



# **Educational Visits Policy Part 2**

**September 2013**

## Planning

All off-site visits and activities must have had formal planning to ensure that the event occurs in a safe manner. 'Spontaneous' activities must be considered and planned for so that measures can be implemented to control foreseeable risks.

All educational visits, to whatever location, must have clear objectives and benefits which can be achieved without putting participants and supervisors at unacceptable risk.

All the component elements of the visit must be considered in order to achieve the aim and the following guidance includes factors to be considered when planning the visit and the activities entailed.

## Supervision

When approving outdoor education activities the Head of Establishment must appreciate that ratios of participants to staff/supervisors in any group will vary depending upon:

- the number, knowledge, experience and/or training of staff, supervisors and helpers
- professional judgement of the person leading the activity
- physical suitability or fitness for the task, e.g. hours worked, fatigue, suitability, physical fitness generally and on the day
- nature of the area and activity
- the developmental stage of the participating group
- previous training and experience of the participating group involved
- any special needs including learning, behavioural or medical needs or specific circumstances

Some activities may involve aspects to encourage independence and investigation. This may, in fact, be the sole purpose of the activity. Leader's must consider in the planning and development stages the competency of all participants to be remotely supervised and the competence of supervisors to supervise. In all cases the leader must ensure that all those involved are prepared for this particular activity.

Parents and guardians must be advised if any remote supervision is included in the activity at an early stage so that they may consider this aspect when giving consent.

Mixed residential parties will require **both male and female support**. In the case of residential visits for primary phase pupils and special needs participants' additional supervisory support is advisable.

The LA takes the view that it is not possible to issue specific regulations on staff ratios for any activity since the nature of each 'risk' is unique due to the circumstances prevailing at any specific moment in time together with the degree of preparation of each participant to deal with those risks.

However, the LA requires that wherever recognised National Governing Bodies issue supervision ratios these are adhered to as an absolute minimum and improved upon if a suitable and sufficient risk assessment indicates this to be necessary.

Staff must exercise their individual professional judgement based on a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, having taken **all** factors into consideration including, when appropriate to the activity, advice from national sports and activities governing bodies.

Where doubt persists, and when reference is made elsewhere in this guidance to the approval of the Director for Learning and Culture, further information should be sought from the relevant section of the Education Department:

- advice regarding risk assessments can be obtained from the Health & Safety Section
- advice regarding curriculum matters can be sought through the School Development Service, the Oxfordshire Quality Schools Association (OQSA) and the Heads of the County's Outdoor Education Centres

- the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (contact details see Section Five) and the relevant National Governing Bodies for the activity involved.

### **Volunteer Staff**

Staff may, and can, be assisted by responsible persons, who are usually termed 'volunteer staff' or 'adults other than teachers', in the supervision of participants engaged in any activities. Such volunteers, who must be competent for the role in which they will be operating when authorised by the Head of Establishment, are covered by OCC insurance to the same extent as employees in respect of public liability cover.

**However, volunteer staff should not be placed in positions of direct overall responsibility except in emergencies.**

They must be made fully aware, by the person in charge of the activity, of the nature and extent of their responsibilities before undertaking such duties. Leaders must ensure that volunteers' abilities and physical condition and attributes are suitable for the activity in which they assist. Guidance on monitoring adults other than teachers has been produced by BAALPE. The guidance is contained in their publication entitled 'Guidelines for Local Education Authorities, Schools and Colleges in the use of adults other than teachers in Physical Education' and although specifically aimed at that curriculum area it gives good general guidance which can be utilised in other areas.

### **Child Protection and CRB Checks**

Heads of Establishments are reminded that satisfactory criminal record checks should be obtained on **all** individuals helping on all activities and residential courses and activities which involve young people. This service is available from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) through the Education Service's Education Personnel Section. The intended response time by the CRB is 2-3 weeks but the possibility of delays in the process will require establishments to allow a longer period to obtain a response. Currently there is a charge for checks on employees but those for volunteers are presently made without charge. Personal knowledge of an individual is no substitute for a formal criminal record check and must never be accepted as such.

Additionally Heads of Establishments will need to consider the implications of Child Protection Policies when planning and arranging activities.

### **Insurances**

No educational visit should be undertaken without adequate insurance cover being arranged. Full details of the County Council's insurance requirements and guidelines are detailed in the Insurance Information Package which has already been forwarded to all educational establishments. Further details and guidance is available from the Treasury Services' Insurance Manager (01865 815435) located in the Council's Business Support Directorate.

All parents should have clear information regarding the responsibilities of the LEA and the school or other establishment and the scope of the insurance cover provided. Consideration should be given for insurance cover in respect of personal injury, property damages and losses, cash losses, specialised risks, medical expenses, legal assistance, travel delays, financial losses, public liability and other possible consequential losses.

### **First Aid Provision**

Suitable provision for first aid must be made for **all** off site activities and the level of provision must be appropriate for the activity taking place. Suitable provision is not merely the provision of a first aid container but also the provision of trained persons who can administer first aid. The trained person, who must hold an appropriate valid certificate recognised by the HSE, may be either a first aider or an appointed person dependant upon the suitable and sufficient risk assessment which must have been carried out before the activity takes place.

### **Transport**

Where transport is required the lead person must ensure that appropriate provision is made. It is imperative that the proper provision is made and that cost does not play a disproportionate part in determining what is proper. Coaches and buses must be hired from reputable companies holding the legally required Public Service Vehicle (PSV) operator's licence or permit and be driven by competent qualified drivers. Coaches must be fitted with individual seat belts for use by passengers but they are not legally required on buses. It is considered that it is not normally appropriate for visits involving long journeys to be made using buses which are not fitted with seat belts.

The lead person must ensure appropriate access and securing facilities are provided for any wheelchair needed by group participants.

### **Mini Buses**

When an establishment-owned, a loaned or a hired self-drive minibus is used as transport during any activity the County Council's Minibus Regulations for educational, voluntary and community organisations must be applied. All drivers must hold a current appropriate and valid Department of Transport Driving Licence together with a valid OCC Minibus Driving Permit. A risk assessment for each journey must be undertaken and any additional adult supervision identified as being necessary must be provided before the journey commences. Necessary first aid provision must be made. The Education Service Minibus Safety Risk Assessment Driver's Checklist must be completed for every journey.

Where independent contractors are used to provide transport for children i.e. persons aged 3 to 15 years inclusive, they must comply with the seat belt requirements contained in The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1996 and The Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) (Amendment) Regulations 1996.

The Department for Transport (DfT) can provide further advice.

### **Private Vehicles**

When private vehicles are used as a means of transport during any part of an activity, whether to reach the destination or once there, Heads of Establishment must ensure that vehicles are suitable, drivers are competent and both the vehicle and driver are appropriately insured.

The Head of Establishment must ensure that when an employee uses their own private vehicle their insurance covers that official business. In cases where volunteers use private vehicles the Head of Establishment must ensure that each volunteer completes, in full, a Volunteer Driver Declaration (**Form VDD**) and includes the name of the insurance company with which they are insured. It should be noted that any payment made towards this use may be classified as hire and reward which may compromise the driver's insurance cover. Specific enquiries should therefore be made of the insurance provider to determine the exact position for any individual.

Additionally the Head of Establishment must ensure that all private vehicles used, whether by employees or volunteers, have a current valid road fund licence and an MOT Certificate where

necessary and that the driver holds appropriate insurance for the vehicle to be used. This requires the physical checking of documentary evidence.

### **Information**

Parents and participants should be informed in writing and in pre-arranged briefing sessions of all details and, particularly, of all the planned activities.

Additionally, as exact details of visits are sometimes mislaid it may be of benefit to give parents and guardians on, or shortly before, the day of departure a brief formal summary of basic information relating to the visit which could include the address of the place to be visited, details of those adults accompanying the party, the times of arrivals and departures and how and who to get in touch with both at the home-base and the destination. A suggested format is included as **Form SIP1**.

The activity leader must decide how information is provided to participants in order that they understand the aims and objectives of the activity, the itinerary and the key safety information.

This information should include local custom and culture, expected standards of behaviour, dress and personal contact, known risks and what action to take in relation to those risks, appropriateness and legality of some types of gift and souvenirs, action to take if approached by a stranger, if a rendezvous is missed or other separation from the main group occurs, the emergency procedures, when they apply and what to do in that eventuality.

### **Medical Information**

Up to date detailed information, records and contact points must be available at all times. All members of the party who become ill or infected during the planning or pre-departure stage should be advised that they must obtain medical approval before undertaking the visit.

The parental/guardian consent form should also specifically include agreement to the participant receiving emergency treatment including anaesthetic or blood transfusion as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not give this agreement Heads of Establishment will need to give further consideration to the participant's inclusion

in the party in view of the additional responsibility such parental action would bring the lead person.

### **Free Time**

Free time should not be wholly unsupervised or undirected.

Properly formulated unsupervised activities must have controls applied to them that are clearly understood by those taking part. Heads of Establishments must, therefore, ensure that an adequate level of supervision, however indirect or remote, is provided. parents/Guardians should be informed in writing of the circumstances in which the participants may **not** be subject to direct supervision.

Discussion of this at planning meetings may be advisable.

### **Checklist Activity and Venue**

Checklists, such as **Form OA3**, **Form OA4** and **Form OA5**, are useful ways of ensuring that essential planning arrangements are completed in a coherent manner. Heads of Establishments may find that they wish to obtain additional information from prospective activity leaders and may therefore want to add to the questions included on the forms.

### **Critical Incident Management**

Group leaders must ensure that suitable and sufficient emergency procedure plans are established and in place both off-site and at home-base. Heads of Establishment must ensure before the departure of

any group that the emergency procedure plans do actually work, the procedures included in the plan are implemented and those individuals identified as having specific roles are aware of them and are available as required.

It is also vitally important that all employees are fully conversant with the plan and their role in it, however minor it may be.

Participant lists and other allied information must be up to date and be kept in the locations and by those individuals noted in the establishment's normal policies as well as their emergency procedure plan.

It is imperative that the party and emergency plan details are always directly available to the home base emergency contact. There is little point in having full details at the establishment if the home base contact is at home or else-where without immediate access to all the relevant information.

### **Preliminary Checklist**

An initial assessment by anyone wishing to lead an outdoor educational activity should take account of the following:

- What are the aims and learning objectives for undertaking such an activity?
- What are the aims and objectives for the intended outcomes of the activities?
- Have appropriate County and establishment policies been identified and taken into consideration in the initial plan?
- Will the activity be taking place in an appropriate location?
- Has a suitable and sufficient written risk assessment been undertaken?
- Has the leader an appropriate qualification of competence, experience and ability?
- Is the leader an approved person or worker for the County Council activities?
- Is the leader's personal level of skill and competence appropriate to the activity being undertaken?
- What recent relevant experience has the leader:
  - in the activity?
  - in the situation and geographical area in which he/she proposes to lead?
  - of participants/groups involved?
- What participant/staff and female staff/male staff ratios are necessary and appropriate?
- Are appropriate numbers of supervisory adults available?
- Is there a requirement to hold a certificate or coaching award of any national governing body for each type of activity concerned with the activity?
- Has a group member a current relevant recognised first aid qualification?
- What arrangements have been made in the event of an emergency?

It is incumbent on the leaders of groups engaged in activities at unfamiliar premises to ensure that the locally prevailing fire precautions and emergency procedures are known and understood by each member of the group.

In the case of a residential visit, leaders should arrange for a practice fire drill to be carried out on the first evening at each establishment visited and that the evacuation and other procedures are satisfactorily completed.

## Potential Hazardous Adventure Activities

### Competency Requirements

**It is of paramount importance that the leaders of potentially hazardous activities are properly competent to carry out their tasks when undertaking activities which can present risks to participants.**

Those potentially hazardous activities which appear in Section Four require the leader to hold the competency level listed which, in general, are in accord with the national governing body of the activity. These levels should ensure that the person leading a group is able to conduct the activity in a manner which reduces, to the lowest level acceptable, any risks which are likely to arise. The holding of a national governing body competency does not, however, preclude the need to undertake a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to determine if additional supervisory or other control measures are required.

For potentially hazardous activities not listed in Section Three advice should be sought from the Health and Safety Section.

For potentially hazardous activities, Oxfordshire County Council's insurers require that participant/staff ratios are in line with not only the recommendations of the national governing body of the particular activity in question but also with the result of the suitable and sufficient risk assessment undertaken for the activity. They also require that the Council and its employees take reasonable care at all times. It is important to emphasise that national governing bodies' recommendations are their minimum guidelines but these do not remove either the Head of Establishment's or the leader's responsibility to ensure that a particular group is adequately staffed by competent people for that activity bearing in mind the unique attributes of each group.

When problems arise they are almost invariably related to:

- matters concerning employees' knowledge of the area
- its hazards
- knowledge of an individual's potential and capabilities
- the type of direct and indirect supervision required
- the changing nature of the environment

### Currency of Qualification and Competency

Heads of Establishment should be aware that many national governing bodies no longer award a qualification for life. The Award holder is required to continue to participate in the activity to practice their skills and to gain up to date best practice.

Many activity national governing bodies also require the first aid element of their awards to be renewed at set intervals to keep the whole award valid.

**In cases where the first aid qualification required by the governing body has either lapsed or a lesser standard of qualification has been obtained then the whole award is invalid and the person involved would not be deemed to be competent.**

Furthermore irrespective of national governing body requirements regular, on-going refresher and other training is needed to ensure continuing professional development and knowledge up-dating.

It is therefore incumbent on individuals who wish to lead groups in activities to ensure that their qualifications are up to date and to the standards required by the appropriate national governing body and also on the Head of Establishment to obtain confirmation from the individual that the qualification or award is still valid by sight of the appropriate up to date documentation.

**The activity national governing body can advise on the standards required - see Useful Addresses in Section Six.**

### **Adventure Activities:**

#### **Requirement for Providers to hold a Licence**

With the enactment of The Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 and the coming into force of The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 providers of certain adventure activities are now required to be licensed in order to provide facilities to young people under the age of 18.

The Regulations and the guidance from the Health & Safety Commission to the Licensing Authority further reinforce the need for effective safety management and provision of quality activities by competent persons.

### **Study Activities**

These activities should be non-hazardous but frequently **can give more cause for concern** than those defined as potentially hazardous in Section Three. They constitute a wide area of outdoor education and environmental activities and include, amongst others, visits to the local park or farm, urban, rural, coastal and river studies in the local and distant environment on a day or residential basis, studies related to examination demands and those concerned with experiences and studies abroad.

They embrace all phases of education and can cross curricular boundaries. Because study activities are not potentially hazardous activities as determined by the Section Three and Section Four definitions, the perception is often that there is no risk involved in these activities. This is not the case. **Some risk exists in all activities.**

The underlying principle of safety is that no person must be put at foreseeable risk in an unknown or unfamiliar environment. This can only be achieved by undertaking a suitable and sufficient written risk assessment and implementing the necessary risk reduction measures.

Field work and environmental studies in the humanities and sciences may involve some work in a locality and in circumstances where special care is needed. The activities undertaken during field work and environmental studies should not themselves be hazardous in nature.

Apart from the defined geographical regions listed in Section Four, where special care is necessary, hazards can and do exist in other places.

#### **The importance of pre-visits cannot be emphasised enough.**

In cases of doubt the Head of Establishment is advised to refer to the Directorate for Learning and Culture for help and further guidance - in the event of health and safety matters to Education Health and Safety Section or to the School Development Service or the Oxfordshire Quality Schools' Association (OQSA) in the case of curriculum matters.

### **Residential Visits – Additional requirements**

Pre-assessment is required for educational visits involving residential experience and considerations additional to those for day visits are necessary.

The pre-assessment should cover both the provision of the accommodation as well as the management of activities. A suggested Provider Information Questionnaire and Centre Information Checklist (**Form OA3 and Form OA4**).

**It should be drawn to the attention of leaders, however, that the questions posed for consideration need not be addressed to those outdoor education residential centres run by Oxfordshire's Education Service since they fulfil the criteria necessary to meet the requirements of the County Council and, in**

**the case of adventure activities, the licensing requirements of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and are regularly monitored.**

The leader and the Head of Establishment will need to consider the level of supervision required for the group during non-programmed activity times when the activity provider is not in direct control of the group. Specific consideration must be given to supervision of 'free' time. Evening programmes and their supervision need to be fully planned.

Some residential centres will provide adventure activities for which a licence from the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority is required. Other centres will provide accommodation only in which case a licence is not required. In instances where a Centre provides accommodation only and uses an independent provider for adventure activities which are within the scope of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, **party leaders must ensure that the independent provider holds a current valid licence from the Licensing Authority for the in-scope activities which they offer.**

The expected standards of group and personal conduct will need to be discussed and agreed between the leader and the Centre or residential establishment and the whole party made aware of what is expected of them.

## **Foreign Visits**

### **Types of Foreign Visits**

Foreign visits generally fall into two broad categories:

- the visit organised by a specialist agency. This can include ski activities, visits based on a particular region and residential or outdoor adventure activity courses abroad.
- exchange visits of students of different countries. This includes work experience placements, language, cultural and sporting exchanges. In the case of work experience reference should be made to 'Oxfordshire Work Experience Scheme' Health & Safety Procedure (see Education Service Intranet site) and to the Oxfordshire Education Business Partnership Unit's Work Experience Officers.

It will not be unusual, however, for establishments to arrange day visits themselves using independent commercial transport and organising non-hazardous activities for the day. Even so, an educational objective needs to be set and the same planning as for longer visits needs to be implemented to ensure the health and safety of all participants.

## **Planning**

Heads of Establishments will need to be aware of the possibility, in some areas to which visits may be planned, of rapid changes in circumstances which may put party members at risk due to ethnic, religious or other reasons due to local political and social unrest. This may include areas where normally there would be little or no concern over the safety of participants but the prospect and speed of volatile situations developing should, in the modern world, never be underestimated.

Travellers' information is provided to tourists by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. The Head of Establishment must therefore require Leaders to **check at frequent intervals the information provided by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk))** from the conception of the proposed visit, throughout the planning process and right up to the departure date. The information given by them must always be heeded even to the detriment of the planned activity.

### **Supervision**

The Head of Establishment should be satisfied that the leadership of the party is experienced and can cope with the foreign visit both in terms of language and local knowledge and has the appropriate management and organisational skills.

Less experienced employees, voluntary workers, teachers and other adults may be included in the party provided they understand their own supervisory role. With foreign exchanges adults from the host establishment may also be included in a supervisory role on the same understanding. In the latter case the arrangements must be made explicit and any problems with language overcome.

### **Travel Abroad**

All arrangements for travel abroad should comply with the requirements, including bonding, contained in the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. **In other words use only properly approved and licensed carriers or suppliers who can generally be sourced via ABTA, FTOT, AITOT, PSA, CPT, YCA, ABTOT etc.**

Heads of Establishments should ensure that any tour operator used is reputable and bonded through a body approved by the Department of Trade and Industry. Additionally if air travel is included within the package an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL) must be held by the organiser or operator.

This licence is a legal requirement and provides security to the consumer in the event of the licence holder going out of business.

In the event of taking a minibus abroad reference must be made to Oxfordshire Education Service Policy Circular P6/96 dated 3 September 1996 - 'School Transport - Taking a Minibus Abroad' – and the requirements for ASOR and EU Waybills, Own Account Certificates and Drivers' Hours, Age and Qualifications complied with. Specific enquiries

should be directed to the Education Service's Transport Officer.

Specific foreign travel motor insurance cover will be necessary when County Council vehicles are used and the County's Insurance Manager must be informed at least twenty-eight days before the date of departure.

### **Organisation**

It is important that advice is sought from organisations or institutions with local knowledge of the area to be visited who may be able to offer support in both planning and running the visit.

In addition, local advice and regulations should be checked, ideally before the visit, by party leaders, communicated clearly to, and followed by, all participants.

It may be useful to enquire of other Oxfordshire educational establishments who may have undertaken visits of a like nature or in the same or neighbouring vicinity and who are able to offer information, either general or of their particular experiences, to assist in the planning of the visit.

However, other establishments' experiences, planning, risk assessments and organisation cannot be used in place of the due process required for each individual visit.

Visits and exchanges of the types described above may not be hazardous in themselves but may sometimes include a potentially hazardous activity. In this case the party leader should refer to the appropriate part of Section Four and the equivalent foreign national governing body competencies applied.

Advice may need to be sought from the UK National Governing Bodies over comparative and equivalent foreign awards.

### **Planning**

The party leader should draft in consultation with the Head of Establishment an outline plan which includes:

- objectives
- itinerary
- activities and the related risk assessments
- cost
- dates
- participant group

Advice on costs, insurance, supervision etc. Should be sought from the relevant agencies. Participants should not be canvassed until the initial agreement has been obtained from the Head of the Establishment.

### **Cost and Charging**

In planning the cost of the visit provision should be made for:

- transport
- accommodation
- insurance
- entrance fees
- incidental expenses
- taxes
- contingency fund

Charges cannot be made for tuition if the activity is part of the National Curriculum. Reference should be made to the County Council's and to the Establishment's charging policy guidance.

### **Medical Insurance**

Medical insurance is required for all foreign travel.

Parties visiting states of the European Union will be covered for treatment resulting from medical problems through the use of Form E111 which, in the case of pupils, will need to be completed by the parent or guardian. Form E111 is obtainable from and authorised at Post Offices. The form entitles holders to reciprocal free or reduced cost treatment.

**However, additional medical insurance cover will be necessary since the cover provided by Form E111 is unlikely to cover all expenses other than in the most simple and straightforward of cases.**

The attention of participants and those giving consent for participation must be drawn to the limitations of provision of Form E111 and the need to supplement this provision.

Additional medical insurance cover for schools is available through the Insurance manager, Treasury Services in the Council's Directorate for Business Support. The Insurance Manager is also able to offer advice and recommend insurance providers for non-school groups if requested.

### **Vaccinations/Inoculations**

The Head of Establishment must ascertain whether any vaccination or inoculation is required for the country or countries to be visited and must ensure that all persons have received any vaccination/inoculations necessary before the date of departure.

### **Visas/Passports**

Exact passport and visa requirements for each country to be visited must be established through confirmation from the relevant consulate or embassy at the outset of the planning stage.

The requirements attributable to each individual traveller must be determined with confirmation with the consulate or embassy being made where necessary. Particular care is required in the case of non-British and non-EU passport holders.

All appropriate information must be communicated to those travelling and the proper action taken.

Details of passports may be obtained from the UK Passport Service's website ([www.ukpa.gov.uk](http://www.ukpa.gov.uk)) and from selected Post Office branches and World- Choice Travel Agents.

Individual passports are required for all individuals aged 16 and over although Collective Passports can be issued in lieu of individual ones to approved parties under 18 years of age who are British nationals and travelling abroad as a group of between 5 and 50 in number.

Applications for Collective Passports and contact with the regional passport offices outside London can be made by calling the UKPS National Adviceline on 0870 521 0410.

In instances when individual full passports are being used the party leader must ensure, before departure, that passports are actually for the person travelling and are valid for at least 6 months after the intended date of return .

It is advisable to photocopy the inside back cover or other page containing details of each passport in case of loss or other emergency needs.

### **Information**

When making visits abroad the Thames Valley Police form - Educational Visits Abroad (**Form TVP/E147**) - must be completed and copies distributed in accordance with the instructions shown in its preamble detailed on the form. Details of all members of the party travelling must be included. The completed form should be sent to the distributees at least seven days before the departure date. However, should there be any subsequent changes before departure, revised forms, clearly showing the specific changes, should be forwarded at that time.

### **Monitoring and Review**

It is essential to monitor and review any visit to see if the aims and objectives were met and if any improvements in the health and safety arrangements can be made for any similar subsequent activities. This exercise should be undertaken by both the party leader and the Head of establishment and reported formally to the Educational Visits Coordinator and the Governing body or Management Committee.