Offsite visits policy

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Approved by:	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy	**Date:** December 2024
Last reviewed on:	November 2026	
Next review due by:	November 2028	

OFFSITE VISITS POLICY

From Derbyshire County Council Offsite Visits Policy Template

This policy operates in line with our school mission, Catholic ethos and best safeguarding practice. St Mary's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

1. Introduction

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy acknowledges the immense value and many benefits of outdoor learning and is committed to supporting off-site visits and activities that enrich the learning opportunities of children and young people. The St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy (and any contracted external providers where an activity has been commissioned) works within the requirements set out in Derbyshire County Council's Offsite Visits and Adventure Activities Guidance and the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel 'National Guidance' (both accessible via EVOLVE).

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

2. Roles and Responsibilities

For all visits it is important that each person involved understands their specific roles and responsibilities as detailed in this section.

Employer: As an academy, the St Ralph Sherwin Multi-Academy Trust (linked through our Local Governing Board)

Under Health & Safety law the employer has primary responsibility for Health, Safety & Welfare of employees and students, this overall responsibility cannot be delegated. In establishments where the LA is not the employer the Governors or Management board will normally hold this responsibility and should be fully aware of the responsibility this entails.

The employer will ensure that its employees are provided with appropriate guidance, that there are training regimes in place to support it and that the guidance is understood.
The School Visits Service (SVS) team will provide Derbyshire County Council visit guidance. The SVS team has a huge breadth of knowledge and experience and can provide support with any visit from a walk to the park through to extended oversea expeditions.
SVS provides training courses for Educational Visits Coordinators (EVCs) and Visit Leaders. SVS monitors visits through EVOLVE and through sample monitoring 'in the field'.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring off-site activities and visits comply with the LA Guidance and this Visit Policy and are notified or submitted for formal approval as required, that all visits approved can be accommodated within the planned provision and that the ethos of each visit is one with which the Establishment wishes to be associated. 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. The **Deputy Headteacher** is nominated deputy to approve offsite visits in the absence of the **Headteacher**. The Headteacher is **John Nish**; the Deputy Headteacher is **Alice Poole**. The Acting Deputy Headteacher (maternity cover) is **Elizabeth Thompson**.

Educational Visit Co-ordinator

The Educational Visit Co-ordinator (EVC) is a staff member who has received relevant training and induction and is delegated with the following tasks:

- To grant verbal permission that a leader may plan a visit after deciding that the timetabling and ethos of the visit are acceptable.
- To check and approve that the planning and risk management for visits follows employer policy and guidance, and to liaise with the LA as required.
- To ensure 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 establishment

The designated EVC is **Vicki Major** who received training in the role in **September 2024** and three year update if when completed

Visit Leader

Visit Leaders will have over-all charge of the visits they lead. They are also responsible for and must demonstrate the following;

- Competence, including where necessary verification, to lead the visit
- Awareness of potential hazards, dangers and competence when completing the necessary risk assessments and introducing measures to control risks to an acceptable levels.
- Informing the Headteacher of the identified risks
- Sound judgement of what constitutes a dangerous situation and preventing access to dangerous situations
- Ability to undertake dynamic risk assessments
- Arrangement of adequate supervision
- Knowledge of where to get information about the area they are travelling to which could include such things as tide tables and weather forecasts.
- Ensure relevant visit information is shared with parents/carers and informed consent is sought where necessary.

Visit Leaders, assisting staff and voluntary helpers will be appropriately trained as required and specifically competent to carry out the responsibilities allocated to them for all visits. Details related to a visit and its participants (including staff) will be accessible to a designated 24/7 emergency contact in case of emergencies.
The Visit Leader will usually be the **Class Teacher.**

3. Procedures

Staff wishing to plan and undertake a visit (prospective Visit Leaders) will first seek permission from the Headteacher/Manager or EVC.

Finance

The Headteacher, EVC and Visit Leaders should take account of the legal framework relating to charging, voluntary contributions and remissions as set out in sections 449-462 of the Education Act. The establishment charging policy for off-site visits is INCLUDED IN OUR Charging Policy

Staff Induction and Training

All new staff will as part of their induction into the establishment, be familiar with the local policy for off-site visits and activities and understand their role in managing, planning, leading or assisting with organising off-site visits. All staff will have access to County 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 and as required by Derbyshire County Council School Visits Service.

Visit Approval

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy has adopted the Derbyshire County Council system for approval of visits which is based on these being categorised into three broad types:
1. Local low risk single day visits that are regular and routine
2. Day visits and programmes that require enhanced planning
3. Higher risk visits, further field that require detailed planning and leader competence

Category 1

These visits will be regular, routine day activities that are organised in and around the locality, usually on foot. Regularly repeated visits can be covered by a block annual consent subject to parents/carers being made aware of every visit, especially any involving a return time outside the normal day.

Visits and activities included in this category for this establishment are:

- Visits in and around your base setting on foot (churches, parks, urban centres)
- Sports fixtures (involving transport)

- Swimming programme

These visits should be planned using the establishment All Visits risk assessment and with approval by the EVC and Headteacher. Activities can be covered by an annual blanket parental consent.

Where there are local activities that are a planned part of the curriculum/routine programme but are dependent upon the right conditions on the day, then the visit leader will sign out before departure leaving relevant information with the base contact.

The specific establishment off-site All Visits Risk Assessment (that may also include road transport) covers general supervision of these visits. A review will be required rather than completed a new document each time. Any additions can be documented using the Event Specific Notes form.

All other visits: All other visit must be planned and submitted using EVOLVE.
Based on the visit types, EVOLVE automatically directs the flow of approval for Category 2 and 3 visits.

Category 2

These visits are single "one off" day visits or a programme of visits that take place off-site but further field than your base locality and with no element of adventurous activities (as defined in Category 3). These opportunities will usually require transport and could also require some enhanced planning and risk assessment. Example visits are:

- Visits requiring use of transport (urban areas, theatres, social events, places of interest)
- Swimming in public lifeguarded pools (excluding open water)
- Fieldwork visits (not in open/ remote country)
- Activities at Water Margins (coastal locations & inland waters)
- Farm visits
- Forest school programmes

These activities will be entered onto EVOLVE and submitted to the EVC prior to departure. Approval is delegated to *Headteacher* and visits should be covered by a specific parental consent. Consent should be 'informed' consent. For a programme of regular visits to similar destinations, one single visit form can be completed, with the relevant dates selected and can be covered by an annual blanket parental consent.

The specific establishment All Visits Risk Assessment (that also includes road transport) will cover general supervision of the visit. A review will be required rather than completed a new document each time. Any additions can be documented using the Event Specific Note form.

If a visit is planned to a higher risk environment, the appropriate risk assessments must be completed for your specific visit. This will then be attached to the EVOLVE record, prior to submitting to your EVC and Head for approval.

Certain activities will require staff to hold specific qualifications or competencies before being able to deliver sessions. e.g. forest school. Please refer to the activity qualification matrix for further information or contact SVS. Relevant qualifications will be added and uploaded to EVOLVE. These activities will not be undertaken unless there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff to deliver them.

Evolve: Category 2 minimum document uploads

- Itinerary
- All Visit Risk Assessment
- Specific Risk assessment / Care Plan

Category 3

Approval from the Local Authority (LA) will be required for all overseas visits, residential visits and those which include adventurous activities, be it provider or establishment lead. The EVOLVE system will automatically pass such identified visits to the LA for approval after first being checked by **Visit Coordinator** and authorised by **Headteacher**. Specific informed consent will be required for each visit.

Overseas visits and DofE 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 or verified by holding an appropriate national accreditation e.g. AALA licence, Learning Outside The Classroom Quality Badge (LOTC). Providers will not be used until they have been 'vetted' by the LA.

Evolve: Category 3 minimum document uploads

- Itinerary
- All Visit Risk Assessment
- Specific Risk assessment: e.g. Activity, Transport, Residential, Oversea, Care plan etc.

At the current time, the school will not undertake overnight visits due to Covid-19 restrictions.

4. 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.

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 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.

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy staff 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.

5. Monitoring

To ensure policy and procedures are being followed the establishment will undertake monitoring of off-site visits. SVS will provide sample monitoring of visits 'in the field'.

6. Insurance

Appropriate insurance must be in place for all visits. The responsibility for arranging adequate insurance cover rests with **Headteacher** in conjunction with the organiser of each journey. For visits abroad, additional journey insurance **must** be taken out.

As an employer, in addition to the standard public liability cover which all establishments will have in place, Derbyshire County Council offers LA Schools the opportunity to buy into an annual 'blanket' personal accident cover / travel insurance, covering any off-site activities and overseas travel ventures.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body, **Headteacher** and EVC to determine whether any additional insurance should be taken out. Academies and other non-school based establishments must make their own insurance arrangements. Insurance in St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy is provided by Department for Education (DfE)

7. Inclusion

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to treat a young person less favourably and/or fail to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled persons are not placed at a substantial disadvantage without justification.

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy endorses the principles of:

- a presumption of entitlement to participate
- accessibility through direct or realistic adaption or modification
- integration through participation with peers

Adjustments made to include a disabled child or young person should not impinge unduly on the planned purpose of the activity.

Expectations of staff must be reasonable, so that what is required of them (to include a given young person) is within their competence.

8. Behaviour

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy encourage the use of codes of behaviour conduct as a means of establishing appropriate expectations of young person's behaviour. Such codes will be explained to both young people and those with parental authority prior to a visit, so reducing the opportunity for misunderstanding both expectations and the sanctions that may be invoked where a code is breached.

Whilst inclusion of young people and adults on offsite visits will be the norm at St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, this will not be the case where health and safety of the individual or other group members would be significantly compromised. Visit Leaders will ensure that they consult the LA and parents well in advance of the visit where inclusion is an issue.

9. Evaluation

Visit leaders must have a clear understanding of the learning outcomes they hope to achieve. Outdoor learning, off site visits and activities have the potential to deliver a very wide range of benefits and outcomes, these should be prioritised and recorded on EVOLVE.

For a positive safety culture to exist and develop, learning from past experience, incidents and mistakes is a crucial component in any safety system. A review/evaluation of the safety management of all of the *establishment's* educational visits by the Visit Leaders, EVC and Headteacher on a regular basis will take place. This should include a review of incidents, near-misses and accidents.

10.Emergency Procedures

The risk management for each visit will identify the relevant emergency procedures during the visit. For any off-site visit a home contact will be designating by the establishment who may be needed as a link between the party, the parents/carers, the establishment and the County Council in the event of an emergency. The home contact must be an employee, be unrelated to anyone attending the visit and be confident in providing support in a crisis.

For visits that take place outside normal establishment hours:

- A completed Emergency Card for Visit Leaders (or equivalent) must be with the Visit Leader at all times
- A completed Emergency Action Card (or equivalent) must be with the emergency home contact(s) at all times, where access to EVOLVE is not possible.
- A First Contact Emergency Action Card can be used when taking an initial a call from a Visit Leader in an emergency.

In the event of a delay in retuning (of more than 1 hour), or of an incident resulting in harm to any attending participant, staff member or volunteer, then the establishment must be contacted as soon as possible to inform **Headteacher** or designated deputy 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. In appropriate circumstances the Visit Leader will be designated to undertake

this task.

- If the incident is very serious to contact Derbyshire County Council using the emergency contact phone number and details given below:

  The emergency contact phone number for Derbyshire County Council during office hours is 00-44-1629-538364 or outside office hours 00-44-1629-533085. Upon connection, please ask for the Emergency Planning Duty Officer. Please note that calls to the numbers above are to be used only in extreme circumstances, such as serious injuries and/or fatalities. Under no circumstances should these numbers be given to young people or to their parents or guardians.

11. Accident Reporting

All accidents will be handled in line with Derbyshire's County Council's Accident Reporting Procedures.

Academies must ensure they have equivalent procedures to meet the requirements of the law and good practice. Where an incident or accident occurs on an activity led by a Provider, please ensure this is reported to the LA Visits Team.

Chair of Governors/Management Board

Signature: …… Name: …… Date: …….

Headteacher/Manager

Signature: …… Name: …… Date: …….