

Feed the mind

Rohanne Thompson advises on how to plan
and execute a fun and educational school trip

This guide provides a brief introduction to all the information
needed to enjoy safely a school trip with your class



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Contents

<u>Part 1: Planning</u>	<u>Page</u>
Gaining Permission	3
Exploratory Visit	3
Risk Assessment	4
Planning Protocol	6
<u>Part 2: Safety</u>	
Roles of Adults	7
Roles of Pupils	8
Effective Supervision	9
First Aid	10
First Aid Personnel	11
Water safety	12
<u>Part 3: Practicalities</u>	
Parental Permission	13
Travel 1 The School Minibus	14
Travel 2 Advice for Minibus Drivers	15
Financial Planning	17
<u>Appendices</u>	
Risk Assessment 1 Form	18
Risk Assessment 2 Form	19
Emergency Procedures	20
Emergency Procedures 2	21
Parental Consent Form	23
Possible Locations	25
Useful Websites	28

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Gaining Permission

It is essential that formal planning is done before any visit can be approved. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties that may arise and making plans to reduce them. In practice, the head teacher is ultimately responsible for the safety of the pupils. However the Head will often delegate planning to the organiser of the visit usually known as the "group leader". However, the head teacher must be satisfied that this person is competent to do the detailed planning and preparation for the visit, and also has the necessary relevant experience to do this correctly.

Many Local Authorities or Children's Services Authorities provide detailed guidance on visits, including risk assessments, which their schools must follow. For potentially hazardous activities, some Local Authorities require schools to obtain the Authority's approval before the trip can take place. In other schools, and generally for less hazardous activities, the governing body is responsible for permission and should satisfy itself that the visit has been planned effectively and that risks have been reduced to safe levels.

Exploratory visit

The group leader should undertake an exploratory visit, wherever possible. The aim of this visit is to:

- Ensure the venue is suitable to meet the objectives and aims of the visit
- Obtain advice from the manager regarding potential risks and other information
- Assess the site for potential danger – including identifying areas of possible risk and providing remedies to identified hazards to reduce the risks to acceptable levels
- Ensure that the venue can provide for the needs of the staff and pupils in the group, including adequate toilet facilities and catering arrangements
- Become familiar with the area before taking a group of young people there.

It may be useful to obtain names and addresses of other schools that have used the venue and to contact them to get the benefit of their experiences.

Many schools will take new groups of pupils to the same location each year. As some factors will change from year to year, it is sensible to re-assess the risks each year.

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Risk Assessment

The aim of the risk assessment is to identify hazards or potential for hazard and to put in place measures for dealing with, to reduce, or remove those hazards. The risk assessment provides the paper trail of evidence that careful and responsible consideration has been given to the trip.

School pupils and staff must not be placed in situations that expose them to unacceptable and unnecessary levels of risk. Safety must always come first. If the risks are too large and cannot be contained then the visit must not take place.

The group leader usually carries out the risk assessment. An assessment should be completed well before the visit, and should be approved by the head teacher and/or governing body of the school. Although it does not need to be complex, the assessment should be comprehensive. Local Children's Services Authorities, head teachers and governing bodies should be given a copy so that approval for the visit can be given with a clear understanding of the risk management and recognition that comprehensive planning of the trip has been carried out.

The risk assessment should include:

- A description of the hazards
- Details of who might be affected by the risks
- What safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to acceptable, safe levels
- Evidence that these safety measures can be put into place to reduce the risks
- Details of steps that will be taken in an emergency.

The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all teachers/supervisors on the visit, with details of the active measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks.

The group leader should monitor the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action as necessary.

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The group leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:

- The type of visit/activity and the level at which it is being undertaken
- The location
- Modes of transport
- The competence, experience and qualifications of accompanying staff
- The ratio of staff to pupils
- The group members' age, competence, fitness and temperament and the suitability of the activity
- The special educational or medical needs of pupils
- The quality and suitability of available equipment, including transport
- Seasonal conditions and weather
- Emergency procedures and availability/location of emergency care.

Planning Protocol

Outline the proposal to Head teacher, Governors or Local Children's Services Authority to seek approval. Include details of:

- Visit objectives
- Likely date, duration, venue
- Pupil group, staffing
- Resources, estimate of costs.

Strategic Planning

- Contact venue. Is it suitable for the group?
- What are the transport options?
- Who would lead the group and who would help to supervise it?
- Who will pay for the visit?
- Make exploratory visit & Risk Assessment.

Make substantive proposal to head teacher, Governors, or Local Authority with details of:

- Dates
- Group membership
- Staffing
- Transport
- Risk assessment
- Emergency procedures
- Insurance
- Costs and benefits.

The Visit

- Obtain approval and parental consent
- Brief pupils
- Go on visit, monitoring progress and associated risks at all times
- On return, evaluate all aspects of the visit and make a written record.

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Roles of Adults

All school trips must be adequately supervised by competent adults, preferably teachers. Obviously, with larger parties it may be necessary to use support staff and/or parents/guardians as supervisors. These volunteers should be competent and given comprehensive information regarding the trip.

Hierarchy of Authority

Ensure all supervisors and pupils know who is the group leader. The group leader is responsible for the welfare of the whole group at all times but may delegate supervisory responsibility to other adults. In doing so they must ensure that:

1. Each adult knows exactly the pupils for which they are responsible.
2. The supervisor is aware of any special needs or requirements of particular pupils within their group.
3. Every supervisor has a register of their group and performs regular headcounts. Supervisors must inform their group of an emergency meeting place in case the group gets separated.
4. Each adult has been briefed on the plan of the activities and their educational purpose. They must also know the layout of the site and be able to anticipate risks or hazards and react to protect pupils.
5. Every adult is made aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency, and has access to appropriate First Aid and emergency telephone services.
6. All supervisors must have the ability to contact the group leader at all times.

Behavioural Conduct

The group leader should make sure the group as a whole is aware of the behaviour standards expected on the trip, including pupils and supervisors. Adults must be able to control their groups and ensure that the pupils obey these rules of behaviour.

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Roles of Pupils

All pupils on school trips should be aware of the plans for the activity and abide by the rules of conduct and behaviour.

Generally, they should:

1. Know who the group leader is and how to contact them in an emergency.
2. Know which supervisor is responsible for their welfare and stay in regular contact with that person.
3. Be aware of the purpose of activities, having been given clear and concise instruction by their supervisor.
4. Rarely, if ever be alone.
5. Be aware of other pupils in their group and alert an adult if someone is in trouble or missing.
6. Know where the meeting place is if they get separated from the group.
7. Abide by the rules of conduct and behaviour at all times.

Effective Supervision

Head counts

Supervisors should perform Head counts regularly. Head counts are particularly needed when:

1. A group moves to another location.
2. The group is in a densely populated area.
3. When arriving or leaving the site.

Buddy system

Pupils may be paired together to reinforce head counting and supervision. The pupils can keep regular checks on their buddy's welfare and it encourages them to stay in contact. However the buddy system must never be used to replace adult supervision and should be used in conjunction with head counts and register taking.

Registers

The group leader should have a complete register of pupils and adults that are present on the trip. Each supervisor should also have a list of the pupils for whom he/she is responsible.

Group allocation

The group leader should allocate the groups during the planning stages of the trip. The group sizes should take into account:

1. The age of the pupils - For Key Stage 2, the Government guidelines = 1 adult to 6-10 pupils.
2. The ability of the group - Pupils with learning difficulties or children with difficult behaviour may require additional supervision.
3. The nature of the activity.
4. Experience and competence of supervisors

Danger points

Particular care is needed in the event of any:

- Change of group supervisor
- Change of group size
- Change of activity.

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First Aid

During the planning for the trip the group leader should assess what level of first aid is needed.

When there is no special risk identified, the minimum stock of a travelling first aid kit should be:

1. a leaflet giving general advice on first aid
2. six individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings
3. one large sterile un-medicated wound dressing—approximately 18 cm x 18 cm
4. two triangular bandages
5. two safety pins
6. individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes
7. one pair of disposable gloves

In addition, if the trip involves travel, Transport Regulations require that all minibuses and public service vehicles used either as an express carriage or contract carriage have on board a first aid kit with the following items:

1. ten antiseptic wipes, foil packaged
2. one conforming disposable bandage (not less than 7.5 cms wide)
3. two triangular bandages
4. one packet of 24 assorted adhesive dressings
5. three large sterile un-medicated ambulance dressings (not less than 15 cm x 20 cm)
6. two sterile eye pads, with attachments
7. twelve assorted safety pins
8. one pair of rustless blunt-ended scissors

All first aid containers should be:

1. maintained in good condition
2. suitable for the purpose of keeping the items referred to above in good condition
3. readily available for use
4. prominently marked as a first-aid container.

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First Aid Personnel

The First Aider

First aiders must complete a training course approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). There are no rules on exact numbers of required first aid qualified staff but every trip should have at least one competent first aider. However, when planning a trip make sure that adequate first aid provision is also left at the school, for example, do not take the only first aid kit on the trip or have the only qualified first aider present on the visit.

On a school visit, the main duties of a first aider are to:

1. give immediate help to casualties with common injuries or illnesses and those arising from specific hazards encountered on the trip
2. when necessary, ensure that an ambulance or other professional medical help is called.

The Appointed Person

An appointed person is someone who:

1. takes charge when someone is injured or becomes ill
2. looks after the first-aid equipment e.g. restocking the first aid kit
3. ensures that an ambulance or other professional medical help is summoned when appropriate.

Appointed persons are **not** first aiders. They should **not** give first aid treatment for which they have not been trained. However, it is good practice to ensure that appointed persons have emergency first aid training/refresher training, as appropriate.

A school trip may have a first aider and appointed person who can assist them.

Water Safety

Drowning is the third most common cause of death in children aged under 16.

The best way to avoid a pupil getting into danger is to prevent entry into the water in the first place.

Be aware of the following progression

1. Ignorance, disregard or misjudgement of danger. To intervene and change a child's opinion of risk at this early stage is vital. Correct education can ensure that the water hazard is acknowledged, understood and respected.
2. Unrestricted access to hazards. Try to deny all access to the hazard and avoid areas that you know to be dangerous.
3. Absence of adequate supervision. Ensure that the supervision mentioned earlier in the guide is upheld at all times and stepped up around potential water hazards.

In the event of an emergency be aware of the rescue provisions of the site, e.g. life saving rings, staff contact telephone numbers, local coast guard information.

Check the weather conditions before the visit. Heavy, persistent rain may result in slippery banks to rivers and could cause a pupil or adult to fall and be swept away. If your school's visit is to a coastal location also be aware of the tidal pattern.

If there is any risk of danger revert to "Plan B" or cancel the trip.

Parental Permission

Written information should be given to parents regarding any off-site visit or activity. The following information should be included:

- Date of the visit
- The visit's objective
- Time/Location of departure and return—the parent must agree to meet their child on return
- Method of transport
- Provisions for special educational or medical needs
- The standard of behaviour expected from their child—May include a code of conduct that the parent and pupil should sign

The group leader should request the following information from the parents:

- Any allergies/phobias their child suffers
- Details of prescribed medication and method of administration
- Name, address and telephone number of the pupil's GP
- Dietary requirements
- If the trip involves interaction with water; the child's ability to swim and their level of safety awareness
- The parental home and daytime contact telephone numbers and addresses
- An alternative contact, including telephone number and address

Consent

Group Leaders should obtain parental consent. A parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group.

Medical Consent

Included on the parental consent form, parents should be asked to agree to their child receiving emergency treatment should it be needed, including blood transfusion and anaesthetic procedure.

See sample Parental Consent Form in appendix.

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Travel 1

The School Minibus

Safety Checks

Walk around the vehicle and check for visible defects

Interior checks, confirm:

Fuel level (and type of fuel)

Lights & indicators are working

Location and contents of first aid kit & fire extinguisher(s)

Location of wheel brace and jack

Mirrors correctly adjusted, clean and unobstructed

Position & function of all dashboard controls

Pressure on brake pedal

Seat belts are undamaged and working properly

Wipers & washers working properly

Exterior checks

Brake fluid level

Coolant level

Doors open and close properly

Lights including brake lights and indicators are clean and working

Oil level

Tyre pressures and tread, including spare

Windscreen & windows clean and undamaged

Windscreen washer fluid level

Brake Checks

Check brakes before loading passengers.

With engine running, check handbrake is working properly & brake pedal is firm when pushed.

If faults that might affect the vehicle or passenger safety are found, the vehicle must not be used until all faults are remedied.

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Travel 2

Advice for Minibus Drivers

Before setting off

- Conduct a predrive safety check before every journey.
- Allow sufficient time for the journey.
- Plan breaks. Avoid long spells of driving that risk children becoming restless due to boredom.
- Ensure children are supervised when boarding vehicle, especially if using rear door.
- Do not exceed the carrying capacity of the minibus.
- Make sure everyone is sitting, one to a seat and are using seat belts.
- Carry a complete list of passengers with notes of special needs. Keep list with other relevant documents in a place where they can be found readily in event of an accident.
- Check that no bags or clothing are caught in doors, that all luggage is secure and gangways and exits are clear.

During the journey

- Do not allow boisterous play of any kind.
- Try to keep children occupied (if escort onboard); give them something to do beforehand.
- Do not allow pupils to operate the doors. If possible have staff members sat by exits or if not possible ensure only responsible pupils are seated near the doors
- Use Hazard Warning Lights when pupils are boarding or leaving the mini-bus.
- If there is a serious delay during the return journey, inform the school so that parents can be made aware. Here, a mobile telephone is useful (although it should not be used whilst driving the vehicle).
- Children must not be left unaccompanied on the minibus.
- If there is a risk of fire, evacuate vehicle and move occupants to a safe place.
- If you have to stop in an emergency or break down while on a motorway, only stop on the hard shoulder and as far away from the carriageway and passing traffic as possible. Ensure all pupils are removed from the mini-bus and are

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escorted to a safe area on the verge, beyond the safety barriers and away from the carriageway.

Journey's end

- Supervise children when leaving the vehicle, especially if using the rear exit.
- Always park so that passengers step onto the footway and not the road.
- Take care when reversing if children are nearby. If you have to reverse, get adult help in directing you.
- Do not leave children alone if no one has come to collect them.

Financial planning

The head teacher should ensure that banking arrangements are in place to separate the visit's receipts from other school funds and from private accounts.

In schools other than independent schools the education provided wholly or mainly during school hours is free. This means that head teachers may not impose a charge on parents for any visit that occurs during school hours. The head teacher may, however, ask for a voluntary contribution.

Parents should be made aware that the contribution is not compulsory, and the children of parents who do not contribute may not be discriminated against. It is permissible to ask parents to contribute more than the minimum amount in order to subsidise those pupils whose parents have not contributed. In the last resort, the visit may have to be cancelled if there are not enough voluntary contributions and the shortfall cannot be made up.

The head teacher may, however, charge parents when a visit is deemed to be an 'optional extra'. An optional extra is a visit that:

- falls wholly or mainly outside school hours
- does not form part of the National Curriculum
- is not part of a syllabus leading towards a Prescribed Public Examination
- is not within the scope of the statutory requirements relating to religious education.

The head teacher should obtain the parents' agreement to meet the costs of an optional extra visit before the visit is planned in detail.

One point of detail is that some venues (particularly nature reserves) require a photocopy of the school's insurance schedule (essentially to verify adequate third-party liability cover). This is not often required by venues that cater for large numbers of the general public, like zoos and theme parks.

Risk Assessment 1

1. Place to be visited:

Date:

List of Potential Hazards:

2. List of people at particular risk from the hazards identified above:

3. List of controls in place to protect against hazards:

(e.g. ensuring adequate supervision, carry out a exploratory visit to assess risks)

4. How will you cope with the hazards that are not fully controlled in part 3?

5. Continual monitoring of hazards throughout the trip

(Adopt plans and act on them as necessary)

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Emergency Procedures

All teachers in charge of pupils during a school trip have a duty of care to make sure that all pupils remain safe and healthy whilst under their supervision.

Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take action in an extreme situation that could save a pupil or staff member's life.

Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit. County and controlled schools should follow the Local Authority guidance on emergency planning procedures.

If an accident happens, the group leader should follow this list of priorities:

- assess the situation
- safeguard the uninjured members of the group
- attend to the casualty
- inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident, including the victims next of kin and the contact at the school.

Responsibility

The group leader should take charge in an emergency, and all those involved in the school trip, including supervisors, pupils and their parents, should be informed of who will take charge in an emergency. Emergency procedures should have been organised and put in place and back up cover arranged and made available so the group leader can delegate their other duties of supervision and risk assessment to other members of staff.

Pre-arranged school home contact

Contact should be made with the school. The school's main responsibility is to inform the victim's parents and the Local Authority (where appropriate). The named person should have all the necessary information about the visit and have been involved with the planning process so they have a full understanding of the site, the pupils involved and the emergency procedures.

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Emergency Procedures 2

Other factors to consider include:

- ensure that all group members who need to know are made aware of the incident and that all group members are following the emergency procedures
- ensure that a teacher accompanies casualties taken to hospital and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together
- notify the police if necessary
- inform the school contact. The school contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit.

Detail to pass on the school contact

- Nature, date and time of incident
- location of incident; names of casualties and details of their injuries
- names of others involved so that parents can be reassured
- action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom)
- notify insurers, especially if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the school contact)
- notify the provider/tour operator (this may be done by the school contact)
- ascertain telephone numbers for future calls
- Mobile phones, though useful, are subject to technical difficulties, and should not replace usual communication procedures.

After the incident

As soon as possible write down accurately all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence.

Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident.

Complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or local authority inspector, if appropriate.

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Media Attention

No one in the group should speak to the media.

Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to a designated media contact in the home area

No one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties.

Parental Consent Form

To be distributed with a letter listing the full trip details

School Name: _____

Details of Visit to: _____

On date: _____

Times: _____ to _____

I agree to _____ taking part in this school day visit. I have read all the information provided and I agree to _____'s participation in the trip and acknowledge the requirement for _____ to behave in a respectful and responsible manner.

Medical Information about your child

Is your child currently taking any medication? YES or NO

If YES, please give details below

Please outline any allergies (dietary or medical) and any special dietary requirements such as vegetarianism/wheat intolerance, etc. (specify).

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Parental Consent Form

To be distributed with a letter listing the full trip details

Declaration

I agree to _____ receiving medication as instructed and any emergency medical, surgical or dental treatment as required and advised by medical professionals.

Signed _____ Date: _____

Contact details

Work telephone: _____

Home telephone: _____

Home address:

Alternative Emergency contact

Work telephone: _____

Home telephone: _____

Home address:

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Possible Locations

Jodrell Bank Science Centre and Arboretum

Lower Withington, near Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 9BL

Tel: 01477 571339 Fax: 01477 571695 web: www.manchester.ac.uk/jodrellbank/viscen

The Jodrell Bank Arboretum covers 14 ha (35 acres) and its 2500 varieties of native woody species constitutes one of the finest collections of hardy trees and shrubs in the North West of England. Add the fact that it is alongside the University of Manchester's world-famous Lovell radio telescope and you have the recipe for a great day out that can combine astronomy and space science with the local environment and natural history. Easy parking, café, shop, 3-D theatre and discovery centre.

Nature Reserves

Coombes Valley Nature Reserve

Six Oaks Farm, Bradnop, Staffs., ST13 7EU

Tel: (01538) 384017 Fax: (01538) 384017

An RSPB reserve, lying in a wooded valley covering 261 acres. Large refuge for woodland birds. A wide range of other wildlife can also be observed and studied, such as spring flowers, butterflies in the summer and fungi in the autumn.

Formby Red Squirrel Reserve (NT)

Victoria Road, Freshfield, Formby, L37 1LJ

Tel: (01704) 878591 Fax: (01704) 874949

A National Trust reserve. The area is home to many red squirrels. They are visible throughout the year and are easy to watch. The National Trust wardens welcome groups of visitors but have a policy of accompanying large groups to prevent too much noise.

Longton Brickcroft Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre

Liverpool Road, Longton, Lancashire, PR4 5YY

Tel: (01772) 611497 Fax: (01772) 621542

Has local ecological importance in Longton. Visitor centre is open all year round

Marshside RSPB Nature Reserve

c/o Beechwood Cat Tail Lane, Scarisbrick, Lancashire, PR8 5LW

Tel: (01704) 233003 Fax: (01704) 233003

A nature reserve with coastal grasslands, lagoons and hides by the estuary.

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Old Moor Wetland Centre

Old Moor Lane Off Manvers Way, Broomhill, Wombwell, S.Yorks, S73 0YF

Tel: (01226) 751593 Fax: (01226) 751617

250 acres, including a visitor centre. Hands-on, interactive displays and a film show. The reserve features a variety of wetland habitats and excellent bird hides. The site also has a picnic area.

Trafford Ecology Park

Lake Road Trafford Park, Manchester, M17 1TU

Tel: (0161) 873 7182 Fax: (0161) 876 0523

A peaceful oasis in the middle of Trafford Park Industrial Estate. Once a wasteland, it has now been transformed into a thriving activity centre and haven for wildlife. Schools can come to the centre to see the displays and discover the wild flowers, trees, birds and animals that live there.

Gardens

BTCV Nursery and Wildlife Garden

Hollybush Conservation Centre Broad Lane, Kirkstall, W.Yorks., LS5 3BP

Tel: (0113) 274 4864 Fax: (0113) 278 1940

Created on a formerly derelict site. Many varied habitats. Encourage the individual planting of nature gardens. Good educational programme.

Belper River Gardens

Matlock Road, Belper, Derbyshire, DE56

River gardens. Popular with school groups but large so strict supervision would be needed.

Biddulph Grange Garden (National Trust)

Grange Road, Biddulph, Staffs., ST8 7SD

Tel: (01782) 517999 Fax: (01782) 510264

High Victorian garden, recently restored by the National Trust. The garden is divided into a series of themed gardens including Chinese and Glen.

Byrkley Park Centre

Rangemore, Rangemore, Staffs., DE13 9RN

Tel: (01283) 716467 Fax: (01283) 716594

Award-winning garden with farm animals, play area and full disabled facilities.

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens

Cholmondeley Castle, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8AH

Tel: (01829) 720383 Fax: (01829) 720383

Romantically-landscaped gardens with lakeside and woodland walks. Rare breeds of farm animals including llamas!

Wentworth Castle Gardens

Low Lane, Stainborough, S.Yorks., S75 3ET

Tel: (01226) 731269

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Grade I Listed building and gardens. National collections of species rhododendrons, magnolias and hybrid camellias.

Hollies Botanical Garden

off Weetwood Lane, Leeds, W.Yorks., LS16 5NZ

Tel: (0113) 278 2030

Leeds botanical garden, the home of 4 National Council collections for conservation for plants and gardens.

Ness Botanic Gardens

University of Liverpool Ness, Neston, Cheshire, CH64 4AY

Tel: (0151) 353 0123 Fax: (0151) 353 1004

Ness Botanic Gardens has a large collection of trees, shrubs, roses and heathers. Picnic area and adventure playground. **Education room** for school groups.

The Herb Garden

Chesterfield Road Hardstoft, Pilsley, D'rbysr., S45 8AH

Tel: (01246) 854268

A large display herb garden with many rare and unusual varieties of culinary, medicinal and aromatic plants. Educational and informative posters through out to give detailed information on the plants.

Fletcher Moss Botanical Gardens

Tel: (0161) 434 1877

Millgate Lane Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2SW

Botanical gardens with an interesting rock garden situated around a natural pond

Useful Websites

- British Mycological Society Fungi for Schools Website
 - <http://www.fungi4schools.org/>
- British Ecological Society
 - <http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/articles/education/>
- Field Studies Council
 - <http://www.field-studies-council.org/outdoorclassroom/index.aspx>
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>
- Children's University of Manchester
 - <http://www.childrensuniversity.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
 - <http://www.wwtlearn.org.uk/>
- The Health and Safety Executive
 - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>
- National Trust Learning Website
 - <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-chl.htm>
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
 - <http://www.rosipa.com/index.htm>
- Health and Safety on School Trips
 - <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/visits/>