



## Field Trips with the FSC

### *A guide for parents and governors*

Going on field trips is the most enjoyable part of many children's school career; over 8 out of 10 children said so in a recent survey<sup>1</sup> of over 2000 science students from all over the country. A field excursion is always special and for some children it will make the difference that allows them to reach their full potential<sup>2</sup>. The FSC is a pioneering charity which aims to make all this possible. We do this by providing opportunities to visit, and to work in, some superb teaching and activity sites. The results will be obvious. 'Being somewhere special' and 'working with others' will provide the inspiration that many of the 80,000 children and students visiting FSC Centres this year will remember for many years; for some it will be the inspiration that changes their lives.



However, for various reasons – money, safety, time for example – this important part of the school experience does sometimes cause concern. Therefore, in this guide we've answered some of the most frequently asked questions which are posed to us. They cover important topics such as health and safety and we hope that this is the information and reassurance that you need. If not, please don't hesitate to contact us with your questions.

Words alone may not be enough. The best reassurance will be for you to see our Centres, facilities and fieldwork in action; if you would like to come and see for yourself please contact us and we can arrange a visit.

<sup>1</sup> Student review of the Science Curriculum. Science Museum (March 2002)

<sup>2</sup> Raising achievement through the environment: the case for fieldwork and field centres. NAFSO (1999)



## OUR CENTRES AND SITES

### **Are field trips safe?**

We would like all of our visitors to enjoy themselves. 'Having Fun' and 'Feeling Safe' go hand in hand and throughout our 60 years of working with schools, the health and safety of our visitors has always been of prime importance. The FSC takes these responsibilities very seriously; we have very clear procedures for ensuring the safety and care of all of our visitors, especially school age groups. We follow the latest standards and guidelines published by the *Department of Education and Science (DfES)*<sup>3</sup>.

The *Safety and Care* charter opposite summarises what you can expect in all of our centres. The charter is just a summary of our extensive *Operating Codes of Practice*<sup>4</sup> which all of our centres use. These are 'industry standards' and have been developed through unrivalled fieldwork experience gained as nearly three million people have passed through FSC doors. FSC Centres which carry out 'adventure' activities - including climbing, caving, trekking and watersports – have even more safety requirements. They are licensed every year by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA)<sup>5</sup> which inspects our systems, procedures and guidelines to make sure that they meet national standards.

Only field sites which have been *risk assessed* are used and nobody will lead groups in unfamiliar sites or in conditions which are unsuitable.

<sup>3</sup> *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: A good Practice Guide*. Department for Education and Science (updated guidelines, 2002)

<sup>4</sup> *Operating Codes of Practice*. Internal manual. Field Studies Council.

<sup>5</sup> *Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996*. AALA

## OUR PROMISE TO YOU

### The FSC Safety and Care Charter

All FSC Centres have:

- **Risk assessed field sites, activities and buildings**
- **24 hour duty system with on site staff and 'on call' back up (for Day Centres this system extends for the times students are at the Centre)**
- **Restricted access external doors, including keypad locks**
- **Regular head counts both during fieldwork and in the Centre**
- **Nominated first aiders are available 24 hours a day**
- **Robust personnel systems for the appointment, induction and monitoring of staff, including checking of all appropriate qualifications, references and criminal records**
- **Identifiable staff wearing FSC name badges**
- **Comprehensive induction and training for health and safety issues**
- **Public liability insurance cover**
- **Safe vehicles meeting current requirements, such as passenger seat belts and head restraints**

In addition FSC has in place:

- A programme of Health and Safety training courses
- A Health and Safety auditing procedure
- A Health, Safety and Hygiene committee reporting to the FSC's Executive Committee

## OUR STAFF AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Are your staff suitably trained?**

A safe 'outdoor' experience relies ultimately on the common sense and good judgement of the staff and group leaders. Most people agree that there is no substitute for field experience and each FSC Centre has a senior team of dedicated and committed teaching staff, many of whom have been with us for several years; they play a critical role in mentoring newer staff and assessing their capabilities. FSC has a clear 'career' structure along which staff will gain new responsibilities. No untrained staff will lead school groups in the field and our staff will always work within their own experience. Our career progression ensures that all of our staff are trained and qualified to appropriate levels, guided by bodies such as the government's Health and Safety Executive, 'though our own training standards are usually much higher. All of our teaching staff are advanced first aiders and are trained in the management of groups outside the classroom. Staff in the Centres which carry out 'adventure' activities, including climbing, caving, trekking and watersports, hold appropriate qualifications to lead the activities.

### **Who is responsible during the visit?**

We make it our duty to care for all visitors to our Centres and we will make sure that everybody knows who is responsible. Often the responsibility is shared by FSC staff and teachers who are accompanying their groups. Visiting teachers will maintain overall responsibility for their students, as recommended in the latest government guidelines<sup>3</sup>. FSC staff will assume practical responsibility for all students during all fieldwork activities, including preliminary briefings and follow-up reviews. At all other times, FSC Centre staff will provide support and guidance towards the safety and enjoyment of visiting students. The FSC will only take responsibility for unaccompanied children on designated FSC courses where the children are not part of an organised group. Specific details are available on request from each of our Centres.

### **What about insurance?**

The FSC has public liability insurance to cover our legal liability for injury to visitors or damage to their property. Most schools have their own insurance which covers travel and field trips. If this is not the case the FSC has access to a Voluntary Insurance Scheme through our insurance broker, HSBC Insurance Brokers Ltd. If you are unsure please don't hesitate to contact any FSC Centre for advice.

### **Do we need to send medical details?**

Medical emergencies are very rare during our field trips but if they do happen we are well prepared. All visitors will be asked to fill in a confidential medical questionnaire before a visit. This information will forewarn our staff of any conditions which may require prompt medical treatment. All of our teaching staff are advanced first aiders who are also trained to look after students with allergies, asthma, diabetes and epilepsy. FSC staff will also carry a 'safety sack' for emergencies and first aid during field trips away from our Centres.

### **Can we run our own courses?**

The FSC does host many groups who teach themselves. This usually involves a lot of pre-course planning and preparation, including telling parents and students what is expected and getting the necessary consents, medical and dietary information. However, 'self-led' groups are asked to work with FSC staff to ensure a safe and appropriate programme, and to adopt an approved code of practice.

### **Can you help to train our own teachers?**

If you are a teacher or school manager who is interested in leading your own group in out-of-classroom activities, the FSC may be able to help. We lead accredited training courses at a variety of levels – from fairly straightforward outdoor group management through to managing and leading activities in demanding environments such as remote areas above 600'. Training courses include:

- Health and Safety in Fieldwork
- Walking Group Leader Awards
- Certificate in Offsite Safety Management
- Mountain Leader Awards (Summer)
- First aid courses
- In-service training courses for schools and local authorities
- Training courses for trainee and newly qualified teachers
- Free 'taster' days for teachers

Places for trainees on some of our courses are subsidised – please see our web site for details. Also, if you are organising a group for training we could arrange to come to you to run workshops or training events. Again, see our web site.

## MORE ABOUT OUR CENTRES

### **What's the food like?**

All residential Centres have fully equipped kitchens and dining rooms which allow us to cater for large groups coming from many different places and backgrounds. All of the day Centres have eating areas. Your children and students may even find themselves sharing a dining room with visitors from Singapore, Barbados, Russia or any of the numerous countries with which the FSC works. Visitors will be asked to fill in a dietary preference sheet so that suitable options are available during their stay; vegetarian and special dietary requirements will always be catered for. We will also ask for information about allergies. Our own inspection team makes sure that we comply with all food and hygiene requirements.

### **What do visitors need to bring?**

Apart from food, keeping warm and dry is at the top of the list of priorities for most younger visitors. We try to go out in most weathers and, therefore, inadequate clothing or footwear could make the trip a misery. To make sure this doesn't happen all of our Centres will provide a list of recommended items and a minimum of at least one spare set of warm clothing is usually suggested. Waterproofs and boots will be available for hire, and all of our residential Centres have washing and drying facilities.

### **How do I keep in contact?**

All of the Centres have public telephones and postal facilities to maintain contact. Most also have e-mail access. You will be supplied with contact numbers and addresses by the Centre. Mobile 'phones will not work in some of our more remote Centres and we do try to discourage the use of mobiles unless there is an emergency.

### **What do you expect from your visitors?**

We must emphasise that we want people to enjoy themselves at our Centres. Therefore, FSC Centres are run with a minimum of restrictions which are explained in a leaflet sent to all schools before their visit<sup>6</sup>. These are very similar to those you would expect at school and home. Visitors will be reminded about these when they arrive. A highlight of a field trip for many children is working together as a team and helping each other: nearly everybody soon realises that the few rules we have are there for everybody's benefit and so respect them.

6. *Discipline for School Pupils*. Information leaflet. Field Studies Council

## **WHY CHOOSE FSC?**

### **Because we have....**

#### **The People**

##### **trained and knowledgeable staff**

- Rigorous FSC training and induction programmes to ensure standards are met
- At the forefront of education initiatives through working with government bodies and examination boards

#### **The Experience**

##### **unrivalled fieldwork experience**

- The environmental education pioneer, providing fieldwork for 60 years
- Massive experience - 80,000 visitors - young and old - every year...nearly three million in total
- Proven, tried and tested operating systems to ensure safety, high educational standards
- Our track record - each year we get new students from the same schools because teachers trust and value what we do

#### **The Flexibility**

##### **variety unmatched by others**

- No 'off the peg' courses; all of our school courses are specially designed to meet the needs of each group
- Our commitment to 'lifelong learning', with Centres catering for all ages, running over 650 courses each year covering a huge range of subjects and having the resources to support them
- Sixteen centres with a national network of teaching sites
- A global view, supported by our work and tours in forty countries worldwide

#### **The Back-up**

##### **extensive support and facilities**

- We listen and learn - feedback from our 80,000 visitors each year helps us to improve what we do
- Fully equipped centres with dedicated facilities to support fieldwork and teaching FSC published resources such as our world famous identification charts and guides

#### **The Commitment**

##### **a pioneering 'non-profit' commitment to support field trips**

- A charitable vision, to support *Bringing Environmental Understanding To All*
- A commitment to reaching all children; we try not to exclude anybody from what we do
- A strong environmental philosophy
- Working with like-minded partners to make sure that we offer the best there is
- Providing 'value for money' with no hidden costs or extras