



<http://oeapng.info>

## Ratios and Effective Supervision

Activity and Visit Leaders must ensure that young people are supervised in accordance with the principles of "Effective Supervision", requiring them to take account of:

- The nature of the activity (including its duration).
- The location and environment in which the activity is to take place.
- The age and gender (including developmental age) of the young people to be supervised.
- The ability of the young people (including their behavioural, medical, emotional and educational needs).
- Staff competence.

This means that arrangements for supervision must take into account the nature of a group and the individuals in it. It is therefore important that, when planning a repeat visit or a series of activities, the previous plan (no matter how well it worked in the past) is reviewed to ensure it meets current group needs.

Ratios are a risk management issue, and should be determined through the process of risk assessment. It is not possible to set down definitive staff/student ratios for a particular age group or activity.

Some guidance documents do set out ratios, but these should be regarded as starting points for consideration rather than being definitive, as they may be appropriate only where the activity is relatively straightforward and the group has no special requirements. For example, the DfES publication HASPEV (1998) suggested the following "starting points":

- School years 1 - 3, 1:6
- School years 4 - 6, 1:10/15
- School years 7 onwards, 1:15/20

Without special safeguards or control measures, these ratios will **not** be adequate to meet the needs of most residential or more complex visits.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (updated 3rd April 2017) no longer sets out different requirements for minimum ratios during outings from those required on site. As with other age groups, ratios during outings should be determined by risk assessment, which should be reviewed before each outing. The appropriate ratio on an outing is always likely to be lower than the legal minimum that applies otherwise (for children aged three and over in early

years settings either 1:8 or 1:13 and 1:30 in infant school reception classes in maintained schools). It is not unusual for a ratio of 1:1 to be necessary.

A useful framework for assessing requirements for ratios and effective supervision is **SAGE**:

- **S**taffing: who is needed/available? The plan must work within the limits of available numbers, abilities and experience.
- **A**ctivities to be undertaken: what do you want the group to do and what is possible?
- **G**roup characteristics: prior experience, abilities, behaviour and maturity, any specific or medical/dietary needs.
- **E**nvironment: indoors or out; a public space or restricted access; urban, rural or remote; quiet or crowded; within the establishment grounds, close to the establishment or at a distance; and the ease of communications between the group and base. Do not overlook environments to be passed through between venues. For residential visits consider the accommodation and surrounding area. For outdoor environments, consider remoteness, the impact of weather, water levels and ground conditions.

You can find further guidance in the documents 4.2a "*Group Management and Supervision*" and 4.4b "*First Aid*".

