



**Federation of
Westminster Special Schools
& Bi-Borough Inclusion Service**

Outdoor Learning Policy

**Approved by Full Governing Board: July 2024
For review by EHT and Nominated Governor: July 2027**

Contents

1. [General](#)
2. [Roles and Responsibilities](#)
3. [Competence to Lead](#)
4. [Procedures](#)
5. [Staffing](#)
6. [Transport](#)
7. [Inclusion](#)
8. [First Aid](#)
9. [Emergency Procedures](#)
10. [Accident Reporting](#)
11. [Code of Conduct for Visit](#)

I. General

The Federation of Westminster Special Schools recognises the value of offsite trips and is committed to supporting outdoor learning and activities that enrich the lives of its children and young people (CYP)

The Federation of Westminster Schools (and any contracted external providers where an activity has been commissioned) works within the requirements set out in the 'Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster City Council Guidance for Off-Site Visits and Related Activities with National Guidance & EVOLVE 2022'.

Across the Federation we use a web-based system called 'EVOLVE' to facilitate the efficient planning, management, approval, and evaluation of visits. Through this system staff can also access and refer to National Guidance (NG) documents to help plan, and safely implement their offsite trips.

All Federation staff will be made aware of the requirements of this policy and any changes that are made when the policy is reviewed.

Attached to this policy are the following:

- 1) Visit Category Appendices
- 2) Federation Offsite Register
- 3) Checklist for trips
- 4) Risk Assessment template
- 5) WCC Guidance for Off Site Visits (2022)

2. Roles & Responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that:

- off-site activities and visits comply with the Local Authority (LA) Guidance and this Outdoor Learning Policy;
- plans are submitted for formal approval as required;
- all visits approved can be accommodated within the planned provision;
- the educational purpose of each visit will address the learning and development needs of the group concerned.

The Headteacher will ensure that the Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC), Visit Leaders, assisting staff and voluntary helpers are appropriately trained as required and specifically competent to carry out the responsibilities allocated to them for all visits. If the Headteacher (along with the support of the EVC, if needed) does **not** feel that the visit leader(s) or staff member is competent to lead/support on the trip, he/she **will not go**.

Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC)

The EVC is a staff member who has received relevant training and induction and is delegated with:

- supporting the Headteacher in ensuring that competent staff are assigned to lead and accompany visits;
- ensuring that a policy is in place for educational and off-site visits, and that this is updated as necessary (it is accessible via the EVOLVE folder);
- approving trips (via EVOLVE) that have the appropriate planning and risk management in place that follows employer policy and guidance;
- liaising with the LA as required;
- ensuring that there is sample monitoring of visits in keeping with the recommendations of employer policy and guidance.

The EVC should be specifically competent, ideally with practical experience in leading and managing a range of visits similar to those typically run by the school.

Visit Leader

Visit Leaders will have overall responsibility for the visits they lead, which will be effectively supervised with an appropriate level of staffing. They are responsible for:

- supervising CYP in accordance with their training and the Federation's policy;
- ensuring relevant visit information is shared with the staff and parents/carers and consent is sought where necessary;
- being familiar with documents and information shared on EVOLVE about the specific trip; and
- ensuring that the CYP are thoroughly prepared for the visit;

Visit leaders **MUST** ensure all relevant documentation is completed prior to the visit.

Visit Leaders, assisting staff and voluntary helpers will be appropriately trained as required and specifically **competent** (please see section 3) to carry out the responsibilities allocated to them for all visits.

Visit leaders must be aware of the emergency procedures should something unexpected happen on the trip (please see sections 10 & 11).

Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants (TAs) share in caring for CYP on trips. They must be:

- briefed on their role by the visit leader;
- competent to carry out that role;
- inducted into, and follow, Federation policies and procedures.

If the Visit Leader is unavailable, the TA must be aware of emergency procedures and implement them (please see sections 10 & 11).

Governing Board

Under Health & Safety law the employer has primary responsibility for health, safety & welfare of employees and CYP.

Along with the Executive Head and the Headteachers, the Governing Board is responsible for ensuring visits are approved as required by the Federation's Outdoor Learning Policy; that all visits approved can be accommodated within the agreed timetable; and that the educational purpose of each visit appropriately addresses the learning and development needs of the group concerned.

3. 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:

- What experience does the leader have in leading or accompanying similar or other visits? (Check Staff History on EVOLVE).
- Is the leader competent in planning and managing visits?

- What are the leader's reasons for undertaking the visit?
- Is the leader an employee of the Federation?
- Does the leader have the ability to manage the pastoral welfare of CYP?
- Does the leader exhibit sound decision making abilities?
- What experience has the leader of the CYP he/she intends to supervise?
- What experience has the leader of the environment and geographical area chosen?
- Does the leader possess appropriate qualifications?
- If appropriate, what is the leader's personal level of skill in the activity, and fitness level?
- If leading adventurous activities, has this been approved by the LA?
- Is the leader aware of all relevant guidelines and able to act on these?

If the EVC, Headteacher or Deputy Head feel the Visit Leader is not competent in leading the trip, either he/she will not go or he/she will not be the Visit Leader.

4. Procedures

One week before the date of the trip, staff wishing to plan and undertake a visit will inform the Headteacher, complete pre-visits checklist, order lunch if necessary, complete EVOLVE and put the visit on the school calendar.

Activities that are defined as 'adventurous' or 'residential' will need Headteacher and LA approval on EVOLVE before they can proceed (please look at 'Category 3' under the sub-heading Visit Guide for timelines).

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

Visit leaders must plan and understand the risks involved in the trip (and how to manage them) prior to taking their trip.

Planning

When planning an offsite trip the following should be kept in mind:

- Aims and objectives- ensure these are relevant to the CYP's learning
- EVC/Head approval- if this is a trip that requires 'extensive planning' or is defined as an 'adventurous activity' (please see Appendix B), seek verbal/written approval before completing EVOLVE
- Inform parents/carers of the trip
- Make sure all who are involved in leading the visit are fully aware of additional needs of CYP and staff – i.e. medical, behaviour
- Ensure you have enough staff for the trip
- Ensure there is a 'Plan B' in case for any reason your trip cannot go forward (i.e. due to weather conditions, staff changes, venue is too crowded etc.)
- Fill out your EVOLVE at least **2 weeks** before the actual trip.

Visit leaders or staff attending the trip should visit an establishment and carry out an informal risk assessment prior to going on the trip. This information needs to be fed back to the Visit Leader prior to them filling out the EVOLVE.

Risk Management

The risk management of an activity is normally carried out by visit leader and assistants with the support of EVCs as required. Risks are expected to be reduced to an acceptable or tolerable level, but not necessarily eliminated.

Planning should achieve a rational balance between potential adverse risks and the intended benefits and outcomes of the activity. The Federation of Westminster Special Schools will balance benefits and risks with a focus on controlling real risks, either those which arise most often or those with the most serious consequences. We will have competent leaders, activities that are appropriate for the group, appropriate levels of supervision, and most importantly, if there is a feeling of 'unease' about the trip or activity, the Visit Leader may cancel the trip, turn back, or resort to 'Plan B'.

There is no legal requirement to produce a risk assessment in a particular format but there is a legal requirement for the process to be recorded and for suitable and sufficient control measures to be identified for any significant risks i.e. those that may cause serious harm to an individual or harm several people.

Staff within the Federation will adopt and adapt the risk management materials available through EVOLVE to ease the burden of bureaucracy that might otherwise discourage leaders from making full use of educational visit learning opportunities.

A copy of the school generic visits risk assessment is located in the EVOLVE resources library

Visit Guide

The Federation categorises visits into three categories. Each category has its own procedures to follow:

- Category 1: Local, single day, low risk visits
- Category 2: One day visits, programmes, venues further away from base locality
- Category 3: Residential visits, adventurous activities, overseas visits

Category 1:

Examples include, but are not limited to: supermarket, local park, local walk etc.

- Do a pre-visit if no member of staff has been to the venue before, or the Visit Leader is unsure of the potential risks that may arise from the visit.
- Put details on the school calendar
- Enter the trip details and the appropriate risk assessments into EVOLVE
- Fill out, and hand in the 'trip checklist' to the Headteacher
- Visit Leaders should take a first aid kit with them (in the case of Early Years, one member of staff present should hold a current Paediatric First Aid certificate)
- Visit leaders should sign their class/ CYPs in and out of the building
- Offsite book which contains CYPs' medical forms
- Brief TAs/volunteers on the itinerary, assign CYP to specific staff, and bring any CYP concerns to light

Category 2:

Examples include, but are not limited to: swimming at a public pool, activities at water-margins, farm visits, forest schools programmes, museums, galleries, holy sites etc.

- Inform parents/carers
- If a visit is planned to a higher risk environment, the appropriate Safe Working Procedure document should be reviewed for your specific visit. (i.e. read about farm visits before you go)
- Do a pre-visit if no member of staff has been to the venue before, or the Visit Leader is unsure of the potential risks that may arise from the visit.
- Put details on the school calendar
- Enter the trip details and the appropriate risk assessments into EVOLVE
- Fill out, and hand in the 'trip checklist' to the Headteacher
- Visit Leaders should take a first aid kit with them (in the case of Early Years, one member of staff present should hold a current Paediatric First Aid certificate)
- Visit leaders should sign their CYP in and out of the building
- Offsite folder which contains CYPs' medical forms, risk assessments, PHPs and Evolve documentation.
- Brief assistant leaders/volunteers on the itinerary, assign CYPs to specific staff, and bring any CYP concerns to light

Category 3:

Examples include, but are not limited to: adventurous activities (see Appendix B for a definition), open-country trips (Appendix F), water-based activities (Appendix C, D, and E) and residential visits (Appendix A).

The process is the same as for 'Category 2', but The EVOLVE system will automatically pass such identified visits to the LA for approval after first being checked and authorised by the EVC and the Headteacher. Specific consent will be required for each visit.

Overseas visits and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions will be submitted to the LA **four working weeks** before a visit is set to take place, and before anyone is financially committed. **Other visits requiring LA approval require two working weeks' notice.** Approval notification via email will automatically be sent out (from EVOLVE) as soon as possible up to two working weeks after receipt of the visit form.

A member of staff intending to lead an adventurous activity must be specifically approved by the LA to do so via the EVOLVE Leader Approval Request function.

When external providers are used, it is a requirement for their safety management to have been verified either by completion and return of a Provider Form (located in the EVOLVE folder) or by holding an appropriate national accreditation. Providers will not be used until they have been approved by the LA.

5. Staffing: Training, Volunteers, and Supervision

As part of the induction process, all new staff in the school will be trained in the policy and procedures for off-site visits and activities and understand their role in managing, planning, leading or assisting with the organisation off-site visits. All staff will have access to local and national guidance.

The EVC will identify any specific training needs and requirements and ensure staff can access relevant learning and development opportunities as appropriate.

Volunteers & short-term supply

Where it is deemed appropriate, volunteers and short term supply will be included on trips but they should not be given the same responsibilities as staff. They are there to support but, under no circumstances should they be left solely in charge of a group, be responsible for medical or personal care needs or left alone with CYP. A volunteer/short-term supply should be paired with a member of staff at all times.

Supervision

On all visits there must be an **effective level of supervision** that has been approved by the EVC and Headteacher that is in accordance with this policy.

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 emergency options.

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

6. Transport

- **WALKING**
Staff must read and refer to the 'Travel-Walking' document in the EVOLVE folder under 'Transport'. This document outlines significant hazards and associated risks with walking in the community. It gives staff control measures or guidance as to how to handle pupils in specific situations, as well as how to organise the group so CYP and staff are safe.
- **COACHES**
The LA does not approve coach companies. Whilst UK legislation ensures that coaches are fit for public use, the facilities available on coaches may vary. Liaising with other establishments within the LA that have used a particular company (via a search on EVOLVE) will help to determine the level of service that may be provided.
- **MINIBUSES**
Staff with the appropriate licensing and training may drive the mini-bus. **Staff must read the 'Travel-Rail, Underground, Bus document in the EVOLVE folder under 'Transport'**. This document outlines significant hazards and associated risks with riding a bus. It gives staff 'control measure' or guidance as to how to handle pupils

CYP in specific situations, as well as how to organize the group so they and staff are safe. Please refer to NG: [Transport in Minibuses](#)

- **PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN LONDON**
Staff must read and refer to the 'Travel-Rail, Underground, Bus' document in the EVOLVE folder under 'Transport'. This document outlines significant hazards and associated risks with these forms of transportation in the community. It gives staff 'control measure' or guidance as to how to handle CYP in specific situations, as well as how to organize the group so they and staff are safe.

7. Inclusion

Under the Equality Act (2010), it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled participants because of their disability, without material or substantial justification. Staff 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 CYP should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity.

8. 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.).

A working knowledge of first aid 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 particular 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 Paediatric First Aid certificate.

9. Emergency Procedures

In the event of a delay or in the case of an emergency the Visit Leader must call the school to advise and seek guidance from a member of the senior leadership team (SLT). If there is a serious injury, medical risk or harm to any CYP, staff member or volunteer, the emergency services should be called first.

The school must be contacted as soon as possible to inform SLT so that they can decide: –

- If the incident is of a less serious nature then the next of kin or parents of those affected will be informed about what has happened (e.g. that the party will be returning late or that an incident has befallen a party member) and the action that has been taken so far.

- If the incident is very serious then emergency services will be contacted

For visits that take place outside normal establishment hours:

- The Visit Leader must have phone numbers for a member of the SLT, **and**
- A completed emergency contact list must be available with the emergency home contact(s) at all times, where access to EVOLVE is not possible.

The school contact must be contactable 24/7, have the authority to make the necessary decisions, have access to EVOLVE, and access to parent/carer contact information.

10. Accident Reporting

If an accident or incident occurs during the offsite trip, an accurate record of all details must be recorded as soon as possible. This must not be left until later when the recall of detailed information may be inaccurate. The following should be recorded:

- Time, date and nature of the incident.
- Accurate incident location.
- Names of casualties.
- Details of injuries.
- Actions taken, including all communications.
- Names of others involved but not injured.
- Details of any moves from the incident site (times, which moved, where to, how). □
Names and contact details of witnesses and proposed actions.

Please give this to the Headteacher or a member of the SLT.

11. Code of Conduct for Visits

The Code of Conduct Policy will apply on outdoor visits in the same way that it applies in school. Staff will also be required to adhere to the Use of Mobile Phones Policy.