

St. Joseph's In The Park



Policy Title Off Site Visits	Date Summer 2023
Owner Head Bursar	Date for Review Summer 2025 (Finance & General Purposes Committee)

This policy is for whole school including EYFS.

1 Introduction

Off-site visits are activities arranged by or on behalf of the school, and which take place outside the school grounds. The governors and teaching staff believe that off-site activities can supplement and enrich the curriculum of the school by providing experiences which would otherwise be impossible. All off-site activities must serve an educational purpose, enhancing and enriching our children's learning experiences.

In this policy, we seek to establish a clear and coherent structure for the planning and evaluation of our off-site visits, and to ensure that any risks are managed and kept to a minimum, for the safety and health of all pupils, at all times. Within these limits, we seek to make our visits available to all pupils, and wherever possible to make them accessible to those with disabilities. The visits usually take place within the school day.

2 Aims and objectives

The aims of our off-site visits are to:

- enhance curricular and recreational opportunities for our pupils;
- provide a wider range of experiences for our pupils than could be provided on the school site alone;
- promote the independence of our children as learners, and enable them to grow and develop in new learning environments.

These visits begin with short excursions into the local area in the Pre School, and progress to a residential experience towards the end of the Juniors.

3 Curriculum links

For each subject in the curriculum, there is a corresponding programme of activities (which includes visits to the school by specialists).

4 Residential activities

All Junior children have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit. This activity is during term time. Parents pay additional costs to support this activity,

5 How visits may be authorised

The Headmaster will appoint a teacher as party leader to be responsible for running the activity.

He will:

- approve visits that meet the aims of this policy
- ensure that risk assessments are completed;

- assign competent staff to lead and help with trips;
- organise related staff training;
- verify that all accompanying adults, including private car drivers, have had satisfactory DBS checks, and that the letter from our coach company (see 6) assures us that their drivers, too, have had DBS checks;
- make sure that all necessary permissions and medical forms are obtained;
- keep records of visits, and ensure that there are regular generic assessments of the risks (e.g. road-crossing) where there are frequent visits to local venues.

Where staff are proposing to arrange an off-site activity, they must seek and obtain the approval of the Headmaster before any commitment is made. A comprehensive visit plan should be provided by the member of staff to allow for an informed decision to be made. Visit plan templates are available from the school office.

It is our policy that all children should be able to participate in educational visits. Where a child with a disability is eligible for a trip, we will make every effort to ensure that s/he is included. We may seek guidance from parents to help us to adapt our programme, and we will make any reasonable adjustments to our itinerary to include a child with disabilities. Any such adjustments will be included in the risk assessment.

6 Risk assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment is carried out by the group leader before any proposed visit to a new location. It will assess the risks which might be encountered on the visit, and will indicate measures to prevent or reduce them. The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What safety measures are needed to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?

Staff planning an off-site activity should make a preliminary visit to the venue, in order to carry out an on-site risk assessment:

- the probable weather conditions at the time of year proposed for the trip
- the facilities available, with due regard to the proposed size of the group
- the site's suitability with regard to the age and any particular needs of the children
- the venue's own approach to security and to health and safety

Venues providing instructor-led activities will have their own risk assessments for particular sessions, and these assessments may be adopted if it is impractical for the group leader to experience the activity beforehand, or lacks the skills required to make informed judgements about the risks it may involve. Approval will not have been given unless there is satisfaction with the venue, its instructors and their risk assessment procedures.

It is important to assess and record any health, safety or security issues that are identified during the preliminary visit. Any such issues will be taken into account when the final decision is taken on whether the visit should proceed, and the Visit Plan must state both the extent of any risks involved, and the measures that will be taken to reduce or eliminate them. The cost of these preliminary visits will be borne by the school, and should be built into the overall financial arrangements for the visit itself.

Any trip will require a minimum of two adults. An activity should normally have sufficient adults taking part to provide the following minimum ratios:

- 1 adult to 10 pupils in Years 3 to 6
- 1 adult to 6 pupils in Years 1 & 2
- 1 adult to 4 pupils in Early Years

However, these are minimum requirements, and may not provide adequate supervision in all cases.

A risk assessment must also cover transport to and from the venue. The coach company we use on a regular basis has provided us with a letter detailing all the health and safety measures it routinely takes, including:

- the provision and required use of seat belts;
- proper vetting of the driver;
- proper insurance for the driver;
- details of first aid and emergency equipment;
- breakdown procedures.

The group leader will double-check that all adults helping to supervise the trip have been subject to DBS checks.

A copy of the completed risk assessment will be given to the Headmaster, and all adults supervising the trip.

Annual visits

For visits to locations that are made each year, a risk assessment is kept for review and updating as necessary. The group leader, along with the Headmaster must ensure that any changes to the trip or to the assessment of risk are noted and evaluated accordingly.

Generic Risk Assessments

Generic risk assessments for a range of activities are available on the common area of the school's server. These assessments may be submitted along with the comprehensive visit plan. However, it is essential that these risk assessments are scrutinised and adapted as necessary.

7 Transport

The costing of off-site activities should include any of the following that apply:

- transport;
- entrance fees;
- provision of any special resources or equipment;
- costs related to adult helpers;
- any refreshments that the school has opted to pay for.

Transport arrangements will allow a seat for each member of the party. It is our policy only to use coaches fitted with 3-point seat belts, and to insist that they be worn by all those participating in the visit.

Where private cars are used for transport, the school insurance policy will cover such journeys. The group leader is responsible for checking the driver has been subject to the normal DBS checks.

8 Communication with parents

The parents of children taking part in an off-site activity will be provided with all appropriate information about the intended visit. Parents must give their permission in writing before a child can be involved in any off-site activities. Parents are asked to sign a universal permission declaration at the time of joining the school which gives permission for their child(ren) to take part in off-site visits. Parents not wishing to sign this declaration will be given a permission form for each visit. Parents who have agreed to sign the universal permission declaration may withhold consent for any particular trip by submitting a written withdrawal of consent prior to the trip.

Funding for off-site activities is provided mainly by parental contributions. This must be made clear to parents in all correspondence about an educational visit at the planning stage.

The timetable for the payment of contributions should allow for the Headmaster to make a decision about the financial viability of the activity in reasonable time.

9 Further health and safety considerations

All adults accompanying a party must be made aware, by the party leader, of the emergency procedures which will apply. Each adult should be provided with an emergency telephone number. This will normally be the school number, but where an activity extends beyond the normal school day, the home and/or mobile telephone number of a designated emergency contact should be provided.

Before a party leaves school, the school office should be provided with a list of everyone, children and adults, travelling with the party, together with a programme and timetable for the activity as well as mobile phone contact details.

The safety of the party, and especially the children, is of paramount importance. During the activity, the party leader must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that safety. This involves taking note of any information provided by medical questionnaire returns, and ensuring that children are both safe and well looked after at all times.

Prior to an activity, if it is felt that the behaviour of an individual child is likely to compromise the safety of others or the good name of the school, the party leader should discuss with the Headmaster the possibility of excluding that child from the activity.

10 Visit Plan

The Visit Plan for intended educational visits must include the following:

- risk assessment (including indication that the venue's risk assessments have been discussed);
- report on preliminary visit;
- applications for approval of visit;
- general information;
- names, ages, contact details, permission forms, medical records and other relevant details of all those going on the visit;
- travel schedule;
- accommodation plan (if applicable);
- full plan of activities;
- intended arrangements for supervision;

- insurance arrangements for all members of the group;
- emergency contacts and procedures;
- general communications information;
- guidance for party leaders;
- guidance for the emergency contact and/or Headmaster;
- medical questionnaire returns;
- first-aid provision.

11 Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the Headmaster who reports back to the Governing body and will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.