Schools Forum

Tuesday 19th September, 2017

Tuesday 19th September, 2017

School visits improvements

1.   **Summary**

The current "manual paper-based" educational visits system used by Walsall, although well written, is not providing the consistent and timely documentation to meet the needs of all the stakeholders and users. A task and finish team (Corporate Health and Safety, emergency planning, schools improvement and led by the Schools Organisation Project Manager) has been working on the best way to introduce a proven electronic school visits management system at a reasonable cost (> £10000 p.a.) by end of September 2017.

2.   **Detail**

A good educational visits system ensures: **"The right leaders are doing the right activities with the right young people in the right place at the right time".**

Walsall recognises the benefits to children and young people of off-site visits and activities and wishes to encourage schools to organise more of these. One way of doing this is to reassure schools that the council is doing everything it can to protect schools, teachers and councils from any risk associated with organising educational visits. **Correct documentation and regular training and review of visit staff is essential** to prevent accidents and to reassure authorities if an accident does occur.

There have also been a number of high-profile cases recently where visit staff were e.g. unaware of how to give emergency medication (e.g. epi-pen) resulting in at least one death. It is also essential that all staff are aware of correct practice and procedure and that this practice is monitored and reinforced for all visit staff on a regular (minimum 6-monthly) basis. Where this is not done, it **can create a lot of hardship for Head-teachers** as they get dragged into unnecessary paperwork and stress over answering questions from enforcing authorities (e.g. Ofsted, Government, DfE etc.)

Because of the increase in certain types of risk (e.g. terrorism abroad and in the U.K.) Walsall needs a more robust, joined-up system, especially for high-risk educational trips. High risk trips (i.e. trips abroad and "adventurous" trips) require sign-off by the Council as well as Head-teachers and this becomes very much easier when a shared electronic system is in place. An electronic system can also be easily extended to non-school organisations such as Youth Groups and Duke of Edinburgh activities etc.

Thousands of schools across the country use an electronic integrated system to inform and remind all educational visit organisers exactly what information is needed, when it is needed, who needs it and the system allows them to share and protect the data in a secure manner. This allows all approved personnel to access the system and key information they need. It also simplifies the process for all involved.

3. **What have we done so far (phase 1)?**

The Task and Finish Team have looked at the two main providers of educational visit software in the U.K.
Provider 1 sets up each school separately at a cost of £1500 per school.
Provider 2 provides central software to the Council at a total cost of £5000 per annum for up to 400 users which would allow 3 or 4 users at each school (Provider 2 does have a a one-off charge of £750 for set-up and training of users.

4.0 **What are our next steps?**

We recommend the Council uses Provider 2 as the system allows the Council to keep an overview of visits organised, allowing better organisational learning, the total cost is £5,750 which is already available for this and the council has access to **22,000 schools** in the U.K. (and **136 Local Authorities** in the U.K.) who already use Provider 2 to manage **1 million visits involving 25 million children** (see section 7 for details).

We need the schools from the Schools Forum to **volunteer to pilot the Provider 1 educational visit handling system in early October**. The volunteers will undergo basic Evolve training delivered by Provider 2.

Action	Date	Who
Task and Finish Team meeting	08/09/2017	PMc / CC / JC/ AB
Schools Forum report	12/09/2017	PMc /LP
Schools Forum	19/09/2017	PMc / LP
Purchase software	20/09/2017	LP
Task and Finish Team meeting	22/09/2017	PMc / CC / JC/ AB
Update visits procedure	25/09/2017	PMc
Set up software links for all schools	30/09/2017	Provider 2
Update visits Policy	30/09/2017	CC
Pilot software (in selected schools)	01/10/2017	Volunteer Head-Teachers
Advertise software to all schools and ask for volunteers	07/10/2017	School Forum / PMc

5.0 **Citizen Impact**

The system is anticipated to have only a positive impact on citizens.

6.0 **Equality Implications**

This system can provide <u>all</u> Walsall schools with the same visits organisation software which is used by some of the best and richest schools in the world.

7.0 **Further Reading** http://www.edufocus.co.uk/pages/evolve/visits.asp

Author
Peter McCarthy
School Organisation Project Manager
Zone 2f Second Floor Civic Centre
Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP
Tel: 01922 658435
☎ 658435
✉ peter.mccarthy@walsall.gov.uk

Sponsoring Assistant Director
Lynda Poole
Access & Achievement
Assistant Director - Access and Achievement
Email: poolel@walsall.gov.uk
Tel: 01922 652895
Mobile: 07572 141217