

# safety management system



# Contents

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1. Health and Safety Policy Statement
2. Implementation and Review of the Safety Management System
3. Accommodation
4. Transportation
5. Services Supplied by Agents and Ground Handling Companies
6. Sports, Skiing and Activities
7. Excursions and Visits
8. Staff Training
9. Emergency Procedures, Crisis Management and Safeguarding
10. Accidents, Incident Reporting and Near Misses
11. Travel Insurance, Liability Insurance & Financial Protection
12. Pre-Tour Safety Information and Inspection Visits

## Appendix

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- Combined Liability Insurance certificate
- ATOL certificate
- ABTOT certificate
- STF Certificate of Compliance
- LOTC Quality Badge
- ABTA certificate

## 1. Health and Safety Policy Statement

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Established in 1992, Absolute Travel and Tours Limited (Absolute School Travel, Absolute Sports Travel and Absolute Skiwise), is a specialist tour operator organising sports tours, ski trips, study trips, festivals, events, activity weeks and tournaments for schools, colleges, academies and clubs alike, to destinations both at home and abroad.

At Absolute Travel and Tours Limited we are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our clients and staff alike. Our 'Safety Management System' (SMS) ensures that all reasonable measures are taken to assure our clients of a high level of safety and professionalism throughout a trip or tour. We shall achieve this by:

- Maintaining a written Health and Safety Policy to the standards which are consistent with advice contained within the HSE document (HSG65) and incorporates the requirements of the School Travel Forum Code of Practice, ABTA's Code of Conduct and of the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge.
- Facilitating and promoting a positive health and safety culture amongst staff, clients and suppliers alike.
- Planning and setting standards which meet the needs and expectations of our clients which are measurable, achievable and realistic.
- Measuring and reviewing our performance internally on a regular basis and by undergoing a comprehensive annual audit by qualified external consultants.
- Ensuring that our management team and members of staff receive suitable and regular internal and external training to improve their knowledge, competence and professionalism.
- Ensuring that the minimum standards for health and safety that are incorporated into our Safety Management System are met or exceeded.

The monitoring and review of our systems are ongoing with a formal review taken on an annual basis.



Ashley Gowing  
Managing Director

1<sup>st</sup> September 2023

## 2. Implementation and Review of the Safety Management System

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### 2.1 Implementation

- 2.1.1 The Safety Management System has been developed by Absolute Travel & Tours Limited under the guidance of external consultants, for the implementation of the company's Safety Management System policy.
- 2.1.2 The directors will ensure managers have the knowledge and competence to implement the policy and training is provided where appropriate.
- 2.1.3 The directors will ensure that all members of staff are made aware of the basic requirements of the SMS.
- 2.1.4 The directors will monitor the SMS and examine areas where improvements to the system and activities can be made.
- 2.1.5 All members of staff are made aware of the need to report any weakness or failures in the SMS to their manager.
- 2.1.6 Managers are required to report on a regular basis to the directors regarding the implementation of the SMS including both success and weakness requiring attention and review.

### 2.2 Review

- 2.2.1 Our safety management standards will be independently assessed and verified by an approved external Health and Safety consultant on an annual basis.
- 2.2.2 Any accidents, incidents or near misses brought to our attention will be recorded and reviewed (see section 10 for the procedure on Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses).
- 2.2.3 A formal review of the SMS is held by the directors on an annual basis.

### 2.3 Responsibilities

- 2.3.1 Overall and final responsibility for health and safety rests with the Managing Director including the development and implementation of the Safety Management Policy. Day to day responsibility for the management of health and safety rests with the Managing Director including the appointment of competent persons to implement the policies, the provision of adequate resources and monitoring of current best practice.
- 2.3.2 All line managers and supervisors must ensure that this policy is followed, and that staff are managed and supervised in accordance with it. Breaches of Company safety rules and procedures will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 2.3.3 All employees are required to:
  - co-operate with managers and supervisors on health and safety matters
  - not interfere with anything provided to safeguard their health and safety
  - take reasonable care of their own health and safety
  - take reasonable care for the health and safety of others including visitors and clients at home and abroad
  - report all health and safety concerns to an appropriate person

## 3. Accommodation

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- 3.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will ensure that an accommodation contract is signed when an accommodation is contracted directly, confirming that the accommodation conforms to local and national fire, safety and hygiene standards and that liability insurance is in place for the duration of the contract. Additional clauses aimed at further improving safety standards for the benefit of our clients may be added at our discretion. Confirmation that the contract conditions are still being met will be obtained every three years.
- 3.2 For all accommodation centres secured by agents or ground handlers, Absolute Travel & Tours will ensure that an agent contract is completed confirming that the accommodation they are providing conforms to local and national fire, safety and hygiene standards and that liability insurance is in place for the duration of the contract. Additional clauses aimed at further improving safety standards for the benefit of our clients may be added at our discretion. Confirmation that the contract conditions are still being met will be obtained every three years.
- 3.3 Absolute Travel & Tours will request and endeavour to obtain a copy of the current fire certificate or equivalent local documentation.
- 3.4 Absolute Travel & Tours will request and endeavour to obtain a copy of the current liability insurance policy.
- 3.5 Absolute Travel & Tours will request and endeavour to obtain a copy of the current hygiene certificate or equivalent local documentation.

### Standard Accommodation Checklists

- 3.6 All accommodation (used or featured) will be subject to a Standard Accommodation Checklist prior to first use and thereafter when a significant change occurs, such as major structural alterations, or change of owner, or at a maximum of three-year intervals, whichever is the sooner.
- 3.7 The Standard Accommodation Checklist aims to audit aspects of fire safety, hygiene and general accommodation facilities and may be completed by company director, senior staff, approved agent or accommodation manager.
- 3.8 The results will be assessed by a suitably trained and qualified company auditor or approved external auditor and recorded in one of the categories outlined in 3.14 below along with details of any subsequent investigation, should areas of concern have been highlighted.
- 3.9 A random spot check of Standard Accommodation Audits may be taken on an annual basis by a trained auditor and where significant discrepancies in the accuracy of the information provided by a third party are identified, suitable corrective action will be undertaken before accepting any further Standard Accommodation Audits from that source.

### On-site Accommodation Audits

- 3.10 A supplementary audit will be required for all accommodation centres that are deemed to be 'frequent use.'
- 3.11 If it becomes evident that the accommodation will be used in any one year for five or more different groups, or 250+ clients – whichever is reached first - it will be listed as 'frequent use' and within a maximum of twelve months of the frequent use criteria being established, will receive an on-site Accommodation Audit.
- 3.12 A supplementary audit is a more in-depth audit carried out on location by an auditor qualified in this capacity.
- 3.13 The accommodation will be re-audited to On-site Accommodation Audit standard at least every three years, should it continue to be deemed 'frequent use'.

### Monitoring of Accommodation Audits

- 3.14 Following the completion of accommodation audits, these will be recorded in one of the following categories and maintained on file, indicating the current audit status:
  - **High Conformity:** Minor or no areas of improvement have been identified. The management will be commended and encouraged to maintain their standards.
  - **Acceptable Conformity:** Room for improvement has been identified, but the defects do not render the accommodation unsafe. The defects will be brought to the immediate attention of the management at the time of auditing or at the time of the audit assessment and followed up in writing within 14 days. The deficiencies will be evaluated, and a schedule of remedial action will be agreed and monitored.
  - **Unacceptable:** The accommodation centre is considered unsafe for our customers, even if it conforms to local standards. This accommodation will be removed from our programme and will not be re-instated until the defects have been rectified and the establishment re-audited to a standard that is either High or Acceptable Conformity.
- 3.15 A schedule of all accommodation used is maintained, indicating the current audit status of each.

### Illness Management & Incident Management

- 3.16 Accommodation providers should have an effective system in place for responding to any illness outbreak. The system should include clear instructions on the implementation of the prevention of spread of infection (POSI) procedures and these questions feature in the General Safety section of the Accommodation Checklists and Audits.
- 3.17 Accommodation providers should have documented contingency plans in place for the continuity of the business in the event of a major incident and these questions feature in the General Safety section of the Accommodation Checklists and Audits.
- 3.18 The internal handling of POSI procedures and illness outbreaks as well as internal Business Continuity matters are outlined in the Emergency Procedures document, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

## 4. Transportation

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### 4.1 Airlines

- 4.1.1 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited holds an Air Travel Organisers Licence (5675) as granted by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
- 4.1.2 All Air Transport to and from the UK is regulated by the Department of Transport and the CAA. These bodies operate to very strict safety criteria and it is considered no additional practical measures can be undertaken by Absolute Travel & Tours in this respect.
- 4.1.3 Flights originating in other jurisdictions are governed by the laws and regulations of the country in question. However, we will ensure that use of airlines currently prohibited from UK and EU airspace will not be used, or where no alternative is available, brought to the attention of clients.

## 4.2 Ferries (and Eurotunnel)

- 4.2.1 All the ferry companies (and Eurotunnel) that we use are regulated nationally. We do have regular meetings with the major ferry companies booked by us and we are updated about changes to safety procedures.
- 4.2.2 The operators comply with independently set safety standards and no additional practical measures can be undertaken by Absolute Travel & Tours in this respect.

## 4.3 Public Transportation

- 4.3.1 All public transportation is regulated nationally and by the appropriate authorities in each country. No additional practical measures can be undertaken by Absolute Travel & Tours in this respect.

## 4.4 Railways

- 4.4.1 All rail transport is regulated nationally by the countries through which the train travels. No additional practical measures can be undertaken by Absolute Travel & Tours in this respect.

## 4.5 UK & Non-UK Coaches

- 4.5.1 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited will endeavour to hire coaches from well-established and reliable companies and those who belong to recognised industry bodies such as the 'Confederation of Passenger Transport' (CPT), the 'Guild of British Coach operators' or are 'Coach Marque' accredited whenever practicable and appropriate in the UK, or from reputable suppliers when sourced overseas.
- 4.5.2 All companies shall complete a Provision of Service Agreement for Transportation Suppliers in which they confirm that they comply with all applicable national, local, trade and other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice. This Contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding drivers' hours, driver vetting, insurance cover, subcontracting and vehicle age to which the coach company must agree prior to usage by Absolute Travel & Tours.
- 4.5.3 A confirmation that contract conditions are still being met will be obtained every three years.

### Coach Checklists

- 4.5.4 The appropriate Coach and Minibus Supplier Checklist form must be completed prior to first use and thereafter when a significant change occurs, such as major fleet changes, or change of owner, or at a maximum of three-year intervals, whichever is the sooner, irrespective of how many times the supplier is used within a year.
- 4.5.5 The appropriate Coach and Minibus Supplier Checklist form must be completed prior to first use and thereafter in the aftermath of any significant safety related incident, accident, complaint or claim, illness outbreak or near miss, irrespective of how many times the supplier is used within a year.
- 4.5.6 The appropriate Coach and Minibus Supplier checklist form should be completed by either the supplier directly or by an agent supplying the service or by an approved auditor or representative.
- 4.5.7 Each completed Checklist and Minibus Supplier Checklist form will be assessed against the Coach Core Values by a trained auditor and recorded in one of the categories defined in 4.5.12 below. See also 8.2 for staff training.
- 4.5.8 A random spot check of Coach and Minibus Supplier Checklist forms may be taken on an annual basis by a trained auditor and where significant discrepancies in the accuracy of the information provided by a third party are identified, suitable corrective action will be undertaken before accepting any further Checklists from that source.

### Monitoring of Coach Audits

- 4.5.9 Following the completion of accommodation audits, these will be recorded in one of the following categories and maintained on file, indicating the current audit status:
  - **High Conformity:** Minor or no areas of improvement have been identified. The management will be commended and encouraged to maintain their standards.
  - **Acceptable Conformity:** Room for improvement has been identified, but the defects do not render the supply unsafe. The defects will be brought to the immediate attention of the management at the time of auditing and followed up in writing within 14 days. The deficiencies will be evaluated, and a schedule of remedial action will be agreed and monitored.
  - **Unacceptable:** The supply is considered unsafe for our groups, even if it conforms to local standards. The defects will be brought to the immediate attention of the management at the time of the auditing, or at the time of the audit assessment and followed up within 14 days. The supplier will be removed from our programme and will not be re-instated until the defects have been rectified and the supplier re-audited to a standard that is either High or Acceptable Conformity.
- 4.5.10 A schedule of all coach and minibus transportation suppliers is maintained, indicating the current audit status.

## 4.6 Coach services obtained through approved third-party verification schemes

- 4.6.1 Where services are obtained through suppliers that are accredited under the approved schemes shown below, the quality of the third-party verification has already been professionally assessed. A validation of the supplier's current membership of the scheme will be confirmed, but further substantiation is not required.
- 4.6.2 Approved schemes are "CPT Coach Marque" and the "Guild of British Coach Operators" membership.

## 5. Services Supplied by Agents and Ground Handling Companies

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### 5.1 Accommodation

- 5.1.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will ensure that a Handling Agency Agreement contract is signed when an accommodation is contracted via an Agent or Ground Handling company confirming that the accommodation conforms to local and national fire, safety and hygiene standards and that liability insurance is in place for the duration of the contract. Additional clauses aimed at further improving safety standards for the benefit of our clients may be added at our discretion. Confirmation that the contract conditions are still being met will be obtained every three years.
- 5.1.2 All Accommodation will be audited and monitored in accordance with Section 3 above.

### 5.2 Coaches

- 5.2.1 All Agents and Ground Handlers providing non-UK coaches and minibuses shall sign a contract in which they confirm that the companies they select will comply with all applicable national, local, trade and other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice. This Contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding drivers' hours, driver vetting, insurance cover and vehicle age.
- 5.2.2 All coach and minibus transportation supplies offered by an agent will need to complete and return a Coach and Minibus Supplier Checklist form prior to first use and thereafter at a maximum of three-year interval as specified in section 4 above and will be assessed and monitored as specified in section 4 above.

### 5.3 Other Services

- 5.3.1 Where Agents or Ground Handlers provide other services that would be the subject of a safety review if booked directly by us, such as visits and excursions, they shall sign a contract agreeing to use the same standards as had these been sourced directly by us.

## 6. Sports, Skiing and Activities

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### 6.1 Sports

#### **Before the Trip**

- 6.1.1 There will be discussions with, or information will be provided to the group leader which will cover:
- The Group Leader's objectives.
  - The age and skill level of the participants and potential opposition in relation to that of the tour group.
  - Specific equipment and clothing requirements; existing international legislation, local rules and the range of playing surfaces that may be encountered.
  - The suitability and duration of proposed coaching, games, matches and/or tournaments including where available indications of proposed match schedules in tournaments to allow consideration of rest and recovery periods.
  - Special needs.
- 6.1.2 Group Leaders are issued with an itemised package proposal with a transparent pricing, indicative itinerary and a copy of our "Before You Go – A Planning & Safety Guide" at the booking stage.

#### **Insurance**

- 6.1.3 Any insurance included in our sports tour packages will have appropriate cover for the sports to be undertaken.
- 6.1.4 Leaders will be reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure the suitability of any alternative insurance cover arranged separately should they choose to opt-out of the insurance cover that is included. We may request a copy of any independently sourced travel insurance to be kept on file if we are concerned but will not typically do so.
- 6.1.5 The tour leader will be advised to inform travellers (and parents of any pupils) of the detail of the insurance schedule of cover so that they may make additional arrangements if they so wish and to contact any Health Check line to discuss any pre-existing medical conditions in good time at their own discretion.

## Permissions

- 6.1.6 Suitable information will be provided to the group to ensure informed decisions on permission to tour by parents and the managing authority. Where such schemes exist and approval to tour by a UK Sports' Governing Body has been granted in writing, such permission will be passed on to the necessary authorities overseas for reciprocity.

## Sports Venues, Facilities and Equipment

- 6.1.7 We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all facilities offered are fit for purpose in achieving the group's aims while maintaining appropriate safety standards. Whenever practicable, an assessment of the following will be made by the hosts, local agent, or remotely by our staff:
- First aid facilities
  - Emergency medical procedure
  - Changing and welfare facilities
  - Transport access
  - Appropriateness of the pitch or court playing areas to the age group involved
  - The suitability of the actual location of fixtures where there may be adverse local conditions
- 6.1.8 We will endeavour to carry out a 'Sports venue audit' for any venue that may be used for our festivals or frequently used for fixtures.
- 6.1.9 We use audited sports venues for events, festivals and friendly matches whenever possible, practical and appropriate, but many circumstances determine the use of other non-frequently used venues. Such occasions include the matching of teams in terms of age and ability; the availability of teams, officials and venues; weather and other local conditions and factors. Due to the enormous number of miscellaneous venues used, many used on a one-off or infrequent basis, we will not inspect these or carry out a 'sports venue audit'. However, they may well have been recommended by our local agents who are responsible for the organisation of ad hoc fixtures.
- 6.1.10 Where sports equipment is supplied by us it will be fit for purpose and the size, weight and type of equipment will be suitable for the age, ability and physical size of the group. As and when appropriate there may be evidence of regular checks, maintenance records. If sports equipment is supplied by a host club or local venue or via a local agent, they should meet local health and safety standards even if these differ from our own.

## Sports Fixtures, Tournaments and Festivals

- 6.1.11 Staff members, or agents appointed by us, will endeavour to ensure that the sports fixtures that are organised are only arranged with teams of a comparable age and ability. In exceptional circumstances, alternative arrangements will be put in place once the client has been informed and agrees.
- 6.1.12 Staff members, or agents appointed by us, will endeavour to ensure that all sports fixtures are organised with clubs or teams with a suitable reputation and appropriate facilities. In exceptional circumstances, alternative arrangements will be put in place once the client has been informed and agrees.
- 6.1.13 Pupils should be responsible for having any personal medication to hand and have the general fitness and physical maturity to meet the demands of the activity.
- 6.1.14 Group leaders will be advised of any 'Code of Conduct' requirements and regulations that may be appropriate to the host facility, club venue, festival organisation or tournament committee when we have been advised in advance.
- 6.1.15 In staging tournaments, festivals and events that are owned, managed and organised by Absolute Travel & Tours, the personal wellbeing of participants is always paramount:
- Group leaders, staff and festival staff should refer to our Safeguarding policy
  - Group Leaders and staff should refer to "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide" and any Guidelines pertaining to the event they are attending.
- 6.1.16 In staging tournaments, festivals and events that are owned, managed and organised by Absolute Travel & Tours, our event managers will ensure that in respect of our sports arrangements:
- Care will be taken in the programming and scheduling of matches.
  - Whenever practical, advance written notification of these schedules will be given.
  - No participating pupil should be subjected to unreasonable levels of physical activity given the nature and duration of the activity.
  - Sufficient rest periods are provided to allow for recovery between matches.
  - Any contingency arrangements will be put in place with the least disruption practically possible to the overall programme.
- 6.1.17 In booking teams into tournaments, festivals and events that are not owned, managed and organised by Absolute Travel & Tours, we will endeavour to ensure that we only select events that are reputable and suitable for our teams and to forward any regulations and schedules in advance whenever this is practicable.

## **Coaching Staff and Festival Staff**

- 6.1.18 The quality of all coaching and support staff will be fit for purpose and staff will have the necessary qualifications, training and experience to fulfil the role expected of them. Individuals will be National Governing Body licensed where appropriate and will not have been banned from working with young people.
- 6.1.19 All event representatives and coaching staff appointed directly by Absolute Travel & Tours will be subject to an application and interview process and references and identity checks requested. Where possible, DBS checks are also made, if deemed appropriate for the role contracted.
- 6.1.20 Where third party providers are used to supply coaching staff, including professional football clubs and associations, we will ensure that the qualification and competences of staff provided meet with our requirements and expectations. We will ensure that any additional safeguarding/child protection policies are adhered to and respected by those suppliers.
- 6.1.21 A feedback process via the tour questionnaire is in place to ensure that the suitability of delivery and the monitoring of performance of staff and individuals can be regularly reviewed, and that supplementary or remedial action may be taken as appropriate.

## **6.2 Skiing**

### **Before the Trip**

- 6.2.1 There will be discussions with, or information will be provided to the group leader which will cover:
  - the group leader's objectives for the trip
  - the age and skill level of the participants, class sizes and instructor/pupil ratios
  - the suitability of the resort, accommodation and any special needs or other requirements
- 6.2.2 Any insurance included in our ski trip packages will have appropriate cover for the winter sports to be undertaken. Leaders will be reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure the suitability of any alternative insurance cover arranged separately should they choose to opt-out of the insurance cover that is included. The tour leader will be advised to inform travellers (and parents of any pupils) of the detail of the insurance schedule of cover so that they may make additional arrangements if they so wish and to contact any Health Check line to discuss any pre-existing medical conditions in good time at their own discretion.
- 6.2.3 Potential hazards will be highlighted to Group leaders including warnings about slip, trip and fall. Further safety information concerning walking in ski boots, falling icicles, slippery footpaths and traffic risks when disembarking from coaches and ski buses amongst other hazards will also be brought to the attention of leaders in our "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide" documentation and further documents may be made available in respect of the specific destination selected.
- 6.2.4 Board and accommodation appropriate to the nature of the trip and the group travelling will be discussed in advance to meet the expectations of the group.
- 6.2.5 Guidance will be given on the appropriate clothing and equipment required for winter conditions. A sample kit list can be found in our "Ski trip Information" document and on our website.
- 6.2.6 Emergency contact details and procedures; homecare abroad issues; and suggested information to be carried by pupils should they become isolated from the groups whilst away on tour, are outlined in the 'Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide' which is sent to the Group Leader and which is available to download from our website.
- 6.2.7 An indicative itinerary will be supplied for parents prior to travel.
- 6.2.8 A poor weather contingency plan will be in place where practicable and appropriate.

### **Ski Equipment**

- 6.2.9 Absolute Travel & Tours works only with established and reputable ski hire shops and equipment providers. Each supplier has a written Service Level Agreement with us that specifies the minimum safety and quality standards that we expect for our clients, specifying the following conditions:
  - they have sufficient liability insurance in place
  - equipment is of an acceptable standard and is checked every time it is issued
  - only members of hire shop staff who are suitably competent will undertake the fitting of equipment
  - ski bindings are fitted with due consideration to the age, weight, height and ability of the participant and the manufacturer's instructions.
  - at the time of issue, boots are dry and in full working order with no significant damage that could reduce performance and all fastenings are fully functioning and fit for purpose
  - helmets are fit for purpose, correctly fitted with no significant damage and where applicable meet local standards
  - all equipment issued is easily identifiable so that children do not try to use the wrong equipment
  - will keep ski equipment fitting records in case of accident investigation if locally required to do so.
- 6.2.10 Should ski equipment hire be contracted by agents on our behalf, then our Supplier Agreement will have been sent to the agents in order that the same standards are met.



- 6.2.11 The wearing of an approved helmet is a legal requirement when skiing or snowboarding in many resorts and you should refer to our “Ski Trip Information” document and SnowSport England for further advice as well as downloading a copy of our “Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide” from our website.
- 6.2.12 Our standard ski packages include the hire of helmets as well as boots, poles and skis, with an opt-out option to use your own equipment should this be deemed possible and appropriate.

### **Ski Instruction**

- 6.2.13 Absolute Travel & Tours works only with established and reputable Ski Schools. Occasionally qualified British ski instructors are also contracted.
- 6.2.14 All instructors used for school groups will be qualified according to local and national regulations (where they exist), be at or over the equivalent of BASI Alpine level 2 Instructor and approved by the Director of the local snow sport school.
- 6.2.15 The Ski School will have signed a Provision of Service Supplier contract that confirms that as a minimum they:
- comply with all National Regulations and are certified to operate locally
  - have sufficient liability insurance in place
  - acknowledge the levels of qualification expected
  - stipulate and agree maximum class sizes
  - agree to an expectation of satisfactory level of spoken English to ensure good communication
  - confirm runs to be used will be selected to match the needs of the group and level of instruction needed
  - all lifts to be used will be licensed and approved to local regulation and be suitable for safe use by school groups with particular consideration to beginners
- 6.2.16 Our ski packages include four hours per day tuition as standard with the option to reduce or extend timings on request and practicable, although such options do not include lunchtime supervision by instructors.
- 6.2.17 Pupils should be responsible for having any personal medication to hand and have the general fitness and physical maturity to meet the demands of the activity. Absolute Travel and Tours will ensure that snow sports schools are informed of any special needs, including essential medical information in advance.

### **Ski Resorts**

- 6.2.18 Absolute Travel & Tours works only with established and reputable ski Resorts. Absolute Travel & Tours will endeavour to inspect all ski resorts prior to using them for the first time and thereafter at least every 3 years if deemed as frequent use. Resorts that are used more than 5 times in a calendar year for groups would be classed as frequent use. Inspections may be undertaken by our staff, handling agents or representatives.
- 6.2.19 Absolute Travel & Tours will try to select resorts that are able to absorb high season visitors without causing dangerous overcrowding of the lift system or runs and with due consideration to nursery slope provision.
- 6.2.20 All ski lift systems will comply with and be licensed according to local regulations, and we will assess resort lifts to ensure that these are suitable for school and youth groups, particularly with beginners in mind.
- 6.2.21 When aware in advance, we will bring to the attention of our group leaders, the details of any chairlifts without foot rests or restraining bars and any old-style T-bars or draglifts crossing steep or difficult terrain.

## **6.3 Activities and other trips**

### **Before the Trip**

- 6.3.1 There will be discussions with, or information will be provided to, the group leader which will cover the group leader’s objectives for the trip.
- 6.3.2 The suitability and duration of proposed activities will be discussed with due consideration allowed for rest and recovery periods between activities.
- 6.3.3 Special needs will be considered in discussion with the group leader.
- 6.3.4 Emergency contact details and procedures are outlined in the ‘Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide.’
- 6.3.5 An indicative itinerary for parents will be supplied to the group leader on request.

### **Activity suppliers**

- 6.3.6 Absolute Travel & Tours works only with established and reputable Activity suppliers. All Activity companies and suppliers shall sign a Provision of Service Supplier Agreement in which they confirm that they comply with all applicable national, local, trade and other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice.
- 6.3.7 This contract also stipulates a set of safety standards regarding activity staff vetting, first aid qualifications, supervisory ratios, additional health and safety guidelines as well as an expectation of satisfactory level of spoken English to ensure clarity of communication.
- 6.3.7 Absolute Travel & Tours will assess all activity venues and suppliers prior to using them for the first time and all adventurous activity suppliers will require approval by a qualified technical advisor in advance of use.

- 6.3.8 An 'Adventurous Activity' is one, that if undertaken by commercial operations in the UK, would require licensing by, for example, the AALA. These activities would include but are not limited to caving, climbing (except on purpose-built climbing walls or abseiling towers) and water-sports.
- 6.3.9 Where we offer an activity that is not classed as an adventurous activity, but which may include an element of risk, we will make an assessment as to whether this needs to be referred to a Technical Advisor for approval.
- 6.3.10 Unless any UK based activities are provided by an LOTC Quality Badge holder, all defined activities above will be assessed and approved in writing before use for the first time and following any significant changes in the activity or its provider, by a suitably qualified or experienced Technical Advisor.
- 6.3.11 The assessments will cover all aspects of the provision and include: the activity provider's safety management system and safety record; suitability of the activity for planned users, by reference to their age and likely level of suitability; location; equipment; staffing ratios; staff competence, recruitment and monitoring; first aid and emergency provision; communications, insurance and the existence and effects of local regulations, safety standards and/or disclaimers.
- 6.3.12 All Adventurous Activities in the UK, if not holding an LOTC Quality Badge, will be subject to either a desk-top inspection or a physical inspection, either by a scheme accepted and recognised by the Technical Advisor or by the Technical Advisor themselves. This will be at the discretion of the Technical Advisor.
- 6.3.13 We will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to ensure thorough assessments can be made and that recommendations contained in the assessments are followed up and satisfactorily completed before any group which has booked embarks on the activity in question.
- 6.3.14 We will ensure that our insurance covers such activities before arranging them.
- 6.3.15 All defined activities will be monitored via client feedback.
- 6.3.16 All defined activities unless provided by a LOTC Quality Badge holder will be re-assessed and approved in writing at least every three years by a suitably qualified Technical Advisor.
- 6.3.17 Pupils should be responsible for having any personal medication to hand and have the general fitness and physical maturity to meet the demands of the activity.

## 7. Trips, excursions and visits

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- 7.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will endeavour to ensure that all visits and excursions that are included within our tours or directly promoted by us are considered safe for group activity.
- 7.2 Wherever possible we will ensure that the providers have evaluated health and safety to a satisfactory degree.
- 7.3 We will advise schools of any potential additional risks which the provider wishes to bring to the attention of school and youth groups.
- 7.4 Where excursions fail to demonstrate reasonable safety measures for visitors, including children, we shall not offer that excursion and/or make such information available to group leaders who are considering using the excursion independently.
- 7.5 If we become aware that a visit or excursion is considered unsafe, we will remove it from our programme or list of optional extras even if it conforms to local standards, until evidence that the defects have been rectified is in place.
- 7.6 We shall categorise risks as follows:
  - **Category 1 (low risk):** Attractions such as sports stadiums and theme parks regularly open to visitors, where there is low inherent risk and health and safety laws and regulations are in place within a reasonably controlled environment.
  - **Category 2 (potential medium risk):** Locations and attractions that may not be so regularly used to large visitor groups, where there are some potential risks and health and safety laws and regulations may not be clear or principally directed to the safety of children.
  - **Category 3 (water immersion risk):** Attractions and venues which feature water immersion such as swimming pools, water parks and private beaches.
  - **Category 4 (specialist activities):** Attractions and venues that require specialist training such as ski schools, sports courses or adventurous activities.
  - **Category 5 (other excursions):** All other attractions, visits, events and excursions where individual assessments of risk need to be completed.
- 7.7 Where areas are not covered by a specific code of practice, individual risk assessments which assess instructor competence, means of safety management, external assessment, operating licences and liability insurance cover will be implemented.
- 7.8 A copy of "Demystifying Risk Assessments" - a booklet written for the STF on how a group leader may tackle risk assessments – is available to download at any time from our website.
- 7.9 Party leaders should ensure that any activity or visit that they select is appropriate to the age, ability and size of their group. Party leaders are responsible for the conduct of their group, overall supervision and for ensuring that their students are following all safety guidelines and instructions. A copy of our "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide" is always available to download from our website.

- 7.10 We will advise groups in advance where the signature of a waiver by a Group Leader or parent may be required in resort or prior to travel. Notwithstanding, Group Leaders have the reassurance that the primary contract is with Absolute Travel and Tours Limited and is signed under English law. This means that the protection offered under the Package Travel Regulations takes precedence over local disclaimers that may be demanded in resort.
- 7.11 Confirmation will be sought from each supplier that emergency and business continuity procedures are in place, including provision for severe weather conditions, customer illness and epidemics/pandemics such as Covid-19.

## 8. Staff Training

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### 8.1 General Staff Training

- 8.1.1 We will ensure that our staff members receive initial and ongoing training in all areas for which they are responsible. This ranges from detailed product knowledge through to assessment of all components of a tour including accommodation, transportation and other key elements.
- 8.1.2 Members of staff are encouraged to participate in additional training provided by independent suppliers, which are offered as and when appropriate.
- 8.1.3 Members of staff are also trained in those areas of the Safety Management System for which they may be required to exercise responsibility. All employees are made aware of the principal commitments and responsibilities of the Safety Management System.
- 8.1.4 Only senior members of the management team are selected as Duty Officers and anyone so appointed receives the appropriate training or has the appropriate experience before carrying out this role, to fulfil this responsibility.

### 8.2 Training of In-house Accommodation and Coach Supply Auditors

- 8.2.1 Senior staff whose role it is to oversee and assess accommodation units receive suitable training to undertake such audits, provided by suitably qualified and approved safety consultants.
- 8.2.2 Our In-house accommodation and coach supply auditors will analyse the result of Standard Audits Checklists, identify and action suitable additional investigation if required and provide an informed opinion on the suitability for use. They may also visit suppliers to complete On-Site audits, to make recommendations regarding improvements to the safety management of the supply where necessary and provide an informed opinion on the suitability for use.
- 8.2.3 All our in-house accommodation auditors will complete an initial training course which is supplied or approved by suitably qualified consultants and undertake at least two accompanied on-site audits with an approved auditor in order to demonstrate due competence to undertake audits and record and monitor any findings.
- 8.2.4 All company qualified auditors will complete refresher training by suitably qualified and approved safety consultants at least every 2 years.
- 8.2.5 We will maintain a list of company qualified auditors and training records retained for a minimum period of 5 years.

### 8.3 Emergency Procedure Training

- 8.3.1 All staff members on full permanent contracts receive an initial training in the Company's emergency procedures and refresher training is undertaken on an annual basis.

## 9. Emergency Procedures, Crisis Management and Safeguarding

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- 9.1 We will maintain and update our 'Emergency Procedures Practical Guide' which clearly defines the role that all staff may need to carry out in the event of a serious incident involving our clients on tour.
- 9.2 One of the Absolute Travel & Tours management team shall be appointed as Duty Officer on a roster basis to ensure that a senior member of staff is contactable in an emergency, 24 hours a day.
- 9.3 The Duty Officer will be supplied with details on all groups on tour at that time as well as have access to emergency contact numbers for suppliers including coach drivers and agents.
- 9.4 All Group Leaders, coach companies and agents will be advised how to contact the Duty Officer should the need arise as suggested in DfES and LEA guidelines.
- 9.5 In the office, the 'Incident Manager' can call on the advice and support of an external crisis management team which should circumstances dictate, provide an extended team of people including lawyers, customer service managers and other specialists to assist.
- 9.6 It may be considered appropriate to send a number of specialists to the scene of the incident to assist in differing capacities including linguists, medical staff, lawyers and trauma psychologists.
- 9.7 External training on crisis management may also be recommended for senior management when appropriate.
- 9.8 A full review of any emergency incident will be conducted by the directors. Measures will be put in place to remedy and improve procedures where this is deemed appropriate.

- 9.9 We maintain a Safeguarding Policy which details procedures to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable clients that is available to staff and clients, which can be downloaded from the company website.
- 9.10 The Emergency Procedures document also includes Guidance notes on POSI/illness outbreak/epidemics and pandemics like Covid-19 and Business Continuity.

## 10. Accidents, Incident Reporting and Near Misses

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- 10.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will encourage clients to report any safety related issues immediately. This will enable us to investigate any concerns and to ensure that any necessary action is taken straight away. To facilitate this, Absolute Travel & Tours will provide an 'Incident/Accident Report Form' to all Group Leaders prior to travel.
- 10.2 Group leaders may report accidents, incidents or near misses by:
- telephone to the Duty Officer on the emergency number
  - in person when a local representative is in attendance
  - by sending us an 'Incident/Accident Report form' as soon as possible
- 10.3 Absolute Travel & Tours will keep a record of all accidents, incidents and near misses of which it becomes aware, or which are brought to its attention. All reports will be reviewed, and an investigation undertaken if appropriate.
- 10.4 Members of staff are encouraged to discuss incidents arising at internal staff meetings in order that these may be collectively reviewed, and lessons can be learned where appropriate.
- 10.5 An annual review of all accidents and incidents considered as serious will be undertaken by the Company directors and measures put in place to remedy and improve procedures where this is deemed appropriate.

## 11. Travel Insurance, Liability Insurance and Financial Protection

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- 11.1 It is a requirement of any booking with us that all members of every group travel with adequate travel insurance cover. A comprehensive travel insurance designed for the needs of our tour groups is included in all our school and youth group packages as a default. However, it is the party leader's responsibility to check the travel insurance cover meets with the requirements of their group, to forward the policy key facts and inclusions to parents of participants for their own review and to advise the Health Check Line (or their own insurers) without delay of any factors that may affect the cover including any pre-existing medical conditions if so required. Groups may opt out of the insurance cover at the booking stage and make their own arrangements if they wish.
- 11.2 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited has Tour Operator's Combined Liability Insurance, with £10,000,000 cover.
- 11.3 We conform with the updated Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018.
- 11.4 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited holds an ATOL Licence as granted by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to comply with requirements for the financial protection of flight inclusive packages. Our number is ATOL 5675.
- 11.5 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is a member of ABTA. Our membership number is ABTA Y5420.
- 11.6 We are also members of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust), membership number 5507 which provides full financial protection for packages that are not flight-inclusive (non-licensable packages).
- 11.7 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is an Assured Member of the School Travel Forum (STF).
- 11.8 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited holds the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (LOTC QB).

## 12. Pre-Tour Safety Information and Inspection Visits

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- 12.1 Absolute Travel & Tours issues all tour party leaders with our 'Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide.' This is available to view, read and download from our website. Additional information specific to each destination is available too. The aim is to draw attention to key safety points and promote increased safety awareness. The goal, as always, is for the tour to operate as safely and smoothly as possible.
- 12.2 Absolute Travel & Tours issues all tour parties with a 'Final Tour Pack' prior to travel which includes a final itinerary, tour contact details and additional information specific to the tour.
- 12.3 Absolute Travel & Tours encourages Group Leader Inspection visits. Full details are available on our website. Hosted inspection trips are offered to our most popular destinations at selected times of year. Where no official inspection visit is scheduled, we offer ad hoc trips instead. These offers apply to group leaders who have already confirmed a booking with us. Inspection visits are designed to increase group leader awareness of a destination in advance of a tour and to enable risk assessments of accommodation and other key elements to be undertaken.
- 12.4 Absolute Travel and Tours is a partner of the "Travel Aware" - formerly known as "Know Before You Go" – campaign. Please visit the website at <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/> during the initial planning stage for up-to-date travel advice and information. We recommend that you check regularly for updates.