



Offsite Activity/Visits Policy

Approved by: Pupil Outcomes and Wellbeing Committee

Date: October 2025

Last reviewed on: October 2025

Next review due by: October 2026

This Policy should be read in conjunction with: Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy; Complaints Procedure; Charging & Remissions Policy; Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy; Education Visits Emergency Statement

1.0 Rationale

Opportunity

- 1.0** Safely managed educational visits with a clear purpose are an indispensable part of the broad and balanced curriculum that is offered at Downlands. They are an opportunity to extend students' learning and enrich their appreciation and understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. They can be the catalyst for improved academic performance or a lifetime interest and as such we encourage and support their role in the life of the school. Where possible we aim to enable as many students as possible to participate in the range of visits offered by the school.
- 1.1** The school's policy and procedures are formulated in conjunction with the **advice, guidance and training** provided by West Sussex County Council

2.0 Education Visits Intent

Overall Aim: To create educational experiences beyond the classroom which enable students to develop skills for life, confront and manage risk and to enjoy and engage in their learning.

- 2.1** All offsite activities have been designed to contribute to our Character Education. It is intended that they will:
- Show **resilience** in activities that push them outside their comfort zones
 - Be **optimistic** about their futures and how they can achieve them
 - Be proactively **community focused** both within our school community and our local community
 - Show **kindness** through giving both time and appreciation to other people, their histories and their cultures.
 - Be **self-aware** of their own learning and how they can understand their place in society
- 2.2** To ensure that all visits are safe, purposeful and appropriate to meet the educational needs of the students taking part
- 2.3** To comply with Local Authority (LA) guidance contained in the guidelines set by National Guidance (<https://oeapng.info/>). In addition, the *WSCC LOfC Guidance (2021)*, on *EVOLVE*.
- 2.4** To meet DfE guidelines (2018) entitled 'Health and Safety on Educational Visits' and relevant HSE guidance
- 2.5** To ensure that where appropriate, further advice is sought from the LA and other technically competent personnel.
- 2.6** To ensure that educational visits are in line with school policies on special needs, inclusion, equal opportunities, finance, charging and remission, safeguarding and behaviour.

3.0 Types of Visits and Ventures Planned and Used

- 3.1** Teachers and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) agree the programme of main visits and activities in advance of each academic year. Where appropriate, extra trips can be added in-year through application to the Trips Co-ordinator who will then liaise with SLT to determine whether the trip is viable.
- 3.2** Within each department's curriculum intent and implementation, teachers plan educational visits and activities that support the pupils' learning.
- 3.3** Wherever possible we give details of visits and activities to parents at the beginning of the academic year in our school calendar and via the parent's trips booklet.
- 3.4** At Downlands, we offer a wide range of activities which allow for the aims outlined above to be met.
- On site, out of classroom activity
 - Local ventures
 - Away from base, day or part day ventures (both regular and occasional)
 - Residential ventures
 - Visits abroad
- 3.5** These activities can be categorised as follows:
- 3.5.1 Curriculum core**
Trips which are compulsory components of the National Curriculum or GCSE specifications. These will mainly include geography fieldtrips and drama live theatre.
- 3.5.2 Curriculum enhancing**
Trips which are not compulsory but are linked directly to our curriculum intents. These could include day trips such as dance and music performances, visits to museums or historic monuments **and** residentials which are directly linked to the curriculum.
- 3.5.3 Enrichment**
Trips which are not directly linked to academic curriculums but contribute to our character curriculum and increasing our student's cultural capital. These include residentials such as the ski trip and football tour and all curriculum enrichment activities (CEA).
- 3.5.4** The category of the activity will determine the approval process (see Appendix 1)

4.0 Organisation and Management

- 4.1** Organisation and management follows the guidance set by the Local Authority and in reference to guidelines set by National Guidance (<https://oeapng.info/>) and the In addition the *WSCC LOtC Guidance*

(2021), on *EVOLVE*.

- 4.2** In addition, the *Safety in adventurous activity* document and other information accessible via Evolve may apply.
- 4.3** Evolve is GDPR compliant and further details can be found on their website <http://edufocus.co.uk/pages/evolve/gdpr.asp>
- 4.4** All Evolve guidance documents can be found by clicking on the Resources tab <https://evolve.edufocus.co.uk/evco10/docs.asp>
- 4.5** The Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) and Trips Co-ordinator work together to keep up to date with the training offered by West Sussex County Council.
- 4.6** Off site visits and educational visits are fully integrated into the ethos and culture of the school and all key policies are considered for their relevance with adaptations or agreements made as required, (except *) in particular:
- Curriculum Policy
 - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies *
 - Behaviour Policy (which applies equally to off-site activities and visits as it does to conduct within school)
 - SEN and Inclusion Policy
 - Charges and Remissions Policy
 - Finance Policy
 - Single Equality Policy
 - Critical Incident
- 4.7** Many visits are managed entirely in accordance with these policies and, apart from simple additional considerations (e.g. to the site, to transportation of students), are managed as they would be in school contexts. We aim to take the ethos, culture and challenge to learning in school into all our outdoor learning and off-site contexts.
- 4.8** Approval systems are in place within the establishment and via Evolve; this process incorporates risk-benefit management; supervision; working with providers and inclusion
- 4.9** Governors are kept informed of the overall policy and programme, as well as being given feedback on specific events and successful ventures in an annual report given by the EVC and Trips Co-ordinator.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Governors

- Approve, monitor and evaluate the Off-Site and Educational Visits Policy
- Ensure it is in accordance with other key policies
- Include as an annual agenda item a report from the EVC

5.2 Headteacher/SLT

- The Headteacher gives consent for any trip or activity requiring LA approval and devolves the responsibility for approval of all other trips and activities to the EVC.
- A member of SLT will be in post as EVC
- Agree all the off-site and residential trips that are included on the school calendar
- Act as emergency contacts for residential trips
- Hold pre-residential meetings with the supervisory team and EVC to run through safety details when needed
- Support all staff involved in trips and residential trips with regard to upholding the highest standard of discipline, health and safety and safeguarding
- EVC will submit EVOLVE forms to the Head for approval within the timeframe specified by LA.

5.3 Educational EVC (Claire Davies) & Trips Co-Ordinator (Matt Smith)

- Approve financial viability of trips and provide advice and guidance on charges to parents and funding available, including any financial assistance parents/ carers may be entitled to.
- Ensure that all proposed trips are planned using the school documentation (based on the LA documentation) in full and that planning considers all aspects outlined in the procedures as detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- Raise all trips that are submitted by trip leaders to SLT and ensure a timely approval process.
- Raise any concerns with SLT immediately
- Support trip leaders in ensuring that all procedures for trips are followed
- Assist in the induction of new staff to the trips planning procedures
- Keep up to date with DfE and LA guidelines for off-site trips and acts as staff advisor
- Attend regular training on the area of educational visits and updates EVC training once every three years
- Ensure that an up-to-date record is kept of staff qualifications relating to off-site and educational activities and facilitates the appropriate CPD for staff as required.
- Report to Governors annually

5.4 Trip Leaders

- Follow all procedures detailed in this policy and comply with Local Authority (LA) guidance contained in the guidelines set by National Guidance (<https://oeapng.info/>) and the WSCC *LOtC*. In addition, the *Safety in adventurous activity* document and other information accessible via Evolve may apply.
- Discuss and submit for consideration every proposed activity / trip to the trips co-ordinator
- Complete the EVOLVE form in good time adhering to deadlines for

- those trips requiring LA approval (4 weeks prior to visit commencing)
- Ensure that charges for the trip are in accordance with school policy and liaises with the EVC for approval
- Ensure that for trips that are taking place predominantly during school hours, parents are made aware that contributions are voluntary.
- Liaise with Trips Co-ordinator to ensure letters to parents are consistent and appropriate for trip and submit to Trips Co-ordinator for approval prior to sending home
- Liaise with Trips Administrator regarding dates for payments to allow parents sufficient time to spread the cost of larger trips
- Submit full risk assessments and complete other documentation as required by the Trips Co-ordinator
- Work closely with the Trips Co-ordinator to ensure all aspects of safety detailed through the school documentation are considered and all areas attended to in full
- Ensure all staff not currently employed by school who are participating in the trip are DBS checked as appropriate to their role
- Attend all meetings called in order to ensure good planning and safety
- Provide guidance to accompanying staff and parents on all safety matters in full
- Put the safeguarding, health, welfare and safety of pupils on trips first at all times
- Maintain high standards of discipline on trips in order to enhance safety
- Communicate fully with parents on all trip matters
- Where appropriate (e.g. any residential activities and / or overseas trips) organise an information evening for parents in the term preceding the trip where the Code of Conduct is made explicit.
- Check with the Finance Office that all trips/activities are paid for in full at least 2 weeks prior to commencement.

5.5 Other Supervisory Staff

- All staff assisting with supervision on any trip will be conversant with the school's policies and procedures
- All staff will ensure that the requirements of any risk assessments, risk control procedures and safe systems are followed.
- All staff will ensure that once the trip has started, where any previously unforeseen hazards or risks are identified, they are brought to the attention of the Trip Leader.
- Staff will feedback information to the Trip Leader to enable a full review of the trip to be completed.

6.0 Communication with Parents

- 6.1** Signed parental consent must be obtained for all off site trips, activities and educational visits.
- 6.2** One parental consent and medical form may cover a programme of similar activities over a maximum of one year. e.g. sporting fixtures. The onus is on the

parent / carer to update the school in the interim if there have been any changes regarding medical information. Student bulletins and the school website will be the main vehicle for communicating these types of activity where providing information too far in advance is not feasible.

- 6.3** Residential, overseas, hazardous or long-distance ventures require visit-specific medical and consent forms to be completed
- 6.4** Parents must be supplied with full information regarding the visit. This must be sufficiently comprehensive for parents not to be in a position to claim after the event that they were misled or uninformed about any of the following:
- Venue(s) and travel arrangements (particular mention must be made if staff cars are to be used as a mode of transport)
 - Dates and times of departure and return where visits exceed beyond the school day
 - The nature of activities planned
 - Kit list
 - Arrangements for supervision
 - Code of conduct or standard of behaviour expected during the visit
 - Financial contribution expected from parents and dates when payments due
 - Insurance arrangements
 - Contact system in case of emergency
 - Any expectations placed on parents, for example to resume responsibility for their child in the event his or her conduct requires sending home from a visit outside of school hours.
- 6.5** The PE Department will share details regarding fixtures and sporting events using Bromcom to parents.
- 6.6** The PE Department will complete an EVOLVE Local Visit Form for all fixtures.
- 6.7** As per the Charging and Permissions policy and the DofE guidance on Charging for School activities. All activities which have 50% of the sessions within school hours should make it clear to parents that:
- Payment for the activity is voluntary
 - That the trip may not be viable if enough payments are not made
 - How the funding collected represents costs and how the money is to be spent (available on request)
- 6.8** Off-site insurance details will be made available

7.0 Cancellations / Withdrawals

- 7.1** In the event that a student cancels their participation on an Educational Visit, any monies due to be refunded should be returned via SCOPAY or online transfer to the parent/carers who made the payment. **The amount of refund is dependent on how late the student is withdrawn from the activity, whether a replacement student can be found and what costs have already been met by the school which cannot be reclaimed.**

- 7.2** Where the trip has been organised through a tour operator or other external supplier, the cancellation charges which are described in the booking conditions / terms of the insurance will apply.
- 7.3** The school reserves the right to withdraw any student from an Educational Visit if the student displays unsafe behaviour in (or out) of school and it is considered that this behaviour would pose a Health and Safety risk on an Educational Visit. Prior to removal, a risk assessment will be completed by the trip leader and SLT. This will then be used to determine whether it is deemed safe for this child to attend the trip. The outcome of the risk assessment will then be shared with parents/carers as soon as necessary. In such a circumstance the school **will not** refund any payments to parents already made to the tour operators or external suppliers unless a replacement is able to be found.
- 7.4** Where a trip is not paid for in full 1 week prior to the date of the activity, the school reserves the right to withdraw any student from an Educational Trip / Visit.
- 7.5** When a student has been permanently excluded from Downlands or suspended over the duration of a school trip, they may not be viable for any refund depending on how close to the trip this occurs. If a replacement can be found, refunds may be offered but any costs for this replacement will not be met by Downlands and will be passed onto the parents.
- 7.6** The school reserves the right to withdraw any student from an educational visit if their attendance in school has caused concern. If a student's attendance falls below 80% then a discussion will be held with parents. In the first instance, this is to consider a plan to improve their attendance. However, if their attendance does not improve, the student may be removed from the trip. The decision will be made in consultation with the Trip Leader, EVC, Trips Coordinator and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In instances when the school has removed a student from a trip due to lack of attendance in school, the parents/carers will be liable for any non-recoverable costs.

8.0 Supervision

- 8.1** Supervision strategies are taken from the West Sussex County Council Offsite Visits Guidance on Evolve and include agreements on ratios, which are never exceeded and frequently improved. Strategies include:
- Direct
 - Indirect
 - Remote
- 8.2** The strategies to be used are dependent on typical risk factors of the group or individuals concerned, the site or location, the leaders present (including ratios) and other factors such as transport or weather etc. These are agreed as part of the planning process and can be adapted to changing circumstances, for example 'Plan B' where we always plan clear alternatives when it is necessary or prudent to do so.
- 8.3** All staff in a supervisory capacity will have been selected for their experience

and skills and will have been subject to a DBS check (see trip leader's responsibilities)

9.0 Transport

9.1 A variety of transport is used following LA guidance.

- Teachers' cars (only when covered by business class insurance) and on completion of the Agreement to Drive and Record of Details Form, to be held on file by the HR Department.
- buses (local, non-motorway travel)
- coaches (through recognised suppliers)
- trains
- The school's own minibus: confirm with EVC which vehicle you are entitled to drive. Staff need to have completed a recognised Driver Training course.
- Minibuses hired through HCC (for small group transport, eg choir, PE and sports teams, drama trips) require drivers to have completed a recognised Driver Training Course
- Ferries
- Airplanes
- Parental Responsibility

9.2 When booking transportation, especially coaches, we will only contact known and trusted suppliers. WSCC insurance does not cover any losses due to cancellation of travel when booked independently from a package, thus the following considerations must be made:

- Trips should aim to book coach travel as part of the entire package wherever possible
- When this is not possible, additional assurances should be made regarding the coach companies cancellation policies to ensure that we are covered in this instance.
- Additional insurance should be considered for the trip to ensure that travel is included within any claims.

10.0 Inclusion

10.1 Downlands is an inclusive school, and all reasonable adjustments will be made to enable students to access educational trips and visits. There is, however, a clear distinction between different types of trips and therefore the reasonable adjustments made by the school would depend on whether the categorisation of the trip

10.1.1 **Curriculum core** - Inclusion of all is required. PP students will be fully funded. SEN support will be provided for students with an EHCP.

10.1.2 **Curriculum enhancing** – Efforts will be made to ensure curriculum and similar entitlement is not lost as this is an enhancement activity. Inclusion of all is desired but not required. Payments will be requested from PP students but the costs should be met in most circumstances, in liaison with the PP co-ordinator. SEN support will be provided for students with an EHCP.

10.1.3 **Enrichment** - an activity that is a clear choice or extra – optional. Choice and other factors will mean that not all attend. PP students will not be funded, and SEN support may not be given for students with an EHCP (although this will be attempted if staffing is available). Funding for PP students may be sought from outside agencies

10.2 It is important to distinguish between these curriculum-focused discussions and those of the health and safety of the child or young person concerned and their effect on other children or young people, as well as staff. Any decision on inclusion when such factors are included must, as normal, take 'every reasonable step' to include that young person. However, if those reasonable steps cannot ensure their safety and/or that of others, then that may be the reason they cannot attend that particular venture. Downlands Community SchoolEVC would seek clarification and advice from the West Sussex County Council regarding individual cases.

11.0 Selection of Students

11.1 Downlands operates a procedure whereby a deadline date is clearly published for applications for a school trip/visit.

11.2 It must be clear on all letters regarding trips/visits that replies must be completed using a standardised form.

11.3 On the closing date for the trip / visit, should it be oversubscribed, an electronic randomised draw will take place. After the trip is 'full' the remaining students' names will continue to be drawn to form a reserve list. These students would then be offered places as they arise.

11.4 The exceptions are as follows:

- If the places allocated have had to include a gender balance, then the reserve list will operate on the basis that if a female student cannot go, the next female student on the waiting list is allocated the place; similarly, for male students.
- If twins or siblings in the same year group apply to go on a trip, then should one name been drawn, the other will be allocated a place. (**Sibling** refers to brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, fostered brother or sister, stepbrother or sister, or the child of the parent/carer's partner where the child for whom the school place is sought is living in the same family unit at the same address as that sibling)
- The school does not operate a 'first come, first served' policy. However, places must be reserved in advance for any Child in Care on roll who may wish to attend any curriculum related trip /visit.
- With regard to Residential Retreats it may be deemed that certain students would benefit from attending e.g. students who have been recently bereaved and young carers and in keeping with the ethos of the school we would always seek to allocate places to such students in these circumstances.

- 11.5** The school does not operate any other criteria such as age, gender (unless it relates specifically to the nature of the activity e.g. sporting fixtures / tournaments), how many other visits the students have been on or the students' behavior record unless there needs to be serious consideration given to the current behavior of the student and the impact this may have on the smooth running of the trip and/or Health and Safety of the other students and staff. In these circumstances, discussions will be held with parents and risk assessments completed.

12.0 Selection of Staff

- 12.1** Staff must be allocated to school trips /visits based on the following criteria which relate to risk management:
- competence
 - qualifications
 - previous experience of the activity
 - knowledge of the students, the location or the specific activity being undertaken
- 12.2** Staff must be allocated with regard to the age and gender balance of the students attending the trip /visit.
- 12.3** Staffing must meet the required ratios for any school trip /visit
- 12.4** Staffing can comprise of teaching staff, LSA's and support staff but this must be managed to ensure the appropriate balance given the nature of the activity and the students attending. It may also comprise of other adult volunteers known to the school e.g. former members of staff, provided they hold current DBS checks and meet the criteria for risk management above.
- 12.5** Colleagues must consider the selection of staff on the smooth running of the rest of the school and ensure impact is limited across departments wherever feasible.
- 12.6** Staffing for any trip should be as balanced as possible to allow for younger or inexperienced staff to be included and to learn about educational visits / activities from more experienced and / or senior staff. There must, therefore, be equality of opportunity for staff to participate in trips /visits.

13.0 Trip Authorisation

- 13.1** All trips for an academic year should be submitted to the Trips co-ordinator by the end of July in the previous academic year so they can be included in the parents booklet, however on occasion some trips may be launched within the academic year. In these circumstances, they should be submitted to the trips co-ordinator no later than six weeks prior to the visit.
- 13.2** Impacts on cover will be a key consideration when approving trips. All trips should be categorised and the below criteria followed:
- 13.2.1 Curriculum core** - as these trips are compulsory parts of the curriculum, appropriate cover will be allowed.

13.2.2 Curriculum enhancing - as these trips contribute to our curriculum, cover must be authorised by SLT

13.2.3 Enrichment - as these trips are optional extras, cover must be authorised by SLT.

13.2.4 There may be occasions when there are exceptions to the above criteria including:

- When the overall cost of the trip increases for students
- When it negatively impacts staff well-being
- When the activity is only available during school time and the decision is made that it's benefit outweighs the impact of cover

During these occasions, a decision may be made by SLT to allow the trip to run and alternate arrangements for cover should be sought. Staff could consider one of the following:

- Identifying members of staff who would volunteer to cover staff for a trip (beyond their usual cover allocation) on a casual basis.
- Facilitating multi-class cover within a faculty to facilitate the trip.

14.0 Safeguarding

14.1 Downlands Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Policy includes off-site visits and ventures and residential activity. In particular, trip leaders must note from that policy:

14.1.1 guidance on acceptable behaviour and avoiding unnecessary contact

14.1.2 suitable 'employment' checks are made on volunteers and other responsible adults who support these ventures in line with guidance, (e.g. the degree of monitoring, frequency and intensity of contact) including DBS requirements and appropriate qualifications

14.2 External providers or outdoor centres must be drawn from the West Sussex LOTC checked providers list, which confirms that safety management checks are in place. If a provider is sought who does not have these checks, they should be asked to complete an OE2 form prior to an EVOLVE form being submitted.

15.0 Risk – Benefit Assessment

15.1 As part of planning an off-site activity, the process below must be followed:

15.1.1 There must be an analysis of the benefits of the activity translated into clear objectives and expectation

15.1.2 There must be an assessment of the risk of harm and its likelihood made, followed by putting clear control measures in place so that they can be

satisfactorily managed

- 15.1.3** A pre-visit by key staff is considered an essential part of reviewing the Location and its ability to realise the benefits and be managed. Very well-known and used sites may be checked by contacting key personnel prior to re-visiting web-based information is increasingly available and useful
- 15.1.4** All the County approved off-site locations are managed by a site-specific agreement with the West Sussex County Council detailing management procedures. These sites do not require the same pre-visit by key staff but this is still encouraged to help with familiarity.

16.0 Incidents and Emergencies

- 16.1** Guidance from West Sussex County Council is used to prepare leader and base-contact checklists and contact details.
- 16.2** All staff will carry the Visits Emergency Policy with them on visits and must follow this document when an incident occurs.
- 16.3** Any concerns or 'near-misses' are discussed with the EVC to consider changing strategies and are reported to the West Sussex Outdoors Skills and Participation Service where necessary or if the information is useful.

17.0 Monitoring and Review

- 17.1** Outdoor learning/off-site and educational visits are to be monitored by trip leaders and the EVC in the following ways:
- individual staff reviews contribute to the feedback on the quality of ventures and recommendations for the future
 - the Headteacher or EVC reports to governors on an annual basis as to the effectiveness of the overall programme
 - any good practice is celebrated by sharing with other trip leaders through an annual INSET session. Complaints are reviewed through the schools' complaints procedures and in conjunction with the LA where appropriate
 - the policy is reviewed every three years or as required if regulations, guidance or circumstances change
- 17.2** Trip leaders must complete the EVOLVE evaluation following a trip.
- 17.3** An in-house evaluation will be completed via conversation with the Trips Co-ordinator which is then logged centrally for reference.