



ATHLONE CASTLE VISITOR CENTRE

Athlone Castle Visitor Centre Code of Conduct for School/Language Group Tours/Visits

Athlone Castle Visitor Centre would like to thank you for booking your school visit with us. We want to ensure that your class has a safe and enjoyable visit with us and as such we would like for all teachers and group leaders to be fully aware and informed of the following guidelines and code of conduct prior to the school visit

- **Cancellations**

All cancellations must be communicated to the staff at Athlone Castle Visitor Centre by email (info@athlonecastle.ie) or by telephone (090 6442130) at least 24 hours prior to the school visit/tour taking place, otherwise, a cancellation charge may be incurred.

- **Time of Visit**

We understand that traffic congestion and unfamiliarity with Athlone may cause your school group to be late for their visit. If this does occur, we ask that you ring Athlone Castle Visitor Centre ahead of time to inform us that you are running late and to give us an estimated time of arrival. A late arrival may cause your tour to be cut short or in extreme cases to be cancelled.

- **Duration of Visit**

The duration of your visit will depend entirely on your circumstances. If you have requested a special tour package with staff at Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, the duration of the visit will be dependent on the type of tour you choose. The normal guided tour visit of the Centre will take no longer than one hour.

- **Teacher/Student Ratio**

A ratio of 1 Teacher/Staff Member per 10 pupils/students **must be observed** (primary & secondary schools). A ratio of 2 Teachers/Leaders per 8 pupils/students **must be observed** (language schools).

- **Teacher Guidelines**

All teachers/leaders must be clearly identifiable and **must always** remain with the group at every stage of the guided tour/visit. Teachers/Leaders **must not** leave the building or the castle grounds whilst a tour is being conducted. A teacher/leader must accompany children to the toilets if they need to use the facilities. Athlone Castle Visitor Centre staff are not permitted to do so as per our Child Safeguarding Policy. A copy of this policy is available upon request.

- **Pupils/Students Guidelines**

All pupils/students must be made aware of the behaviour that is expected of them prior to their visit and are asked to respect other visitors in the Centre during their visit. All pupils/students must always remain with their tour group. It is the responsibility of the teacher/leader to ensure that no pupil/student leaves the tour at any point and must deal efficiently with any such occurrence. A teacher/leader must accompany children to the toilets if they need to use the facilities.

- **Behaviour**

Disruptive or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated within the Visitor Centre. All such disruptions will be initially addressed by the tour guide. Should the problem persist, a teacher/leader will be asked to deal with the situation.

- **Visitor Centre Guidelines**

There is to be no running, shouting or horseplay of any kind by pupils/students permitted within the Visitor Centre. No eating or drinking is permitted in the internal spaces of the Visitor Centre. Chewing gum is strictly forbidden. Picnic tables are available to use in the courtyard area, with a strictly 'no littering' policy in place.

Athlone Castle Visitor Centre is delighted to offer a hands-on and interactive tour with all pupils/students, and all will be invited to interact with items from the collection during their tour. However, to ensure the safety of all, this will only be done with the instruction, supervision and guidance of an experienced tour guide. Pupils/students are asked not to interact with items of the collection without such supervision and must obey all the safety barriers in place and respect the 'Do Not Touch' notices where they appear within the Visitor Centre. Pre or post tour worksheets are available on request.

Athlone Castle Visitor Centre has a strict **no** bag policy within the exhibition spaces. We have a storage facility on site that can cater for all groups and their possessions. This storage unit is always locked and is under the supervision of all staff on duty. Our aim is to provide a safe environment for all visitors, and we ask that you adhere to this important rule.

- **Policy**

We endeavour to provide a safe and healthy environment for visitors within the constraints of an historic property and as far as is reasonable and practicable. We also have a firm policy that all children and young people have the right to participate in and enjoy Visitor Centre activities within this safe environment. As such, we present a child centered approach to all our relevant educational provisions including school tours, workshops, outreach and family days. Considering this, Athlone Castle Visitor Centre has devised policies derived from and consistent with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Children First: National Guidance, 2017 and the Children First Act 2015. A copy of this policy is available upon request.

- **Health & Safety Hazards Warning**

Please be aware that there are uneven surfaces, steps and some low doorways on site to negotiate where care should be taken by all visitors. Children should be supervised at all times.

