



Champion EDUCATION TRUST

OFFSITE VISITS POLICY

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A family of Schools

OFFSITE VISITS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Off site visits are activities which take place outside the school grounds. The Governors and staff at Lotus school, believe that high quality offsite learning supports the development, independence and learning of our students.

The Department for Education published a new policy statement regarding educational visits (www.education.gov.uk). The statement replaces all previous government guidance and clarifies how health and safety law applies to educational visits and aims to reduce red tape and bureaucracy in organising visits and activities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

This Policy has been written in line with Guidance published by DFE. It has been agreed and implemented by Governors, and aims to set out clear procedures to enable coherent planning and minimise risks to students, staff and members of the public.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORISATION

If an off-site visit is proposed, permission must be sought from the Headteacher, and the guidance below followed, before any commitment is made on behalf of the school. The Headteacher will make an informed and final decision based on the educational benefits to students alongside other factors such as staff ratios and risk. Off-site visits may be cancelled or postponed on occasion due to circumstances beyond our control.

In line with Legislative expectation, Lotus school has appointed **Mrs Stephanie Owen** as School Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC).

The role of the EVC is to:

- Ensure that they are familiar with National and Local Procedure and Guidance and support those engaging in Offsite visits, to do so in line with current legislation
- Remain up to date with Legislation, Policy, Procedure and Guidance and to keep and share documentation which will support staff to operate within this
- Ensure that all offsite activity meets employer and establishment requirements
- Be the first point of contact for colleagues planning an offsite visit to provide support, advice and guidance
- Ensure that Lotus school Trips Out Request Forms and risk assessments are completed and handed in prior to off-site visits taking place
- Keep appropriate records including record of visits and any incidents, accidents or near misses
- Organise training and induction
- Monitor practice – before during and after including evaluations
- Support the head to make a judgement call about the competence of colleagues to lead visits

Where the activity involves a higher risk (category C) activity including a period of more than 24 hours, an overnight stay, or a journey by sea or air, the headteacher will follow 'Offsite visits and Trips Policy, Procedures and Guidance' and will seek the approval of the governing body and the LA before permitting the activity to take place.

The role of the party leader is to:

- Seek permission from the EVC and Headteacher by completing and electronically sending a 'school trips out request form' making the benefits to students explicit
- Appoint a responsible and suitable Deputy party leader
- Meticulously plan each visit considering health and safety as well as educational benefits
- Where available, Seek risk assessments from providers and carry out their own thorough risk assessment prior to an activity or visit taking place and hand them to the headteacher and EVC at least two weeks in advance unless there are exceptional circumstances
- Book transport via the Office providing at least two weeks' notice to maximise availability

- If lunches are to be provided, to ensure that they are ordered at least two weeks in advance with consideration given to dietary requirements (order forms are in main office)
- Check with the school office whether blanket permission was sought and gained at the start of the academic year
- Share risk assessments and Emergency Procedure, with other adults taking part in the activity
- Ensure medical records, care plans, and student profiles are up to date and available whilst off-site
- If the activity leader and Headteacher deem it necessary, book additional staff
- Ensure that medication is within date, stored carefully and available whilst off-site
- Ensure a registered First Aider is in attendance on the trip and takes the medical bag with them
- To ensure that they have a working mobile phone which is switched on and that the main office has the number
- Ensure that a collection of ‘public concern’ cards are taken in case of student incidents in front of members of the public. These cards explain the nature of the needs of the students who attend Lotus and aim to support the staff in managing the situation effectively without having to have unnecessary and prolonged contact with members of the public.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

A comprehensive risk assessment must be carried out by the group leader before the proposed visit. It will assess the risks which might be encountered and will indicate the measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions to minimise these
- Record your findings and implement them
- Review your assessment and update if and when necessary

Staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment as well as seeking the providers own risk assessment if appropriate. It is important to take into account the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip and the facilities available. They should also assess the site’s suitability with regards to the age, ability and particular needs of the students. Any such issues will be taken into account when the final decision is made on whether the visit should proceed.

Once completed, the risk assessment should be sent electronically, with the Trip request form, to the school EVC who will check, sign and forward it to the Headteacher for approval. If approved, the Headteacher will send this back to the party leader who must ensure that all adults attending the offsite visit have read and signed the risk assessment prior to leaving the building. Once signed, one copy must be taken on the trip by the party leader and another left on the clipboard provided by the school office.

A risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. It will be the responsibility of the designated driver to safety check the bus using the safety checklists and complete accordingly.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/CARERS

At the start of each year, permission will be sought from parents requesting permission to take their children offsite for educational visits within the local area and during school times.

No student should be excluded from offsite visits, however, out of courtesy; Lotus will always endeavour to gain consent. In the exceptional case that a child does not have permission to take part in an offsite visit, their participation will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis.

Trips which involve a Category B or Category C activity require parental consent in all cases and without exception.

Some off-site visits may incur a “voluntary contribution”. No child will be excluded from an activity because of the unwillingness or inability to make a contribution.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The party leader must be deemed to be a suitable person by the EVC in consultation with the Headteacher who has overall responsibility for the safety of students. When in charge of a group activity, the party leader must make sure all adults accompanying the group are aware of the emergency procedures that will apply. The party leader and deputy leaders should have their mobile phones switched on and should have the school telephone number in case of emergency. Where an activity extends beyond the normal school day the home number of a designated emergency contact must be provided.

Before leaving school, the party leader must sign all students and adults out of the building and leave the list in the main office

We require all those who are working with children and young people, to behave in a professional manner at all times, and to fully comply with the content of this policy and guidance, as well as all other school policy and procedure (available on school website and also stored in the school office).

Mini bus drivers must have successfully completed a Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme course (MiDAS), and be between the age of 22 and 70. Drivers are responsible for safety checking the bus prior to transporting passengers and should complete the checklists provided.

EMERGENCY

In the event of an emergency the party leader should become the lead contact for any emergency services. The deputy leader should make contact with the school or nominated designated emergency contact and they can then support in co-ordinating contact with parents and other agencies if necessary.

Once back in school and within 24hours of the incident staff will be required to fill in an Emergency Incident form, located in the main office. This will allow the party leader and deputy to fully explain what happened on the visit and give the Headteacher the chance to reflect on any changes needing to be made for future visits. This form will be discussed with the Headteacher and party leader and deputy and may be also discussed with Governors.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from the following sources:

- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/index.htm>
- National Guidance for the Management of Outdoor Learning
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Council for Learning Outside the Classroom- <https://www.lotc.org.uk/>