

2. The Value of Offsite Visits and the Benefits of Outdoor Learning

2.1 Foreword from the Director of Children, Family and Adult Services

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council recognises the value and importance of offsite visits and outdoor learning, and fully endorses the vision set out in the 2006 Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom that “every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances”.

Offsite visits and outdoor activities can provide the most enjoyable, memorable, and powerful learning experiences which can not only enrich the curriculum, but also significantly improve academic attainment. Following detailed research, a recent Ofsted Report concluded that “when planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils’ personal, social and emotional development” and that “well organised activities outside the classroom contributed much to the quality and depth of learning”. I would therefore encourage all schools to ensure that their curriculum planning includes sufficient well structured opportunities for all students to engage in high-quality learning experiences outside the classroom.

The aim of this Guidance is to encourage and enable staff to lead high-quality offsite visits and outdoor learning experiences sensibly and safely. The care and protection of children and young people is clearly vital at all times, but it is also important to weigh any risks involved against the benefits, and to maintain a balanced and proportionate approach. It is also important that children and young people have opportunities to learn how to overcome challenges and to identify and manage risks themselves.

These guidelines play a central role in our positive support to all providers of offsite visits and outdoor learning for children and young people in the East Riding, and I encourage you to use them as the basis of good practice. I would also like to thank all colleagues involved in their production.

Alison Michalska
Director of Children, Family and Adult Services

2.2 The value of Offsite Visits and Outdoor Learning

- Offsite visits provide wonderful opportunities to extend young peoples’ learning and to enrich their understanding and appreciation of themselves, others and the world around them. Indeed, for most, they offer immensely enjoyable, memorable and life enhancing experiences. In many cases, they may act as the catalyst for improved academic achievement, a lifetime interest or, even, professional fulfilment. Overseas travel is particularly valuable in enabling young people to explore and experience new cultures, and to broaden their horizons.
- It is widely acknowledged that offsite visits can significantly benefit the personal and social development of young people, in particular by:
 - raising achievement, through improved self-esteem and motivation;
 - developing key skills;
 - developing social education and citizenship;
 - promoting education for sustainable development
 - promoting health and fitness
- Offsite visits also form an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and they complement the learning done at school. In some instances, they form a statutory part of the national curriculum programme of study, and a compulsory part of the examination syllabi. Many believe that there is great educational value in taking students “out of the classroom” to see the world at first hand, and that such experiences help to “bring education to life”. Relationships

BASIC ESSENTIALS (BE)

2. The Value of Offsite Visits and the Benefits of Outdoor Learning

between young people and also with staff are often transformed for the better, and this can have a positive ongoing effect on the whole learning and development process.

2.3 “Every Child Matters” and Outdoor Learning

- Learning outside the classroom and residential experiences can play a significant role in achieving the outcomes of Every Child Matters. Participation in these activities not only encourages healthy lifestyles, it develops the personal attributes and social skills that are vital for achievement, social inclusion, responsible citizenship, enterprise and employability, and it helps children and young people to learn to manage risk.

Every Child Matters outcome	Outdoor Learning contribution to ECM
Enjoy and Achieve – develop the capacity to enjoy learning and succeed in it	Developing self-awareness, self-esteem, selfconfidence & teamwork. Engagement & motivation. Extending horizons. Real-world learning.
Stay Safe – learn how to stay safe and manage risk	Developing the ability to assess and manage risk while taking part in challenging activities.
Be Healthy – understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle	Participating in healthy physical activities. Developing lifelong recreational interests. Maintaining mental wellbeing through participation in positive activities.
Make a Positive Contribution – form relationships and participate in society	Developing awareness of and respect for self, others & environment. Building relationships through shared experiences. Engagement in positive instead of anti-social activities.
Achieve Economic Well-being – acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to adult and working life.	Developing attributes and personal skills for employability & enterprise. Real-world learning

For more details regarding the contribution of Outdoor Learning to Every Child Matters, see: <http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/01/2.1b-Every-Child-Matters-Outdoor-Learning.pdf>

For more details of research regarding the value of Learning Outside the Classroom, see: <http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/01/2.4c-Research-Supporting-Outdoor-Learning-and-LOTC.pdf>

2.4 The importance of knowing and complying with good practice

- Whilst concerns over safety, and fears of litigation, may have increased in recent years, it is clear from the views expressed below that leading authorities, from a wide range of backgrounds, continue to acknowledge the importance and value of properly organised, well led offsite visits:
- *“Teachers should not abandon school visits – safely conducted and properly supervised, they are an important part of any child’s education”*
David Milliband, School Standards Minister Sept 2003

BASIC ESSENTIALS (BE)

2. The Value of Offsite Visits and the Benefits of Outdoor Learning

- *“We have issued a wealth of good practice guidance which helps ensure that the vast majority of school visits are carried out safely. Many schools across England already have staff trained as Educational Visits Coordinators, who liaise with the outdoor education adviser in the local education authority, and help teachers to assess and manage the risks of a visit.”*
Ivan Lewis, Skills and Vocational Education Minister Sept 2003
- For visits to be conducted safely, employees clearly have a legal and professional responsibility to ensure that they follow the guidance provided, and seek further advice where appropriate. The aim of these documents and of associated training is to support and encourage staff to follow best practice, and to continue leading safe and successful offsite visits.
- It is important to recognise that the most valuable safeguard for all visits and activities is the competence of the leaders themselves. Training of staff in areas such as risk assessment and group leadership skills is thus crucial to safety, and is considered an integral part of the wider support and guidance made available by the Local Authority.
- Whilst few question the value of offsite visits, the safety of young people must never be taken for granted, and sadly there have been a few fatal accidents on visits in recent years. All those responsible for young people on offsite visits must guard against complacency, and these guidelines can be a valuable tool to remind staff of good practice.
- By following recommended practice, staff should be able to organise and lead visits in confidence, without undue fears of litigation. Indeed, it is a testimony to the professionalism and care of staff that serious accidents on visits are extremely rare. Furthermore, providing members exercise reasonable care and follow recommended practice, they are unlikely to be considered liable if an accident occurs.
- Learning Outside the Classroom has a vital part to play in meeting the demands of the National Curriculum, and in achieving the goal of personalised learning. Good schools have always used educational visits, residentials and other activities outside the classroom as part of their whole-school approach. To consider how Learning Outside the Classroom relates to the National Curriculum see the following websites:
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/2.3a-National-Curriculum-and-LOtC-Matrix.pdf>
- For further information about the value and importance of outdoor learning, see the following websites:
<http://oeapng.info/downloads/making-the-case/>
LOtC Manifesto Summary:
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/2.2b-LOtC-Manifesto-Summary.pdf>
High Quality Outdoor Education publication:
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/5.1b-High-Quality-Outdoor-Education-Publication-1.pdf>
Ofsted LOtC Summary:
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/2.4a-Ofsted-LOtC-Summary.pdf>
Research supporting outdoor learning
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/2.4c-Research-Supporting-Outdoor-Learning-and-LOtC-Final-1.pdf>
Time for change – outdoor learning research
<http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/05/2.4e-Time-for-change.pdf>

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council recognises and appreciates the invaluable contribution and enormous commitment of all those involved in the planning, leading and supervising offsite visits, many of whom do so voluntarily. Indeed. The Local Authority wholeheartedly encourages teachers and other leaders to continue to offer these wonderful learning opportunities to young people.