The Virtual School for Children in Care

Educational Visits Policy

Walsall Council

Walsall Right 4 Children

1. Context

Walsall Virtual School supports offsite educational visits and trips, and believes they enhance learning and improve attainment, aspirations, social skills and personal development.

2. Scope

This policy applies to any visit that is organised by Walsall Virtual School, whether as part of the curriculum, during school time, or outside the normal school day, including weekends and holiday periods.

3. Walsall Council's Educational Visits Standards and OEAP National Guidance

The National Guidance published by OEAP (**http://oeapng.info**) 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.

Staff will follow Walsall Council's Standards and the National Guidance, as well as the requirements of this Policy. Should there be any conflicting advice clarification should be sought from the Virtual School Headteacher or Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC).

4. Competency, training, and succession planning

We will ensure that all staff involved in visits are competent; to this end, we will appoint one or more EVCs to coordinate educational visits.

In line with best practice, and with council policy, our EVC will attend an EVC training course, and appropriate refresher every three years. This training may be provided by Walsall Council's health & safety team or an approved delivery partner such as Evolve Advice.

All staff involved in offsite visits will receive training so that they are familiar with our systems for managing visits. Visit Leaders will receive appropriate training to ensure that they are familiar with our, and the council's, requirements including planning, risk assessment and record keeping, related to visits.

No member of staff will lead a visit unless they have participated in a range of visits and observed the trip leader on a number of occasions.

We will ensure that we have a healthy pool of visit leaders by appropriate succession planning.

5. Visit Planning

All visits must be appropriately planned using the checklist and templates included as appendices in this policy. This will ensure that:

- All leaders and participants, have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including their role in the risk-assessment management process
- Carers and social workers have been fully informed and, where necessary, consent has been obtained
- Any third party providers or facilities have been appropriately selected, and are competent
- An effective emergency plan and designated emergency contact(s) are in place and will be available as appropriate needed, for the duration of the trip.
- All details of the visit/activity are accessible to the emergency contact throughout the period of the activity.

The aims and benefits of the visit should be clear – we will ask the What, Who, Why, Where, When and How questions – the answers will inform the planning process.

6. Risk Assessment

We will ensure that all visits have appropriate risk assessments in place. Normally, the aim is to eliminate risk wherever possible; however, with educational visits eliminating all risk could also remove many of the benefits associated with the activity and hence would be counterproductive. Consequently, whilst risk should be managed, and should be at 'acceptable levels', there needs to be a careful balance between the risk of the activity and the benefits of participation and the learning outcomes.

Risk assessments will be recorded; but concentrate on significant risk, ignoring the trivial. The assessments will identify appropriate controls to minimise the risk of serious harm to students or staff. Routine visits, with everyday levels of risk, should only require minimal planning; whereas higher risk visits will require a more detailed approach.

Educational visits risk assessments can be at three levels:

- **Generic** – assessments and procedures that apply across a range of visits and cover the basic risks relevant to visits involving similar activities
- **Visit specific** – assessments covering any visit specific risks not already covered by generic assessments
- **Dynamic/on-going** – carried out continuously during the visit and not necessarily recorded

A bank of risk assessments covering a range of activities to support this part of the planning process can be found in the Evolve library.

Further information about risk assessment can be found on Walsall Link and the National Guidance website (see section 3 above).

7. Visit approval – School roles

Walsall Council has delegated the responsibility for formal approval of all educational visits at Walsall Virtual School to its Head Teacher. Within our school, the following applies:

- **Visit leaders** are responsible for the planning of their visits. They should obtain outline permission for a visit from the Headteacher or EVC prior to planning, and before making any commitments. Visit leaders have responsibility for ensuring that their visits will comply with all relevant guidance and requirements, and should seek advice from the EVC where necessary.
- **The school EVC's** are Lorraine Thompson and Debbie Woolfe. The EVC's will support and challenge colleagues over educational visits and are the first point of contact for advice on visit related matters. The EVC's will check final visit plans.
- **The Headteacher** has responsibility for authorising all visits.

8. Visit notification

Visits must be planned in advance so that they can be checked thoroughly with enough time to make amendments. The council's Resilience Unit (Emergency Planning) no longer needs notification in advance of any visits; however, for all visits, the school must have visit and participant details, including emergency contacts and any known health issues of participants, readily available in Walsall Virtual School.

9. Monitoring, review and evaluation

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Policy and for the monitoring of visits organised by Walsall Virtual School. Monitoring includes checks on procedures, checks on training, reviews following visits, and sampling (field observation) to check that procedures are followed during visits.

The EVC's are often best placed to carry out routine monitoring (the National Guidance includes a document on monitoring).

All visits will be reviewed after the event, particularly with regard to any accident, incident or other significant occurrence during the visit. We will also review the learning outcomes to ensure the visits meet their intended objectives. If appropriate, we will review our procedures and/or risk assessments.

10. Supervision

We will ensure active and effective supervision on our educational visits, based on risk assessment. The assessment will take into account:

- The nature and duration of the visit and the planned activities, including any "free time" 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 – all staff should be competent to carry out their roles
- The consequence of a member of staff being indisposed, particularly where they will be the sole leader with a group for any significant time

Our minimum supervision arrangements will be based on the needs of the young people attending the trip. However, for Secondary aged students we would have a minimum of 1 staff member to 6 young people and for Primary aged students we would have a minimum of 1 staff member to 4 (or 3 depending on age) students.

Any pupils who have a one to one provision are not included in this and will still require that additional member of staff when on a trip.

11. Parental Consent

As a Virtual School, any trips that we run during school hours will require that we obtain consent, from an adult with parental responsibility, for pupils to participate in offsite activities that we organise.

Consent is also needed by Walsall Virtual School for visits taking place outside school hours and also for an activity taking place both during and outside school hours where it is perceived to involve a higher level of risk, such as a visit involving a long journey or adventure activity.

In the case of our children and young people we may gain consent from carers or social workers if they have parental responsibility for our students.

12. Inclusion

In line with the Equality Act 2010, all our activities will be available and accessible to all, irrespective of special educational or medical needs or protected characteristics. When a visit or activity is being planned, all reasonably practicable measures will be taken to include all young people. Every reasonable effort will be made to find a venue and activities that are both suitable and accessible and that enable the whole group to participate fully and be actively involved.

The principles of inclusion will be promoted, ensuring:

- an entitlement to participate
- accessibility through adaptation or modification, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services.
- integration through participation with peers

Further information on inclusion, including circumstances where it is reasonable to exclude a young person, e.g. on grounds of behaviour, is available in the National Guidance (see section 3 above).

13. Behaviour

Where a young person's behaviour presents a significant, unmanageable and unacceptable risk to the health and safety of themselves, or other persons on a visit, it may be reasonable to exclude them. As we wont always personally know every young person we take on a visit, we will seek guidance from their carer and social worker. When a young person is excluded on these grounds, we will consider providing alternative ways of achieving the same learning outcomes.

Where there is doubt about excluding a young person on the grounds of behaviour, the following points will be considered; we will:

- identify the issue at the earliest planning stage
- involve all interested parties
- establish a behaviour management plan with agreed action points that may enable inclusion
- consider providing an additional adult, such as a parent or support worker, with a specific brief to manage behaviour issues
- ensure that what is expected of staff is reasonable and within their competence

We have a code of conduct that sets out our expectations for behaviour on visits. As a Virtual School who doesn't always know the children and young people prior to visits, we will always explain the code to young people and carers, so they understand our expectations and the sanctions that may be invoked if the code is breached.

14. Charges for offsite activities and visits

Walsall Virtual School does not normally charge its pupils for activities. When costing a trip seek approval from the Headteacher before planning any activities for the pupils.

Head teachers must take account of the law relating to charging for school activities, as set out in sections 449 to 462 of the Education Act 1996.

15. Minibus driving and Transport

We will ensure that our risk assessments pay particular attention to transport arrangements; including – driver competence, maintenance of vehicles, insurance, seat belts, weather conditions, journey times, comfort stops, and driver fatigue. Only reputable companies will be used.

When using the council own mini buses staff will ensure that they are authorised to do so and they will complete a visual check of the vehicle before they set off. This ensures it is safe to drive so that the destination can be reached effectively.

The National Guidance includes guidance on transport and the use of minibuses (see section 3 above).

16. Using external providers and facilities

When planning an off-site visit, we will thoroughly research the suitability of the venue and check that facilities and third party provision will meet our needs and expectations.

We will obtain sufficient information to allow us to assess each venue. This can include a visual walk through using google maps to identify any significant issues. Establishment websites may also hold images of specific areas/activities for consideration. If appropriate, we will take advantage of nationally accredited provider assurance schemes that are available, including:

- The Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) **Quality Badge** (which covers both quality and safety)
- Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) **licence** (see below)
- **Adventuremark**
- Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres – **AHOEC Gold Standard**
- **National Governing Body** (NGB) centre approval schemes (applicable where the provision is a single, specialist activity).

If the provider holds such an accreditation, there should be no need to seek further assurances about the areas that it covers.

If a provider does not hold a suitable accreditation which covers all aspects of their provision, then we will use other means of gaining assurances about relevant aspects of their operation.

17. Volunteers

Currently Walsall Virtual School does not use volunteers to support off site visits.

18. Emergency Planning and Critical Incidents

For all visits, we will have visit and participant details, including emergency contacts and any known health issues of participants, readily available in the office.

Where visits take place out of school/office hours, a base contact(s) will be nominated who will be available 24/7 and will have ready access to these details "out of hours". All staff involved in the visit must have contact details for the base contact(s) in case of emergency.

In the event of an emergency the school's Emergency and Business Continuity Plan will come into play.

In the case of a critical incident; that 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

We will contact the council's Resilience Unit (Emergency Planning) for support, without delay.

The council's Resilience Unit can be contacted on:

- 01922 652026 – Normal office hours
- 01922 650000 – Outside normal office hours.

These numbers should be carried by all staff members at all times during an educational visit but should only be used in the case of a genuine emergency. **Under no circumstances should these numbers be given to young people or to their parents or guardians**.

Any accidents that occur during visits will be reported, as appropriate – e.g. to HSE (if RIDDOR applies), and to the council's health & safety team. All incidents, including "near miss" incidents, will be investigated and procedures/risk assessments reviewed as appropriate.

19. Insurance

We have **Employer's Liability** and **Public Liability Insurance** in place, via Walsall Council, to indemnify the school against all claims for compensation for injury suffered by any person employed by it; by persons acting in a voluntary capacity; and by persons not in our employment (e.g. pupils). The indemnity covers activities including offsite visits.

Some level of **Personal Accident Insurance** is provided for council employees in the course of their employment, providing predetermined benefits in the event of an accident. However, Visit and activity leaders should contact the council's Insurance & Loss Control section (01922 652909) if they need clarification of any of the above, or advice on any circumstances requiring early notification of specialist activities to the council's insurer.

Where insurance is not provided via the council, those establishments should ensure they have appropriate insurance in place, similar to that outlined above.

20. Educational Visits Advice

The EVC will always be the first point of contact regarding any visit.

- Walsall Council's health & safety team act as our educational visits adviser and can be contacted on 01922 65 5793 or via email **safetyandfire@walsall.gov.uk**.

Normally contact with the team should be via the EVC or Headteacher.

Note: Walsall Council does not approve visits – this task is delegated to schools. however, the local authority will advise schools and answer any specific queries related to educational visits.

Virtual school activity / visit proposal application

Not all sections will be relevant to every proposed visit:

Proposed Activity: _____

Group Leader: _____

The group leader should have already received approval of the proposed visit in principle before the completion of this form.

When approval is given, one copy should be retained in the virtual school office and another by the group leader. The person in charge of the office should be informed of any subsequent changes in planning, organisation, staffing.

1. **Purpose of Activity / Visit and specific educational objectives:**

_____

_____

_____

2. **Proposed Activity / Visit to take place:**

_____

_____

_____

3. **Proposed dates and times of Activity / Visit:**

_____

_____

_____

4. **Transport arrangements / needs:**

_____

_____

5. **Organising company/agency (it not Virtual School):**

Name: _____ Address: _____

_____

Tel: _____ Licence No. if registered: _____

6. **Proposed cost and financial arrangements:**

_____

7. **Insurance arrangements for all members of the proposed party, including voluntary helpers:**
    Include the name of the insurance company.

Insurance Cover: _____ Policy No. _____

Address: _____

8. **Accommodation to be used:**

Name: _____ Address: _____

_____

Tel: _____

Name of head of centre (if available): _____

9. **Details of the programme of activities:**

_____

_____

_____

10. **Details of any hazardous activity and the associated planning, organisation and staffing:**

_____

_____

_____

11. **Names, relevant experience, qualifications and specific responsibilities of staff involved in the Activity / Visit:**

_____

_____

_____

12. Names, relevant qualifications and specific responsibilities of other adults involved in Activity / Visit:

_____

_____

_____

13. Name, address and telephone number of the contact person in the home area who will hold all information about the Activity / Visit in case of an emergency:

_____

_____

_____

14. Proposed size and composition of the group:

Age range: _____

Number of boys: _____   Number of girls: _____

Adult to pupil ratio: _____   Leader/participant ratio: _____

15. Information on parental consent:

Information on whether the group leader has received all consent forms duly completed and signed (parental consent may precede or follow approval):

_____

16. Risk Assessment:

A completed Risk Assessment must be attached to this proposal.

Steps to follow when assessing risks

1.	**Activity / Place of Visit** Potential hazards:
2.	**List groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards you have identified:** eg. Pupils, students, group leader, non-teaching staff, teachers
3.	**List existing controls or note where the information may be found:** eg. Ensure sufficient supervision, clear guidance to pupils
4.	**How will you cope with the hazards which are not currently or fully controlled under (3)?** List the hazards and the measures taken to control them.
5.	**Continual monitoring of hazards throughout visit:** Adapt plans and then assess risks as necessary.

Risk assessment action plan

Activity/Situation/Hazard	Action Required	Target Date

Assessment and Action Plan prepared by: _____

Date: _____

Next Assessment due: _____