

Glenridding Beck – Investigation Report

Drowning of Max Palmer in Glenridding Beck 26 May 2002

PART C. LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL VISITS

These pages describe the LEA's guidance and the School's procedures.

The lessons learned cover particularly the need for:

- clear LEA guidance for schools which is regularly reviewed
- clear procedures within schools which establish accountabilities and are regularly monitored
- school governors to question the objectives of and management arrangements for educational visits

The left hand column sets out some facts and the right hand column provides comment and further sources of information.

Note: Comments in *bold italics* draw particular attention to points that those involved in educational visits and adventurous activities may need to consider.

This Part has two sections:

- Lancashire County Council guidance
- The School's visits procedures

It ends with a summary of the key points.

Facts

Lancashire County Council guidance

1. Lancashire County Council (LCC) sent its internal guidance "LCC guidelines for day and residential visits" to all LEA-maintained schools in April 1997.
2. These "LCC Guidelines" did not make specific reference to risk assessment. However, the LEA's general statement on H&S matters, set out as an annex to LCC's Scheme for Financing Schools, drew the attention of school governing bodies to the need for suitable and sufficient risk assessment.
3. The LCC Guidelines had an Appendix: "Guidance for validity of National Governing Body awards in outdoor activities". This included activities such as mountain walking, canoeing, rock climbing, caving, sailing,
4. The LCC Guidelines also contained a specific requirement for supervisors of water-based activities to have relevant life saving qualifications.
5. The Guidelines made reference to the British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE) guidance "Safe Practice in Physical Education".
6. LCC had previously issued the BAALPE Guidelines and any revisions to all its schools and outdoor centres. In February 2000, the then latest version, the "Millennium Edition" was sent to all its maintained schools
7. On 26 August 1999, LCC had issued to all its schools the DfES guidance "[Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits](#)" (HASPEV).
8. LCC had adopted the BAALPE guidelines as policy in respect of physical education, but their policy status in respect of outdoor visits was unclear. The Advisory Service based its training for PE teachers on the BAALPE guidelines.

Comment

This was a slightly amended version of guidance originally issued to schools in February 1993. The guidance was informed by the Department for Education guidance "Safety in Outdoor Education" 1989.

It is good practice for all LEA guidance on outdoor activities to set out clearly the LEA's expectations for risk assessment and provide any useful aids to help teachers carry out assessments to a level proportionate to the risk. Guidance documents etc should be kept up to date and checked for consistency.

This guidance on NGB qualifications was helpful for schools in matching qualifications to the proposed activities. However, it did not cover situations where schools might provide activities outside the scope of the NGB qualifications. ***This was a weakness.***

It is good practice for LEA guidance on outdoor activities to set out the extent and limits of what is covered and the activities for which specialist advice and/or high-level approval is required. This would include a clear statement of its position on activities not covered by NGB standards or guidance.

The provision of the BAALPE (and DfES) guidelines to all schools by the LEA was a positive action. Both documents were sent to head teachers.

It is likely that in many schools the BAALPE guidelines will have been passed to the Head of PE. Hence they may not have been readily available to other teachers organising residential visits or outdoor education activities, particularly as the BAALPE guidelines had been adopted as policy in respect of PE. (See C8)

It is important that LEA and school procedures and policies, not only draw attention to any supporting documentation, but also indicate how and why it is relevant.

The issue or revision of important documents such as the BAALPE and DfES guidelines should lead to review of an LEA's policies and procedures.

Review should also take place in the light of potential lessons to be learned from serious incidents both within and outside the Authority.

With many LEAs now having an intranet, it should be possible to disseminate rapidly revisions to policies or procedures.

The School's visits procedures

9. The Head teacher took up post in January 2000. As a priority, she revised the Staff Handbook to clarify roles and responsibilities and made it a Controlled Document.

10. The Staff Handbook contained the school's Safety Policy Statement which stated under "Out of School Activities" that (a) the Governors had formally adopted the County Guidelines. (b) "Accident and emergency procedures should be understood by all taking part and strictly adhered to" (c) it was the responsibility of the person organising the visit to ensure that the LCC guidelines and school policy were adhered to.

11. The Handbook also held the school's "Residential and Out of School Visits Policy". This did not set out the approval process *per se*, but it included a "School Visit Form" with a heading "approvals" containing spaces for the following to sign and date it:

- Teacher in charge
- Deputy Head
- Head teacher
- Governors

12. The opening paragraph of the LCC guidelines stated: "Approval of the Head teacher is required for all visits and activities off the school site. Approval of Governors is required for residential visits and they should be kept fully informed throughout the planning stage to ensure their continued approval."

13. The governors at the School expected the organiser to have followed the relevant guidelines and the information provided to have been checked by a member of the school's senior management. The governors might ask questions about new or unusual visits before giving approval but were less likely to do so for repeat visits.

Ensuring clear lines of responsibility is an important aspect of good management.

The principles of document control are set out in ISO 9000 <http://www.bsi-global.com/>

This was a clear statement of the school's position on out of school activities.

The system for checking the approval of visits had become degraded over time. There was also a lack of clarity over some of the responsibilities. The form itself was not seriously deficient. The weakness lay in the fact that there was no check of compliance with its requirements.

Compliance with procedures should form part of a school's internal monitoring arrangements and should be a feature of LEA monitoring.

HASPEV makes clear that the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of a visit lies with the leader and the head teacher.

However, HASPEV also sets out (paragraph 20) some checks that the Governing Body should do.

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/visits/>

It is good practice for the Governing Body to be told well in advance of proposed visits. Governors should always be prepared to ask searching questions about the educational objectives and management arrangements for forthcoming school visits and the outcomes of completed visits.

LEAs can help Governors by providing information/training on key questions relating to educational visits.

Key points

- LEA guidance on outdoor activities should set out clearly the LEA's expectations for risk assessment
- LEA and school procedures and policies should draw attention to any supporting documentation and indicate how and why it is relevant
- LEAs should review their policies and procedures for educational visits whenever significant new or revised guidance is published by authoritative bodies
- It is good practice for documents relating to H&S policies and procedures to be subject to an appropriate level of Document Control
- Compliance with procedures should form part of a school's internal monitoring arrangements and should be a feature of LEA monitoring (PARA C11).
- Governors should always be prepared to ask searching questions about the educational objectives and management arrangements for forthcoming educational visits and the outcomes of completed visits.