

The Rydal Academy Educational Visits Policy

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Approving Body: Local Governing Body

Committee: LGB

Review Cycle: 2 years

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Date for next review: July 2025

Introduction

Off-site visits are activities arranged by or on behalf of the school which take place outside the school grounds. The governors and teaching staff believe that off-site activities supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences, which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our pupils' learning experiences. Off-site activities may also be used as an effective method of rewarding achievement.

In this policy we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of pupils at all times. Within these limits we seek to make our visits available to all pupils, and wherever possible to make them accessible to those with disabilities. The visits usually take place within the school day although some may extend to evenings and residential visits.

All visits will comply with the Health & Safety advice provided by the Department for Education and Outdoor Education Advisor Panel guidance.

Aims

The aims of our off-site visits are to:

- enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils.
- provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone.
- promote the independence of our pupils as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments.
- encourage pupils to learn new life skills and be active in the local community

Residential activities

Residential visits enable pupils to explore curriculum subjects on a much deeper level and give the opportunity to learn in a more diverse manner. Residential visits must be planned well in advance and be subject to more detailed risk assessments.

Regular Visits

Swimming Lessons will not be entered on EVOLVE. A risk assessment for swimming lessons will be completed that applies for the whole year.

Local Area Visits

A local area visit form will be completed on EVOLVE by the visit leaders for after school sports fixtures to local venues, sports events to local venues and visits to local establishments within Darlington e.g. library, town centre, supermarket. Standard school risk assessments for these trips will be completed by the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC), Mrs L Peoples, and kept within school. Staff leading these trips should familiarise themselves with the school risk assessments.

How visits are planned and approved

The school has appointed an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC), Mrs L Peoples, Assistant Headteacher, who will be involved in the planning and management of off-site visits. Advice on risk assessment or other health & safety issues is also available from Mrs S Jones, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Operations & Business Manager.

The Educational Visits Coordinator will:

- check that staff leading visits have the required qualifications to lead specific activities;
- ensure that risk assessments are completed and suitable;
- organise staff training and make sure new staff understand the visits approval process,
- ensure that educational visits have regard to safeguarding and the requirements for DBS checks on accompanying adults. Where occasional accompanying adults are not left in sole charge of pupils a DBS check may not be required. This will be at the discretion of the EVC and Headteacher.
- make sure that all necessary permissions and medical forms are obtained by the Visit Leader and Admin Office;
- approve visits on the EVOLVE system.

The Headteacher will give final approval for Residential, Overseas and Adventurous Activities. Approval for all other visits is delegated to the EVC.

The Trust Business Manager will audit the management of Educational Visits annually.

Visit leaders and staff arranging or otherwise involved in off-site activities must follow the procedures adopted by the school for the managing and approving of educational visits.

Visit leaders will:

- ensure all off site activities take place in accordance with the School's procedures;
- ensure sufficient staff and helpers of the right experience are DBS checked and briefed throughout the visit;
- conduct risk assessments and ensure management to reduce risks including site specific, generic and dynamic risk assessments are undertaken and recorded;
- ensure emergency procedures and systems for recording and sharing information on accidents and near misses are in place and accidents are recorded and reported;
- will, where possible, undertake exploratory visits or seek references from other schools if using new venues;
- ensure appropriate transport arrangements are in place i.e. reputable coach company, driver insurance, following specific School and legal requirements;

- ensure that consents and medical information has been obtained;
- feedback any learning points from visits to the EVC.
- Complete the approval process on EVOLVE.

The school office will support visit leaders with the administration involved, for example checking consent forms and obtaining DBS checks.

The School Admin Office will also support Educational Visits by:

- verify that all private car drivers, have had satisfactory Disclose and Barring Service Criminal checks and hold adequate vehicle insurance;
- arranging for DBS checks on volunteers where required;
- support visit leaders in ensuring commercial providers are appropriately checked and insured;
- ensure that financial procedures are followed;
- Collecting consent forms when pupils join the school and checking these.

Where staff, are proposing to arrange an off-site activity, they must seek and obtain approval from Phase Leaders before making any commitments or making bookings.

It is our policy that all pupils should be able to participate in educational visits. Where a pupil with a disability is eligible for a trip, we will make every effort to ensure that s/he is included. We may seek guidance from parents to help us adapt our programme, and we will make any reasonable adjustments to our itinerary to include a pupil with disabilities. Any such adjustments will be included in the risk assessment.

Staff and other adults assigned to participate in an Educational Visit should be appropriately briefed on their responsibilities prior to the visit taking place.

The EVC and Visit Leader must ensure that staff and adults have received appropriate training and have been informed of their responsibilities including details of the plan visit, risk assessment and the actions to take in event of an emergency.

Staff and other adults must ensure they make themselves familiar with the visit plans, risk assessments and any other health and safety arrangements prior to the commencement of the visit. They must also ensure that they report any issues of concern to the Visit Leader immediately.

Staff and other adults supporting Educational Visits are required to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner at all times and ensure they observe standards of behaviour consistent with school policy and the Code of Conduct.

During all visits, including overnight stays, staff and adults remain responsible for pupils at all times and should have regard to their fitness to undertake their duties at any time of the day or night. Staff and adults should give careful consideration to participating in activities which may compromise their ability to undertake their duties. Staff and adults should not consume alcohol.

Parental Permission / Indemnity Forms

The Rydal Academy obtains a consent form when a pupil joins the school and these are valid until a pupil leaves the school. These are located in the admin office and Visit Leaders should ask admin staff to check that children's parents have completed these for each child they are proposing to take on a visit.

All residential visits require further written parental permission and the Visit Leader must ensure that additional indemnity forms and medical information is completed and returned.

Risk assessment

Risk assessment is part of the planning for all visits, although the use of generic risk assessments for common trips can make this process easier and provide a template for a particular trips risk assessment.

Generic risk assessments should be reviewed by the Visit Leader and amended as required. Risks and control measures that are not relevant should be deleted and the risk assessment uploaded onto EVOLVE.

Where possible, staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment. Venues providing instructor-led activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments should be considered to ascertain if they are of an appropriate standard and meet the expectations of The Rydal Academy. Where a preliminary visit has not been possible, other methods must be used to ascertain the suitability of a venue. The cost of preliminary visits should be included in the overall budget for the visit.

The staff to pupil ratio for each visit will be based on a risk assessment to determine the supervision needs for the particular group. This should be based on the specific needs of the pupils, environment to be visited, the activities to be undertaken, the distance from school and the experience of the supervising adults. Most trips will require a minimum of two adults.

Residential visits where the group includes both male and female pupils these should ideally be accompanied by both male and female members of staff. It is however acceptable for the visit to be accompanied by only female staff.

The Visit Leader will double-check that all regular volunteers helping to supervise the trip have been subject to satisfactory Disclose and Barring Service Criminal checks. Those volunteers used for one off activities, who are not left alone at any time (out of sight/ear shot of a member of staff) to supervise pupils, do not necessarily need Disclose and Barring Service Criminal checks completing. The Headteacher's and EVC's discretion under these circumstances should be used.

For pupils with significant additional needs, an individual risk assessment to raise awareness of possible hazards and control measures that may not have been previously considered.

It is important that the risk assessment is communicated and understood by everyone involved in the trip (staff, volunteers, pupils and parents) before it takes place. This includes risks, control measures, emergency arrangements and contingency plans.

Dynamic risk assessments may be required during the visit if there are changes in circumstances e.g. weather, illness or an unforeseen hazard.

Any accidents that occur to employees, volunteers or pupils during the visit must be investigated and recorded following normal School Accident Reporting procedures.

Transport

When hiring coaches and minibuses, it is our policy only to use reputable companies with vehicles fitted with appropriate child restraints (seat belts), and to insist that all those participating in the visit wear them.

The school has access to minibuses, although only staff with the D1 category on their license are entitled to drive them.

Where private cars are used the School Office will keep records of insurance.

Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party and appropriate child restraints will be used, whether travelling by car, minibus or coach.

Costs

The costing of off-site activities should include any of the following that apply:

- transport;
- entrance fees;
- insurance;
- provision of any special resources or equipment;
- costs related to adult helpers;
- any refreshments the school has opted to pay for.

Where the school makes a charge to parents or requests voluntary contributions these will be according to the published Charging and Remissions Policy.

The school may use pupil premium funding to reduce or remove the cost to parents for educational visits.

Communication with parents

The parents of pupils taking part in an off-site activity should be provided with all appropriate information about the intended visit to make an informed decision on their child's participation.

Parents must give their written permission, medical and contact details, before a pupil can be involved in any off-site activities. This will usually take the form of the indemnity form completed when a pupil joined the school. In most cases further written consent will not be required.

If the visit will require funding from parents this will be made clear to parents at the planning stage.

No pupil should be automatically excluded from an activity because of the inability of the parent to make a contribution.

The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the Headteacher to make a decision about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

Where appropriate for residential, foreign or adventure activity visits, meetings with parents will be arranged.

Expectations of behaviour and codes of conduct will be explained to parents. This will include the need to meet the cost and make arrangements for collecting pupils in certain circumstances.

Pupils

Pupils should be briefed about aims, expectations and codes of conduct for all visits. Ongoing briefings are an important part of learning and safety.

Where possible pupils should be involved with planning, developing codes of conduct, assessing/managing risk and evaluating their own attitude, behaviour, development and learning.

If a pupil is not permitted to attend an educational visit, this will be following a behaviour risk assessment by staff, agreed by the Phase Leader or Head Teacher and parents will be informed in advance. Any pupils that do not attend an educational visit for any reason will still have access to all areas of the curriculum.

First Aid

A member of staff with basic first aid knowledge and training should accompany each visit.

Visits including Early Years children will always have at least one member of staff with current paediatric first aid knowledge and training.

A first aid kit should be taken on each visit and be always reasonably accessible to the group.

Further health and safety considerations

All adults accompanying a party must be made aware, by the Visit Leader, of the emergency procedures, that will apply. Each adult should be provided with an emergency telephone number. This will normally be the school number, but where an activity extends beyond the normal school day the home telephone number of a designated emergency contact should be provided.

Before a group leaves school the school office should be informed of the individuals, pupils and adults, travelling with the group. Visit leaders must ensure that registers are completed before departure and the school office know the expected time of return.

The safety of the group, and especially the pupils, is of paramount importance. During the activity the Visit Leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure their safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that pupils are both safe and well looked after at all times.

Head counts should be taken at regular intervals during the visit. This must be the case before moving between venues or boarding the transport back to school.

Prior and during an activity on the visit, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual pupil is likely to compromise the safety of others or the good name of the school, the Visit Leader can, if needed, exclude a pupil from the activity.

The following should be taken by the group on each visit:

- First aid kit
- Mobile phone (make sure the office has the number)
- Inhalers and medication
- School contact details / emergency contact details if after school times
- List of pupils and adults on the visit
- Risk assessments

For residential visits the Headteacher and Office Manager will have copies of the indemnity forms and list of pupils on the visit.

Evaluation of visits

In order to ensure that visits represent the best use of time and resources, and that the visit met the learning outcomes that were intended it is important that visits should be evaluated to ensure any lessons are learnt and that these lessons are applied to further visits.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed every two years or before if necessary.