

# Outdoor Education & Offsite Visits



**The Inspire Multi Academy  
Trust (South West)**

**March 2025**



# The Inspire Multi Academy Trust

## Outdoor Education & Offsite Visits Policy

### **RATIONALE**

At The Inspire Multi Academy Trust, our vision to enable every young person to experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of their learning and personal development. Through learning opportunities outside the classroom, we aim to raise achievement and create aspirations through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about *what* we learn but importantly *how* and *where* we learn and development takes place.

We want the children in our care to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and to develop aspirations that will lead to achieving future economic wellbeing. Activities have to be carefully planned, well supervised with excellent delivery of teaching objectives. They should extend learning through careful preparation before, and follow-up activities after the event.

Just as important as the quality of individual activities, is planning learning outside the classroom into the curriculum map, and teaching and learning more widely so that it can provide a regular and frequent diet from 4 to 11 years. In this way knowledge, skills, development and understanding can be progressively built up.

### **ROLE OF THIS POLICY**

This information sets out how staff at the school plan and manage learning out of the classroom, off the school site. Following these procedures provides guidance as to what is required at each stage and where decisions are drawn from. It identifies that best practice has been used as a model wherever it exists. This adaptation is based upon the policy and guidance produced by Plymouth City Council and by the DfE in its publication Health and Safety of Pupils on educational Visits (HASPEV).

### **1. Description of relevant activities**

Learning out of the classroom draws upon the local and worldwide environment to provide enrichment experiences contributing to an exciting balanced curriculum that promotes, spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and prepares children for the opportunities and experiences in adult life.

Most of these activities involve parties leaving the site for a period of time on visits that range from day, short duration, to extended days and overnight residentials. They could include travel to a venue in another country where there are very different regulations and have a naturally occurring and contributory level of risk.

The experiences they provide often require voluntary, additional effort and considerable resources and expense and therefore require specific consideration for risk and quality. This policy also sets out the background and the specific commitments expected of all volunteers and young people. Through this commitment The Inspire Multi Academy Trust seeks to protect valuable staff and ensure opportunities are protected for future generations of learners who will want to follow in the footsteps of current students.

At The Inspire Multi Academy Trust, we seek to ensure that the National Curriculum is delivered to all children, regardless of social background, race, gender or differences in ability. All are entitled to the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. To enrich the curriculum for our young people, we also offer a range of educational visits and other activities that add to and complement what they learn in school.

## **Pre-visits**

In order to undertake a full and comprehensive assessment of risks, a pre-visit is essential for when any off-site venue is used for the first time. In rare cases information can be obtained from another user school or from a trusted provider when the costs or practicalities of a pre-visit are arguably prohibitive. Risks should be re-assessed from time to time on an agreed frequency. It is the responsibility of the visit organiser to ensure that a pre visit is carried out or that suitable information on both quality and safety is obtained as a part of the risk management planning. Staff undertaking a pre visit should make up a list of questions in advance of the visit to make best use of the time. Pre visits are a part of a visit and the cost of them should be included within the voluntary contributions sought from participants or other funders.

### **1.2 Minimum Ratio of adults to pupils**

At The Inspire Multi Academy Trust, we follow LA Guidance on minimum staff/pupil ratios:

Age 4-6 (Rec, Y1, Y2)	1 : 10
Age 7-9 (Y2, Y3, Y4)	1 : 15
Ages above 10, in the UK. (Y5, Y6)	1 : 15
All students who travel abroad. (Y5, Y6)	1 : 10

In all cases one adult included in the above ratios must be a teacher or qualified Youth Leader/Support Staff member. It must be stressed that these are minimum ratios and that visit organisers must consider under risk management the following factors when deciding on the final adult/child ratio: SEN and medical needs; type of activities to be undertaken; experience and competence of all adults accompanying the visit; duration of the visit; competence and behavioural history of the group of children/young people.

### **1.3 Voluntary Help**

We are aware that many educational visits could not take place without the goodwill of volunteer helpers. Volunteers will normally be people well known to the school as either Parents/Carers or governors. Volunteers will be told that they have the responsibility to follow the instructions of the visit organisers (Party Leader) and that the visit organiser retains overall responsibility.

The school will appoint volunteer helpers as far in advance of the visit as practical and will provide opportunities for those volunteers to meet the pupils, for whom they will have responsibility, learning their names and getting to know them.

The school retains the right to make the final decision as to which volunteers accompany a visit, as not all volunteers may be suitable.

The visit organiser is responsible for ensuring that each volunteer knows precisely what his or her role is and understands that they have a responsibility to carry out that role.

Where children are organised in small groups, a child will not generally be placed in a group for which his/her Parent/Carer is responsible.

### **1.4 Gaining Informed Consent**

For visits and activities that usually take place within the school day, the governing body approves all such visits in advance. We follow the Local Education Authority's guidelines relating to health and safety, and we ask Parents/Carers to give written permission for their child to take part in any activity that takes children off the school site. If we do not receive this written permission (where required), the child will be unable to participate. When joining the school, each Parent/Carer is asked to sign a document giving permission for their child to take part in activities within the locality, and not including transport, during

their time at the school. We call this a 'Local Visits Consent Form'. We also have a system for collection of information on changes to medical history and contact details for use in an emergency.

We commit to providing Parents/Carers with the necessary information that will enable them to give an informed consent and further to ensure that they are aware of any risk that is naturally present. We will endeavour to make this information available in a variety of ways that will give it the best possible chance of being seen. Further, the school will offer Parents/Carers the opportunity to come into school to speak to staff directly. (it is best to make an appointment for this.) For more major events, such as residential trips, a meeting will be arranged well in advance to enable all the information to be presented.

The school's definition of locality is the catchment area defined by PCC, extended to walking routes, of up to 30 minutes duration, and the adjacent sites of the following:

Local schools  
Allotments  
Local park/woodlands  
Community buildings

Within each class's programme of work the teachers plan educational visits and activities that support the children's learning. We give known details of these visits and activities to Parents/Carers at the beginning of each term. We may plan other activities as the school year progresses and inform Parents/Carers of these in due course.

Some activities are planned that naturally require higher levels of risk; continue after the school day or normally active period; some overnight. When this is the case a specific risk assessment is carried out that forms the basis of the briefing to Parents/Carers and is therefore an integral part of the consent they give. (see also The Adventure Activities Licence section).

For visits and activities that usually take place within the school day, a block consent will be sought covering several activities with similar arrangements. We follow the Local Authority's guidelines, and we ask Parents/Carers to give permission either on block or individually for their child to take part in any activity that takes children off the school site. If we do not receive this written permission, the child will be unable to participate.

In some instances, the school may pass onto Parents/Carers, details of events that it considers are complimentary to its curriculum. Where a provider's information about a specific event is commended by the school but the school will not be arranging participation; it is necessary to clearly point out that the Parents/Carers must judge the provider themselves and consent to their child's participation directly with the provider and not through the school. Where the school can, it does its best to ensure that a provider it commends operates legally and is health and safety compliant. However, Parents/Carers are advised to always check carefully with a provider before making any commitment.

### **1.5 Keeping Records (Document Control)**

To maintain a record of the planning for any significant off-site activity, including the risk assessment, a file is held in the school office containing all the key evidence which is stored on the EVOLVE system. The working file can then be added together with any evaluation after the event has taken place. Generic examples and past Risk Assessments are located here, together with links to licensed providers.

Managers should always be able to gain access to this information, day and night and in any emergency. The internal form on EVOLVE/PSOE1 provides a planning checklist and consequently should be used from the very beginning. When any further assistance is required, copy the form in its current state and send the copy to the Outdoor Education Leader together with your questions. This form requires at least two different people to sign it and therefore affords some protection each double-checking each other.

## **1.6 Risk Assessments**

The school follows the guidelines on Risk Assessment in the LA supported EVOLVE system. A risk assessment is used to help plan all educational visits and off-site activities. The Headteacher and Educational Visits Coordinator [EVC] delegates this responsibility to the member of staff organising the visit or activity. This must then be approved before the visit/activity is allowed to go ahead. The risk assessment will include the SEN/medical needs of the specific group of children participating. In completing a risk assessment consideration will be given to the risk management information provided by companies and organisations.

Many now provide information to help with this task and will complete questionnaires that seek a commitment from them. The practice of requesting large amounts of risk assessments is not considered a reliable measure and should be discontinued in favour of the use of completing EVOLVE accurately. A provider's risk assessments will not be relied upon as meeting the requirements expected of a Party Leader. The school has a standard format for risk assessment (blank forms in the visits offsite folder). Risk assessments should be completed and saved on the system.

Many aspects of a trip are covered by generic risk assessments and these should be referred to rather than be repeated. Risk Assessments are then amended when further visits are organised.

## **1.7 The Adventure Activities License**

The Adventure Activities Licensing Scheme is a Government sponsored scheme, which was introduced in 1996 under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations. The scheme ensures that those who provide certain adventure activities to young people under the age of 18 years will have their safety management systems inspected. Where appropriate, a licence is then issued.

On 1st April 2007, and as a result of widespread government regulatory reorganisation, the responsibility for implementing the regulations was transferred to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The organisation that carries out inspections and issues licences on the HSE's behalf is the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

The Inspire Multi Academy Trust uses licensed providers for certain activities such as sailing, caving, abseiling, paddle sports and orienteering.

The school only purchases licensable provision from organisations that can confirm their current status via a photo copy of their Licence or by phoning the advertised number quoting the centre's reference and speaking directly to the Activity Licensing Authority or checking details on the website [www.aala.org.uk](http://www.aala.org.uk).

## **1.8 Transport Arrangements**

At The Inspire Multi Academy Trust, the transport used includes: coaches, mini buses (also from local schools), cars, ferries, walking and public transport.

Parents/Carers will always be informed as to the type of transport being provided for an educational visit. Seat belts must be provided on all private transport seats, and it is school policy that transport be arranged so that wherever possible each child will wear a seatbelt whilst travelling on a school visit. These are a legal requirement on most vehicles but there are some exemptions on public bus services, local bus services and trains for example. The visit organiser is responsible for the conduct and behaviour of the children whilst they are travelling, and this includes ensuring that seat belts are fitted correctly. The school must ensure that there is sufficient supervisory staff to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the children whilst travelling.

For child protection reasons and to protect individuals, no teacher, TA or volunteer will transport a child on a 1:1 basis in a private car. Adults who do take children in their car must have business insurance for their vehicle. Evidence of this must be submitted to the Headteacher.

### 1.9 Approvals

Teachers/staff and governors/managers agree the programme of visits and activities at the beginning of each term.

Plymouth City Council categorises off site activities into three groups:

**Category C**- trips involving significant risk such as overseas visits, all residential activities and all visits involving outdoor adventurous activities especially Mountaineering, Caving, Rock Climbing, Sail and Paddle sports. 'One off' trips, which are not identified in the school's yearly plan, may also come under this category due to the lack of previous experience of the provider and its risk assessment procedures. Examples of this would include: Junior Ten Tors, Devon County Show, Grenville House, London, Heatree Activity Centre and The National Marine Aquarium.

**Category B** – trips involving transport (other than to city venues) and whole day experiences such as Occombe Farm and the Eden Project.

**Category A** - local transport within the city and walking visits to locations on the published school list. Specific approval for all categories is obtained by initial approval from the Headteacher. This is required prior to any commitment and is dependent upon signed consent.

(Any proposal that is a major expedition or proposes to visit countries where circumstances are considerably different to the UK needs the early approval of the DfLL Outdoor Education Adviser and this must be before any contracts are signed. Some companies who organise trips with schools seek to contract directly with the Parents/Carers and thus take the event out of the control of the school or the DfE. All staff should be on the look out for this practice as creates considerable uncertainty over any difficulty that may subsequently arise.)

### Approvals and Consent Timeline

Category	Site Visits, Risk Assessments completed and passed to EVC	Informed Consent
<b>Category C</b>	Minimum of 5 weeks before visit start date. To be completed for the EVC Co-ordinator three weeks before the visit.	Parents/Carers' meeting three weeks before visit. Signed consent and medical forms.
<b>Category B</b>	Where possible, 2 weeks before visit start date	No Parents/Carers' meeting required. Signed consent and medical forms 1 week before visit unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
<b>Category A</b>	The week before visit date.	Parent/Carer consent given at start of school

The information normally required by the EVC is covered under five headings:

- outline of the event with objectives.
- impact assessment on school's procedures
- cost/voluntary contributions
- party leader capability

e) risk assessment

### **Additional Advice with Planning**

When a matter requires expertise beyond that locally available, then advice should be sought from the Outdoor Education Leader or EVC Leader. Plymouth City Council whose address also appears in the Safety in Outdoor Education and Off-Site Activities Policy. Tel 01752 (30) 7435 or Fax your enquiry to 01752 307403. Other organisations that may be able to help are listed in an addendum in Outdoor Education Visits and Offsite Activities.

Many large companies who organise schools' events can offer considerable guidance on how to meet safety requirements. Specific questions and the checklist in the PCC Policy, PSOE 5 provides a checklist that can help in these circumstances. Staff should consider very carefully any contract with a provider who is not willing to provide this assistance. Many will provide risk assessments that cover their own responsibility and some help accompanying staff to produce their own. A provider's risk assessments cannot provide for a parties own assessment that must consider the providers themselves.

## **2.2 Action Prior to Departure**

### **Prior to your departure the following must be in place**

- A. A copy of the arrangements, with the programme(itinerary), risk assessment, medical and SEND details, contact details and a full list of participants, lodged in the school office.
- B. An Emergency Contact sheet which highlights the links between the remote site and the school site procedures. Additionally, a cascade phone call system to contact the homes of participants, should the need arise, may be useful for larger events. A contact list for mobile telephones
- C. Procedures for ensuring that groups working away from the main base and from the remote sites if they are residential have returned safely or are noted overdue and appropriate action is taken.

### **Late Return Procedures**

- D. A copy of the risk assessment together with all the management issues it highlights. All copies of any providers' quality and safety assurance, their AALA License and Insurance Certificate.
- E. The insurance company's contact details on major trips with all the emergency and incident contact numbers for when help is required.

## **2.3 Confirmation of Compliance with Legal Obligations under Health and Safety Legislation. (See also section 1.7 The Adventure Activities License)**

### **Risk Assessments**

The school has developed management procedures for educational trips based upon risk assessment. These operational procedures apply to all aspects of the current activity. Before approval is given the party Leader is asked to confirm that accompanying adults are familiar with the generic content and have been briefed on specific aspects that are relevant to their role.

## **2.4 Accident Report Form**

Accident reporting forms are kept in the office and should be completed, following an accident, when a party returns to school for all short duration events. When a group is going to be away for several days then copies of the form should be taken by the Party Leader. If an accident is serious enough to merit notification to the HSE then as many relevant details as possible should be recorded and attached to the form.

The same forms can be used to report a near miss incident, or an account should be given verbally to the responsible person for their consideration.

## **2.5 Near Miss Events**

These are managed in the same way as the accident forms when the situation requires it. Consequent information is circulated internally to staff through a memo titled **Near Miss**.

## **2.6 First Aid Treatment**

If an accident occurs staff are expected to do everything that is reasonable to prevent worsening of an injury and or preserve life until the arrival of the emergency services.

All party leaders must carry a mobile phone and have considered signal strength in the planning of the visit. Signal shadows need to be identified and nearest suitable landlines noted.

Each off-site visit must have an appointed person who should be current in their 1 day first aid training.

**Appointed Persons** - To be responsible for taking immediate action, such as calling an ambulance. Appointed Persons should not attempt to give first aid for which they have not been trained.

For residential groups the appointed person should hold a 12-hour qualified first aid status.

A member of staff with the four-day certificate should ensure the adequacy of our planned provision, test it through simulation and give advice, although she or he may not be with all groups off site.

Travel first aid kits to go out with all groups and with the contents to meet the anticipated demands.

Details of any **First Aid Treatment** that is given to participants on an offsite event whether by the accompanying staff or by another person will be recorded using Medical Tracker which can be shared with parents. Parents/Carers should always be informed of any treatment given.

## **2.7 Emergency Procedures**

Although rare there is always a plan to deal with an emergency if it should happen. The Party Leader should talk through the procedures so that all accompanying staff are aware of what they can do. By training the staff to the capability of the appointed person then any adults coming across an emergency can take the necessary first steps. These include:

- analyse the situation,
- make safe the rest of the group and themselves,
- protect, where possible and safe to do so, any casualties,
- summon assistance if they are not a trained first aider.

All party leaders must carry a mobile phone and have considered signal strength in the planning of the visit. Signal shadows need to be identified and nearest suitable landlines noted.

Once all members of the party are safe, and emergency services give their permission, the party leader must contact the Headteacher directly to receive direction and further support. The Headteacher will then contact Parents/Carers the chair of Governors and the Local Authority.

## **2.8 Reporting Outcomes of Investigations and Concerns**

After an event a considerable amount of learning has usually accumulated and this will need to be recorded in the trip log which should then be left on the file for next year for another Party Leader to pick up. Of particular use will be the risk assessment with any inclusion of risks assessed at another venue that may relieve the need for subsequent costly visits by new staff.