



Why does the school offer educational trips and visits?

We recognise that well planned, out of school experiences can complement the high quality, school-based teaching and learning we provide, which is central to what we achieve here at Northgate. Our experienced staff are able to identify trips and visits which enhance the classroom learning of our students, and we are incredibly fortunate to have a staff body who are willing to run nearly 150 external visits each year, ranging from day trips to local universities to evening theatre visits, and even lengthier residential trips such as foreign exchanges and Duke of Edinburgh Gold expeditions which last a week or more.

Why do clashes between trips occur?

In order to minimise impact to student progress and to keep disruption to the timetable to an acceptable level, we have to carefully consider a variety of factors; this includes when a trip can run, which staff are able to support the trip and how many school days students may be taking part in trips.

Some trips are typically booked up to a year in advance, whereas other trips are booked at short notice as an opportunity becomes available; for example, surplus tickets for sporting events or the theatre are sometimes offered to school parties at heavily discounted prices.

When deciding upon a date for a trip or visit to run, there are also many other considerations:

- The visit leader's and accompanying staff member(s)' other commitments, be these professional (e.g. teaching and assessments, clubs or rehearsals, staff training) or personal (e.g. childcare, a partner's work commitments).
- Availability/cost of the activity (e.g. group booking at an art gallery, theatre tickets, accommodation).
- Availability/cost of transport (e.g. affordable flights abroad).
- Suitability of dates for other parties involved (e.g. exchange schools).
- Other events in school (e.g. practical and oral examinations, SEND testing).
- The availability of suitable cover staff to take over absent colleagues' lessons.

The above constraints prevent us from creating a full schedule at the start of a school year; neither is it feasible to only ever run one trip on any given day. Our guiding principle is that, where staff are willing to give up their time to run trips, we want to maximise the opportunities available to our young people, which results in instances when multiple trips may be scheduled to go ahead at the same time.

How is the number of available places per trip decided upon?

There are several factors that dictate how many places are available for a trip, including (but not limited to):

- **Safety precautions:** how many students can be safely accommodated by the activity/venue, compliance with health & safety regulations, the number of suitably qualified/experienced staff available to support the visit.
- **Quality of experience:** the impact of numbers on the quality of the experience for those taking part, the impact of numbers on a visit's value for money for those taking part.
- **Availability:** the availability of appropriate travel options/providers, the availability of tickets, the number of suitably qualified/experienced staff available to support the visit.

How does the school allocate places when a trip is oversubscribed?

Some of our trips and visits have more applicants than available places, and when this is the case, places are allocated by random lottery. Whilst we recognise that it can be difficult for a student to discover they have not been selected, we have safeguards in place to guarantee that the selection process is impartial; for example, the visit leader and accompanying staff are never involved in the selection process and we employ online software to carry out the random lottery to ensure fairness.

Random lottery is the fairest way to allocate places on oversubscribed trips and is a method utilised by many schools, both locally and nationally. It is important that students understand that when they apply to go on a trip, their place is not guaranteed until confirmed by the trip leader, and in some cases this will be after a random lottery has taken place.

Why doesn't the school use a 'first come, first served' policy?

Schools are specifically advised against this practice by the visits guidance we follow, as it can disadvantage many of our students and families - for example, those who may need time to seek financial assistance. Because it is not possible for all families to immediately access the money that is needed, we use a random lottery of all applications received by the deadline stated on the letter to allocate places when trips are oversubscribed.

What happens if my child doesn't get a place on a trip?

All unsuccessful students' names are entered onto a reserve list. Again, to ensure fairness, the order of the reserve list is also determined by random lottery. Should students who have been allocated a place subsequently withdraw from the visit, then students from the reserve list will be offered the places.

Why aren't unsuccessful students prioritised for future trips?

There are several reasons why it isn't possible to devise a fair and equitable system to enable this.

For example:

- Trips are not always available to exactly the same group of students e.g. some may be specific to those studying a particular subject or in a particular year group, while others are open to all.
- Students will not necessarily apply for every opportunity that arises due to their personal circumstances. For example, a less confident student not applying for a residential trip should still have equality of opportunity when applying for a day trip.
- Cost is a consideration. For example, students from lower income families who do not apply for expensive trips should still have equality of opportunity for lower cost visits.

Given factors of this nature, it would not be right to give priority to someone who had been unsuccessful in applying for a previous trip over someone who did not even apply for the preceding visit.

How is this process agreed and reviewed?

As a school, we follow extensive guidance and advice provided to us by various professional bodies, including the Department for Education and the Local Authority. In addition to this, the school's Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body consult with other educational settings within the community, professionals and parents/carers to ensure the process remains fit for purpose.

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Who can I contact if I have further questions or queries?

Please contact our Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) in writing via the following email address:

visits@northgate.suffolk.sch.uk

