

safety management system



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1. Health and Safety Policy Statement

Established in 1992, Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is a specialist tour operator organising sports tours, ski trips, study trips, performing arts trips, festivals, events, activity weeks and tournaments for schools, colleges, academies, clubs and other groups, to destinations both at home and abroad.

At Absolute Travel and Tours Limited (Absolute Travel & Tours) 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 incorporating the requirements of the School Travel Forum Code of Practice, industry best practice as Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge holders and ABTA's Code of Conduct.
- 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 indeed, exceeded.

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



Ashley Gowing
Managing Director

1st September 2026

Absolute Travel & Tours Ltd (updated 1st September 2026)

2. Implementation and Review of the Safety Management System

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 to the directors on a regular basis regarding the implementation of the SMS including any areas of either success or weakness that may require 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

- 3.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will endeavour to ensure that a Supplier Agreement (contract) is signed when an accommodation is contracted directly and regardless, will confirm 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/minimum standards 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 endeavour to ensure that the handling agent completes a Supplier Agreement (contract) and regardless, will confirm 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 or request confirmation that this is valid and in date.
- 3.4 Absolute Travel & Tours will request and endeavour to obtain a copy of the current liability insurance policy or request confirmation that this is valid and in date.
- 3.5 Absolute Travel & Tours will request and endeavour to obtain a copy of the current hygiene certificate or equivalent local documentation, should such documentation be produced and be available for inspection.

Standard Accommodation Checklists

- 3.6 All accommodation used 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 ownership, or at a maximum of three-year intervals, whichever is the sooner.
- 3.7 The Standard Accommodation Checklist aims to highlight aspects of fire safety, hygiene and general accommodation facilities and may be completed in the first instance by a 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 Checklists may be taken 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 Checklists 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 an accommodation (hotel, hostel or other) will be used in any one year (on a rolling basis) 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 An On-site Accommodation 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 may be agreed and monitored or further clarification sought. Any defect or limitation may be considered to be offset by any mitigation of arrangements.
 - **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 On-site Accommodation Audits too.
- 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 On-site Accommodation Audits too.
- 3.18 The internal handling of POSI procedures and illness outbreaks as well as internal Business Continuity matters are outlined in the Critical Incident & Emergency Procedures document implemented by Absolute Travel & Tours, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

4. Transportation

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 that 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, at Absolute Travel & Tours, 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 our 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 correspondence (and meetings) with the major ferry companies booked by us and we are updated about changes to safety procedures as well as behaviour guidelines.
- 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 & Tours 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 and booked overseas.
- 4.5.2 When booked directly, 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 use 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 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 ownership, 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 Supplier Checklist form should be re-evaluated 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 Supplier checklist form should be completed by either the supplier directly or by an agent supplying the service on their behalf.
- 4.5.7 Each completed Coach Supplier Checklist form will be assessed by a trained auditor and recorded in one of the categories defined in 4.5.9 below. See also 8.2 for staff training.
- 4.5.8 A random spot check of Coach Supplier Checklist forms may be taken by a trained auditor and a site visit undertaken as best practice on occasion. 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 review of the Coach Supplier Checklist form, each 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 presently accepted at the time of publication are: CPT Coach Marque; Guild of British Coach Operators membership; LOTC Quality Badge for Accommodation and Coach Transport and the DVSA UK Earned Recognition Scheme.

5. Services Supplied by Agents and Ground Handling Companies

Where services are sourced through agents or ground handling companies, Absolute Travel & Tours will ensure that Supplier agreements are signed confirming that all appropriate minimum standards are maintained.

5.1 Accommodation

- 5.1.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will endeavour to ensure that a Handling Agency Supplier 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 Absolute Travel & Tours will endeavour to ensure that a Handling Agency Supplier Agreement (contract) is signed when non-UK coaches (and minibuses) are contracted via an Agent or Ground Handling company in which they confirm that the suppliers they select and contract will comply with all applicable national, local, trade and other laws, regulations, rules and codes of practice. This Agreement (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 suppliers contracted by an agent or handling company will need to complete and return a Coach Supplier Checklist form prior to first use and thereafter at a maximum of a three-year interval as specified in section 4 above and will also 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 at Absolute Travel & Tours (such as visits and excursions), they shall sign a Supplier Agreement (contract) adhering to the same standards as had these elements been sourced and booked directly by us.

5.4 Performance Monitoring

The performance of agents and ground handling companies will be monitored through customer feedback, incident reporting, supplier communications, audit findings and management review. Where recurring concerns are identified, corrective action will be agreed or the relationship reviewed.

6. Sports, Skiing and Activities

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 requirements or additional considerations.
- 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 this is not a requirement.
- 6.1.5 The tour leader will be advised to inform travellers (and parents of any young participants or school 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 (should this be required).

Permissions

- 6.1.6 Suitable information will be provided to the group leader to ensure awareness of any permission requests to governing bodies that may be advisable (or required) prior to travel. In some cases, the Group Leader will be responsible for gaining and passing on any such permissions granted to the reciprocal body in the hosting country.

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, a 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 travelling on tour
 - The suitability of the actual location of any fixtures to be played including the impact of weather conditions
- 6.1.8 At Absolute Travel & Tours, we will endeavour to carry out a 'Sports venue audit' for any venue that may be used for the festivals that we organise ourselves or frequently used for friendly 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 large 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, whenever possible, they will have been approved by our local agents (or handling agency) in destination, who are responsible for the organisation of ad hoc fixtures and arrangements.
- 6.1.10 Where sports equipment is supplied by us it will be fit for purpose. If sports equipment is supplied by a host club or local venue (or via a local agent), it 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, and when this is deemed to be appropriate, alternative arrangements will be put in place once the client has been informed and duly 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, and when this is deemed to be appropriate, alternative arrangements will be put in place to fulfil an arrangement or commitment.
- 6.1.13 Pupils should be responsible for having any personal medication to hand and to have the general fitness and physical maturity to meet the demands of the activity (match, tournament, coaching session, training or other).
- 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 (or organisers) when we have been advised of any such information, 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 representatives are advised to read and refer to our Safeguarding policy
 - Group Leaders, staff and representatives are advised to read and refer to our '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 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 (or alternative) 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/or organised by Absolute Travel & Tours, we will endeavour to ensure that we only select events that are reputable and suitable for our teams. We will forward (or advise group leaders to refer to) any regulations and schedules supplied to us or made available by event/festival/tournament organisers 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 roles 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 (whether employed by us or self-employed) will be subject to an application and interview process. References and identity checks will be requested. Where possible (for British citizens resident in the UK), enhanced 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 sports clubs, private academies, organisations and associations, at Absolute Travel & Tours we will endeavour to ensure that the qualification and competences of staff provided meet with our requirements and expectations. We also endeavour to will ensure that any additional safeguarding/child protection policies are adhered to and respected by those suppliers.
- 6.1.21 Those professional clubs, development centres, private academies or organisations that regularly supply coaching or support staff to us (for our festivals and tours) will be asked to sign a Supplier Agreement, confirming that all appropriate certification is held at their end; any necessary checks have been satisfactorily completed by them; and that all minimum standards and expectations will be met or indeed surpassed.
- 6.1.22 A feedback process via the tour questionnaire that we send to groups 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 requirements or other considerations
- 6.2.2 Any insurance included in our ski trip packages will have appropriate cover for the winter sports to be undertaken. Group 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 also be advised to inform travellers (and parents of any pupils travelling) of the detail of the insurance schedule of cover, so that they may make alternative or additional arrangements if they so wish. This will also enable them to contact any Insurance Health Check line to discuss any pre-existing medical conditions in good time and at their own discretion (should this be a policy requirement).
- 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 Group Leaders in our "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide" and 'Guidelines for Ski Group Leaders' documentation. Further information pertinent to a specific destination, resort or hotel may also be provided along with any generic Risk Assessment guidelines.
- 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 appropriate clothing and equipment required for winter conditions. A sample kit list can be found in our "Ski trip Information" document, in our "Guidelines for Ski Trip Group Leaders" and on our website.
- 6.2.6 Emergency contact details and procedures; homecare abroad issues; and suggested additional safety control measures for pupils (including those if they become isolated from their group), are outlined in the 'Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide' which is sent to Group Leaders, and which is available to download from our website.
- 6.2.7 An indicative itinerary will be supplied to the school (to pass on to parents in whatever format) prior to travel.
- 6.2.8 A poor weather contingency plan will be in place where practicable and appropriate, being mindful of changing conditions and other factors.

Ski Equipment

- 6.2.9 At Absolute Travel & Tours, we work with established and reputable ski equipment (ski, boot and helmet hire) suppliers. Each supplier signs a written Service Level Agreement with us, confirming that the minimum safety and quality standard expectations in terms of equipment and service for our clients are met or surpassed. As a minimum, the following conditions are specified in the Agreement to ensure that:
- they have sufficient liability insurance in place.
 - equipment is of an acceptable standard (fit for purpose) and is checked every time it is issued.
 - only members of hire supplier 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, meet local minimum standards, show no signs of damage and are fitted correctly and checked again, prior to use by our clients.
 - all equipment issued is easily identifiable so that children do not try to use the wrong equipment.
 - ski equipment fitting records will be maintained in case of accident investigation, if locally required in destination.
- 6.2.10 Should ski equipment hire be contracted by agents on our behalf, then our signed Supplier Agreement with them will reflect the same minimum standards as if the services had been contracted by us directly.
- 6.2.11 The wearing of an approved helmet is a legal requirement when skiing or snowboarding in many countries and strongly recommended in others. Group Leaders are advised to refer to our "Ski Trip Information" and SnowSport England guidelines for further advice. A copy of our "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide" is available on our website and sent to Group Leaders prior to travel.
- 6.2.12 Our standard ski packages include the hire of helmets as well as boots, poles and skis as a default. Groups or individuals within a group may choose to use their own equipment if they wish, whether in destination or as an opt-out option in advance, should this be requested by the Group leader and deemed appropriate by the school.

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 whenever practicable and approved by the Director of the local snow sports 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
 - extra consideration will be given to beginner groups and the particular logistics and practicalities involved.
- 6.2.16 Our ski packages include four (or sometimes five) hours tuition per day as standard with the option to reduce or extend timings in most resorts. Lunchtime supervision by instructors is not a standard inclusion in our packages.
- 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, representatives or ski reps.
- 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, details of any chairlifts without footrests or restraining bars and any old-style T-bars or draglifts crossing steep or difficult terrain.
- 6.2.22 We advise Group Leaders that pupils should not be allowed to ski alone or outside marked ski areas and trails at any time and that off-piste skiing is not permitted. We advise the ski schools who work with us, accordingly.

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; risk assessment guidelines and permissions.
- 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 A list of those activities that are supported and available for selection at each venue, as well as those that have been deemed unsupported (excluded by the LOtC), will be provided to group leaders prior to booking. The list is produced and updated by the LOtC and itemised in the School Travel Forum handbook. It is subject to amendment at any time and subject to review. See point 6.3.11 below for notification to activity suppliers of supported activities.
- 6.3.4 Activities that are not supported by the LOtC Quality Badge Scheme will not be offered as options by us or shown as inclusions in our packages. Such activities include but are not limited to bungee jumping, go-karting, paintballing, sub-aqua diving, quad biking, water-skiing and other towed water-sports.
- 6.3.5 Special requirements and other considerations will be addressed in discussions with the group leader.
- 6.3.6 Planning assistance and generic safety information and procedures are outlined in the 'Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide' which is sent to group leaders and can be downloaded from the website at any time.
- 6.3.7 An indicative itinerary will be supplied to the group leader, as well as a detailed bespoke package of inclusions (and exclusions) prior to confirmation.

Activity suppliers (including adventurous activity assessment and approval)

- 6.3.8 At Absolute Travel & Tours, we do not operate any adventurous activities ourselves and none of the adventurous activities offered are led by our own staff. We only work with established and reputable third-party Activity suppliers.
- 6.3.9 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 climbing (except on purpose-built climbing walls or abseiling towers) and water-sports (such as white-water rafting, kayaking, SUP and canyoning). Adventurous activities that are requiring of external assessment and approval are those that require a safety briefing and ongoing supervision and/or qualified instruction throughout the activity; and where the participant's own actions influence the outcome (i.e. doing not just experiencing); and include a higher level of risk which may result in a serious injury if incorrectly managed.
- 6.3.10 All Activity suppliers providing adventurous activities 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. 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 levels of spoken English to ensure clarity of communication.
- 6.3.11 The supplier will be advised of those activities which are 'supported' and available to be included in our programmes and those which must be excluded and not made available to our groups.
- 6.3.12 Absolute Travel & Tours will initiate an external assessment of all overseas activities (activity venues and suppliers) prior to using them for the first time. All adventurous activity suppliers will need to be approved by a qualified external independent technical advisor, in advance of first use and every three years thereafter, should the provision still be maintained.
- 6.3.13 Should our programme of adventurous activities or suppliers materially change at any stage, then we will undertake the necessary audit procedures accordingly and without delay.
- 6.3.14 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.
- 6.3.15 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.
- 6.3.18 Where we offer an activity that is not classed as an adventurous activity, but which may include an element of risk, we will make a judgement as to how this should be assessed. See point 7.6 below.

7. Trips, excursions and visits

- 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, where we have been duly notified in advance.
- 7.4 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 and the risks involved are primarily associated with group management which is the responsibility of the group leader. The venue and activity risks are such, that it is reasonable to expect the group leader to be familiar with them from everyday life.
 - **Category 2 (potential medium risk):** Locations and attractions (not involving water immersion) 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 specifically 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.

- 7.5 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 for their own judgement and assessment.
- 7.6 Feedback will be monitored and kept under review.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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 may also be implemented and required.
- 7.9 A copy of "Demystifying Risk Assessments" - a booklet written for the STF (a number of years ago) on how a Group Leader may tackle risk assessments, is available to download at any time from our website and may still have plenty of good generic advice and information for consideration.
- 7.10 Group leaders are responsible for ensuring that any activity or visit that they select is appropriate to the age, ability and size of their group.
- 7.11 Group 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.
- 7.12 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.
- 7.13 Confirmation will be sought from each frequently used supplier that emergency and business continuity procedures are in place, including provision for severe weather conditions, customer illness and pandemics.

8. Staff Training

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 and specialisations.
- 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 Anyone appointed as an on-call Duty Officer has the appropriate training and/or experience to be able to fulfil this responsibility.
- 8.1.5 All employees will undertake safeguarding awareness training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.
- 8.1.6 Staff will be encouraged to undertake site/inspection visits appropriate to their roles and responsibilities to broaden their product and destination knowledge and to learn from local suppliers too.

8.2 Training of In-house Accommodation and Coach Transportation Auditors

- 8.2.1 Senior staff whose role it is to oversee and assess accommodation checklists and to undertake on-site accommodation audits will receive suitable training to ensure the appropriate competence required to undertake such audits and assessments. All training will be provided by suitably qualified and approved safety consultants.
- 8.2.2 Senior staff whose role it is to oversee and assess transportation checklists will receive suitable training to ensure the appropriate competence required to undertake such audits and assessments. All training will be provided by suitably qualified and approved safety consultants.
- 8.2.3 Our trained and certificated in-house accommodation auditors will analyse the result of Standard Checklists, identify and action suitable additional investigation if required and provide an informed opinion on the suitability for use. The results will be categorised and recorded.
- 8.2.4 For those staff who intend to audit properties in person (on-site accommodation audits) it will be necessary to complete and pass a further (extended) course to attain the appropriate qualification. Thereafter, to demonstrate due competence to undertake such audits and to record and monitor any findings, at least two accompanied on-site audits must be completed with a qualified auditor who has at least two years auditing experience, to satisfy our requirements to be able to audit a property independently.

- 8.2.5 Our trained and certificated in-house coach transportation auditors will analyse the result of Standard Checklists, identify and action suitable additional investigation if required and provide an informed opinion on the suitability for use. The results will be categorised and recorded.
- 8.2.6 All company qualified auditors will complete refresher training by suitably qualified and approved safety consultants at least every 3 years.
- 8.2.7 We will maintain a list of company qualified auditors and training records and certification will be 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.
- 8.3.2 Supplementary training and guidance in critical incident management and emergency procedures will be contracted with reputable external consultants as and when deemed appropriate to support the internal refresher training being undertaken.
- 8.3.3 Senior staff and management will have the necessary training, knowledge and experience to manage critical incidents and emergency procedures as documented in the "Critical Incident & Emergency Procedures" Guide.

9. Emergency Procedures, Crisis Management and Safeguarding

- 9.1 We will maintain and update our 'Critical Incident & Emergency Procedures Practical Guide' which clearly defines the role that all staff may need to carry out in the event of a critical incident involving our clients during a trip.
- 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 or have access to details on all groups on tour (away on a trip) at that time, as well as having access to emergency contact numbers for suppliers including coach drivers and agents.
- 9.4 The Duty Officer will be supplied with the contact details for the Critical Incident Support Emergency Assistance service that is provided by external Crisis Management consultants on behalf of Absolute Travel and Tours.
- 9.5 All Group Leaders, coach companies and agents will be advised how to contact the Duty Officer should the need arise as suggested in accordance with current Department for Education (DfE), OEAP and School Travel Forum guidance. The 24/7 Duty Office number is always quoted on our Final Tour Itineraries and in our "Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide."
- 9.6 In the office, the 'Incident Manager' can also call on the advice and support of the external critical incident (crisis management) support team which should circumstances dictate, provide an extended team of people including lawyers, customer service managers and other specialists to assist.
- 9.7 It may be considered appropriate to send specialists to the scene of the incident to assist in differing capacities including linguists, medical staff, lawyers and trauma psychologists.
- 9.8 External training, including role play scenarios on critical incident (crisis management) procedures will be held for our management team (and extended senior staff) as and when deemed to be beneficial.
- 9.9 A full review of any critical incident (or near miss) will be conducted by the directors. Measures will be put in place to remedy and improve procedures, as considered appropriate.
- 9.10 We maintain a Safeguarding Policy which details procedures to ensure the safeguarding of our clients (including vulnerable individuals) that is made available to staff, reps, suppliers and clients, downloadable from our website. All employees will receive safeguarding awareness training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.
- 9.11 Our "Emergency Procedures Guidelines" also include notes on POSI/illness outbreaks and Business Continuity.

10. Accidents, Incident Reporting and Near Misses

- 10.1 Absolute Travel & Tours will encourage clients (and staff) 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 (and staff) 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, near misses and critical incidents (those 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.
- 10.6 The ongoing monitoring of feedback at every level of the company is vital in all areas of our business to ensure the correct control measures and learnings are in place and to maintain and enhance the quality of our product and service.
- 10.7 Accidents, near misses and risk assessment are regularly reviewed internally with company employees, in conjunction with the monitoring of feedback from suppliers, customers and ad-hoc self-employed representatives.

11. Travel Insurance, Liability Insurance and Financial Protection

- 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 that 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 travel insurance cover at the booking stage and make their own arrangements if they so wish.
- 11.2 Tour Operator's Combined Liability Insurance, with £10,000,000 cover is in place. Please see Appendix for details.
- 11.3 We comply 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. See Appendix for certification.
- 11.5 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is a member of ABTA. Our tour operator 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) including the coach (and ferry) packages that we operate. See Appendix for certification.
- 11.7 Absolute Travel and Tours Limited is an Assured Member of the School Travel Forum (STF). See Appendix.
- 11.8 We also hold the prestigious Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (LOtC QB). See Appendix.

12. Pre-Tour Safety Information and Inspection Visits

- 12.1 Absolute Travel & Tours issues all tour party leaders with our 'Before You Go – A Planning and Safety Guide.' This is also available to view, read and download from our website. Additional information specific to each accommodation/destination we offer and pertaining to each sector (sport, ski, study, performing arts) are all available too. The aim is to draw attention to key safety points, risk assessment considerations and to promote increased safety awareness. The goal, as always, is for the trip/tour to operate as safely and smoothly as possible.
- 12.2 Absolute Travel & Tours issues all tour parties with a 'Final Tour Pack' (by email) prior to travel which includes a final itinerary, tour contact details, 24/7 emergency contact details and additional information specific to the trip.
- 12.3 Absolute Travel & Tours encourages Group Leader Inspection visits. Details are available on our website and in our various Group Leader Guidelines. Hosted inspection trips are offered to our most popular destinations. Where no official inspection visit is scheduled, we offer ad hoc trips instead. Inspection visits are designed to increase group leader awareness of a destination in advance of a trip or tour and to enable risk assessments of accommodation and other key elements to be undertaken by them.
- 12.4 At Absolute Travel & Tours, we are partners of the "Travel Aware" campaign <https://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk/>. We recommend that clients visit this during the planning stage for travel advice/support and regularly for updates.
- 12.5 Essential travel information is available on/from the homepage of our website as reviewed and approved by ABTA, through hyperlinks appropriate to Foreign Travel Advice, Passports and Visas, Travel Health and Travel Insurance.
- 12.6 The Company will periodically review all pre-tour information issued to customers to ensure that guidance remains accurate and comprehensive, reflecting current legislation, government advice and industry best practice as we strive to support the safe delivery of our trips and tours, whenever and wherever they are undertaken.