



Department  
for Education

Guidance

# Health and safety on educational visits

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**Applies to England**

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# Types of trip

The 2 main types of trip are:

- routine visits
- trips that need a risk assessment and extra planning

## Routine visits

These involve no more than an everyday level of risk, such as for slips and trips, and are covered by a school's current policies and procedures. They only need a little extra planning beyond the educational aspect of the trip and can be considered as a lesson in a different classroom.

## Trips that need a risk assessment and extra planning

These are trips not covered by a school's current policies. This could be due to considerations such as the:

- distance from the school
- type of activity
- location
- need for staff with specialist skills

Sometimes a school may simply need to review its current plans or arrangements that were successful on previous trips. However, some trips will need a risk assessment, detailed planning and the informed approval of the headteacher or governing board. The person given the job of managing this should:

- have the [skills, status and competence needed for the job](#)
- understand the risks involved
- be familiar with the activity

Plans should be proportionate and sensible, focusing on how to manage genuine risks.

# When to seek consent from parents or carers

A school must always get written consent for nursery-age children.

For children over nursery age, written consent is not needed for most trips, as they're part of the curriculum. However, it's good practice to tell parents or carers about them.

Written consent is usually only needed for trips that:

- need a higher level of risk assessment
- are outside normal school hours

The school can ask parents to sign a consent form when their child enrolls. This will cover them for their whole time at the school. Advice on consent forms is available on the [Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel \(OEAP\)](https://oeapng.info/) (<https://oeapng.info/>) website.

A school should still tell parents or carers about such trips and give them the opportunity to withdraw their child.

## Using outside organisations

Schools using an outside organisation to provide an activity must check the organisation has appropriate safety standards and public liability insurance.

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the [Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge](http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/) (<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>) to organisations that meet nationally recognised standards.

Schools can [check if an organisation holds the LOtC Quality Badge](http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search) (<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/search>).

If an organisation does not hold the badge, the school must ensure that they're an appropriate organisation to use. This could include checking:

- their insurance
- that they meet legal requirements
- their health and safety and emergency policies
- their risk assessments
- control measures

- their use of vehicles
- staff competence
- safeguarding
- accommodation
- any sub-contracting arrangements they have
- that they have a licence, where needed

The school should have an agreement with the organisation that makes it clear what everyone is responsible for. This is especially important if they will be taking over supervision of the children.

## Adventure activities: caving, climbing, trekking and watersports

These kinds of activities should be identified and risk assessed as part of the visit beforehand. Staff managing or leading visits must not decide to add such activities during the trip. They should always consider the abilities of the children when assessing risk.

Organisations need a licence to provide some adventure activities. Organisations that hold the LOtC Quality Badge should hold a licence for the activity they provide.

[Information about licensing \(http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/public-information.htm\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/public-information.htm) is available on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website.

## Watersports

When planning watersports, schools should consider the need for:

- instructors
- lifeguards

A school should take particular care when using hotel swimming pools and other water-based leisure facilities that may not have a trained lifeguard on duty. Although there are no swimming-pool-specific health and safety laws, the OEAP provides useful advice about undertaking adventure specialist activities, including swimming.

# Trips abroad

Trips abroad can present extra risks and need a higher level of risk assessment.

Schools should make sure that any organisation providing activities holds the LOtC Quality Badge or similar local accreditation.

The HSE does not cover incidents overseas. However, it can investigate work carried out in Britain to support the trip, such as a risk assessment. School staff could be liable under civil law for any injuries to the children due to negligence.

If the trip includes significant risks, such as challenging terrain, a remote location or an extreme climate, a school should follow the guide to the [British Standard for adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom](https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/what-is-the-national-standards-body/why-standards-matter-for-consumers/consumer-resources/) (<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/what-is-the-national-standards-body/why-standards-matter-for-consumers/consumer-resources/>) as the basis for its planning and risk assessment. Organisations employed by the school should follow this, too. If they have a LOtC Quality Badge, they follow this standard.

Schools should consider the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's detailed guidance on [safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas](https://www.gov.uk/safer-adventure-travel-and-volunteering-overseas) (<https://www.gov.uk/safer-adventure-travel-and-volunteering-overseas>) and [foreign travel advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>) when organising a visit abroad.

## Knowing what to do in an emergency

Schools should have an emergency response plan that covers what to do if there is an incident away from school. They should also have a communications plan that covers how routine communications should be handled, including regular check-ins and calls to reassure people. Trip leaders should be familiar with the plan.

Schools can get advice on creating a communications plan from their outdoor activity adviser or the [OEAP website](https://oeapng.info/) (<https://oeapng.info/>).

## Evaluating trips

A school should set up a clear process for evaluating all visits once they have been concluded, from the planning through to the visit itself. It should keep a record of any incidents, accidents and near-misses.

This will help it:

- evaluate whether its planning has worked
- learn from any incidents which took place

## Educational visits coordinators

Schools should appoint an educational visits coordinator and make sure they have the training they need. The headteacher assumes this duty if there is no coordinator. Local authorities or academy trust outdoor education advisers can advise on appointing and training coordinators.

The coordinator works with the outdoor education adviser to help their colleagues in school to assess and manage risks.

The coordinator should:

- be an experienced visits leader
- have the status to be able to guide the working practices of other staff
- be confident in assessing the ability of other staff to lead visits
- be confident in assessing outside activity providers
- be able to advise headteachers and governors when they're approving trips
- have access to training, advice and guidance

Guidance is also available on the [OEAP website \(https://oeapng.info/\)](https://oeapng.info/).