



## Off-Site Visits Policy

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## Introduction

The Governors and staff at Bantock Primary School acknowledge the great value of Educational Visits and Outdoor Activities in the teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum. The National Curriculum and EYFS define what we teach the children in school. Each year group will go on at least one off-site visit each academic year linked to an aspect of their topic work to enhance this curriculum. Alongside off-site visits the school will invite in speakers and groups to enrich and extend experiences.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our residential and off-site visits to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the health and safety of pupils at all times. Within these limits we aim to make our visits available to all pupils and wherever possible make them accessible to those with any disabilities, making reasonable adjustments if needed. The majority of visits normally take place within the school day.

The policy identifies how the school complies with the guidance given by the DFES and LA on Off Site Visits which can be found [here](#). The Governing Body approves and evaluates the schedule of proposed visits. The Governing Body will also review the implementation of this policy annually.

## Aims

The aims of our off-site educational visits acknowledge guidance given in Every Child Matters (2004).

We aim to:

- give pupils opportunities to enjoy and achieve through enhanced curricular and recreational opportunities, contributing towards their overall physical and mental health and wellbeing
- provide contextualised learning opportunities that develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of
- provide a wider range of safe and enjoyable experiences within the local and wider community than could be provided by the school site alone.
- promoting the life-skills of independence, resilience and teamwork – to enable them to grow and develop through challenging experiences in new learning environments
- foster a concerned awareness and sensitivity about the environment.

These visits begin with day or half day trips and progress to residential experiences.

## The Educational Visits Coordinator

The LA requires that each School has a senior member of staff with the responsibility for educational visits. The person will be known as the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC). In consultation with the Headteacher the EVC oversees the day to day running of the School Policy on Off Site Visits.

## Types of visits

Wolverhampton LA classifies visits in the following ways and the risks attached to them:

### Category A

These comprise activities that present no significant risks. They should be supervised by an experienced teacher. Examples might include walking in parks or on non-remote country paths; field studies in environments presenting no technical hazards.

Such activities will include skills focused learning, problem solving, team building, and self-reliant journeys and activities, with residential experience an especially valued feature.

### Category B

These comprise some higher-risk or higher profile activities. Safe supervision requires that the leader should, as a minimum, have undergone an additional familiarization process or induction specific to the activity and/or the location. The visit leader will be approved as appropriately competent by the LA, or by the EVC following LA guidance. Examples of activities might include walking in non-remote country; camping; cycling on roads or non-remote off-road terrain; low level initiative challenges or residential. The school will seek approval from the LA of any Category B visits by emailing the appropriate off-site visit approval form and related risk assessments to Cyndy

Morris or Chelsea Cook following prior approval from the chair of school governing board. In the case of residential visits, pupil numbers can be estimated if not known at the time of seeking approval. The LA will need to be informed of any subsequent staffing changes following approval. The EVC will use the Evolve web-based service – provided by Elite Safety and Education - in order to complete off site visit approval forms.

### Category C

This is the most demanding category. It includes all those activities that, if not school-led, would be in scope of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996. Wolverhampton LA identifies this category as including visits abroad.

### Visits & Visitors Register

Details of all Category A, B & C visits and sporting activities are recorded on a yearly register which is updated whenever a new visit or visitor is arranged.

### Evolve (see appendix)

Evolve [evolve.edufocus.co.uk] is an online visit and activity planning, processing and monitoring tool that the school uses for its off-site visits. Evolve is provided for the school by Elite Safety in Education. All teachers have a username and password and use the system in order to plan and process their visits. When planning trips, the visit leader will upload completed risk assessments, venue and activity details and staffing details to the system in order for the EVC to check and advise upon. When the EVC is satisfied that the visit leader has completed the necessary plans, the form will be electronically sent to the Headteacher to be signed off.

### Routine (Local Area) Visits

These involve no more than an everyday level of risk, such as slips and trips, and are covered by a school's current policies and procedures. They only need a little extra planning beyond the educational aspect of the trip. They can be considered as lessons in a different classroom.

Local Area Visits can be recorded using Evolve but the school does not recommend staff utilising this option when planning any type of activity not on the school premises. All off site visits must therefore be recorded by selecting the "Visit Form" option on Evolve (see appendix).

### Health and Safety

It is essential that the health and safety of all children be of paramount importance during all visits.

The visit leader on any visit will appoint a deputy who must be as well informed about the visit as the visit leader.

The EVC will conduct an audit annually of all staff competencies (Appendix 1) for being visit leader or support on educational visits following LA guidelines.

When booking a visit, it is good practice for the visit leader to look for certification of off-site visit provide badging schemes, such as Adventurous Activities Licensing Service (AALS) and/or Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (LOTC).

Supervision levels for visits aims to follow guidelines from Wolverhampton LA which state that it is no desirable to prescribe specific ratios. Rather it is better practice to use informed risk assessment to determine appropriate staffing levels depending upon the size, age, physical, mental and behavioural needs of the group in relation to the environment and nature of the activity undertaken.

### Minibus travel

Minibuses should normally have an adult supervisor in addition to the driver. For longer journeys, two drivers are recommended. On coaches, there should be at least two adults in addition to the driver.

The following legal guidance for seating arrangements in minibuses has been sourced from <http://www.childcarseats.org.uk/the-law/other-vehicles-buses-coaches-and-minibuses/>

The school minibus is fitted with three-point seat belts on forward facing seats. New regulations introduced in September 2006 require all children under 12 who are under 1.35m (4'5") to use an appropriate child restraint – baby seat, child seat or booster seat – when travelling by car. These regulations do not apply to minibuses in that there is no legal requirement to provide child restraints such as child seats.

### Seat Belts

The school's policy is that all children wear seatbelts in minibuses and coaches. It is also the school's policy that no children sit in the front seats of the minibus, unless all rear seats are full. It is always the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all passengers wear seat belts, even when the vehicle is stationary.

It is also the driver's responsibility to ensure that:

- Children aged from three years up to their 12th birthday, and under 1.35 metres (approx 4'5") tall, use an appropriate child restraint if available, or if not available, wear the seat belt
- Children aged 12 and 13 years (and younger children who are 1.35 metres or taller) use the seat belt.

As we regularly transport children under 12 who are under 4'5" tall (135cms) we will use booster cushions as a minimum, as we have a duty of care to ensure that pupils travel safely. The school has booster seats available for children who are too small for normal seats - children who are shorter than 135cm.

Operators are not required to provide child seats because it is not practical for them to carry a range of different child seats on their vehicles. However, they may allow parents or others to supply their own child car seat for a use on a minibus journey.

Prior to every offsite visit, the visit leader and supervisors will discuss minibus or coach rules with the children, ensuring that they are aware of the hazards associated with minibus or coach travel and take steps jointly to minimise risks.

### Supervision Ratios

The school has decided on the following ratios as a guide for visit leaders organizing visits, although the EVC or Headteacher may alter these ratios according to the requirements of the visit risk assessment:

#### **Category A:**

EYFS 1 adult: 6 group members (recommended)

Infant 1 adult: 10 group members (recommended)

Junior 1 adult: 12 group members (recommended)

#### **Category B:**

Ratios are specified in detail for particular activities in Sections 3 and 4 of LA guidance.

#### **Category C:**

Junior: 1 adult: 6 group members

### Risk Assessments

Risk assessments made in the planning process may identify the need to increase supervision levels for certain activities and pupils. There should be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency i.e. a sick/injured child. One member of staff will also have a current first aid qualification, however if this is not possible the school can "nominate" a member of staff for first aid.

All risk assessments will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit, and will indicate the measures to prevent, or reduce them. The risk assessments are known as VAGRA (Venue, Activity, Group Risk Assessments) and ensure that the visit leader considers the specific natures of the venue (is it outside? Is it near water?); the activity (what will the children be doing? Canoeing? Hill walking?) and the group (such as do any of the children have specific behavioural or educational needs?) and should be based on the following considerations:

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

Ongoing, dynamic risk assessments take place during visits. A reassessment of risks may be necessary e.g. changing weather conditions, staff illness etc. These assessments need not be recorded until after the visit when they should be reviewed to inform future planning. Staff are reminded, however, that risk assessments are legal documents and needed to be rigorously completed.

Staff will be reminded to frequently complete a head count of each member of their group.

A blank risk assessment can be found at Appendix 2 and a range of generic risk assessments can be located on SharePoint: Visits and Visitors>Example Risk Assessments, or on Engage - School and Pupil Services - Health, Safety and Welfare, Documents, Off-Site Visits. These can be amended and saved according to the requirements of specific visits.

### Group Leader

The group leader has **overall** responsibility for the management of the visit and must:

- Be approved to carry out the visit, suitably competent and knowledgeable about the services and procedures
- Plan and prepare for the visit, assess the risks and make adequate preparation for emergencies
- Define the roles and responsibilities of other staff and young people and ensure effective supervision of what they do; for longer trips or residentials, ensure that other staff are appropriately organized for taking breaks, sleeping etc.
- Always make adequate arrangements for the safety and well-being of all young people, ensuring activities are suitable for the group
- Introduce child protection measures
- Ensure persons instructing adventurous activities are competent and qualified
- Carry out dynamic risk management, annotating on existing risk assessments, whilst the visit takes place
- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct at all times – see Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct on SharePoint: School Documents>Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an important part of the risk management process and in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 it is an offence for people to work with children and young people in 'regulated activity' unless they have been vetted by a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. However, this may not apply to volunteers brought in to assist visits. It will be up to the EVC and ultimately the Headteacher to judge in each individual situation the amount and type of contact time during which volunteers may have access to young people. If the contact with children is too frequent, intensive and/or overnight then they will need to be DBS checked (For residential visits a DBS check is essential). However, when a volunteer does not have sole access to children, is supervised and does not have duties such as toileting then a check does not necessarily need completing. When using an outside provider, the visit leader must obtain written confirmation that staff DBS checks are valid.

### Volunteer Helpers

Volunteer helpers have an important role to play in the success and safety of school visits. Their role includes being responsible and looking after, in equal measure, all the children in their group. They must show a commitment to their group, an interest in the focus of the visit and assist children in their learning by helping them to read signs/labels/information, asking questions that encourage children to think about the task and help to explain areas of interest. To that end all volunteer helpers must be selected carefully, be approved by the EVC, or Headteacher, and sign the 'Off Site Visits Volunteer Agreement' proforma (Appendix 3) before they are included on the school visit staffing.

### E-Safety

Digital still and/or video footage is an important way of commemorating, celebrating and supporting the curriculum, with some images being selected to be shown on the school website. Therefore, it is essential that parental agreement is gained prior to any digital still and/or video footage is taken of a child. Parents are asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 4) for images of their children to be used for school purposes. This record **MUST** be checked for all children attending the visit and no images are to be taken of any children without parental permission.

### Pupils with Special Educational and Medical Needs.

Pupils with special needs or medical needs will be included wherever possible on all visits, whilst maintaining the safety of everyone in the group. Any barriers will be considered at the planning stage and when carrying out the risk assessments. Special attention will be given to supervision ratios.

Each group leader on a visit will hold summary sheets containing details of the child/children's needs. The visit leader should discuss the visit with parents of those children with special needs to ensure sufficient support is in place for each child and members of staff. For any child who requires the administration of medication for the trip, parents must issue written consent to the visit leader.

### Transport

Transport arrangements for any off-site visit will ensure that each member of the party has a seat and when booking coaches, it is the policy that only coach companies approved by the LA are used. Any vehicle used must be fitted with seat belts and all children must always wear these and at least one adult additional to the driver will act as an escort. Where private cars are used for transport, each driver must have the appropriate insurance (checked by the EVC or Headteacher), appropriate car seats, or boosters, will be in place and the visit leader must ascertain that the cars are roadworthy and that each driver has had appropriate DBS checks. Adults should ensure that their behaviour is safe and that the maximum capacity is not exceeded.

### Communication/Consent from Parents/Funding off-site visits

Parents of children taking part in any off-site activity involving transport will be provided with full and complete written details of any intended visit, including costings, the nature of activities and associated risks. Parent, pupil and staff meetings will be held at school at least 6 months prior to residential visits. Parents/carers will be asked to respond to the school letter giving permission for their child to take part in the off-site visit and they are also required to complete Appendix 4 (Parental Consent for Off-Site Activities) with details of any medical needs, photograph permission and emergency contact numbers for their child. Parents must complete these consent forms before their child can be involved in any off-site activity.

The Parental Consent for Off-Site Activities form (Appendix 4) is completed by parents before every school off-site visit including residential.

Funding for off-site activities is provided mainly by voluntary parental contributions. The requested voluntary contribution is made clear to all parents in the initial letter about the visit.

No child will be excluded from any activity because of the unwillingness, or inability, of the parent to contribute,

For local school outings, not involving transport e.g. to church, park walk, village walk, a letter will be sent to parents each year for consent. Risk assessments will still be completed for such visits.

### Insurance

Schools within Wolverhampton currently purchasing the insurance provided by the Director Finance and Physical Resources are covered by a package of insurance described in the 'LMS Guide to Insurance Arrangements' issued by, and available from, the Risk Management and Insurance Services (RMIS), Finance and Physical Resources, Civic Centre on (01902) 554565.

This package includes all of the insurances necessary for any off-site visit or activity **within the UK** including Liability and Personal Accident. (A copy of the insurance is on display in the school entrance hall)

### Planning and Preparation for School Visits.

When planning a visit, the visit leader should consult with the EVC to ensure correct procedures are adhered to. Each visit planned, be it day or residential, needs rigorous planning, possibly including a preliminary visit.

Procedures for the visit leader to follow are identified in the Educational Visits Pre-Visit Checklist (Appendix 5).

To summarise:

#### **A minimum of two weeks prior to the visit complete and return the following information to the EVC:**

- Obtain costs for entrance fees and coaches, any other anticipated expenses for location.
- Visit the proposed location if possible
- Check location for toilets, eating environment, shops and fire precautions.
- Complete the visit costing calculation form (see Appendix 6)
- Gain authorisation from the EVC for their phase by completing the Off-Site Visit Approval Form (Appendix 7)
- Begin to complete a form on Evolve
- Gain authorisation from the Headteacher on the same form

- Enter visit details on the visit register and school diary.
- Confirm booking of coaches or other transport (using LA approved coach company)
- Complete risk assessments for the location and discuss with EVC (see EVC for criteria)
- Write a letter to parents including all relevant details:
  - Venue
  - Dates and Times
  - Costing/ Parental Contribution
  - Clothing and food, money needed on the day
  - Parental consent form **with medical needs** clearly identified and request for e.g. EpiPen's, inhalers.
- Determine staffing levels following risk assessments (in consultation with EVC or Headteacher).
- A record of money brought in and parental consent forms must be held in the school office.
- All adult helpers not employed by school must sign adults in school proforma prior to visit.
- School office to inform Health and Safety at the LA one day prior to visit.

Once the Appendix 5 is completed the visit leader must complete the Off-Site Visit Approval Form (Appendix 7) and a copy to be handed to the EVC for filing in school visits folder. All columns must be completed, with particular attention to be paid to the column headed "Other Relevant Qualifications and Experience". This must detail appropriate attributes/qualifications/experience of all adults involved in the visit:

- Ensuring all medical records are available
- All the permission sheets are completed.
- Check E-Safety parental consent forms for digital imagery of children.
- Check all adult helpers not employed by the school have signed the 'Adults in school' proforma.
- Children's spending money.
- All the emergency contacts are available.
- First Aid Kit is collected/First Aider on visit.
- At least one member of staff has a mobile phone for calling school, but also takes the school mobile phone for calling any parents/carers whilst on the visit
- Group lists given to supporting adults.
- List of pupils/staff and days itinerary left in school office.

A completed copy for each trip must be to be handed to the Schools Finance Manager for filing in school visits folder.

### Emergencies

In the event of an emergency if an incident or crisis develops follow the emergency procedures flow charts guidance - Appendix 9 and 10

### Evaluation and Reporting

The visit leader must complete a Post Visit Report Form (Appendix 9) within two weeks of returning from the trip and a copy to be handed to the EVC for filing in school visits folder.