



Risk information for schools

The Edinburgh International Book Festival has been running since 1983. To date there have been no reportable accidents, and the overall ranking of risk on site is low. Every year, City of Edinburgh Council officials inspect the site before opening to ensure it meets the safety standards required for the issue of a public entertainment licence. Book Festival staff are present throughout the site and are all trained to ensure the safety of the public.

There are elements of your group's safety that are your responsibility. In particular, our site is open to the public and you must ensure that your group is adequately controlled and supervised at all times. Below we have included some information about the Book Festival that may help you plan your visit, with particular relevance if you are required to carry out a risk assessment prior to your school's visit.

Getting here:

The Book Festival is situated in Charlotte Square Gardens and George Street in the West End of the city centre. The main entrance gate to the Gardens is on the east side of Charlotte Square, opposite the end of George Street. Our central location means that parking is restricted. We advise using public transport as a greener and more convenient option.

Buses should drop off on the north side of Charlotte Square. A Road Crossing Assistant will be available by the bus drop-off point during the day to assist your group.

Some schools events take place in our Spark Theatre on George Street, which can be accessed from several points between Castle Street and Charlotte Square. If your event is here, you can still come into the Gardens before or after to explore the site and visit our Garden Bookshop. There is a pedestrian crossing between the sites, although there may not always be a Road Crossing Assistant present.

Please note: there is no level access from the north side of the square to the Book Festival site. There are 3 steps down from the pavement to the road and 5 steps up to the pavement around the Gardens. If you require level access to the site, we recommend that the bus pulls up on the south side of the Square where there is level access. This route takes you across the pedestrian crossing over South Charlotte Street, left up to George Street and then across the pedestrian crossing at the end of George Street into the Gardens. The south side of the Gardens has a busy two-way road. The rest of the Square has much lighter two-way traffic.

Please allow plenty of time before your event in case of any delays resulting from traffic around the Square.

If your first event is in Charlotte Square, you will be checked in by our Front of House staff in the Entrance Tent. If your first event is in the Spark Theatre on George Street, you should check in with our Front of House staff in George Street. They will check your numbers of pupils and adults and direct you to the correct venue.

Our site:

The general public have free access to the Gardens every day except for Baillie Gifford Gala Day (27 August 2019). There is park fencing around the Gardens and, in certain places, security fencing. Areas of the site not for public access are clearly marked with appropriate signage.

There are signed entrance and exit points to our George Street site. Fencing will be placed along the perimeter separating the public areas from the cycle path and pavements.

If you are attending an event on Baillie Gifford Gala Day, our Entrance Tent Front of House staff will check you in upon arrival.

Running is not permitted on site as it can be dangerous and creates noise on the wooden walkways, which is disruptive when events are on in our venues.

There will be bars selling alcohol to the public during licensed hours. There have been no incidents related to this to date.

There will be drinks, light refreshments and snacks on sale in our cafés daily. There are two drinking water taps available in the Gardens for refilling water bottles. Children should be supervised whilst using these taps.

Pupils are welcome to bring their own packed lunches, but please be aware that we can't guarantee shelter for lunches during inclement weather, except on Gala Day.

There is First Aid available for all customers on site.

There are toilets available for all customers on site.

We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and have recycling bins around site for paper, glass, plastic, cans and food waste. Please encourage your group to make full use of these facilities and ask a member of staff if assistance is required.

Fire exits are clearly marked with signage and emergency lighting. Our staff have been fully trained in fire procedures and have access to relevant equipment throughout the site. In the event of emergency, please contact the nearest member of staff and follow their instructions.

In the event of a fire or evacuation, our Front of House team will escort you from the venue to a place of safety.

Our events:

When queuing for events, please do not block the entrances or exits. Our staff may ask you to move your group to keep the walkways clear. Please keep any noise disruption from your group to a minimum whilst queuing and going in or out of events.

Our Front of House staff will direct your group to their seats.

Q&A with the author is a usual part of the majority of our events. Audience participation is welcome during an event at the direction of the author. Climbing on stage or around the venue is not permitted.

After the event, the author is often available to sign books in our Garden Bookshop, Signing Tent or Baillie Gifford Imagination Lab.

Late entry to events is only possible if there is a suitable break in the performance or accessible space in the venue without causing disruption. Please ensure you arrive in plenty of time to avoid any possible disruption to the authors on stage or the other school groups attending.