

Advice for schools on making their risk assessment for a group visit to Blenheim Palace, Park, Gardens and Estate

Date: October 2021
Version 1.2

A visit to the Park

Potential hazards are:

- Traffic: Movement and parking of vehicles (e.g., visitors' coaches and cars, commercial and Estate vehicles) means that children/students and their accompanying adults should be **always** alert to the dangers inherent in this, especially when disembarking from, or embarking on their transport and when walking in the Park.
- Water: The Lake in the Park and the pools etc. in the Gardens pose the risk inherent in any water situation.
- Grass: It is not always a safe surface. On slopes, especially when wet, it contains risk, as do tussocks and uneven surfaces.
- Animals: The actions of dogs on leads (note - some owners do not exercise this control) and of wildlife, e.g., waterfowl, are unpredictable. Due care should be taken with any animal and no contact should be made. Also be aware of fouling by the geese, insects and bees/wasps at certain times of the year - stings.
- Fruit and fungi: Berries, fruit and fungi are found at various locations through the Estate. We advise to not collect them as they might be poisonous.

Actions:

- Children/Students should be made aware of these potential hazards and should be **always** supervised accompanying school staff and adult.
- Children/Students should wear footwear that has a good, non-slip sole and clothing suitable for walking outside.
- Children/Students should be informed to not touch and collect fruit and fungi they come across.

A visit to the Formal Gardens

Potential hazards are:

- Entrance to the Formal Gardens: This is situated past the West Courtyard and Stables Café. There are steps, gravel, water and variations in height.
- Water Terraces: There is a fall-from-height risk at three locations: - Where the steps descend into the Terraces from the South Lawn and on two sets of steps descending to the lower part of the Terraces. There is a wide platform at each location, but either a low or no parapet, so that there is an unprotected fall height of about 2.5 metres onto grass or hard standing. The surfaces of the platforms are generally even, and the hazard is reasonably obvious.
- Walled Garden: There is a climbing apparatus and a maze, both of which are popular with children. There are, of course, variations in height, steps, ropes and slides.
- Butterfly House: The butterflies may land on the visitors, and the zebra finches often take flight and may be of concern to anyone with a bird phobia. The Butterfly House can become very hot in warm weather.

Actions:

- There must be proper supervision of children/students by the school staff or accompanying adults near any object which can pose risk e.g., statues, cannons, balls or hedges. School staff members are asked to ensure that pupils do not climb or walk along the edges of the elevated sections.
- Children/students should be kept away from any work underway in the gardens or anywhere else at Blenheim.
- School staff and accompanying adults are asked to **always** supervise play when children/students are in the Walled Garden.

Emergency Procedures**Suspect Package:**

Upon discovering a suspect package:

- Do not move it or touch it
- Inform a member of the Blenheim staff as soon as possible, stating why you are suspicious
- Do not use your mobile phone or a radio within 15 metres of the suspect package
- Clear the immediate area
- Stop others entering
- Make yourself available as a witness

Signs and notices

All signs and notices are there for a purpose; danger can ensue if they are not obeyed.

Care must be taken here, as everywhere, with children who have special educational needs.

Geography workshop**Potential hazards are:**

- Electric fences: At various times of year and various locations, low-voltage electric fences will be set up temporarily to assist in various Estate operations.

Actions:

- There are signs on the electric fences and are clearly marked.
- Adult supervision is required at all times while on the trail.
- Please follow the route as per depicted on the map and use the small pedestrian gate in the wall when going between the Walled Garden and the South Lawn.