Orford Castle, Suffolk

Hazard Information for Education Visits

It is the responsibility of teachers and group leaders to complete a risk assessment prior to the site visit. The following information is intended as an aid and does not replace the group leader's own risk assessment. We recommend coming to the site on a free planning visit, to help you with your risk assessment. Please note: where possible, English Heritage staff at the site will be happy to assist you with your queries, but cannot check or sign any section of your risk assessment.

Environmental conditions at historic sites may change rapidly and you will need to remain alert at all times during your visit. Most accidents are the result of slips and trips so please make sure you wear appropriate footwear and dress sensibly for the site and weather. Please be aware that the site may close at short notice due to adverse weather. Where applicable, stonework and trees at our sites are inspected regularly; however, extreme weather conditions can sometimes affect stonework and trees so as well as following any staff instructions and being mindful of temporary barriers and signage, please remain vigilant at all times. On-going conservation work may pose a temporary hazard; a member of staff will advise you of any works when you visit. Dogs on leashes may be present on site.

All learners who are 16 years or younger must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times whilst on site.

Moving vehicles may pose a hazard upon arrival and while on the site.

- The car park has a loose gravelled surface.
- Coaches may drop off in the car park; be aware that this car park is used by all visitors and there is an access track running through it to residential properties.

The historic nature of Orford Castle presents various hazards, including rough ground and spiral staircases.

- There are a number of steep slopes and banks outside the keep. The ground is generally rough and overgrown. It is possible to access a disused quarry site adjacent to the Orford Castle site. The quarry site has numerous hazards.
- The entrance steps to the keep are steep and uneven.
- The stairs and floors throughout the keep are uneven and can be slippery. Some risers are different heights giving unexpected short drops.
- The narrow spiral stairs that lead to the Constable's Chamber in the Lower Hall are unlit and have no handrail.
- The door to the keep is a heavily sprung glass door. There are also two heavily sprung glass doors from the shop leading into the Lower Hall. There is a risk of catching fingers inside these heavy doors.
- Lighting levels are low inside parts of the keep.
- The walls inside the keep are rough and there are projecting stones at various levels.
- There are a number of narrow passageways with low headroom, rough walls and uneven floors. There are low lighting levels throughout the keep.

The nature of the site provides numerous climbing hazards.

- Climbing on the castle walls, both interior and exterior, is not permitted.
- Climbing on the cannon is not permitted.
- Climbing on trees is not permitted.

Features in the upper hall present various hazards, including loose masonry.

- The masonry on chimney leading to the fireplace in the Upper Hall may be loose in places.
- Windowsills in the Upper Hall and Lower Hall are low and the glass in the window is not safety glass.

- Garderobe shafts in the Chapel corridor, Lower Chamber and Upper Hall are covered with Perspex sheets. These must not be stood on as they will not withstand a person's weight.

Features on the roof of the castle present various hazards, including exposure to high winds and a steep drop.

- The door leading to the roof is hard to open when it is windy and can slam easily.
- The disused stone oven in the bakery is unsafe to stand in and has a low stone opening.
- The roof of the castle is exposed to high winds.
- There is a sheer drop off the roof, but this is fenced off by railings.

Staircase treads may be worn and uneven; always use the handrail where provided.

- There are 9 long steps leading to the castle, 21 to the shop entrance, 27 to the basement and 91 to the roof. It is advisable to wear appropriate footwear.

The site can be very busy, and some areas may become congested.

- Groups should assemble outside the ticket office.

There are no toilets on site.

- There are free public toilets close to the castle, located on Market Hill; please speak to the site staff if you require directions.

Dogs and wildlife may be present on site.

- Dogs may be present on site but should be kept on a lead at all times.
- Bats are present in the Upper Hall and there are often bat droppings from May to September. This may present a zoonotic hazard.
- Pigeons often nest on the roof in the drain. There are pigeon droppings around the roof area and sometimes in other parts of the castle. This may present a zoonotic hazard.