

Document Control - Document Details	
Document Name	Policy for Outdoor Education and Off-site Educational Visits
Purpose of Document	Outline of purpose and intent for management and provision of Outdoor education and off-site visits at Oathall.
Document Version number	14
Document Owner	Toby Houghton
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Document location	Shared Google drive: AAC-College policies/Approved Policies 2024-25
Date of first draft	2008
Date latest version approved	14 October 2024
Approved by	Governing Body
Next scheduled review date	October 2025

Version History		
Version number	Date Approved	Change/Reasons for Change/Comments
11	25 November 2021	General updates & section on Coronavirus
12	09 January 2023	No changes
13	11 December 2024	No changes
14	14 October 2024	WSSC guidance document dates updated. Removal of specific COVID section.

Distribution list
Governors
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Policy for Outdoor Education and Off-site Educational Visits

Introduction

Oathall Community College provides many opportunities for its students to enrich and enhance their on-site learning through use of outdoor education and off-site educational visits. This encompasses residential activities, environmental studies, sports, physical and cultural activities, business visits, conference, and adventurous activities.

The value of off-site educational visits is well recognised by the governing body and fully supported throughout the school. It is emphasised that a culture of safety must prevail and there is a need for careful planning and adherence to statutory procedures. Off-site educational visits must be well managed, information communicated, and responsibilities recognised.

This document outlines the specific policies and procedures for Oathall Community College. It supplements and follows the advice and guidance contained within the following significant publications:

- West Sussex County Council's Regulations for Educational Visits and the use of EVOLVE and national guidance: Latest version August 2023
- Government & DFE advice on health & safety for schools, regularly updated.
- Department for Education advice on 'Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, school leaders, school staff and governing bodies
- The Health and Safety Executive statement: "School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities – Tackling the Health & Safety myths".

Roles and responsibilities

The governing body satisfies itself that the appropriate procedures, risk assessments, and control measures are in place and that the documented guidance notes are being followed. All off-site visits that are residential, abroad, or hazardous need to be approved by the governing body. Such approval must be recorded in the minutes of the governing body.

The headteacher is delegated by the governing body to approve all off-site educational visits of a perceived low risk, local, daily or regular nature. This is recorded through use of the local authority off-site visits approval process known as EVOLVE. This in turn is delegated to the deputy headteacher. The person with these responsibilities will approve the group leader for each trip.



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The educational visits co-ordinator (EVC) ensures that all off-site activities follow the correct procedures. The person with these responsibilities will approve and monitor the written risk assessments and costings to ensure good practice. In addition, the following responsibilities and duties are undertaken:

- Support the group leader in identifying the purpose for the visit and the selection, training and briefing of appropriate supervising adults and volunteer helpers.
- Ensure that safeguarding checks are in place where necessary
- Arrange duty emergency contact and draw up proper procedures to be followed in such an event.
- Keep records and make reports of accidents and “near misses”
- Review and regularly monitor procedures
- Liaise with the LA outdoor education adviser where necessary to ensure the proposed visit complies with the LA regulations.

The group leader is responsible for identifying the purpose of the visit and following the checklist published in the LA guidance. A risk assessment is necessary for all off-site visits. Significant risks and their control measures will need to be recorded on the EVOLVE system. This will take account of:

- Generic risks as published in this document and the LA regulations and notes of guidance for off-site activities.
- Event specific risks as identified from a pre-visit or thorough knowledge or experience of the environment, accommodation, the leader’s competence, the group and other factors such as transport.
- On-going risks identified by the professional staff responding to changing circumstances and the success of planned activity and procedures. The participants and staff will be fully briefed on the purpose and the risk assessment control measures

Student participants are encouraged to consider risks involved in an off-site educational activity and to assist in the design of appropriate risk management strategies that support their learning. They will be fully aware of the purpose of the visit and understand expectations of behaviour. Students whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. If a student’s behaviour fails to meet the expected requirements on a visit, disciplinary procedures may be instigated in line with the college’s behaviour policy.



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All students are entitled to take part in off site visits and activities except where this is not possible for health and safety reasons; tutors and the inclusion team encourage students to take part in trips and activities and particular attention is paid to those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or have special needs. Our charging and remissions policy outlines how we will provide financial assistance for trips.

Parents should be able to make an informed decision about whether their child should go on the visit. The group leader should ensure that parents are given sufficient information in writing and are invited to any briefing sessions.

Selection criteria

Should a trip be oversubscribed, the selection criteria will be clearly defined in the initial letter to parents.

As all trips have different purposes these will vary from trip to trip. In general, the priorities will be:

1. Curriculum purpose e.g. History students would take priority for a history trip.
2. Age - when trips are run annually or bi-annually such as the ski trip, students would be selected in age order. (Oldest first)
3. Students who have previously been unsuccessful in applying for a place on a trip.
4. All other names will be selected randomly 'from a hat' by a leadership team member.

Notes for Off-Site Educational Visits

To ensure proper good practice and compliance with the necessary regulations it is expected that:

- All group leaders will familiarise themselves with the published advice and guidance. Further information is available from the Evolve website (www.westsussexvisits.org) and the West Sussex Services for Schools site. Training for group leaders will be arranged to include all aspects of supervision, ongoing risk assessments (including being prepared to stop an activity that has become too hazardous) and how to deal with an emergency. Access to such training is also available through the outdoor education office.
- In order to plan an off-site activity, trip leaders should use EVOLVE+ to get outline approval for their trip. This ensures the EVC, and others can approve finance, staffing and the activity before more detailed plans are undertaken. Routine or local visits such as PE



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fixtures also need to be planned ahead. It may be possible to approve a series of events on a termly basis.

- No financial commitment or communication with parents should be undertaken until outline approvals have been agreed.
- Informed Parental Consent. Parents now agree on admission to allow their child to take part in any off-site visits and PE fixtures but parents should always be informed about a trip or activity that takes place off site. Additional parental consent is required for residential or hazardous trips. Trip leaders should refer to guidance. The use of EVOLVE+ is being developed to allow parents to consent online.
- Cover Form. This local form is to achieve any necessary cover arrangements.
- Once outline approval is granted the full EVOLVE visit form needs to be completed and submitted for approval by the EVC and Deputy Headteacher.
- All residential visits and for those that are either visits abroad or for adventurous/hazardous pursuits will need to be approved by the deputy headteacher (or EVC) and submitted to the local authority one month in advance and certainly before becoming financially committed. These types of off-site activity also need the governing body's approval. School journey insurance is automatically covered by the local authority unless the establishment has 'opted-out' of the arrangement. Off-site group leaders should check to see if such cover is already being provided by a tour operator, or external provider. A refund may be possible.
- The school journey insurance policy can be found on EVOLVE in the resources section
- On return the group leader must report to the deputy headteacher or EVC any 'near miss incidents', accidents or other incidents. The WSCC on-line accident reporting form should be completed. If an accident form was completed at the venue, this should be given to the EVC.
- A general evaluation of the visit is possible, within 28 days, through the EVOLVE visit form. This can inform future visits and may be a useful check on the value of the risk assessments undertaken.
- Risk assessment forms should be completed and lodged with the EVC when risks are perceived as significant. External providers will have their own risk assessment documents that can be used to help in this process. For certain activities an Adventurous Activity Licence is legally required. (See the LA guidance or www.aala.org.uk) If this is the case their licence number need only be quoted instead of actually requiring copies of their risk assessment documents.
- Providers that hold a LOTC (Learning Outside the Classroom) Quality Badge have been externally assessed and are acceptable as a 'checked' provider on the EVOLVE site.