



Trips and Visits Policy

Part 1 – Introduction

POLICY No. 42 Version March 2010

Rational

Oxfordshire County Council not only recognises and endorses the value of educational visits and offsite and outdoor education for all, it also provides through the Education Service a range of outdoor education opportunities at several of its own professionally managed centres within and outside Oxfordshire as well as providing access to a whole range of other activities organised by establishments.

Outdoor education is a term now widely accepted as covering educational activities concerned with learning, moving and living out-of-doors, whether it be in a rural or urban environment, on a day or residential basis and also embraces educational visits to particular venues to achieve specified educational objectives and benefits.

It may or may not be subject specific and can be an approach to learning which both extends and reinforces the curriculum by :-

- transcending subject boundaries
- providing investigative opportunities
- forging links with a variety of disciplines
- encouraging personal independence
- applying to all ages

The ideology of outdoor education encompasses :-

- environmental and other subject specific studies
- outdoor and adventurous activities
- personal and social development and independence

Although these elements are reflected within the National Curriculum and can provide effective opportunities for cross-curricular links it must also be realised that the provision of outdoor education should not be seen purely in a curricular context. Great benefit can be gained from youth work and extra-curricular projects providing outdoor education activities.

Aims and Objectives of Outdoor Education

The benefits of outdoor education are most effectively realised by the establishment adopting a holistic policy towards it, thereby ensuring that it relates firmly to that establishment's overall aims and objectives as an integral part of the whole curriculum or service offer.

Effective outdoor education depends on the setting of clearly defined aims and objectives for each venture, study or activity.

Participants and parents/guardians must be made aware of the aims and objectives by effective planning, preparation and presentation. They should appreciate and understand how the aims can be achieved in the context of outdoor education.

The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, European Directives and Regulations implementing them have sharpened concern for health and safety. It is now absolutely clear that employees, volunteers and participants must all work within a system which can be seen to be free of foreseeable hazards and uncontrolled risks. Where foreseeable hazards are intrinsic to the very purpose of an activity then the control measures identified, proposed and used must reduce the risk to an acceptably low level.

The management of, and the attitude towards, safety are just as important as sets of rules and regulations which govern practice. Good safety management is the principle of this document. It is in keeping with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which require a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk to be undertaken before activities take place and that tasks are only given to those who are competent to carry them out.

No guidelines can account for each unexpected or unforeseeable occurrence in every environment in which teachers, leaders, students/participants and helpers can find themselves when off establishment premises but this document defines areas to be examined as part of the risk assessment process.

Activity specific governing bodies are listed in Section Five from whom detailed advice can be sought, but this publication incorporates accepted good practice as well as the general advice and guidance on safety for those persons responsible for outdoor education activities which can be found in :

- “Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits” DfES (ref. HSPV2) and the three-part supplement : Standards for LEAs in Overseeing Educational Visits, Standards for Adventure and a Handbook for Group Leaders
- “Safe Practice in Physical Education” from the British Association of Advisers and lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE) (Millennium edition) ISBN 1 8712 2811 5
- “Guidance to the Licensing Authority on The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996” from the Health & Safety Commission ISBN 07176 1160 4
- “Adventure Activity Centres : Five Steps to Risk Assessment” from the Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee of the Health & Safety Commission ISBN 0 7176 2463 3
- “Overseas Expeditions” from the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel

These documents are readily available :

the BAALPE book has previously been issued to Oxfordshire County Council schools, the Health & Safety Commission guidance is available from HSE Books, DfES and Outdoor Education Advisers Panel details of which appear in Section Six. Further guidance is either available from or accessible through the Education Service Intranet site and from other printed matter which is listed in Section Five of this guidance under ‘Useful Publications’.

Responsibility

The responsibility for health and safety rests, however, with each employer whether the LA in Community, Voluntary Controlled and Community Special Schools or the Governing body in Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Foundation Special Schools. However,

responsibility for health and safety is not only a matter for the employer. A role in the safe provision of visits and activities is played by each of the LA, the Governing body or management Committee, the Headteacher or Head of Establishment, the Educational visits Co-ordinator (EVC), the group leader, supervising and supporting adults, parents and the participants themselves. Each role is interactive and complementary to each other.

What is clear though is that no visit or activity can take place unless adequate planning has taken place and appropriate approval given.

This document is designed to provide a framework of sensible precautions and requirements in which outdoor education and off-site visits can be enjoyed and enhance learning experiences. It is hoped this framework will safeguard all participants and protect those who exercise responsibility for them.

The requirements and guidance included in this framework apply to all persons who teach or supervise activities off establishment premises and all educational establishments which come under the aegis of Oxfordshire County Council.

Persons using the facilities of an Oxfordshire County Council educational establishment on a hire basis are subject to the County Council's health and safety policy as well as the particular establishment's local health and safety policy and regulations.

They must have obtained the approval of the Head of Establishment before embarking on any activity.

Risk Assessment

Whilst the need to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments for all work activities is required by law (Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999), the fact is that risk assessment and risk management are merely tools of good management and good practice.

Assessing risk is a process rather than a document. It is not merely the assessment that is important but the actions that are taken as a result of it. Taking the appropriate action is more important than the actual form in which it is made or recorded. Risk assessment is not an onerous task since it simply answers the question 'What must be done to prevent people being harmed when doing this activity?' Fundamental to answering the question is the need to distinguish between hazard and risk.

Hazard is something with the potential to cause harm.

Risk is the likelihood of that potential being realised.

The Health & Safety Executive and others have produced advice and guidance on risk assessment and all identify logical steps to follow to obtain effective risk assessments. These steps follow the process of

- identifying the hazards;
- deciding who might be harmed and how;
- evaluating the risks arising from the hazards and deciding what measures are required to reduce the risks;
- recording the findings;

- reviewing the assessment, making revisions as necessary.

Bearing in mind that hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control measures are now component parts of National Curriculum activities, participants may be involved, or be encouraged to help, in the risk assessment process. However, since, in some instances, hazards and risks may not easily be recognised universally it is important that those who lead the activities are in a position to easily identify situations which may cause harm and to take appropriate action to reduce the risks to the lowest acceptable level. This may not necessarily be by removing the hazard as in some instances this will be physically impossible and in others the hazard may be the prime mover or purpose of the activity.

In essence those leading an activity must be competent in the task with which they are charged. It is for this reason that the LEA require the holding of at least the appropriate nationally recognised qualification in the activity to be one indicator of their competence.

Many aspects of outdoor education will be designed to challenge the individual whilst still ensuring their health and safety. It is essential that risk assessments apply to the activity being undertaken by one particular individual or group at one particular time.

Accordingly risk assessments should be dynamic and subject to frequent review.

It is incumbent on the Heads of Establishments to ensure that risk assessments are both rigorous and relevant and that they are prepared by those leading the activity who are best placed to implement the required measures identified in the assessments.

A pre-visit is most important in gathering all relevant information for use when undertaking the risk assessment.

Where evidence of the risk assessment process is required, it can take a variety of forms so long as these are drawn to the attention of those involved in implementing the control measures put in place as a result of the assessment. These forms can include:

- a statement that standard operating procedures apply and are in place for the activity or visit. These may have been produced by a National Governing Body, an LEA or the individual establishment itself, or
- a list of specific additional arrangements that are considered necessary because of the circumstances specific to the particular visit, or
- a visit approval application form designed to lead a group leader through the process of assessing the risk or
- one of many other formats which individual authorities, establishments or leaders have found helpful in encouraging a systematic approach to the management of risk and the protection of all participants.

Role of the LA

Despite the fact that managerial responsibility for day to day matters is delegated by the LA to individual establishments, an advisory, guiding, approval and monitoring role is retained by the LA.

Supplement 1 to the DfES publication "Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: a Good Practice Guide" sets out the role of the LA and indicates that it should:

- monitor the educational visits carried out by the LAs schools and other educational establishments;
- review policies and procedures in the light of lessons learned and sharing of good practice;
- monitor the work of the Educational Visits Coordinators including giving advice and guidance and ensuring access to appropriate training both for the EVC and for employees leading or otherwise supervising visits;
- determine which visits will require LA approval;
- advising on adult : participant ratios and whether ratios can include competent on employee adults ;
- ensuring all those involved in educational visits are assessed as competent in their specific tasks;
- ensuring training is available for those who need that competence.

This latest guidance from DfES makes abundantly clear the need for better co-ordination of visits by establishments themselves by means of their own Educational Visits Co-ordinator together with greater monitoring of educational visits by LAs.

In fulfilling their responsibility in determining which visits will require direct LEA approval consideration has been given to the categorisation of visits in line with Part 2 of the supplement to HASPEV.

Consequently all activities and visits will fall into one of three categories viz. Category A, Category B or Category C. Criteria of each category and the approval requirements of each are shown in Approval of Visits later in this guidance.

Role of the Governors & Management Committee

The Governing body has a very important part to play in the safe management of educational visits and other off-site activities. The Governors must ensure that the necessary guidance is available to enable informed policy, practice and procedures to be developed within the establishment for the provision of these important and highly beneficial activities. This guidance will include the identification and provision of the necessary training for both establishment staff and Governors themselves. The Governing body will have to ensure that the Head of Establishment and the Educational Visits

Co-ordinator are fully supported and that they are given the necessary time and have the appropriate competency to meet the requirements of their roles.

They will also need to determine what type of visit they must be informed about and agree to, how the educational objectives can be identified and met and that all LEA policy and procedures are met before final bookings are confirmed. This will include ensuring that the vital planning and pre-visits have been made and that after the visits are completed that reviews and appraisals are made and the outcomes incorporated into work schemes and future activities.

Role of the Head of Establishment

The LA delegates the principle of managerial control for outdoor education to the Head of the establishment at which the students or participants are registered or enrolled. The Governors of Aided and of Foundation schools act similarly.

The supervision and welfare of all participants undertaking activities is therefore inescapably the managerial responsibility of the Head of Establishment.

Some do, of necessity, delegate the day to day responsibility to members of their staff who may be the Educational Visits Co-ordinator. Total responsibility, however, cannot be delegated.

The Head of Establishment will ensure, even when they personally are the EVC, that all policies and procedures relating to educational visits are implemented and fully met and they will monitor the role and activities of the EVC in conjunction with the proactive actions of both the LEA and Governing body or Management Committee.

The Head of Establishment must be fully satisfied that the lead person:

- is competent
- has the required support during the activity
- can exercise an accepted and reasonable degree of supervision at all times and in all circumstances

The County Council deem competency as having sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities.

In giving their approval Heads of Establishment must be sure that the necessary planning procedures have been followed. This will entail monitoring that the required steps have been taken.

The Internal Approval Form (**Form OA5** in Section Four) details the steps to be taken.

The lead person in turn must ensure that the necessary information and checks must have been obtained and given. The Pre-Assessment checklists

(**Form OA3 and Form OA4** in Section Five) detail this.

Governors and Management Committees for their part must ensure that guidance provided by the LA is, in fact, available to all those involved in organising educational visits and that the guidance is implemented locally. They must be proactive in determining:

- that the necessary time and expertise is available to Heads, EVCs and others in relation to their responsibilities for educational visits ;
- what governor training is necessary and available;
- what types of visit they need to be informed about or approved and which can be approved by the Head of Establishment ;
- the educational objectives and benefits of the visit and how they will be met.

Role of the Education Visits Coordinator

The Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) will be involved in the process of planning and management of educational visits which would include adventure activities led by the establishment's own staff. It is clear however that they are not responsible for managing the actual visits but co-ordinating the process.

It is not intended either by the LEA or the DfES that establishments should create and fund a new post but rather that the formal recognition of the function and role will concentrate and fulfil the health and safety obligations.

Included in the role of the EVC will be to :

- ensure that educational visits meet LEA requirements including those of risk assessment;
- support the Head of Establishment and Governors or Management Committee with approvals;
- assign competent people to lead and to support visits ;
- assess competence of leaders and other supporters and organise necessary training ;
- ensure procedures are met particularly in respect of consents, emergency arrangements, accidents, incidents and near misses;
- review systems and monitor local practices.

Clearly the EVC will need to be competent to fulfil this role. Heads of Establishment will be required to ensure their EVC is competent and to provide access to the appropriate training to achieve this if necessary.

Role of the Group Leader

One person, normally a teacher or youth worker, will act as Group Leader and will be approved by the EVC and Head of Establishment as competent to undertake this role.

The group leader will have overall responsibility for setting the educational objectives of the visit and for the planning, supervision and conduct of the visit in accordance with this guidance document.

The group leader will :

- undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments for all the activities over which they have control;
- ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been undertaken by all third parties providing or delivering activities to the group during the visit;
- ensure that on-going risk assessments are undertaken and that appropriate control measures are implemented during the course of the visit.

The group leader will review and evaluate the visit and report formally to the Head of Establishment and the EVC and to the Governing body or Management Committee when appropriate.

Approval of Visits

Part 2 of the DfES supplement to HASPEV categorises activities as Category A, B or C.

Category A :

comprises activities which in normal circumstances present no significant risks and include activities where no National Governing Body (NGB) or other accreditation is required. They can be supervised by those assessed as competent by the LEA, Head of Establishment or EVC and where the establishment's and LEA's procedures are followed.

Examples will include off-site visits, local walks in parks and field and other studies in environments and locations presenting no technical hazards.

Category A visits will be subject to approval by the EVC.

Category B :

includes those activities where a general leadership award such as Basic Expedition Leader Award (BELA) or Activity Leadership NVQ can be used as a measure of competency. Activities such as walking, camping, road cycling, low level initiative challenges and off-road cycling in non remote country are included in Category B.

Where the EVC themselves hold such an NGB award or are competent to assess and validate colleagues for leadership they will be able to approve these visits in conjunction with the Head of Establishment whilst ensuring that LEA procedures are followed.

Where the EVC does not hold the appropriate competency reference must be made to the LEA's advisory staff who will assume the approval function.

Category C :

comprises those adventure activities which are in-scope of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations, those which require specific activity NGB awards and those activities included in Section Three of this guidance. Additionally although not technically so, the LEA include **all** visits abroad as Category C for the purposes of approval requirement.

Category C activities require the specific approval of the Director for Learning and Culture and application for approval must be made using Form MA1 (see Section Five) which is to be submitted at least 4 months before the intended activity date. In instances of remote expedition type activities application for approval is required at least 12 months before the intended activity date. Additionally, Thames Valley Police Form TVP/E147 must be completed and distributed as indicated for all visits abroad.

When assessing the category into which an activity falls account must always be taken of environmental considerations. Activities may fall into a higher category if it should occur :

- in or near water,
- in winter or adverse weather conditions,
- on or near cliffs or steep terrain,
- in locations subject to extremes or rapid weather or environmental changes.

Examples include field study activities next to open water, such as pond dipping, might rate as Category B. Off-road cycling over steep terrain or winter camping might rate as Category C.

It must be noted that Category C includes any activity in water with the exception of curricular swimming activities which take place in a swimming pool environment.

Responsibilities of Participants

In the planning stages it is imperative that all participants are made aware of their responsibilities which will include the requirement not to take unnecessary risks or put other group members at risk, follow all instructions of the leader and other supervisors, look out for anything that might injure or threaten themselves or others and draw it to the supervisor's attention and to behave according to local requirements/customs.

Information for Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians should be fully informed of the arrangements and activities planned when young people are involved in :

- extended day activities
- off-site visits and activities
- foreign visits
- residential visits
- potentially hazardous activities so that they can make an informed decision to give consent for their child to participate.

Heads of Establishment will need to give particular consideration to those instances where parents/guardians may be separated or living apart and where information may need to be provided jointly or individually. Additionally the need for agreed consent may be an issue to be resolved in such circumstances.

In all cases consent must be obtained in writing.

When participants are to be away overnight or for longer periods, parents/guardians should be offered the opportunity to meet the actual organiser/leader and other staff involved, including volunteers, and who will be accompanying and overseeing the group.

Parents should be told that they can also help in the preparation for the visit by reinforcing the establishment's policies and codes of conduct.

Arrangements for sending participants home early for whatever reason need to be determined and agreed with parents. Apportionment of the costs involved will also need to be decided.

Parents and Guardians responsibility to provide information

For their part parents/guardians must provide the following information to the establishment :

- a parental/guardian consent - (**Form OA1** see Section Five)
- relevant details of participants' special needs, medical history, dietary requirements, information on medication, travel sickness, etc. - (**Form OA2** see Section Five)
- details of a contact point in the event of an emergency for all times during the period of the visit - (**Form OA1** see Section Five)
- where appropriate all contact details for the joint County Council/Thames Valley Police form - Educational Visits Abroad (**Form TVP/E147** see Section Five)

It is most important that full details for all adults and young people participating in the activity is provided since this information is required to ensure a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the whole activity can be carried out.

Heads of Establishment will again need to give particular consideration to those instances where parents/guardians may be separated or living apart and ensure that full and correct contact information is provided appropriate to the circumstances of the particular case in point.