Outdoor Learning and Educational Visits Policy

Written by	Claire Gillick
Ratified by Governors	Summer 2026
Date for Review	Summer 2029
Signed – Chair of Governors	
Signed – Headteacher	
Is this an internal or external policy?	External
Is this based on a model policy	Yes - Policy written by KCC Outdoor Learning Team

This policy has been impact assessed by Sue Buxton in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality

Introduction:

At Woodlands Primary School, we recognise the value of outdoor learning and educational visits or trips. Visits are widely recognised as an important tool for supporting the education and development of children and young people, providing direct curriculum-linked activities to improve learning, skills, understanding and activity opportunities to enhance PE and extra-curricular activities. They also provide a wide range of personal development opportunities to support the development of real-life skills.

At Woodlands Primary school, we are committed to enriching the curriculum through outdoor learning and educational visits. We believe everyone should have the opportunity to access places and venues, which provide them with knowledge and understanding of our community and environment. Trips are planned annually in year groups and visits aim to include a wide range of establishments, venues and activities which broadly link to the children's learning. Woodlands Primary school ensures that these trips are inclusive to all children.

"Learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development."
Ofsted – 'Learning Outside of the Classroom' report

"It has long been acknowledged that pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their schools. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom.
Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits – Department for Education and Skills, 1998

"Outdoor learning supports academic achievement, for example through fieldwork projects, as well as the development of 'soft' skills and social skills, particularly in hard to reach children. It can take place on school trips, on visits in the local community or in the school grounds.
House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, February 2005

Aims and Objectives:

Woodlands Primary School has a clear and robust system, policy and procedures in place for the planning, safe management and monitoring of educational visits and activities. The Headteacher and Governors are committed to establishing and implementing arrangements that will ensure:

- Visits and activities are planned to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and volunteer helpers - with appropriate risk management and assessments that are specific to the needs of the group, individuals, the planned activity, the location and the environment. This includes any significant risk assessment information being shared with all adults and children on the visit as appropriate.
- Visits and activities are planned with clear educational aims and objectives, based on pupils' needs and abilities, to support high quality learning outcomes. At Woodlands Primary School, these visits and activities link to the curriculum. They provide real life experiences, which enhance and enrich the children's learning and provide opportunities to support the development of real-life skills.
- All trips are reviewed and evaluated on the EVOLVE system in relation to aims and future planning. For outdoor, residential and adventurous activities, this will take place in the form of a meeting following the trip.

Risk Management:

Visits are planned to ensure the safety of pupils and young people, including appropriate risk management and assessment that is specific to the needs of the pupils, the planned activity and the location and environment.

Risk assessments are undertaken for all off-site visits and outdoor activities. Forest school activities have individual risk assessment and are recorded in a specific folder. Children's initials are used on all risk assessments with Special Educational Needs and Disability needs (SEND) / behaviour needs / medical conditions which are only shared with school staff. We share the risks assessments with volunteers without identifying any specific children. Risk assessments are also undertaken for the transport of children from school to the venue and back. Risk assessments for individuals are usually held on the one central document but there may be a need for a separate risk assessment. The Inclusion Manager will make this decision in liaison with the class teacher and parent.

Emergency and serious incident procedures are in place to manage accidents, incidents and safeguarding issues, and visit information can be easily accessed by all those who need it in an emergency situation (this may be overnight or during holiday periods). All teachers have a school phone and numbers for emergencies. All staff and volunteers involved with visits receive appropriate training and briefings on dealing with emergencies. Qualified first aiders accompany each class and systems are in place for incidents and accident reporting. DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads) are available by phone on all trips and overnight residential trips.

The management of overall visit and activity planning, risk assessment and the visit approval process is carried out by a competent staff member with appropriate experience and training - the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC). At Woodlands Primary School, this is the School Business Manager, supported by the admin assistant. Our EVC has attended EVC training courses and will attend an EVC update at least every three years.. Residential trips are overseen by the Outdoor Educational Team through the EVOLVE system (online planning tool), Headteacher and Governors.

The full governing body review the policy, in line with the policy schedule, or before, if required.

Visits and activities are planned and led by phase group leads who are competent members of the school community in conjunction with venue / establishment staff, who hold appropriate qualifications and experience as required by the activities.

All school staff are trained for their roles in leading and accompanying educational visits and activities.

Appropriate technical expertise is sought in relation to the planning and management of more hazardous or adventurous activities, including the verification of activity leader qualifications, safe activity management and ratios.

External providers used to provide services and support, are checked to ensure they are suitable for use on educational visits, meeting nationally accepted standards and legal adventurous activity requirements (e.g., Adventurous Activities Licence) where appropriate.

Activities such as swimming, crossing roads and curricular partnerships with other schools are examples of these site-specific risk assessments where the same venue is used each week and barring any changes to the nature of that venue, our prime concern on a weekly basis is the risk presented by the group of pupils undertaking the visit. For all 'one-off' trips, a specific risk assessment is required.

Written consent is obtained from parents / guardians / carers for all trips. Specific medical consent, informed activity and instructions are obtained from parents / guardians / carers as appropriate for the type of visit or activity. All parents / guardians / carers are given enough information to be 'fully informed' about all educational visit activity plans.

Relevant medical information and details of other issues such as behaviour, special needs and dietary requirements are obtained from parents / guardians / carers and are available to visit leaders and accompanying school or establishment staff. Specific risk assessments are undertaken where necessary for individual children in conjunction with parents / guardians / carers. Parents may be asked to accompany their child as one way of making 'reasonable adjustments' to support those with a recognised need, although they do not have to agree. Other adjustments will be considered alongside this. See appendix A for additional information on Inclusion. The EVC will ensure the level of first aid provision needed for each trip. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines for first aid equipment are followed to ensure appropriate provision.

The trip leader should have a PLAN B in the event of the planned agenda needing to change. This is recorded on the risk assessment and all parties should be aware.

The Headteacher ensures that in the event of a major incident or accident, Local Authority guidelines are adhered to in terms of informing parents, staff and the media to ensure that serious incidents, accidents and near-accidents are investigated.

Staffing Ratios:

Accompanied visits must always be in the overall charge of a teacher known as a Trip Leader. All other staff and volunteers are required to follow the instructions that are given by the Trip Leader. Other people who the Headteacher considers responsible adults will provide additional help. These will usually be members of staff, other adults who have been Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked or parents who are well known to the school. The EVC must ensure that, as a minimum, there are never less than two responsible adults with any group, one of whom must be a member of staff / or other responsible and DBS checked adult designated by the EVC. In addition, it is desirable that an adult of each sex accompany mixed groups of pupils whenever possible. In considering the staffing needs for large groups of pupils, the following ratios of responsible adults to pupils are applied:

Year R	1:4
Years 1 – 3	1:6
Years 4 – 6	1:10

Where there is regard to high level of SEND or behaviour concerns, a ratio of 1:1 may be judged to be necessary by the Headteacher/Inclusion Manager in consultation with the class teacher.

EVOLVE:

From 1 September 2017, all maintained schools and establishments were given the responsibility for approving their own educational visits and activities, including residential and adventurous activities. Kent County Council (KCC) provides all schools with a Kent Framework for Safe Practice on Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Activities to support and guide schools in the safe planning and management of outdoor learning activities and educational visits.

The EVOLVE system provides a tool for Headteachers and EVCs to use day-to-day to reduce the workload and administration of visit management. The system provides a comprehensive tool to evidence good planning and practice on educational visits and activities, covering all aspects of visit management from staffing to risk management in an online tool, as well as for reporting on and

evaluation of visits. KCC monitor compliance with the scheme of delegation and adherence to the Kent Framework for Safe Practice on Educational Visits and Outdoor Learning Activities.

The school uses the KCC EVOLVE site to record all trips and off-site visits. All information is held securely on this site in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulations.

Appropriate expertise through the EVOLVE and Outdoor Learning T team is sought in relation to the planning and management of more hazardous or adventurous activities, including the verification of activity leader qualifications, safe activity management, appropriate ratios etc. At Woodlands Primary School, the residential visits are planned by the school staff and advice/approval is sort from the EVOLVE team.

External providers on the EVOLVE system used to provide services and support, have been appropriately checked to ensure they are suitable for use on educational visits e.g. meeting nationally accepted standards and legal adventurous activity requirements (e.g. Adventurous Activities Licence), have appropriate financial protections in place (e.g. ATOL) as appropriate; and hold an appropriate level of Public Liability Insurance for the activities or services provided. At Woodlands Primary School, venues are checked and approved by the EVOLVE team and the school.

Information and documents relating to educational visits are appropriately stored and retained, in line with GDPR and document retention requirements, to support incident management and potential investigations / court proceedings after serious incidents and accidents. Information and documents are held on the EVOLVE system and in secure folders in school. Individual class teachers on the trip itself have access to all contact and medical details for pupils via Arbor on the school mobile phone. Information for staff will be held by the school office and shared with trip leaders on request. Staff and adult volunteers should ensure the trip lead knows of any significant medical information that may be required on the trip e.g. allergies.

The EVC formally approves all visits and activities. The school uses the EVOLVE system to record all trips. Residential trips are approved by the EVOLVE team, Headteacher and school governors.

Appropriate monitoring and evaluation of visits and activities takes place, to ensure quality and safety, visit aims and to aid future planning. The EVC is informed of any specific issues affecting future visits, venues and transport of the group.

Full training is given on the use of the EVOLVE service and visit management. The Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) formally approves all visits and activities. The KCC outdoor education team and the headteacher approve residential trips. KCC retains its legal health and safety responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act as the ultimate employer of staff.

Voluntary Contributions:

The basic principle underlying the charging provisions of the 1988 Education Reform Act is that education provided by any maintained school for its registered pupils should be free of charge if it takes place wholly or mainly during school hours.

There is also the principle that an educational visit mainly outside the school day should be free of charge if it contributes to the delivery of the National Curriculum.

Charges may be made for residential accommodation.

Visits that are non-educational should not take place during school time, denying access to full programmes of study. All visits during the school day should therefore be deemed educational.

Voluntary contributions can be requested for any educational visit that takes place during the school day; however, a pupil cannot be prevented from taking part in the visit based on a family not making any or sufficient contribution.

Where the visit is non-educational, the charge cannot exceed the actual costs to be incurred. Costs can be calculated against transport, board and lodging, admission costs, costs of appropriate non-teaching staff, incidental costs of staff, materials and equipment and insurance costs.

Accounts related to off-site activities are kept on the EVOLVE system and checked by the School Business Manager.

Voluntary Help:

The use of voluntary helpers should only be permitted by the Headteacher or EVC. This permission will be based upon knowledge of the volunteers and their previous experience and training (on the job). The fact that help is voluntary does not negate the legal responsibility of those involved.

It is the aim of the Governing Body that DBS checks are carried out by the office on all volunteer helpers – hence much advance notice is needed and those intending to use voluntary help should liaise with the EVC as early as possible in the planning phase. Where insufficient numbers of volunteers have been DBS-checked, the trip leader will be made aware of the individuals that are not checked and ensure that they are accompanied with checked individuals.

All volunteer helpers have the same responsibility to follow the instructions of the trip leader.

Transport:

Hired transport – The school should ensure appropriate levels of supervisory staff are available to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils. The driver of the coach has no responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of the pupils.

Public transport – Close supervision should be ensured.

Use of private cars – Staff must ensure they have appropriate insurance cover for conveying pupils during the course of their professional duties. Parents must be informed if private transport is used. Parents volunteering to provide transport in their cars will be asked to certify (a) that they have fully comprehensive insurance (b) that their vehicle is in a roadworthy condition and (c) that they have a valid driving licence. The school will not reimburse parents/staff for the use of their cars. Unless agreed otherwise with the EVC, there should always be two adults in each vehicle.

On occasions when more than one coach is used to transport a class of children, the trip leader will travel on one coach and will delegate overall responsibility for the children on the other coach to another employee of the school, until at the destination. Consideration should also be given to the personality, behaviour and SEND of the children involved.

When travelling by coach or minibus, adults should space themselves evenly throughout the vehicle to ensure adequate supervision at all times.

Children should not travel in the front seat of vehicles, and a check should be made beforehand whether ‘booster seats’ are needed. There are school booster seats available.

Emergency Procedure:

1. In an emergency, the emergency services should be contacted if needed.
2. The children should be evacuated to a safe area.
3. The trip leader should ensure that all members of the party, adults and children are accounted for.
4. The trip leader should telephone the school's designated person, usually the Headteacher, and arrange to keep them regularly informed.
5. The designated person will inform KCC and the Chair of Governors.
6. The designated person will contact parents and other named persons as appropriate. Adult helpers should be told not to make contact by mobile phone to avoid misinformation and rumour.

Documents:

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety-guidance/health-and-safety-policies

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/27918/DfEE-First-aid-guidance-for-schools.pdf

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/Curriculum/outdoor-learning

Appendix A – Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel National Guidance

Inclusion – 3.2e (Feb 2023)
The Equality Act 2010 defines several protected characteristics: disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and being on maternity leave; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. It is illegal to discriminate against someone because of these characteristics, and an employer or establishment must make reasonable adjustments to its facilities or services to include them.

Outdoor learning and off-site visits should be available and accessible to all, irrespective of any special educational or medical needs or protected characteristics. The principles of inclusion and equality should be promoted and addressed in policy and practice, ensuring:
• an entitlement to participate;
• accessibility through adaptation or modification, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services;
• integration through participation with peers.

When you plan a visit or activity for a group, such as for a school year-group or youth group, you must take reasonably practicable measures to include every member of the group. You must make reasonable efforts to find a venue and activities that are suitable and accessible, and to make arrangements that enable the whole group to participate fully and to gain the benefits.

You should take care not to cause indirect discrimination. For example, arranging a residential visit during a religious festival or holiday might prevent people of certain

religions being able to participate.

In making decisions, you may have to balance the aim of providing the best possible outcomes for the whole group with the aim of meeting the particular needs of an individual. Sometimes, perhaps because of a severe disability, it may be genuinely impossible to either find reasonable adjustments which could enable someone to be included in a particular visit or activity, or to find a suitable alternative visit or activity for the whole group. In this case, it is not necessary to deprive the rest of the group of a worthwhile opportunity, but you must be able to demonstrate that what happened was for a reason other than unfair discrimination.

Any adjustments that are made to include an individual should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity. For example, it may not be appropriate for a parent to accompany a child on a residential visit where a planned outcome of the visit is developing independence. However, you may be able to find a different activity which will achieve the same purpose, and which is accessible to all.

Clothing, Head Coverings etc.
Sometimes clothing or head coverings worn for religious or cultural reasons might be inappropriate for certain activities. For example, certain hair styles or a turban may make it difficult to wear a helmet, or a long burka or skirt may make it difficult to wear a harness or to take part in some physical activities.
In addition, some activities might require a participant to wear clothing that causes concern, or might cause concern for other reasons. For example:
• some women or girls might be concerned about wearing a figure-hugging wetsuit;
• there may be sensitivities about a participant being touched by a leader, such as when adjusting a harness or being supported during an activity.
Such matters should be approached with sensitivity and an intention to understand concerns and to find mutually acceptable solutions. For example, a loose-fitting anorak could be worn over a wetsuit, or participants could be paired up to help each other to adjust their harnesses.

If the risk assessment for an activity concludes that particular protective equipment or clothing is necessary, then this must be applied to all participants in that activity. However, sometimes there are other ways of mitigating a risk, and care should be taken that the risk assessment considers these. For example, there are other ways of preventing head injury than wearing a helmet.
Employers and establishments should take care that their policies do not include inflexible blanket requirements, such as for the wearing of helmets, unless their risk assessments show that they are necessary.

Exclusion
A decision to exclude someone should not be taken lightly, and only after consultation with those who have responsibility for them or are involved, such as the headteacher/manager, visit leader, class teacher, SENCO, parents, support staff, any third-party provider, GP or social worker.
If you exclude someone from a visit or activity for good reasons, you should consider providing them with a suitable alternative. You should also consider the impact of exclusion on them, and the wider implications such as on attitudes and relationships across the establishment.

Exclusion for Behaviour

Behaviour is not one of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act. It may therefore be acceptable to exclude someone from an activity or visit if their potential behaviour presents a significant, unmanageable and unacceptable risk to the health, safety or welfare of either themselves or others, or to the successful completion of the activity or visit. However, if the behaviour is associated with a protected characteristic, great care should be taken to ensure that unfair or illegal discrimination does not take place.

Where there is some doubt about including or excluding someone on the grounds of their behaviour, you should consider:

- addressing the issue at the earliest stage of planning;
- involving all interested parties;
- establishing a behaviour management plan with agreed action points that may enable inclusion on the visit;
- establishing behaviour targets and timescales to be met to either allow inclusion or trigger a decision to exclude;
- providing an additional adult, such as a parent or support worker, with a specific brief to manage behaviour issues;
- ensuring that what is expected of staff is reasonable and within their competence;
- recording this process.

If someone is excluded because of their behaviour, alternative ways of achieving the same learning outcomes should be considered. Because outdoor learning and off-site visits are enjoyable, it can be tempting to use exclusion from them as a punishment for behaviour not connected to them.

However, this could give the wrong message about the educational worth of such activities. For example, if a school would not exclude pupils from an indoor maths lesson as a punishment for misbehaviour elsewhere, to exclude them from a visit as a punishment could suggest that the visit is less important but more enjoyable than the maths lesson.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (4.4i October 2022)

Principles

All young people have an equal right to be included in outdoor learning and offsite visits. Establishments must therefore plan to enable young people with special needs and disabilities to participate.

Understanding the needs and abilities of the group is a foundation for visit planning.

Planning and Preparation

You should consider, well in advance, the needs and abilities of potential participants and plan visits accordingly. You must make reasonable adjustments so that all can benefit from the experiences being offered.

Where an establishment has a coordinator for special educational needs and disability (SENCO), they should be involved in future planning at an early stage.

Planning of visits that have a long lead-in time may have to begin with no knowledge of who will participate. In such cases you should consider the possibility that there might be potential participants with special educational needs or disabilities. In selecting venues, you should consider their accessibility for disabled young people as well as their suitability for the visit aims.

Where an establishment offers options from which participants can choose, for example during an Activity Week, initial planning should assume that those with special educational needs or disabilities might wish to participate across the whole range of activities. You should ask students to indicate their preferences well in advance, so that detailed planning can take them into account.
Transition planning should mean that the needs of young people moving between establishments are known.

In some cases, it may genuinely not be possible to find ways of including particular participants without significantly compromising the intended outcomes for others. In these cases, it may be necessary to plan alternative but equally valuable 'parallel' activities. However, the social and developmental benefits of a group altering their plans and ambitions to include a disabled colleague may often outweigh any loss of other benefits.

Decisions about how best a young person with a special educational need or disability can participate in an activity or visit may require discussion with a wide range of people, such as head teacher/manager, visit leader, outdoor education adviser, class teacher, parent, SENCO, social worker, carers, support staff, their GP and any third-party provider. These discussions should take place well before the visit plan is finalised. This is especially important when considering including or excluding a young person with serious behavioural issues or disabilities.

You should always inform parents well in advance of a visit taking place, to ensure that any needs can be accommodated. Parents will also be able to offer advice on how a young person is likely to respond during a visit.
Where a young person is the subject of an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, or other care plan or risk assessment, this should be used to inform the plan for the visit.

All staff involved in any visit should be fully briefed about the needs and disabilities of participants, ensuring that they understand their assigned roles and, in particular, who will be supervising those participants who are vulnerable or, for example, likely to abscond, display challenging behaviour, or have an epileptic seizure.

You should make enquiries at an early stage about wheelchair access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at venues to be visited, if necessary. If ramps are not available in certain places, you may need to arrange to take portable ramps with you.

A preliminary visit will reduce the likelihood of unforeseen problems, provide familiarity with the site and disabled access where needed, and help create confidence about the supervision arrangements before the visit goes ahead.
Where a participant requires medication during a visit, see OEAP National Guidance

document 4.4d “Medication”. You should check whether your insurance policy covers any pre-existing medical conditions.

Staffing and Supervision

Supporting participants with special needs or disabilities on visits may require additional staffing to provide effective supervision. For supervision to be effective, staff should be experienced in dealing with the needs of the participants involved. All staff should be given the opportunity to talk through any concerns they may have about their ability to support participants with special needs or disabilities. Extra help should be requested, if necessary, for example by involving a care assistant.

The following factors should be considered when determining staffing requirements:

- The need to administer medication;
- The need for support with toileting;
- Any heightened likelihood of a participant absconding;
- The likelihood of a medical emergency arising;
- The way in which being away from the normal setting will affect behaviour (for example, some young people have unpredictable fears and phobias that will be more difficult to cope with out of their normal environment);
- The risk of violence or assault, and therefore the need for skills in de-escalation and positive handling;
- The need for manual handling of participants, and whether staff require training in this;
- The need for flexibility for staff working on a 1:1 basis to take a break;
- Where a member of staff is needed to supervise or care for an individual participant, they should not be considered to be part of the overall staffing ratio, as their role will be focused on their charge’s wellbeing, not on the wider supervision needs of the group;
- If a member of staff is driving a minibus, they will not be able to supervise passengers, nor deal with any emergencies – if participants need supervision while travelling, you should ensure that sufficient staff are available.

Costs

You must not pass on any additional costs of the necessary adjustments, such as additional staff, to the participants who require it or to their parents, but the costs may be shared by the whole group through the visit funding arrangements (fees, voluntary contributions, establishment funds etc.).

Document History	
Date	**Summary of changes**
Autumn 2018	Document created
Spring 2021	Updated with an amalgamation of the latest KCC model policy and more detail added. Change in S Buxton’s job status and adding Diane Dale as EVC.
Summer 2023	Additions to SEND/needs risk assessments section and addition of appendix A. Roles rather than names for EVC.
Summer 2026	Updated front sheet and changes to use of Arbor for pupil information.