

Safety Information for Educational Groups

Elan Valley Visitor Centre and Estate

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Environmental Education Ranger

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Safety Information for Educational Groups – Elan Valley Visitor Centre and Estate

Safety Statement	<p>This venue fully accepts its responsibilities under Health and Safety Legislation. A Health and Safety Policy is in place together with written risk assessments undertaken in respect of our legal duties relating to persons other than employees (i.e. visitors) coming onto our site and using our facilities.</p> <p>Please be assured that your health and safety whilst on the Elan Estate is of our utmost concern to ensure that your visit is an enjoyable and valuable learning experience.</p> <p>Educational groups are informed of the following details, which will aid the undertaking of your own 'educational visit' risk assessment for the purposes of your visit.</p> <p>We were extremely proud to be the first place in Wales to be awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom 'Quality Badge' in February 2009, recognising us as a provider of quality, safely managed educational experiences for young people. It was successfully renewed in 2011.</p>
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Background	
Experience	The Elan Valley Visitor Centre has been open to the public since 1985 with an extension to the original building in 1997. It lies within a 70 square mile Estate owned by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and largely vested in a charity, the Elan Valley Trust. Educational visits have been welcomed to the Estate since 1985, with the provision of a full-time Environmental Education Ranger since 1997.
Education programmes	There are a range of educational programmes available, depending on the size and age range of the group. Details are given in the 'Educational Visits to the Elan Valley' booklet or by discussion with the Environmental Education Ranger.
Visitor numbers	Each year we receive around 150,000 visitors to the Visitor Centre and approximately 100 school visits.
Suitability	The Visitor Centre and Estate are considered suitable for pupils of all ages, however there are minimum age requirements for some activities; please discuss with the Environmental Education Ranger.
Booking a visit / Contact information	<p>Please contact the Environmental Education Ranger to arrange provisional dates and activities and possibly to book a pre-visit before sending in your booking form with the confirmed details.</p> <p>Telephone: (01597) 810390 Fax: (01597) 810206 Email: fiona.wase@dwrwymru.com</p> <p>A list of schools that have visited our venue is available upon request.</p>
Arrival information	We request that the group leader reports to the Information Desk at the Visitor Centre upon arrival unless other arrangements have been made. The contact number there is (01597) 810898. Please try to inform the Centre if you are likely to arrive much later than the arranged time.
After your visit	If, after your visit, you have any concerns or you experienced any problems regarding the management of the Estate or the health and safety of the members of your party, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with you.

General Information	
Responsibility for conduct	<p>Party leaders must not leave their group unsupervised. Staff in charge of visiting educational parties are fully responsible for the conduct of the members of their party (including adult helpers) while on the Elan Estate. The overall welfare and health and safety of the group is the responsibility of the visiting group's staff.</p> <p>Groups must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter areas which are <u>not</u> open to the public • behave in an unruly manner • touch any working machinery • ignore any instructions/safety information provided by site staff <p>The Education Ranger and/or other Ranger staff have the right to refuse to undertake activities if the behaviour of the group is considered a health and safety hazard.</p>
Staff : pupil ratios / maximum party sizes	<p>All groups must bring with them a suitable number of adults to supervise the party and to assist with the activities. We require a ratio of 1 adult to 8 children for water activities (such as pond dipping) and a ratio of 1:10 for all other activities. Any pupil requiring 1:1 support for any part of the day must be accompanied by their support member of staff while on site.</p> <p>The maximum party size will therefore vary with the activity, please discuss with the Education Ranger when booking your visit.</p>
Insurance (Public Liability / Employers' Liability)	<p>We have Public Liability insurance cover provision to a minimum of £5 million.</p> <p>Details of our Public and Employers' Liability insurance are available prior to your visit on request.</p>
Criminal history	<p>All reasonable measures are taken to ensure that Ranger staff who work with educational groups have been subject to criminal history checks and full Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosures are in place for such staff.</p>
First Aid	<p>Ranger staff hold current First Aid at Work certificates and a standard First Aid kit is always carried when leading an educational party. Please note that the staff in charge of the visiting group are responsible for the administration of First Aid and no group will be allowed on site without a suitably qualified First Aider. An additional First Aid kit is held at the Information Desk at the Visitor Centre and in all Ranger vehicles.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the visiting group's staff to ensure that any specific medication required by a pupil is available when required, and where necessary the Education Ranger is informed of any such condition when the booking is made.</p> <p>This could also include any allergies to bee stings, plants, etc.</p>
Pre-visits	<p>If a member of staff in charge of the visit would like to pre-visit the Estate in order to complete their own risk assessment and to familiarise themselves with the activities or equipment, this should be arranged with the Education Ranger.</p>

Emergency Evacuation	<p>Emergency evacuation procedures are in place. All staff are familiar with and regularly practise these and will direct visitors safely from the premises. Evacuation Notices are posted within the site at the following locations: Education Room, Information Desk, Kitchen and Rangers' Office.</p> <p>On hearing the alarm, all visitors must make their way to the dedicated Assembly Point located at the front of the Visitor Centre near to a statue of the poet Shelley.</p> <p>Evacuation drills are practised and fire exits, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and automatic smoke detection systems are regularly inspected.</p> <p>Wales and West Fire and Security Ltd. also make a bi-annual check.</p>
Communication systems	<p>All Ranger staff carry communication aids when with an educational party, usually in the form of a satellite telephone, as mobile phone reception is very poor on all networks.</p> <p>Additional telephones are also located at the Visitor Centre and there are currently three BT phone boxes on the Estate.</p>
Playground equipment	<p>All equipment is checked weekly by trained staff to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose' and results of inspections are recorded.</p> <p>All play equipment within the dedicated area conforms to current British and European Standards and is subject to an annual inspection.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the visiting group's staff to supervise children when using the playground and to heed any safety notices in place.</p>
Facilities for visitors with Special Needs	<p>The venue tries to accommodate the requirements of visitors with special needs. Visiting staff must ensure that suitable arrangements are in place in order that appropriate supervision and assistance is available to pupils with special needs when booking the visit.</p> <p><u>Physical Impairment</u> – Wheelchair access is possible throughout the Visitor Centre but is difficult elsewhere due to the terrain of the Estate.</p> <p><u>Visual Impairment</u> - The Visitor Centre has an audio-visual show. Pupils with visual impairment are welcome to sit in the front row.</p> <p><u>Hearing Impairment</u> - Pupils with hearing impairment are welcome to sit in the front row for the audio-visual show.</p> <p>We are aware that clarification of specific provision may be needed by schools in relation to more detailed risk assessment requirements for certain pupils. In such circumstances we would invite schools to contact us.</p>
Medical needs	<p>The Education Ranger should be contacted by the school or party leader if any pupil is known to have any specific or serious medical condition / needs. Discussion will be needed to consider emergency arrangements. Details of such conditions should be provided in advance on the booking form for the visit.</p> <p>We will, where it is safe to do so, aim to fully include pupils with specific or serious medical conditions within the activities we offer.</p>

Loss of bearings	Please note that due to the nature of the terrain and size of the Estate, it is imperative that the group stays together and that regular head counts are made by your staff.
Lost persons	Please notify the Education Ranger immediately if a member of your party goes missing. Enquiries can also be made at the Information Desk or the Rangers' Office at the Visitor Centre. Telephones are also available at these locations to call for assistance.
Welfare facilities	<p>Toilets (with disabled facilities) are present at the Visitor Centre. Staff should be aware that these are not available exclusively for the educational group's use during the time that the Visitor Centre is open to the public (mid March to early November).</p> <p>There is a smaller set of toilets adjacent to the Education Room for use by the group if they are based in that room. All toilet facilities are regularly cleaned by site staff.</p> <p>No toilet facilities are available at the majority of the sites visited during activities, for example at the pond dipping and woodland areas.</p>
Hand washing facilities	The group will always be asked to wash their hands at the Visitor Centre after returning from an activity. This must be done before the group eats or drinks.
Lunch time arrangements	<p>There is a large picnic area to the rear of the Visitor Centre adjacent to the playground for use on fine days.</p> <p>The Education Room is usually available as an area for eating packed lunches on days when it is not possible to eat outside - please check when booking your visit. Water is freely available in the Education Room.</p> <p>There is a café in the Visitor Centre which offers a selection of meals, snacks and drinks during the season (mid March to early November). Only food purchased from the café may be eaten in the dining area. If the group wishes to use the café facilities, they must inform the Education Ranger on the booking form.</p>
Gift shop	The Visitor Centre shop is open between mid March and early November, with a limited range being available during the closed season for visiting groups to purchase. If the group would like the opportunity to visit the shop, it must be built into the day's programme in order to allow no more than fifteen pupils in the shop at once. Please indicate on the booking form if you wish to allow time for this.
Weather Protection and Sun Safety	<p>Pupils should be made aware that sun protection cream / lotion may be necessary on sunny days to offer protection while visiting the Estate. The picnic area behind the Visitor Centre does have limited shade, pupils can move into the Education Room to eat if it is available.</p> <p>In case of wet or cold weather, alternative activities will be provided where possible (e.g. bringing live material into the Education Room for study rather than going to the pond or woodland).</p>

<p>Clothing requirements</p>	<p>All pupils must wear trousers and have waterproof clothes available, even in summer, as the weather is very changeable throughout the year!</p> <p>Appropriate footwear is essential, preferably walking boots or other shoes with good non-slip soles. Wellingtons are not normally required - please check when booking.</p> <p>Even in warm weather, skirts and shorts are not recommended due to the increased risk of tick bites, especially when visiting woodland areas - see separate section about ticks below.</p>
<p>Traffic hazards</p>	<p>A speed restriction of 10 m.p.h. is in place around the Visitor Centre environs. Staff should be aware of the hazard from reversing delivery vehicles.</p> <p>On the roads of the Estate, the national speed limit applies. Safety procedures are in place to ensure that pupils behave in an appropriate manner when on or near to the road. These are detailed in specific risk assessments for the different educational programmes.</p>
<p>Animal fouling in public access areas</p>	<p>Dogs and pets are not allowed into the Visitor Centre, but are allowed onto the Estate. Owners are requested to clean up any animal fouling in areas used for educational visits and place this safely into the bins provided. Dogs are not allowed into the pond dipping area.</p> <p>Assistance dogs are welcome in the Visitor Centre.</p>
<p>Ticks / Lyme disease</p>	<p>Ticks are present on the Elan Estate. They are spider-like animals which are parasitic on sheep and other animals. The group can avoid being bitten by them by wearing suitable clothing (see previous section). After visiting areas where they occur, the group will be asked to brush down their trousers to remove any that may be present.</p> <p>The member of staff in charge of the visit will be given an information sheet about how to remove ticks if one is later found on the body. There is a slight chance of contracting Lyme disease if bitten by an infected tick. Lyme disease is treatable with antibiotics and has never been recorded on the Estate.</p>
<p>Weil's disease</p>	<p>This is a water-borne disease transmitted through open cuts and wounds on the skin and is carried by wild rodents. When the group are working with their hands in water, for example when pond dipping, they will be asked to check their hands for recent cuts before the activity starts, and given disposable gloves to wear if they need to. These will be provided by Ranger staff.</p>
<p>Avian Influenza (Bird flu)</p>	<p>Wild birds carry several diseases that are infectious to people. Under no circumstances should any member of the group handle a dead bird. If you find a dead bird on site please advise the Education Ranger, who will arrange for the bird to be disposed of following guidelines issued by DEFRA.</p>

Harmful and poisonous plants and fungi	<p>At certain times of year some poisonous berries may occur on trees and shrubs on the Estate. Schools should advise all children that berries and other plant matter should not be picked or eaten.</p> <p>Certain fungi (<i>mushrooms & toadstools</i>) also grow periodically. Schools should advise all children that fungi should not be picked or eaten.</p>
Conservation	<p>Staff should be aware that the Elan Estate is primarily managed as a water resource and conservation area. As a consequence this may mean that access to an area may be restricted at short notice, e.g. if a bird starts nesting in an area used for educational visits. Where possible, alternative arrangements will be made.</p>
Photographs	<p>We may take photographs during your visit. These may be used for internal publications, on our website or for external press releases. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that it has parental consent for any child who appears in the photograph, and to remove any child who cannot be photographed.</p>

Areas of Higher Risk	
Water Safety	<p>The Estate has a system of dams and reservoirs which are all over 30 metres deep, as well as rivers, streams and a pond. Safety near the water is of utmost importance and safety talks relating to pupils' behaviour near to the water will be given before activities commence.</p> <p>In the event of heavy rainfall the areas near to streams and rivers are likely to be restricted until considered safe.</p> <p>Control measures in place in respect of risks from water courses are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public safety equipment in the form of life buoys are present and regularly checked. • Pupils will never be required to enter the pond or river, as there is a dipping platform at the pond for the group to use and Ranger staff will only enter the river if it is safe to do so.
Contact with animals	<p>There are free ranging sheep on the Estate, which occasionally approach visitors hoping that they will feed them. Staff should advise the group not to encourage this behaviour and to ignore the sheep rather than feed them.</p> <p>The Estate is well used by dog walkers and staff should be aware that dogs may be encountered which are not on a lead. Signage is present on the entrance gates into areas used by educational groups asking owners to clear up any fouling and to keep dogs under close control, but the signs are unfortunately not always adhered to.</p> <p>The group will be required to wash their hands thoroughly at the Visitor Centre before eating or drinking.</p>
Allergies	<p>There are numerous plants and trees on the Estate which could cause allergic reactions. We also feed wild birds at the Visitor Centre, with the seed and peanuts being stored on site. It is the responsibility of the school to advise the Education Ranger of any such allergies prior to the visit in the relevant section on the booking form.</p>

Other Relevant Information	
Specific risk assessments relating to the activities chosen by the group are too detailed to describe in this document, but are available by post or email on request.	
Signed	
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