

Wirral Council Policy for Educational visits and Offsite Activity 2012

1. Introduction

Every year thousands of children and young people from Wirral schools and Children and Young People's Department participate in Educational Visits and off-site activity as part of their Educational experience or personal development. These activities and opportunities are integral to a rounded educational experience which excites, challenges, motivates and stimulates learners.

This policy sets out how Wirral Council will manage this aspect of learning. The policy will include health and safety requirements.

2. Definitions

Adventure Activities: Activities that take place in challenging environments that can present technical or environmental complexity in the organisation or delivery of the activity. Many adventure activities have well established National Governing bodies that train, assess and validate the competency of staff to lead in the activity.

Educational Visits: All visits with a group of young people that leave a school site to journey to another location either during the school day or for extended periods beyond the school day. This usually does not include work experience or activity in schools on split sites. This activity is planned and organised by the school.

Off-site Activities: Activities that occur away from the base of regular work with children or young people organised by staff who work within Children's Services.

Learning Outside of the Classroom (LOtC): Activity that takes place on the school site and further afield. Some of this work falls under the category of Educational Visits.

Children and Young People: all young people under the care of Children's Services whether from a school or setting.

Staff: In the context of this policy staff are defined as any employee of Wirral Council any agency worker or volunteer working for Wirral Council including elected members of Wirral Council.

3. **Application:**

This policy applies to any of the following activities when undertaken by young people under the supervision or control (whether pastoral or direct) of Wirral Council staff. This policy also applies to activities which are facilitated by Wirral Council or any of its maintained schools or other services.

- Off-site activities, visits or excursions
- Activities that fall within the remit of Learning Outside the Classroom
- Adventure Activities

(All of the staff in a maintained school are LA employees or volunteers. There may be other people who work in the school who are not employed by Wirral Council. This policy would not apply to them as in this case Wirral Council is not the employer. If the staff were to lead a visit – eg a sports coach – this would be in the role of volunteer to support the school/establishment. In this case the sports coach would be covered by this policy).

This policy applies regardless of whether or not the activities take place within or outside of normal working hours including weekends and holiday periods.

Wirral Council has formally adopted Outdoor Education Advisor Panel (OEAP) 'National Guidance' as the source guidance for this policy from the website: www.oeapng.info

It is a legal expectation that employees must work within the requirements of their Employer's Guidance. Wirral Council Children and Young People's Department and their employees must follow the requirements of 'OEAP National Guidance' in addition to the requirements of this policy statement which are highlighted below. Please refer to

4. Policy Statement on page 3.

Where there is any variance of policy between the National Guidance and local policy this Policy Statement sets out Wirral Council's requirements which take precedence over any National Guidance.

Where another employer (such as governing Body of Voluntary Aided, Foundation or Academy School) wishes to opt into Wirral Council's Guidance, Systems and processes for supporting and monitoring all LOtC activities they should produce a Policy statement that outlines this intention.

Where a Wirral Council employee commissions LOtC activity they must ensure that this particular commissioned agency has either of the following:

- Wirral Council Guidance or OEAP National Guidance
- A system in place where standards are no less than those required by OEAP National Guidance

4. **Policy Statement:**

Wirral Council recognises the important role that educational visits, off-site activities, adventurous activities and Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) plays in providing a rich and rewarding education for children and young people irrespective of age, ability or circumstances.

Wirral Council actively supports and encourages such activities and recognises that this may involve exposing participants to challenges and risks with which they may not be familiar. The Council ensures arrangements and procedures are in place to identify and manage these risks against the benefits of the activity. It is the Council's policy so far as is reasonably practicable that all activities falling within the scope of this policy should:

- Comply with recognised sector best practice guidance with respect to issues falling within the scope of this policy. For the purposes of this policy this signifies compliance with the National guidance issued by the Outdoor Education Adviser's Panel (www.oeapng.info) unless this guidance is specifically over-ridden by a requirement within this or any other Wirral Council Health & Safety Policy
- Be allocated sufficient resources (time, planning, staff and budget) to enable activities to be undertaken safely
- Follow a Risk Management process that is informed by a Risk Benefit Assessment where the benefits of the proposed activity are balanced against the risks. Detail is to be included on how the risks can be managed. There maybe some background or residual risks elements remaining and these could be viewed as acceptable. Part of the curriculum and learning for young people is to know how to identify and manage appropriate risk. Where risks to participants are viewed as unacceptable then the activity must not be carried out until further advice has been sought from the Council's Educational Visits Advisor
- Be monitored to satisfy the Council that the requirements of this policy are being met

5. **Third Party Providers**

Where activities that fall within the scope of this policy are being provided by a third party the Council will require that:

- Reasonable checks of any external organisations that are contracted to provide any activities regardless of whether these activities are being carried out on or off-site are carried out to ensure that the external organisations are competent to provide such activities
- Checks are made via an external validation process using an Inspection and Accrediting Body which may include the Adventure Activities Licensing Service, the LOtC Quality Badge and Adventuremark or sector Approval schemes. Wirral Council endorses the LOtC Quality Badge Scheme. Confirmation about individual Awarding Body schemes should be made via the Educational Visits Advisor
- The performance of external organisations is adequately monitored to ensure that agreed practices are being met
- The significant findings of monitoring are acted upon and reported to the Educational Visits Advisor and/or Governing Body of the school

Where activities involve either Travel Abroad or the provision of 'Adventure Activities' led by Wirral Council or by a third party provider the Council requires that these be submitted to the Educational Visits Advisor for checks and approval early in the planning stages.

To secure the policy objectives the Council will put arrangements in place to:

- Establish and maintain systems and procedures to enable schools and settings to comply with the requirements of this policy. All schools and settings will be required to record and manage activities falling within the scope of this policy using the Evolve online system
- Provide advice to enable staff with responsibilities for any aspect of this policy to meet any requirements placed on them
- Provide written guidance and procedures for staff to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities within the scope of this policy
- Provide access to suitable and sufficient information and instruction and training for all staff who organise, facilitate, lead and advise on such activities
- Comply with reasonable directions and instructions issued by external organisations providing such activities where these are issued in order to secure the health and safety of other persons
- Establish structures to enable the reporting of any significant findings of monitoring activity (e.g. incident reports) to the Council's SMT

6. **Organisational Responsibilities and Arrangements**

In addition to the overall responsibilities for managing health & safety matters that are described in the Council's Health and Safety Policy some specific responsibilities apply in relation to the activities covered by this policy. These are identified in 6.1 – 6.6.

6.1 Director for Children and Young People's Department

The Director for Children and Young People's Department is responsible for the following:

- Allocating sufficient resources to ensure that adequate competent advice is available to provide advice, guidance and support to Wirral Council settings. This is the case when activities fall within the scope of this policy. In order to meet this requirement the Council has formally appointed an Educational visits Adviser
- Ensuring that the requirements of this policy are adequately monitored and that appropriate actions are taken to obtain compliance with the requirements of this policy
- Reporting significant failings in this policy to the Chair of Strategic Health and Safety Co-ordinating Group so that they can maintain effective oversight of day to day health and safety compliance

6.2 Educational Visits Adviser

The Council's Educational Visits Adviser is appointed by the Council to provide advice and guidance to duty holders named within this policy so that they can discharge their duties under this policy. This includes any relevant statutory information.

Responsibilities for the Educational Visits Adviser are highlighted below:

- Maintain their competence and keep abreast of legal requirements and sector and industry best practice with regards to activities covered by this policy
- Report significant changes to legislation, sector and industry best practice to appropriate committees and ensure that employee representatives/recognised trades unions are consulted on matters of health and safety relating to this policy and any associated procedures (e.g. at the School's Health and Safety Committee – "HASCAM")
- Provide advice and guidance to schools and settings to enable activities to be carried out safely
- Monitor schools and settings to ensure that they are complying with all relevant legislation on the conditions set out within this policy
- Report the significant findings of monitoring including any recommended corrective actions to duty holders so that they can discharge their duties in accordance with this policy

6.3 Governing Bodies

Governing bodies play a key role in providing oversight of all activities undertaken by the school. Governing Bodies should satisfy themselves that the school has suitable policies and procedures in place to adequately manage and monitor all activities falling within the scope of this policy. The results of monitoring should be discussed at Governing Body meetings.

6.4 Headteacher/Head of Establishment

The Headteacher/Head of Establishment are responsible for ensuring that any activities falling within the scope of this policy are:

- Adequately resourced (in terms of planning, time, staff and budget) to secure compliance with the requirements of this policy and any associated procedures.
- Reported to the Council's Education Visits Advisor where required under the terms of this policy
- Led by competent people
- (If third party providers are providing the activity), the Headteacher/Head of Establishment is responsible for ensuring that responsible checks are carried out to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that the third party is competent to provide the activities that they have been contracted to provide
- Checked in relation to risk management systems. Risk management systems are required to be in place using a risk benefit assessment tool to ensure that adequate risk management measures are implemented. For activities provided and delivered by third parties reasonable checks of the provider using the risk management system should be used. The Headteacher/Head of Establishment is not responsible for Providers' risk assessments and should not undertake any further risk assessments of a Providers' activities
- Monitored and any significant findings reported to the council's Educational Visits Advisor and to the school's Governing body so that they can maintain effective oversight of these activities

The Headteacher/Head of Establishment may appoint a member (or members) of their staff to carry out these duties on their behalf. Where such appointments are made the Headteacher/Head of Establishment remains responsible for the standard that is to be achieved and they must monitor the performance of these appointed persons to ensure that the required tasks are being carried out competently.

The appointment of an EVC should have sufficient authority (i.e. they should normally be a senior member of staff) to enable them to undertake their role and should be provided with the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to discharge their duties effectively.

6.5 Educational Visits Co-ordinators (EVC)

EVC's are responsible for delivering any tasks devolved to them by their Headteacher. Once appointed EVC's have an additional responsibility to ensure that they bring any significant failings relating to compliance with this policy and its associated procedures to the attention of their Headteacher/Head of Establishment.

6.6 Staff

Staff are responsible for taking care of themselves and for others affected by their actions or their omissions. In the context of this policy this significance is outlined below:

- Co-operating with line managers and supervisors by implementing the agreed actions of any risk management process and planning when they undertake or are involved in activities falling within the scope of this policy
- Reporting any failings in the risk management process relating to activities falling within the scope of this policy to the attention of management
- It is an expectation of this Policy that all Wirral council staff have been formally assessed as competent to undertake such responsibilities that have been assigned to them

7. Emergency Planning, Critical Incident Support and Incident Reporting

A critical incident may include an incident where any member of a group undertaking an off-site activity has:

- Either suffered a life threatening injury or fatality
- Is at serious risk
- Or has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.

As an employer Wirral is committed to providing emergency planning procedures to support establishments in the event of a critical incident. All health and safety related incidents including any “near misses”, arising from activities covered by this policy must be reported using the M13 ‘Accident and near miss form’ and sent to CYPD Health and Safety Team.

8. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Council’s Health and Safety Policy.

9. For more advice

All policies and procedures form part of the Council’s Terms and Conditions of Employment and therefore care should be taken with their application.

10. Links to Other Policies

This policy is linked to the Policy and Guidance document **Educational Visits and Offsite Activity 2012**.

11. For more information

Information on how to apply this specific policy is available from Gaby Crolla the Council’s Educational Visits Advisor. Gaby Crolla Tele: 0151 346 6571 gabycrolla@wirral.gov.uk