

St. Lawrence College

Whole School Educational Visits Policy



Our school is one community, united in our respect for each other, tolerant of differences and proud of our diversity, honest and positive about our learning and behaviour every day.

Reviewed: 2025

RESPONSIBILITIES

At St. Lawrence College we believe that pupils derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits, trips and expeditions with their school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom. Visits help to develop a pupil's curiosity and investigative skills while longer trips and expeditions, particularly residential, encourage resilience and greater independence.

Most school visits take place without incident and it is clear that teachers are already demonstrating a high level of safety awareness. The potential hazards to which this policy refers is certainly not intended to discourage teachers. No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally incident free, but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do happen nonetheless. The management of health and safety on visits is clearly part of a school's overall policy on health and safety. Rather than trying to cover every eventuality this policy sets out basic principles, leaving further specific detail to teachers' professional judgement.

Currently, the job of organising trips falls under the oversight of the Deputy Head Teacher (DHT), who ensures that all school employees taking pupils on trips understand what is required of them. This document is designed to help all who wish to take pupils on school trips, and give guidelines and advice to ensure that the trip runs as safely as possible.

APPROVAL OF VISITS

Timely Deputy Head Teacher (DHT) and/or Head Teacher (HT) agreement must be obtained before any visit takes place. This may require wider discussion at a meeting of the relevant (Junior/Senior) Senior Leadership Team.

The DHT should ensure that visits comply with regulations and guidelines provided by the school's own health and safety policy. The DHT should ensure that the group leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit.

The DHT should ensure that:

- Adequate child protection procedures are in place
- All necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins
- The risk assessment has been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place
- Training needs have been assessed by a competent person and the needs of the staff and pupils have been considered
- The group leader has experience in supervising the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively
- The group leader or another teacher is suitably competent to instruct the activity and is familiar with the location/centre where the activity will take place
- Group leaders are allowed sufficient time to organise visits properly
- Non-teacher supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children
- Ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate
- Parents have signed consent forms

- Arrangements have been made for the medical needs and special educational needs of all the pupils
- Adequate first-aid provision will be available
- The mode of travel is appropriate
- Travel times out and back are known including pick-up and drop-off points; and a list of this information is handed to the school office
- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover
- S/he has the address and phone number of the visit venue and has a contact name
- A school contact has been nominated (this may be the Headmaster/Headmistress) and the group leader has the details
- The group leader, group supervisors and nominated school contact have a copy of the agreed emergency procedures
- The group leader, group supervisors and nominated school contact have the names of all the adults and pupils travelling in the group, and the contact details of parents
- There is a contingency plan for any delays including a late return home

GROUP LEADER

One teacher, the group leader, should have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit and should have regard to the health and safety of the group. The group leader should have been appointed or approved by the HT or DHT.

The group leader should:

- Obtain the DHT's prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place
- Follow school regulations, guidelines and policies
- Appoint a deputy
- Clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned
- Ensure that all those attending or involved in the visit know who is in charge at any time and that all supervisors and external providers are clear about their responsibilities
- Be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range
- Be suitably competent to instruct pupils in an activity (and provide proof where necessary) and be familiar with the location/centre where the activity will take place
- Be aware of child protection procedures, safer recruitment procedures and volunteer vetting procedures
- Ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available
- Undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including the briefing of group members and parents
- Undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment
- Review regularly undertaken visits/activities and advise the DHT where adjustments may be necessary
- Ensure that teachers and other supervisors are fully aware of what the proposed visit involves
- Have enough information on the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability or be satisfied that their suitability has been assessed and confirmed;
- Ensure the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group

- Consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health or safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality
- Ensure that group supervisors have details of the school contact
- Ensure that group supervisors and the school contact have a copy of the emergency procedures
- Ensure that the group's teachers and other supervisors have the details of pupils' special educational or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively
- Observe the guidance set out for teachers and other adults below.

TEACHERS

Teachers must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances. They should:

- Follow the instructions of the group leader and help with control and discipline
- Consider stopping the visit or the activity, notifying the group leader, if they think the risk to the health or safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Trip organisers must be aware of and apply satisfactory safeguarding measures for visits where there are non-teacher adult volunteers. In particular, visits which involve an overnight stay will require any non-teacher adult volunteers to:

- Be DBS checked (or the nearest possible equivalent)
- Provide references
- Be made aware of the school's safeguarding, child protection and safe working expectations before the visit
- Be the subject of a risk assessment which details appropriate supervision of the volunteer
- Non-teacher adults on the visit should be clear about their roles and responsibilities during the visit.

Non-teacher adults acting as supervisors must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group
- Not be left in sole charge of pupils except where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment
- Follow the instructions of the group leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline
- Speak to the group leader or teacher supervisors if concerned about the health or safety of pupils at any time during the visit
- If volunteers on day-trips do not have an enhanced DBS check, this should be noted on the risk assessment for the trip and appropriate safeguards and supervision put in place. Risk assessments

for visits involving non-teacher adult volunteers must be discussed and signed off by the DHT and the HT, who can advise on appropriate safeguards and supervision.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUPILS

The group leader should make it clear to pupils that they must:

- Not take unnecessary risks
- Follow the instructions of the leader and other supervisors including those at the venue of the visit
- Dress and behave sensibly and responsibly
- Be sensitive to local codes and customs
- Look out for anything that might hurt or threaten themselves or anyone in the group and tell the group leader or supervisor about it.

Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils should be fulfilled in other ways wherever possible.

PARENTS

Parents should be able to make an informed decision on whether their child should go on the visit. The group leader should ensure that parents are given sufficient timely information in writing and are invited to any briefing sessions.

Parents will need to:

- Provide the group leader with emergency contact number(s)
- Sign the consent form
- Give the group leader information about their child's medical, physical and dietary health which might be relevant to the visit (by means of the consent form).

PLANNING

RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment must be completed by the group leader well before the visit, and should be approved by the DHT.

A risk assessment for a visit need not be complex but it should be comprehensive. Specialised information for some visits may be necessary and the DHT should ensure that the person assessing the risks is competent to do so.

A formal assessment of the risks that might be met on a visit should have the aim of preventing the risks or reducing them to the lowest practicable level. Pupils must not be placed in situations which expose them to an unacceptable level of risk. Safety must always be the prime consideration. If the

risks cannot be contained then the visit must not take place or an alternative activity or Plan B should be considered, where appropriate.

The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- What are the hazards?
- Who might be affected by them?
- What are the existing safety measures in place?
- What further safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps will be taken in an emergency?

The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all teachers on the visit, with details of the measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks. The DHT should also be given a copy so that approval, as necessary, can be given with a clear understanding that effective planning has taken place.

Frequent visits to local venues such as swimming pools do not need a written risk assessment every time. A written generic assessment of the risks of such visits should be made at regular intervals, and careful monitoring should take place by the DHT.

If there is a generic risk assessment already in place for a specific trip or activity, the group leader may (where appropriate) carry out a dynamic risk assessment by reviewing the generic risk assessment form and taking into account all the relevant factors, including the specific characteristics and needs of the pupils attending the visit before embarking on it.

Regardless of the type of the visit, the group leader must be prepared to reevaluate and/or reassess the risks whilst the visit is taking place taking into account of any relevant changes in circumstances or factors such as fatigue or changes in the weather. If the risks become unacceptable the visit shall be terminated and/or a Plan B activity carried out instead.

PLANNING VISITS

Before booking a visit through any outside agency, the group leader should obtain a written or documentary assurance that providers such as tour operators have themselves assessed the risks and have appropriate safety measures in place.

The group leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:

- The type of visit/activity and the level at which it is being undertaken
- The location, routes and modes of transport
- The competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff
- The ratios of teachers and supervisory staff to pupils
- The group members' age, competence, fitness and the suitability of the activity
- The special educational or medical needs of pupils
- The quality and suitability of available equipment
- Seasonal conditions, weather and timing

- Emergency procedures, including earthquakes
- How to cope when a pupil becomes unable or unwilling to continue
- The need to monitor the risks throughout the visit.

EXPLORATORY VISIT

An exploratory visit should be made by any teacher who is to lead a group abroad or on a residential visit, or who is to instruct or lead the group in an outdoor activity such as trekking in a location that is not familiar to them.

In other cases the group leader should undertake an exploratory visit, wherever that is possible, to:

- Ensure at first hand that the venue is suitable
- Meet the aims and objectives of the school visit
- Obtain names and addresses of other schools who have used the venue
- Obtain advice from the manager
- Assess potential areas and levels of risk
- Ensure that the venue can cater for the needs of the staff and pupils in the group
- Become familiar with the area before taking a group of young people there.

If in the last resort an exploratory visit is not feasible then the group leader will need to consider how to complete an adequate assessment of the risks. A minimum measure would be to obtain specific information by letter from the venue, from other schools who have recently visited it, and perhaps from local organisations. The appropriate DHT or HT must confirm approval of such assessments.

Many schools will take new groups of pupils to the same location each year. As some factors will change from year to year, it is prudent to re-assess the risks each time, even when the group leader stays the same. It may be useful to evaluate each completed visit and keep a record.

FIRST AID

First aid should form part of the risk assessment. Before undertaking any off-site activities the Deputy Head or the group leader should assess what level of first aid might be needed. On any kind of visit the group leader should have a good working knowledge of first aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken (obtainable from the nurses). For adventurous activities, visits abroad or residential visits it is sensible for at least one of the group's teachers to be a fully trained first-aider. All adults in the group should know how to contact the emergency services.

The minimum first-aid provision for a visit is:

- A suitably stocked first-aid box
- A person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

Other considerations when considering first-aid needs should include:

- The numbers in the group and the nature of the activity
- The likely injuries and how effective first aid would be
- The distance to the nearest hospital.

RATIOS

It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- Age and ability of group
- Pupils with special educational or medical needs
- Nature of activities
- Experience of adults in off-site supervision
- Duration and nature of the journey
- Type of any accommodation
- Competence of staff, both general and on specific activities
- Requirements of the organisation/location to be visited
- Competence and behaviour of pupils
- First aid cover.

Group leaders should consult the guidance provided on the staff handbook regarding adult: pupil ratios for trips involving/not involving overnight stays and discuss with the relevant DHT if necessary.

SUPERVISION

VETTING SUITABILITY

The visit leader must ensure that guidance on the vetting of volunteers is followed: see 'Adult Volunteers', above.

SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

All adult supervisors, including teachers and parent/volunteer helpers, must understand their roles and responsibilities at all times. It may be helpful to put this in writing. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision, such as those with special needs or those likely to cause trouble. Teachers retain responsibility for the group at all times.

COMPETENCES IF LEADING AN ADVENTURE ACTIVITY

If the school is leading an adventure activity, such as canoeing, the Group Leader must ensure that the correct qualifications are held by the person(s) taking the activity.

HEAD COUNTS

Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils should take place, particularly before leaving any venue. All supervisors should carry a list of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times. It may be helpful (especially if the visit is to a densely populated area) to dress the pupils in the same clothing (uniform, tracksuit etc) to make them easily identifiable. Pupils should not usually be required to wear name badges.

REMOTE SUPERVISION

The aim of visits for older pupils may be to encourage independence and investigative skills, and some of the time, on expeditions and for fieldwork, they may be unsupervised. The group leader should establish during the planning stage of the visit whether the pupils are competent in remote supervision. The group leader remains responsible for pupils even when not in direct contact with them. Parents should be told, before the visit, whether any form of remote supervision will take place.

CHILD PROTECTION

The School's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures will apply at all times during off site visits. Any incident amounting to an allegation or suspicion of abuse which occurs whilst on the visit must be dealt with immediately, in accordance with the policy and procedures, by contacting the CPOs at St. Lawrence College.

PREPARING PUPILS

GENERAL

Pupils who are involved in a visit's planning and organisation, and who are well prepared, will make more informed decisions and will be less at risk. Providing information and guidance to pupils is an important part of preparing for a school visit. Pupils should clearly understand what is expected of them and what the visit will entail. Pupils must understand what standard of behaviour is expected of them and why rules must be followed. Lack of control and discipline can be a major cause of accidents. Pupils should also be told about any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own safety and that of others.

PARTICIPATION

The group leader should ensure that the pupils are capable of undertaking the proposed activity. Pupils should be encouraged to take on challenges during adventurous activities but should not be coerced into activities of which they have a genuine fear.

Pupils whose behaviour is such that the group leader is concerned for their safety or for that of others should be withdrawn from the activity. On residential visits the group leader should consider whether such pupils should be sent home early. Parents and pupils should be told in advance of the visit about the procedures for dealing with misbehaviour, how a pupil will be returned home safely and who will meet the cost.

INCLUSION

The School will make every effort and make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that all pupils are able to take a full and active part in off site visits and that they are accessible to all, irrespective of disability, special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation etc.

The School will only consider preventing a pupil from attending an off-site visit as a last resort and will only do so following consultation between the School, the pupil and the parent(s) and only then if the refusal is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, for example because of an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the pupil concerned or others on the visit.

The School will work with parent(s) and pupil(s) in order to agree a way forward in respect of the proposed off site visit and retain a written record of the steps taken and the final decision.

INFORMATION TO PUPILS

The group leader should decide how information is provided, but must ensure that the pupils understand key safety information. For some pupils on overnight visits it will be their first experience away from home on their own and in the close company of other pupils. Pupils should understand:

- The aims and objectives of the visit/activity
- The background information about the place to be visited
- How to avoid specific dangers and why they should follow rules
- Why safety precautions are in place
- Why special safety precautions are in place for anyone with disabilities
- What standard of behaviour is expected from pupils
- Appropriate and inappropriate personal and social conduct including sexual activity
- Who is responsible for the group
- What to do if approached by anyone from outside the group
- Rendezvous procedures
- What to do if separated from the group
- Emergency procedures.

For residential visits all group members should carry the address and telephone number of the accommodation in case an individual becomes separated. This applies to exchange visits when pupils will also need to know about any ground rules agreed between the group leader and host family.

Where visits involve multiple activities with differing requirements each activity will need to be assessed and separate information provided. Pupils should be aware of who is responsible in any

instances where the group leader has delegated responsibility to another member of staff or instructor.

If at any time there is a change in the planned schedule new activities should be assessed and pupils provided with the appropriate information.

PREPARING PUPILS FOR REMOTE SUPERVISION

During any time that remote supervision takes place, the group leader must ensure that pupils are aware of the ground rules and are adequately equipped to be on their own in a group. The size of each group should also be considered.

As a minimum, pupils should have the following:

- Telephone numbers and emergency contacts if lost
- Maps and plans and any other information for them to act effectively
- A knowledge of how to summon help
- A knowledge of out of bounds areas or activities
- Identity cards and a rendezvous point.

It is important that pupils are told not to go off on their own, are given clear instructions about permitted remote supervised activities and understand and accept the ground rules. See Remote supervision.

TRANSPORT AND PUPILS

Pupils using transport on a visit should be made aware of basic safety rules including:

- Arrive on time and wait for the transport in a safe place
- Do not rush towards the transport when it arrives
- Wear your seatbelt and stay seated whilst travelling on transport
- Never tamper with any of the vehicle's equipment or driving controls
- Bags must not block aisles or cause obstructions
- Never attempt to get on or off the moving transport
- Never lean out of or throw things from the window of the transport
- Never get off a vehicle held up by traffic lights or in traffic
- Never run about or pass someone on steps or stairs while transport is moving
- Never kneel or stand on seats
- Never distract or disturb the driver or impede the driver's vision
- Stay clear of doors after boarding or leaving the transport
- After leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move off before crossing the road
- If you feel unwell tell a teacher or supervisor.

The group leader should ensure that pupils know what to do if they miss the scheduled departure time.

PUPILS WITH MEDICAL NEEDS

Additional safety measures to those already in place in the school may be necessary to support pupils with medical needs during visits. Consideration should be given to arrangements for the safe storage and administration of medication and ensuring sufficient supplies are available for residential visits.

All teachers supervising visits should be aware of a pupil's medical needs and any medical emergency procedures. Summary sheets held by all teachers, containing details of each pupil's needs and any other relevant information provided by parents, is one way of achieving this. If appropriate, a volunteer teacher should be trained in administering medication, if they have not already been so trained, and should take responsibility in a medical emergency. If the pupil's safety cannot be guaranteed, it may be appropriate to ask the parent or a care assistant to accompany a particular pupil.

The group leader should discuss the pupil's individual needs with the parents. Parents should be asked to supply:

- Details of medical conditions
- Emergency contact numbers
- Written details of any medication required (including instructions on dosage/times) and parental permission to administer
- Parental permission if the pupil needs to administer their own medication or agreement for a volunteer teacher to administer
- Information on any allergies/phobias
- Information on any special dietary requirements
- Information on any toileting difficulties, special equipment or aids to daily living
- Special transport needs for pupils who require help with mobility.

Enquiries should be made at an early stage about access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at residential centres etc, if appropriate.

All teachers supervising the visit should be given the opportunity to talk through any concerns they may have about their ability to support the child. Extra help should be requested if necessary, eg a care assistant.

If teachers are concerned about whether they can provide for a pupil's safety or the safety of other pupils on a trip because of a medical condition, they should seek further information from the pupil's parents.

The group leader should check that the insurance policy covers staff and pupils with pre-existing medical needs.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Parents should be informed in writing of any offsite activity or visit unless it is a regular part of the school curriculum of which parents have already been informed via the school calendar and/or letter. Seeking annual consent for such routine visits may be appropriate.

INFORMATION TO PARENTS

Before residential visits, or when the pupils are to travel abroad or engage in adventure activities, parents should be encouraged to attend a briefing meeting where written details of the proposed visit should also be provided. There should be alternative arrangements for parents who cannot attend or who have difficulty with communication in English.

Parents need to be aware that the teachers and other adult supervisors on the visit will be exercising the same care that a prudent parent would. The following information on matters that might affect pupil health and safety should be given to parents:

- Dates of the visit
- Visit's objectives
- Times of departure and return: parents must have agreed to meet their child on return
- The location where the pupils will be collected and returned
- Mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company
- The size of the group and the level of supervision including any times when remote supervision may take place
- Details of accommodation with security and supervisory arrangements on site
- Details of provision for special educational or medical needs
- Procedures for pupils who become ill
- Details of any vaccinations or medication required for the visit
- Names of leader, of other staff and of other accompanying adults
- Details of the activities planned and of how the assessed risks will be managed
- Standards of behaviour expected and general group discipline including prohibited items. This information may take the form of a code of conduct which parents should sign
- What pupils should not take on the visit or bring back
- Details of insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, cancellation, medical cover, any exceptions in the policy and whether parents need to arrange additional cover
- Clothing, equipment and money to be taken
- The information to be given by parents and what they will be asked to consent to

PARENTAL CONSENT

If parents withhold consent absolutely the pupil should not be taken on the visit but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent the HT and DHT will need to consider whether the pupil may be taken on the visit or not.

A parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group. Besides conveying the parents' consent it could also form the basis for obtaining details required. General issues to consider include:

- Any allergies/phobias the pupil may have
- Any medication the pupil is taking (if so what the dosage is and who is to administer it)
- Whether the pupil administers their own medication
- Any contagious or infectious diseases suffered within the family during the preceding 4 weeks, and any other recent illnesses suffered by the pupil
- Any special/medical dietary requirements
- Whether the pupil suffers from travel sickness
- Information on any toileting difficulties
- Whether the pupil has any night time tendencies such as sleepwalking (for residential visits)
- The pupil's ability to swim in the pool or sea and their level of safety awareness
- Any other information which the parent thinks should be known
- The parental home and daytime phone numbers and addresses
- An alternative contact, with their phone number and address.

The contents of a consent form for a parent to sign will vary according to the type of visit. See the DHT for advice.

MEDICAL CONSENT

This should form part of the parental consent form. Parents should be asked to agree to the pupil's receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not agree to this, the HT may decide to withdraw the child from the visit – given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.

EARLY RETURN

The group leader should tell parents that they will be expected to fund the early return of a pupil whose conduct gives cause for concern on a visit.

CONTACT WITH PARENTS DURING THE VISIT

The group leader should ensure that parents can contact their child via the school contact and the group leader (two school mobile numbers) in the event of a home emergency, and that they have a number to ring for information in the event of an incident during the visit or a late arrival home. Parents should therefore:

- Know the destination details
- Be aware of the emergency contact arrangements at home (particularly important during holiday periods when the school may be closed) and at all the venues the group will visit