



## **Educational Visits Policy**

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## 1. Scope

This policy applies to all Victory Park Academy staff and volunteers involved in the supervision of pupils when learning outside of the classroom.

## 2. Overview

Victory Park Academy acknowledges the great value of Educational Visits in broadening and enhancing both the learning and social experience of pupils.

Under statutory guidance that came into effect on 1st March 2004, all schools are required to have a named Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC), who will ensure that the planning and supervision of all visits and adventurous activities meet the DCSF Requirements and LA guidelines.

The Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) for the college is Mr A Newman. Safeguarding Compliance is the responsibility of safeguarding Lead, Mrs C Burch.

The role of the EVC is to coordinate the visits from the college, ensuring that each has been planned to take account of the needs of participants, the stated education aim of the visit and to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to manage risks. The EVC will also ensure that each visit is properly approved by the Head of Academy and in some cases, the Local Authority.

All staff involved in the planning and supervision and leadership of educational visits should read this policy in conjunction with SBC Guidance on School Visits (which can be found at the bottom of the EVOLVE website homepage). Forms referred to in this policy are available from the EVC, or the EVOLVE website (Go into "Guidance" then "Forms").

The Academy is committed to ensuring that all educational visits are inclusive and accessible to all pupils, regardless of background, ability, or individual needs. Reasonable adjustments will be made to support participation wherever possible.

## 3. Approval of Visits

- 1) All proposals for educational visits / trips must be submitted in the first instance to the Head of Academy for authorisation at least four weeks before proposed date of trip.

***NB: Proposals must include educational purpose of trip, initial summary of risks, safety and organisation, travel arrangements, number of pupils, number of supervising staff, costs.***

- 2) Trip leader liaises with EVC to prepare comprehensive risk assessments and all other required documentation. EVC approves visit paperwork.
- 3) Letter to parents must be quality assured by administration manager, Tracey Wilson.
- 4) Where required, Approval sought from LA, via EVOLVE website (Tracey Wilson).
- 5) All documentation must be signed off by Safeguarding Lead.

All matters relating to visits outside of the Academies – Approval of 'normal' day visits is at the discretion of the EVC / Head of Academy. However, visits that involve:

- Travelling overseas
- A residential experience, or
- an adventurous activity (as defined in SBCs Visits Guidance)

Require the additional approval of the LA (online through EVOLVE). The Academy Board will also need to be informed about these visits prior to a commitment being made.

If an external provider or tour operator is being used, it may be useful to use the “External Provider Form” (in the Form section of the website) to obtain essential information from them, at the time of the provisional booking. Providers used regularly by Southend schools will have already completed a provider form via the LA. It’s worth checking, through your EVC, before sending your own form.

The Academy Board will have oversight of educational visits and will be informed of significant or higher-risk visits as part of its safeguarding and governance responsibilities.

#### **4. Competence to Lead**

Any member of staff leading a visit must be assessed as ‘competent to lead’ before approval for the visit is given. The Head of Academy will determine whether staff are competent to lead visits.

If a member of staff will lead an activity which requires specialist skills (e.g.: skiing or canoeing) it is essential that they hold suitable qualifications and have an appropriate level of experience. Additional guidance on this is given in the SBC Guidance for School Visits document.

#### **5. Reason for Visits**

It is essential that all visits have sound and clearly stated educational aims. Trips ‘for the sake of it’ will not receive approval.

#### **6. Assessment of Risk**

‘Risk assessment’ is a careful consideration of the benefits to pupils of a proposed educational visit and potential risks to pupils, staff or others together with identification of the control measures necessary to reduce risks to a level which, in the professional judgement of the assessor, is deemed to be acceptable (i.e. low). The assessment should indicate the benefits that outweigh risks.

- In considering risk, there are 3 levels of which visit leaders should be mindful:
- Generic Risks – normal risks attached to any activity out of the Academies. These could be covered by careful completion of the SBC Visits checklist – EVOLVE website - Forms
- Event Specific Risk – any significant hazard or risk relating to the specific activity and outside the scope of item 1 above. These should be recorded on the SBC School Visits Risk Assessment Form”. EVOLVE website - Forms
- On-going Risk – the monitoring of risks throughout the actual visit as circumstances change.

In addition, consideration must be given to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), medical conditions, or additional needs. Where necessary, individual risk assessments should be completed, and appropriate adjustments made to ensure all pupils can participate safely and inclusively.

#### **7. Plan B**

Despite the most detailed and sedulous pre-visit planning, things can go wrong on the day, e.g. Parent helper is unavailable, member of staff is ill, transport fails to arrive, museum has lost booking, etc. To avoid having to make important decisions under pressure, it is important that some advanced thinking is done to cater for any foreseeable eventuality. This takes the form of a **Plan B**.

## **8. Critical Incident & Emergency Procedures**

In the event of a critical incident or emergency during an educational visit, the Visit Leader must take immediate responsibility for coordinating the response.

Procedures should include:

- Assess the situation and ensure the safety of all pupils and staff
- Contact emergency services where required
- Inform the Academy as soon as possible (Senior Leadership Team)
- Ensure that no member of staff contacts parents directly unless instructed to do so
- The Academy will coordinate communication with parents and, where necessary, the media
- Maintain a written record of events, actions taken, and decisions made

## **9. Behaviour Expectations**

All pupils are expected to maintain high standards of behaviour during educational visits and always represent the Academy positively.

The Visit Leader should ensure that:

- Pupils are briefed on expected behaviour prior to the visit
- Any behaviour that puts individuals at risk is addressed immediately
- Sanctions may be applied in line with the Academy Behaviour Policy
- In serious cases, arrangements may be made for a pupil to be collected early

## **10. Staffing Ratios**

A professional judgement must be made by the Visit Leader and Head of Academy and/or Head of Academy as to the appropriate ratio for each visit.

This will be determined by:

- type, duration and level of activity
- needs of individuals within the group (SEN)
- experience and competence of staff and accompanying adults
- nature of the venue
- weather conditions at the time of year
- nature of transport involved

## **11. Safeguarding**

It is the responsibility of all staff and adults involved, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people during off-site visits and learning outside the classroom. The planning process must fully consider potential safeguarding risks. Visits Leaders should ensure that they are informed of any children and young people who may be particularly vulnerable or have specific safeguarding needs and ensure that other staff/adults are made aware as necessary.

## 11.1 Overnight Stays

Where activities and visits involve overnight stays, careful consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements, taking into account issues of privacy and child protection. Children, young people, staff and parents should be informed of sleeping arrangements prior to the start of the trip. Careful attention should be given to ensuring safe staff/participant ratios and to the gender mix of staff.

## 11.2 Relationships and Professional Behaviour

During off-site visits there is a potential for relationships between staff and participants to be less formal than in the college environment. Supervising adults are in a position of trust and responsible for ensuring that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries.

Young people may build relationships with other adults and young people from outside the group. This provides a potential for some positive experiences but it also presents risks.

Pupils should not be left unsupervised at any point whilst off site and staff should ensure that social interaction is appropriate.

Supervising adults are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions. They should operate, and be seen to operate, in an open and transparent way.

The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.

Staff should:

- Conduct themselves in a publicly open and transparent manner when working with children and young people, and avoid situations where they and an individual or small group of pupils are unobserved.
- When an activity requires use of physical touch i.e. fitting of a safety harness; openly communicate intention to touch and seeking pupil's permission preferable with other staff present.
- Where a pupil has become upset/distressed, ensure comfort and reassurance are provided in an age-appropriate manner whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries
- Adhere to the college safeguarding policies at all times.

## 11.3 Mobile Communications and social media

Staff supervising pupils off site are required to carry Academy mobile phones to be used to communicate with the college or pupils' parents in the event of emergencies or changes in estimated arrival times etc. In addition to this staff, supervising parents and pupils may be in possession of mobile phones and may be connected to the internet. Mobile phones and use of social media present significant risks which staff should be aware of.

Specifically:

- Photographs and/or comments shared by pupils or staff on social media can
- Easily be taken out of context. What may appear at the time as harmless fun can easily be perceived as inappropriate and damaging to the reputation of individual students, staff or

the college by parents, colleagues or members of the public? Once shared by other users on the social media such images/comments become very difficult to remove.

- Internet enabled smartphones are able to access unsuitable web content.
- Smartphones may provide a vehicle for cyber-bullying

#### **11.4 Measures to Safeguard Pupils & Staff should include**

- A visit behaviour agreement addresses the risks posed by availability of personal mobile phones and access to social media either through applying existing Academy policies or by laying down some basic ground rules.
- All adults should be familiar with and adhere to the college's use of mobile phones policy throughout the duration of an offsite visit. Where phones cannot be locked away, they should be kept out of site at all times. Staff should not engage in private use of phones. This includes messaging other group members.
- Staff should keep confidential personal information including phone numbers and social media profiles.
- Academy cameras should only be used to take images of pupils and staff
- Images must not be displayed on social networking sites.

#### **11.5 Role of Supervising Parents**

Supervising parents must be fully briefed on the programme, venue, activities, supervision arrangements and their responsibilities. They must also be given a written list of the pupils in their immediate care. Risk assessments must be shared with supervising parents during a pre-trip briefing.

All adult volunteers'/parent supervisors who have regular or unsupervised access to young people must be DBS checked. NB: Where parents are supervising their own child only and there are measures in place to ensure responsibilities do not extend to other pupils then the need for DBS is waived.

### **12. First Aid**

The level of first aid provision should be based on risk assessment. On all visits there should be a member of staff who has a good working knowledge of first aid. The Appointed Person First Aid Certificate is the minimum requirement for residential visits.

### **13. Transport**

Travel arrangements should be included in the risk assessment. If public transport is to be used, all pupils and supervisors must be fully briefed as to procedures on platforms, at bus stops, on busy streets etc.

If travel is by coach or minibus, all pupils must wear a seat belt. Staff must ensure that pupils comply with this rule; pupils may also be asked to check the seat belt of their neighbour. If a minibus is being borrowed or hired, the driver must have passed an appropriate driving test, as given in SBCs minibus guidelines.

### **14. Water 'Margin' Activities**

Where pupils might participate in learning activities near or in water, such as a walk along a riverbank or seashore, collecting samples in ponds or streams, or paddling or walking in

gentle, shallow water, then the guidance contained in DfES 'Group Safety at Water Margins' is relevant (this document can be found in the Guidance section of the EVOLVE website). All staff, including parents, should be provided with a copy of this guidance prior to the visit.

## **15. Seeking Parental Consent**

Parents should be made fully aware of any likely risks of the visit and their management, so they may consent or refuse on a fully informed basis (known as 'Acknowledgement of Risk'). The letter to parents should therefore give full detail of the visit, the reason for the visit (educational aims), supervision arrangements and the transport arrangements. Ensure that detail of other incidental activities is included, together with Plan B if appropriate. The letter should also state the cost of the visit per child.

All personal data collected for the purpose of educational visits, including medical information and emergency contact details, must be handled in accordance with the Academy's Data Protection Policy. Information should be kept secure and only shared with staff who require it for the duration of the visit.

### **15.1 The reply slip should read: -**

"I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to take part in ..... .."

I have read and understand the information about the visit.

### **15.2 In the case of sports fixtures, the reply slip should read: -**

"My child \_\_\_\_\_ is able to play in the ..... match (at .....) On ....."

I have read and understand the information in the letter, and give permission for my child to take part."

## **16. Before the Visit**

Proposals for educational visits are to be approved by the Head of Centre and before progressing into planning stages.

- 1) For local, low risk visits (e.g. a visit to a local park), fill in the Academies "local visits" form as soon as possible before the visit together with a standard risk assessment. Copies should go to the office and EVC for agreement.
- 2) For visits within the Southend area to events or places of local interest, an educational visit form together with a risk assessment and critical incident form should be completed and agreed with the EVC before the trip takes place.
- 3) For visits which take place outside of the Southend area AND residential, overseas, or adventurous activities, complete enter the visit details onto the EVOLVE system.

### **16.1 When approved**

Follow Educational visits guidance flow chart – Appendix 1

## **17. On the Day of the Visit**

You must ensure:

- Briefing to all involved staff ensuring understanding of risk assessment, critical incident plan.

- Two fully charged mobile phones to be logged out. If the visit is on EVOLVE this should be number given in leader details.
- Collect first aid kit(s)
- Collect Pupil contact list
- Collect Emergency Card
- Pupils carrying asthma inhalers to be checked to ensure they are carrying an inhaler or staff in possession of pupil inhaler should it be required.
- Brief supervising parents
- Perform an initial head count before departing

During the course of the visit, pupils should be counted regularly as appropriate, and always when changing locations. Always 'double-count'.

College mobile phone(s) should be switched on at all times including the entire homeward journey.

## **18. After the Visit**

It is important that after each visit a proper debrief takes place. This should take place within a week of the visit date, and should involve the Visit Leader, accompanying staff and, if appropriate, the supervising parents. The purpose of debrief is to identify what went well and what could have been done better, in order to inform future planning.

## 19. Appendix 1 – Educational Visits Guidance Flowchart

