



Learning that Connects

# EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

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### **1. Scope**

This policy applies to all Educational Visits involving students at Studio West. 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 students being away from the normal school sites, while in the care of the Studio West. 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.

Studio West employees must follow that guidance as well as the requirements of this Policy. Should there be any conflicting areas, then this Policy and Studio West's other relevant policies take precedence, and clarification should be sought from Simon Hoban Newcastle City Councils Senior Health and Safety Officer ([simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk))

### **3. Educational Visits Advisory Service (EVAS)**

Studio West buys into Educational Visits Advisory Service (EVAS) through Newcastle City Council.

The EVAS is delivered by professional H&S Officers from the Schools H&S Team. [Contact details for the Schools H&S Team](#) are available from the Schools H&S website.

The service delivered by EVAS includes:

- The provision of this policy on Educational Visits. This provides a management framework for schools educational visits and is available on the Schools H&S Webpages.
- Provision of H&S advice in relation to visit planning and assessment processes.
- Facilitation of initial training for Educational Visits Co-ordinators (EVCs), Visit Leaders and Assistant Visit Leaders as well as re-validation training for EVCs after 3 years.
- Independent validation and scrutiny of the assessment & planning processes for category 3 to confirm that assessments and planning processes are satisfactory.
- Approving Activity Leaders for Adventurous activities
- Auditing management arrangements for educational visits on a sampled basis.

### **4. EVOLVE**

The service delivered by EVAS is supported by EVOLVE an online information

management system, used for the notification, approval and monitoring of visits and adventurous activities.

EVOLVE provides an auditable record trail and enables Head Teachers EVCs to monitor the assessment and planning processes carried out for each visit.

It's recommended that all visits be recorded on Evolve, but as a minimum all Category 2 and 3 visits must be recorded on EVOLVE. These visits are automatically notified to the EVAS for independent scrutiny and validation of the assessment and planning processes.

Where Studio West choose not to enter visits in categories 1 and 2 on EVOLVE, they ensure that records are kept in another appropriate format and be available for inspection.

## **5. Benefits**

All students 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 school grounds, local activities, day visits, residentials, 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.

## **6. Assessment of Risk**

Studio West 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 Studio West 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.

Studio West therefore provides such opportunities for their students. 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 Studio West.

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 students 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).

## **7. Inclusion & Equality**

Educational Visits should be available to all students, 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).

## **8. 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).

## **9. Commissioning**

If an organisation outside Studio West 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. Studio West must satisfy themselves that this is the case.

## **10. 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
- Principal
- Educational Visits Co-ordinator which at Studio West is Business Engagement Manager

## **11. Business Engagement Manager**

The Business Engagement Manager must undertake an Educational Visits Co-ordinator training course and a refresher / revalidation course every three years, both of which are provided by Marcus Tinsley, the Educational Visits Co-ordinator. The course includes training on visit planning, risk assessment, leader competence and required procedures.

## **12. Senior Health and Safety Officer**

Newcastle City Council's Senior Health and Safety Officer, Simon Hoban, may be contacted by email at: [simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk)

Senior Health and Safety Officer:

- provides advice and guidance to the Business Engagement Manager 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 training for Business Engagement Manager.
- can provide other tailored training, such as for Visit Leaders and Group Leaders.

### 13. Visit categories

For the purposes of EVAS notification and approval visits are grouped into three categories.

Category	Definition	Requirement for Notification, Validation & Approval
1	<p>These are routine non-complex low risk visits.</p> <p>Examples include visits to libraries, theatres, museums etc</p> <p>They are covered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic Risk Assessment</li> <li>• School's local Educational Visits Policy &amp; procedures, (including blanket approval by Head Teacher for these visits).</li> <li>• Blanket informed parent/carer consent</li> </ul>	<p>Blanket approval for visits in this category is normally provided by the Head Teacher in the school's Educational Visits Policy.</p> <p>Recommended that EVOLVE be used to record documents.</p>
2	<p>Visits which require enhanced planning, due to the presence of a specific risk/s.</p> <p>These visits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All residential visits not in Category 3.</li> <li>• All other non-residential visits not in categories 1 or 3</li> </ul> <p>They require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A risk specific assessment, including:</li> <li>• Visit specific informed parental consent.</li> <li>• School's local policy &amp; procedures to be followed.</li> </ul>	<p>Must be approved by Head Teacher.</p> <p>EVOLVE must be used for all visits in category 2, to record documents and provide an auditable trail.</p>
3	<p>Higher risk visits defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits outside the UK</li> <li>• Visits which include adventure activities (see section 13).</li> <li>• Visits to remote or hazardous locations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Head Teacher must authorise the visit in Evolve a minimum of 4 weeks before the visit. EVAS will receive automatic notification of the visit.</b></p> <p>EVAS will validate the arrangements once the assessment and planning processes have been scrutinised and any queries addressed.</p>



Category 3 visits must be authorised in EVOLVE by the Principal and notified to EVAS at least four weeks prior to the visit. This is to provide time for any issues identified to be addressed by the school prior to validation being given by EVAS.

#### **14. 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 rope 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 Business Engagement Manager.

#### **15. Leader competence and approval**

The Business Engagement Manager is the person responsible for planning and leading a visit, which may involve other members of staff and volunteers. The Business Engagement Manager is responsible for the supervision of a group of students during a visit.

The Principal must ensure that the Business Engagement Manager is competent to carry out their responsibilities.

The OEAP National Guidance includes documents on “Assessment of Competence” and “Good Practice Basics”.

Studio West staff who wish to lead adventure activities must have approval to do so from the Principal. Approval will be based upon evidence of competence, which may include evidence of relevant qualifications, training and experience.

### **16. Minibus driving**

Studio West policies regarding minibus operation must be followed. The OEAP National Guidance includes guidance on the use of minibuses.

### **17. 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

Studio West has policies and procedures for responding to crises and critical incidents (Safeguarding Policy). The OEAP National Guidance 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.

### **18. Accident/incident reporting**

Studio West incident reporting procedures must be followed. After any major incident on an Educational Visit, Studio West should undertake a review of the incident, their risk assessments and emergency procedures, and should share the findings with the Educational Visits Co-ordinator. It is also good practice to record and learn from ‘near misses’. Studio West should establish a system for doing this and should consider how best to share the learning outcomes of such incidents.

### **19. Supervision**

OEAP National Guidance 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 students 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.

## **20. Monitoring**

The Principal is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Policy and for the monitoring of visits organised by Studio West. The Business Engagement Manager is often best placed to carry out routine monitoring. The OEAP National Guidance includes a document on monitoring. In case of doubt or concern, advice may be obtained from Simon Hoban (Senior Health and Safety Officer).

## **21. Assessing Venues and Providers**

The OEAP National Guidance 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 – Simon Hoban (Senior Health and Safety Officer) can provide a template.

## **22. Insurance**

The OEAP National Guidance includes guidance about insurance for visits. Studio West 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.

## **23. Further Information and Advice**

Further information and advice is available from Simon Hoban (Senior Health and Safety Officer) [simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:simon.r.hoban@newcastle.gov.uk)