

OUTDOOR LEARNING AND SCHOOL VISITS POLICY

Introduction

MOD Schools is committed to the benefits of outdoor learning and educational visits. The knowledge and experience gained beyond the classroom can consolidate and extend the taught curriculum and have a wide-ranging impact.

This policy applies to all MOD Schools establishments overseas, including FS1 settings, 0-3 settings and Music Centres.

Legal and policy framework

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees and non-employees so far as is reasonably practical. The Act also places duties on individuals to take care for the health and safety of themselves and others.

MOD Schools establishments come under the umbrella of MOD and DCYP health and safety policies, to which this policy is subservient.

MOD Schools has formally adopted the guidance issued by the Outdoor Education Advisers' National Panel (OEANP) for the "Management of Outdoor Learning, Off-site Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom". This can be found at www.oeapng.info. In order to maintain currency, this is only published in online format. SCE staff must follow the OEANP guidance as well as the requirements of this policy statement.

If a MOD Schools staff member commissions activity, they must ensure that the commissioned agent has systems and procedures in place where the standards are not less than those specified in the OEANP guidance.

Clarification of roles

Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP)

DCYP is the parent organisation for MOD Schools establishments overseas, and is responsible for setting overall policy on visits, for monitoring that establishments have sufficient trained staff, and for support to the Visit Leadership Team and Head/Manager in the event of a critical incident. In this iteration of school visits policy, authority for approvals of all categories of visits is delegated to Heads/Managers of schools, settings and Music Centres.

Head/Manager

Heads/Managers are responsible for ensuring that practice in their school, setting or Music Centre follows the requirements and recommendations of this policy. They should also have an Establishment Visit Policy that makes a formal statement linking their policy to this, as well as setting out any procedures or requirements particular to their establishment.

Heads/Managers should be aware that the appointment of an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) is critical to the implementation of this policy. All Establishments that undertake Educational Visits must have a currently validated EVC who meets the criteria set out below. In some cases, it may be more effective for an EVC to be shared between Establishments e.g. for 0-3 settings in the same area. Proposals to share an EVC require DCYP approval.

Heads/Managers should designate a named person to fulfil the role of EVC and agree sufficient time allowance to fulfil the role. They may choose to designate themselves. Where the Head/Manager has not designated a named member of staff, then the functions of the EVC will automatically be attached to those of the Head/Manager.

The Head/Manager is responsible for the approval of all categories of visits involving children from their establishment, including medium and high risk activities and all residential visits. The Head/Manager may delegate responsibility for the approval of low risk visits to a trained Educational Visits Coordinator.

Educational Visits Coordinator

The EVC is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all activities and visits meet the requirements of this policy, OEANP guidance and the relevant Establishment Visit Policy
- Supporting the Head/Manager with approval of visits and other decisions
- If delegated by the Head/Manager, approval of low risk visits
- Supporting the Head/Manager in ensuring that all members of Visit Leadership Teams are competent, and that, where necessary, Visit Leader training has been undertaken
- Ensuring that emergency arrangements are in place
- Ensuring that activities and visits are reviewed and evaluated

Visit Leader

The Visit Leader has overall responsibility for supervision and conduct of a visit. To ensure accountability and to avoid potential confusion, a single Visit Leader should be appointed for each visit. The Visit Leader retains a duty of care for the group at all times, unless the responsibility for providing care and supervision has been formally handed over to an appropriately selected third party provider for a specific period. The Visit Leader must have good knowledge of the employer and establishment policies and procedures.

To ensure a clear audit trail of responsibility allocation, there must be only one designated Visit Leader for each visit.

Other staff and adult helpers

Teachers and setting staff accompanying educational visits act as MOD Schools employees whether the visit takes place within or outside normal hours. A second MOD Schools employee must be appointed as the Deputy Visit Leader and be able to take full

responsibility for the Visit Leader's role if necessary. The Deputy Visit Leader must be familiar with the relevant employer and establishment policies and procedures.

Teaching assistants, keyworkers, support staff, parents and volunteers can play an important role in providing appropriate supervision. The Visit Leader must ensure that they are competent to undertake their responsibilities and brief them to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities. All teachers, teaching assistants, keyworkers, support staff, parents and volunteers will act "in loco parentis" and carry a duty of care towards anyone they are supervising.

Procedural requirements

Planning a visit

When planning any visit, the first consideration for the Visit Leader is to identify the intended learning outcomes.

All visits should be thoroughly researched to check the suitability of the venue and that facilities and third party provision will meet group expectations. Such information gathering is essential in assessing the requirements for risk management and effective supervision of young people. Pre-visit research for new venues will often include a preliminary visit from the Visit Leader.

For visits to adventure activity providers, the Visit Leader will need to check that the provider's setting, accommodation, facilities, activities, staffing and ethos meet the needs of the group and the intended learning outcomes. UK providers may be accredited under various schemes including:

- The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge
- Adventure Activities Licensing Scheme
- Adventuremark
- National Governing Body centre approval scheme

MOD Schools takes the view that where a provider holds any of the above accreditations, there should be no need to seek further assurances. However, these schemes do not apply to adventure activity providers outside the UK. For providers not covered by any of the listed accreditation schemes, the Visit Leader should check that equivalent standards are met.

A checklist for planning visits is attached at Annex A.

Planning documentation

The Visit Leader should first present an outline application for visit approval to the EVC. If initial approval is given, the Visit Leader should gather full information, where necessary including information obtained during a preliminary visit, and submit this for formal approval. This may be done using the form at Annex B. Establishments may alternatively use an IT system for visit approval that captures at least the same information.

Parental consent

Schools are not required to obtain consent from parents for pupils to participate in off-site activities that take place during school hours and which are a normal part of a child's education e.g. local studies and visits to museums. Although parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from the school curriculum, it remains good practice to inform parents that a visit or activity is to take place. The school might also inform parents, perhaps when they enrol their child, or through the school's prospectus, policy document or web site, about the way the school uses the local environment and the fact that their child may not always be on the school site but could be learning somewhere in the wider community.

Parental consent is required for visits that take place or extend beyond school hours. Blanket consent may be given for routine local visits and activities e.g. for a concert or a sports event at another school. Individual written consent is required for all visits which involve a higher level of risk including but not limited to longer journeys, residential visits and adventurous activities.

If blanket consent is relied upon, it should be turned into informed consent prior to any visit. Parents should therefore be given information about forthcoming visits and given the opportunity to withdraw their consent if they do not wish their child to participate.

Activities that involve a charge, or that include payment or cancellation terms, will need parental agreement to the financial arrangements.

Consent may be recorded either on paper or electronically. Whichever form of consent is used, proper consideration must be given to correct storage of personal information and to its retention. Visit records must be kept for a minimum of 12 months after the event. In the case of a reportable incident, it is advised to keep details until seven years after the event or in the case of people under 18 at the time then seven years from their 18th birthday.

Ratios

Supervision ratios for school visits must take account of:

- The nature and duration of the activity
- The location and environment in which the activity is to take place
- The age and gender of the young people to be supervised
- The ability of the young people, including their behavioural, medical, emotional and educational needs
- Staff competence in relation to the activities

Ratios are a risk management issue, and should be determined through the process of risk assessment. It is not possible to set down definitive staff/student ratios for a particular age group or activity.

However, as a minimum requirement for low risk activities (e.g. visits to local historical sites, museums, and local walks) the ratios in normal circumstances would be:

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|------------------|---|
| 0-3 settings | 1 adult for every 2 children aged 2 or over |
| FS1 | 1 adult for every 2 to 4 children |
| FS2 | 1 adult for every 4 to 6 children |
| Years 1-3 | 1 adult for every 6 pupils |
| Years 4-6 | 1 adult for every 10 to 15 pupils |
| Year 7 and above | 1 adult for every 15 to 20 pupils |

Years 12-13 may be able to use a lower ratio than the above.

A minimum of two adults is required for any visit.

For residential visits, the number of male and female staff and other adults in relation to the number of boys and girls in the group also needs to be taken into consideration.

First Aid and medication

Establishments should already have in place a risk assessment which determines their first aid provision on site. Off-site provision should simply be an extension of this. First aid requirements should take into account:

- The nature of the activity
- The nature of the group
- The likely injuries associated with the activity
- The extent to which the group will be isolated from the support of the emergency services

Qualified first aiders may not be necessary for all off-site activities and visits. However, a basic level of first aid support must be available at all times. This will require that one or more of the staff leading the activity:

- Has a working knowledge of simple first aid and is competent to use the first aid materials carried with the group
- Knows how to access, and is able to access, qualified first aid support

For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), there is a mandatory requirement that at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate must accompany children on outings.

Visit Leaders should be aware of the medical needs of any children taking part in the visit. Parents should be asked to provide written details of medical conditions and of any medication required (including instructions on dosage/times), and for their permission for staff to administer medication, or for their child to administer their own if this is appropriate. This is covered in the template parental consent form at Annex C.

Teachers' conditions of employment do not include any obligation to manage or administer medicines. Heads/Managers should ensure that they have sufficient staff members to accompany a visit who have volunteered to do so. Staff should be trained to manage medicines, but in many cases such training need only involve familiarisation with the employer's policy and reading instructions from a parent or doctor, or perhaps a demonstration of how to use an epinephrine auto-injector (e.g. EpiPen).

Safeguarding and child protection

All education staff have a duty to safeguard and protect children in their care¹ and must act in accordance with their own establishment's child protection policy. Staff must have received the appropriate level of safeguarding training and know the appropriate action to take. They should be familiar with MOD Schools safeguarding policy² and with the procedure for dealing with allegations against staff³.

The appropriate vetting and DBS checks for staff and volunteers must be in place. MOD Schools staff who work "frequently or intensively" with, or have "regular access" to young people or vulnerable adults, must undergo an enhanced DBS check as part of their recruitment process. For the purpose of this guidance, "frequently" is defined as once a week or more, and "intensively" is defined as four days or more in a month, or overnight. However, it must be understood that a DBS check (or other vetting procedure) in itself is no guarantee as to the suitability of an adult to work with any given group of young or vulnerable people.

Consideration must be given to the possibility of abuse from someone within the group or having access to it, including intruders entering or a pupil leaving residential accommodation.

Approval of visits

The Head/Manager is responsible for the approval of all educational visits. Approval may be delegated to the EVC for low risk visits. For residentials, and for all medium and high risk visits, the headteacher must be able to demonstrate that advice has been taken from a person or persons with the necessary competence. This may either be a suitably qualified and experienced fee-earner or member of the establishment's own staff.

Visits are categorised as follows:

Category 1

- Walking in parks or non-remote country paths
- Field studies in environments presenting no technical hazards
- Regular locally based activities such as sporting events
- Visits to local shops
- Environmental studies in the local park

¹ Section 175 Education Act 2002

² "Safeguarding in SCE" issued March 2015

³ "Procedure for dealing with allegations against staff" issued March 2015

- Special day visits further afield e.g. to museums or seasonal events
- Cycle proficiency training

Category 2

- Residential visits
- Camping
- Cycling on road or non-remote off road terrain
- Low-level initiative challenges
- Visits involving outdoor and adventurous activities that are in AALA registered or other approved centres and organised and controlled by staff from those centres

Category 3

- In water or near water where the presence of water poses a significant risk to the activity (not including curriculum swimming sessions and swimming galas)
- In winter conditions
- On or near cliffs or steep terrain
- In an area subject to extremes of weather or environmental change
- In developing countries or those with civil unrest
- Visits that in the UK would come with the scope of the AALA (caving, climbing, trekking, watersports)

For Category 3 visits it is recommended that one or more members of the visit team staff should have an additional qualification or qualifications relating to the activity or activities to be undertaken.

Visits to high risk countries

Visits to some countries are governed by the MOD 'Overseas Travel Risk Management Policy and Process'. This policy sets out special approval and training requirements for visits to high risk countries. These may be high risk due to the conduct of military operations or because of risks posed by crime, terrorism or poor infrastructure. For proposed visits to high risk countries, approval must be sought from DCYP at the earliest planning stage, before any commitments have been made. The list of high risk countries is accessible on DII⁴. The list currently includes some countries previously visited by MOD Schools establishments e.g. Egypt, Kenya, Indonesia, Malaysia. It should be noted that the training requirements for staff leading and accompanying such visits can be onerous e.g. the Security Awareness in Fragile Environments (SAFE) course, required for travel to many of these countries, is a three day residential, held only in the UK.

Even if a proposed trip is not to a high risk country, staff should ensure that:

- They have read Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice for the intended destination and discussed any concerns or queries with the head of establishment.

⁴ Operational and Fragile Country Tables

- They follow the 'Pre-travel Checklist' on the Overseas Travel Risk Management DII page where applicable.

Notification to DCYP

DCYP must be notified in advance of a) any proposed trips to high risk countries and b) any Category 3 visits. Notification should be sent to the Senior Principal MOD Schools, or to any designated deputy for this purpose.

Training

EVC training

EVCs must have attended an EVC course accredited by the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel. This is a one day course, delivered by accredited OEAP trainers.

EVCs must undertake formal revalidation training every three years.

Visit Leader training

As a minimum, all Visit Leaders must have in-house training before leading a visit. This can be provided by the establishment's own trained Education Visits Coordinator. For more complex visits and/or those involving medium to high risk activities, Visit Leaders must have attended a one day OEAP certificated course. For simple visits and low risk activities, external Visit Leader training is recommended but not mandatory.

There is no revalidation requirement. However, Visit Leaders are expected to be current in their knowledge of good practice in outdoor education. Update refresher training is therefore recommended, at intervals to be determined by the EVC.

EVC and Visit Leader training are readily available at a range of UK venues. DCYP will arrange occasional trainer visits to overseas locations where it is cost effective to do so.

Adventure activity training

Anyone leading an adventure activity (caving, climbing, trekking, watersports) should have their competence confirmed by holding a UK National Governing Body leadership/coaching award at an appropriate level. The detailed qualification requirements can be found in the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) qualifications matrix⁵. For example, for someone leading a trekking activity on foot in lowland country in summer, it is necessary for the leader to hold at least the Walking Group Leader Award.

Although the decision whether to approve a visit is delegated to Establishment level, it is necessary for Heads/Managers to demonstrate that they have taken appropriate technical advice, again as specified in the AALA qualifications matrix. (NB Holding the minimum relevant NGB Award for the activity is not sufficient.) For the trekking example above, this

⁵ See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l177.pdf>

would be at least the Summer Mountain Leader Award. Technical advice can be from the Establishment's own visit leader if appropriately qualified.

Succession planning

Bearing in mind future changes to the number of MOD Schools establishments, the potential transfer of staff between schools, and the turnover rate for military dependants, Heads/Managers should pay particular attention to the longer term requirement for trained staff, particularly for EVC and Visit Leaders. It may be prudent to have more than the minimum number of trained staff to allow for turnover.

Risk management and risk-benefit assessment

The risk assessment and risk management process is at the heart of effective planning and preparation for successful educational visits. There is no legal requirement to record a risk assessment in a particular format. However, there is a legal requirement a) to identify any hazards which present significant risks, b) to identify how those risks can be managed to reduce them to an acceptable level, and c) to record the results of this risk assessment.

The Department for Education recommends that schools should take a common sense and proportionate approach to risk, remembering that risk assessment and management are tools to enable children to undertake activities safely, and not to prevent activities from taking place.

The risk assessment(s) for a visit should be submitted together with the formal application for visit approval, bearing in mind that risk assessments are dynamic documents which need to be kept under review during the course of the visit. Risk assessments must be shared and understood by all members of the visit team.

When a school is using a centre or provider, the provider will usually have their own risk assessments. The Visit Leader should check that the provider has these and that they are suitable. The school is responsible for the risk assessment of the care and supervision of their own pupils, and for risk assessing any aspects of the visit that are self-organised, including transport to and from the venue.

Schools leading their own activities may find some generic risk assessments useful as starting points. These can readily be found by internet searches. However, care must be taken with all generic risk assessments, since they remain generic until they have been carefully applied and adapted as necessary to meet the needs of the people involved in the particular visit or activity. Establishments may find it helpful to develop site specific risk assessments for regularly visited sites, and to share these with other SCE establishments in the same area.

Emergency procedures and incident reporting

The majority of incidents that occur on off-site visits will be dealt with by the visit leadership team and establishment. However, some of these may be critical incidents and require

support from the DCYP. A critical incident is where any member of a group undertaking an off-site activity has:

- Suffered a life-threatening injury or fatality; or
- Is at serious risk; or
- Has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.

If a critical incident should occur, the visit leader should immediately contact the head of establishment. In turn, the head of establishment must immediately contact the Senior Principal MOD Schools.

Inclusion

Every effort should be made to ensure that outdoor learning activities and visits are available and accessible to all, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, gender or religion. Schools should take all reasonably practical measures to include all young people.

Insurance

“Staff are entitled to clarity about the extent to which their conduct at work could potentially render them subject to civil or criminal proceedings. The MOD is committed to standing behind its people who act reasonably and in good faith in the course of their duties or work related activities. With regard to safety related decisions, the Defence Board has made clear that it expects people to make such decisions based on proper procedures, and will support those who do so including in cases where there is an injury or fatality.”⁶

Volunteers accompanying a visit and acting under the direction of MOD staff would be similarly supported.

Beyond the above commitment to defend claims of negligence against staff acting in the course of their duties and following reasonable instructions, visit planners should note that the MOD has no commercial insurance against personal accidents, injuries, health or medical problems; travel incidents, cancellations or delays; and theft, loss or damage to personal possessions. For example, if a child is injured on a skiing trip and needs to be repatriated, the cost of this would fall to the establishment that arranged the trip. Visit planners should therefore consider the need for travel insurance to cover against such eventualities. The need for staff and children to be covered by their own personal accident and belongings insurance should also be considered.

Finance

Schools must not charge for:

- Education provided during school hours; or

⁶ 2014DIN01-098

- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education.

Nor must schools charge for the cost of transport provided for such a visit.

Schools may charge for:

- Visits that do not meet the above criteria;
- Board and lodging for pupils on a residential visit, except to parents in receipt of certain benefits (broadly equivalent to those who qualify for free school meals).

A non-residential visit is deemed to take place “during school hours” if 50% or more of the activity occurs during school hours, including any travelling. For residential visits, if the number of school sessions take up by the visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit, it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening).

Example 1: Visit during school hours

Pupils are away from noon on Wednesday to 9 pm on Sunday. This counts as nine half days including five school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

Example 2: Visit outside school hours

Pupils are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9 pm on Sunday. This counts as seven half days including three school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.

The restrictions on charging do not prohibit schools from seeking voluntary contributions in support of an activity or visit. However, it must be made clear to parents that there is no obligation to contribute, and pupils must not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution.

