

## Bennett Memorial School

### Advice for Educational Visits Following Recent Terrorist Attacks

Terrorist attacks and violence have threatened the UK for years, but since 2015 we have seen an increase in violent acts towards innocent individuals, and this has caused increasing concern for parents and teachers when weighing the possible risks of such attacks against the benefits of participating in an activity. Whilst evidence suggests that school groups are unlikely to be specifically targeted, they could easily become caught in post-incident disruption; as the events in Manchester demonstrate the young are not exempt as targets. Another concern is that many of our visits take place in the capital due to the school's physical proximity to London, and involve travel by public transport.

We have therefore put together this document as advice for teachers running visits and to inform parents of the precautions we are putting into place. These precautions will be incorporated into our risk assessments. Ultimately, as with all visits, a decision needs to be made about whether to go ahead with the visit or not and sometimes altering plans can be the only way to guarantee safety.

It would be a shame if the threat of international terrorism prevented school and student travel so a sensible calculated balanced decision needs to be made. Bennett Memorial School will take the following into consideration to minimise the risks:

1. Consider changing either the date or visit location to a time or location that carries less risk.
2. Carefully consider the relative benefits of visits to religious or political venues and events that could be considered higher risk.
3. Consider increasing supervision ratios from normal arrangements. If, for example, small groups of older students are allowed to spend short periods of time indirectly supervised by staff, consider removing this additional freedom.
4. Consider using private coach transport or school minibus rather than public transport when travelling to or in London.
5. Research the venue/s to avoid occasions when large crowds are likely or political demonstrations are planned in the area.
6. Liaise with venues in advance to understand their own security arrangements for school groups and any individual events.
7. Speak to local police (or police force where visit is taking place) for specific advice in advance.
8. Stay alert to local and national news, especially for any changes to official UK security threat levels <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>
9. Advice for visits to London are available through the Metropolitan Police <https://beta.met.police.uk/>
10. Advice for visits using public transport in London are available [http://www.btp.police.uk/advice\\_and\\_information/travelling\\_safely.aspx](http://www.btp.police.uk/advice_and_information/travelling_safely.aspx)

11. Assess the needs of SEND students and their ability to react and respond to dynamic situations.
12. Communicate openly with students and parents in advance to reassure them that safety is the priority and has been carefully considered by the organisers. Provide contact details of visit leaders for them to contact during the visit.
13. Remind students to remain vigilant and alert, reporting anything suspicious to leaders.
14. Remain alert to more 'usual' crime since this remains far more likely than terrorism.
15. Provide all participants with a printed emergency contact card with the school's or office's landline telephone number on it and provide space for them to write down their own home landline number.
16. Carry a spare mobile phone (if possible on a different telephone network to the other handset) and spare battery or auxiliary charger. Simple items like a notebook, pen and torch can be really useful too.
17. Each leader should carry a names list with all participant details, including medical conditions and next of kin noted.
18. Carry water and snacks on visits in case of travel disruption and long delays, especially in warmer months or climates.
19. Carry additional personal medication in case of long delays.
20. Be additionally vigilant in crowded places such as shopping malls, travel hubs and sports stadia.

#### **In the event of a security incident on a visit**

1. Brief participants in advance that, if they are caught up in a security incident, they should try and get away quickly, but safely, from the immediate vicinity, leaving baggage or other belongings behind.
2. Brief participants in advance to follow instructions of police or security forces at all times, being mindful that they may be armed and appear more intimidating than they are used to. Officers might be extremely forceful, direct and may even point weapons directly at them and others. This is necessary until identities are confirmed
3. Brief participants what to do if separated from each other in the event of a security incident. This should include designating specified physical meeting points and contact telephone numbers for staff. Remember that mobile phones may not work in the immediate hours after an incident so it is additionally important to designate a meeting location. Consider use of telephone boxes where they still exist for contacting the school or office. Phone networks were blocked by police in London following the 2005 7/7 attacks but were deliberately maintained by the French police in Paris November 2015.
4. Tell students that if they are separated, to ask for assistance from a police officer or other security official and state that they are a part of a school group.

5. Data based communication services such as WhatsApp might work even when voice calls don't so consider setting up a visit-specific WhatsApp group for communicating in an emergency.
6. If groups are caught up in a security incident, leaders should attempt to keep everyone together whilst moving away as quickly as possible. Keeping together may be difficult and is ultimately less important than speed of action and staying safe. Staying low and even better, moving away whilst behind solid objects such as concrete barriers or buildings (as opposed to just parked cars) will provide good protection.
7. Once accounted for, it may seem obvious to try and travel from the town or venue as soon as possible. If this involves public transport, it may not be the best option as some terrorist organisations plan secondary attacks that specifically target transport hubs. Taking shelter somewhere nearby – a nearby hotel or office building should be identified. Getting inside somewhere is likely to be a sensible move.
8. The Group Leader should notify the home contact as soon as practicable, noting the known whereabouts of all members.
9. Activate the school's emergency plan by phoning the school as soon as possible to let them know the situation. The school will establish a crisis team that can become a communication focal point and receiving area for next of kin and students upon return to school.
10. Arrange the group's return transport when the situation is sufficiently secure to do so. Parents should collect their children from school rather than travel to the incident location.
11. The school will communicate with parents using their normal methods where possible, including email and secure website areas.
12. School staff will remain in school until all students have been safely returned to their parents. Transport will be provided to collect students from stations or other transport hubs in order to return them to school to be collected by parents.
13. Consideration should be given to arranging proactive trauma counselling for students and staff after such an event.

#### **Additional overseas visit considerations**

1. Research and adhere to the FCO advice for the country being visited, noting any specific advice for cities or areas or via Twitter [@FCOtravel](https://twitter.com/FCOtravel) <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
2. Subscribe to updates for the country and carry a smart phone or tablet that can access these updates whilst overseas.
3. Remember to do the same for any countries that are being entered for purposes of transition.
4. Other official advice from the FCO can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reduce-your-risk-from-terrorism-while-abroad>
5. Confirm with insurers that they will cover costs resulting from acts of terrorism, including medical care, repatriation and cancellation/curtailment. Consider adding this cover if possible as it is often an exclusion on non-specialist travel insurance

6. Tour operators should describe their own risk assessment and arrangements following terrorist threats and acts, including the possibility for changing destinations even if FCO advice has not changed (to specifically advise against travel).
7. Scan copies of passports, visas and travel insurance details and save these onto a secure cloud-based storage system in case of lost documents following an incident.
8. Carry additional medication such as anti-malarial tablets in case of lost baggage and delays following an incident.
9. Avoid political or religious celebrations / demonstrations or venues. Contact embassies or high commissions in advance of any proposed visits to these locations.
10. Avoid locations that are synonymous with Western or European tourism if possible – especially popular bars, cafes, luxury hotels or restaurants. Rural and small towns generally attract a lower risk of terrorism than cities and principal tourist attractions.
11. Enforce student awareness to cultural sensitivities, clothing and behaviour.
12. Student behaviour and overall group presence and posture should be conservative and not draw additional attention.
13. Comply with instructions from legitimate security forces and officials. If leaders are unsure of their credibility and time is available, seek advice from the embassy or high commission by telephone.
14. Check with your mobile telephone operator before departure to confirm that international roaming and data services are enabled.
15. In more remote destinations, consider hiring a satellite telephone for the duration of the visit. These can be hired short term from a company called Cell Hire – some countries restrict the use of satellite phones by tourists so it is worth checking this in advance.
16. Group leaders should carry a suitable first aid kit at all times, and also carry water purification tablets.
17. Notify your travel insurance provider as soon as possible if directly affected by terrorism and request repatriation assistance as soon as it is safe and secure enough to do so. The embassy will take a direct role in assisting British nationals and will in most circumstances also assist other passport holders if they are students at a British school. Consular assistance to school groups will normally be prioritised over adult tourists.
18. It may seem obvious to attempt returning home as soon as possible by rushing to the airport or other transport hub. However, such locations are sometimes targeted by terrorists for secondary attacks. Although counter intuitive, it may be better to 'hole up' at a suitably secure hotel away from the main tourist sites. The luxury hotels favoured by high end tourists and business travellers are normally best avoided in such situations as they may be more likely secondary targets. Local advice should be gained from the local embassy or high commission or a tour operator's ground handler
19. Consider changing either the date, entire destination or internal itinerary to avoid higher risk cities or locations