



## Good Practice – the Basics

Good practice does not guarantee safety or success, but it does make them more likely. Good practice, in terms of **what** happens on any particular visit can be quite subjective, because it depends so much on the aims and the context. However, by looking at **how** outdoor learning and off-site visits are planned, managed and supervised, it is easier to identify what good practice looks like.

Good practice is fundamentally about getting the right leaders doing the right activities with the right participants in the right places at the right times.

The following are the basics of good practice.

### Enabling Policies

Have straightforward and practical employer and establishment policies, focused on enabling safe, high quality learning. Such policies should encourage all staff to engage with outdoor learning and off-site visits and include standard operating procedures to facilitate regular activities and visits happening as a matter of routine.

See documents [5.3b "How to Write an Establishment Visit Policy"](#) and [1b "Foundations"](#).

### Clear Aims

Identify clear aims and benefits: Answer the WHAT, WHO, WHY, WHERE and WHEN questions. Be clear about what you want to achieve, with whom and why. A clear understanding of aims makes it easy to identify suitable choices for many aspects of planning. Identifying the potential benefits is essential in making sound judgements as to whether the plan is sensible, acceptable and viable.

See document [2.4i/5.1b "High Quality Outdoor Learning"](#).

## Competent and Effective Leadership

Ensure the competence and effectiveness of visit/activity leaders and leadership teams.

Appoint an Educational Visits Coordinator and make sure that they, and any others involved in the oversight and approval of activities and visits, have the training they need and access to competent advice.

See documents [3.1b "Establishment Roles and their Interdependence"](#) and [3.2d "Approval of Leaders"](#).

## Thorough Planning

Take into account the four 'SAGE' variables (Staff, Activities, Group and Environment) and the interplay between them. Match the level of challenge to the capabilities of individual participants in order to maximise the benefits.

Plan systematically (e.g. by using a checklist) so that group and individual needs (e.g. safeguarding, special needs and disabilities, medication) are met and other relevant factors (e.g. parental information and consent, first aid, transport, insurance) have been considered. Many of these can be addressed through standard operating procedures.

Have contingency arrangements and alternatives (a 'Plan B') when necessary.

See documents [1b "Foundations"](#), [3.3e "Checklist - Visit Leader"](#) and [4.1a "Avoiding Accidents and Emergencies"](#).

## Proportionate Risk Management

Most human activity involves balancing benefits and risk. All activities have some risk associated with them, so the only way to eliminate **all** the risk is by stopping the activity altogether – but this means losing all of the benefits of the activity. Risk management is not about eliminating risk altogether – it is about reducing it as low as reasonably practicable and deciding if this is acceptable so as to gain the benefits.

Risk assessment is a process, not a piece of paper, although it is important to record the key results of that process. Risk assessment and risk management are tools to enable participants to take part in beneficial activities safely, and not prevent such activities from taking place. Take a common-sense and proportionate approach and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and paperwork.

See document [4.3c "Risk Management - an Overview"](#).

## Effective Supervision

Make decisions about staffing ratios based upon your risk assessment. Employ active and effective supervision. Supervision is not a passive presence, it is an active employment of good leadership habits – supervision is about what leaders do, not just that they are there.

See documents [4.2a "Group Management and Supervision"](#) and [4.3b "Ratios and Effective Supervision"](#).

## Sound Selection and Use of Providers

Ensure that any external providers and facilities are carefully selected, and that there is clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of provider staff and establishment staff at all times during a visit or activity.

See documents [4.4g "Selecting External Providers and Facilities"](#) and [4.4h "Using-External Providers"](#).

## Preparation for Emergencies

Ensure that emergency plans and procedures are in place and that they are tested and effective. Plans can never provide a step-by-step guide to responding to an emergency: they must be implemented and adapted by competent people.

See document [4.1b "Emergencies and Critical Incidents – Overview"](#).

## Monitoring

Monitor what happens in your establishment(s), so that you know whether what happens in practice is consistent with policy and expectations.

See document [3.2b "Monitoring"](#).

## Review and Evaluation

Review activities and visits in terms of aims, learning outcomes, planning, risk management, supervision arrangements, any incidents or accidents. Ask yourself: What worked well? What didn't work so well? What will we change next time? What learning needs sharing with colleagues?

See documents [4.2c "Reviewing"](#) and [5.1d "Evaluation"](#).

