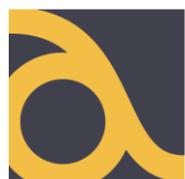


RBWM Guidance for Outdoor Educational Activities and Offsite Visits

2025-2028



**achieving
for children**

Summary

This guidance document outlines the Local Authority’s approach to outdoor education and off-site visits for 2025–2028. It aligns with the National Guidance from the Association for Advisors of Outdoor Learning & Educational Visits (AAOLEV). The document emphasizes the importance of well-planned and managed outdoor learning, defines responsibilities, and provides detailed procedures for planning, risk management, inclusion, and emergency protocols. It also includes guidance on adventurous activities, overseas visits, and the use of external providers.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to link the requirements of the LA with the Association for Advisors of Outdoor Learning & Educational Visits (AAOLEV) (formerly the Outdoor Education Advisers’ Panel) National Guidance.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (the Local Authority) acknowledges the immense value of outdoor educational activities and off-site visits and related activities to young people and fully supports and encourages those that are well planned and managed.

The LA adopts the Association for Advisors of Outdoor Learning & Educational Visits ‘National Guidance’ (NG): www.oeapng.info and references this document via hyperlink to specific sections of National Guidance.

The LA uses the web-based online Evolve system to facilitate the planning, management, approval, and evaluation of visits. All staff that lead visits should complete a visit form and submit to their school’s Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) for evaluation and forwarding to the Head via Evolve.

The ‘starting point’ for this document echoes National Guidance, in that the key to effective and successful outdoor learning and off-site visits is the right leaders doing the right activities with the right young people in the right places at the right times. Refer to National Guidance document 1.b [Foundations](#)

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V2	December 2022	Annual Revision. New sections (29) 'Exchange Visits and Homestays', and (33) 'Terrorist Activity' have been added.
V3	July 2025	3-yearly Revision.

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2 Responsibilities

The **Health and Safety at Work 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, and statutory youth groups, the employer is the local authority (i.e., Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead). Such schools must adhere to advice and guidance contained in this document.

Where any of the above schools has chosen not to access this area of support from the local authority, then they must ensure that their systems and procedures are equally as robust as would be the case if they were accessing this support. This would include ensuring that National Guidance www.oeapng.info is followed, that your Educational Visits Coordinator has attended an EVC course, and that you have access to competent technical advice, for example, via an AAOLEV accredited Outdoor Education Adviser.

The LA does not have the capacity to undertake ‘field observation’ visits, and this task is therefore delegated to the Headteacher and/or EVC.

- **For academies, foundation, independent, and voluntary aided schools**, the employer is usually the governing body or proprietor. Although welcome to do so, these schools are not obliged to use the guidance of the LA. If using LA guidance, this should be clearly stated. If not using LA guidance, schools are advised to ensure that their systems are equally as robust as those of the LA.

All persons involved in a visit have a specific responsibility which they should be clear about prior to the visit taking place. Refer to National Guidance documents 5.2b [Planning Basics](#) and [Checklists](#)

3 Role of the Educational Visits Coordinator

To help fulfil its health and safety obligations for visits, schools are encouraged to appoint an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) who will support the Headteacher. In small schools the Headteacher may also be the EVC. Should the school choose not to appoint an EVC, those functions will automatically fall to the Headteacher.

The EVC should be specifically competent, ideally with practical experience in leading and managing a range of visits like those typically run by the school. Commonly, but not exclusively, such competence will be identified in a person on the senior management of the school, appropriately experienced teacher or in more recent times, the School Business Manager.

The EVC should book onto the LA’s EVC training as soon as possible after appointment. Subsequent update training or a repeat full course is only recommended for those who have had a period of absence from or are involved in the role infrequently.

The EVC should support the Headteacher in ensuring that competent staff are assigned to lead and accompany visits, see [Section 11](#), and with approval and other decisions.

The EVC must ensure that a policy is in place for educational and off-site visits, and that this is updated as necessary.

Schools are advised to consider the merits of adapting the sample 'Educational Visits Checklist' to suit their own circumstances.

Refer to National Guidance [Educational Visits Coordinator](#)

4 Recording Visits

It is recommended that all visits are recorded, approved, and evaluated, as this ensures that a robust audit trail exists, and evidence learning outcomes.

5 Approval

Final approval is delegated to the Headteacher for all visits, except for:

- Overseas visits
- Residential visits
- Adventurous activity visits

Which, for LA maintained schools require Local Authority approval. These visits should be submitted to the LA at least 10 days in advance.

In approving visits, the Head and EVC should ensure that the visit leader has been appropriately inducted/trained, and is competent to lead the visit, see [Section 11](#)

What does 'Visit Approved by LA' mean?

When the Headteacher authorises a visit, they confirm that the visit complies with school and local authority policy, and that in their opinion the visit leader and any accompanying staff are competent to supervise the visit.

This task can only be the responsibility of the Headteacher/Senior Management, as the Local Authority does not have first-hand knowledge of the intended participants or the competence of the staff team to make this decision.

The LA therefore relies on the Headteacher to make an appropriate professional judgement prior to authorising visits, by taking all aspects into account, including but not limited to:

- The competence of the visit leader
- The competence of the accompanying staff
- The ages, level of maturity of pupils, including those with special needs
- The intended learning outcomes
- The proposed itinerary/session plan/programme of activities
- That contingency plans (Plan B) in place

The Local Authority operates on the basis that the Headteacher should not submit the visit for LA approval if they are not satisfied with the intended arrangements. 'Approved by LA' therefore confirms that the school appears to have followed the Local Authority's stated procedures.

All visits requiring local authority approval are viewed, and it is assumed that an Event Specific Risk Assessment has been written and is in place.

Where school staff lead adventurous activities themselves (i.e. not using an external provider) it is unlikely that the Headteacher will have the necessary technical expertise to assess the competence of the activity leader and staff, and therefore this task is carried out by the Local Authority. Refer to National Guidance document 1b [Foundations](#)

6 Outcomes

Clarity regarding the intended outcomes of the visit will help to ensure that the potential benefits can be achieved. Up to four 'intended' outcomes may be recorded during the planning process on Evolve, for subsequent evaluation.

Work that takes place outside the classroom can provide a very powerful means of developing learning in all curriculum areas and raise attainment. Experiential learning can also provide opportunities for development in other areas, including:

- Relationships
- Emotional & spiritual
- Cross curricular
- Individual
- Teamwork
- Environmental

Preparatory work should take place in advance of the visit where appropriate. This, in conjunction with activity that will take place during the visit, should feed into any follow up work. Refer to National Guidance document 5.1c [Learning Outside and Off-site visits: self-evaluation using the Ofsted framework](#)

[High Quality Outdoor Learning](#) can be used as a tool by visit leaders to assist in both identifying outcomes and in the evaluation of the learning taking place. It can also help the leader in providing clarity to a provider when designing a programme.

7 Inclusion

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, it is unlawful to discriminate against any participants that fall within scope of the Act, without material or substantial justification. You are required to make reasonable adjustments to avoid participants being placed at a substantial disadvantage. However, the Equality Act does not require responsible bodies to place employees or participants at inappropriate risk if a health and safety issue arises. It is also the case that the adjustments made to include a disabled young person, for example, should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity.

Refer to National Guidance document 3.2e [Inclusion](#)

8 Planning - Risk Management - What to Record and How.

Note: Risk management during visits is covered in [Section 9 – Safety During the Visit](#)

How much planning?

The extent of planning required is related to the complexity of the visit, see:

National Guidance document 4.3c [Risk Management – an overview](#)

Two levels of documentation: Generic & Event Specific

Generic documents can be used to cover the significant risks that you would always expect to manage in any relevant experience or activity. They include National Guidance, Local Authority, and school policies. They could include a Local Learning Area policy (see below), and procedures for managing routine activities, such as using transport, supervision of swimming pool changing areas, dismissal of students from venues, etc.

Event Specific documents could record all significant findings following an assessment of risk for a particular visit, or they may simply record issues not covered by existing generic documents. **NB:** If existing generic documents cover everything then there is no need to repeat anything.

As an aide memoire risk assessment can follow the STAGED mnemonic when considering the hazards associated with educational visits:

Staff
Transport
Activities
Group
Environment
Distance from home

Activities within the ‘Local Learning Area’ (if designated)

This refers to specified visits/activities within a designated geographical area that are part of the normal curriculum and take place during the normal school day. If the school has designated a Local Learning Area, then these activities should simply follow the Standard Operating Procedures stated, and do not normally need additional documentation.

Activities in the Local Learning Area should be recorded via a ‘Signing Out’ sheet left with the school office before departure.

If desired, and where parental consent is obtained, activities outside normal school hours could be included within the Local Learning Area policy, such as after school clubs, sports fixtures, evening activities, etc.

Higher Risk Activities

Activities that pose a higher risk will be more complex in nature and therefore need additional planning and risk management. These will include the following visit types:

- Day visits that are more complex or further afield

- Overseas visits
- Residential visits
- Adventurous activities

Planning Meeting

In the early stages of planning the visit leader (VL) and/or the EVC should convene a 'Planning Meeting', ideally with all staff involved in the visit. This Planning Meeting will provide the opportunity for information to be shared amongst colleagues, discussions to take place, decisions made, and for relevant details to be recorded. It helps ensure that everyone understands the plan and that everyone has opportunity to contribute to it. This process of sharing, discussion, decision making, and recording should be ongoing throughout the planning phase.

What to record and how?

The Visit Leader must provide a means of recording and sharing visit planning, and enable the EVC and Headteacher to contribute to, support, and monitor the activity.

Schools must assess risk prior to departure. The term 'risk assessment' is a process, and not a document (is a 'verb' not a 'noun'). HSE legislation dictates that the significant findings of the risk assessment process must be recorded, but it does not state any format for this. The 'significant findings' are a combination of the identified issues and what is being done about them. As there is no legal requirement to document the findings of the risk assessment process in any format, it is up to the school and visit leadership team to decide what format works best and will be most useful for them. Options could include any, or a combination of the following:

- A mind-map or annotated illustrations
- Handwritten notes
- Audio or video files, e.g., of a staff meeting
- A traditional completed template/form
- Event Specific Notes

Information recorded could include:

- a) Planning notes, decisions made, comments, etc.
- b) Participant briefing notes and rules.
- c) Operating procedures
- d) Event Specific Notes
- e) Risk assessment findings
- f) Other documents, e.g., letter/s to parents, itinerary, kit list, etc.

Additional notes on risk management

- It is not possible nor is it desirable to eliminate all risks, but these should be reduced to an acceptable or tolerable level. Planning should achieve a rational balance between potential adverse risks and the intended benefits and outcomes of

the activity - see [Managing Risk in Play Provision](#) An activity should only take place if, in the professional judgement of the leader, the residual risk following implementation of any control measures is deemed to be acceptable.

- It is good practice to involve participants in the planning and organisation of visits, as in doing so they will make more informed decisions, will become more 'risk aware' and hence at less risk. They will also have greater ownership of the event. This is endorsed by HSE in [Principles of Sensible Risk Management](#)
- Alternative arrangements (Plan B) should be included within the planning process where appropriate, for example, where weather conditions or water levels might be critical, or where an overcrowded venue might necessitate an alternative option.
- Where an adventurous activity is to be delivered by an external provider, the provider will have responsibility for managing the activity (see [Section 31](#)). As such, the provider's risk assessments are not the concern of the school leader, and do not need to be requested from the provider. See National Guidance document 6a [FAQ Asking for a provider's risk assessments](#)
- To inform future visits, it is good practice to record any significant issues following the visit evaluation.

See National Guidance documents:

4.3c [Risk Management – an overview](#)

4.3g [What to Record and How](#)

4.3c [Risk Management – some practical advice for leaders](#)

9 Safety during the visit & ongoing risk management

Prior to the visit, staff must ensure that all participants understand what is expected of them. This includes any 'rules' that will be in place. These should be re-emphasised as appropriate during the visit.

The on-going monitoring of all aspects of the visit by the leader and other staff is the single most important aspect in the risk management of visits, and hence safety. This also contributes towards enjoyment and learning.

Where appropriate, activities must be modified (e.g., Plan B) or curtailed to suit changed or changing circumstances, for example: an over-busy lunch area, rain, rising water levels, etc. This is primarily the responsibility of the visit leader, in consultation with other staff where appropriate.

Following the visit, the visit leader should record any significant issues as a note for both reference and to inform future visits.

Refer to National Guidance document 3.4k [Responsibilities of the Visit Leader](#)

10 Parent / Carer Consent

Schools:

Written consent from parents is not required for pupils to take part in most off-site activities organised by a school (except for nursery age children) as most of these activities take place during school hours and are a normal part of a child's education at school. However, it is good practice to inform parents of these activities.

Written consent is usually only requested for activities that need a higher level of risk management or those that take place outside school hours. Parents must be informed of these activities in advance and given the opportunity to withdraw their child from any visit or activity covered by the form. The school must have a robust means of ensuring that changes to parent / carer contact details and child medical details are up to date.

E-consent, via services such as ParentPay, etc., is an acceptable alternative to paper-based consent forms.

Other establishments:

Annual consent is appropriate for regular routine activities.

For all other visits, consent should be obtained on an individual visit basis. Information provided to parents prior to granting consent should include full details of the activities and any other significant information.

All: Refer to National Guidance document 4.3d [Parental Consent](#)

11 Competence to Lead

The competence of the visit leader is the single most important contributory factor in the safety of participants.

The EVC and/or Headteacher must therefore consider the following when assessing the competence of a member of staff to lead a visit:

- a) The experience of the leader in leading or accompanying similar or other visits (Check Staff History).
- b) Has the leader been briefed by the EVC or attended a Visit Leader Training course? (See [Contacts](#))
- c) Is the leader competent in planning and managing visits?
- d) What are the leader's reasons for undertaking the visit?
- e) Has the leader undertaken appropriate induction into the local authority of academy?
- f) Can the leader manage the pastoral welfare of participants?
- g) Does the leader exhibit sound decision-making abilities?
- h) What experience has the leader of the participants he/she intends to supervise?
- i) What experience has the leader of the environment and geographical area chosen?
- j) Does the leader possess appropriate qualifications if appropriate?
- k) If appropriate, what is the leader's personal level of skill in the activity, and fitness level?
- l) If leading adventurous activities, this requires to be 'approved' by the LA.
- m) The leader must be aware of all relevant guidelines and able to act on these.

Refer to National Guidance document 3.2d [Approval of leaders](#)

12 Staffing and Supervision

On all visits there must be an 'effective level of supervision' that has been approved by the EVC and Headteacher, and where applicable is in accordance with Governing Body policy.

The [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#) no longer differentiates between outings and on-site settings as regards minimum specified ratios.

For all other visits the visit leader, EVC and Headteacher must make a professional judgement regarding the number and suitability of staffing on an individual visit basis, after consideration of the following factors:

- The type, level, and duration of activity.
- The nature / requirements of individuals within the group, including those with additional needs.
- The experience and competence of staff and other adults.
- The venue, time of year and prevailing/predicted conditions, if applicable.
- The contingency, or 'Plan B' options.

A visit must not go ahead where either the visit leader, EVC, or Headteacher is not satisfied that an appropriate level of supervision exists.

Consideration should be given to the additional implications that may arise if staff are to be accompanied by family members (or partners) on visits.

Refer to National Guidance document 4.2a [Group management and supervision](#)

Vetting and Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Checks

Staff and volunteers who work frequently or intensively with or have regular access to young people or vulnerable adults, must undergo an enhanced DBS check with barred list check as part of their recruitment process. For this guidance:

- 'frequently' is defined as 'once a week or more'.
- 'intensively' is defined as 'four or more days in a month, or overnight'.

Refer to National Guidance document 3.2g [Vetting and DBS Checks](#)

Direct, Indirect and Remote Supervision

Young people must be supervised throughout all visits, even though they may be unaccompanied at times.

Direct supervision is where a member of staff is with a young person / group.

Indirect supervision is where young people are unaccompanied by a member of staff, but where there is a member of staff in the vicinity, for example as might occur in a museum or shopping centre, a theme park, or 'down-time' at an activity centre.

Remote supervision is where young people are unaccompanied by a member of staff, and the supervising member of staff is not necessarily in the immediate vicinity, for example as might occur during DofE expeditions, or a Year 12 or 13 unaccompanied visit to university open day, or town/city visits involving Years 12 or 13 where the age and maturity of the students allows this.

Both Indirect and Remotely supervised activities can bring valuable educational benefits, and the progression from dependence to independence is to be encouraged. Such activities develop essential lifelong skills, including learning to manage risk, self-sufficiency, interaction with the public, social skills, communication, decision making, etc.

The decision to allow indirect or remote supervision should be based on professional judgement considering such factors as:

- prior knowledge of the individuals (including their maturity and levels of responsibility).
- venue and conditions.
- the activity taking place.
- preparatory training.
- the competence of the supervising staff.
- the emergency systems in place.

When recording a **remotely** supervised visit, there must still be a named visit leader. This will be the member of staff that has made a professional judgement regarding the level of responsibility and maturity of the participants and decided that in their opinion it is reasonable for them to be undertaking the specific activity unaccompanied by an adult.

Refer to National Guidance documents:

4.3b [Ratios and Effective Supervision](#)

4.2a [Group Management and Supervision](#)

3.2g [Vetting and DBS Checks](#)

13 First Aid

For all visits there should be a responsible adult with a good working knowledge of first aid appropriate to the environment (e.g., urban, remote, water, etc.).

General life experience, a working knowledge of first aid, or a 3-hour non-assessed basic skills course is suitable for routine urban visits. However, the nature of the visit may indicate that a higher-level qualification is appropriate, especially in circumstances where it is likely that access by the emergency services may be delayed.

Based on the nature of the visit, the EVC (or visit leader) should make a professional judgement regarding the level of first aid required.

A first aid kit appropriate to the visit should be carried.

For EYFS outings, there must always be at least one member of staff present who holds a current, in-date Paediatric First Aid qualification.

Refer to National Guidance document 4.4b [First Aid](#)

Refer to: [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)

14 Insurance

Advice regarding insurance may be sought from the Local Authority's Insurance section. (See [Contacts](#)).

In addition to the standard public liability cover which all establishments will have in place the LA or school will have taken out 'blanket' personal accident cover & travel insurance for all trips & visits at home or abroad. This cover only applies to establishments who are insured under the Council's central insurance arrangements. Full details of the cover and scheme are held by the establishments or can be obtained from the insurance section (See [Contacts](#)).

For those establishments who make their own insurance arrangements, personal accident / travel insurance must be taken out for all visits abroad. For all other visits it is the responsibility of the Governing Body (where applicable), Head of Establishment, and Educational Visits Coordinator to determine whether additional insurance should be taken out. The establishment should particularly consider the need for additional insurance for residential activities, or those involving adventurous activities or hazardous environments.

15 Transport

Refer to National Guidance document 4.5a [Transport general considerations](#)

Private cars

Where a private (staff or parent) car is to be used to transport young people then this must be approved by the Headteacher.

Refer to National Guidance documents 4.5c [Transport in private cars](#) & 6.f [FAQ Use of private cars](#)

Refer to National Guidance document 4.5e [Hiring a coach](#)

Minibuses

Schools that own or hire a minibus must have an operational policy in place for this.

Refer to National Guidance document 4.5b [Transport in minibuses](#)

Public transport in London

For public transport within the Greater London area contact 'Transport for London', who may offer free travel for school parties on London buses, Underground, Tramlink, and Docklands Light Railway, to cultural destinations.

See [Transport for London – School Parties](#) Tel. 0343 222 1000 Email. schoolparty@tfl.gov.uk

16 Farm Visits

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

Refer to National Guidance document 7g [Farm Visits](#)

17 Water-Margin Activities

This section applies to:

Activities that take place near or in water – such as a walk along a riverbank or seashore, collecting samples from ponds and streams, or paddling or walking in gentle, shallow water*. It does not apply to swimming and other activities that require water safety or rescue qualifications and equipment, or water-going craft. NB: * 'gentle' means hardly moving at all. 'Shallow' typically means up to the knees (or top of wellington boots) of the participants.

If the activity **exceeds** the above definition, then this is classed as a water-based adventurous activity needing local authority approval, and [Section 24](#) applies.

If the activity falls **within** the above definition, this is classed as a 'water-margin' activity and the following applies:

- a) All staff involved in the activity should be conversant with, and adhere to the guidance contained within National Guidance document 7i [Group Safety at Water Margins](#) This document must be made available to all supervising adults in advance of the visit
- b) Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.
- c) As with all visits, where appropriate there should be an approved alternative 'Plan B' that could be used where conditions dictate, and for which parental consent has been obtained if necessary.
- d) Although LA approval is not required for water-margin activities, the leader must have previous relevant experience and must have been assessed as competent to lead the activity by the EVC and/or Headteacher.

Refer to National Guidance document 7i [Group Safety at Water Margins](#)

18 Residential Visits

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

[A Guide to High Quality Outdoor Learning and Residential Experiences](#) can be used as tools by visit leaders to assist in both identifying outcomes and in the evaluation of the learning taking place. It can also help the leader in providing clarity to a provider when designing a programme.

Refer to National Guidance document 4.2b [Residential Visits](#)

19 Overseas Visits

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

For all visits it is essential that consideration is given to the following:

- a) Culture: food and drink, local customs, religion, expected behaviour/dress, gender issues, sanitary arrangements, corruption, political stability, local financial information, alcohol & drugs.
- b) Accommodation: checked for suitability, security, safety precautions and emergency evacuation.
- c) Transport systems have been assessed as safe for use.

The visit leader should consider the relevant country information from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office website: [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) (from the home page select 'Travel Advice'). All relevant FCDO information should be circulated amongst the staff team.

For travel within the European Union (plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland), all participants should have a valid GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card). See [Applying for healthcare cover abroad \(GHIC and EHIC\) - NHS](#)

For Exchange Visits: National Guidance document 7f [Exchanges and home stays](#)

For Overseas Expeditions See [Section 27](#)

Travelling to the European Union

Schools wishing to travel to the EU from the UK must adhere to new rules post-Brexit. The EHIC card is now replaced by the GHIC (Global Health Insurance Card) but is valid in the EU until the card reaches its expiry date.

ABTA Brexit advice for travellers: [Brexit advice for travellers | ABTA](#)

National Guidance document 4.4c [Insurance](#)

20 Weather, Clothing & Survival

Where appropriate, the leader must obtain and act upon recent weather forecasts and local advice.

Participants should be adequately clothed appropriate to:

- The time of year, prevailing weather conditions, altitude, and exposure to elements.
- Likely changes in weather.
- The experience and strength of the party.
- The nature of the visit and environment.

When venturing away from immediate help, leaders should consider the need for:

- Comfort, insulation, and shelter for a casualty.
- Comfort, insulation, and shelter for the whole group.
- Provision of emergency food and drink.

- Torch.
- Possible need of signalling equipment and/or mobile phone (NB. Mobile phones may not work in remote areas).

It is primarily the responsibility of the visit leader, in consultation with other staff where appropriate, to modify or curtail the visit or activity (e.g., Plan B) to suit changed or changing circumstances - for example: over-busy lunch area, rain, rising water levels, etc.

21 Swimming

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

All swimming activities and venues must be included within the visit plan, and lifeguarding arrangements checked in advance. This is particularly important in respect of visits abroad, where for example, a hotel pool may be available.

Young people must always be supervised by a competent adult whilst undertaking swimming activities. The following criteria apply -

Swimming pools (lifeguarded)

LA Approval is not required, however:

- UK Swimming Pool safety is guided by various Health and Safety at Work Acts and Regulations. Pool operators have a duty to take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure that teaching and coaching activities are conducted safely.
- For publicly lifeguarded pools abroad, the school's staff must seek assurances that appropriate lifeguard cover is in place prior to participants entering the water.
- Unless suitably qualified, the school's staff should not have responsibility for lifeguarding. However, they do always retain a welfare role for participants either through direct or 'remote' supervision.
- For swimming lessons, the LA school should ensure the swimming teacher in charge or other pool employees/responsible adults supervising the participants are qualified according to current guidelines.

–

Refer to National Guidance document 7.x [Swimming pools](#)

Hotel (and other) swimming pools

Schools should check the lifeguarding position in advance.

LA Approval is not required for this activity.

If lifeguarding arrangements are not provided at the pool, then the visit leader will bear the full responsibility for ensuring swimming safety, and approval to lead the activity will be required via EVOLVE.

The following awards/qualifications apply:

For free ('recreational') swimming activity

A valid RLSS UK National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ), or equivalent in the country visited - see www.lifesavers.org.uk

A valid RLSS UK National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches

(NRASTAC) or equivalent - see www.lifesavers.org.uk or
A valid RLSS UK Water Safety Management Award (WSMA), with appropriate endorsement.

The role of the lifeguard is:

- To directly supervise the pool and the pool users, exercising appropriate levels of control. (Note: the lifeguard should always remain on the poolside except in the case of an emergency)
- If necessary, brief pool users in advance regarding rules (e.g., no diving, running, etc.).
- To communicate effectively with pool users.
- To anticipate problems and prevent accidents.
- To intervene to prevent behaviour which is unsafe.
- To carry out a rescue from the water.
- To give immediate first aid to any casualty.

The above must be accomplished in the context of the normal operating procedures and the emergency plan for the pool, which should be considered before swimming takes place. Full familiarisation of the systems described should be walked through at the pool.

Staff must be aware of the procedures in the event of an emergency, and who at the venue will provide back up. Staff should also know if they have exclusive use of the pool, as other pool users may increase the supervision role of your lifeguard.

If a young person over 16 years holds an appropriate qualification, then their role should be emergency lifeguard action, and supervision should remain the responsibility of the school's staff.

Refer to National Guidance document 7x [Swimming pools](#)

Open water swimming (i.e., not in a swimming pool and not a 'water-margin' activity)

LA Approval is required.

Consideration should be given to the following factors:

- Unknown locations and hazards, especially overseas.
- Changing environmental conditions.
- Supervisor complacency.
- Adherence to local advice.
- Preparation and knowledge of young people, i.e., is it a planned activity?

The designated lifeguard must be dedicated exclusively to the group, and the location used must fall within the RNLI/RLSS definition of a 'safer bathing area'. Local advice must always be sought.

For free swimming activity

- A valid National Beach Lifeguard Qualification (NBLQ) or equivalent in the country visited, see www.lifesavers.org.uk Note: this is for beach/sea only, not inland water.
- or**

For structured or programmed activity

- A valid RLSS UK National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTAC) or equivalent - see www.lifesavers.org.uk **or**

- A valid RLSS UK Water Safety Management Award (WSMA), with appropriate endorsement.
see www.lifesavers.org.uk

Refer to National Guidance document 7o [Natural Water Bathing](#)

22 Definition of an 'adventurous activity'

The following activities are typically regarded as 'adventurous':

- All activities in 'open country' (see below)
- Air activities (excluding commercial flights)
- Abseiling
- All forms of boating (excluding commercial transport)
- Camping
- Canoeing / kayaking
- Coastering/coastal scrambling/sea level traversing
- 'Extreme' sports
- High level ropes courses
- Hill walking and Mountaineering
- Horse riding
- Motor sport – all forms
- Off road cycling
- Rafting or improvised rafting
- River/gorge walking or scrambling.
- Rock climbing (including indoor climbing walls)
- Sailing / windsurfing / kite surfing
- Swimming (all forms, excluding publicly lifeguarded pools)
- Shooting / archery / paintballing
- Snorkel and aqualung activities
- Snowsports (skiing, snowboarding, and related activities), including dry slope
- Trampoline Parks
- Underground exploration
- Use of powered safety/rescue craft
- Water skiing
- Other activities (e.g., initiative exercises) involving skills 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 an arbitrary boundary and there may be occasions where this definition is inappropriate. Please contact the local authority if you think this might apply. For level of competence required to lead in open country see [Section 25](#)

The following activities are not regarded as adventurous; however, these activities must be supervised by a member of staff who has previous relevant experience and who in the opinion of the EVC and Headteacher is competent to supervise the activity:

- Walking in parks or on non-remote country paths
- Field studies - unless in the environments stated in 'open country'.
- Swimming in publicly lifeguarded pools
- Theme parks
- Tourist attractions
- Pedal go-karts
- Ice skating (rink)
- Farm visits
- Local traffic survey

- Museum, library, etc.
- Physical Education and sports fixtures (other than the above)
- Water-margin activities as defined in [Section 17](#)

23 Adventurous Activities

This section is applicable to all adventurous activities except the following, for which separate guidance applies:

[Water-based activities](#) - Section 24

[Open country activities](#) - Section 25

[Snowsports](#) - Section 26

[Overseas expeditions](#) - Section 27

[Trampoline Parks](#) – Section 28

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

The responsibility for the safety of participants in an adventurous activity will rest with either:

a) **An external provider** - see [Section 31](#)

The provider must hold an [LOtC Quality Badge](#) or complete a [Provider Form](#)

Note: If a Provider holds an [AALA licence](#) (and/or any other accreditation) but not an LOtC Quality Badge, then a Provider Form may still be required.

Note: Whilst the responsibility for the safety of participants rests with the provider, the accompanying staff continue to retain a welfare duty of care.

or

b) **A member of your school's staff** - see [Section 30](#)

This person must be specifically approved by the Headteacher to lead the activity.

24 Water-Based Activities

For clarification between water-margin and water-based activities see [Section 17](#)

Staff should ensure that the intended outcomes of the activity are balanced with all reasonably practicable safety precautions.

The following are not regarded as adventurous activities for the purposes of this guidance:

- Swimming in publicly lifeguarded pools - see [Section 21](#)
- Water-margin activities as defined in [Section 17](#)
- Commercial craft, tourist boat trips, and similar activities for which young people would not normally wear personal buoyancy.

Except for the above, all other forms of water-based activities are regarded as adventurous activities. The responsibility for the safety of participants in an adventurous activity will rest with either:

- a) **An external provider** - see [Section 31](#)
The provider must hold an [LOtC Quality Badge](#) or complete a [Provider Form](#)
Note: If a Provider holds an [AALA licence](#) (and/or any other accreditation) but not an LOtC Quality Badge, then a Provider Form may still be required.

Note: Whilst the responsibility for the safety of participants rests with the provider, the accompanying staff continue to retain a 'pastoral' duty of care.

or

- b) **A member of your school's staff** - see [Section 30](#)
This person must be specifically approved by the Headteacher to lead the activity.

To participate in water-based activities, participants should normally be water confident. Participants who lack water confidence may still be able to take part subject to consideration of all factors, including the activity itself and supervision arrangements. The level of water confidence of all participants must be known by the activity leader prior to the commencement of water-based activities.

Leaders should have knowledge of the water conditions/hazards (and potential changes) that might be encountered and prepare accordingly. Local advice must be sought where appropriate, e.g., coastguard, harbour master, other site users, etc.

Personal buoyancy conforming to the appropriate National Governing Body and/or relevant British Standard must always be worn by all participants in water-based activities, except, at the discretion of the activity leader, where the activity:

- a) takes place in a swimming pool, **or**
- b) is 'swimming', **or**
- c) is an activity for which personal buoyancy would not normally be worn by young people.

25 Open-country activities and expeditions

For the purposes of LA approval, 'open country' is normally defined as land above 300m, or more than 1km from vehicular access. However, this is an arbitrary boundary and there may be occasions where this definition is inappropriate. Please contact the LA if you think this might apply.

The responsibility for the safety of participants in the activity will rest with either:

- a) **An external provider** - see [Section 31](#)

Note: Whilst the responsibility for the safety of participants rests with the provider, the accompanying staff continue to retain a 'pastoral' duty of care.

or

- b) **a member of your school's staff** - see below

This person must be specifically approved by the Headteacher to lead the activity.

The following minimum levels of technical competence apply where a member of the school's own staff intends to lead an open-country activity:

- a) For leaders of walking groups outside the UK or Ireland:
- International Mountain Leader Award (IML) www.mltuk.org
- b) For leaders of walking groups in mountainous terrain within the UK and Ireland:
- Mountain Leader Award (ML) Summer or Winter as appropriate www.mltuk.org **or**
- A written statement of competence by an appropriate technical adviser –
see [Section 30](#)
- c) For leaders of walking groups in summer conditions in non-mountainous hilly terrain (Known variously as upland, moor, bog, hill, fell or down), with well-defined obvious boundaries, such as roads and coastlines, and where any hazards within it are identifiable and avoidable, and where wild camping or movement on steep ground is not involved:
- Hill & Moorland Leader Award (HMLA) www.mltuk.org **or**
- A written statement of competence by an appropriate technical adviser –
see [Section 30](#)
- d) For leaders of walking groups in terrain 'easier' than that defined in c)
The leader must demonstrate an appropriate level of competence. This may include one or more of the following:
– Countryside Leader Award (CLA) www.countrysideleaderaward.org
– Lowland Leader Award (LLA) www.mltuk.org

- Sports Leaders UK Level 3 Award in Basic Expedition Leadership (BEL) www.bst.org.uk
- Completion of a suitable 'Leader Training' Course.
- A written statement of competence by an appropriate technical adviser see [Section 30](#)
- Evidence of recent, relevant experience, appropriately corroborated.
- A written statement of competence by an appropriate technical adviser see [Section 30](#)
- Evidence of recent, relevant experience, appropriately corroborated.
- An assessment of competence (written or implied) by the Headteacher.

26 Snowsports

Snowsports (e.g., skiing and snowboarding) are regarded as adventurous activities, and the visit therefore requires LA approval.

There are advantages to Snowsports taking place during term time as opposed to during the school holiday period. These include greater choice generally, less queueing for lifts, less crowded slopes therefore less chance of collisions occurring, less crowded resort, higher possibility of 'sole use' of accommodation, lessons more likely to be conducted by permanent Snowsport school instructors (as opposed to 'casual' instructors), greater likelihood of English-speaking instructors, considerable cost savings through avoiding high season (possibly allowing more young people to participate), etc.

A member of staff intending to organise a Snowsport visit (but not instruct, lead or supervise on snow) must hold the Snowsport Course Organiser Award (SCO), administered by Snowsport England www.snowsportengland.org.uk and must have previously accompanied at least one educational Snowsports visit.

Young people may only participate in Snowsports when under the direction of an appropriately qualified and competent person. This would normally be an instructor employed by the local Snowsports school. Schools should therefore consider the merits of fully instructed lessons of 4/5 hours duration per day.

Helmets must be worn by all participants in Snowsport activities.

A member of staff intending to lead skiing or snowboarding (i.e., not using a ski school) must be qualified as below and have been approved by the Headteacher - see [Section 30](#)

Skiing: The minimum qualification to lead skiing on snow is:

- The Alpine Ski Course Leader Award (ASCL) www.snowsportengland.org.uk or
- The Alpine Ski Leader Award (ASL) www.snowsportscotland.org or
- A statement of competence by an appropriate 'technical adviser' - see [Section 30](#)
-

Snowboarding: The minimum qualification to lead snowboarding on snow is:

- The Snowboard Leader Award (SBL) administered www.snowsportscotland.org or
- A statement of competence by an appropriate 'technical adviser' - see [Section 30](#)

Pupils may only take part in off-piste activities if:

- a) under the direction of a suitably qualified local instructor, AND

- b) they will remain within the designated controlled areas, AND
- c) off-piste activities are specifically included within the visit insurance policy, AND
- d) a NOTE is added to EVOLVE in advance of the visit, confirming that the above criteria are/will be complied with.

Important: Owing to unacceptable liability waiver requirements, currently schools must be wary of accepting a waiver from many US ski resorts. If a visit to a US ski resort is being planned, please send a copy of any waiver to the LA for legal scrutiny.

Refer to National Guidance document 7.v [Snowsport visits](#)

27 Overseas Expeditions

Overseas Expeditions (for the purposes of this document) are defined as those which typically involve journeying in remote areas of the world and/or in developing countries.

Overseas Expeditions will only be approved by the local authority if the provider either:

- a) Holds an LOtC Quality Badge www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk
- b) Provides a statement of compliance with [Guidance for Overseas Expeditions, Edition 4](#)
- c) Is a member of an 'umbrella' body to which membership requires conformation with safety and quality standards equal to or exceeding the LOtC QB (e.g., British Activity Providers' Association, Expedition Providers' Association).

For providers that do not hold a LOtC Quality Badge, 'Guidance for Overseas Expeditions, Edn.4' should be referred to when the proposal is initiated. This document contains information for both schools and providers and includes a checklist of vital aspects that **must** be considered prior to the school making a commitment with an external provider. Overseas expedition providers are required to comply with the minimum standards specified in this document.

When planning an expedition and selecting a provider, schools should particularly consider the educational aims of the venture, that appropriate progression takes place, and that the requirements relating to 'Best Value' are met.

Refer to National Guidance document 7q [Overseas Expeditions](#)

28 Trampoline Parks

The Association for Physical Education (AfPE) holds the view that trampoline parks, if used during private, controlled sessions, can offer opportunities for younger students or those with additional needs to develop balance and coordination skills in line with curricular requirements. (Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport, and Physical Activity 2024; Pp 328).

UK providers of trampoline parks are increasingly leaving the International Association of Trampoline Parks' (IATP) and have established a UK trade association under AILA (Association of Indoor Leisure Activities). LOtC QB Inspections of trampoline parks now have a pre-requisite for the park to be members of AILA rather than IATP. Schools should fully consider the National Guidance document 6n [Visiting trampoline parks](#)

Trampoline parks are classified as an adventurous activity and should therefore be entered on EVOLVE. However, the final approval has been set at Head level upon confirmation of consideration of the above National Guidance document.

Please note that the above does not apply to trampoline clubs or centres which are registered with British Gymnastics. These activities are not classified as 'adventurous', and schools intending to visit these facilities should comply with current AfPE guidance.

29 Exchange visits and homestays

Exchange visits and homestays are of enormous benefit for experiencing different cultures and learning new languages. The Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022, Annex D) document states that if overseas students are billeted with UK host families where they are in effect embedded with those families and enjoy family activities and outings, for example during school holidays or at weekends, additional checks might be needed for those within that family over the age of 16, such as a DBS check on at least the titular 'head' of the family. If overseas students are merely staying with UK hosts overnight on a 'B&B' basis while attending school during the daytime, for instance, then a DBS is not normally required but the school must be satisfied that there are no safeguarding dangers. Establishments are required by law to undertake such precautions and seek whatever assurances they deem necessary before placing vulnerable people in the care of others. Such assurances might include, but are not limited to, interviewing host families; completing an application form; providing references; agreeing a contract with the host school. Often, if a family is already known to the school, and a bond of trust has developed over a period, then this could be sufficient. Refer to National Guidance sheet 7.1f 'Exchanges and Homestays'

Additional considerations:

Accommodation

- Has a Homestay Form been completed for where the students are staying?
- What facilities will they have access to?
- Has the accommodation been approved or checked?
- Will staff make *ad-hoc* visits?
- How will students be able to communicate with their own staff?
- Are appropriate security arrangements in place for their belongings?

Communication

- Are hosts aware of their roles & responsibilities?
- Do you ask for family profiles to be exchanged?
- Consider issues such as smoking, pets, religious beliefs, dietary requirements.

Emergencies

- Do students know what is expected of them and how they should behave?
- How will you get feedback on the exchange?
- Do students know who they can talk to if a problem arises (consider a code word or phrase)?
- Is everyone aware of emergency contact information including addresses and visit leader details?
- Do visit leaders have access to the completed medical consent forms?
- Do visit leaders know what the emergency procedures are in event of a major incident?
- Can students make an emergency call in the country and know what the currency values are?
-

Staff

- Do all staff know what is expected of them and their roles & responsibilities?
- Is there a need for certain staff to attend specific courses related to the exchange visit (e.g., child protection, first aid)?
- Do staff have appropriate licence/qualifications to drive in the host country?

30 Emergency Procedures

Schools should ensure that their Health and Safety policy includes off-site visits.

Staff involved in a visit must be aware of and adhere to their school's policy on emergency procedures and the RBWM emergency assistance procedure.

In the event of an emergency, schools should use a reliable means of recording events and information.

For visits that take place outside normal school hours:

- A completed [Emergency Card – Visit Leader](#) (or equivalent) must be always with the Visit Leader, **and**
- A completed [Emergency Card – Home Contacts](#) (or equivalent) must be always with the school's Emergency Contact.

In an emergency, if it is not possible to reach any of the designated school emergency contacts, the leader should call the local authority 24 hour emergency Duty Officer number - see [Contacts](#)

Refer to National Guidance Documents: 4.1i [Emergencies and critical incidents](#)

4.1b [Emergencies – The school's role](#)

4.1c [Emergencies – Guidance for leaders](#)

31 Approval of staff to lead an adventurous activity.

Procedure for obtaining permission to lead an adventurous activity.

Staff who wish to lead (i.e. supervise or instruct) an adventurous activity, as defined in [Section 22](#), should first upload details and scanned copies of all relevant qualifications (e.g. instructor certificates, first aid, etc.) and send to the Outdoor Education Advisor paul.bowen@achievingforchildren.org.uk.

The visit leader should complete the Visit Forms as usual.

On receipt of a Visit Form the Headteacher should view the proposed activity in the context of the leader's competencies and qualifications. If the Headteacher does not have the competence to make this judgement, then he/she should enlist the help of the Outdoor Education Advisor.

Criteria for approval

Approval should normally be granted where the leader of the activity has recent relevant experience, and:

- is appropriately qualified through the relevant National Governing Body, **or**
- has a 'Statement of Competence' from an appropriate 'technical adviser' – see below.

In some cases, approval may be granted where no qualification is held, but the person concerned is deemed to have a sufficient level of competence in addition to recent relevant experience.

In cases where no National Governing Body exists, the decision should be based on factors which may include technical advice, the leader's stated competence, observed competence, experience, and attendance at training courses.

Approval should always be subject to a requirement that the leader must always act within the remit of his/her qualifications, and in accordance with National Governing Body Guidelines where these exist.

Technical Adviser

For further clarification regarding a technical adviser see National Guidance document 6h [Adventure Activity Qualifications](#)

For most activities the competence required of a technical adviser is stipulated by the activity's National Governing Body.

32 Using an External Provider

An 'External Provider' is defined as where there is an element of instruction, staffing, or guiding, for example:

- Activity Centre
- Ski Company
- Educational Tour Operator
- Overseas Expedition Provider
- Climbing Wall where instruction is provided by climbing wall staff
- Freelance instructor of adventurous activities
- Youth Hostel (where instruction is provided)
- Voluntary organisation (e.g., Scout Association), where instruction is provided

For the purposes of this guidance, an External Provider is NOT a:

- Youth Hostel (where accommodation only is used)
- Hotel, B&B, Airbnb etc.
- Campsite
- Museum, gallery, etc.
- Tourist attraction
- Theme Park
- Farm
- Coach, Train, or Airline company
- Swimming Pool
- Climbing Wall where instruction is provided by a member of your school's staff with an approved Activity Leader Form (ALF) ([Section 30](#) applies)
- 'Volunteer' instructor of adventurous activities (see below)

The decision about the use of an external provider is the responsibility of the visit leader, EVC, and Headteacher. The LA does not maintain a list of 'approved' external providers or tour operators.

Schools should consider the requirements under 'best value' when selecting an external provider.

To confirm that all aspects of the operation of the provider are satisfactory, the school must ensure that either:

- a) The Provider holds a LOtC Quality Badge www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk or www.kaddi.com

or

- b) A 'Provider Form' has been satisfactorily completed by the provider.

Note: If a Provider holds an [AALA licence](#) (and/or any other accreditation) but not an LOtC Quality Badge, then a Provider Form may still be required.

33 Advice to establishments regarding terrorist activity.

In most circumstances, school groups are unlikely to be specifically targeted by terrorists, but they could easily become caught in post-incident disruption following an incident. Since not at greater risk than the general UK population per se, our advice for school and student groups is therefore practical and logistical. Much of our advice should be included in risk assessments and ultimately, a decision needs to be made on whether to go ahead with the trip or not as altering plans is the only way to guarantee safety. It would be a shame if the threat of international terrorism prevented school and student travel, so a sensible calculated balanced decision needs to be made. We hope that this article will help schools make such assessments. This article will help those responsible for making these difficult decisions, either as a tour operator or as a school Head Teacher.

Further advice is available in the RBWM Evolve 'resources' section [EVOLVE - Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead](#) or a National Guidance www.oeapng.info search for advice sheet 4.4e 'Terrorism' and 6k 'Visits and the Threat from Terrorism'. Additionally, the Association for Advisors of Outdoor Learning & Educational Visits (AAOLEV) National Guidance sheet 7.2K 'Group Safety in Crowded Places' may also be useful.

Useful Contacts

Outdoor Education Adviser

Paul Bowen

Paul.bowen@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Tel: 07968 832367

Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) 24-hour Emergency Control Room

Tel: 01753 853517

Kaddi Provider Database

www.kaddi.com

AAOLEV National Guidance

www.oeapng.info

National Library

www.national-library.info

LOtC Quality Badge

www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

www.lotc.org.uk