



## **Northern Education Trust**

### **Education Visits Policy**

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Northern Education Trust  
Cobalt Business Exchange,  
Cobalt Park Way,  
Silverlink,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE28 9NZ

[www.northerneducationtrust.org](http://www.northerneducationtrust.org)



# EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

Northern Education Trust



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## **1. Scope**

This Policy applies to all Academies within the Northern Education Trust.

It applies to all Educational Visits involving pupils of the Academies. It applies regardless of whether the activities take place within or outside of normal working hours, including weekends and holiday periods.

Educational Visits are defined as events that involve pupils being away from the normal Academy sites, while in the care of the Academy. This includes visits, outings, school trips and off-site activities such as: local visits to parks, museums, libraries and sports facilities; cultural, educational, recreational and exchange trips; outdoor activities; residential; field trips.

## **2. Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP) National Guidance**

This Policy adopts the National Guidance published by the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP) on the website <http://oeapng.info> . This provides detailed guidance about many aspects of outdoor learning, off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom, and includes Essential Reading for all key staff roles. Specific information can be found by using the site's search function.

Academy employees must follow that guidance as well as the requirements of this Policy and other policies of their Academy and of the Northern Education Trust. Should there be any conflicting areas, then this Policy and the establishment's other relevant policies take precedence, and clarification should be sought from the Educational Visits Advisory Service (EVAS).

## **3. Benefits**

All pupils should be given the opportunity of learning outside the classroom and benefiting from participation in a wide range of visits and activities, including activities in the Academy grounds, local activities, day visits, residential, field studies and outdoor adventure activities. Whether their emphasis is adventurous, academic, sporting, cultural, spiritual or creative, off-site visits and outdoor learning provide first-hand experiences that inspire and enhance learning and development in ways which are powerful and lasting. They provide a foundation for life-long learning and healthy lifestyles, as well as complementing classroom learning and enriching the curriculum.

## **4. Assessment of Risk**

The Northern Education Trust has a legal duty to ensure that risks are managed - requiring them to be reduced to an "acceptable" or "tolerable" level. This requires that proportional (suitable and sufficient) risk management systems are in place. This Policy sets out the arrangements that the Northern Education Trust has made for managing the risks inherent in Educational Visits.

Risk is a natural part of everyday life: all activities involve risk, and it is impossible to entirely eliminate it. Indeed, the human spirit thrives on adventure and journeys into

new territory, both physical and metaphorical. As they grow up, it is important that children and young people learn to understand and manage risk and uncertainty for themselves. If we attempt to 'wrap them in cotton wool', they not only miss huge opportunities for growth but also emerge into society unable to cope with the uncertainties and challenges of adult life. Well-managed Educational Visits, including outdoor and adventurous activities, play a vital part in helping children and young people to learn about the real world, and to understand and manage risks for themselves.

The Academies therefore provide such opportunities for their pupils. Good planning and management of activities should be about reducing risks to an acceptable level, taking into account the potential benefits. The starting point for such a risk-benefit assessment should be a consideration of the targeted benefits and learning outcomes. This appreciation of the benefits to be gained through participating informs decisions about whether residual risks (i.e. the risks remaining after control measures have been put in place) are acceptable. The Health & Safety Executive endorses this approach through its "Principles of Sensible Risk Management", and advocates that it is important that young people are exposed to well-managed risks so that they learn how to manage risk for themselves.

Employees who follow this Policy, work within the limits of their own competence, and use their common sense and professional judgement will be fully supported by the Northern Education Trust.

Although some paperwork is required in order to record and communicate the decisions made, risk management should be largely a common-sense process centred upon competent staff. It should focus on significant risks, not trivial ones, and it should not become a restrictive and onerous bureaucratic exercise.

Risk assessment is a legal requirement and assessing risks associated with Educational Visits is no different. However this does not need to be a complicated process. It is simply a systematic examination of what might harm people, and should be based on common sense. Although an assessment is always required, a written risk assessment is only required when significant risks have been identified. The reasons for recording significant risks include:

- Deciding whether to proceed, modify or cancel a proposed visit or activity
- Deciding what precautions need to be taken to prevent unnecessary harm
- Making the planning process systematic and thorough
- Informing all those involved about the risks and precautions
- Providing evidence for those responsible for approving a visit
- Demonstrating that good practice has been observed in the case of an incident.

It is also necessary to include an assessment of risk to staff members during visits that may not be identified during the assessment of risk to pupils taking part (for example, violence at work).

Further information about risk assessment can be found on the OEAP National Guidance website (see section 2 above).

## **5. Inclusion & Equality**

Educational Visits should be available to all pupils, regardless of background or abilities. Establishments must ensure that their provision meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Guidance about inclusion can be found on the OEAP National Guidance website (see section 2 above).

## **6. Review & Evaluation**

All visits should be reviewed after the event, with particular regard to any accidents, incidents or other significant occurrences during the visit, followed by any necessary review of procedures and/or risk assessments.

The Ofsted report "Learning Outside the Classroom – How Far Should You Go?" (October 2008) (available on the OEAP National Guidance website) makes statements in the strongest terms to support the value of Learning Outside the Classroom, including the fact that it raises achievement. However, it also highlights the finding that Learning Outside the Classroom is rarely evaluated with sufficient rigour. A methodology to address this is provided within the document "Rigorous Evaluation of LOTC: Meeting Ofsted Expectations and Assuring Quality" in the OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above).

## **7. Commissioning**

If an organisation outside the Northern Education Trust is commissioned to provide a service which may include Educational Visits, it must have policies and procedures in place which at least meet the same standards as described by this Policy. Academies must satisfy themselves that this is the case.

## **8. Role-specific responsibilities**

OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above), sets out the responsibilities and functions, regarding Educational Visits, of specific roles including:

- Member of Board of Governors or Management Board
- Headteacher
- Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC)
- Visit or Activity Leader
- Assistant Visit leader
- Volunteer Adult Helper

## **9. Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC)**

Each Academy must have an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) in post. The role of the EVC is described in the OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above). EVCs must undertake an EVC training course and a refresher / revalidation course every three years, both of which are provided by EVAS. The course includes training on visit planning, risk assessment, leader competence and required procedures.

## 10. Educational Visits Advisory Service (EVAS)

The Educational Visits Advisory Service, which is a service provided by Sunderland City Council and is based at Derwent Hill Outdoor Education and Training Centre, may be contacted by telephone on 017687 72005 or by email to

[EVAS@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:EVAS@sunderland.gov.uk). The Advisory Service:

- provides advice and guidance to EVCs about planning visits, and clarification when required regarding this Policy or the OEAP National Guidance. Requests for advice will receive a response within one week of the request being received (except over the Christmas / New Year holiday period).
- provides information via the Evolve online system.
- monitors and approves visits using the Evolve system.
- provides training for EVCs.
- can provide other tailored training, such as for Visit Leaders and Group Leaders.

## 11. Academy Visit Policy

The Academy should have a policy that sets out how this Policy is implemented in practice, and makes reference to the OEAP National Guidance. There is a document on “How to write an establishment visit policy” in the National Guidance (see section 2 above).

## 12. Notification and approval of visits

The Evolve online system is provided and managed for academies by the EVAS. It should be used for the notification, authorisation and monitoring of visits. Visits in Category 3 (see below) require approval by EVAS, on behalf of the Northern Education Trust. Key information about a visit is available through Evolve in the event of an emergency.

EVCs are responsible for setting up Academy staff to use Evolve.

For the purposes of notification and approval, Educational Visits are classified into three categories. These are based on the ‘Radar’ model described in the OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above).

Category	Definition	Requirement for notification & approval
Category 1	<p>Straightforward routine visits defined as Category 1 in a written policy by the Academy, covered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ a generic risk assessment, regularly reviewed</li><li>➤ blanket informed parental consent (not necessary if visits take place during school hours)</li></ul>	Evolve may be used but is not required.

	➤ school/service operating procedures	
Category 2	Visits requiring enhanced planning with event-specific risk assessment, including: ➤ All residential visits not in Category 3 ➤ Non-residential visits not in Categories 1 or 3	Must be authorised by the Headteacher, using Evolve.
Category 3	Higher risk visits, defined as: ➤ Visits outside the UK ➤ Visits which include adventure activities ➤ Visits to remote or hazardous locations	Must be authorised by the Headteacher, using Evolve, at least four weeks before the visit, and then approved by EVAS

The requirement for Category 3 visits to be authorised by the Headteacher at least four weeks prior to the visit, is to provide time for any issues arising to be addressed. For more complex visits, more time should be allowed.

Contracts with providers should not be signed, or commitments made to participants or parents until sure that requirements for approval can be met. EVCs are encouraged to ask EVAS to comment on unsubmitted draft plans in Evolve for complex visits at an early stage, which could be a year or more before the visit.

### 13. Adventure activities

Adventure activities are defined as including:

- Abseiling
- Air activities (excluding commercial flights)
- Camping (except 'official' campsites)
- Caving, potholing, mine exploration
- Climbing (including indoor climbing walls)
- Coasteering, coastal scrambling, sea-level traversing
- Fishing in hazardous environments (e.g. sea, fast rivers, on deep water)
- High level ropes activities
- Horse riding & equestrian sports
- Motor sport – all forms
- Mountain Biking
- River/gorge/ghyll walking or scrambling, canyoning
- Shooting, Archery, Paintballing
- Skiing (including Indoor or Dry Slope)
- Snorkel and aqualung activities
- Snowboarding (including Indoor or Dry Slope)
- Swimming (all forms, excluding UK public pools with lifeguards)
- Walking (hills, mountains, open country)

- Watersports - powered craft, waterskiing (excluding commercial transport)
- Watersports - Canoeing/Kayaking
- Watersports - Rafting or improvised rafting
- Watersports - Rowing
- Watersports - Sailing / windsurfing / kite surfing
- Watersports – Surfing

Remote or hazardous locations include:

- areas more than 30 minutes walk from a road or refuge
- coastal areas with significant tidal hazards
- hazardous quarries
- steep terrain

These lists are not exhaustive: if in doubt advice should be obtained from the EVAS. If an Academy organises adventure activities routinely and finds the requirement for approval on each occasion to be a disproportionate barrier, there are two possible options.

- The Academy may apply to EVAS to delegate the authority to approve visits involving adventure activities to the Headteacher (thus in effect defining them as Category 2). It would need to demonstrate it has the knowledge and systems in place to make the required decisions. External verification, such as an AALA licence, may be appropriate. Such delegation should be subject to regular review.
- The Academy may choose to define a specific type of visit as Category 1 in a written policy. If this includes adventure activities, then approval from EVAS is required, which will be based on an assessment of:
  - The definition of the type of visit
  - The generic risk assessment
  - The operating procedures
  - Leader Approval for specific school/service staff if they are to lead the adventure activities.

Normally this approval will be given for a limited time, subject to review.

#### **14. Leader competence and approval**

A Visit Leader is the person responsible for planning and leading a visit, which may involve other members of staff and volunteers, including Group Leaders. A Group Leader is responsible for the supervision of a group of pupils during a visit.

The Headteacher must ensure that Visit Leaders and Group Leaders are competent to carry out their responsibilities. EVAS can provide Visit Leader and Group Leader training courses and can advise about competence requirements.

The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes documents on “Assessment of Competence” and “Good Practice Basics”. Visit Leaders, Group Leaders and other staff who require guidance or support should contact their Academy’s EVC.

Academy staff who wish to lead adventure activities must have approval to do so from EVAS on behalf of the Northern Education Trust, unless the authority to approve visits involving adventure activities has been delegated to the Headteacher.

Approval will be based upon evidence of competence, which may include evidence of relevant qualifications, training and experience.

Leader approval is managed through Evolve.

- For a specific visit, evidence of the leader's competence is required by the Activity Leader Form (ALF) which is part of the normal Evolve visit planning process.
- If a leader wishes to apply for generic approval to lead a specific adventure activity, then they should complete a Leader Approval Request (LAR) in Evolve for endorsement by their Headteacher who submits it to EVAS for approval. When this approval is given, it may be attached to future ALFs as evidence.

### **15. Minibus driving**

Academy policies regarding minibus operation must be followed. The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes guidance on the use of minibuses. Academies are strongly advised to obtain a Section 19 Permit one for each minibus used.

### **16. Emergency Planning and Critical Incidents**

A critical incident is an incident where any participant in a visit:

- has suffered a life threatening injury or fatality
- is at serious risk
- has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period

The Academy should have policies and procedures for responding to crises and critical incidents. The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes information on planning for and managing critical incidents on visits, which can be found using the site's search function. The website [www.schoolemergencies.info](http://www.schoolemergencies.info) provides resources on planning to deal with a school emergency.

### **17. Accident/incident reporting**

The Academy's and Northern Education Trust's incident reporting procedures must be followed.

After any major incident on an Educational Visit, the Academy should undertake a review of the incident, their risk assessments and emergency procedures, and should share the findings with the Northern Education Trust and EVAS. It is also good practice to record and learn from 'near misses'. The Academy should establish a system for doing this and should consider how best to share the learning outcomes of such incidents.

### **18. Supervision**

OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes documents on "Ratios and Effective Supervision" and "Group Management and Supervision".

This Policy does not prescribe minimum staff to participant ratios for visits (except where the law requires minimum ratios for Early Years). Ratios and other arrangements for the effective supervision of pupils should be determined as part of the risk assessment process by proper consideration of factors including:

- age (including the developmental age) of the group
- gender issues
- ability of the group (including special needs, behavioural, medical and vulnerability characteristics etc)
- nature and location of the activity (including the type of activity, duration, skill levels involved, as well as the time of year and prevailing conditions)
- staff competence.

## **19. Monitoring**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Policy and for the monitoring of visits organised by the Academy. The EVC is often best placed to carry out routine monitoring. The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes a document on monitoring. In case of doubt or concern, advice may be obtained from EVAS.

## **20. Assessing Venues and Providers**

The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes guidance on Preliminary Visits and Provider Assurances.

The Learning outside the Classroom Quality Badge provides sufficient reassurance that a provider meets nationally required minimum standards of safety and quality.

Details of a provider's status can be checked on the Quality Badge website [www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk).

If a provider of activities does not hold the Quality Badge, then detailed checks should be made to ensure that it meets required standards. The most straightforward way of doing this is to use a Provider Statement Form – EVAS can provide a template.

## **21. Insurance**

The OEAP National Guidance (see section 2 above) includes guidance about insurance for visits. The Academy should arrange Cancellation and Personal Accident cover for visits, unless they already have blanket insurance cover in place. This should cover cancellation of contracts with providers in the event of circumstances such as travel difficulties or illness or injury to participants, staff or their families.

When buying insurance cover from any source, the terms of the policy should be studied carefully, paying particular attention to the exclusions. Separate insurance or extensions to the policy should be arranged for any items for which the standard cover is inadequate.

## **22. Further Information and Advice**

Further information and advice is available from Educational Visits Advisory Service  
Tel 017687 72005 Email [EVAS@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:EVAS@sunderland.gov.uk)