-2020/>

You may also wish to read the advice which has been prepared by the Scottish Advisory Panel on Outdoor Education (SAPOE), in partnership with local authorities and representatives of outdoor education centres, to support the safe reopening and operation of outdoor education centres for visits by schools. This is available on the webpage <https://www.goingoutthere.co.uk/appendix/coronavirus-covid-19-reopening-and-operation-of-outdoor-education-centres-and-reintroducing-visits-by-schools/>

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