

# Southwark Children's Services



## Off Site Visits Policy

2011 Edition



[www.southwarkvisits.org.uk](http://www.southwarkvisits.org.uk)



# High Quality Educational Visits

High quality educational visits form an essential part in young people's development and indeed are often the most memorable experiences of a lifetime.

Southwark children's services endorses the manifesto of The Learning outside the Classroom agenda and other initiatives to enhance young people's educational experiences.

An essential element in delivering high quality educational visits is ensuring that they are conducted in a planned, safe and effective manner with the minimum of 'form filling' commensurate with the complexity of the visit.

Southwark children's services has adopted the national guidance from the Outdoor education advisers panel <http://oeapeg.info> and has introduced EVOLVE an online visit notification and approval system to ensure that visits are planned in a methodical way to ensure a safe experience for all those involved . This system is well proven, simple to use and gives a clear audit trail

The competence of the visit leader is the key component in ensuring the safety of the participants, Therefore heads of establishments and educational visit coordinators (EVC's) must accurately assess this competence and the local authority encourages establishments to seek further advice from them as required.

We offer training for Heads, EVC's and visit leaders on use of EVOLVE and the latest good practice in off site visits.

This policy replaces guidance previously issued and is to be in effect until further notice and is intended to assist establishments provide safe, high quality visits for Southwark's young people.



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This document is updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation, guidance and best practice. The most recent version of this policy and latest guidance will always be available on EVOLVE

## Policy for Off Site Visits

Southwark children's services acknowledges the immense value of educational visits to young people, and fully supports and encourages all visits that are correctly planned, managed, and conducted. We believe that all establishments should strive for high quality educational visits, in order to maximise the educational benefits to the young people taking part. The term off site or educational visit are interchangeable and have the same meaning in this document.

This document details the policy for visits that Southwark establishments are to meet. It is intended to be supportive and to ensure that visits are organised with due care and reference to the latest guidance. As such, this document is both an aide for all staff involved in visits and a means to assist establishments in developing their own educational visits policy.

Southwark children's services uses the EVOLVE internet based system as a complete portal for all matters relating to educational visits. EVOLVE can be accessed at <http://www.southwarkvisits.org.uk>. All heads of establishments and educational visit coordinators (EVC's) are provided with a log in to the site. Other members of staff should contact their EVC for access. All local authority visit approval is processed through this portal. EVOLVE contains a powerful database with search facilities, guidance, course information, an inter EVC message service, document library, downloadable resources and the facility to generate reports.

Voluntary aided schools and other independent subscribers to EVOLVE (academies, free and independent schools) where the governing body is the employer are required to approve all off site activities and 'EVOLVE' acts as a notification and resource to support that function.

Community schools and educational establishments /service areas where Southwark council are the employer, the head of establishment will approve the majority of off site visits. However, there are certain categories of visits where, in addition to approval by the EVC and head of establishment, **specific approval must be given by the local authority**. The categories of these visits (in any combination) are as follows:

### Overseas

#### Residential (including staying overnight on site)

#### Involving an Adventurous Activity (as defined in this policy)

The establishment's EVC must login to EVOLVE and complete a visit form online as early as possible in advance of the visit taking place, but at least a **minimum of 4 weeks prior to the event**.

Note: for overseas expeditions a different procedure applies and outline approval should be sought up to 24 months prior to the expedition taking place.

Following online submission of a visit form, the local authority will review the information and will either 'Approve' the visit, or 'Return' the Visit Form to the EVC with reasons given for further information/clarification.

Prior to the visit taking place, the EVC must check the status of approval on EVOLVE. These categories of visit must not take place without local authority approval.

All establishments are recommended to develop their own local policy that includes local arrangements for internal notification, emergency contacts etc and adopt this policy for use.

## Role of the Educational Visits Coordinator

**To help fulfil its' health and safety obligations for visits, all establishments are recommended to appoint an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC).**

The EVC will be appointed by and will act on behalf of the head of establishment. For smaller establishments or where off site activity is infrequent this function can be combined with the head of establishment.

The EVC should be specifically competent, having practical experience in leading and managing a range of visits similar to those typically run by the establishment. Commonly, but not exclusively, such competence will be identified in a person on the senior management/leadership team of the establishment.

The EVC will be the principal contact with Southwark for visits planned by the establishment.

The EVC will be involved in the planning and management of educational visits including adventure activities led by the establishment's staff.

The EVC should ensure that an appropriate local policy is in place for educational visits and that regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

The EVC will be required to attend training and update training where appropriate.

The EVC should ensure that OEAP national guidance, local authority guidance, the establishment's own policy, and/or any other relevant documentation is readily accessible to staff.

The EVC is required to keep appropriate records of educational visits, and to make these available to Southwark where requested, as part its statutory monitoring role as employer. This is best achieved by using EVOLVE.

The EVC should seek advice from the Outdoor education adviser or other personnel as required.

Where an EVC position is vacant or not desired, the associated duties will revert to the head of establishment until such time as an EVC is appointed and has attended appropriate training.

For visits that are **overseas, residential or involving an adventurous activity as defined in this policy** the establishment's EVC must log in to EVOLVE and complete a visit form online as early as possible in advance of the visit taking place but **at least a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the event**. For overseas expeditions a different procedure applies and outline approval should be sought up to 24 months prior to the expedition taking place. Following online submission of a visit form, the local authority will review the information. The local authority will either 'Approve' the visit, or 'Return' the visit form to the EVC with reasons given for further information/clarification.

Prior to the visit taking place, the EVC must check the status of approval on EVOLVE. These categories of visit must not take place without local authority approval.

If the local authority has attached a note that requires confirmation of having been read, the EVC will not be permitted to access his/her account until this has been confirmed.

A member of staff intending to lead (i.e. instruct) an adventurous activity must be specifically approved by Southwark to do so and will need to be appropriately qualified.

## **Health & Safety Responsibilities**

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety on educational visits with the employer:

For community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, maintained nursery schools, pupil referral units, youth groups, etc. Southwark council is the employer and therefore establishments are to adopt this policy and follow the guidance/best practice requirements available on the EVOLVE portal.

For voluntary aided schools, academies, free schools etc. the employer is usually the governing body or proprietor. These establishments are encouraged to use this policy as a model, but are not obliged to do so. If not using this policy, they should ensure and be able to evidence that the systems in place are equally as robust as those as described. Southwark children's services can provide information, advice and training but the responsibility for and the approval of any activity remains with the employer.

All persons involved in a visit have specific responsibilities which they should be clear about prior to the visit taking place. These range from pupils, adult helpers, teachers, group leaders, visit leader, EVC, head teacher, governing body, to the local authority etc. Guidance on specific roles and responsibilities can be accessed via EVOLVE.

## **Definition of an 'Adventurous Activity'**

The following activities are regarded as 'adventurous'. Community schools and other children's services establishments must obtain local authority approval for these types of visits:

- All activities in 'open country' such as D of E Expeditions.
- Swimming (all forms, excluding publicly life guarded pools)
- Camping where participants/leaders erect tents and/or self cater.
- Canoeing / kayaking
- Sailing / windsurfing / kite surfing
- Rafting or improvised rafting
- Use of powered safety/rescue craft
- All other forms of boating (excluding commercial transport)
- Water skiing
- Paintball (including 'Laser Quest')
- Snorkel and aqualung activities
- Hill walking and Mountaineering
- Rock climbing (including indoor climbing walls)
- Abseiling
- River/gorge walking or scrambling
- Coastering/coastal scrambling/sea level traversing
- Underground exploration (Except designated 'Show' caves)
- Shooting and archery
- Skiing, snowboarding, and related activities (including dry slope)
- Air activities (excluding commercial flights)
- Horse riding
- Motor sport – all forms
- High level ropes courses
- 'Extreme' sports (Parcours, Bungee, Zorbing, Mountain or ATB Boarding etc.)
- Other activities (e.g. initiative exercises) involving skills/risks inherent in any of the above

'Open country' is normally defined as land above 300m, or more than 1km from vehicular access. However, this is a somewhat arbitrary boundary and there may be occasions where this definition is inappropriate. Please contact the Outdoor education adviser if you think this might apply.

For the purposes of approval, the following activities are not regarded as adventurous and therefore do not require local authority approval. However, these activities **must** be supervised by a member of staff who has previous relevant experience and who has been assessed by the EVC or head of establishment as competent to supervise the activity:

- Walking in municipal parks or on non-remote country paths known to the leader
- Field studies in benign environments
- Swimming in publicly life guarded pools
- Theme parks
- Pedal powered go-karts
- Ice skating (rink)
- Farm visits
- Local traffic survey
- Museum, library, etc.
- Physical Education and sports fixtures

Please contact the Outdoor education adviser if there is uncertainty over whether a particular activity requires local authority approval.

#### **Ratios for Off Site visits**

The staff to young person ratio ranges given here are intended as a guide and should be considered MINIMUM Requirements. Actual ratios for any visit must be determined by risk assessment by the visit leader or other competent person.

The ratios for adventurous activities are 'activity specific' and available in the national guidance and via the EVC and Outdoor education adviser.

Competent leaders will recognise when supervision should be increased e.g. if any group members have behavioural or physical needs, the weather being unfavourable on the day etc.

Where leaders operate alone, the group must be trained and briefed on the action to be taken if for any reason the leader is incapacitated. An assistant leader able to safeguard the group and raise the alarm should be present if the group would be at significant risk if the leader was incapacitated.

### Ratios for General off Site Visits

Activity	Age Range	Staff to Young People Ratios	Notes
Local Visits (Galleries, Museums and Normal Countryside)	Nursery	1:2-4	
	Reception/Year 0	1:4-6	
	Years 1-3	1: 6-10	
	Years 4-6	1: 10 – 15	
	Year 7 Onwards	1: 15-20	
	Special Education	1: 6-10	
Residential Visits (In UK)	Years 4-6	1: 8-10	
	Year 7 onwards	1: 10-15	
	Special Education	1: 5-8	
Visits Abroad	Year 7 Onwards	1:10 with 2 staff minimum	For younger year groups contact the Outdoor education adviser
	Special Education	1: 5-8 with 2 staff minimum	
Swimming in Public Pools  (with qualified Lifeguard)	Years 1-3	1:5-8	
	Years 4-6	1:10-12	
	Years 7	1: 15-20	
Swimming (all other)	All Years	1:5-10 with 2 Staff Minimum	This is classified an adventurous activity and requires specific local authority approval

## Southwark Contacts

Outdoor Education Adviser	Paul Bond 0207 639 5100 07949 216077 <a href="mailto:Paul.Bond2@southwark.gov.uk">Paul.Bond2@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Health & Safety Manager Children's Services	Lee Tapping 0207 525 3808 <a href="mailto:Lee.Tapping@southwark.gov.uk">Lee.Tapping@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Insurance Team	0207 525 0612 <a href="mailto:CentrallInsuranceServices@southwark.gov.uk">CentrallInsuranceServices@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Southwark Emergency Contact (24 hour)	020 7525 5000

Further copies of this document may be downloaded from <http://www.southwarkvisits.org.uk>