

• Frequently asked questions

What should I look for to safeguard any monies I pay over?

With an average school trip representing an investment of over £20,000, the protection of those funds mostly paid for by parents is an important consideration.

Most protection is offered when booking a package, which is defined in the Package Travel Regulations 1992 and the Air Tour Operators License scheme (ATOL). In practice, it can be quite tricky to properly identify if what might be offered comes under the protection. For example, airline tickets booked online with an airline will have no protection, whilst the same tickets booked at the same price via a tour operator will.

To simplify this all STF Assured Members are required to work so clients benefit from the protection of the Package Travel Regulations and ATOL. Additionally, they must be members of approved schemes ensuring clear terms and conditions as well as full financial security.

Aren't there consistent safety standards anyway?

No. For example, in the EU hotel safety requirement remains just Guidance, not a Directive. Consequently even close to home standards for hotel safety can vary. In addition, the existence of local standards often is only part of the story, with the actual day to day management of accommodation more likely to create safety issues.

All STF members are required to audit all accommodation before first use and repeat the process every three years. The audit is designed to evidence the hotels understand and follow current good practice. Likewise, other key suppliers such as transport and adventurous activities are similarly assessed.

Won't my insurance cover everything if things go wrong?

Usually and in theory; most insurance will pay back expenses covered in the policy, but with the usual exception of medical hotlines, they will most often rely on the client to solve any issues themselves and claim later. This can have implications for group leaders who are already fully committed managing their group of pupils.

All STF members have a 24/7 emergency helplines, providing important support for those tricky and demanding situations that we know might arise. In addition, the experience of a good tour operator will most often be able to quickly resolve the majority of problems with the minimum of impact on the client.

Finally

Evidence shows that educational visits are rewarding, hugely beneficial and justify a place in any well balanced curriculum. The STF want to support schools in achieving that aim and commit to our principles of working with stakeholders to promote best practice in school travel.

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PICTURE CREDITS: Club Europe Group Travel, Edwin Doran Sports Tours, Equity Inspiring Learning, Inspire Sport, NST Travel Group, Worldstrides International Discovery.



Go with confidence

The School Travel Forum and
LOtC Quality Badge – an explanation



Good practice
and advice guide



● The evidence for the effectiveness of school trips

In 2008 Ofsted reported:

"well-planned out-of-classroom activities, which include trips, not only enhance pupils' learning, but can also re-engage those who are hard to motivate".

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM – HOW FAR SHOULD WE GO? 02 OCT 2008, OFSTED

In 2012 Ofsted also reported that:

"Neston High School secures high attainment and levels of progress through a well-integrated curriculum with a broad programme of learning outside the classroom (LOTC). This includes many residential visits, day trips and activities in the local environment".

GOOD PRACTICE RESOURCE - LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: NESTON HIGH SCHOOL, 20 NOV 2012, OFSTED

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation's £2.25m special project 'Learning Away', which started in 2008, has been able to evidence the benefits of residential experiences throughout school life:

"[after their residential experience] More than two thirds of secondary students felt they had a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses (73%), had developed their listening skills (71%), had more confidence in explaining things to others (71%) and felt more able to join in discussions at school (68%)"

YORK CONSULTING, EVALUATION OF LEARNING AWAY: INTERIM REPORT 1, JUNE 2013

How do the STF Assured Member & LOTC Quality Badge schemes work?

Every year all companies holding or wanting the awards are audited by independent experts to ensure they are complying with the STF's safety management systems, financial protection requirements and fair trading policies.

This is not a simple tick box exercise; the standards are informed by experts and stakeholders and represent current good practice; expert auditors are used and they are entitled to inspect any aspect of a member's operations. Failure to meet the standards results in loss of Assured Member status and LOTC Quality Badge.

These awards provide schools with an easy and highly effective means of exercising due diligence in this area and provides essential reassurance to all.

You can easily find STF Assured Members and LOTC Quality Badge holders:

- www.schooltravelforum.com/assuredmembers.aspx
- lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search

● More help and advice

National Guidance

With the withdrawal of the government's guidance, HASPEV, the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP) has written and published National Guidance, a free online resource, which is consistent with advice from the Health and Safety Executive. To date 76 employers (Local Authorities and independent schools) have adopted or refer to the National Guidance in their policies for outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom.

Council learning outside the classroom

As part of the Council's work they have developed resources and CPD programmes which help schools improve the effectiveness of their LOTC.

Whilst there are many resources available free on their web site, for a very modest annual fee, membership of the Council provides access to a wider range of resources, networks and good practice advice. For schools still linked to a local authority one single membership for that authority means the resources are available for all. In addition membership supports the work of the Council to promote and develop good practice further.

Schools should also consider applying for the new LOTC Mark; this new award is a national accreditation for schools which recognises and supports the development of learning outside the classroom across all subject areas. LOTC Mark is intended not only to recognise existing exemplary provision, but also to assist and support schools in developing their LOTC offer.

STF standards, white papers and guidance notes

These are published on the STF website and are freely available to view and download.

● Finding good school trip providers

LOtC Quality Badge scheme

The LOTC Quality Badge is a nationally recognised indicator of good quality educational provision. It provides for the first time a national award combining the essential elements of provision – learning and safety – into ONE easily recognisable and trusted accreditation scheme.

It covers ALL types of learning outside the classroom (LOtC) providers throughout the UK, which includes museums, art galleries, tour operators, adventure centres, nature reserves, science learning centres and farms among many other provider types.

The scheme is managed and developed by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, an independent charity existing to champion LOTC and encourage young people to get out and about.



The School Travel Forum Assured Members

Founded in 2003 and a not for profit organisation, the School Travel Forum is dedicated to promoting the best standards in school travel world-wide. The STF's Assured Member scheme won widespread recognition and support for the way it simplified and provided essential reassurance for leaders looking to organise school trips.

With the subsequent launch of the LOTC Quality Badge, our standards were adopted as the benchmark for all companies operating Study, Sports and Cultural Tours for that award. As both schemes fully adopted the standards of the other a STF Assured Member will always be a LOTC Quality Badge holder.

