



January 2023

Outline and Purpose

Learning outside the classroom is highly motivating. Learning in the school grounds, the locality, visiting sites further afield and residential experiences all stimulate interest, curiosity and passion for 'doing'. These activities broaden young people's horizons, enable them to develop new skills and build relationships. They make young people more engaged with learning and therefore more likely to do well.

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom – January 2015

Outdoor learning supports academic achievement, for example through fieldwork projects, as well as the development of 'soft' skills and social skills, particularly in hard to reach children. It can take place on school trips, on visits in the local community or in the school grounds.

House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee – February 2005

Outdoor Education gives depth to the curriculum and makes an important contribution to students physical, personal and social education

Outdoor Education- Aspects of good practice – OfSTED – Sept 2004

An LOTC experience therefore can be seen as any aspect of a pupil's education that takes place out of the classroom and should include visits to such places as school grounds, parks, museums, swimming pools etc. as well as residential trips and visits abroad.

The school has adopted the guidance in 3 key documents and all guidance within this policy MUST be read in conjunction with the detailed advice contained within them. These are:

• **Chester West and Chester Regulations and Guidance for Safe Practice of Learning Outside of the Classroom. (LOoTC) Managed by Edsential.**

www.edsentia.co.uk

• **Health and Safety advice for schools (Feb 2014)**

• **School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities: Tackling Health and Safety Myths (HSE, 2011)**

This LOTC policy includes:

- Educational visits
- Forest Schools

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning policy and subject policies all of which make reference to LOTC.

Educational Visits

January 2023

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Governors:

- To ensure that the Head Teacher and the EVC have adhered to the guidelines contained within Edsential of LOTC.
- To ensure that visits are approved as necessary by the LEA before bookings are confirmed, unless the visits are deemed to be within the local area. In this case, a simpler form and risk assessment must be completed.
- To agree to all residential visits, trips abroad and those involving outdoor and adventurous activities. In these instances, to ensure that bookings are not completed until external providers have met all the necessary assurances. (This service is provided by the LEA Outdoor Education Unit)
- To define which type of visits should be approved by the Governing board, and/or the Head Teacher, and/or or the Educational Visit Coordinator.
- To ensure that that all aspects of risk management have been considered and that risk assessments for travel, accommodation and activities have been carried out prior to departure. It is not expected that Governors should become directly involved in risk assessment and related matters unless they have an appropriate competence.
- Ask questions about a visit's educational objectives and how they will be met. Are the objectives appropriate to the age and abilities of the pupil group? Why is a particular venue being used? Is the visit inclusive for all students? Is the visit value for money?
- To ensure measures exist to obtain parental consent on a basis of full information, to investigate parental complaints.
- To review annually the EV policy and procedures including incident and emergency management systems.

Role of the Head Teacher:

- To ensure that visits comply with the guidelines and regulations provided by the LEA and the Schools own Health and Safety Policy.
- To ensure that the Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC) is competent to oversee the co-ordination of all off-site education, and support the EVC in attending relevant training courses. The Schools current EVC is Mr Martyn Lewis.
- To ensure that the EVC informs the Headteacher of the progress of the visit and that this information is relayed to Governors (and to parents as necessary).
- To ensure that the activity leader is competent (experience and training) to undertake the activity.
- To check that the EVC has designated an appropriately competent group leader who will meet the LEA's criteria. For less routine visits, the Head Teacher will need to ensure that the EVC can obtain advice from an appropriate technical adviser as necessary.
- To ensure that in the event of a major incident or accident, LEA guidelines are adhered to in terms of informing, parents, staff and the media. Help to ensure that serious incidents, accidents and near-accidents are investigated.

Role of the Educational Visit Co-ordinator:

It has been identified in the HASPEV supplements as good practice for each school to have an **Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC)**. The EVC's role is to support the Head Teacher in ensuring that all visits follow LEA regulations and guidance and all of the school's relevant policies and procedures and will act on behalf of the Head Teacher;

- To approve educational visits as agreed by the Head Teacher and Governing Board.
- To provide adequate documentation to support the planning of all trips and visits.
- To ensure all off-site visits are thoroughly planned using standardised whole-school documentation including Evolve. This also includes trips within our local area.
- To ensure all staff are aware of the guidelines available through *CWAC* concerning their particular visit.
- To assign competent people to lead or otherwise supervise a visit. Competence of other adults proposed to provide support or lead activities within a visit will commonly be done with reference to accreditations from an awarding body and/or previous experience and on the job training.
- To ensure visits have appropriate support ratios and adequate cover for health and safety, first aid, medication and behaviour management.
- To work with the visit leader to obtain the consent or refusal of parents and to provide full details of the visit beforehand so that parents can consent or refuse consent on a fully informed basis.
- To organise the emergency arrangements and ensure there is an emergency contact for each visit.
- To keep records of individual visits including reports of accidents and 'near accidents' (sometimes known as 'near misses'). Retaining information alongside Evolve.
- To ensure that arrangements are in place for the Governing board to be made aware of visits so that questions can be asked as necessary.
- To ensure that LEA Approval form has been approved for residential trips at least 6 weeks before the visit is due to depart.
- To ensure that visit evaluation is used to inform future visits and training needs. Further staff training should be made available where a need is identified.
- To arrange for the recording of accidents and the reporting of serious injuries as required. Accident and incident records should be reviewed regularly, and this information used to inform future visits.
- To review systems and, on occasion, monitor practice.

Role of the Visit Leader:

The Visit Leader has full responsibility for the safe running of the activity including pre-planning and following guidance and ensuring all participants are aware of their roles. To achieve this Visit Leader will;

- Identify the clear purpose and objectives of the visit.
- Complete visit documentation by completing Evolve and obtain EVC approval for any visit off-site, no matter how short its duration.
- In the case of a local area visit, the allocated form and risk assessment must be completed.
- Plan the itinerary in such a way as to account for all times on the visit including meal and 'down' times particularly on residential trips.
- Have prior knowledge of the venue – the visit leader should have made an exploratory pre-visit.
- Inform parents and seek permission/consent, detailing the nature, purpose and related activities involved in the visit.
- Allocate supervisory responsibility to each adult for named pupils and ensure that each adult knows which pupils they are responsible for. To ensure that each pupil knows

which adult is responsible for them and that all adults understand that they are responsible to the visit leader for the supervision of the pupils assigned to them.

- Ensure that all adults involved in supervising the visit are aware of the risk assessments and the expected standards of behaviour.
- Continuously monitor the appropriateness of the activity, the physical and mental condition and abilities of the group members and the suitability of the prevailing conditions.

Role of the Pupil

- To be aware of the risk assessments carried out for the visit.
- To know who their supervisor is at any given time and how to contact him or her and to alert the supervisor if someone is missing or in difficulties.
- To understand the need to have a meeting place to return to, or an instruction to remain where they are, if separated.
- To understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour.

Procedures

CWACC (Edsential) and the Department for Education provide detailed guidelines on procedures in a range of specific situations likely to be encountered / undertaken on visits off-site. Visit leaders will need to be aware of the relevant sections before undertaking the trip

The school has in place a clear process to be adhered to in planning and organising an educational visit or trip;

Planning

- Confirm details with, and obtain approval for the trip with the EVC by completing the risk assessment and Evolve form.
- Obtain approval from the Headteacher, this ensures that all visits have been entered into the school diary.
- ***When the visit is authorised***, letters are sent home to parents as necessary including Pupil Premium children who are offered the trip at a discounted rate.
- Parents must always be made aware when their child is undertaking a visit and will be off school premises.
- Collect reply slips (bearing in mind some pupils in care of social services may also need additional permission from them) - No pupil will be allowed to go on a visit without parental/carer permission.
- Liaise with the EVC over any changes to the approved itinerary and arrangements.
- Pre-visits. In most cases it is very important to undertake a pre-visit. The need for a pre-visit should be discussed with the EVC. If a pre-visit is considered as not being necessary the reasons must be noted on the visit risk assessment and the Evolve form.

In planning and organising a residential trip or visit involving outdoor and adventurous activities the above process remains relevant with the following additions.

- All visits involving a residential (overnight stay) and/or adventurous activities must be approved by CWAC **before** a contract is made with a Provider.
- This is obtained by ***contacting the Outdoor Education Unit and checking if the Provider that you are planning to use has been vetted by the LEA.***
- Complete school procedures including Evolve.
- Obtain approval from the Headteacher. This will allow the date to be entered into the school diary ***at least 10 Weeks prior to the visit***

- **When the visit is authorised**, letters are sent home to parents as necessary including Pupil Premium children who are offered the trip at a discounted rate.
- Collect reply slips (bearing in mind some pupils in care of social services may also need additional permission from them) – No pupil will be allowed to go on a visit without parental permission. Authorisation for the visit leader to act for the child in the event of a medical emergency should be implicit within the permission. CWAC Form to be completed by the parent/carer.
- Collect pupil donations using the procedures requested by the school office.
- Liaise with the EVC over any changes to the approved itinerary and arrangements.
- Wherever possible and practical a First-aider should accompany each visit offsite.
- There should always be an appropriate first aid box available for use.

During the day

- One of the key features of all visits is the need for all staff to be involved in on going risk assessments. Visit Leaders need to make decisions on an on-going basis regarding the safety of the visit. This includes the support ratios and pupil groupings dependent upon social interactions and behavioural issues presented during the day. All members of staff need to be aware of the plans and procedures identified for dealing with pupils with specific behaviour plans.
- Visit Leaders must take a mobile phone in order to remain in contact with the school (and vice versa) during the time off-site. In the event of an emergency the school must be contacted immediately (or as soon as is practical) in order that the Head Teacher can take charge of the management of the incident. This procedure will follow the schools Critical Incidents Policy.

Review

- All journeys and visits off-site must be reviewed and evaluated in relation to the visit aims and purpose in order to aid future planning. It is the responsibility of the Visit Leader to inform the EVC of any specific issues effecting future visits concerning the venue, the transport or the group.
- In the case of a residential or outdoor or adventurous activity, this will take the form of a formal meeting in the week following the trip.
- The visit leader must also complete the Evolve review for their visit within 14 days of the visit.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment and risk management are legal requirements. For educational visits they involve the careful examination of what could cause harm during the visit and whether enough precautions have been taken or whether more should be done. The aim is to make sure no one gets hurt or becomes ill. The programme of a visit, as set out in the risk assessment and the consent form, should not be deviated from.

Risk assessment for educational visits can be usefully considered as having three levels:

- **Generic activity risk assessments**, which are likely to apply to the activity wherever and whenever it takes place. These are usually prepared by the LEA/ employer or by the school. Examples of generic risk assessment include St. Joseph's Risk Assessment for coach Travel. School staff will not normally prepare them unless they have accumulated specific experience or other expertise. These should still be checked and signed by the trip leader to ensure that they have been read.

- **Visit/site specific risk assessments** which will differ from place to place and group to group. These are undertaken by the school for each venue and are amended as necessary for different groups. They should be prepared or agreed by someone trained and competent to assess risks, such as the EVC.
- Activities such as swimming, crossing roads and curricular partnerships with other schools are examples of these site specific risk assessments where the same venue is used each week and barring any changes to the nature of that venue, our prime concern on a weekly basis is the risk presented by the group of pupils undertaking the visit.
- However, for visits which are 'one offs' a specific risk assessment for the venue itself as well as for the pupils is required. Examples of this would be visits to farms, galleries, museums, public parks, garden centres etc. as part of a specific curriculum module for a specific class group
- **Ongoing risk assessments** are those that take account of unplanned and unexpected changes, for example, illness of staff or pupils, changes of weather, availability of preferred activity. The visit leader is responsible for making decisions on an on-going basis during the visit as to the appropriateness of continuing the visit in the light of prevailing conditions.
- **All staff and pupils should be aware of a "PLAN B" in the event of the planned agenda needing to change.** Visit leaders are always in charge. They should trust their own knowledge of the young people and use their own professional judgement. This may include challenging an activity leader where the visit leader's knowledge of the group is superior or intervening to prompt a change of plan, including stopping an activity if they feel uncomfortable or believe that that it has become too hazardous.
- Where it is considered unsafe to include a particular pupil because there is serious doubts concerning their behaviour or it is felt that they represent a significant risk to themselves or others within the group (including staff), the Head Teacher will make the final decision on whether the pupil should access the trip and suitable alternatives that will meet the educational needs of the visit will be planned.

Vetting of Providers

When a residential or visit that includes adventurous activities (see LEA Guidance Notes) is being considered, the Providers of such services will be vetted by the LEA on our behalf to ensure that it meets the LEA requirements. This is why the Outdoor Education Unit must be contacted prior (Pre-Check) to any contracts being established. It is important that this check is made even if the chosen Provider is one that the school has used on previous occasions. Many trusted establishments have been provided with a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge.

Licensed Activities

- Most Providers who offer adventurous activities require an Adventurous Activity Licence. The adventurous activities that fall within the scope of the Licensing Authority are; Caving, Climbing, Trekking and Water sports. The status of a Provider in terms of licensing will be confirmed during the Pre-Check process. The Outdoor Education Unit will confirm if any Provider requires a licence and will check if a Provider's licence is current.

Insurance

- When a trip is undertaken as part of the normal school curriculum, even though it is conducted off school premises, the insurance arrangements for the school will prevail.
- The visit leader must check the need for additional travel insurance depending upon the nature of the activity to be undertaken.
- When a tour operator is used the type and extent of the insurance cover being used should be ascertained.

As part of the LEA vetting process the Outdoor Education Unit will check that this level of Insurance is in place. This can be confirmed when contacting the Outdoor Education Unit as part out the visit Pre-Check.

Voluntary Contributions

- The basic principle underlying the charging provisions of the 1988 Act (ERA 1988) is that education provided by any maintained school for its registered pupils should be free of charge if it takes place wholly or mainly during school hours.
- There is also the principle that an educational visit mainly outside the school day should be free of charge if it contributes to the delivery of the National Curriculum.
- Charges may be made for residential accommodation.
- Visits that are non-educational should not take place during school time denying access to full programmes of study.
- All visits during the school day should therefore be deemed to be educational.
- Voluntary contributions can be requested for any educational visit that takes place during the school day; however, a pupil cannot be prevented from taking part in the visit on the basis of a family not making any or sufficient contribution.
- Where the visit is non-educational the charge cannot exceed the actual costs to be incurred. Costs can be calculated against transport, board and lodging, admission costs, costs of appropriate non-teaching staff, incidental costs of staff, materials and equipment and insurance costs.
- Accounts related to off-site activities should be kept by the school bursar.

Voluntary Help

- The use of voluntary helpers should only be permitted by the Head Teacher or EVC. This permission will be based upon knowledge of the volunteers and their previous experience and training (on the job). The fact that help is voluntary does not negate the legal responsibility of those involved.
- CRB checks should be carried out by the office on all volunteer helpers who are working with children on their own – hence much advance notice is needed and those intending to use voluntary help should liaise with the EVC as early as possible in the planning phase.
- All volunteer helpers have the same responsibility to follow the instructions of the visit leader.

Transport

- Parents should always be informed of the type of transport to be used and risk assessments carried out.
- Hired transport – The school should ensure appropriate levels of supervisory staff are available to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils. The driver of the coach has no responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of the pupils.
- Public transport – Close supervision should be ensured.
- Use of private cars – Staff must ensure they have appropriate insurance cover for conveying pupils during the course of their professional duties. Parents must always be informed if members of staff intend to use private transport. School will not reimburse parents for the use of their cars.
- All parents and staff must complete EV Transport form before transporting pupils by private car.

Review

Visit Leaders will need to evaluate the success of each trip with the EVC who can oversee the need for changes in arrangements for subsequent visits to the venue or with the particular group.

In the event of a visit that involves residential and/or adventurous activities, a formal review meeting between the EVC and the Visit Leader must take place.

The group leader must review their risk assessment and effectiveness of their trip using Evolve within 2 weeks of the trip finishing.

Page Break

Forest School Policy January 2023

Equality and Diversity

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place; reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc.

Health and Safety

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous. Ratios within the woodland area remain the same as indoors as we are still on the school premises (1 adult to 8 children or with an Early Years Professional 1 adult to 13 children). Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Dynamic risk assessments will be in place to cover other eventualities. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice. The pre-school has a Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety

Risk Assessments will include:

The site of the Forest School

Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives)

Open Fire

Rope and string

Shelter building

Collecting natural materials

First Aid

The Forest School Leader has a paediatric first aid certificate. There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school.

Ensure the safety of all other children within the group and the possible need to evacuate them indoors.

Seek emergency help if needed.

Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms, contact HSE if it is a serious accident.

Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken into the woodland.

Use of Tools

Children and adults will be trained in the use of each tool before they use it. Tools will be counted in and out and checked against an inventory. Tools will be stored safely and kept out of the reach of children. They will be cleaned after each use to prolong their life, broken and damaged tools will not be used. Children and adults will be informed of rules, safety and how to use before they use.

Use of Fires

A Forest School Leader must always be present when a fire is lit and must never be left unattended. There must always be water available to extinguish the fire.

Children will be reminded of the fire pit procedures at each and every visit.

Walk behind the log seats and stand behind the log.

Step over and sit down on the log seat.

Stand up, turn around and step over the log.

Children are not allowed to cross the inner circle (adults should be role models of this).

Environment

Wherever possible environmentally friendly products and recycled materials will be used. St Joseph's Catholic Primary School will promote environmental awareness and care for our environment. Conservation issues and sustainability will also be supported. The woodland will be maintained to ensure the survival of all native flora and fauna and new flora will be introduced if needed. We will remove all litter and debris we take into the woodland and have regular litter picks to remove other refuse which is in the area. We will be caring towards our neighbours and try to minimise the amount of smoke and noise produced. Brambles and nettles will be removed from the main pathways but will be allowed to grow in other areas of the woodland. Branches at eye level and below on the main pathways will be removed to avoid injuries for people entering the woodland unsupervised (without the Forest School Leader), they will remain on all other trees. Dead and fallen branches will be removed, cut down and stored in the log store and used as fire wood. During the winter months large stones and logs will be left alone to avoid disturbing hibernating creatures. There will be areas created where wood is allowed to rot to encourage insects to thrive, wild flowers will be allowed to grow and children encouraged to enjoy them growing rather than pick them. A hedgerow will be introduced around the edge of the woodland and maintained to encourage small wildlife to live in the woods.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leader: will have a level 3 Forest School Leader qualification, CRB enhanced disclosure and an outdoor first aid qualification.

Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.

Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.

Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into the woodland.

Administration of first aid and first aid kit.

Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.

Organising emergency procedures.

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and

boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School and monitor levels of safety at all times, support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

This policy will be reviewed annually or before should any incidents arise or laws and policies change.

This policy was agreed by the Governing board on:

Signature of Chair of Governors:

Signature of Headteacher:

Signature of EVC:

Signature of Forest School Teacher

This policy will be reviewed annually.