



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**



Together, over time, we are proud to learn together to make a difference to ourselves and others.

# **West Northamptonshire Council And Chiltern Primary School**

## **Policy for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom**

(Guidance for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and other  
Children's Services establishments)

September 2021 – July 2024

# 1.0 Provision of Employer Guidance

## Policy for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC)

West Northamptonshire Council has formally adopted "Outdoor Education Advisory Panel (OEAP) National Guidance" as

"West Northamptonshire Employer Guidance". This guidance can be found on [the following web site](#):

It is a legal expectation that employees should work within the requirements of their employer's guidance; therefore, West Northamptonshire Council employees should follow the requirements of "OEAP National Guidance", as well as the requirements of this Policy Statement.

Where a West Northamptonshire Council employee commissions LOtC activity, they should ensure that such commissioned agent has either:

1. **adopted West Northamptonshire or OEAP National Guidance** or
2. have systems and procedures in place where the standards are not less than those required by OEAP National Guidance.

P Howell completed refresher CPD on Thursday 9 September 2021 with Mike Fawcett at Knuston Hall, Wellingborough. Next due in September 2024.

## 2.0 Scope

The OEAP NG "[Status Remit and Rationale](#)" clarifies the range of employees whose work requires them to use the guidance. In summary, it applies to employees whose work involves any one of the following:

- direct supervision of young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;
- direct supervision of young people undertaking experiences that fall within the remit of Learning Outside the Classroom;
- facilitating experiences for young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;
- deploying staff who will supervise or facilitate experiences of or for young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;

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

For a more expansive explanation of legal expectations, all users of the guidance are strongly recommended to read the OEAP NG document: "[Underpinning Legal Framework and Duty of Care](#)"

## 3.0 Ensuring Understanding of Basic Requirements

As an employer, West Northamptonshire Council is required to ensure that its employees are provided with:

- appropriate guidance relating to visits and LOtC activity;
- access to advice, support and further training from Advisers that have proven expertise and professional understanding of OEAP National Guidance, OEAP accredited training and expectations set by current good practice.
- suitable systems and processes to ensure that those trained are kept updated;

West Northamptonshire Council requires all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and other Children's Services establishments to:

1) Have in place a policy for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) that follows OEAP National Guidance.

2) Secure the services of an Adviser who is a registered or accredited member of the [Outdoor Education Advisers Panel](#) to provide advice, support and approval for Category C visits (see below). 3) Train staff to the following standards:

- a) OEAP accredited Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC) training - all West Northamptonshire Council Children's Services establishments are required to have a current, trained EVC in post. This training is available through the [Outdoor Education Advisory Panel \(OEAP\)](#)
- b) OEAP accredited OEAP EVC training is valid for 3 years at which point it should be revalidated through the OEAP.
- c) Visit Leader (VL) Training – The completion of this training is recommended for all who lead Educational Visits. Currently there is no revalidation requirement, however, to meet LOtC guidance requirements regarding leader competence, leaders must be current in their knowledge of expectations of good practice, so refresher training is strongly recommended.

3) P Howell completed refresher CPD on Thursday 9 September 2021 with Mike Fawcett at Knuston Hall, Wellingborough. Next due in September 2024.

## 4.0 Approval and Notification of Activities and Visits

OEAP National Guidance categorises visits as Standard and Enhanced – explanations of these categories can be found in following OEAP NG document "[Risk Management – an overview](#)" Standard visits are further classified as follows:

### Category A visits

These visits are close to the school, done on a regular basis involving environments known to the staff. It would include normal daily life activities.

Examples include walks and exploring the area near to the school site, visits to the local church, library, school sporting fixtures and other regular non-complex activity. It can also include transport if needed.

## Category B visits

These visits are to areas beyond the local area involving more complex environments and activity, and will typically be a one off or irregular activity in the school year. The leaders will be approved to lead the visit by the EVC. There may be some specialist training attached to some activities in this area.

Examples include visits further afield, farm visits, local parks, museum visits, swimming lessons in offsite pools, zoo visits, sporting festivals and larger tournaments and some basic outdoor education activity.

Enhanced visits are also known as [Category C visits](#) and include residential visits, overseas visits and adventure activities.

It is not possible to provide a completely definitive activities list. Examples of activities include Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, outdoor adventure activities including hills and mountains, motor sports, adventures on water or field studies involving water.

West Northamptonshire Council delegates the responsibility for formal approval of category A and B visits to the Heads and Managers of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and other Children's Services establishments. It is a requirement of this policy that Heads and Managers carry out this function in accordance with OEAP National Guidance.

Category C visits should be approved by an Adviser who is an accredited member of the [Outdoor Education Advisers Panel](#)

## 5.0 Risk Management

As an employer, West Northamptonshire Council has a legal duty to ensure that risks are managed by requiring them to be reduced to an "acceptable" or "tolerable" level as elimination of risks may not be practicable. Risk Management is an essential component of both the EVC and Visit leader training courses.

The risk management of an activity should be informed by the benefits to be gained from participating. West Northamptonshire Council strongly recommends a "Risk-Benefit Assessment" approach, whereby the starting point for any risk assessment should be a consideration of the targeted benefits and learning outcomes. This appreciation of the benefits to be gained through participating provides objectivity to a decision that any residual risk (i.e. the risk remaining after control measures have been put in place) is "acceptable". HSE endorse this approach through their "Principles of Sensible Risk Management" and advocate that it is important that young people are exposed to well-managed risks so that they learn how to manage risk for themselves.

There is no legal or West Northamptonshire Council 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.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Risk Management – an overview](#)"

## 6.0 Coronavirus

The Department for Education (DfE) advise on whether or not Educational Visits can be undertaken must be followed but when visits are allowed, schools should;

- Review their standard operating procedures for Educational Visits to ensure that they follow the current Public Health England advice regarding the measures needed to reduce the risks from Covid-19 - [Refer to the latest OEAP National Guidance](#):
- Consider avoiding activities which have a high likelihood of minor injuries, so as to reduce the need for first aid, close contact with participants or visits to hospital. If the planned activity is in an area open to the public, consider carefully how social distancing with members of the public can be achieved.
- Take the current government guidance into account as part of the process of risk assessment when planning a visit and then check it regularly in the days and weeks leading up to the visit (as well as during it if it's a residential visit) and make any necessary changes to their plans.
- If planning to use one or more providers, schools should check that they have assessed the risk of coronavirus and implemented control measures to prevent infection. It should be noted that some providers may not have had the benefit of the advice and support available to education establishments and so may not be fully aware of the measures that are expected.
- Consider making a preliminary visit to check the Covid-19 measures in place and to discuss with the provider any issues that are identified.

## 7.0 Emergency Planning and Critical Incident Support

A critical incident is an incident where any member of a group undertaking an off-site activity has: either suffered a life threatening injury or fatality is at serious risk; or has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period

As an employer, West Northamptonshire Council is committed to providing emergency planning procedures to support establishments in the event of a critical incident.

All schools are provided with 24 hour Limited critical incident cover at no charge. Schools can sign up to an SLA for Advanced response critical incident cover.

To activate support from West Northamptonshire Council, the following telephone numbers should be used:

Emergency Planning. Normal office hours: 01604 236844 Outside normal office hours: 07885 292851

These numbers should be carried by leaders at all times during an off-site activity but should only be used in the case of a genuine emergency. Under no circumstances should these numbers be given to young people or to their parents or guardians.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Emergencies and Critical Incidents – an overview](#)"

## 8.0 Monitoring

Each establishment should have a policy for Learning Outside the Classroom that clearly identifies

- The monitoring role of the EVC, Head/Manager, other senior staff and the Governing Body.
- The monitoring role of the establishment's adviser for Category C visits.
- The type of visits subject to EVC scrutiny.
- Any arrangements for peer monitoring on a sample basis.
- The extent of sample monitoring through field observation by the EVC and/or Head/Manager.

Monitoring of health and safety should be done in such a way that it is a positive experience for leaders, with supportive feedback to enable them to reflect upon and improve their practice. It can be integrated with appraisal and with observation of teaching and learning – in this case outside the classroom.

West Northamptonshire Council will initiate regular Educational Visits Audits to monitor schools' compliance with the requirements identified in sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 above.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Monitoring](#)"

## 9.0 Assessment of Leader Competence

OEAP National Guidance provides clear advice regarding the assessment of leader competence. It is an expectation of West Northamptonshire Council policy that all Visit leaders and their assistants in Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and other Children's Services establishments will have been assessed as competent to undertake such responsibilities in line with the LOTC guidance.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Approval of Leaders](#)"

## 10.0 Role-specific Requirements and Recommendations

OEAP National Guidance sets out clear and detailed responsibilities and functions of specific roles that relate to roles to be found within West Northamptonshire Council management structures. These are:

Director of Children's Services  
Lead Member(s) for Children's Services  
Adviser (other than an OEA) including Health and Safety Adviser

Refer to individual OEAP NG documents headed as above.

OEAP National Guidance sets out clear and detailed responsibilities and functions of specific roles that relate to roles to be found within most Children's Services establishments. These are:

- Member of Board of Governors or Management Board
- Head teacher
- Manager of an establishment other than a school
- EVC
- Visit or Activity Leader
- Assistant Visit leader
- Volunteer Adult Helper
- Those in a position of Parental Authority

Refer to individual OEAP NG documents headed as above.

## 11.0 Charges for Off-site Activities and Visits

West Northamptonshire Council Heads/Managers, Curriculum Planners, EVCs and Visit/Activity Leaders must take account of the legal framework relating to charging, voluntary contributions and remissions as set out in sections 449 to 462 of the Education Act 1996 and the DfE guidance document 'Charging for School Activities' (2014).

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Charging for School Activities](#)"

## 12.0 Vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

West Northamptonshire Council employees who work frequently or intensively with, or have regular access to young people or vulnerable adults, must undergo an enhanced DBS check as part of their recruitment process.

For the purposes of this guidance:

frequently is defined as "once a week or more"; intensively is defined as 4 days or more in a month or overnight.

However, it must be clearly understood that a DBS check (or other vetting procedure) in itself, is no guarantee as to the suitability of an adult to work with any given group of young or vulnerable people.

The placement of an adult within a situation of professional trust (where young people could be vulnerable to physical or mental exploitation or grooming) should always be on the understanding that an overview based on a common sense risk-benefit assessment process has been considered.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\) Checks](#)"

## 13.0 Requirement to Ensure Effective Supervision

In general terms, the Law does not prescribe activity-specific staffing ratios; but it does require that the level of supervision and group management is "effective".

Effective supervision should be determined by proper consideration of:

- The nature and duration of the visit and the planned activities;
- The location and environment in which the activity is to take place;
- The nature of the group, including the number of young people and their age, level of development, gender, ability and needs (behavioural, medical, emotional and educational);
- Staff competence;
- The consequence of a member of staff being indisposed, particularly where they will be the sole leader with a group for any significant time.

However, as an exception to the above, DfE prescribes ratios for early years in the [statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#).

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Ratios and Effective Supervision](#)"

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Group management and Supervision](#)"

## 14.0. Preliminary Visits and Provider Assurances

All visits should be thoroughly researched to establish the suitability of the venue and to check that facilities and third party provision will meet group expectations. Such information gathering is essential in assessing the requirements for effective supervision of young people. It is a vital dimension of risk management.

Wherever reasonably practicable, it is good practice to carry out a preliminary visit. Establishment policy should clarify the circumstances where a preliminary visit is a requirement.



It is good practice for Visit Leaders to take full advantage of the nationally accredited, provider assurance schemes that are now available, thus reducing bureaucracy.

Examples of such schemes include:

- [The LOTC Quality Badge](#)
- AALS licensing
- Adventuremark
- NGB Centre approval schemes (applicable where the provision is a single, specialist activity).

Refer to: OEAP NG document "[Pre Visiting an Adventure Activity Provider mind map](#)"

## 15.0 Insurance for Off-site Activities and Visits

Employer's Liability Insurance is a statutory requirement and West Northamptonshire Council holds a policy that indemnifies it against all claims for compensation for bodily injury suffered by any person employed by it. This cover should extend to those persons who are acting in a voluntary capacity as assistant supervisors. West Northamptonshire Council also holds Public Liability insurance, indemnifying it against all claims for compensation for bodily injury from persons not in its employ, as well as for the accidental loss of, or damage caused to, property. Employees (as agents of the employer) are indemnified against all such claims, as are voluntary helpers acting under the direction of the employer's staff. The indemnity covers activities such as off-site activities and visits organised by all establishments and settings for which the employer is responsible.

Some level of Personal Accident Insurance is provided for all West Northamptonshire Council employees in the course of their employment, providing predetermined benefits in the event of an accident. However, Visit / Activity Leaders should be advised that they should consider taking out less limited personal accident cover privately, or obtain cover through a professional association.

West Northamptonshire Council Visit and Activity leaders should contact the local authority Insurance Section to seek clarification of the above, including any circumstances requiring early notification of specialist activities to the insurer. They should also ensure they have obtained current information regarding any special policies that may be available to offer more comprehensive cover.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Insurance](#)"

## 16. Inclusion

Every effort should be made to ensure that outdoor learning activities and visits are available and accessible to all, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, gender, religion or sexual orientation. If a visit needs to cater for young people with special needs, every reasonable effort should be made to find a venue that is both suitable and accessible and that enables the whole group to participate fully and be actively involved.

Establishments should take all *reasonably practicable* measures to include all young people. The principles of inclusion should be promoted and addressed for all visits and reflected in establishment policy, thus ensuring an aspiration towards:

an entitlement to participate

accessibility through direct or realistic adaptation or modification

integration through participation with peers

Employers, Heads/Managers, Curriculum Planners, EVCs and Visit Leaders should be aware of the extent to which Inclusion is or is not a legal issue. Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to:

treat a disabled young person less favourably;



fail to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled persons are not paced at a substantial disadvantage without justification.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Inclusion](#)"

## 17.0 Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations

Employers, Heads/Managers, EVCs and Leaders should have a basic understanding of where and when the provision of adventurous activities is legally regulated.

The Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 established the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations and the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA), initially responsible to the DfES. The scheme is now the direct responsibility of HSE and operated through the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS).

The intention of the regulations is to provide a regulatory framework to protect children, parents, teachers and schools when using providers of defined adventurous activities in closely defined environments. The regulations and supporting inspection regime provide a formal process of professional inspection to accredit that providers have effective safety management systems and processes, meeting a national standard.

The definitive source of advice on the Licensing Regulations is to be found in the Health and Safety Executive publication: "Guidance from the Licensing Authority on Adventure Activity Licensing Regulations 2004".

Leaders should be aware that the AALS license is an assurance of safety. It does not accredit educational or activity quality.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[AALA Licensing](#)"

# 18.0 Transport

Careful thought must be given to planning transport to support off-site activities and visits. Statistics demonstrate that it is much more dangerous to travel to an activity than to engage in it and establishments must follow the specialist guidance provided in the West Northamptonshire Council transport policy. All national and local regulatory requirements must be followed.

The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk management process when planning the journey, giving proper consideration to issues of driver-distraction when considering what supervision is required for the specific group of passengers being transported in a minibus.

The Visit Leader should ensure that coaches and buses are hired from a reputable company.

Transporting young people in private cars requires careful consideration. Where this occurs, there should be recorded procedures.

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Transport General Considerations](#)”

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Transport in Minibuses](#)”

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Transport in Private Cars](#)”

## 19.0 The Evaluation of LOtC

This English Outdoor Council has produced a guide to [High Quality Outdoor Learning](#). The guide outlines the benefits of working in outdoor contexts and has been written to help evaluate, and set about improving, or further improving, the quality of outdoor learning. In support of this, ten key outcomes of outdoor learning have been identified with a range of indicators attributed to each one. These indicators can be used to support any improvement work, which will often be enhanced by working closely with partners. Head teachers and EVCs are recommended to use this text and the National Guidance document [Self-Evaluation and the Ofsted framework](#) when evaluating the impact of LOtC in their schools or settings.

