ABBOTSHOLME SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

Introduction

The following is a specific guide to policy and practice in Abbotsholme School and all staff are required to follow it.

Outdoor learning, offsite visits and Learning Outside of the Classroom underpin the broad-ranging ethos of the holistic education provided by Abbotsholme School. They enhance and extend the academic learning, which takes place within the school.

Employer's Policies and National Guidance

Abbotsholme School uses Evolve Standard for the organisation and approval of educational offsite visits. All teaching and boarding staff have an Evolve account and guidance on how to use Evolve can be found in the Evolve Help Centre.

Further excellent guidance may be obtained from The Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) https://oeapng.info/ In the event of any conflict between the Abbotsholme School policy and National Guidance, then the policy of Abbotsholme School must be followed and clarification sought from the Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) or SMT.

Clarification of Roles

Headmistress: The Headmistress receives notification of all residential trips via email from Evolve. For overseas residential trips the EVC and Trip Leader will discuss the trip in question with the Headmistress, who will give final approval for the trip.

EVC: Abbotsholme School has an EVC in post. The EVC is Joy Holmes. The role of the EVC is to check the plans and associated documents for each offsite trip and to give approval for all day time and weekend trips. For all residential trips (UK or overseas), the EVC will complete all checks and discuss with the Headmistress. For international residential trips the trip will be discussed in a meeting with the Trip Leader, EVC and Headmistress, the latter of whom gives final approval. The EVC will undertake an EVC training course and a refresher/revalidation every three years, to comply fully. This course includes training on visit planning, risk assessment, leader competence and required procedures.

Deputy EVC: The role of the Deputy EVC at Abbotsholme School is to deputise for the EVC whenever required and also to check and approve local, regular trips, such as sports fixtures and swimming lessons. The Deputy EVC is Andrew Abraham.

Trip Leader: The trip leader is required to initiate, plan and run an offsite visit in accordance with guidance in this document and through the Evolve trip planning tools. Refer to OEAP National Guidance 3.1b **Establishment roles and their inter-dependence** for further guidance. Click here

Procedural requirements
The Evolve system enables staff to plan a trip through a step-by-step process. For any questions staff should initially consult the Evolve Staff Starter Guide or discuss with the EVC or Deputy EVC.

International trips – External Providers
Through Abbotsholme School pupils may have access to external providers, such as Camps International and Edukid. It should be noted that any trips organised by these or any other external provider are private arrangements between a parent/pupil and the organisation and these do not constitute a 'School trip'. This is the case, regardless of whether a member of Abbotsholme staff accompanies the trip. The responsibility for all aspects of the trip remain with the organising external provider.

Monitoring
Before planning an offsite trip, approval for the visit must be sought from the SMT (normally the Deputy Head) and the visit entered into the school calendar. Any offsite visit not on the calendar will not be considered.
Whenever time allows, the EVC and Deputy EVC will monitor visits by field observation. However, it is recognised that due to the huge number of visits that the school undertakes, this is likely to be limited in scope. Where possible trips will be briefly evaluated on Evolve. After whole school residentials (Hikes, Camps) the EVC will elicit feedback from hikes and camps leaders to improve the events in subsequent years and maintain sustainability of the trips.

Induction and Training, Record Keeping, Apprenticeship model
As part of staff induction at the start of the each school year, the EVC will discuss the Educational Visits Policy and practical application of how to prepare for and organise an offsite school trip according to the school policy. All teaching and boarding staff have access to Evolve and it is the Trip Leader's responsibility to create the trip form.

During INSET sessions, the EVC will periodically update staff on any changes or knowledge refreshers as appropriate.

All approved trips are held within the Evolve system. For one-off trips staff are expected to take a register on Evolve. In the case of trips with multiple dates (e.g. Prep School swimming, Boarders' visits to Tesco) the trips will be set up on Evolve. However, it is not possible to take multiple registers on Evolve Standard. Therefore, it is the Trip Leader's responsibility to leave a list of pupils off-site with Reception and on the Staffroom Noticeboard. At the weekend, when Reception is closed, it is only necessary to leave the list on the Staffroom Noticeboard. For all boarding trips taking place over the weekend, a list of participants will be left on the Staffroom Noticeboard, along with details of the trip.

Any paper copies will be collected regularly by the EVC and retained. To access a personal Evolve account click here.

Before any trip, sign off from the School Health Centre is required. For boarding trips, Prep swimming lessons and regular sporting fixtures, this will take place at the start of each term. The Health Centre will update Trip Leader's accordingly, should circumstances change. For one-off day visits, an individual sign off is required. The Health Centre will inform the EVC/Deputy EVC that this has taken place.

Competence to lead a school trip is a combination of skills, knowledge, awareness, judgement, training and experience. It is not necessarily related to age or position within the school. It is situational – a leader who is competent in one activity or environment may not be so in another. Relevant experience is not necessarily gained by repeating the same thing several times, but by experiencing a range of different activities and environments. All new members of staff are encouraged to shadow more experienced Trip Leaders. By taking responsibility for less complex and lower risk visits first, skills sets can be developed and confidence built. At Abbotsholme School all staff teaching and boarding staff are authorised by the Headmistress to be Trip Leaders.

The norm for school residentials would be to have one male and one female member of staff accompanying the trip. On Round Square trips, this is not always possible, due to the low numbers of pupils involved and the requirements of the organisers of the specific conferences. If this is the case, parents will be advised of this in the introductory letter. In some cases, it may be possible to work in tandem with another school. In such cases, the staff of the accompanying school should be well known to the Trip Leader in a professional capacity.

Refer to OEAP National Guidance document: **3.2d Approval of Leaders** for more details. Click here

Risk management

As an employer, Abbotsholme School has a legal duty to ensure that risks are managed – required them to be reduced to an 'acceptable' or 'tolerable' level. Risk is a natural part of everyday life: all activities involve risk, and it is impossible to eliminate it entirely. It is important that children learn to understand and manage risk and uncertainty for themselves. Well-managed offsite visits, including outdoor and adventurous activities, play a vital part in helping children to learn about the real world, and to understand and manage risk for themselves.

Schools are therefore encouraged to provide such opportunities for children. Good planning and management of activities should be about reducing risks to an acceptable level, taking into account the potential benefits. The starting point for such a risk-benefit assessment should be a consideration of the targeted benefits and learning outcomes. This appreciation of the benefits to be gained through participating provides objectivity to a decision that any residual risk (i.e. the risk remaining after control measures have been put in place) is acceptable.

Employees who follow this Code of Practice, work within the limits of their own competence, and use their common sense and professional judgement will be fully supported by Abbotsholme School.

Risk management should be largely a common-sense approach centred upon competent staff. It should focus on significant risks, not trivial ones, and it should not become a restrictive and onerous bureaucratic exercise.

Trip Leaders are required to source Risk Assessments from venues or to write their own Specific Risk Assessment as appropriate in good time in advance of any planned trip and add these Evolve trip plan. Click here The reasons for recording significant risks include:

- Deciding whether to proceed, modify or cancel a proposed visit
- Making the planning process thorough
- Informing all those involved in the visit about the risks and precautions
- Demonstrating that good practice has been observed
- Providing evidence for those responsible for approving the visit.

Decisions about the staffing for any visit should take into account

- The nature and duration of the visit and the planned activities
- The location and environment in which the activity is to take place
- The nature of the group, including the number of young people and their age, level of development, gender, ability and needs
- Staff competence
- The consequence of a member of staff being indisposed particularly where they will be the sole leader with a group for any significant time.

In planning for any trip, Trip Leaders should consider supervision ratios and ensure that that the maximum is never exceeded. Click here

At the start of each school year, all staff who will participate in a school visit in any capacity are required to sign a Generic Risk Assessment. Click here These are then held electronically by the EVC and added to each Evolve trip as appropriate.

All transport requirements should be referred in good time to Sam Hobbs.

Further guidance on risk management can be obtained from OEAP National Guidance documents:
4.3c Risk Management – an overview, Click here **4.3f Risk Management – some practical advice** Click here **4.3g Risk Management – what to record and how** Click here and **4.3b Ratios and Effective Supervision** Click here and **4.2a Group management and Supervision** Click here

Assessing Venues and Providers
Wherever possible Trip Leaders should take advantage of established national approval schemes, such as the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), AALA (Adventure Activities Licensing Authority), Adventuremark, AHOEC (Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres) to reduce bureaucracy and ensure quality. When using Evolve, nationally approved badges will automatically be highlighted when selecting a particular provider.

For further guidance refer to OEAP National Guidance document **4.4h Using external providers and facilities** Click here and **4.4f Assessing an adventure activity provider** Click here

Emergency Procedures and Incident Reporting

On any offsite visit the school emergency plan is added to Evolve by the EVC or Deputy EVC. Please follow the procedure outlined there. The emergency procedures for school trips can be found here: Click here:

Behaviour

Abbotsholme School encourages the use of codes of behavioural conduct as a means of establishing appropriate expectations of young persons' behaviour. Such codes should be explained to young people before a visit so reducing the opportunity for misunderstanding both expectations and the sanctions that may be invoked where the code is breached. Pupils are expected to adhere to the highest standards of behaviour whilst on any offsite visit, be it a day trip or residential. Wherever possible pupil behaviour will be managed on the visit, but where necessary pupils may be withdrawn and returned to school with a member of staff. In extreme circumstances, parents will be required to collect their child from the visit, at their own expense. To that effect, parents will be sent the Behaviour Contract for all school residentials before each residential.

Abbotsholme School

Behaviour Contract for all school residentials

This is a contract between child/parent/guardian and Abbotsholme School. It is very important that this is discussed with your child before the trip. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Child

I will:

- Keep myself and others safe at all times
- Listen carefully to instructions
- Follow instructions that are given to me
- Treat all adults and peers with respect
- Show care and consideration for others
- Always tell my group leader if I have a problem
- Look after my belongings
- Adhere to the school behaviour expectations at all times

Parent/Guardian

In the unlikely event that my child endangers the safety of himself/herself or others or engages in unacceptable behaviours, I agree to collect my child directly from the residential location. If the residential is abroad, I agree to arrange the safe passage of my child home at my expense.

Mobile phone use

On school day trips pupils in the senior school are normally allowed to bring their mobile phones. This also applies to residential trips. However, for hikes and camps expeditions mobile phones are not allowed, except for the Sixth Form. On D of E expeditions each group may carry one mobile phone for emergency purposes only.

During any school trip, staff should take a school trip phone and all communications with pupils must take place via this phone. There are two trip phones, which are held by Joy

Holmes. Ideally any text messaging should be done using WhatsApp. The WhatsApp group must include all pupils on the trip and all messaging must be done through the group chat, rather than 1:1, unless it is an emergency. If a 1:1 WhatsApp or text is sent by a pupil, that should be recorded on MyConcern. If any conversations happen in the group WhatsApp are of the nature that you would report on MyConcern if they were said in person, the same rule applies: please ensure the digital conversation is screenshotted and uploaded to MyConcern.

Inclusion & Equality
Every effort will be made to ensure that Educational Visits and Outdoor learning including on site adventurous activities are available and accessible to all who wish to participate irrespective of disability, special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, sex, religion etc.

All young people should be encouraged to participate in as wide a range of activities as possible. If a visit is to cater for pupils with particular needs, a suitable venue should be selected and, in some cases, additional supervision, resources or support may be needed or activities adapted. An individual risk assessment may be appropriate. Trip Leaders are responsible for ensuring a Provider is fully informed of all relevant information including medical, emotional, dietary including allergens, and behavioural to enable them to fulfil their duty of care.
Further guidance available here: **3.2e Inclusion** Click here

Insurance
Abbotsholme School has Public Liability Insurance and details can be obtained from Mr. Richard Baum.

Finance
The cost of some offsite visits is included in the school fees. However, the majority of day visits and residential trips and all holiday visits will be charged to parents. When planning a trip, Trip Leaders should ensure that monies have been received before committing money to an external provider.

In the introductory letter to parents, it is advisable to include a statement, such as the one below, in case of a pupil withdrawing from the trip.

'Please note that in the event of your child subsequently withdrawing from the trip (unless this is for insured reasons) we reserve the right to retain part or even all of the payment, in order to cover any costs incurred or to protect the viability of the trip for others, if a suitable replacement cannot be found.'

Data Protection

On all school trips staff are required to have in their possession the medical and parental contact details from Evolve. This information is confidential and may only be shared with other staff and must be disposed of securely on return to school.

Joy Holmes

Educational Visits Co-ordinator, January 2025