



## Off-site Visits Policy 2025

### Overview

This policy is intended to meet the needs of all our students, members of staff and volunteers.

Where relevant this policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- First Aid Policy.
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.
- Behaviour Policy.

### Legislation

This policy is written under the guidance of the following legislation:

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: employers are required to ensure the health and safety of their employees and non-employees, so far as is reasonably practicable. The Act also places duties on individuals to take care for the health and safety of themselves and others.

Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999: employers to undertake risk assessments and put measures in place to control the significant risks.

Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004: a person who provides facilities for adventure activities is required to hold a licence if that person provides such facilities in return for payment; or is a local authority and provides the facilities to an educational establishment in respect of the pupils of such an establishment.

### General Information – Off-site Visits

Visits provide a valuable educational extension to both the academic and wider curriculum. Off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities must serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our student's learning experiences.

Individuals responsible for planning and controlling school visits have an important role to play. Not only are they responsible for the safety of the students in their care, they are also the School's representatives. Visit Leaders must ensure that both they and other staff within their group have the skills, qualifications, and other abilities to control the activities that will be undertaken. Teachers organising and taking part in school visits off-site accept responsibility for the care and welfare of students, and they act in loco parentis. A thorough understanding of matters affecting safety is essential.

For each visit there should be an emergency plan and communications plan, known to the trip leaders. The website of the Outdoor Educator's Advisors' Panel (<https://oeapng.info/>) is a source of advice. Training of the Educational Visits Coordinator and all staff involved in educational visits must be kept up to date. The EVC will inform and update staff of the procedures for educational visits at Inset each year.

The following definitions are used throughout this policy.

**Visit:** The entire period between departing from and returning to the school or home setting, including time devoted to travel. A visit comprises of one or more activities.

**Activity:** Any specific component of a visit. This might be an activity (such as cycling or pond dipping) or other element (such as travel or residence). Visits should be regarded as comprising a series of consecutive and/or concurrent activities.

## **Roles & Responsibilities:**

### ***Head of Learning:***

The Head of Learning has overall responsibility for off-site visits. The Head of Learning is responsible for ensuring that school staff are competent for the roles allocated to them, and that there is a robust system in place for approving leaders and approving plans for activities and visits.

### ***Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC):***

The Department of Education (DfE) advises that schools should appoint an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC). Schools should ensure EVC(s) is/are appropriately trained and there should be a clear process for approving visits. The EVC is the school's focal point for planning and monitoring visits and outdoor learning. They should work closely with the Head of Learning and with Visit Leaders.

### ***Outdoor Education Adviser:***

A person engaged by an employer to provide advice and training about outdoor learning, off-site visits, learning outside the classroom and related matters to the employer and the school.

As an independent school, Hope Tree School does not have automatic access to the services of the County Outdoor Education Adviser, however good practice is shared to help assess and manage risks.

The Cambridgeshire County Council Outdoor Education Adviser is:

Mr Stephen Brown

Tel: 01480 375677 / 07879436541

e-mail: [Stephen.Brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### ***Visit Leader:***

The person who has overall responsibility for managing the visit, including for the health and safety of the participants and the supervision, welfare, learning and development of the participants.

### ***Visit Leadership Team:***

The staff team, including the visit leader and any assistant leaders, activity leaders and helpers.

### ***Activity Leader:***

A member of the visit leadership team who is responsible for the management of the group (or sub-group) taking part in a specific activity within a visit, including for their supervision, health, safety, welfare, learning and development.

**Assistant Leader:**

A member of the visit leadership team who supports the visit leader or an activity leader and who may be required to take over from them if necessary.

**Helper:**

A person (normally an adult) who has an agreed role during a visit, but who is not a visit leader, assistant leader, activity leader or participant.

Examples include:

- An inexperienced member of staff
- A parent
- An apprentice
- A student or trainee
- A carer.

Any child or young person acting as a helper should be regarded as a participant for the purposes of supervision, safeguarding and parental consent.

Appropriate former school staff and parent volunteers do not count as responsible adult supervisors on visits unless approved by the Head or Learning and after completing the relevant procedures for all volunteers working on behalf of the school.

The list of approved "helpers" is held by the EVC.

**Provider:**

Any third-party person or organisation contracted to organise and/or deliver a visit or activity, and/or supervision of participants.

**Types of Visit**

At Hope Tree School educational visits are divided into categories:

- Local Walking Visit - no transport required.
- Cambridgeshire Visit.
- Beyond Cambridgeshire Visit.
- Residential visits and visits abroad.
- Visits involving adventure activities.

**Activities requiring an Adventure Activities Licence:**

A school or other educational establishment (college, university etc.) does not require a licence for provision to its own students. A licence is required for provision to students of another educational establishment or to other members of the public, when provided in return for payment.

The following activities are within the scope of the scheme:

- Caving (underground exploration in natural caves and mines including potholing, cave diving and mine exploration, but not in those principally used as show-places open to the public).
- Climbing (climbing, traversing, abseiling and scrambling activities except on purpose-designed climbing walls or abseiling towers).
- Trekking (walking, running, pony trekking, mountain biking, off-piste skiing and related activities when done in moor- or mountain-country above 600 metres and which is remote, i.e., over 30 minutes travelling time from the nearest road or refuge).
- Watersports (canoeing, rafting, sailing and related activities when done on the sea, tidal waters, or larger non-placid inland waters).

It is the responsibility of the Visit Leader in conjunction with the EVC, to ensure that centres providing activities requiring licensing under the Adventures Activities Licensing Regulations 2004 are so licensed.

The HSE web site hosts a page to search for activity providers who are registered with the Licensing Authority as licence holders (<https://aala.hse.gov.uk/aala/>).

Providers are required to have their licence on display. Providers can make their licence available on their website and share it with potential clients and other interested parties.

Rowing does not require an AALA Licence as the regulations exclude the use of powerboats and rowing-boats propelled or steered by oars. The legislation is aimed at commercial providers of outdoor adventure activities and not at private members' clubs. The Royal Yacht Association (RYA) is the UK's national body for all forms of boating.

## **Planning**

### ***Risk Assessment:***

A risk assessment is required for all school visits. They must be approved by the EVC.

Risk assessments must be personalised to the individual visit. All paperwork must be completed and passed to the EVC no later than 72 hours prior to the visit.

### ***Supervision:***

Pupil to staff ratios for school visits are not prescribed in law. Those planning visits, based on risk assessment, should decide the ratios, considering the activity to be undertaken and the age and maturity of the students. The school must ensure that the staffing of visits enables leaders to supervise students effectively.

Decisions about the staffing and supervision should take into account:

- The nature and duration of the visit and the planned activities.
- The location and environment in which the activity is to take place.
- The nature of the group, including the number of young people and their age, level of development, gender, ability and needs (behavioural, medical, emotional, and educational).
- Staff competence.
- The consequence of a member of staff being indisposed, particularly where they will be the sole leader with a group for any significant time.

When planning a repeat visit or a series of activities, it is important to review the previous plan (no matter how well it worked in the past) so as to ensure that it meets current group needs and any other changes (e.g. time of year).

Two teachers should accompany a group by coach.

A useful framework for assessing requirements for ratios and effective supervision is SAGE:

- **STAFFING:** who is needed/available? The plan must work within the limits of available numbers, abilities and experience.
- **ACTIVITIES:** to be undertaken: what do you want the group to do and what is possible?
- **GROUP characteristics:** prior experience, abilities, behaviour and maturity, gender, any specific or medical/dietary needs.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** indoors or out; a public space or restricted access; urban, rural or remote; quiet or crowded; within the establishment grounds, close to the establishment or at a distance; and the ease of communications between the group

and base. Do not overlook environments to be passed through between venues.

- For residential visits consider the accommodation and surrounding area.
- For outdoor environments, consider remoteness, the impact of weather, water levels and ground conditions.
- Consider the implications of current guidance about avoiding infection during an epidemic.

### ***External Activity Providers:***

Schools must check that external activity providers have appropriate safety standards and liability insurance.

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the LOtC Quality Badge to organisations which meet nationally recognised standards. Where the organisation does not hold the badge, the school must check they are an appropriate organisation to use.

This will include checking:

- Their insurance.
- They meet legal requirements.
- Their health and safety and emergency policies.
- Their risk assessments and control measures.
- Their use of vehicles.
- Staff competence.
- Safeguarding.
- Accommodation.
- Any sub-contracting arrangements they have.
- That they have a licence where needed.

### ***Transport:***

Careful consideration must be given to transport for any visit. For local visits, where possible, walking is recommended but must be strictly supervised and the route chosen with care.

When considering the method of transport for any visit, staff will consider the following:

- Student and staff numbers.
- Destination and ease of parking (minibuses, coaches).
- Route to and from a venue.
- Cost to students.
- Ratio of staff – on minibuses 2 members of staff (inc driver) must be present.
- Insurance.
- Safety of all persons.
- Contact with the public.
- Driver's licence (cat B for car, D1 for minibus) and driver's hours (if applicable).

### ***Insurance:***

The School has comprehensive insurance cover which comprises Employer's Liability Insurance, Public Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance. We will explicitly check that there is appropriate insurance in place which covers all offsite visits to be undertaken. The insurance cover already taken out by the School will be sufficient in most cases.

### ***Finance:***

As part of the planning the costs section of the Off-site Visit proposal form will need to be completed and authorised by the Head of Learning.

A detailed breakdown of the budget should be prepared to include:

- Numbers of students and staff expected to take part.
- Income – amounts and proposed payment plan for deposits and the billing of instalments, where appropriate.
- Costs of operating the visit, including timeline of when payments to tour operator/airlines/accommodation will be due.
- Details of any internal subsidy to fund the visit
- Draft communication to parents concerning finance.

***Minor changes:***

An additional student, or a student withdrawing, a change to the itinerary, changes to costs etc. Any communication to third party providers by telephone to be followed up by an email to the same and confirming the content of the telephone call.

***Significant changes:***

Changes which may result in the need to make a claim against the School's Travel Insurance Policy.

- All communications to be agreed with the Educational Visits Coordinator prior to communication with the third party.
- Except in the case of emergency please allow adequate time for the School to consult with our insurers concerning such changes.
- All communication with third parties to be by email if at all possible, with the Educational Visits Coordinator copied in.
- Any communication to third party providers by telephone to be followed up by an email to the same confirming the content of the telephone call, copying in the Educational Visits Coordinator.

***Last minute changes and/or emergencies:***

Student unable to attend due to illness or other reason:

- All communications to be agreed with the Educational Visits Coordinator prior to communication with the tour operator etc.
- Except in the case of Emergency please allow adequate time for the School to consult with our Insurers concerning such changes.
- All communication with tour operators etc to be by email if at all possible, with the Educational Visits Coordinator to be copied in.
- Any communication to tour operators etc by telephone to be followed up by an email to the same confirming the content of the telephone call, copying in the Educational Visits Coordinator.

***Cancellation:***

In the event of a trip being cancelled obtain a cancellation invoice from the tour operator and supply to the Educational Visits Coordinator.

***Requirements for Cash or Foreign Currency***

- Please request cash for visits within the UK at least 10 days before departure.
- Please request foreign currency at least 21 days before departure.

***After the Visit:***

Confirm total Income and Expenditure, return unused cash or foreign currency, together with all receipts in support of expenditure to the Educational Visits Coordinator within 7 days of the end of the visit.

### ***Behaviour:***

It is the responsibility of the Visit Leader to ensure that all students and their parents are briefed adequately about expectations of behaviour, risk management and informed about all the activities and events taking place on a visit.

Parents should be referred to the Behaviour Management Policy and the student code of conduct as the same levels of behaviour are expected on the trip as in school. Visit Leaders are also responsible for finding out the expectations different venues will have when it comes to student behaviour and ensuring these expectations are passed onto students and staff accompanying the visit.

There is a "No Alcohol" policy for staff and students on off-site visits.

### ***Parental Consent:***

At the beginning of each school academic year the School contacts parents and requests consent for local walks near the school site and the local village. In addition to consent the list contains basic medical details, any medication used, dietary requirements and emergency contact details. Parental consent for any other visits will be requested separately.

Parents will on occasion give consent but with certain caveats, the list is updated throughout the year as parents amend information or submit further details. As part of the preparation and planning of a visit the School provides the consent list details for the relevant students to the Visit Leader and EVC. For any visit outside the local area an online consent questionnaire is sent through to parents.

Additionally, for each visit a letter is submitted to parents explaining the details of the visit, a reply giving parental consent for their daughter to attend is required in the following circumstances:

- There is a cost involved for attending the visit.
- The visit takes place outside of the school day.
- The visit takes place outside the Histon and Impington.

The letter must be clear and detailed in setting out the activities and inherent risks involved; it is important that parents are giving "informed consent".

The letters are returned to the Visit Leader who compiles a list of replies.

In general students must be in good physical and mental health to take part in an off-site visit.

Reasonable adjustments must be considered to ensure attendance/participation where possible. A risk assessment/medical advice may be required.

Parents must be made aware that if needed there is an expectation that students will be collected at their expense. Under no circumstances should a student be taken on any off-site visit without parental consent, this is a Visit Leaders responsibility.

### ***Medical:***

As part of the paperwork required for new students a detailed medical form is completed by parents. The information is held by the School and shared in school on a 'need to know' basis. Plans are written for students with relevant medical issues.

The Visit Leader or Head of Learning will contact parents and compile a "consent list" (see parental consent para above). In addition to consent the list contains basic medical details and any medication used. Where students have medical conditions listed the Visit Leader must liaise with parents to ensure the student is fit to attend the visit, any plans in place are followed and any individual medication is taken. If any students are added to the visit at a later stage, it is important that liaison still takes place. A first aid trained member of staff must be on any visits. All visits must have a minimum of one "medicines trained" member of staff for the administration of student medication.

It is the Visit Leader's responsibility to assess the first aid requirements, to include appropriately trained staff and obtain first aid kit(s). A copy of all participating students medical needs, GP & parents/guardians contacts must be carried on visits. This parental consent information must be destroyed once the trip is over in line with Data Protection requirements.

If there are students on your medical list who require medication, then it is also your responsibility to collect these medicines from the medical room.

### ***Checking Out & Back In:***

When departing on a visit during the school day Visit Leaders should inform staff remaining on site as they leave, on return to school they should check back in. This ensures that the school is aware which groups are off-site at any given time and ensures fire registers are accurately maintained. Outside of school opening hours the Head of Learning should be kept informed in a similar manner.

### ***Overdue groups:***

Where during a visit a group is delayed, the Visit Leader must contact the Head of Learning (or a member of Senior Management). It may be necessary to inform parents where this is near the end of the day. Where a group is overdue by an hour and has not contacted a member of Senior Management, they should telephone the Visit Leader (or other staff) to find out the reason for delay and to ensure their welfare.

### ***Leader's Checklist:***

The Outdoor Educator's Advisors' Panel (<https://oeapng.info/>) is the school chosen source of national advice. Checklists for the relevant roles related to offsite visits can be found here and should be used when planning and supervising all visits.

### ***Emergency Procedures:***

Most incidents that happen on off-site visits can be dealt with by the school staff accompanying the visit. However, sometimes an incident becomes an emergency, when further support is needed. In an emergency practical action to take, includes:

- Calling the emergency services.
- Informing parents.
- Informing the Head of Learning
- Arranging food/drink/shelter/accommodation/transport as necessary.
- Sending staff to the scene of the incident to support the group.
- Dealing with the media and social media communications.
- Informing insurers.
- Making emergency funds available.

- Addressing any safeguarding issues.
- Practical arrangements for the group travelling back to base and being reunited with parents.
- Arranging therapeutic support

A copy of all documentation for any visit will be accessible in case of emergency. The Head of Learning and the Head of Pastoral Care are sent a copy of the documentation prior to the visit's departure. The Visit leader will carry a list of emergency phone contacts for the Head of Learning and the Head of Pastoral Care

In the event of a serious emergency after the initial response the School's Off-site Visits Emergency Plan would be implemented. The Visit Leader must carry a copy of the students' medical/contact information on the visit, which contains details of what medical treatment can or cannot be given to a pupil in an emergency. In any matter requiring outside medical assistance, the Head of Learning or Head of Pastoral Care should be contacted immediately.

The School Off-site Visits Emergency Plan is at annexe (Appendix) A.

A copy should be taken on the visit.

### **Documentation & Procedure:**

The following procedure and documentation is in place for visits:

- Educational Visits proposal form completed and submitted to Head of Learning
- Visit approved by Head of Learning
- Visit info submitted to EVC
- Event added to school calendar
- Risk assessment completed – including consideration of medical conditions and plans for particular students
- Visit letter sent to parents
- Medical consent list compiled for students attending
- Visit leader to meet with EVC

### **Day of visit:**

- Ensure have copies of the School's Off-site Visits Emergency plan, the Head of Learning and Head of Pastoral Care contact numbers, student medical needs, GP and parent/guardian details
- Collect any student medications
- Collect first aid kit(s)
- Sign out at school entrance

**Evaluating Visits:**

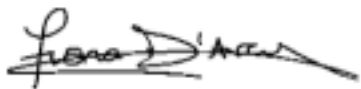
On completion the visit leader and accompanying staff should evaluate the visits success, educational benefit and lessons learned to inform future planning.

Any 'Near misses', accidents or emergencies should be recorded on the School Accident/Near Miss Record.



Signed:

Head of Learning



Head of Pastoral Care

Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026