

Oxfordshire County Council

Educational Visits policy

(Guidance for Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided Schools and other Children's Services establishments)

Abbreviations

AALA	Adventure Activities Licensing Authority
DfE	Department for Education
EVC	Educational Visits Co-ordinator
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
HSWA	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
LOtC	Learning Outside the Classroom
MoVE	Management of Visit Emergency
NG	National Guidance
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council
OEAP	Outdoor Education Advisers Panel
PE	Physical Education
VESN	Visit Emergencies Support Network
VL	Visit Leader

Introduction to this policy

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) endorses the value of educational visits and other learning outside the classroom activities which can offer the following benefits:

- Improved health and psychological wellbeing for students and staff
- Increased learning and attainment
- Cognitive, personal, emotional and social development
- Physical activity and wellbeing
- Increased creativity, attention and focus
- Increased engagement through applying learning in the 'real world'
- Increased awareness through connections with the natural world

OCC has a duty of care towards its employees and their students. In order to safeguard both children and staff, OCC aims to provide clear guidance and appropriate training for educational visits and other learning outside the classroom activities.

This policy applies to OCC Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools and other Children's Services establishments.

The policy specifically does not include:

- The management of pupils travelling between split sites
- Work experience
- Non-maintained OCC schools/settings i.e. academies

Academy trusts must ensure they have processes and policies in place to ensure they met their own obligations as employers. Academies are recommended to:

- Adopt OEAP National Guidance
- Appoint appropriately trained people e.g. Educational Visits Co-ordinator
- Operate approval processes with appropriate reference to an external competent person e.g. Accredited member of OEAP.

OCC Employer Guidance

OCC has adopted OEAP National Guidance as its operating guidance for the management of Visits and LOtC activities. This guidance has received widespread endorsement from professional associations and organisations, including HSE and the DfE. All personnel in maintained schools must adhere to this guidance. If clarity is required on the interpretation of guidance please contact OCC's Off-Site Visits Officer, educationalvisits@oxfordshire.gov.uk

This guidance can be found on the following web site:
<http://oeapng.info/>

Employer/employee responsibility

To comply with the HSWA both employers and employees have defined responsibilities:

- OCC, as the employer, **must** ensure that its employees are provided with appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision.
- OCC employees **must** follow the requirements of their employer guidance. This means that OCC employees must follow the requirements of this Policy and other relevant OCC policies together with those of the school / setting.

As an employer, OCC is required to ensure that its employees are provided with:

- appropriate guidance relating to Educational Visits and LOtC activities
- access to advice, support and further training from Advisers that have proven expertise and professional understanding of the guidance, the training and expectations set by current good practice
- suitable systems and processes to ensure that those trained are kept updated

OCC requires all Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools and other Children's Services establishments to:

1. Have in place a policy for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) that follows OEAP National Guidance.
2. Train staff to the following standards:

a. Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC) training - all OCC establishments are required to have a current, trained EVC in post who has completed face-to-face OEAP EVC training. OEAP EVC training is valid for 3 years at which point it should be revalidated through attendance at a re-validation course. Details of current courses can be found here:

<https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Search?search=EVC>

b. Visit Leader (VL) training – the completion of this training is recommended for all who lead Educational Visits. Currently there is no revalidation requirement, however, to meet LOtC guidance requirements regarding leader competence, leaders must be current in their knowledge of expectations of good practice, so refresher training is strongly recommended.

3. Operate appropriate processes for the systematic planning, approval and monitoring of visits (see below).

Assessing venues, facilities and providers

The LOtC Quality Badge is a national quality assurance scheme for providers of educational visits. It covers both safety and quality and provides appropriate evidence of diligence checks. The quality badge is available for both venues and activities. Schools can check whether a provider holds the LOtC Quality Badge:

<https://www.lotc.org.uk/educators/developing-your-lotc/find-a-lotc-quality-badge-holder/>

Providers of adventurous activities to children in more hazardous / remote locations need to hold an AALA licence. Providers whose activities fall into the remit set out by the licensing regulations must hold a licence. Schools can check whether a provider holds a licence:

<https://aala.hse.gov.uk/aala/>

If clarity is required on whether a provider should hold a licence, please contact OCC's Off-Site Visits Officer, educationalvisits@oxfordshire.gov.uk

OEAP Provider Statements - If a provider is leading activities and does not hold an LOTC Quality Badge or AALA Licence the school will normally need to ask the provider to complete an OEAP NG 8.1q Provider Statement which will then provide evidence of appropriate diligence checks.

Approval and Notification of Activities and Visits

Category A visits

These visits are close to the school, done on a regular basis involving environments known to the staff. It would include normal daily life activities. Examples include walks and exploring the area near to the school site, visits to the local church, library, school sporting fixtures and other regular non-complex activity.

Category B visits

These visits are to areas beyond the local area involving more complex environments and activity, and will typically be a one off or irregular activity in the school year. The leaders will be approved to lead the visit by the EVC. There may be some specialist training attached to some activities in this area. Examples include visits further afield, farm visits, local parks, museum visits, swimming lessons in offsite pools, zoo visits, sporting festivals and larger tournaments and some basic outdoor education activity.

Category C visits

These visits include residential visits, overseas visits, adventure activities and activities involving water. Examples of activities would include Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) expeditions, outdoor adventure activities including hills and mountains, motor sports, adventures on water or field studies involving water. A more comprehensive list can be found here: <https://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/8-1f-activities-requiring-employer-approval/>

OCC delegates the responsibility for formal approval of category A and B visits to the Heads and Managers of Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools and other Children's Services establishments. It is a requirement of this policy that Heads and Managers carry out this function in accordance with OEAP National Guidance.

Category C visits must also be endorsed by OCC's Off Site Visits Officer (see approval processes below)

Approval processes until March 2025:

1. All Category A, B and C Educational visits requiring OCC insurance should be compiled on the Termly Insurance Declaration form at the start of term, before visits take place, and submitted to insurance@oxfordshire.gov.uk. The form can be accessed at <https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/insurance/school-journey-and-personal-accident-insurance>
2. All Category C visit plans should be prepared on an OCC Educational Visit Notification form and submitted to the Off Site Visits Officer educationalvisits@oxfordshire.gov.uk 4 weeks prior to the visit

Approval processes from April 2025:

1. All Category A, B and C Educational visits requiring OCC insurance should be compiled on the Termly Insurance Declaration form at the start of term, before visits take place, and submitted to insurance@oxfordshire.gov.uk. The form can be accessed at <https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/insurance/school-journey-and-personal-accident-insurance>
2. All Category C visit plans should be prepared on the eVisit 2.0 visit planning portal, approved through school processes and submitted to the Off Site Visits Officer for review 4 weeks prior to the visit.

OCC Employer training, advice and support for visits

The OEAP is the responsible body for the accreditation, management, delivery and content of EVC, Visit Leader, Management of Visit Emergency (MoVE) training courses. OCC will continue to use these as its core training for staff involved in managing and delivering visits.

To support schools/settings with their off site visits programmes OCC provides:

- EVC, EVC revalidation, Visit Leader and MoVE training delivered by OEAP endorsed providers. This is a requirement of OEAP and provides quality assurance to OCC
- Access to relevant, current and appropriate advice and support for those managing and leading visits

The purpose of the training is to enable employees to:

- Access appropriate guidance and support for the management of outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC activity
- Develop competence in the management and delivery of outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC activity

The specific training courses provided are:

- EVC – for those new to the post
- EVC revalidation – a 3 year update for existing EVC's
- Visit Leader – for those leading outdoor learning, visits and /or LOtC activities
- Management of Visit Emergency (MoVE) – aimed at supporting SLTs and EVCs in the event of a visit emergency.

Heads / Managers must ensure their EVC's and Visit Leaders are competent to lead a safe and quality experience. The OCC training programme will help to provide a validation of this.

Further specialist support may be obtained from:

Off Site Education Visits Officer 07394 866410
educationalvisits@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Risk Management

OCC, as the employer, has a duty to ensure suitable, sufficient and proportional risk management processes are in place for its employees. OCC delegates visit management to schools/settings who must ensure it applies to all those leading, helping or participating in outdoor learning, off site visits and LOtC activity.

Good practice states risk management follows the principles of an identified risk benefit process as outlined in the National Guidance. Heads / Managers must ensure that policies are accurate and the actual delivery of the visit reflects these, so creating a culture of safe and effective practice in both planning and delivery.

A template Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA) form can be downloaded here:

<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-educational-visits-service/visits-advice-and-guidance>

A specific RBA should be prepared for each school visit.

Safeguarding

Heads / Managers must ensure all those involved in the planning and delivery of visits programmes must comply with current Safeguarding requirements as set out in [OCC Schools pages](#).

Monitoring

Responsibility for monitoring is delegated to schools/settings and should principally be carried out through systems put in place by the Head/Manager/EVC. Schools/settings should routinely arrange for their own monitoring of actual visits as they happen.

OCC reserves the right to undertake monitoring visits of its school or setting establishments on a random basis and will provide feedback to the head teacher and EVC on weaknesses and strengths as a result of the monitoring activity. A monitoring visit request may also be triggered if there are concerns or reports made to OCC about the practice relating to off site visits planning or activity.

Emergency Planning and Critical Incident Support

A critical incident is where any member(s) of a group undertaking outdoor learning, visits and /or LOfC activities are involved in an incident that will typically:

- Result in single or multiple fatality
- Incur life threatening injury requiring immediate hospitalisation
- Suffer life threatening ill health, requiring immediate hospitalisation
- Involve one or more participants having gone missing for a significant period of time
- Incur significant media coverage

By definition a critical incident will be beyond the normal coping mechanism of the Visit Leader and additional expertise will be required to support the Visit Leader on the ground and also the school/setting itself.

OCC's Emergency Planning Unit helps the Council to meet its statutory duties to have robust emergency plans and business continuity arrangements in place. OCC provides appropriate support in the event of a critical incident occurring. To activate support from OCC, the following telephone numbers should be used:

- 24-hour OCC contact for major emergencies: 07771 878725
- Thames Valley Fire Control Service 01183 589333 with a request for the OCC Duty Emergency Planning Officer to be contacted

This number should only be available to Head teachers / Managers and, as appropriate, to the leaders undertaking outdoor learning, visits and /or LOfC activities, and all should receive specific guidance for its use.

emergencyplanning@oxfordshire.gov.uk

OCC schools now have access to the **Visit Emergencies Support Network (VESN)**. This is a network of five experienced Outdoor Education Advisers working in partnership to provide emergency support. If you have a Visit Emergency and OCC's Off Site Visits Officer is not available you can access support from any of the other advisers: <https://vesn.org.uk/vesn-members/>

Inclusion

OCC schools/settings are required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. National Guidance specifically requires Heads/Managers to ensure the planning and delivery of outdoor learning, visits and /or LOfC activity demonstrates:

- Reasonably practicable measures are taken to include all young people
- Reasonable effort is made to find a venue and activities that are suitable and accessible
- Enable the whole group to participate fully and be actively involved

Charges for Off-site Activities and Visits

Head teachers / Managers must take into account the Education Act and latest DfE and OEAP guidance relating to charging for school activities.

Reference:

A. Education Act 1996 sections 449 - 462

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/part/VI/chapter/III>

B. DfE Charging for School Activities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charging-for-school-activities>

C. OEAPNG 3.2c Charging for School Activities

https://oeapng.info/search-results/?download_search=charging

The Outdoor Education Advisers Panel has produced summary guidance (reference C). Appendix 1 summarises the key information in a flow diagram and provides some suggested wording for different charging scenarios.

Insurance for Off-site Activities and Visits

OCC provides appropriate Employer Liability insurance to cover employees involved in outdoor learning, visits and /or LOtC activities. Schools/settings are required to have appropriate insurance to cover other events e.g. cancellation, belongings, travel disruption.

Further details of policy cover can be obtained from [OCC Insurance insurance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:insurance@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or 0333 014 3385

	Date	Significant recorded changes
Date published	5/03/2025	
Date of next review	5/03/2026	

Appendix 1: Guidance on Charging for Educational Visits

It is important that schools understand the law in relation to charging for school trips, for more details click [here](#) to view the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel guidance. The key information has been summarised in the flow diagram on the next page and some suggested wording for different charging scenarios has been provided below:

Wording 1 example:

We are writing to inform you about an upcoming educational visit for our students to [Destination/Activity] on [Date]. This visit provides an invaluable opportunity for your child to enhance their learning experiences outside the classroom, offering both educational and personal development benefits.

To support the costs associated with this trip, we kindly ask for a voluntary contribution of £[Amount] per student. This contribution will help cover expenses such as transportation, entry fees, and materials needed for the visit. No student will be excluded from this activity based on their ability to contribute, however if insufficient contributions are received the trip may not proceed. While contributions are voluntary, they are crucial to ensuring that we can proceed with the trip as planned.

If you are able to make a contribution, please submit the amount to the school office by [Deadline]. We appreciate any support you can provide.

Thank you for your continued support in your child's education. Should you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Wording 2 example:

The school will be subsidising the costs associated with the activities and transport relating to this residential visit. However, the charge to parents for accommodation and meals during the trip is: £[Amount].

Parents in receipt of benefits which entitle their child to free school meals are exempt from this payment. The list of qualifying benefits can be found here:

www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals

(If you have questions about this please contact [Name].)

Wording 3 example:

As this visit is an extra-curricular optional extra, we have to pass on the full cost of the visit to parents. In this case the cost of the visit is £[amount].

