



Educational Visits Policy

Approved by the Trust Board	December 2024
Review cycle	2 years
Policy due for review by Local Governing Body	December 2026

Key staff: Educational Visits Co-ordinator - Leadership Lead Educational Visits Lead Teacher Headteacher Chair of Governing Body

Introduction

Educational trips and visits provide an excellent opportunity for personal growth of students. They can have a positive effect on students' self-esteem and can significantly improve many skills including their ability to work with others, powers of investigation and improved understanding of their surroundings. They are an integral part of the life of children and young people and can enhance the quality of their educational experience, providing opportunities which cannot be offered easily in a school setting.

It is important that all visits are well managed and risks assessed to ensure children get the very most out of their experience in an environment which encourages 'safe' risk-taking.

Scope

This document aims to provide advice and guidance which will enable those involved with educational visits to have confidence in knowing they have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of those in their care, their colleagues and themselves, and have minimised the likelihood of anything going seriously wrong and maximising the benefit to those taking part.

Nore Academy has adopted most of the national guidance published by the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP). This provides detailed guidance about many aspects off-site visits and the advice contained within it also forms part of this policy. In order to keep this policy succinct, links have been provided, where more detailed guidance is appropriate. The OEAP guidance incorporates a regular update process to ensure that all documents are kept up-to-date.

Nore Academy is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment as well as ensuring safe practice. It is hoped that all those involved in educational visits will encourage young people to enjoy the outdoor environment responsibly and take care of their surroundings (for example, by following the Countryside Code and leaving no trace) and will take practicable steps to uphold the principle of sustainability.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Educational Visits Lead Teacher and EVC will be the Lead Teacher for PE. They are competent, with significant practical experience in leading and managing a range of visits.

The EVC may delegate the responsibility for the administration associated with the role.

The EVC should attend initial training, and annual updates as provided by the LA or other agencies.

The Headteacher, advised by the EVC, must ensure that visit leaders are competent to carry out their responsibilities.

Advice and Support

Kent County Council provide advice, training and support for EVCs and headteachers and the sharing of good practice through the Outdoor Education Adviser. Similarly, advice relating to health and safety aspects of visits is also available from Corporate Health and Safety.

Notification and Approval of Visits

The Headteacher may approve all visits except for:

- Visits with a destination abroad
- Visits involving an overnight stay
- Visits that include adventurous activities

The Local Authority (LA) approves and processes these types of journey using EVOLVE on-line educational visits system.

Applications for LA approval should be submitted at least half a term in advance. Some types of visits (such as ski trips and overseas expeditions) involve an enhanced planning process and in these cases requests for approval should be submitted at least a term in advance.

The Outdoor Education Adviser can advise over whether a particular activity requires LA approval.

Visit Planning

A thorough planning process, usually involving a preliminary visit, is integral to the success and safety of a visit. Where a provider is being used for the first time, and is not recognised by a suitable body, then it will be necessary to seek further assurance using form EVF 1.

Assessing Venues and Providers

There are several nationally recognised schemes that provide assurances about activity providers including:

- The LOtC Quality Badge
- AALS licensing
- Adventuremark
- NGB centre approval schemes (where the only provision is a single, specialist activity)

If the provider holds such accreditation, there should be no need to seek further assurances.

Overseas Travel

Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/> for further information regarding overseas travel. The Department of Health

offers further advice about healthcare abroad including travel immunisations. Destination-specific travel advice is available from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Inclusion

Staff planning off-site visits should make every effort to ensure that visits are available to all children regardless of background, abilities or specific needs. The requirements previously contained in the Disability Discrimination Act have now been absorbed into the Equality Act.

Charging Policy

Complex legislation covers what parents may or may not be asked to pay towards the cost of a visit. In most cases Pupil Premium funding may be appropriate; advice may be sought from the Business Manager.

Supervision

Ratios and other arrangements for the effective supervision of children should be determined as part of the risk assessment process by consideration of factors including:

- Age (including the developmental age) of the group
- Ability of the group and individuals (including special needs, behavioural, medical and vulnerable characteristics)
- Nature and location of the activity (including the type of activity, duration, skill levels involved, as well as the time of year and prevailing conditions)
- Staff competence
- Gender issues

Remote Supervision

Young people must be supervised throughout all visits. At times, they may be unaccompanied by a member of staff or other responsible adult, e.g. during Duke of Edinburgh expeditions or 'down-time' in a shopping mall. This is known as *remote* supervision. Remotely supervised activities can bring purposeful educational benefits, and the progression from dependence to independence is to be encouraged. In addition to considering the benefits of the activity, staff should also ensure that reasonably practicable safety precautions are taken. The decision to allow remote supervision should be based on professional judgement taking into account such factors as:

- Prior knowledge of the individuals (including their maturity and levels of responsibility)
- Venue and conditions
- The activity taking place
- Preparatory training
- Competence of the supervising staff

Where remote supervision is undertaken during an expedition (such as DfE) then the advice contained in the Remote Supervision Guidance Notes published by Mountain Leader Training England (MLTE) should be followed.

Vetting and DBS Checks

National guidance applies to the requirement for employees and volunteer helpers to undergo vetting and DBS checks. Advice may be sought from the Business Manager.

Insurance

Where the school engages external providers to deliver activities, then it is recommended that the provider should have Public Liability insurance in place to the value of £50 million. Where providers have a lower limit to their cover then the advice of the LA's Insurance Section should be sought.

Parent/Carer Consent

It is established good practice to inform parents/carers that a visit or activity is to take place, and residential visits, adventurous activities or activities for which a charge is made will need specific informed consent, including agreement to any payment or cancellation terms. It is acceptable to obtain 'blanket consent' for visits that take place during the School day (e.g. at the start of an academic year or during the admission process) as a means of reducing the paperwork associated with routine activities and visits.

Where blanket consent is in place it remains good practice to inform parents/carers that a visit or activity is to take place (and this may be a useful opportunity both to remind them that they have given consent and to give them an opportunity to withdraw it).

Consent forms can be used as a means to update information about young people's medical issues or food allergies and parental contact details etc. It is essential that this information is available providing relevant and up-to-date information to activity/visit leaders.

Advice may be sought from the EVC.

First Aid

For all visits there should be an adult responsible for first aid arrangements, and a very basic level of first aid support must be available at all times. This will require that one or more of the staff leading or accompanying a visit must:

- Know how to access qualified first aid support.
- Have a working knowledge of some simple first aid, and are competent to use the first aid materials carried with the group.

Transport

Where transport is provided in private cars or minibuses then the council's policy Driving Safely should be referred to.

- **Private cars:** Where a private car (belonging to staff or parents) is to be used to transport children then this must be approved by the Headteacher.

The LA does not take out insurance to cover any claim as a result of transport provided in a private car, and it is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that his/her policy includes appropriate cover.

- **Coaches:** The LA does not 'approve' coach companies. Professional operators of buses and coaches are legally required to hold a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) Operators' Licence. Some coach companies are also accredited under the Coach Marque scheme (although this is not a requirement).
- **Minibuses:** The licence requirements for driving a minibus are complex and are explained fully at What Can You Drive. More information on driving, driving hours and minibus permits is contained in the Minibus guide. Further detailed guidance and advice is available from RoSPA.
- **Public Transport:** The use of public transport for visits can reduce costs significantly, and potentially enable more visits to be made and more children or young people to participate. Within Greater London, Transport for London (TfL) organises the School Party Travel Scheme which offers free off-peak school group travel on buses, tube, tram and DLR. London Overground companies need to be contacted directly for their schemes.

Assessing and Managing Risks

Good planning and management of visits or activities should be about reducing risks to an acceptable level, taking into account the potential benefits to the learners or participants – a 'risk benefit assessment'.

Although some paperwork may be required in order to record and communicate decisions made, risk management should be a logical process – centred upon competent staff – as follows:

1. **Establish clear aims and identify anticipated outcomes:** Essential in making sound judgements as to whether the level of risk is acceptable.
2. **Make effective use of generic risk assessments:** These are a starting point for developing a safety management plan – based on experience of similar visits. They provide generic prompts to leaders and set out the risks usually associated with that type of activity, as well as how those risks can be controlled.
3. **Undertake event-specific risk assessments (where required):** Using the generic risk assessment as a prompt, consider the chosen venue, the unique characteristics of the particular group, and any activity-specific needs, including the environment, accommodation and the leaders and factors such as transport, to identify if the generic risk assessment needs to be revised or added to in any way.
4. **On-going or dynamic risk assessment:** This steers how decisions are made while the visit is taking place and is about making sound decisions and applying appropriate group management strategies in response to changing circumstances. Having a 'Plan B' can often aid the dynamic risk assessment on what action to take next.
5. **Complete the review process:** The lessons learnt from Ongoing/Dynamic Risk Assessments should inform future visits plans and be incorporated as refinements to generic risk assessments. A review process should be seen as an essential part of sound risk management. A more in-depth description of the risk management process is included in the Model visits risk assessment.

Emergency Planning

Even when accepted principles of safe practice are followed, accidents may occur. This eventually should be prepared for, so that in the stressful event of a serious incident, the best course of action will be taken by the group leader. Home contacts and the party leader should have access to the full list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of parents/carers and the next of kin of staff, and be familiar with the Emergency planning guide.

Accident/Incident Reporting

Information about reporting accidents, incidents or near misses, and report forms, can be found on the Council's website.

Visit Evaluation

Rigorous evaluation of individual visits or of a series of visits or activities, is the key to maximising the benefits and learning outcomes of these experiences.

Where visits have been approved by the LA, an evaluation form request is automatically sent by email to the party leader after the visit has ended. The leader should complete the online evaluation form promptly. Collecting accurate information enables colleagues to recommend good provision to others – and to investigate any concerns that may arise.

Monitoring

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the monitoring of visits organised at Nore Academy; although in practice the EVC may be best placed to carry out routine monitoring. Monitoring may take place by:

- Using the online approval system EVOLVE, including LA approval of visits.
- A review with the Headteacher/EVC/Visit Leaders of specific issues and relevant procedures and documentation, including policies, risk assessments and plans for specific visits.
- Direct observation of a visit in progress.

Where visits have been approved by the LA, a sample of visits in progress will be monitored by the OEA. This monitoring process is intended to be positive, supportive and developmental, and feedback and recommendations will be given. In many cases this feedback will be largely concerned with the quality of provision of the centre or destination being visited. Any areas of significant risk will be referred to the Headteacher and the provider informed.

Person responsible for updating this policy:

Educational Visits Coordinator

stress for staff leading visits who may have to respond dynamically to any change in circumstances or plans, to reassure children that there is no need to worry unduly, and to ensure that parents can be confident that the schools' visit planning is thorough and that they are kept appropriately informed about the action taken should any incident arise.

Visit planning

- Ensure that visits outside of the immediate local area are added to the EVOLVE system. The Outdoor Education Adviser monitors the system and will then be able to inform schools about any known issues
- Stay alert to local and national news relating to your destination. Consider following X (formerly known as Twitter) feeds from BBC News, Metropolitan Police or the local Police force, Transport for London or other overground rail providers as appropriate, and any major venues being visited.
- Ensure a 'home contact' is identified at school (– the role of the home contact is to receive emergency calls from the visit leader and then cascade information/contact the various key people on behalf of the trip leader). Where the home contact is not a member of the senior leadership team, then is vital that they are able to contact a member of the SLT.
- Consider whether normal supervision ratios would be adequate if the group was separated, and how the leadership team would manage an enforced group split.
- Brief children what to do if they are separated from each other. Tell younger children to ask for help from venue staff or a police officer. Designate a specific meeting point for older students. Consider all children being given an emergency contact card containing contact numbers for the visit leader, other visit staff and the school.
- Where older students may be allowed periods of indirect supervision, consider whether that is appropriate and what instructions students are given in the event of a planned meeting point being inaccessible.
- Liaise with venues such as museums, theatres, galleries, etc. in advance so that you know what their security arrangements are for school groups, and where they will evacuate the premises to.
- Take into account that it may take longer to enter some sites, due to bag checks.
- Assess whether any additional arrangements or supervision are needed for children with SEND including whether additional medication may be needed if the group are delayed.
- Plan alternative travel routes should a station or train line become unavailable and consider using alternative transportation systems. For example, if you are travelling by Tube, consider what buses you can use to get back home, if the Tube service is suspended.
- When older students may have been expected to travel independently or been dismissed from locations other than school (with parental consent), consider whether to revise those arrangements.
- Discuss with children, and any parent volunteers, their appropriate use of mobile phones and social media during the visit.

During a visit

- Remind children to be alert and report anything concerning to staff.
- Minimise waiting times around entrances to major public sites, and at busy transport venues.
- Carry out frequent head counts.
- Ensure staff have each-others' contact details available.

- When travelling by coach ensure that the visit leader and coach driver(s) are in contact, so that should a planned meeting point become inaccessible an alternative can be arranged.
- Carry sufficient water and snacks in case of travel disruption or long delays. Where age appropriate, encourage children to retain a snack for the journey home.
- Consider the benefit of younger children wearing easily identifiable items (such as hi-vis jackets or brightly coloured caps) to ease identification of children in crowded areas.

In the event of an incident

- Visit leaders should attempt to keep everyone together, but may have to be prepared for the party to be separated into smaller more manageable groups to allow more speedy movement. Group leaders should liaise with the visit leader to ensure all children and staff are accounted for.
- Emphasise to children and other adults the importance of not using mobile phones to contact parents, friends or family until parents or carers have been informed and this has been agreed with the home contact.
- Notify the home contact as soon as possible, and give the whereabouts of the group and the action that will be taken. If the group has become separated and communication cannot be established between groups and the visit leader then group leaders should inform the home contact directly of those accounted for and their whereabouts.
- Continue to monitor Twitter feeds from relevant sources and follow advice given.
- The home contact should inform the Outdoor Education Adviser and Health and Safety Adviser as soon as possible, and use the normal communication methods to inform parents where possible. Ensure only accurate and unambiguous information is given and advise when updates will be given. Emphasise if possible that the group are all accounted for. The school's Chair of Governors should also be informed.
- Home contacts may need to activate the school incident plan, depending on the circumstances of the incident.
- Arrange return transport when this is possible, and advise parents of the meeting time when known, and meeting point if this is not to be the school itself.

Following the incident

- Arrange a debrief between the visit leader and accompanying staff, home contact and other senior leadership as appropriate.
- Communicate to parents in writing the action taken.
- Consider how the incident is followed up in school (e.g. assemblies/ PSHE lessons) and whether it is necessary to draw on outside expertise from Educational Psychology colleagues or other counselling services.