

STAYING SAFE...

For With God Nothing is Impossible' Luke 1:37

Church Lench CE First School

Educational Visits Policy 2023

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At the heart of the school is our belief that 'with God nothing is impossible', which allows our children to have high aspirations and know that they are part of a loving family. We have a flexible, child-led, broad and balanced curriculum where every child can thrive in a happy, inclusive and safe environment.

THE MANAGEMENT OF VISITS AND LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Church Lench CE First School

POLICY STATEMENT

The aim of Worcestershire County Council is to maximise the opportunities for children to learn through well planned visits and learning outside the classroom (LOtC) activities. All children (up to 18) either at school or under the partial or full care of the council are covered by this policy. To ensure that visits and LOtC activities are run by competent staff, maximise learning and are properly planned the council has adopted the Outdoor Education Activities Panel (OEAP) National Guidance as the standard; employees organising visits and LOtC activities for young people will follow the National Guidance (<http://oeapng.info/>) and any Council policy, procedure, guidance and training that applies.

External providers commissioned to deliver visits and LOtC activities will be expected to be appropriately licensed, qualified and hold a recognised quality standard such as the LOtC badge. Procurement tenders and contracts will explicitly state a requirement for providers to provide evidence of their competence and adherence to national guidance as a prerequisite to any provision of services. Appropriate child safeguarding measures will also be required, e.g. disclosure and barring vetting.

This policy applies to all visits and LOtC activities whether or not they occur during normal school / working hours, breakfast clubs, in the evenings, at weekends or during holiday periods.

1. STRATEGY

The Council strategy for visits and LOtC activities is to apply the same standards and systems across all schools and children's services. In order to do this the Council has adopted the OEAP National Guidance as the standard for visits and LOtC activities and the EVOLVE planning and management system. The Council also expects any commissioned service providing visits and LOtC activities to work within the National Guidance and to be able to demonstrate their compliance through a quality standard, accreditation or scheme.

All visits and LOtC activities will follow the following hierarchy by using the EVOLVE system:

- Visit leader (VL) – initiates, plans (and runs) the visit or LOtC activity;
- Educational visit coordinator (EVC) – checks the plans and associated documents, gives outline approval, monitors progress, assesses the success (or otherwise)

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and provides feedback to improve future visits or LOtC activities. Each school must have an EVC; and,

- Headteacher / Service Manager – checks that essential elements for the visit or LOtC activities are in place and gives approval.

2. ORGANISATION

The Council has a duty of care to ensure that young people and staff on visits and undertaking LOtC activities are safe. This duty has been devolved through the management hierarchy to specific roles in schools and service areas. The responsibilities and functions of these roles are detailed below.

2.1 Health and Safety Adviser - Outdoor Education

A specific H&S adviser is designated to lead on outdoor education and the administration of the EVOLVE visit management system. The responsibility of the adviser is to:

- Perform audits and sampling as part of the normal H&S auditing process to ensure compliance with legislation and OEAP guidance as it applies to young people and staff undertaking visits and LOtC activities;
- Provide information to schools and services about visits and LOtC activities, e.g. policies, procedures, and guidance;
- Keep under review this policy and related procedures and update as and when new information or practice changes;
- Ensure that EVC's, VL's and other staff involved in visits and LOtC activities are trained and assessed as competent in their specific roles;
- Monitor a representative sample of visits and LOtC activities as notified to the council via the EVOLVE system;
- Monitor the commissioning and procurement of providers to ensure Council, licensing and quality standards are being met, e.g. use of checklists for approving providers;
- Provide advice and information on visits and LOtC activities, referring to specialist advisers for high-risk activities.

2.2 Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC)

The EVC has a key role in the approval and management of visits and LOtC activities for schools / services. The EVC will be a trained and competent VL who has a senior position in a school or is a service manager. The EVC is responsible and accountable for:

- Preparing the school specific policies and procedures for visits and LOtC,
- Ensuring all visits and LOtC activities meet council requirements, e.g. National Guidance;

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- Ensuring parental / carer consent for children to take part in visits and LOTC activities;
- Ensuring visit leaders and other staff involved in visits and LOTC activities are appropriately competent;
- Organising induction and training for all staff involved in visits and LOTC activities;
- Preparing and testing critical incident and emergency plans
- Debriefing VL's following visits and LOTC activities to evaluate learning points
- Keeping appropriate records, e.g. accidents, incidents, risk assessments etc.
- Monitoring visits and LOTC activities (including those undertaken by external providers)
- Reviewing local systems for initiating, developing and approving visits and LOTC activities.

2.3 Visit Leader

The VL would normally be the originator of the visit / LOTC activity and manage the project from start to finish. The main responsibilities of the VL are to:

- Prepare outline visit / LOTC activity briefs for approval by the EVC;
- Draw up detailed plans for the visit or LOTC activity to include:
 - roles and responsibilities of staff and helpers,
 - risk assessments,
 - parental consent, medical information / provision and contact information,
 - manage the collection of fees and payment of providers,
 - safeguarding and child protection,
 - contracts with external providers are signed including agreed and clear handover procedures,
 - insurance cover is sufficient;
- Provide information to parents, staff and helpers;
- Agree reporting procedures, emergency plans and contact details with the EVC;
- Be a role model for children on the visit, e.g. behave sensibly, not drinking alcohol etc.; and,
- Evaluate all aspect of the visit / LOTC activity during and after the event and prepare a report for the EVC.

2.4 Visit Support Staff, Assistants and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers who assist visit leaders to take young people out on visits play a very important role in ensuring safety and meeting learning outcomes for the individuals. Volunteers, when used play an equally important role in the visit as school employed staff and need to be given full information and training. Volunteers must comply with their expected role, if it is felt a volunteer is likely to ignore instructions then they must not be allowed to attend. The main responsibilities as a visit assistant are

- Contribute to the planning of a visit where requested by the visit leader.

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- Provide emergency contact information and declare any health issues that may arise during the visit.
- Ensure they have attended any pre meetings
- Ensure they have read and understood and abide by the visit plans and risk assessments.
- Feed back to the visit leader if they feel they cannot meet the expectations of the plans or can foresee issues.
- Supervise the young people in accordance with their instruction and training.
- Follow instruction from the visit leader on the day.
- Be a role model to the children e.g. behaving sensibly and not drinking alcohol etc.
- Contribute to the visit evaluation.

2.5 Schools

The council recognises that schools undertake visits and LOtC activities as part of their learning curriculum and therefore carry the accountability and responsibility for ensuring pupil and staff safety.

2.5.1 Governors

Governing Bodies have the responsibility to ensure that the school has effective health and safety policies and provision in place which meets statutory requirements, Council and national guidance.

2.5.2 Headteacher

Headteachers are responsible for approving the following:

- Pupils and staff participating in visits and activities beyond the boundaries of the school; or,
- Pupils and staff participating in activities that falls within the remit of LOtC.

Visits and LOtC activities will be notified to the Headteacher through the EVOLVE management system and approval given electronically. The Headteacher will specifically check:

- Staff competence (VL, EVC, activity specific qualifications, vetting and DBS);
- Provider or travel company details (e.g. do they meet required standards);
- Insurance(s);
- Emergency plans and contact details; and,
- That any adult who is acting in a supervisory capacity as a volunteer, assistant or helper is authorised by the participating school to undertake the visit or LOtC activity.

2.6 Services

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Services for young people that undertake visits and LOfC activities are required to ensure the competence of staff who organise and manage visits and LOfC activities. The service manager will appoint a sufficient number of VL's and EVC's for the scope of the visits and LOfC activities undertaken. The EVOLVE system will be used for planning, approval and monitoring of visits and LOfC activities.

3 ARRANGEMENTS

The Council facilitates visits and LOtC activities by providing advice, information, training and subscribing to the EVOLVE on-line electronic information, management and planning system for visits and LOtC activities.

3.1 The EVOLVE system

EVOLVE is a subscription service that is part of the SLA for schools. The benefits of using the system are:

- Intuitive user interface;
- Reduced paperwork;
- Clear audit trail;
- Robust and simplified procedures;
- Real-time monitoring; and
- A comprehensive overview of all school off-site visits - especially important for critical incident planning.

The system URL is:

https://evolve.edufocus.co.uk/evco6/evchome_public.asp?domain=worcestershireschoolvisits.org.uk

Full training on the system can be provided by contacting the H&S Team.

3.2 Training

Schools and services must ensure that staff undertaking or approving visits and LOtC activities have the requisite competencies; the Council recognises four core courses that give competence to the required standard:

- Visit Leader (VL): this course is the minimum that is acceptable to take young people on a visit or LOtC activity; refreshing staff every 3-5 years is recommended.
- Visit Leader Refresher Training (recommended 3-5 years)
- Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC): this course is only open to staff who hold a current VL certificate and have the managerial responsibility for giving outline approval for the visit or LOtC activity to take place; EVC's are required to revalidate every 3 years;
- EVC Revalidation

These training courses can be accessed via the H&S Team - details can be obtained from the Children's Portal or by contacting the H&S Team on 01905 846102. Other providers offer similar training but this may differ in content and syllabus especially in the use of the EVOLVE system and Critical Incident planning. If staff, schools or services are unsure

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whether a training course meets the Council's requirements they should contact the H&S Team as detailed above.

Please note - Staff who lead and provide high risk activities for children must hold the relevant qualification from that sport's governing body.

3.3 Planning a visit or LOfC Activity

The planning of a visit or LOfC activity should reflect the complexity of the following variables:

- Staffing requirements:
 - What staff to young people ratio will provide effective supervision?
 - Are there gender issues?
 - Are assistants, helpers, parents or volunteers involved, in what capacity and are they duly authorised?
 - Have the staff attended the requisite training and gained the competencies required for the visit / LOfC activity?
 - Have staff been given the correct information and instruction for their roles in the visit / LOfC activity?
- Activity
 - What is the level of risk?
 - Are there insurance issues?
 - Is their sufficient competence (qualifications etc.) amongst the staff to run the activity?
 - Is the activity licensable?
- Group
 - What are the abilities of the group (e.g. previous experience)?
 - Do members of the group have mobility problems, learning disabilities, special needs etc.?
 - Are there any medical issues, e.g. medication?
- Environment
 - Is the activity indoors or outdoors?
 - What will be the impact of severe weather? What terrain
 - Is flooding / flash flooding going to be a problem?
- Transport / Distance
 - Where is the activity taking place (on site, off site, abroad)?
 - Is an overnight stay planned?
 - How is the group travelling?
 - What are the contingencies for getting back if there is a breakdown or other event?

3.4 Risk management and Risk Benefit

Risks associated with the visit or LOfC activity will become apparent during the planning stage. The hierarchy of risk management should be applied to determine what risks can

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be. It is recognised that a level of risk is acceptable in order to maximise the benefits from an activity in developing pupils learning the life skill of risk management. Therefore a risk should be looked at in order:

- To be avoided or eliminated if no benefits;
- To be reduced to an acceptable or tolerable level as is necessary to maximise the benefits;
- To be accepted without further control measures; or,
- To use a provider or affiliated organisation, e.g. for high risk and specialist activities.

Once identified the risks that need to be managed should be properly assessed with regard to:

- What is "reasonably practicable", e.g. are their sufficient resources available to adequately reduce the risk;
- A risk – benefit analysis, e.g. do the learning outcomes justify the residual risk; and,
- The principles of sensible risk management –
 - ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
 - providing overall benefit to society and individuals by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
 - enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them
 - ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
 - enabling individuals to understand that, as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Risk assessments should be performed on all substantial risks; measures should be identified to reduce the risk and to demonstrate that risks are acceptable / tolerable risks. Please note - if the risk cannot be reduced to an acceptable / tolerable level the Headteacher or service manager will need to decide whether the visit / LOtC activity can go ahead.

Where a risk has been transferred to an activity provider or affiliated organisation it is a necessary duty to carry out due diligence checks on the provider in order to be sure they are competent. It will sometimes be necessary to request copies of their risk assessments for information; this will always be the case for high risk, unusual or unfamiliar activities. Obtaining copies of such risk assessments is good practice and does not incur any liability on the individual visit leader, school or service. Any apparent errors or issues in the risk assessments should be taken up with the activity provider or affiliated organisation.

3.5 Emergency planning and critical incidents

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Maintained schools and children's services are expected to include measures in their planning to deal with emergencies. In the first instance the school should have sufficient preparations in place (including insurance) to manage the immediate consequences of an incident to include:

- Ensuring that pupils and school staff are safe from further harm, priority to the group
- The relevant emergency services are notified (this should happen co-incident with ensuring pupil and staff safety)
- Appointing a member of staff to be the spokesman and liaison with the emergency services when they arrive (the member of staff to be proficient in the language of the country where the incident has occurred)
- Notifying the school
- Making arrangement for staff and pupils to return to their homes or residential accommodation (possibly with the help of the emergency services).

Once notified the school or service will activate their emergency plan and should notify the Council via Emergency Planning of the incident. The Headteacher (and Governors) or service manager will need to determine if the resources at the site of the incident are sufficient or if further support is required. How to access additional support should be part of the visit / LOtC activity planning, or the school / service may wish to purchase a support package as insurance.

NB. There may be a point where the magnitude of the incident and resultant media attention will require the Council to intervene: typical scenarios might be a major fire at the school, fatalities or when the incident has a significant impact on the local community. The nature of incidents is their unpredictability, so each will be treated separately on its consequences and impact. The 24-hour Emergency Number for Worcestershire County Council is 07624 909756. Separate guidance for dealing with critical incidents is available via the EVOLVE system.

3.6 Advice and Information

The council's H&S Team will provide general advice, guidance and information about visits and LOtC activities but cannot advise on high risk and specialist activities. Schools may have a Visit Leader with appropriate qualifications and experience but the more likely scenario will be that an external provider has been engaged to provide the activity. Schools are recommended to obtain advice and information on high risk and specialist activities direct from the provider or the activity / sport's governing body.

3.7 Transport

Careful thought must be given to planning transport to support off-site visits and LOtC activities. Statistics show that it is much more dangerous to travel to an activity than to

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engage in it. Schools and services must follow the Council's transport policies and procedures.

The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk management process when planning the journey. The number of staff (or volunteers) required to supervise children during transportation will depend on:

- The type of transport
- The driver (staff cannot supervise children and drive at the same time, groups that will need input from an adult during a journey either behavioural or other will require an extra adult to travel with them.)
- The distance to be travelled
- Any special needs of the children being transported.

Where a coach or bus is hired, the Visit Leader must be sure that a reputable company is used, (guidance on this in national guidance) and that contingency plans are in place should there be a breakdown or accident.

If transport is being provided by a minibus, the driver should have been through the Council's training and hold the correct license categories (e.g. C1, D1).

The use of private cars to transport children to visits and LOtC activities is not recommended. If there is no alternative, the EVC or Headteacher should perform some basic checks:

- Does the driver hold a valid license and the correct level of business insurance?
- Is the car taxed (and a current MOT if applicable)?
- Is the vehicle 'roadworthy'?
- Sufficient safeguarding is in place

4 MONITORING AND REVIEW

4.1 Approval of Visits and LOtC Activities

The Head Teacher has the responsibility for the formal approval of all Visits and LOtC activities. Approvals are performed using the EVOLVE system that automatically notifies the Council's H&S Team and Emergency Planning officers. The Council may require further details if the visit or LOtC activity:

- involves a journey more than 50 miles away from base;
- involves a residential or overnight stay; or,
- involves an adventurous activity or takes place in an adventurous environment.

4.2 Evaluation of visits and LOtC activities

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The school or service EVC will ensure that the VL who organised a visit or LOfC activity performs an evaluation to determine:

- What went well;
- What went less well; and,
- How the visit or LOfC activity could be improved.
- Did the provider meet expectations
- Is this a visit that can take place again

It is expected that the EVC will share any learning outcomes with other schools and services.

4.3 Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there is a change in legislation, licensing (of activity providers) or national guidance.

Date: June 2023

Signed: *Mrs Price*

Review Due: September 2026