

## **Educational Visits Policy**

### **Reference documents:**

London Borough of Redbridge – Guidance for Off-Site Visits and  
Related Activities with National Guidance & 'EVOLVE' 2014

Department for Education – Health & Safety Advice on Legal Duties  
And Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies  
Dated February 2014

Health & Safety Executive (HSE) – School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities  
Tackling the Health and Safety Myths  
Dated June 2011

## INTRODUCTION

Any visit that leaves the school grounds is covered by this policy, whether as part of the curriculum, during school time, or outside the normal school day.

In addition to this Policy, the school:-

- adopts the Local Authority's document: "Guidance for Educational Visits and Related Activities with National Guidance & EVOLVE;
- adopts the National Guidance [www.oeapng.info](http://www.oeapng.info) (as recommended by the LA);
- uses EVOLVE, the web-based planning, notification, monitoring and communication system for off-site activities.

Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) advice on 'School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities' is that 'school visits have clear benefits for students', and large numbers of successful visits and outdoor learning activities take place each year.

The potential hazards, which this policy refers to, should not discourage teachers. No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally accident free but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do happen. The management of health and safety on visits is part of a school's overall policy on health and safety.

HSE fully supports schools arranging a wide range of out-of-school activities, which can include visits to museums, trips to the countryside or taking part in challenging and adventurous activities. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken and unfounded health and safety concerns do not create obstacles that prevent these from happening.

## THE VALUE OF SCHOOL VISITS

The school acknowledges the immense value of off-site visits and related activities to young people, and fully supports and encourages those that are well planned and managed. School visits are a valuable part of the educational experience offered to the students and the school fully recognises that learning outside the classroom helps to bring the curriculum to life – it provides deeper subject learning and increases self-confidence. It also helps students develop their risk awareness and prepares them for their future working lives. Striking the right balance between protecting students from risk and allowing them to learn from school visits is a challenge, but getting this balance right is essential for realising all these benefits in practice. The value of the experiences provided can be summarised in promoting:

- **environmental awareness:** a rich variety of environments, both natural and man-made, can be experienced and studied;
- **aesthetic and creative development:** particularly relating to project or coursework;
- **social skills:** residential experiences in particular offer the students the opportunity to develop the skills associated with living and working together;
- **teamwork:** through activities such as problem-solving and decision-making;
- **personal skills:** helping students to gain an initiative, resourcefulness and self-reliance.

However, the educational value of a visit must be evaluated in relation to:

- how the visit enhances the school curriculum;
- the amount of time which can justifiably be spent on the visit;
- classes the students will miss as a result of the visit;
- the disruption to other classes in the school as a result of the visit;
- how the school will run efficiently in the absence of the teachers who would be accompanying the visit.

## TYPES OF VISIT & APPROVAL

There are three types of visit:-

1. **Visits/activities that fall within the “School Learning Area” see (Appendix 1), are part of the normal curriculum and take place during the normal school day (8.30am-4pm).** Trip leaders should follow the “School Learning Area” Operating Procedure.
2. **Other non-residential visits within the UK that do not involve an adventurous activity.** These are entered onto EVOLVE by the Trip Leader and submitted to the EVC for checking. The EVC then submits this to the Designated SLT member for approval.
3. **Visits that are overseas, residential or involve an adventurous activity.** As point 2 but the Designated SLT member authorises this and then submits it to the Governing Body for approval.

## ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Trip Leaders** are required to gain outline approval of their intended visit from the EVC before making any commitments. There on in, they will be responsible for the planning of their visits and for entering these onto EVOLVE (where required) and ensuring that their visits comply with all the relevant guidance and requirements.

**The Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC)** will support and challenge colleagues over visits and learning outside of the classroom activities. The EVC is the first point of contact for advice on visit related matters, and will check final visit plans on EVOLVE before submitting them to the Designated SLT member for approval. The EVC sets up and manages staff accounts on EVOLVE and uploads generic school documents.

**The Designated SLT member** has responsibility for authorising all visits and for submitting all overseas, residential and adventurous activity visits to the Governing Body for approval.

**The Governing Body’s** role is responsible for the final approval of all visits that are either overseas, residential, and/or involve an adventurous activity.

**Teachers, associate staff, volunteers and students** all have responsibilities during the course of any off-site activity in which they are participating.

**Volunteer helpers** can be used to great effect. However, the role of the volunteer helpers must be very carefully considered and their legal responsibilities clearly understood. To offer voluntary help does not negate legal responsibility:

- the Headteacher must authorise all voluntary helpers;
- volunteers accompanying a visit should be given a copy of the school’s Educational Visits Policy and Procedure;
- every volunteer accompanying a visit should know precisely what their role is and understand that they have a responsibility to ensure they carry out that role;
- volunteers must understand that they have a responsibility to following the instructions of the visit leader.

**Should there be a need to investigate an incident or accident that has occurred during the course of an off-site visit, the way in which the school policy has been undertaken will form a substantial part of the evidence used to determine culpability.**

## STAFF COMPETENCE

We recognise that staff competence is the single most important factor in the safe management of visits, and so we support staff in developing their competence in the following ways:-

- An apprenticeship system, whereby staff new to visits assist and work alongside experienced trip leaders before taking on a leadership role;
- Supervision by senior staff on some educational visits;
- Support for staff to attend training courses relevant to their role, where necessary.

In deciding whether a member of staff is competent to be a visit leader, the EVC and Designated SLT member will take into account the following factors:-

- Relevant experience;
- Previous relevant training;
- The prospective leader's ability to make dynamic risk management judgements and take charge in the event of an emergency;
- Knowledge of the students, the venue and the activities to be undertaken.

## ORGANISING SCHOOL VISITS

**All staff are required to plan and execute visits in line with this policy and the school's Educational Visits Procedure.**

For the educational value of a visit to be fully realised it is essential that there is consideration of the follow-up activities, which will take place when the students return to school.

All staff in the school have the option to take part in visits. However, no NQT or inexperienced members of staff will be allowed to lead a trip. If for any reason a member of staff does not wish to participate in trips, they should be prepared to cover for others.

Educational visits should be available to all of the students concerned, and should be organised accordingly, with particular consideration being given, especially when selecting venues and organising transport, to any students who have some sensory impairment or physical handicap.

A major consideration in the organisation of any visit must be the safety of the participants, and in this and all other respects, both CSA and DFE guidelines, as well as the school policy and guidelines must be complied with. The minimum adult-to-student ratio is dependent on the nature of the visit and the age of the students; staff must therefore comply with all school, CSA, DFE requirements and regulations. The organiser must be satisfied that the venue is a suitable one, with all that this entails, and, where applicable, that any officials from the venue who will be involved in the visit, are qualified and dependable. A pre-visit is always recommended in order that a comprehensive risk assessment can be completed. To help fulfil the health and safety obligations for visits, the school has an **Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC)** to support the staff. They have practical experience in all aspects of planning and management of educational visits such as:

- ensuring that each visit meets the school's and LA's requirements;
- ensuring competency of the trip leader;
- providing advice as to the organisation and booking of venues, accommodation, travel and insurance;
- ensuring that risk assessments have been carried out in accordance with LA guidelines.

They will:

- be kept up to date with all aspects of educational visits through training which will be carried out every two years;
- support the school in ensuring that competent staff are assigned to lead and accompany visits with approval and other decisions;
- ensure that a school policy is in place for educational visits and off-site visits, and that this is updated as necessary, and readily available to staff;
- review systems as appropriate;
- seek advice from the LA, or other personnel, where necessary.

## VISIT PLANNING/PROCESS & APPROVAL

Comprehensive details of planning of a trip are found in the school's Educational Procedure (also on the L:drive) and should be read in conjunction with this document as well as the resources and links available on the EVOLVE websites. The main points for a Visit Leader to consider when planning a trip are:

- providing adequate notice of the visit and obtain consent from members of the SLT, their line manager and the EVC before arranging the appropriate cover;
- ensuring an appropriate risk assessment is carried out;
- informing the parents;
- informing the Catering Manager if students will be away from school at lunch time;
- informing the staff with pastoral responsibility for the students;
- ensuring all the necessary medical checks are made;
- ensuring staff downtime on residential trips;
- ensuring that all the financial obligations are met.

## WAYS IN WHICH VISITS CAN BE ORGANISED

- Using a **commercial travel agent** who has experience of organising journeys, to arrange the travel, accommodation and visits. In selecting a travel agent, it is advisable to check for membership of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) who operate a strict code of conduct and whose members have compulsory financial backing.
- Using the services of a **reputable voluntary body** established to promote school journeys, i.e. the School Journey Association of London or the International Service of the Youth Hostels Association.
- **Non-licensed Activity Centres:** LA Guidance for Off-Site Visits and Related Activities with 'EVOLVE' gives detailed advice on assurances which must be obtained from outdoor activity centres before any contact is signed. All correspondence between the school and a centre should be kept together with any notes from a preliminary visit, either to the centre, or by a representative of the centre to the school.
- **Licensed Activity Centres:** The Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995 and the Associated Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (1996) require certain activities to be licensed when commercial companies sell them or where local Authorities provide them with or without charge. The activities that require a licence are:
  - caving (including explorations of disused mines, cave diving and pot holing);
  - on a purpose built wall or tower;
  - trekking, including mountain biking, off-piste skiing and horseback riding when this is undertaken in a remote area (more than 30 minutes from the nearest road or refuge) of moorland or mountain country;
  - watersports such as canoeing, rafting and sailing undertaken on the sea, in tidal water or where water is more than 100 metres across or known to be turbulent.

A licence holder has demonstrated that the Licensing Authority are satisfied that appropriate safety measures have been taken for the provision of the activity licensed. The **trip leader** should provide the **Designated SLT member** with evidence that the provider is licensed. The presence of a license does not indicate any standard of accommodation or catering. The school staff (and approved volunteers) accompanying the activity retain overall responsibility for the students throughout the visit, even when the students are being instructed by a member of the provider's staff.

- **Using an external provider or tour operator:** The decision about the use of an external provider or tour operator is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governing Body. Where appropriate, the school will consider the requirements under 'best value'. It is the duty of the Visit Leader to seek written assurances from the external provider or tour operator being used, that their provision complies with the school's and LA's policy. Only when this has been received and approved should the visit proceed. All provider's should hold an LOtC Quality Badge [www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk) or [www.kaddi.com](http://www.kaddi.com) or a provider form should be satisfactorily completed by the provider and submitted to the EVC.

## PREPARATION FOR AN OFF-SITE VISIT

### General Risk Assessments

As far as safety planning is concerned, preparations should identify potential dangers and difficulties, which could arise and then set up strategies to avoid these dangers or to keep them at acceptable levels. In order to do this, knowledge of the students on the visit and the location is required. Those involved in organising the visit should be aware of, and familiar with, the activities and objectives of the off-site visit.

The five major considerations for risk assessment are:

- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps can be taken in an emergency?

When assessing the general risks in relation to school visits, the following factors will be considered:

- the type of activity and the level at which it is undertaken;
- the age/competence, fitness and temperament of the staff and students;
- any special educational or medical needs of students and staff;
- supervision ratios (as per the table in the Visits folder) and the competence, experience and qualification of supervisory staff;
- the location, routes and modes of transport and the potential risks;
- the time of the day and the time of year.
- the emergency procedures.

When a risk assessment is being prepared and carried out, it should not be seen as something which prevents an activity taking place in safe circumstances and a controlled environment. However, the safety of the students is always the paramount consideration. Students should never be put in a situation which exposes them to an unacceptable level of risk.

### On-going Risk Assessments

Risks should be monitored throughout the visit, and where appropriate activities will be modified or curtailed to suit changed or changing circumstances. All trip leaders will have prepared a "**Plan B**" option. This is the responsibility of all involved in the visit, not just the visit leader. On-going risk assessments do not normally need to be recorded until the visit is reviewed.

## Event Specific Risk Assessments

Educational visits that fall outside the School Learning Area require the completion of an Event Specific Risk Assessment. Items in this area should include:-

- the hazards of the environment/venue being visited;
- details of the Plan B.

## Staffing, Ratios and Supervision

The school must ensure that there is an **'effective supervision' level at all times** and that this level of supervision is approved by the EVC, Designated SLT member and Governing Body. The level of supervision for a visit must be based on risk assessment, the staff ratios as specified in the Education Visits Procedure and will be determined by other factors such as:

- the type, level and duration of activity;
- the nature and requirements of individuals within the group, including those with additional needs;
- the experience and competence of staff and other adults;
- the venue, time of year and prevailing/predicted conditions;
- the likelihood and consequences of any reasonably foreseeable changes (*contingency or 'Plan B' options*).

A visit will not go ahead where the EVC, Designated SLT member or Headteacher are not satisfied that an appropriate level of supervision exists.

Staff assigned to support the special needs of an individual, will not be included in the overall staffing ratio - their responsibility will not include the wider group.

All school staff are DBS checked.

Whilst student to staff ratios for school visits are not prescribed in law, levels of supervision e.g. student to staff ratios for school visits, should be determined by those planning the visit, on the basis of risk assessment - taking into account the activity to be undertaken and the age and maturity of the students. There must be clear boundaries and clear lines of communication.

## Remote Supervision

Students will be supervised throughout all visits, however, at time they may be unaccompanied by a member of staff or other responsible adult e.g. 'down time' in a shopping mall etc. 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.

Staff will ensure that reasonably practicable safety precautions are taken and remote supervision will 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;
- the competence of the supervising staff;
- the emergency systems in place.

## Communication

Communication is an important part of preparation. The Headteacher of the school needs to know exactly where the location is, what activities and facilities are on offer and how these are to be supervised. The extent of this information depends on:

- a) the location in question;
- b) the age of the students;
- c) whether the staff have been there before.

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For example, relatively little information is needed for a visit to a museum, whereas more information and assurances are needed about the standards expected from outdoor activity centres.

### **Leading and adventurous activity**

A member of staff intending to **lead** (i.e. supervise or instruct) an adventurous activity must be specifically approved by the Governing Body to do so. They should first provide details of all relevant qualifications (e.g. instructor certificates, first aid, etc.).

Where approval is not granted to lead the activity, the Visit Form will be returned to the EVC via the Governing Body, with an attached note. Where this is the case the activity **must not** take place.

### **Criteria for approval**

Approval will normally be granted where the leader of the activity is appropriately qualified through the relevant National Governing Body, or where their 'Statement of Competence' has been verified in writing by a suitably experienced and qualified 'technical adviser'. For most activities the level of competence required of a technical adviser will be stipulated by the activity's National Governing Body. In some cases approval **may** be granted where no qualification is held, but the person concerned is deemed to have a sufficient level of competence in addition to recent relevant experience. Approval may also be subject to certain conditions which the Governing Body will stipulate.

The approval granted is solely in respect of a member of staff's authorisation to lead **the activity specified**. It is not an indication in respect of other aspects of the visits (for example general management and supervision skills, on-going risk assessments, etc.), which may be the responsibility of the Governing Body and Headteacher.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

A critical incident is any incident where events go beyond the normal coping mechanisms and experience of the trip leader/team.

The school has an emergency plan in place to deal with a critical incident during a visit (see Appendix 2). All staff on visits are familiar with this plan and it is tested at least bi-annually and following any major staffing changes.

When an incident overwhelms the school's emergency response capability, or where it involves serious injury or fatality, or where it is likely to attract media attention then assistance will be sought from the Local Authority.

## **EDUCATIONAL VISITS CHECKLIST**

The school's checklist forms part of the risk management process for visits and off-site activities. This has been adapted from the Local Authority's generic checklist. A visit will only go ahead if the trip leader answers the questions satisfactorily when seeking outline permission from the EVC.

## **PARENTAL CONSENT**

Consent is not required for activities within the School Learning Area that are part of the normal curriculum during normal school time (8.30am-3pm).

As part of the school's good practice, the parents/carers will be informed in advance when their child leaves the school site.

Consent forms will be used when a visit falls outside of the normal school time. It is the parents/carer's responsibility to keep the school updated of any changes in contact details and/or medical information.

## **INCLUSION**

In line with the Equality Act 2010, the school will not discriminate against disabled participants because of their disability, without material or substantial justification and will make reasonable adjustments to avoid participants being placed at a substantial disadvantage. The school will not put employees or participants at inappropriate risk if a health and safety issue arises and although adjustments to include a disabled young person will be made this should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity.

It should be remembered that the benefits of school visits should be available to students with special educational needs but their needs must be considered when planning and during the visit:

- when deciding staff ratios;
- whether there are any special skills required of the adults to supervise or care for the students;
- particularly with a residential visit, students with SEN may not have spent time away from home before and discussions with parents may help to relieve some of the anxiety which is likely to be felt;
- the trip leader may need to seek parental approval for emergency medical treatment during the time of the visit.

The trip leader and supervisory staff should have the necessary information about the nature of the student's special needs. It should be clearly understood how these would affect the student's ability to take part in the activities.

## **STAFF CONDUCT**

Whilst on an educational visit, all staff members or representatives of the school must conduct themselves in a manner which falls in line with the school's ethos and would not impede their ability to act in the event of an emergency. All teaching staff are expected to adhere to the Teachers' Standards (revised June 2013) during the entire trip which may be outside of their normal contracted hours.

## **FIRST AID/MEDICAL**

All medical checks are the responsibility of the trip leader and should be carried out in plenty of time to make the appropriate arrangements. It would be ideal to have at least one responsible adult with a good working knowledge of first aid appropriate to the environment (e.g. urban, remote, water, etc.) however, this may not always be possible. In the absence of this it should be decided how first aid will be administered especially in circumstances where it is likely that access by the emergency services may be delayed. The trip leader should make a professional judgement regarding the level of first aid required. A first-aid kit, appropriate to the visit, should be carried during the course of the off-site activity. A first-aider must be included in the staff/student ratio for every visit.

## **CHARGING**

### **Remission Arrangements**

Depending upon the family circumstances the school can make a contribution, at the Headteacher's discretion, towards the cost of the visit. The Headteacher/the Governing Body may subsidise in full or part in respect of a student's trip costs, if it feels it is reasonable in the circumstances.

## **INSURANCE**

When a visit is undertaken as a part of the normal school curriculum, even though it is conducted off the school premises, the insurance arrangements for the school will prevail. However, if a school visit includes time out of normal school hours, there may be a requirement for additional insurance cover. The trip leader will always check to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is provided before a visit is undertaken. There are many types of insurance that it might be necessary to acquire, depending on the type of activity to be undertaken:

- public liability;
- employer's liability;
- personal accident cover for all adults, including teachers;
- medical treatment costs;
- specialised activity risks;
- evacuation for medical reasons when abroad;
- loss or damage of hired equipment;
- emergency costs, including accommodation and transport;
- compensation against cancellation or delay, loss of personal possessions, baggage and money;
- legal assistance in the recovery of claims;
- failure or bankruptcy of an agent or travel company;
- travel abroad.

When a tour operator is used the type and extent of the insurance provided must be ascertained. School journey insurance should provide for medical and associated expenses, personal accident, cancellation/curtailment and personal effects and money.

Insurance must be taken out for all visits abroad, high-risk activities and overnight stays at home and abroad. In addition, the NHS (European Health Insurance Card) EHIC should be obtained and completed for ALL visits abroad for all participants.

Advice regarding insurance may be sought from the Local Authority's Insurance Section.

## **TRANSPORT**

In many instances transport will be needed for the off-site visit. Parents should always be informed of the type of transport it is intended to use.

### **Hire transport**

Only reputable companies should be used. Seat belts should be provided and used by all students and staff. The driver of the coach has no responsibility for the conduct and behaviour of the students on the transport. The school must provide sufficient supervisory staff to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the students required under the school's duty of care.

### **School minibus**

Where the school minibus is being used the requirements of the school policy should be closely adhered to. The driver of the bus cannot reasonably be expected to supervise the passengers whilst travelling, nor would it be reasonable to expect emergencies to be dealt with effectively if the driver is the only adult on board. The trip leader must include in their risk assessment the level of supervision required for the students travelling. Anyone driving the school minibus must be insured via the Local Authority and must have current authorisation to drive such vehicles having previously taken and passed the Authority's driving test for minibus drivers (permits to be renewed every 3 years).

### **Public transport**

When public transport is to be used, close supervision of the students must be ensured. Students should be prepared in advance concerning expectations of their behaviour. Where it is considered inappropriate to include a particular student because there is serious doubt about their ability to behave, it is appropriate to find a suitable alternative occupation for that student on the occasion of the visit. For public transport within the Greater London area, free travel can be gained by contacting "Transport for London".

### **Private use of cars**

Extreme caution should be exercised over the use of private cars, both of parents and staff. Where such transport is to be used members should be confident that vehicles and drivers are legal. The following details need to be current:

- valid driving licence;
- vehicle road fund licence and MOT certificate;
- vehicle insurance valid for carrying passengers on a school off-site visit during school time.

Where a **private (staff or volunteer) car** is to be used to transport young people then this should be approved by the Headteacher. The PRIVATE CAR Form must be completed and retained by the school on an annual basis.

### **OTHER TOPICS**

#### **Visits outside of normal school hours**

When educational visits are carried out outside of the normal school day, all trip leaders need to be aware of the students' arrangements for returning home and that all parents are aware of the return time and dismissal arrangements.

## APPENDIX 1 - SCHOOL LEARNING AREA

The school organises regular visits to a number of venues within the borough that either fall within the curriculum's requirements or would enhance the students' social and educational skills and knowledge. All visits organised to these venues do not require it to be uploaded onto EVOLVE, documentation, separate risk assessments or parental consent if it falls within the school day (8.30am-4pm). All trips which fall outside of these times will require full documentation.

However, good practice does require a letter of information being sent to the parent/carer to inform them that their child will be leaving the school site. A proforma letter is available to use on the L:drive in the VISITS folder.

These visits include:-

- Chadwell Heath High Road
- Green Lanes
- Ilford Library
- Romford Library
- Feeder Primary Schools
- Special Needs Schools
- Any Redbridge Secondary School
- Goodmayes Park
- Any Redbridge sports facility
- Redbridge Drama Centre
- Redbridge College

### Operating Procedure for the School Learning Area

The following are potentially significant issues/hazards within our School Learning Area:-

- Road traffic
- Other people/members of the public/animals
- Losing a student
- Uneven surfaces and slips, trips and falls
- Weather conditions
- Activity specific issues when doing environmental fieldwork (nettles, brambles, rubbish, etc.)
- Activity specific issues when carrying out Sports or dramatisation work including acting and dancing (falls, slips, etc.)

These are managed by a combination of the following:-

- The Designated SLT member or EVC must give verbal approval before a group leaves.
- Suitable cover must be agreed by the Cover Supervisor.
- Only staff judged competent to supervise groups in this environment are approved. A current list of approved staff is maintained by the EVC.
- The concept and Operating Procedure of the "School Learning Area" is explained to all new parents when their child joins the school.
- There will normally be a minimum of two adults present, except where the visit involves the sixth form students.
- Staff are familiar with the area/venue, including any "no go areas" and have practiced appropriate group management techniques.
- Students have been trained and have practiced standard techniques for road crossings in a group.
- All remotely supervised work in the School Learning Area is done in "buddy" pairs as a minimum.
- Students' clothing and footwear is checked for appropriateness prior to leaving school.
- Students' medical, educational and social needs will be checked by the trip leader and any appropriate adjustments will be made.
- Staff will deposit in the office a list of all students and staff attending, a proposed route and an estimated time of return.
- A school mobile is taken with each group and the office will have a note of the number.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment is taken when needed (e.g. gloves, goggles).