

Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumberland

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.

- There is a public car park 1.3 miles from the entrance to the castle in Craster. Visitors walk along the main road into Craster and then onto the coastal pathway to the castle.
- Occasionally there are vehicles crossing the farmland on the walk to the castle.

The route to the castle may pose possible hazards.

- The coastal path from Craster runs along a rocky shoreline where livestock often graze. The route takes an undulating course over grass, which may be slippery and boggy during and after wet weather.
- The route from the north is either along the sandy shore or via a path through undulating sand dunes with rocky, uneven pathways.

The ruinous nature of the castle presents many potential hazards.

- The perimeter of the castle is enclosed by a stone curtain wall, which is variable in height, with some metal fencing.
- The south curtain wall has an opening with a restraining bar; there is a short drop to stony ground.
- The east wall has two narrow openings, leading to the rocky shoreline and a tidal inlet with sudden drops.
- The west wall has low-level walls and unfenced areas, with steep drops beyond.
- The north wall is enclosed by a metal fence about one metre high, with a sheer cliff face.
- The grounds around the castle are sloping and undulating.
- Paths are mown through the grass to define a preferred route. Other surfaces are paved or gravelled, all of which can get wet and slippery.
- The ground floors of the gatehouse have dark passages, with low-level lighting.
- There are short, sheer drops from the window embrasures.
- The upper floors of the gatehouse are accessed by a spiral staircase, which has uneven steps.
- There is a short flight of steep, wooden and stone steps to the room above the gatehouse.
- The viewing platform at the top of the spiral staircase is accessible by very small groups only.
- Walls are rough and contain uneven, and often sharp stones.
- Climbing on the walls is not permitted and poses a significant hazard.

Dunstanburgh Castle is home to a wide variety of wildlife.

- Livestock graze in the fields on the approach to the castle. These animals can bite and kick and should not be approached.
- Livestock graze in the castle meadow during certain months of the year. These animals can bite and kick and should not be approached.
- There are animals and birds on site and their droppings can present a zoonotic hazard; there is no piped water to the castle, but hand sanitiser is available on site and can be used by visitors prior to eating.