

FEDERATION OF ST. NICHOLAS C OF E MIDDLE SCHOOL, PINVIN, AND  
PINVIN C OF E FIRST SCHOOL



**POLICY ON OFFSITE VISITS**

**SC24**

Date approved at FGB	10.02.21
Statutory/ school policy status	Non-DfE statutory
Review period	3 years
Date of next review	Spring 2024

Chair of Governor's signature.....

Headteacher's signature.....

# **THE MANAGEMENT OF VISITS AND LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

## **Policy Scope**

The stated aim of Worcestershire County Council is to maximise the opportunities for children to learn through well planned visits and learning outside the classroom (LOtC) activities. All children (up to 18) either at school or under the partial or full care of the council are covered by this policy. To ensure that visits and LOtC activities are run by competent staff, maximise learning and are properly planned the council has adopted the Outdoor Education Activities Panel (OEAP) National Guidance as the standard; employees organising visits and LOtC activities for young people will follow the National Guidance (<http://oeapng.info/>).

External providers commissioned to deliver visits and LOtC activities will be expected to be appropriately licensed, qualified and hold a recognised quality standard such as the LOtC badge. Procurement tenders and contracts will explicitly state a requirement for providers to provide evidence of their competence and adherence to national guidance as a prerequisite to any provision of services.

This policy applies to all visits and LOtC activities whether or not they occur during normal school / working hours, at weekends or during the holidays.

## **1. Strategy**

The council strategy for visits and LOtC activities is to apply the same standards and systems across all schools and children's services. In order to do this the council has adopted the OEAP National Guidance as the standard for visits and LOtC activities and the EVOLVE planning and management system. The council also expects any commissioned service providing visits and LOtC activities to work within the National Guidance and to be able to demonstrate their compliance through a quality standard, accreditation or scheme.

All visits and LOtC activities will follow the following hierarchy by using the EVOLVE system:

- Visit leader – initiates, plans (and runs) the visit or LOtC activity
- Educational visit coordinator – checks the plans and associated documents, gives outline approval, monitors progress, assesses the success (or otherwise) and provides feedback to improve future visits or LOtC activities.
- Headteacher / Service Manager – checks that essential elements for the visit or LOtC activity are in place and give approval.

## **2. Organisation**

The Council has a duty of care to ensure that young people and staff on visits and undertaking LOtC activities are safe. This duty has been devolved through the management hierarchy to specific corporate and school / service roles. The responsibilities and functions of these roles are detailed below.

## 2.1 Outdoor Education Adviser (OEA)

The role of OEA is fulfilled by the council's H&S team. A specific adviser is designated to lead on outdoor education and the administration of the EVOLVE visit management system. The responsibilities of the OEA are to:

- Perform audits and sampling to ensure compliance with legislation as it applies to young people and staff undertaking visits and LOtC activities;
- Provide schools and services with the council's statement of policy and any related procedures applying to visits and LOtC activities;
- Keep under review the policy and related procedures and update them as and when new information or practice changes;
- Ensure that educational visit co-ordinators (EVC's), visit leaders (VL's) and other staff involved in visits and LOtC activities are trained and assessed as competent in their specific roles;
- Monitor visits and LOtC activities as notified to the council via the EVOLVE system;
- Monitor the commissioning and procurement process to ensure that providers meet council, licensing and quality standards; and,
- Provide advice and information on visits and LOtC activities, referring to specialist advisers for high risk activities.

## 2.2 Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC)

The EVC has a key role in the approval and management of visits and LOtC activities for schools / services. The EVC will be a trained and competent Visit Leader (VL) who has a senior position in a school or is a service manager. The EVC is responsible and accountable for:

- Ensuring all visits and LOtC activities meet council requirements, e.g. National Guidance;
- Ensuring parental / carer consent for children to take part in visits and LOtC activities;
- Ensuring visit leaders and other staff involved in visits and LOtC activities are appropriately competent;
- Organising induction and training for all staff involved in visits and LOtC activities;
- Preparing and testing critical incident and emergency plans
- Debriefing VL's following visits and LOtC activities to evaluate learning points
- Keeping appropriate records, e.g. accidents, incidents, risk assessments etc.
- Monitoring visits and LOtC activities (including those undertaken by external providers)
- Reviewing local systems for initiating, developing and approving visits and LOtC activities.

## 2.3 Visit Leader

The VL would normally be the originator of the visit / LOtC activity and manage the project from start to finish. The main responsibilities of the VL are to:

- Prepare outline visit / LOtC activity briefs for approval by the EVC
- Draw up detailed plans for the visit or LOtC activity to include:
  - roles and responsibilities of staff and helpers
  - risk assessments
  - parental consent, medical information / provision and contact information

- Manage the collection of fees and payment of providers
- safeguarding and child protection
- contracts with external providers are signed including agreed and clear handover procedures
- insurance cover is sufficient
- Provide information to parents, staff and helpers
- Agree reporting procedures, emergency plans and contact details with the EVC
- Evaluate all aspect of the visit / LOtC activity during and after the event and prepare a report for the EVC.

## 2.4 Schools

The council recognises that schools will undertake the bulk of visits and LOtC activities and must carry the accountability and responsibility for ensuring pupil and staff safety.

### 2.4.1 Governors

Governing Bodies have the responsibility to ensure that the school has effective health and safety policies in place which meet statutory requirements, council and national guidance.

### 2.4.2 Headteacher

Headteachers are responsible for approving the following:

- Pupils and staff participating in visits and activities beyond the boundaries of the school; or,
- Pupils and staff participating in activities that falls within the remit of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC).

Visits and LOtC activities will be notified to the Headteacher through the EVOLVE management system and approval given electronically. The Headteacher will specifically check:

- Staff competence (VL, EVC, activity specific qualifications, vetting and CRB);
- Provider or travel company details (e.g. do they meet required standards);
- Insurance(s);
- Emergency plans and contact details; and,
- That any adult who is acting in a supervisory capacity as a volunteer, assistant or helper and is authorised by the Participating School to undertake the visit or LOtC activity.

## 2.5 Services

Services for young people that undertake visits and LOtC activities are also required to ensure the competence of staff who undertake visits and LOtC activities. The service manager will appoint a sufficient number of VL's and EVC's for the scope of the visits and LOtC activities undertaken. The EVOLVE system will be used for planning, approval and monitoring of visits and LOtC activities.

## 3 Arrangements

The council will facilitate visits and LOtC activities by providing advice, information, systems and facilitate training.

### 3.1 The EVOLVE management system

EVOLVE is an on-line electronic information, management and planning system for visits and LOtC activities. The benefits are:

- Intuitive user interface;
- Reduced paperwork;
- Clear audit trail;
- Robust and simplified procedures;
- Real-time monitoring; and
- A comprehensive overview of all school off-site visits - especially important for critical incident planning.

The system URL is:

[https://evolve.edufocus.co.uk/evco6/evchome\\_public.asp?domain=worcestershireschoolvisits.org.uk](https://evolve.edufocus.co.uk/evco6/evchome_public.asp?domain=worcestershireschoolvisits.org.uk)

Full training on the system can be provided by contacting the H&S Team.

### 3.2 Training

Training courses are run by WCC H&S Team, details are on Edulink or contact Mike Smith on 01905 766102. The council recognises three core courses that give competence to the required standard. Schools and services must ensure that staff undertaking or approving visits and LOtC activities have the requisite qualifications:

- Visit Leader (VL): this course is the minimum that is acceptable to take young people on a visit or LOtC activity;
- Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC): this course is only open to staff who hold a current VL certificate and have the managerial responsibility for giving outline approval for the visit or LOtC activity to take place;
- EVC Revalidation: EVC's are required to revalidation every 3 years;

Staff who lead and provide high risk activities for children must hold the relevant qualification from that sport's governing body.

### 3.3 Planning a visit or LOtC Activity

The planning of a visit or LOtC activity should reflect the complexity of the following variables:

- Staffing requirements:
  - What staff to young people ratio will provide effective supervision?
  - Are there gender issues?
  - Are assistants, helpers, parents or volunteers involved, in what capacity and duly authorised?
- Activity
  - What is the level of risk?
  - Are there insurance issues?
  - Is their sufficient competence (qualifications etc.) amongst the staff to run the activity?

- Is the activity licensable?
- Group
  - What are the abilities of the group (e.g. previous experience)?
  - Do members of the group have mobility problems, learning disabilities, special needs etc.?
  - Are there any medical issues, e.g. medication?
- Environment
  - Is the activity indoors or outdoors?
  - What will be the impact of severe weather?
  - Is flooding / flash flooding going to be a problem?
- Distance
  - Where is the activity taking place (on site, off site, abroad)?
  - Is an overnight stay planned?
  - How is the group travelling?
  - What are the contingencies for getting back if there is a breakdown or other event?

### 3.4 Risk management

Risks associated with the visit or LOtC activity will become apparent during the planning stage. The hierarchy of risk management should be applied to determine what risks can be:

- Avoided or eliminated;
- Reduced to an acceptable or tolerable level;
- Accepted without further control measures; or,
- Transferred to a provider or affiliated organisation, e.g. for high risk and specialist activities.

Once identified the risks that need to be managed should be properly assessed with regard to:

- What is "reasonably practicable", e.g. are their sufficient resources available to adequately reduce the risk;
- A risk – benefit analysis, e.g. do the learning outcomes justify the residual risk; and,
- The principles of sensible risk management –
  - ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
  - providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
  - enabling innovation and learning not stifling them
  - ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
  - enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Risk assessments should be performed on all risks, measures should be identified to reduce the risk and to demonstrate that acceptable / tolerable risks cannot be reduced further.

Where a risk has been transferred to an activity provider or affiliated organisation it will sometimes be necessary to request copies of their risk assessments for information; this will be the case for high risk, unusual or unfamiliar activities. Obtaining copies of such risk assessments is good practice and does not incur any liability on the individual visit leader,

school or service. Any apparent errors or issues in the risk assessments should be taken up with the activity provider or affiliated organisation.

### 3.5 Emergency planning and critical incidents

Maintained schools and children's services are expected to include in their planning measures to deal with emergencies. In the first instance the school should have sufficient preparations in place (including insurance) to manage the immediate consequences of an incident to include:

- Ensuring that pupils and school staff are safe from further harm
- The relevant emergency services are notified (this should happen co-incident with ensuring pupil and staff safety)
- Appointing a member of staff to be the spokesman and liaison with the emergency services when they arrive (the member of staff to be proficient in the language of the country where the incident has occurred)
- Notifying the school
- Making arrangement for staff and pupils to return to their homes or residential accommodation (possibly with the help of the emergency services).

Once notified the school or service will activate their emergency plan and notify the council. The onus is primarily on the school Headteacher (and Governors) or service manager to determine if the resources at the site of the incident are sufficient or whether a senior manager should be sent to take control (examples of typical responses should be included in the emergency plan). The council should be copied into any response.

There may be a point where the magnitude of the incident and resultant media attention will require the council to respond or assist: typical scenarios might be a major fire at the school, fatalities or when the incident has a significant impact on the local community. The nature of incidents is their unpredictability, so each will be treated separately on its consequences and impact. The 24-hour Emergency Number for Worcestershire County Council is 07624909756.

The Council's Emergency Planning Team provide advice, training and responses to emergencies through an SLA for a small cost. Please contact David Price on 01905 728848 to set up this SLA. Services will be made available to all schools even if they have not purchased the SLA but at a cost of £3000.

The council has produced separate guidance for dealing with critical incidents.

### 3.6 Advice and Information

The council's H&S Team will provide general advice and guidance about visits and LOTC activities but cannot advise on high risk and specialist activities. Schools may have a Visit Leader with appropriate qualifications and experience but the more likely scenario will be that an external provider has been engaged. Schools are recommended to obtain advice and information on high risk and specialist activities direct from the provider or the sport's governing body.

### 3.7 Transport

Careful thought must be given to planning transport to support off-site visits and LOtC activities. Statistics show that it is much more dangerous to travel to an activity than to engage in it. Schools and services must follow the council's transport policy.

The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk management process when planning the journey. The number of staff (or volunteers) required to supervise children during transportation will depend on:

- The type of transport
- The driver (staff who are driving cannot supervise)
- The distance to be travelled
- Any special needs of the children being transported.

Where a coach or bus is hired, the Visit Leader must be sure that a reputable company is used, and that contingency plans are in place should there be a breakdown or accident.

The use of private cars to transport children to visits and LOtC activities should be carefully considered and planned.

## **4 Monitoring and Review**

### 4.1 Approval of Visits and LOtC Activities

The Head Teacher or Service Manager has the responsibility for the formal approval of all Visits and LOtC activities. Approvals are performed using the EVOLVE system that automatically notifies the council's Outdoor Education Adviser and Emergency Planning officers. The council may require further details if the visit or LOtC activity:

- involves a journey more than 50 miles away from base;
- involves a residential or overnight stay; or,
- involves the provision of an adventurous activity.
- the activity takes place in an adventurous environment

### 4.2 Evaluation of visits and LOtC activities

The school or service EVC will ensure that the VL who organised a visit or LOtC activity performs an evaluation to determine:

- What went well;
- What went less well; and,
- How the visit or LOtC activity could be improved.

It is expected that the EVC will share any learning outcomes with other schools and services.

### 4.3 Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there is a change in legislation, licensing (of activity providers) or national guidance.