Cothill Policy Documents

ISSR 16 - Educational Visits Policy & Guidelines

NMS for Boarding: 6.1, 10.1, 14.1

Date: September 2026
Next review: September 2027

1. Introduction

Cothill School places great value on educational visits for all of its pupils, including the very youngest, recognizing that they provide a unique opportunity to enrich the curriculum and to extend and support class based work. They provide opportunities which cannot be provided on site and can extend the knowledge and understanding of all our pupils. We do not take Year 3 & 4 children on overnight or foreign visits. All of our visits for this age group are local – most last only half a day. However, older pupils (especially those in Year 7 & 8 are often encouraged to attend trips lasting a whole day or even overnight.

It is the School's duty to ensure that all educational visits are safely managed and that the health, safety and welfare of pupils, staff and volunteers are maintained in accordance with the guidelines provided by the DfE in 'Departmental Advice on Health and Safety for Schools' (April 2022) and HSE document 'School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities', copies of which are located on the staff shared drive. A separate comprehensive document gives guidance to staff involved with school visits.

2. Responsibilities

The Radley Schools Group (RSG) as employers will satisfy themselves that appropriate safety measures are in place and that training needs have been addressed. The Headmaster, and Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC), have the approval of the Governors to authorise all off-site School visits and to ensure that all trips are prepared and conducted in accordance with the required standards.

The Teacher who will be the Trip Leader/Organiser has overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit and has responsibility for the health and safety of the group. The Trip Leader is responsible, seeking approval and advice from the EVC, assessing the risk levels of the trip and making the necessary safety arrangements. A separate document, "Guidance for staff involved with school visits" (available via the staff shared drive), provides guidelines and the detailed procedures necessary to run an educational visit.

If an activity involves caving, climbing, trekking, skiing or water sports (other than rowing), the Trip Leader must check that the provider holds a licence as required by the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004.

3. Supervision and Staffing

The School recognises the key role of accompanying staff in ensuring the highest standards of learning, challenge and safety on an educational visit. The selection of staff for educational visits is a key priority in determining the initial approval of any proposed visit. We sometimes invite gap students and non-academic staff to volunteer to help with off-site visits. Volunteers are never allowed to supervise children alone and are briefed about their roles beforehand. The School will ensure that DBS screening is completed for volunteer adults assisting with educational visits e.g. overnight stays.

Accompanying staff and adult helpers must have the appropriate skills. It is important to have an appropriate ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. Various factors should be taken into consideration such as the age of the group, the nature of the activities, the duration and nature of the journey and the medical needs of any pupils within the group.

Whilst staff would only ever be expected to consume alcohol in moderation whilst on a residential trip and at times and in locations where it would not compromise their professionalism or care of pupils to do so, there will always be at least two members of staff designated to refrain from drinking at any one time. This is outlined in a separate policy (number N6).

4. Staff to pupil ratios

4.1 Years 3 and 4:

We operate a staffing ratio of a minimum of 1:8 for all off-site visits involving children in our Year 3 and 4 classes. There is a minimum of one teacher, one of whom will have been designated in charge of the visit. Our normal maximum class size is 16, so the teacher will be accompanied by another staff member if the number of pupils on the trip exceeds 8. One member of staff going on the trip must be qualified in paediatric first aid as a minimum.

Generous staffing levels, close supervision and proper protective clothing are essential for even the shortest of excursions. The pupils are always briefed in advance about the visit and of the standards of behaviour which we expect.

4.2 Other years:

It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. Various factors should be taken into consideration such as:

- The age of the group;
- The nature of the activities, the degree of risk involved;
- Whether the activity provider is providing any staff;
- The duration and nature of the journey, distance from base;
- Whether residential or non-residential;
- The medical and/or specific educational needs of any pupils within the group.

Ratios are activity dependent and must be agreed with the EVC who can relax or strengthen these ratios as deemed appropriate. However, a ratio of 1 member of staff per 12 pupils should not be exceeded, with a normal minimum of 2 staff including one teacher for every trip (exceptions can be made when trips are local in nature and the destination is another school). Where practical, a ratio of 1:10 is desirable, especially where no additional staff are supplied by the activity provider.

5. Examples of trips

5.1 Year 3 and 4 examples:

Pupils are usually ready for excursions off-site and for a wide range of new experiences as they develop their confidence within the Early Years setting. In the initial weeks we experience and explore the learning environments, grounds, woods, playgrounds etc and establish interest in our immediate location. All Early Years visits return pupils to the school at their conclusion and only take place within school hours.

- Walks around the school's grounds and nature trail in the wooded section
- Visit to Church Farm in Sunningdale
- Visit to Marcham Church
- Visit to Oxford Castle and Prison

5.2 Examples for other years:

- Year 5: Junior Camping residential, Jump Trampoline Park, Bicester
- Year 6: Battlefields residential in Northern France(4 nights), Imperial War Museum
- Year 7: Iceland residential (5 nights), Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey
- Year 8: Senior Camping residential, Devon Leavers Trip
- Other occasional residential: Sports Tours year 7-8 to Manchester City, Cricket at Lords (yrs 7-8), Year 8 rugby to Leicester Tigers

6. Approval Procedure and Consent

6.1 Trip Organiser

For any venture (that isn't already approved by the Headmaster or Head of Boarding for Sunday trips) a preliminary discussion must be had with the EVC and subject to satisfactory submission of a draft outline for the educational visit, preliminary approval will be given to continue, following the administrative procedures for trips (not discussed here).

When pupils join the school, their parents will have been asked to complete a general consent form for going on trips during the normal school day (including sports fixtures and Sundays). For the purpose of all boarding pupils the school day can include reasonable times outside of academic lessons such as CAPS sessions in the evenings.

For low risk day trips, further consent is not needed, but parents must be informed by the trip organiser confirming that they have understood the purpose, estimated cost and arrangements for the visit (if required).

Depending on the activity and if the trip is residential or not, parents may be asked to complete and sign an additional consent form which provides extra health and safety and/or medical information. **All residential trips must be approved by the Headmaster before embarking on the planning and booking of transport and accommodation.**

Parents are also required to provide up to date emergency contact and medical information so that the appropriate first aid arrangements can be put in place. Pupils may not go on a visit if the appropriate signed consent form has not been received (where required).

Further guidance for trip organisers can be found on the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel website here:
https://oeapng.info/guidance-documents/

6.2 Keeping Parents Informed

All parents are invited to an annual informal parents' evening at the start of the autumn term when the aims of the year's curriculum, the topics that will be studied and the methods of delivering the curriculum will be briefly explained, including key visits that are due to take place over the year.

We will send parents a letter/email well in advance telling them about every significant residential visit and, where appropriate, its cost and itinerary. This will include any trips which involve a significant extension to the normal length of the school day (especially for day pupils). This will also apply to any trip where a higher than normal expected level of risk may be attached. Additionally, all trips involving day pupils that occur outside of normal school hours will be communicated by the Trip Leader and the parental newsletter.

Letters or emails will explain any particular clothing, footwear, accessories etc. that will need to be worn or brought for the activities on the trip. It will also explain any prohibitions (e.g. handheld devices where appropriate; personal items which are expressly not permitted.) Parents may wish their child not to take part in a particular trip or visit, and are requested to notify the school as soon as possible if this is the case. When residential trips are being planned, parents are given information to help them decide whether their child will participate. In addition to the permission and consent form(s), information meetings are sometimes held where appropriate for the longer visits, e.g. to Devon, Iceland, etc

7. First Aid & Lifeguarding

First aid requirements form part of the risk assessment carried out by the Trip Leader. As a minimum a suitably stocked first-aid bag and a person appointed to be in charge of first aid arrangements will be in place for every trip. Increased levels of first aid cover will be dependent upon the nature of the trip and the pupils taking part. A visit rated as overall low

risk should normally have at least one staff member with current Emergency First Aider at Work (EFAW) training.
Pupils with serious medical conditions such as anaphylaxis, or insulin dependent diabetes will require a higher level of first aid competence during the trip. A minimum of Emergency First Aider at Work (EFAW), and Epi-pen training will be required (where appropriate). Activities which are potentially hazardous or remote from medical assistance will also require a higher level of first aid competence namely an HSE certified First Aider (FAW) or the school nurse. If Groups are split between locations on a trip, there should be one paediatric-trained first aider with each group.

For water activities, it is essential that there is a lifeguard present (or staff have received appropriate pool safety training). Numerous staff members receive this training in January every year. Additionally, this may be provided by the facility being used. If no lifeguards are available, the activity may not be carried out. Whilst many of the school sports staff have received poolside rescue training, and can provide lifeguarding cover for lower risk water activities, this is not the equivalent of a full lifeguarding qualification, e.g. NPLQ for pools, and NBLQ for beaches.

8. Risk Assessment

As stated above, the Trip Leader must carry out a risk assessment covering all aspects of the proposed trip which must be shared with and approved by the EVC. Ongoing 'dynamic' risk assessment will be continued by the Trip Leader throughout the trip to ensure that hazards continue to be monitored and appropriate safety measures are put in place. It is the responsibility of the Trip Leader to ensure that all accompanying staff are familiarised with the risk assessment and to continue to brief throughout the trip. In addition, all staff should electronically sign the risk assessment before leaving school to confirm that they have read it.

All swimming (pool, lake, river or sea) activities, as well as accommodation and transport arrangements (as appropriate) must be clearly identified in the trip itinerary and risk assessment with appropriate staffing levels and relevant qualifications agreed individually with the EVC.

Guidance on risk assessments for educational visits can be found on pages 8-10 of the RSG Risk Assessment Policy here.

The EVC has provided a selection of Cothill specific risk assessment templates to aid staff when planning educational visits off site. These can be found here.

9. Pupil Behaviour

For all visits the pupils should be adequately briefed about the aims, expectations and codes of conduct for the visit. Pupils should be engaged in considering the risks of the tasks they are about to undertake. In all cases accompanying staff, parents and pupils should be made aware of the standards of behaviour expected and the sanctions which may be used in

cases where the standards are breached.

Where required, parent consent forms require that parents agree that the school reserves the right to send their child back to school at the parents' expense if they jeopardise their safety, the safety of others or the good name of the school. For residential visits it may be appropriate to require parents and pupils to sign a Code of Conduct Agreement.

10. Emergency Procedures

The Trip Leader must ensure that full details of the visit are retained at school by key personnel who can be contacted if there are changes of plan or if there is an emergency. Staff must ensure that they can access emergency contact details for pupils and staff with them at all times, and that they have the correct insurance information readily available.

School staff will:

- Ensure that the group are all present and accounted for;
- Seek immediate medical attention for any casualties;
- Ensure that any casualty going to hospital is accompanied by a teacher;
- Maintain adequate supervision for the remaining group members;
- Notify the police and/or the British Embassy/Consulate as appropriate;
- Keep the emergency school contact informed of the nature, date and time of the incident, location, names of casualties and details of their injuries, names of others involved so that parents can be reassured.

Additionally, school staff will:

- Know that no-one in the group should speak to the media. All media enquiries should be handled by the designated Cothill School media spokesperson (The Headmaster or senior member of staff available);
- Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families;
- Record accurately as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence.
- The school's Emergency Management Plan contains further details for key staff on how to manage such situations.

11. Travel Insurance

The school holds a Policy with Chubb under policy number UKBCHD35372 which is renewed every September. This provides extensive insurance cover; some specified hazardous activities require an additional premium to maintain appropriate insurance cover. Trip Leaders must ensure that they check the travel insurance if they are undertaking hazardous activities, and that they keep the insurance details with them at all times on the trip.

12. Travel Arrangements

Only reputable companies are used for transport. The travel requirements are risk assessed taking into account all the relevant factors such as distances to be travelled. Likely weather conditions and appropriate arrangements are made to ensure optimal safety conditions for travel. Only vehicles with seat belts are to be used and staff will ensure that pupils always use them.
All staff who drive pupils must have a valid driving licence, and if they are driving a minibus they must have taken and passed the Midas minibus training and test. It is not the general practice at Cothill for staff to use their own vehicles when small numbers of pupils are taken on a trip; school minibuses or taxis are preferred when possible.

However, in exceptional circumstances, the Headmaster or EVC may give permission for staff to use their own car. The safety standards in some countries for roads and vehicles are variable and the Trip Leader must inform parents when this will be the case. The Trip Leader must perform all reasonable checks to make sure that safety is maintained so far as is reasonably practicable.

13. Medical Information

When assessing risk, particular attention is paid to any member of the group who has a disability, medical condition or specific educational need. As previously stated parents are requested to provide the school with any update of medical information and to give consent for any emergency medical treatment which may be considered necessary.
In addition the school database is checked for medical conditions. Key staff such as the school matrons and nurses are consulted where further information and advice is required as well as the parents.

It is the trip organiser's responsibility to take all medical information on the trip and ensure the relevant supervising staff are provided with appropriate information. Pupils must be reminded and checked that they have all the necessary medication and equipment. Staff will hold onto first aid kits as well as specific medical equipment such as inhalers and epipens.

14. Educational Visit Evaluation

The school recognises that every educational trip requires considerable time and effort to organise, and there are associated costs such as lessons missed, staff cover, study and revision time lost. For this reason the Trip Leader is required to state the purpose of the visit at the outset when seeking initial approval. The Trip Leader is also asked to evaluate the trip on return and submit the review to the EVC.

A termly summary of off-site visits that have taken place is provided for the Headmaster and the Head will provide the Governors with an overview of school visits that have taken place.

MJH : September 2026