



Educational Visits Policy

Last reviewed: February 2021

This document applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust www.vale-academy.org

Please read this policy in conjunction with the school's local procedures.

Document Control			
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In this document, 'parent' means parent, carer or other legal guardian

1. Introduction

Educational Visits are a key part of the enrichment of education for young people within the Vale Academy Trust ('the Trust') and its schools, and are central to the philosophy of developing and challenging young people.

This policy covers all Educational Visits that occur outside of school premises. This ranges from walks around the locality to residential visits of several days' duration. It also includes Outdoor and Adventurous Activities and all visits abroad.

Each school will have its own procedures and conditions, sitting under this policy, reflecting its local arrangements and conditions for educational visits, and these may vary depending upon the nature of the visit and any other special circumstances. Parents should ask the visit organiser or the school office for a copy of their procedures and conditions for a specific educational visit.

The Trust encourages young people to progress through a 'Hierarchy of Enrichment'.

Through an offer of day, evening and residential visits we aim to:

- Encourage young people to enjoy and learn about their local community
- Excite and enthuse young people through a range of first-hand experiences
- Develop an understanding of environments and cultures beyond the local area
- Challenge young people in a range of outdoor education and cultural experiences
- Provide opportunities for sporting fixtures and competitions
- Ensure that all such visits are conducted in a safe manner

We operate a wide range of educational visits. These may include:

- Outdoor education and sporting experiences
- Teamwork and leadership opportunities
- Short visits to local parks and churches
- Fieldwork visits
- Expeditions to less developed parts of the world
- Cultural visits
- Exchange trips
- Participation in local events, such as sporting fixtures, theatre performances, museum visits
- Day visits to places of historical, environmental, religious or other interest to support specific curriculum areas
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme expeditions

2. Links to regulations and national guidelines

This policy has been developed to ensure that the Trust is compliant with statutory regulations and good practice guidance, including:

- [Outdoor Education Advisers Panel \(OEAP\)](#)
- [DfE – Health and safety on educational visits](#)
- [DfE - Health and Safety: responsibilities and duties for schools](#)

A policy such as this cannot cover all eventualities which might be encountered, but seeks to put in place a framework within which group leaders and/or the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) can seek to apply their own decision-making processes.

This policy also incorporates aspects of the [Health and Safety at Work Act](#).

3. Clarification of Roles

The Trust follows the [Local Authority 'Educational Visits' guidance](#), which is based on the national guidance from OEAP, as summarised below. Responsibilities for Health and Safety on school visits are determined as below.

The Trust ensures that there are robust procedures for the management of Health and Safety in place across the Trust; and monitors the effectiveness of these procedures.

The Chief Executive develops procedures in line with national guidance; ensures that staff are aware of national, local and Trust policy; quality assures risk assessments for each visit and ensures that safe practice is being followed (carried out through headteachers within each school). No school visit involving young people and staff leaving the school site must take place without approval. Each school will have their own procedures which sit under the main Trust policy and these are overseen by headteachers and Local Governing Bodies.

The Designated Group Leader takes overall responsibility for the well-being of young people during the visit and this includes the preparation of a risk assessment, with adaptations according to any circumstances which may occur during the visit.

All accompanying adults (staff and those volunteers with Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks) take immediate responsibility for a group of young people, follow risk assessments, and ensure that young people are kept safe at all times.

4. Allocation of places on any visit

No young person's place can be allocated on a first come, first served basis as this can be discriminatory to those travelling a greater distance to a school or families with financial constraints.

5. Allocation of Staff

All visits must have a named Group Leader who will have specific responsibilities on this visit. This role cannot be a shared task.

The following staff/student ratios are recommended by OEAP. They should, however, be considered carefully in the light of the activity which is taking place. Risk assessments should take into account whether the class will be together at all times and the level of risk in the activity being undertaken. Where groups separate within a location, these ratios should be strictly followed.

Early Years Foundation Stage - 1:4 as a minimum

Key Stage 1 - 1:6

Key Stage 2 - 1:10

Key Stage 3/4/5 – 1:15 (Increasing to 1:10 ratio on a residential visit)

In almost all circumstances, there should be (i) at least one qualified teacher per class and (ii) one other adult present. The exception to this may be, for example, where activities are taking place at another local school and their staff are part of the overall supervision or where there are sporting activities taking place where there may be a number of qualified staff present where overall supervision ratios are still maintained. However these situations should be highlighted in Risk Assessments and approved by the headteacher within each school.

All off-site visits must have the appropriate staffing to be able to deal with an emergency situation. This will be reflected in both the number of accompanying staff as well as their competences and experience in dealing with off-site visits. Again this situations should be highlighted in Risk Assessments.

6. Vetting of Staff

All helpers should be appropriately vetted, and careful consideration should be given as to whether voluntary helpers are engaging in regulated activity. If so, they should be required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced check with barred list check. Regulated Activity includes taking sole responsibility for a group of children, or participating on a regular basis.

7. Transport Arrangements

Transport arrangements should be indicated within the parental letter and parent consent sought.

8. Minibus Use

The driver of a vehicle cannot drive and supervise young people at the same time. Therefore, if, in your judgement, the young people may need supervising during the journey - because of age, maturity, behaviour, special needs or medical issues etc., then a second adult to provide this supervision is necessary. This will always be the case for a minibus, with children under the age of 7, or with children with significant behavioural or medical issues. Adults driving a school vehicle, such as a minibus, will

have completed appropriate training. Again such issues should be highlighted in Risk Assessments.

9. Private Cars

Where private cars are used, the adult driver should produce in advance of the trip:

- A certificate of insurance (this should include Class 1 Business Use for staff employed by the Trust).
- A driving licence (any endorsements should be made known to the headteacher, who will risk assess the suitability of the driver)
- For vehicles over three years' old, a valid MOT certificate.

On all forms of transport, it is the responsibility of the Group Leader and accompanying staff to ensure that young people follow all safety regulations, including the use of seatbelts.

10. High Risk Visits - Farm Visits

Extra consideration should be given to:

- Farm machinery
- Infections from e-coli or other diseases
- Risk from animal bites, etc.
- Handwashing facilities
- Safety standards and animal welfare

10.1 High Risk Visits – Water

Swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities for a school group. Swimming or paddling should only be undertaken after a number of issues have been considered. These may include:

- The current weather conditions
- The current tide conditions
- Following instructions from local agencies such as beach life guards
- Following instructions from externally employed instructors such as those from Oxfordshire County Council Outdoor Centre who may be leading sessions linked to 'kayaking' or 'coastering'

All of these will have been identified and highlighted on the agreed Risk Assessment. However such activities require a more 'dynamic' risk assessment to be made on the ground at the time of the activity by the trip leader. As such 'informal' paddling and swimming which had not previously been identified on the Risk Assessment would not be authorised.

Students should always be in sight of their teachers. One teacher should always stay out of the water for better surveillance. Swimming should always be conducted in the presence of, and under the supervision of, qualified lifeguards or instructors.

Where students are close to water (for example, a lake in the local park), this must be specifically considered within the risk assessment. Where students are using inland

stretches of water, consideration should also be given to the transmission of infection such as Weil's disease.

11. Use of External Providers

All external providers must be approved by the Trust. The Trust will ensure that any external providers used for hazardous activities are appropriately accredited and licensed. Examples of such schemes include:

- [Learning Outside the Classroom \(LOtC\) Quality Badge](#) (covers both quality and safety of all activities offered).
- [Adventure Activities Licensing Authority \(AALA\) Licence](#) (this statutory scheme covers only safety management).
- [Adventuremark](#) (covers only safety).
- [National Governing Body Centre Approval Schemes](#) (applicable where the only provision is a single, specialist activity)

Where such trips are planned Trip Leaders should seek advice from their headteachers in the first instance who in turn will contact senior staff within the Trust. This does not apply to visits to Oxfordshire County Council outdoor centres.

12. Parental Consent

All off-site visits and activities require the consent of a parent. An exception to this is where students move between educational sites (as in the case of King Alfred's Academy and Larkmead School). Generic permission for up to one academic year may be gained for a series of local area visits, such as visiting the town centre or taking part in a sporting fixture.

Parents must be given the full details of a visit in order to be able to give consent. Written consent can only be given by a parent and must include a signature, name and date. Additional consent can be given to allow the Group Leader to authorise medical treatment in the absence of a parent. Authorisation to provide basic medical needs such as plasters, headache tablets and throat sweets may also be sought.

The individual school will seek specific consent from parents for any visit which:

- Involves travelling by coach, minibus or car
- Takes place outside of the school day
- Involves hazardous activities

On rare occasions consent may be given by a parent over the phone. However, for this to happen the school must be convinced that the parent involved is fully aware of the details of the visit and that it is, indeed, the parent who is giving the permission over the phone.

13. Letters and Communication

Any letter concerning an off-site visit must go via the named school office. The letter must include the following information:

Accurate description of trip

Times and Dates

Finance information

Phone number of staff on the visit

Phone number of Home Based Emergency Contact (HBEC) – if the trip is out of normal office hours

Clarification regarding the use of mobile phones, uniform and general behaviour expectations

Arrangements for lunch, if appropriate

14. Medical Conditions and Additional Needs

The group leader must collate information on Medical Conditions and Additional Needs. This includes Special Educational Needs and young people with challenging behaviour.

This information can either be collated from parental replies or from information already collated through parental information held centrally.

All information provided must be used to inform the Risk Assessment document.

Young people with additional needs should be included within school visits and this should be planned for. Where a medical need might lead to risk this should be incorporated into the risk assessment.

Inhalers, epipens, etc. must be carried by the adult responsible for the group. It is the responsibility of the group leader to ensure that pupils with medical conditions are identified and that this information is shared on a need-to-know basis with those who might be taking responsibility for the young person.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw young people from educational visits on the grounds of behaviour. This is not a sanction, and would usually only be made where the young person's behaviour is likely to create Health and Safety issues on the visit. Advice should be sought from the headteacher and/or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator to ensure that any decision to withdraw a young person is appropriate and proportional.

15. First Aid

First Aid cover should always be planned for. This should take into account:

- The nature of the activity
- The nature of the group
- The likely injuries associated with the activity

- The extent to which the group will be isolated from the support of the emergency services (both in terms of distance and response time)

Qualified first-aiders may not be necessary for all off-site activities and visits. However, a 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:

- Has a working knowledge of simple first aid and is competent to use the first aid materials carried with the group.
- Knows how to access, and is able to access, qualified first aid support
- Carries a First Aid kit

16. Sun Safety

When organising an outdoor visit in the summer, consideration should be given to the risk of sunburn and heatstroke. Measures taken to prevent this are likely to include:

- Wearing tops which cover the shoulders
- Wearing sunhats
- Having access to shade and/or drinking water
- Not participating in activities which are too energetic

17. Road Safety

If you are likely to cross a road on your visit with a group of young people, plan to cross using Pelican Crossings or Zebra Crossings. If these are not within a suitable walking distance, discuss the arrangements needed to follow best practice with the headteacher or the Educational Visits Coordinator. These may include:

- Fluorescent jackets to be worn by adults needing to organise students crossing major roads. Two adults should stop the traffic, one on each side of the carriageway, facing the oncoming traffic. Only when the traffic has stopped moving should the children cross the road.

18. Headcounts

Regular headcounts should be undertaken throughout the visit. These must always include:

- When leaving the school building
- when seated on the coach before embarking (both outward and return journey)
- At any other transition points throughout the day (e.g. the end of lunchtime).

19. Identifying Young People Whilst on the Trip

Normally young people will wear school uniform on most visits which assists with identification. If a visit is to take place off-site where young people are not wearing school uniform, this should be approved by the school's headteacher and must form part of the risk assessment. Other solutions could include: young people wearing a uniform top, sporting top or trip t-shirt.

Exceptions to this may be required in some circumstances, for example Duke of Edinburgh Award Expeditions or trips involving a small number of students. Such exceptions must be approved in advance by the headteacher.

20. Use of Mobile and Wearable Devices by Young Persons

Decisions regarding whether or not mobile or wearable devices are allowed on visits including residential trip are made by headteachers. The Trust would highlight 'best practice' however we do accept that these decisions are best made by headteachers assuming trip leaders and headteachers have taken into account a number of key points as part of the planning and risk assessment procedure. These include:

- Giving clear information to parents and students about expectations if such devices are to be allowed on the trip
- Detailed plans have been discussed should there be a major incident and how communications to parents and others will be managed if students have open access to their devices
- Insurance arrangements are clear should a device be damaged or lost during the Trip and the Trust cannot be held responsible for such losses.

Best practice in relation to device access and usage whilst on visits – Guidance only
For day visits all devices should be switched off and put away, as they would be during a normal school day. There are a number of reasons why such devices are not appropriate on residential visits. These include issues of independence, managing lines of communication in case of an emergency and the importance of the Group Leader in the role of 'loco parentis'.

For these reasons the Trust advises that young people (up until Sixth Form) should not be allowed to bring mobile or wearable devices on residential visits.

There are a number of exceptions to this guidance. These include:

- Visits for Sixth form students
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Expeditions (separate DOE rules apply)
- Exchange visits where communications of young persons with the group leader is an important part of the risk assessment.

Final decisions regarding whether or not mobile or wearable devices are allowed on visits or residential trips should be made by the headteacher but only once they are in receipt of specific information linked to the guidance above.

21. Parental Communication

Parents can be anxious for news and updates during an off-site visit. During residential visits the Group Leader will provide updates where it is possible and appropriate to do so. Such updates will only be provided within school working hours and will be channelled via the school office for inclusion on the school website.

Parents should be given information on what to expect with regard to the level of update provided. However, all visit leaders will advise parents that 'No news is good news'.

22. Safeguarding

All off-site visits require staff to follow the school's safeguarding policy and the Staff Code of Conduct. Staff on off-site visits must be particularly vigilant when working in residential situations.

The group leader is required to ensure all young people are briefed on the issues of fire drills and the access to staff supervision during the night.

Group leaders should consider the security of young people overnight. Considerations could include locking all doors if the building is for the school's sole use or locking individual room doors in a building in which the group are not the sole occupants. Group leaders on camping-type visits should brief young people on safety considerations such as not sleeping in a tent alone and plans for accessing toilet facilities at night. These issues should be covered within the risk assessment.

23. Alcohol Use during an Off-Site Visit

The Trust insists that all educational visits (including all residential visits within the UK or abroad) are free from alcohol. This applies to both staff (including volunteers) and young people. There are no exceptions to this rule.

24. Leaving Emergency Information

The Group Leaders must leave their Home Based Emergency Contact (HBEC) a clear list of who is on the visit. This must include both young people and adults on the visit.

For visits ending beyond the school day the list should also indicate how to contact a parent in case of emergency.

If prepared in advance, this should be updated on the day by blanking out any young people who are absent.

25. Staff Training

The Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) must be appropriately trained and hold a valid EVC qualification.

All staff with the designated role of Group Leader must attend additional Training (Trips Training) in leading an off-site visit. This can be organised within each school or centrally. The training must cover all the requirements of this policy. Training must provide a detailed explanation of risk assessment, dealing with a major emergency situation and emergency procedures.

All staff with the designated role of Home Based Emergency Contact (HBEC) must undergo additional training (HBEC Training). The content of this training must ensure staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a serious incident or fatality during an off-site visit.

26. Risk Management and Risk Assessment

Risk management is part of Health and Safety Law. The term 'risk assessment' is used to describe the process of thinking about the risks of any activity and the steps taken to counter them.

All off-site visits require a Risk Assessment and Group Leaders may need additional training to complete this task. The Risk Assessment should identify all risks during the visits. These may be young person specific (e.g. referring to an individual's medical conditions), site specific or trip specific.

The group leader can refer to an external Risk Assessment for any aspect of a visit for which there is a charge. This could include, for example, a hotel, a climbing activity, a theatre or plane journey.

A generic Risk Assessment can be used for a series of local and linked activities within one academic year. An example may be the same group of young people visiting a local museum or church several times to complete an extended project.

27. The Role of the Home Based Emergency Contact

All off-site visits which take place out of office hours require a Home Based Emergency Contact (HBEC). The HBEC will normally be a senior member of staff and should be given additional training. This training should include practical advice on how to respond in a serious situation on a visit, including dealing with a fatality, road accident or trip curtailment.

The HBEC and the Group Leader must discuss prior to the visit what mobile telephone number will be given to parents and the details of the visit. The HBEC must review the plans for the visit and the quality of risk assessment that has taken place. When the HBEC is assured the visit is safe to proceed they must sign the HBEC Form which authorises this visit to take place. The Group Leader must update the HBEC on any last minute changes to itinerary or student attendance.

During a visit the HBEC should be contactable 24 hours a day, be able to deal with any emergency situation (including being able to drive a vehicle) and have constant access to the details of the visit.

On arrival at the trip's destination, the Group Leader should contact the HBEC to indicate they have arrived safely. During the visit the Group Leader should keep the HBEC informed on any significant incidents that occur. This would include any visits to hospital or breaches of Safeguarding Policy.

The HBEC can stand down from the role once the Group Leader has made contact to state that the group has arrived back safely and the trip has ended.

28. Emergency Procedures and Incident Reporting

Group Leaders should be given additional training in dealing with an emergency situation. Advice for Group Leaders should include reference to:

- Ensuring the continued safety of others
- Delegating clear roles for all adults
- Contacting the Emergency Services
- Caring for the injured student/s
- Caring for the rest of the group
- If appropriate, allocating a member of staff to make notes / take photographs
- The Group Leader remaining free from taking on a specific role in order to focus on strategic planning
- Contacting the Home Based Emergency Contact
- Reviewing the situation on the visit and staffing – is the staff team able to cope with the incident, or do they require extra support?
- If relevant, contacting the travel company as required regarding repatriation / additional support / insurance etc.

For any reported incident, the parents of the student must also be informed. Discretion should be used as to the nature of the incident and it will be the Group Leader or the HBEC who will take the lead in communicating with parents. For some incidents it may be appropriate to contact all parents, including those of young people not directly involved in an incident, to reassure them that their son or daughter has not been involved.

After a visit, on return to the school, the Group Leader must complete an Accident Form for any incidents during the visit which involved:

- A young person being taken from the scene of the accident to a hospital for treatment
- Contagious diseases
- Dangerous Occurrences – where an incident did not result in an injury, but could have done.

29. Evaluating a Visit

The Group Leader is asked to continually evaluate a visit during the event. Any concerns regarding Health and Safety or Safeguarding must be sent through to the EVC. In addition, any views regarding value for money, strengths or areas for development should be sent to the EVC and should be taken into consideration during the planning of future visits.

30. Financing Educational Visits

The Trust complies with the [Education Act 1996 \(Section 451\)](#), and procedures are outlined in the Trust's Charging and Remissions Policy.

31. Withdrawal from a Trip

Once a place has been assigned to a student, there is a contract between the school and the parents that payments will be completed. If a student has a medical condition that means they are not able to attend the visit, a doctor's or hospital note will be required and the matter will be dealt with through the visit insurance policy. If a student changes their mind and no longer wants to attend, there will be no refund of payments made unless a replacement can be found. However these arrangement must be made clear in the initial letters where parents commit to the visit.

Please note: The Deposit is Non-Refundable.

The school has the right to withdraw a young person from a visit due to poor behaviour within school. If the school decides to do this, it should inform the young person and parents as soon as possible. Whilst every effort will be made to refund as much of the cost as possible which may have already been paid by the parents, there is no guarantee that some or all of the amount already paid can be refunded. Each case will be looked at on an individual basis taking into account when the young person was removed and why along with particular costs such as flights which cannot be recouped. The headteacher of each school will make the final decision in such cases.

End.