Victoria Lane Academy

Educational Visits Policy 2026 - 2027

A Member of the Tudhoe Learning Trust

Context

We believe that educational visits are an integral part of the entitlement of every pupil to an effective and balanced curriculum. Appropriately planned visits are known to enhance learning and improve attainment, and so form a key part of what makes *Victoria Lane Academy* a supportive and effective learning environment. The benefits to pupils of taking part in visits and learning outside the classroom include, but are not limited to:

- Improvements in their ability to cope with change.
- Increased critical curiosity and resilience.
- Opportunities for meaning, making, creativity, developing learning relationships and practicing strategic awareness.
- Increased levels of trust and opportunities to examine the concept of trust (us in them, them in us, them in themselves, them in each other).
- Improved achievement and attainment across a range of curricular subjects. Pupils are active participants not passive consumers, and a wide range of learning styles can flourish.
- Enhanced opportunities for 'real world' 'learning in context' and the development of the social and emotional aspects of intelligence.
- Increased risk management skills through opportunities for involvement in practical risk-benefit decisions in a range of contexts. i.e. encouraging pupils to become more risk aware as opposed to risk averse.
- Greater sense of personal responsibility.
- Possibilities for genuine team working including enhanced communication skills.
- Improved environmental appreciation, knowledge, awareness and understanding of a variety of environments.
- Improved awareness and knowledge of the importance and practices of sustainability.
- Physical skill acquisition and the development of a fit and healthy lifestyle.

Application

Any visit that leaves the school grounds is covered by this policy, whether as part of the curriculum, during school time, or outside the normal school day.

In addition to this Educational Visits Policy, *Victoria Lane Academy*

1. Adopts the Local Authority's (LA) document: **'Durham County Council Educational Visits, Off-Site Activities and On-Site Adventures Policy and Guidance'** (All staff have access to this via EVOLVE).
2. Adopts National Guidance www.oeapng.info, (as recommended by the LA).
3. Uses EVOLVE, the web-based planning, notification, approval, monitoring and communication system for off-site activities.

All staff are required to plan and execute visits in line with school policy (i.e. this document), Local Authority policy, and National Guidelines. Staff are particularly directed to be familiar with the roles and responsibilities outlined within the guidance.

Types of Visit & Approval

There are three 'types' of visit:

1. **Visits/activities within the 'School Learning Area' that are part of the normal curriculum and take place during the normal school day.**
   These follow the 'School Learning Area' Operating Procedure (Appendix 1).
2. **Other non-residential visits within the UK that do not involve an adventurous activity.**
   These are entered on EVOLVE by the visit leader and submitted to the EVC for checking. The EVC then submits to the Head for approval.
3. **Visits that are overseas, residential, or involve an adventurous activity.**
   As above, but the Head authorises and then submits to the LA for approval. Note that there are a number of venues which have been given delegated approval so the Head can approve – see Evolve for the most up to date list.

Roles and Responsibilities

Visit leaders are responsible for the planning of their visits, and for entering these on EVOLVE (where required). They should obtain outline permission for a visit from the Head Teacher or EVC prior to planning, and certainly before making any commitments. Visit leaders have responsibility for ensuring that their visits will comply with all relevant guidance and requirements.

The Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) is Jaime Alton who will support and challenge colleagues over visits and learning outside the classroom (LOtC) activities. The EVC is the first point of contact for advice on visit related matters, and will check final visit plans on EVOLVE before submitting them to the Head. The EVC sets up and manages the staff accounts on EVOLVE, and uploads generic school documents, etc.

The Head Teacher has responsibility for authorising all visits, and for submitting all overseas, residential or adventurous activity visits to the LA for approval, via EVOLVE.

The Governing Body's role is that of a 'critical friend'. There is no requirement for governors to approve visits but they will be informed at regular governor meetings what visits have taken place and what is planned. Individual governors may request 'read-only' access to EVOLVE.

The Local Authority is responsible for the final approval (via EVOLVE) of all visits that are either overseas, residential, and/or involve an adventurous activity.

Staff Competence

We recognise that staff competence is the single most important factor in the safe management of visits, and so we support staff in developing their competence in the following ways:

- An apprenticeship system, where staff new to visits assist and work alongside experienced visit leaders before taking on a leadership role.
- Supervision by senior staff on some educational visits.
- Support for staff to attend training courses relevant to their role, where necessary.

In deciding whether a member of staff is competent to be a visit leader, the Head Teacher will take into account the following factors:

- Relevant experience.
- Previous relevant training.

- The prospective leader's ability to make dynamic risk management judgements, and take charge in the event of an emergency.
- Knowledge of the pupils, the venue, and the activities to be undertaken.

Emergency Procedures

Every visit will have nominated emergency contacts. If the visit is off site for only the duration of the school day the school telephone number is sufficient to give as an emergency contact. However, if the visit is of a residential nature ***two*** 24hr contact numbers will be identified (i.e. mobile and/or home phone number). The emergency contacts will have a copy of the Emergency Card (EV8) with the relevant emergency contact details on. They will also have access to all the relevant medical and next of kin information. The visit leader will have a completed Emergency Card (EV7) with them at all times (this will detail the contact details for the emergency contacts).

A critical incident is any incident where events go beyond the normal coping mechanisms and experience of the visit leadership team.

The school has an emergency plan in place to deal with a critical incident during a visit (see Appendix 2). All staff on visits are familiar with this plan and it is tested at least bi-annually and following any major staffing changes.

When an incident overwhelms the establishment's emergency response capability, or where it involves serious injury or fatality, or where it is likely to attract media attention then assistance will be sought from the local authority.

Educational Visits Checklist

VLA's Educational Visits Checklist forms part of the risk management process for visits and off-site activities. This has been adapted from the LA's generic checklist. A visit should only go ahead if the answer to all relevant questions is 'YES'. *VLA's* Educational Visits Checklist may be downloaded from EVOLVE Resources.

Parental Consent

Consent is not required for activities within the School Learning Area that are part of the normal curriculum during normal school time. However, parents will always be informed of the detail when their child is undertaking an educational visit.

Written consent is only requested for activities which need a higher level of risk management or those that take place outside of school hours. A 'one off' consent will be signed by parents when their child enrols at school. This will cover a child's participation in any of these types of activities throughout their time at the school.

However, specific parental consent will be obtained for visits of a residential, overseas or adventurous nature. For these visits, sufficient information must be made available to parents so that consent is given on a 'fully informed' basis.

Inclusion

Victoria Lane Academy will make reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled participants being placed at a substantial disadvantage. However, the Equality Act 2010 does not require us to place employees or participants at risk of injury or ill health in order to make reasonable adjustments.
If appropriate, we may ask the parent/carer of a particular pupil to accompany them on the visit. If there are any concerns about whether school can provide for a pupil's safety or the safety of others on a visit due the specific needs of a pupil we will seek advice from the DCC Health & Safety Team.

Charging / funding for visits

Victoria Lane Academy will arrange payment for visits on an individual visit basis, Visits such as residential trips, which will be more expensive, will have arrangements in place for payment to be made gradually over a period of time leading up to the visit.
Those pupils who receive specific benefits may be entitled to attend the visit with no charge. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Transport

Use of staff cars to transport pupils – Victoria Lane Academy follows the Local Authority advice. When transporting pupils in private vehicles, School Name will ensure the relevant car seats are used as required by law and that the staff member has appropriate business insurance in place. Two members of staff will always be present if there is a need to transport an individual pupil. School will always inform parents if there is an intention to transport their child in a staff car during an off-site visit, and signed consent will be requested.

Use of Parents and Volunteers Cars – *Victoria Lane Academy follows* the guidance in the DCC Educational Visits Policy. The Parent and Volunteer Drivers Agreement form (EV5) will be completed and retained in school. This will be done on an annual basis. Victoria Lane Academy will ensure supervision arrangements are considered and the relevant DBS checks are undertaken. We will also complete the Driving at Work Risk Assessment. (this will also be done where employees are using their own vehicle to transport pupils.)

When transporting pupils in private vehicles Victoria Lane Academy will ensure the relevant car seats are used as required by law and that the appropriate insurance is in place.

Insurance

Note: additional school journey insurance is only mandatory for overseas visits. See Local Authority (LA) guidance for further information.

Victoria Lane Academy is covered by Zurich Insurance for activities when away from the school site, home base or when employees are working in the community within the UK. We are not covered for personal accident benefits or loss of personal property while on educational visits. If necessary, we can arrange this insurance for individual visits. For overseas visits separate insurance will be taken out.

Other topics

Swimming Lessons
Swimming lessons are provided by DCC SLA. Transport is via DCC chartered bus. Children are escorted by one or more members of staff depending on group size. Changing room supervision is under-taken by school staff and/or DCC swimming teacher.

Dismissal of pupils after evening activities

Children staying back at school are dismissed from school as follows. Those children that have parental permission to walk home after clubs are dismissed by staff and leave school independently. All other children are handed to parents by the club supervisor or other staff member. Any child that remains will be kept in school and their parents/carers will be contacted to make suitable arrangements for their collection.

Appendix 1 – School Learning Area
General

Visits/activities within the 'School Learning Area' that are part of the normal curriculum and take place during the normal school day (e.g. museums, libraries, farms etc) follow the Operating Procedure below.

These visits/activities:

- do not require parental consent
- do not normally need additional risk assessments / notes (other than following the Operating Procedure below).
- Do not need to be recorded on EVOLVE

Boundaries

This area includes, but is not limited to, the following frequently used venues: *e.g.*

- *Local Park*
- *Local Church – St James' Coundon*
- *Welfare Hall, Leeholme*
- *Local Supermarket*
- *Venues within in walking distance e.g. Cenotaph*

Operating Procedure for School Learning Area

The following are potentially significant issues/hazards within our School Learning Area:

- Road traffic.
- Other people / members of the public / animals.
- Losing a pupil.
- Uneven surfaces and slips, trips, and falls.
- Weather conditions.
- Activity specific issues when doing environmental fieldwork (nettles, brambles, rubbish, etc).

These are managed by a combination of the following:

- The Head or Deputy/EVC must give verbal approval before a group leaves. Only staff judged competent to supervise groups in this environment are approved. A current list of approved staff is maintained by the EVC and office.
- The concept and Operating Procedure of the 'School Learning Area' is explained to all new parents when their child joins the school, and a synopsis is in the School Prospectus.
- There will normally be a minimum of two adults. Staff are familiar with the area, including any 'no go areas', and have practiced appropriate group management techniques.
- Pupils have been trained and have practiced standard techniques for road crossings in a group. Where appropriate, pupils are fully briefed on what to do if they become separated from the group.
- All remotely supervised work in the School Learning Area is done in 'buddy' pairs as a minimum.
- Pupils' clothing and footwear is checked for appropriateness prior to leaving school.
- Staff are aware of any relevant pupil medical information and ensure that any required medication is available.
- Staff will deposit in the office a list of all pupils and staff, a proposed route, and an estimated time of return.
- A mobile phone is taken with each group and the office have a note of the number.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment is taken when needed (e.g. gloves, goggles)

Appendix 2 – Emergency Procedure

The school's emergency response to an incident is based on the following key factors:

1. There is always a nominated emergency base contact for any visit (during school hours this is the office).
2. This nominated base contact will either be an experienced member of the senior management team, or will be able to contact an experienced senior manager at all times.
3. For activities that take place during normal school hours, the visit leadership team will be aware of any relevant medical information for all participants, including staff.
4. For activities that take place outside normal school hours, the visit leadership team and the emergency contact/s will be aware of any relevant medical information and emergency contact information for all participants, including staff.
5. The visit leader/s and the base contact/s know to request support from the local authority in the event that an incident overwhelms the establishment's emergency response capability, involves serious injury or fatality, or where it is likely to attract media attention.
6. For visits that take place outside the School Learning Area, the visit leader will carry an Emergency Card (EV7).
7. This Emergency Procedure is tested through both desk top exercises and periodic scenario calls from visit leaders.

Policy Reviewed: July 2026 **Date of Next Review: July 2027**

Headteacher: *H. D. Whitfield*

Chair of Governors: *K Short*