



The Hinckley

SCHOOL

Educational Visits Policy 2025-26

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Policy Statement

We acknowledge the immense value of Educational Visits to children, young people and vulnerable adults as recognised in the DCSF Manifesto 'Learning Outside the Classroom'. We believe that all children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care should be entitled to experience learning and enrichment outside the classroom environment.

This policy is intended to assist the Visit Leader and their teams in the planning and delivery of learning experiences outside the classroom.

Context

We believe that educational visits are an integral part of the entitlement of every child 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 The Hinckley School a supportive and effective learning environment. The benefits of children taking part in visits and learning outside the classroom include (but are not limited to):

- Improvements in their ability to cope with change and novelty.
- 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. Students are active participant's 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 giving them the tools and experience necessary to assess their own risks in a range of contexts.
- 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, whether as part of the curriculum, during school time or outside the normal school day, is covered by this policy.

The Hinckley School adopts Leicestershire County Council **Off-site Visits Policy**

available via the EVOLVE homepage. EVOLVE is the web-based notification, approval, monitoring and communication system, used by Leicestershire County Council, to which all staff have access.)

All staff are required to plan and execute visits in line with Leicestershire County Council policy. Staff are particularly directed to be familiar with the roles and responsibilities outlined within the guidance.

The rest of this policy explains how visit approval and planning takes place at The Hinckley School.

Introduction

Educational visits are seen as an integral and fundamental part of children's, young peoples and vulnerable adult's educational experience. The activities and experiences provided are some of the most memorable for children and young people, can be life changing, and often remain with them for life.

Visiting new environments and places such as the countryside or coast makes children and young people aware of different landscapes; this often results in a greater understanding and appreciation of their own environment and offer opportunities to enrich learning and raise achievement in many areas of formal and informal learning. Visiting new areas develops an understanding of others' needs

Types of Visit

There are three types of visit, for each of which the approval process is slightly different:

1. staff using the local area to deliver lessons
2. other visits within the UK excluding adventurous activities
3. Any visit involving adventure activities and / or involving travel abroad

Roles and Responsibilities

Visit leaders are responsible for the planning of visits including completing EVOLVE but should involve both accompanying colleagues and the children in this process. Staff must make appropriate checks of any third-party providers. Staff are advised to obtain outline permission for a visit, from the Operation Management group, before beginning to plan and certainly before making any commitments.

The EVC is Dave Wood who will support and challenge colleagues over visits and learning outside the classroom. They are the first point of call for advice on visit related matters. The EVC will check final visit plans on EVOLVE before submitting them to the head.

The Head of School has responsibility for monitoring and final approval of all visits.

The Governors of the School have overall responsibility for the school and will fulfil their role and responsibilities by overseeing the work of the EVC and the Head of School by supporting and challenging the process and purpose of educational visits organised through The Hinckley School.

Staff Competence

We realise that staff competence is the single most important aspect of safe trip management and so we support staff in developing this competence in the following ways:

- An apprenticeship system, where staff new to visits assist and work alongside experienced trip leaders before taking on a leadership role
- Supervision by Senior staff of some educational visits
- Support for staff to attend training courses relevant to the role of visit leader

In deciding whether any member of staff is competent to be a visit leader the EVC and the Head of School will consider the following factors:

- Level of relevant experience
- Any relevant training undertaken
- The emotional and leadership ability of any prospective visit leader to make dynamic risk management judgements and take charge of any emergencies that may arise.
- Knowledge of the students, the venue and the activities to be undertaken.

Visit Planning and Approval

The internal school approval process is as follows for each type of visit:

1. Local area visits will follow the extending learning territory policy. Visits within the UK excluding adventure activities – these are put on EVOLVE and approved internally by the EVC/Head of School. Visits should be submitted to the EVC via EVOLVE according to the time period set out in Visit Check List for Approval'
2. Visits involving adventure activities must be put on EVOLVE and submitted to the EVC at least 29 days in advance. The school is required to submit these for Local Authority Approval 28 days in advance. Visit leaders must check if an activity provider holds either an AALA licence (http://www.aals.org.uk/aals/provider_search.php) or an LOTC quality badge (<http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>). If they don't then they must complete a Provider Questionnaire (National Guidance document 8p)
3. Visits Abroad require detailed planning to commence well in advance and the head must be kept up to date with progress. Checks must be made on any third party providers and permission from the head teacher to use them be obtained before any deposits are paid. Third party providers who hold the LOTC quality badge (see above) do not require further checks. Those who do not hold this accreditation should complete and return a Provider Questionnaire (National Guidance document 8p), which visit leaders should scrutinise.

4. The head will need to submit final plans to the Local Authority 28 days before the departure date.

Requirements and Procedures for ALL visits

All trips should follow the procedures set out in Appendix 5 'Educational Visit Check List for Approval'.

Emergency Procedures

The school has an emergency plan in place to deal with a critical incident during a visit (see Appendix 1). All staff on visits are familiar with this plan and it is tested at least biannually and following any major staffing changes.

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

Transport

The Hinckley School follows the LA transport policy regarding School / hired self-drive minibus. Ultimately the driver has the responsibility for carrying out pre-checks. However, these should be undertaken by the school minibus manager prior to the handing over of the keys to the driver.

Trip Leaders hiring coaches must follow the guidelines set out in Appendix 6 Hiring of coaches

Use of staff cars to transport students - Staff cars may only be used to transport students when the driver has business insurance and a clean driving licence (a record of both of these being checked will be kept by the EVC). Any use of private vehicles will be subject to a specific risk assessment.

The Visit Leaders – How to plan a visit

The following elements should be considered when planning any Educational Visit or activity:

1. What is the educational purpose and objective of the visit/activity?
2. Has the necessary approval been obtained?
3. Has a Risk Assessment been completed, approved and actioned?
4. Has parental consent and medical information been obtained?
5. Are all staff/volunteers familiar with the emergency procedures?
6. Has final approval been granted by the Headteacher?
7. Has final approval been granted from the Authority for all activities, where appropriate?

8. Are all adults leading and attending the trip fully aware and do they each understand how to raise a safeguarding concern whilst on a trip?

All of the above must be recorded using the EVOLVE system

Research related to the visit location is essential and where reasonably practicable to do so a preliminary visit to the location is a highly desirable aspect of planning a visit – as it assists in the risk management process.

It is good practice to involve all staff who will be attending in the planning process of a visit. This can help to educate them in aspects of risk management and makes it more likely that they will be aware of hazards and risks and ways to deal with them safely.

Risk Management is not solely about completing a written risk assessment form. Whilst this is an important element in the planning stage (and creates a valuable record of this process), it's the ability of the visit leader(s) to monitor changing conditions during the visit and react appropriately that is the main determinant of safety on a visit. For further details regarding risk management see Appendix 1 at the rear of this policy.

Visit Leader(s) need to have prepared for the following:

- Assembly, departure and the journey.
- Arrival at the visit location and fire precautions.
- Accommodation arrangements.
- Communication with young people during the visit.
- Group control and group size.
- A detailed programme which clearly links activities and aims.
- Downtime (there should be no such concept as 'freetime').
- Homesickness, accidents and illness.
- Participation in 'incidental' or 'ancillary activities not central to the visit.
- The return journey.

Avoiding Disappointment/Contingency Planning

The trip Leader in the planning stage and in the production of risk assessments should include alternative plans (Plan B) to cope with weather changes, activities not possible, young people not coping with the activities or emergencies. Do not hesitate to move to your Plan B if conditions require it. For further details regarding contingency planning see Appendix 2 at the back of this policy.

Inclusion

The Hinckley School will ensure that students are not disadvantaged when it comes to educational visits to meet at least the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010. When planning a trip this should be considered.

Financial Planning

The visit leader is to ensure the financial viability of the visit at all times. In order to ensure that the costings are appropriate and that all costs have been considered, the visit leader is to meet with the school finance manager and must complete pre-educational visit check sheet. *Failure to complete the check sheet could jeopardise the visit as approval will not be given by the school until this is completed.*

Visit Leader

The visit leader has overall responsibility for the management of the visit and must:

- Follow LA and governing body regulations, guidelines and policies.
- Recognise that whilst leading the visit s/he is representing the Head/Manager, school/establishment and the LA.
- Ensure that all accompanying adults, whether employees or volunteers, are fully briefed on their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure the overall maintenance of supervision, order and discipline at all times.
- Make adequate arrangements for the safety and well-being of all young people at all times.
- Introduce appropriate child protection/safeguarding measures.
- Make appropriate and adequate preparations for emergencies in conjunction with the EVC and ensure that all accompanying leaders are familiar with these procedures.
- Arrange for clearly understood delegation in his/her absence.
- Ensure that persons instructing adventure activities are competent and properly qualified.
- Ensure that the visit and activities are suitable for the group.
- Ensure that accompanying adults are aware of young people's special educational or medical needs
- Consider the planning checklist (**Evolve Process**) to ensure all procedures have been followed.
- Prepare a specific risk assessment for the visit.
- Obtain the Head/Manager/EVC's written approval for the visit.
- Carry out ongoing risk management while the visit takes place.

After the visit

The visit leader should consider the following on return:

- Thank those involved in leading/organising the visit.

- Review learning with young people and staff involved. This will reinforce positive outcomes from the visit.
- Consider a parent's evening/assembly or other presentation to celebrate the experience and learning which took place on the visit. Involvement of young people in this is highly recommended.
- Review the risk assessment and other planning arrangements in the light of your experience on the visit – this will help to make future visits more successful.
- Complete the evaluation section of EVOLVE to ensure an accurate record of events are on file for future reference.

Adult Volunteers

Volunteers who are not teachers/youth workers at the school/establishment must:

- Be cleared to work with children by having them cleared by the Human Resources Department first. For guidance see The Hinckley School Volunteer Policy.
- Understand and agree to the expectations of them.
- Understand their relationship to the young people, employed staff and visit leader.
- Recognise the limits of their responsibilities.
- Follow instructions from teachers /youth workers/visit leader.
- Ensure they are NOT left in sole charge of young people unless this has been formally agreed and risk assessed.
- Raise concerns for young person welfare with the visit leader.
- Understand that the principle of 'duty of care' will apply to all who are in a supervisory capacity, though it is likely that courts would expect a greater level of care from staff than voluntary helpers.

Parent/Carer

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

- Inform the visit leader about any medical, psychological, emotional or physical condition of their child relevant to the visit.
- Give or refuse consent and sign the consent form.
- Provide details of where they can be contacted in emergency.

For further details regarding information to parents/carers see Appendix 3 at the rear of this policy.

Young People

Young people should be made aware of these responsibilities by the visit leader or other member of staff. In particular, young people should:

- Follow instructions of the visit leader and other members of staff.
- Dress and behave sensibly and responsibly.

- Look out for anything that might hurt or threaten anyone in the group and tell the visit leader or other member of staff about it.
- Not take unnecessary risks.
- If abroad, be sensitive to local codes and customs.
- Agree to and follow a code of conduct for the duration of the visit.

For further details regarding the preparation of children and young people see Appendix 4 at the rear of this policy.

Notification and Approval System

Classification of Off-Site Visits:

- Category A:** local day visits and not adventurous.
Category B: national and visits abroad but not adventurous.
Category C: any adventurous visit (this may be a non adventurous activity in an adventurous location -see below).

Categories	Description	Notification/Approval
A Local visits	Activities and visits within approximately 15-20 miles of the City boundary and in which the element of risk is similar to that encountered in everyday life, i.e. not adventurous as defined in the separate table. Category A visits include sports fixtures away from school but in the local area and visits to Burbage Common	Approval by Head/EVC No notification to LA At least 7 days notice
B1 Non local visits within the UK	As above, but travelling beyond the local area and including residential visits but not adventurous.	Approval by Head/EVC notification to LA Finance 7 days notice

Visit Approval/Notification Procedures: (see Appendix 5) all trips must be approved by finance, management group and by the EVC and Head teacher through EVOLVE

Visit type	Approval / notification required	Supporting documents required for Establishments and Local Authority approval where relevant To be kept in school/establishment Copy to be sent to LA (OA)
Category A visits Local and non adventurous	Category A visits approval by EVC/Head. No notification to LA required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolve process – <u>Approval and notification of visits</u> • <u>List of participants and staff</u> • <u>Event Specific risk assessment</u>

<p>Category B1 visits</p> <p>Non local, within the UK, but not adventurous</p>	<p>Category B visits approval by EVC/Head</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>followed by LA notification at least 28 days before the visit to LA (OA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolve process – Approval and notification of visits • List of participants and staff • <u>Event Specific risk assessment</u> Plus if using an independent provider – • P8 – <u>Copy of completed Independent Provider’s Questionnaire</u>
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Staffing Ratios

- **Staff: young person ratio ranges given below are intended only as a starting point for visit leaders when planning their visit.** Actual ratios for any visit must be determined through a process of risk assessment by the visit leader **or other competent staff.**
- **It has been established that generally speaking a ‘norm’ for staffing educational visits is 1:10 with a minimum of 2 staff.** The ratios below show flexibility but the lower ratios must only be applied with caution through a careful risk assessment. The lower ratios are not a norm.

<p>General Activities (including fieldwork)</p>			
<p>Ratios for specific adventure activities can be found in Section A7 Outdoor leadership and activities available on EVOLVE</p>			
Activity	Age of young people	Staff: young person ratios – typical range (NB actual ratios must be determined by a process of risk assessment)	Visit leader competence
<p>Category A and B1 i.e. visits in the UK but not:- residential adventurous</p>	Year 7-11 (KS3/4)	1:10-15	Previous experience
	Years 12-13 (Post 16)	1:10-20	

- Competent leaders will recognise when the number of young people per leader should be reduced from these ratios (e.g. if group members have particular special needs or difficult environmental conditions) or, occasionally, when they can be safely increased.
- Where leaders operate alone, measures must be in place for the group to be trained, briefed and capable of action in the event of leader incapacitation.
- In normal circumstances at least 50% of the above recommended adult numbers should be employees of the school/centre (eg teachers, youth leaders or learning support assistants). The balance of adult numbers will no
- Can be made up of volunteers (parents, governors) approved by the Head. Such volunteers must be placed on the school/establishment volunteer insurance register and DBS cleared where appropriate.

Communication with Parents/Carers and Children/Young People

Planning Meeting with Parents/Carers:

It is important to have an early meeting with parents/carers especially new visits, residential visits or adventurous activities or when the visit is a totally new experience for the school/establishment. This meeting is the main opportunity for parents and carers to become fully informed of the visit and as such, no information should be withheld i.e it should be “warts and all”. It is good practice to include young people in these meetings. If parents/carers cannot attend the meetings, information **must** be given in alternative way.

Consent for Visits/Activities

Written parental/carer consent are required for off site visits and activities.

Where parents/carers **withhold consent**, or fail to sign the consent form the young person **must not** be taken on the visit and attempts should be made to deliver the visit aims through alternative means.

Copies of consent forms must be taken on all category B and C visits and be ready to facilitate medical treatment and contact with parent/carer.

Special medical needs

Parent/carers should be asked to supply written details of the medical needs of individuals. In circumstances where special care is necessary to ensure safety leaders should ensure the necessary arrangements are in place. The suitability of transport, accommodation and manual handling implications should be considered.

Consent for Regular Visits/Activities

Activities and visits which take place in the immediate locality of the school/establishment and which are part of the school's/establishment curriculum eg. traffic surveys, fieldwork, sporting activities should not require written parental information and consent on each occasion. A useful procedure is to obtain written consent from all parents/carers at the start of the year for all such activity/visit.

Emergency Contact

The visit leader is the person responsible for ensuring that the school and/or LA can provide support and guidance in the event of an emergency. To enable this to happen the visit leader is to ensure that emergency numbers are readily available and left with:

- The school reception during trips during school opening hours.
- With the emergency contact person for trips outside of school hours. Please note that person must be available to assist throughout the duration of the trip and it is the trip leaders responsible to check that they are.

Appendix 1 – Risk Management

Risk Management and Assessment Procedures

Good visits are characterised by a great deal of planning which reduces the risks. Risk assessments are a **simple** record of the thoughts and processes of the leaders planning.

The purpose of the risk assessment is to identify the **significant** hazards and risks posed by the visit and plan to take measures to reduce those risks to an acceptable level. **Written risk assessments** should be kept in proportion to the risks involved, should be simple and should be understood and implemented by all those involved in the visit.

It is good practice to involve all leaders in the risk assessment process; risk assessments produced by one person are rarely read or understood by others on the visit. It may be productive to think of a risk assessment as the minutes of a meeting where significant issues relating to the health, safety and well being of young people and leaders were discussed. Best practice suggests that young people themselves are involved in the risk assessment process.

Terminology for risk assessments

A **Hazard**, is something with the potential to cause harm e.g. *road traffic*.

A **Risk** is the chance/likelihood that someone may be harmed by the hazard- *significant or not significant*.

Control measures are the actions that are put in place to reduce the risk e.g. *brief the group on safe crossing procedure, use suitable crossing points and supervise young people when crossing*.

The risk assessment should:

- Identify the significant **hazards**.
- Identify the level of **risk** that these hazards pose.
- Identify who might be affected by them.
- Identify what **control measures** are needed to reduce any risks to an acceptable level.
- Be recorded, shared and then retained on file prior to the visit.
- Be reviewed following the visit and revised where necessary.

Generic risk assessment – see Section B20

These are general statements of good practice that apply to the activity wherever and whenever it takes place. The generic risk assessments in Section B20 can be used or they may take the form of the NGB guidance, or the school's/establishment's own policies and operating procedures. They are a starting point for specific risk assessments.

Event Specific Risk Assessment –

The visit leader (or other nominated leader) should complete a specific risk assessment for each visit during the early planning stages for the visit. The specific risk assessment should amend/add

to the generic risk assessment to ensure that the significant hazards and risks peculiar to the visit and group members are identified and appropriate control measures introduced.

Hazards can generally be grouped under the following headings:

- Venue: the environment, site specific hazards, weather, traffic etc
- Itinerary (journey): how will the group get to and from the activity site?
- Activity and leadership: what you will be doing with the group and the experience of the leaders, equipment and emergency procedures
- Group characteristics: age, maturity, medical conditions, experience, behaviour
- Risk Assessment for an educational visit with an easily remembered acronym!

A blank specific risk assessment is provided as. Although there is no one correct method of recording risk assessments, this form is easy to complete and use.

Contingency Planning – Plan B

Contingency plan(s) (Plan B) should be prepared for any activity that could be cancelled. This may simply be returning the young people to base or may involve alternative activities. These should be risk assessed and staffed appropriately during the initial planning stage for the visit. Parents should be made fully aware of any Plan B activities prior to giving consent for their child to take part.

Pressure on staff by young people to stick to the original plan despite poor conditions has led to serious incidents/fatalities in the past and must be resisted. If the group are aware of contingency plans, disappointment (and therefore pressure on staff) will be kept to a minimum. By involving young people in the risk assessment process, they are more likely to understand the reasons for abandoning Plan A.

Appendix 2: 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.
3. The visit leadership team and the emergency base contact will both have relevant medical and emergency contact information on all the trip participants (including staff).
4. Both the visit leader(s) and the base contact 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.

5. The National Guidance role specific emergency action cards are carried by:
 - a) The visit leader
 - b) The first point of contact (eg the office receptionist)
 - c) The designated base contact senior manager
6. This procedure is tested through both desk top exercises and periodic scenario calls from visit leaders

Appendix 3 – Parental/Carer Information

Information to be sent to parents/carers:

In addition to the parental meeting and consent letter, visits and activities require full and detailed written information for parents and carers.

Such information should be comprehensive whilst retaining an appropriate amount of flexibility to cope with a change of circumstance. Information should be sent as far in advance of the visit as practicable

It is important that the above information should identify:

- The planned programme of activities, including any alternative contingency plans (Plan B).
- Expected standards of behaviour and conduct of young people.
- Arrangements for the early return of a young person due to unacceptable behaviour, illness or other factors during the visit.
- General arrangements for the supervision of young people, including any circumstances in which young people may be left unaccompanied.

It is important to ask parents/carers for a written acknowledgement of the above. Checklist of information to include where relevant:

- Purpose of visit.
- Dates, times and location of departure and return.
- Destination with full address.
- Activities planned and how risks will be managed (in broad terms). ☑ Codes of conduct expected during the visit.
- Arrangements and responsibilities if a young person is sent home.
- Name of the party leader accompanying staff.
- Accompanying staff including voluntary staff.
- Supervisory arrangements, including occasions of 'remote' supervision.
- Method of travel and travel arrangements.
- Cost and what it does and does not cover.
- Methods of payment and cancellation arrangements/penalties.
- Insurance arrangements (a copy of the schedule for all parents/carers is advisable).
- Advice on pocket money and allocation/care on journey.
- Agreed arrangements for parental and child, non-emergency contact during the visit.
- Emergency contact arrangements to and by parents/carers.
- Items prohibited on journey.
- Clothing requirements.
- A request for written information regarding special medical problems and their treatment/medication, consent for emergency medical treatment and details of special dietary requirements.
- Charging and Remissions Policy for School Journeys/Visits (Education Act 1996)

Appendix 4 – Preparing Children/Young People

Preparation of young people

Adequate and appropriate preparation of young people will significantly enhance enjoyment, educational value and safety. The age, maturity and ability of young people will determine the nature and extent of such preparation but it should include:

- Information and guidance on what the visit involves.
- A clear understanding of what is expected of them, including standards of behaviour and the need to follow rules.
- Arrangements for dealing with persistently bad behaviour, how they could be returned home and whose responsibility this would be.
- A knowledge of potential dangers and how to avoid them.
- Appropriate and inappropriate personal conduct.
- What to do if approached by strangers.
- Meeting places.
- Action if separated from the group.
- Knowledge of emergency procedures.

The need to follow instructions of teachers, youth workers, supervisors and instructors

Appendix 5 - Educational Visit Check List for Approval

Trip:		Date:	
Name of Leader:	Read : Y/N	Completed	Date
5 weeks before			
1a	Submission of Pre-Visit check form to Finance		
1b	If LA approval needed EVOLVE must be submitted at least 28 days before. (external) >20 mile radius/residential/hazardous activity.		
1c	Check availability of school minibus and driver		
4 weeks before			
2a	Approval from Head of School and Governors if required		
2b	General Approval from management group.		
2c	When 2a and 2b received and not before, letters /information to students and/or parents issued.		
2 weeks before			
3a	EVOLVE completed for EVC Approval (Internal)		
3b	School lunches ordered for FSM if appropriate		
1 Week before			
4a	Final approval check at Operation Management group with EVOLVE agreed approval from the EVC and Head		

Two days before the event			
5a	Trip leader talks directly with the EVC to check all is in place. (email will not do)		
5b	Trip Leader provides a signed copy (By all staff attending) of the Risk Assessment to the EVC.		
5c	Preliminary form to Student Reception		
Date of Event			
The following must be left at reception (Or with the named person listed on EVOLVE, if the trip is out of school hours) by the trip leader.			
6a	Accurate list of all persons going on the event with emergency contacts		
6b	Contact details of the trip <u>and</u> deputy leader must be left so the school can contact them in an emergency		
6c	Destination and return ETA back at school		
6d	All consent forms must be taken on the trip and kept accessible but secure throughout e.g. Not left in a locked coach.		
One week after the event			
7a	Evaluation completed by the event Leader		

Appendix 6: Guidance for hiring coaches

For extra information please read: <http://oeapng.info>

The mode of transport for a visit should be chosen to complement the aims of the visit as well as to fit within the practical constraints of time and itinerary. One option is to hire a coach and this document provides guidance on the selection of a suitable provider.

You can find further guidance in documents 4.5a 'Transport - general considerations' and 4.5d 'Seat belts and child restraints' in the documents area on EVOLVE

Safe coach travel

There are four key safety factors when using hired coaches:

- The driver
- The coach and equipment
- The company
- The route or itinerary

The Trip Leader can address some of these in planning, and when selecting the coach provider. However, others will require the ongoing monitoring and Involvement of the Visit Leader.

Selecting a provider

Choosing one coach company from another may seem a difficult task for a trip leader with no specialist transport knowledge. However, the following are ways of providing some assurance of suitability.

- Has the school got an existing, satisfactory relationship with a provider?
- Do not underestimate intuition – if your establishment has used a provider before and always felt safe, listened to and well cared for then this is a good reason to use them again.
- Can the operator cope with any special needs your group may have? ☐ Are the seat belts appropriate for your group and is there, if necessary, ☐ Appropriate access and securing facilities for a wheelchair?
- Where a provider has a fleet of coaches of varying ages and standards, ☐ Confirm the specific standard or vehicle you require.
- Ensure the chosen coach company will not subcontract to another company without your agreement.
- Do not select on price but on value. Price should only become a factor when deciding between very similar or identical offers.

Some research may include:

Ask for copies of:

- Current Coach Operators Licence – this will show how many vehicles the provider can operate at any one time and whether they are licensed only for use in the UK or for international travel. Each coach must carry a licence disk on the windscreen when in use.
- Operator's Vehicle, Public Liability and Employer's Liability Insurances.

Ask for confirmation that:

- Drivers are correctly licensed and have DBS checks.
- The provider has a specific health and safety risk assessment for group travel with young people.
- Drivers have received training to operate with groups of young people.
- Drivers have an emergency procedure to follow.
- There is a 24/7 helpline for the duration of your journey.
- Coaches are equipped with basic safety equipment (first aid and functioning torches). ☐ Vehicles undergo four weekly safety checks.

If travelling abroad, confirm that the driver is experienced:

- In international driving and the countries to be visited.
- In driving a coach in all the expected conditions. Examples might be mountain roads and fitting and using snow chains.
- Check if the provider has any external accreditation or audit - e.g. Coach Marque, Guild of British Coach Operators, BUSK Benchmark, Road Operators Safety Council (ROSCO) 'Safe Driver Awards', Freight Transport Association (FTA) audits or inspections. These can be useful indicators of a professional approach to safety standards.

- Check reviews from previous customers. Which other establishments use the company and what has their experience been?
- Ask for a copy of the provider's current Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS). The company can obtain this from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). The score is based on data from vehicle tests and roadside inspections collected over a three-year rolling period. The scores are colour coded red (highest risk), amber or green (lowest risk).
- Ask the provider to confirm the first time pass rate in their vehicles' annual tests (they can provide this information from DVSA's online system).
- Question the operator about back up. What support is available should the coach allocated to you be unserviceable or unacceptable on the day, or you have an incident on the journey.
- How old are the coaches – are they compliant with UN ECE regulation 66 regarding the strength of the coach roof?
- Is it possible to visit the provider's depot, look at their coach fleet and get a feel for how they do things? If so are they open to let you look at their records of vehicle safety checks and audits?

Once a provider is selected:

- Having selected a suitable provider, it is good practice to liaise with them over the following:
- Pick up and drop off points.
- Choice of route and timings.
- Planned stops.
- How any special needs will be met?
- The respective responsibilities of the driver and the leadership team. Expected behaviour standards and coach 'rules'.