



Off-site visits Policy & Procedure at Alban Wood

(fully in line with Herts guidance and model policy)

The Staff and Governors of Alban Wood Primary and Nursery School acknowledge the immense value of off-site visits and related activities and fully support and encourage those that are well planned and managed. We aim for all visits to have links to the curriculum which are planned for before and after the visits. We aim for trips to inspire, motivate and enthuse our children. We aim to plan at least one further afield trip per year for each class as well as many local trips as are relevant to the curriculum.

Parents and pupils will be fully involved in trip decisions with regular communication methods being used to promote and explain rationale for trips. Letters will also be sent home informing parents of any costs and changes to the normal school day. We aim to make all trips accessible for all children and will support parents with payment plans if necessary. In addition to the voluntary contribution parents are asked to contribute, school will part fund trips whenever possible. School is committed to making trips affordable therefore will fundraise to help make trips available at a lower cost.

This document provides concise and supportive guidance for the planning and management of off-site visits.

All visits will be planned in such a way as to ensure that the benefits and intended learning outcomes are clearly identified and understood by the supervising adults beforehand and can form the basis for objective evaluation afterwards. Arrangements and considerations for all visits will be recorded by means of standard operating procedures using generic risk assessments, or in standard lesson plan format, as deemed most appropriate by the Headteacher in order to minimise the associated bureaucracy.

Scope and Remit

It is a legal expectation that employees must work within the requirements their employer's guidance. This policy relates to Hertfordshire's "Guidance for the Management of LOtC and Offsite Visits" and it is the expectation that all staff will follow its requirements

This policy applies to all members of establishment staff, and other adults associated with Alban Wood Primary and Nursery School who take responsibility for pupils participating in learning and recreational activities in environments that are different from where the young people are usually based. It therefore applies when organising and supervising pupils taking part in off-site activities and visits, as well as when taking part in on-site activities outdoors.

This policy provides the key reference for sound planning for learning and recreational activities that involve taking groups of pupils away from school for extended periods of additional time or further than the local area. It should be implemented when using places such as:

- places further afield e.g. visits to local libraries, theatres and museums etc.
- residential venues
- learning ventures abroad

and involves any one of the following:

- direct supervision of pupils undertaking experiences beyond Alban Wood;
- deploying staff who will supervise or facilitate experiences of pupils

Staff must ensure pupils are supervised in accordance with the contents of this policy, regardless of whether or not the activities take place within or outside of normal working hours, including weekends and holiday periods.

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), health and safety responsibilities lie with the employer. This might be a Local Authority (LA) or Governing Body or a Management Panel. An employer has the legal responsibility to carry out the duties imposed by the Act. However, employers can delegate the tasks necessary to discharge these duties, even though the overall responsibility for health and safety rests with the employer.

In Hertfordshire, the tasks of scrutinising and approving arrangements for Offsite Visits are delegated to the Headteacher of the school.

The Head teacher (or their nominated delegate) will ensure that: -

- All off-site visits comply with employer guidance and are notified or submitted for formal approval as required;
- All staff involved are competent to carry out such responsibilities as they may be allocated;
- There is a clearly designated person who will act as Group Leader;
- S/he is assured that all adults, including volunteers, going on the trip clear about their role and that they should follow the instructions of the designated Group Leader (who will have sole charge of the visit);
- Suitable child protection procedures are in place, including vetting at an appropriate level of all voluntary helpers. Where access to the young people is regular or significant, CRB checks must be in place as required;
- Sufficient time is assigned for staff to organise visits properly. Ideally staff should visit the place of the trip prior to taking children on the trip;
- Visits are effectively supervised with an appropriate level of staffing;
- Visit information has been shared with parents and that consent has been sought where necessary;
- Arrangements are made for the medical needs and special educational needs of all the pupils;
- Inclusion issues are addressed;
- Suitable transport arrangements are in place and meet any regulatory requirements;
- Insurance arrangements are appropriate;
- Details related to the visit (including person details of both participants staff) are accessible at all times to a designated 24/7 emergency contact(s) in case of a serious incident;
- That there are contingency plans in place should the visit plan be significantly changed or cancelled;
- Staff are aware of the need to obtain best value. Appropriate consideration must be given to financial management, choice of contractors, and contractual relationships;
- Risk assessments are completed and are thorough;
- Where the activities or visit involves a third party provider, appropriate assurances have been sought; national schemes e.g. LOtC Quality Badge, AALS licence, Adventuremark, or a clear management Statement of Competence, are recognised in keeping with Hertfordshire's recommendations and make further seeking of provider assurances unnecessary
- All visits are evaluated with regard to best value, teaching and learning, quality experiences, addressing issues raised by any serious incident and to inform the operation of future visits;
- The establishment visit policy includes appropriate emergency procedures in case of a major incident
- The establishment visit policy includes a procedure to ensure that parents are appropriately informed in the event of a serious incident;
- Serious incidents are reported to the employer as required by employer guidance.

To help fulfil its health and safety obligations for visits, this establishment has a specifically designated EVC who supports the Head of Establishment. (In small establishments the EVC may also be the Headteacher or manager).

The Group Leader will: -

- Have the overall responsibility for supervision and conduct of the visit. S/he must be an employee and not a volunteer.
- Be competent to take on such responsibilities and tasks as may be allocated or required for the duration of the visit/activity and be formally approved to do so.
- Plan and prepare for the visit, taking a lead on risk management. Alban Wood sees it as good practice to involve all participating staff in the planning and risk management process for any given offsite visit to ensure wider understanding;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of other staff to ensure effective supervision;
- Ensure that child protection issues are addressed. e.g. CRB checks;
- Collate, make available and disseminate relevant information to supporting staff, parents and pupils as appropriate
- Make sure there is access to first aid at an appropriate level;

- Arrange pre-visit information meetings where appropriate;
- Evaluate all aspects of the visit, both during and after the event;
- Ensure that staff and other supervisors have been appropriately briefed on:
 1. the pupils making up the group, including age, health characteristics, capabilities, special educational needs, behaviour and any other information that seems relevant in the context of the planned activities.
 2. the nature, location and duration of the activity.
- Ensure the visit is effectively supervised; the overarching duty of care remains with the accompanying establishment staff, even when partial responsibility is shared with a provider. Should the provider run the activity in a way that causes concern, the accompanying staff should consider stopping the activity at the first appropriate moment. Such an intervention will need to be used with great sensitivity and discretion to ensure that it does not result in young people being put at greater risk;
- Ensure that all staff and any third party providers have access to emergency contact and emergency procedure details.

Member of Governing Body/Management Board

There will be a member of the School's Governing Body or Management Board who is designated as specifically responsible for Offsite Visits. This is usually, but not exclusively, the Chair.

This person's role is to "enable and ensure" by acting as a "critical friend".

S/he will ensure that: -

- S/he has a clear understanding of whether the management board or governing body is the direct employer of establishment staff; in which case the body will carry the same responsibilities as those of a Director of Children's Services;
- S/he has an understanding of how outdoor learning supports a wide range of learning outcomes;
- S/he has access to employer guidance as well as establishment policy, and a training package to support it;
- Establishment policy clarifies his/her involvement in the visit approval process;
- There are formal notification and approval procedures in place that meet with employer recommendations and requirements;
- The establishment visit policy supports the principles of inclusion;
- There are monitoring procedures in place.

Planning

Risk Assessment

Risks are expected to be reduced to an *acceptable* or *tolerable* level, and not necessarily eliminated. Planning should achieve a rational balance between potential adverse risks and the intended benefits and outcomes of the activity.

Due to the complex nature of off-site visits, conventional 'risk assessment' as a stand-alone tool is not particularly useful and can on occasion be misleading. It is of greater benefit to consider the overall 'risk management' of visits by taking all aspects of visit planning and management into account.

Visit planning includes consideration of the question: '*What are the really important things that we need to do to keep us safe?*' It should focus on those issues that are specific to the individual event, taking into account the needs of the group (including special and medical needs), the experience and competency of the staff team, and the leader in the context of the event.

Planning that includes adventurous activity commonly involves delivery by an external provider and the provider will have responsibility for risk assessing and managing the activity.

Use of generic risk assessments

A selection of generic risk assessments is available in Word format from the Health & Safety pages on the Grid. Whilst not exhaustive, the control measures contained within this selection are probably sufficient to cover most eventualities likely to be encountered in the course of most offsite visits.

Staff are encouraged to compile their own “event-specific” risk assessments which can then be reviewed and re-used as required.

Plan B

Alternative arrangements should be included within the planning process where appropriate, for example, where weather conditions or water levels might be critical, or where an overcrowded venue might necessitate an alternative option.

Where appropriate, all alternative activities should be fully considered and risk assessed beforehand.

Preliminary Visits

Wherever reasonably possible, we believe it is good practice for the Group Leader to make a preliminary visit to a venue or provider beforehand in order for them to familiarise themselves with the layout and surroundings, and any site-specific procedures or issues which may have an impact on the visit or members of the group.

Outcomes

Work that takes place outside the classroom can provide a very powerful means of developing learning in all curriculum areas, and raise attainment. Off site learning can also provide opportunities for development in other areas, including:

- Relationships
- Emotional & spiritual
- Cross curricular
- Individual
- Teamwork
- Environmental

Staffing and Supervision

The LA requires establishments to ensure there is an **appropriate level of supervision at all times** for all visits and that such supervision is ‘effective’. This must have been approved by the EVC and Head of Establishment and, where applicable, in accordance with Governing Body policy.

Ratios for Early Years are specified and must be adhered to; see [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)

For all other visits the Group leader and HT will make a professional judgement regarding the number and suitability of staffing on an individual visit basis after consideration of the following factors:

- the type, level, and duration of activity;
- the nature and requirements of individuals within the group, including those with additional needs;
- the experience and competence of staff and other adults;
- the venue, time of year and prevailing/predicted conditions;
- the contingency or ‘Plan B’ options.

Staff who are assigned to support the special needs of an individual cannot be included in the overall staffing ratio. Their responsibility should not include the wider group.

Use of Voluntary Helpers

The use of parents, as helpers or supervisors on offsite visits, is seen as a valuable means of encouraging or maintaining closer links with the local community and accessing a wider set of skills and experience than may exist amongst the establishment’s staff.

Such volunteers will need to understand and consent to the fact that they will be answerable to the group leader.

It is good practice that all adult helpers and volunteers are subject to CRB checking; however this may not be required where there is no possibility for unsupervised direct contact exists.

Emergency Procedures

Staff involved in a visit must be aware of, and adhere to, the establishment's policy on emergency procedures.

The establishment maintains a number of mobile 'phones specifically for use during offsite visits which should have all relevant contact details pre-programmed into them. It is each Visit Leader's responsibility to ensure these 'phones have:

- the correct details programmed into them beforehand;
- fully-charged batteries (and chargers available if necessary)
- sufficient credit available for the duration of the visit
- For all "out of hours" and residential visits there will be a nominated person(s) that can provide 24/7 cover as an Emergency Contact and that the person(s) so nominated will have 24/7 access to all details of the visit. This will include medical and next-of-kin information regarding staff as well as young people.

Visit Leaders should also complete and carry an Emergency Contacts sheet (OV9).

First Aid

It is not always necessary that qualified First Aider accompanies an off-site visit although we aim to ensure there is at least one member of staff that is First Aid trained on each trip. First aid issues for any visit should be considered as part of the risk management process and the exact requirements should be determined by ensuring that first aid support is available at an appropriate level. What is "appropriate" will be determined by:

- The nature of the activity.
- The nature of the group.
- The likely injuries associated with the activity.
- The extent to which the activity will isolate the group from normal ambulance support, or a known point where a qualified first aider will be available.

A very basic level of first aid support must be available at all times. This will require that one or more of the staff leading the activity:

- Know how to access qualified first aid support.
- Have a working knowledge of simple first aid and are competent to use the first aid materials carried with the group.

Approval of Visits

Approval is delegated to the Headteacher for all visits.

However the following types of visit are required to be notified to the LA: -

- Overseas (anywhere that involves crossing a substantial area of open sea, including Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides and the Channel Islands)
- Those involving one or more adventurous activities to be led by a member of establishment staff.

Regardless of whether a visit should be notified to the LA or not, there should be a clear, unambiguous audit trail for arrangements with clear evidence of approval.

An offsite visit or LOtC activity should not proceed without clear evidence of approval.

Consent

Section 35 of the Education Act 2004 states: '*Where a visit is part of a planned curriculum in normal curriculum time, then parental consent is not necessary although it is recommended good practice to ensure that parents are informed*'.

Annual consent is appropriate for regular routine activities that take place during normal school hours. This may include visits within the local community.

For all other visits, consent should be obtained on an individual visit basis. Information provided to parents prior to granting consent should include full details of the activities and any other significant information.

Insurance

In addition to the standard public liability cover which all establishments will have in place Hertfordshire County Council has taken out 'blanket' personal accident cover / travel insurance for all trips/visits at home or abroad. This cover only applies to establishments which buy into the Council's Annual travel Insurance Scheme. Details are available from the County's insurance department on 01992 555480 or by email at insurance@hertscc.gov.uk

Inclusion

This establishment policy endorses the following principles:

- A presumption of entitlement to participate
- Accessibility through direct or realistic adaptation or modification
- Integration through participation with peers.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled participants because of their disability, without material or substantial justification.

Group Leaders are required to make reasonable adjustments to avoid participants being placed at a substantial disadvantage.

However, the Disability Discrimination Act does not require responsible bodies to place employees or participants at inappropriate risk if a health and safety issue arises.

It is also the case that the adjustments made to include a disabled young person should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity.

Expectations of staff must be reasonable, so that what is required of them is within their competence and normal work practices.

Codes of Behavioural Conduct

Alban Wood encourages the use of codes of behavioural conduct as a means of establishing appropriate expectations of pupils' behaviour. Such codes need to be explained to both the young people and those in a position of parental support before the visit, so reducing the opportunity for misunderstanding both expectations and the sanctions that may be invoked where the code is breached.

As part of encouraging social responsibility, pupils should be encouraged to sign up to a "behavioural contract" for all residential visits

As part of the request for consent, parents should sign and accept responsibility for removing young people in prescribed circumstances.

Weather and Suitable Clothing

Where appropriate, the leader must obtain and act upon recent weather forecasts and local advice.

Pupils should be adequately clothed appropriate to:

- The time of year, prevailing weather conditions, altitude and exposure to elements;
- Likely changes in weather;
- The experience and strength of the party;
- The nature of the visit and environment.

This policy is to be read alongside The Policy for the Management of Learning Outside of the Classroom and Offsite Visits.

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