

West Exmoor Federation



Off-Site Activity Policy

June 2007

West Exmoor Federation - Policy for Off-Site Activity

Introduction

This policy covers all off-site visits and activities organised through the Federation and for which the Governing Body and headteachers are responsible.

The Governing Body endorses the Devon County Council policy document "Outdoor Education, Visits and Off-Site Activities" as the basis for the school's health and safety policy for the management of visits and off-site activities.

The Governing Body seeks to ensure that every pupil has access to a wide range of educational experiences as an entitlement. As part of this entitlement the Governing Body recognises the significant educational value of visits and activities which take place away from the immediate school environment.

The Governing Body aims to enable schools within the Federation to become educational environments in which all members of the school communities can thrive, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender or individual need. We intend to apply this aim to the planning and management of all visits and off-site activities.

Visits and off-site activities support, enrich and extend the curriculum in many subject areas, encourage co-operation, team work and the application of problem solving skills and develop independence and self confidence.

Residential opportunities, physical challenge and adventure can have a particular part to play in the development of personal and social qualities for all young people. Outdoor education helps young people to be physically active and to understand how to assess and manage risk. The management of visits and off-site activities places particular responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of all participants on the Governing Body, headteachers, the party leader, members of staff and volunteers, pupils and parents. The schools also have responsibilities to other members of the public and to third parties. This policy on visits and off-site activities therefore complements the wider federation health and safety policy.

It is a priority of this Federation that all visits and off-site activities are safe, well-managed and educationally beneficial.

Responsibilities of the Headteachers

The headteachers will:

- ensure all visits and off-site activities have specific and appropriate educational objectives;

approve all visits and activities, based on compliance with the county and school health and safety policy, relevant Devon County Council guidance and recognised good practice; ensure off-site programmes are led by competent staff who are appropriately experienced to assess the risks, manage the activity and manage the specific group; check that the staffing ratio is suitable for each visit; ensure party leaders have access to a planning checklist, based on the DCC policy (pp 10-12), and adapted as necessary to meet the particular needs of the school; check that risks have been assessed, significant risks recorded and any appropriate safety measures are in place.

Responsibilities of the Educational Visits Co-ordinator

In order to carry out the above responsibilities effectively the headteachers may delegate specified tasks to a suitably experienced and competent Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC). The EVC will be responsible for carrying out agreed tasks and attending relevant training provided by the County Council.

Approval of off-site activities

The headteachers will be responsible for approving all off-site activities. This includes approving the party leader for each visit or off-site activity.

A summary of the programme for the following categories of programmes, together with a risk assessment, will be sent to the Adviser for Outdoor Education, Devon Curriculum Services, for endorsement:

- hazardous outdoor and adventurous activities (except those taking place at Devon County Council outdoor and residential centres) (Category B activities);
- visits abroad (Category C activities);
- Activities where there is significant concern about health, safety and welfare (Category C activities).

The Governing Body should be informed by the headteachers about plans which involve:

- a residential element;
- any visit abroad and
- any visit where there is significant concern about health, safety and welfare.

The headteachers will monitor off-site visits and activities and will provide a regular report to the Governing Body about the off-site activities which have taken place.

Travel Arrangements

Specific arrangements relating to use of transport are as follows:

- staff driving minibuses must hold a DCC license;
- pupils must wear seatbelts at all times;
- when traveling in cars pupils must use booster seats if necessary;

where parents' vehicles are used the Headteachers must notify them of their responsibility for the safety of pupils, their need to maintain suitable insurance cover and to ensure that their vehicle is roadworthy

Responsibilities of the party leader

The party leader will:

- have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit or activity;
- obtain the headteacher's approval before any off-site visit or activity takes place;
- follow policy and procedures of the County Council and the school;
- assess the risks involved and amend as appropriate any previously recorded risk assessment;
- use the school planning checklist to ensure all procedures have been followed;
- ensure form SOE5 from the DCC policy is completed where commercial, charitable or private (non-DCC facilities) are being used for adventurous or residential activities;
- inform parents fully about the visit and gain their consent, where appropriate;
- reassess risks while the visit or activity takes place;
- ensure there is a contingency plan (Plan B) should a significant change to the programme be necessary due to weather etc.

Responsibilities of additional members of staff taking part in visits and off-site activities

Members of staff, volunteers and parent helpers should:

- assist the party leader to ensure the health, safety and welfare of young people on the visit;
- be clear about their roles and responsibilities whilst taking part in a visit or activity;
- be in receipt of a cleared enhanced CRB check.

Responsibilities of pupils

Whilst taking part in off-site activities pupils also have responsibilities about which they should be made aware by the party leader or other members of staff, for their own health and safety and that of the group. Young people should:

- Avoid unnecessary risks;
- Follow instructions of the party leader and other members of staff;
- Behave sensibly and courteously, keeping to any agreed code of conduct;
- Inform a member of staff of significant hazards.

Responsibilities of parents

Parents have an important role in deciding whether any visit or off-site activity is suitable for their child. Subject to their agreement to the activity parents should:

- support the application of any agreed code of conduct;
- inform the party leader about any medical, psychological or physical condition relevant to the visit;

provide an emergency contact number;
sign the consent form.

The provision of training and information

A copy of this policy and associated procedures will be made available to all staff within the Federation who may be responsible for leading off-site visits and activities and to any parent requesting a copy.

The headteachers will make additional information available to staff to help ensure the safe management of off-site activities. These will include the DCC policy statement "Outdoor Education, Visits and Off-Site Activities" (2003) and access to the DCS website: www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/outdoor

Appropriate training will be made available to leaders and other adults taking part in off-site activities in order to reflect identified school health and safety priorities and educational priorities.

The headteachers will maintain a record of the qualifications held by staff and volunteers involved in outdoor activities including first aid, life-saving, mini-bus driving and specific hazardous activities.

Action in the case of emergency

The headteachers will ensure that emergency arrangements are in place, known to staff and in line with DCC policy, to cover the range of activities undertaken from the schools and the times at which they take place. This will include emergency contact numbers for designated senior members of staff or the governing body out-of hours. First aid provision and training of staff will be in accordance with DCC expectations.

Accidents and incidents

Any accidents and incidents that occur during off-site visits and activities will be reported and recorded in accordance with health and safety policy. Devon County Council will be informed of notifiable accidents and incidents. Accidents and incidents will subsequently be reviewed within the schools to identify any learning points.

Monitoring and review policy and practice

The Governors will review this policy every two years or, if before, at such time as there are significant changes to guidance from Devon County Council on the management of Outdoor Education, Visits and Off-Site Activities or should significant issues be brought to the attention of the Governors through the report of the headteachers.

Recommended further reading and advice

Outdoor Education, Visits and Off-Sites Activities, Devon Curriculum Services, 2003

Safety in Outdoor Education, DfES, 1998

Supplementary Guidance for Health and Safety on Educational Visits, DfES, 2002

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