



National
Guidance
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Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Principles

All young people have an equal right to be included in outdoor learning and offsite visits. Establishments must therefore plan to enable young people with special needs and disabilities to participate.

Understanding the needs and abilities of the group is a foundation for visit planning.

See also OEAP National Guidance documents [3.2e "Inclusion"](#) and [1b "Foundations"](#).

Planning and Preparation

You should consider, well in advance, the needs and abilities of potential participants and plan visits accordingly. You must make reasonable adjustments so that all can benefit from the experiences being offered.

Where an establishment has a coordinator for special educational needs and disability (SENCO), they should be involved in future planning at an early stage.

For advice about participants with mental health conditions, see OEAP National Guidance document [4.4n "Mental Health"](#).

Planning of visits that have a long lead-in time may have to begin with no knowledge of who will participate. In such cases you should consider the possibility that there might be potential participants with special educational needs or disabilities. In selecting venues, you should consider their accessibility for disabled young people as well as their suitability for the visit aims.

Where an establishment offers options from which participants can choose, for example during an Activity Week, initial planning should assume that those with special educational needs or disabilities might wish to participate across the whole range of activities. You should ask students to indicate their preferences well in advance, so that detailed planning can take them into account.

Transition planning should mean that the needs of young people moving between establishments are known.

In some cases, it may genuinely not be possible to find ways of including particular participants without significantly compromising the intended outcomes for others. In these cases, it may be necessary to plan alternative but equally valuable 'parallel'

activities. However, the social and developmental benefits of a group altering their plans and ambitions to include a disabled colleague may often outweigh any loss of other benefits.

Decisions about how best a young person with a special educational need or disability can participate in an activity or visit may require discussion with a wide range of people, such as head teacher/manager, visit leader, outdoor education adviser, class teacher, parent, SENCO, social worker, carers, support staff, their GP or mental health practitioner, and any third-party provider. These discussions should take place well before the visit plan is finalised. This is especially important when considering including or excluding a young person with serious behavioural issues or disabilities.

You should always inform parents well in advance of a visit taking place, to ensure that you are aware of any needs and how they can be accommodated. Parents will also be able to offer advice on how a young person is likely to respond during a visit. See OEAP National Guidance documents

[4.3d "Parental Consent and Informing Parents"](#) and [4.4j "Participant Information and Data Protection"](#).

Where a young person is the subject of an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, or other care plan or risk assessment, this should be used to inform the plan for the visit.

All staff involved in any visit should be fully briefed about the needs and disabilities of participants, ensuring that they understand their assigned roles and, in particular, who will be supervising those participants who are vulnerable or, for example, likely to abscond, display challenging behaviour, or have an epileptic seizure.

You should make enquiries at an early stage about wheelchair access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at venues to be visited, if necessary. If ramps are not available in certain places, you may need to arrange to take portable ramps with you.

A preliminary visit will reduce the likelihood of unforeseen problems, provide familiarity with the site and disabled access where needed, and help create confidence about the supervision arrangements before the visit goes ahead.

Where a participant requires medication during a visit, see OEAP National Guidance document [4.4d "Medication"](#).

You should check whether your insurance policy covers any pre-existing medical conditions.

Staffing and Supervision

Supporting participants with special needs or disabilities on visits may require additional staffing to provide effective supervision. For supervision to be effective, staff should be experienced in dealing with the needs of the participants involved.

All staff should be given the opportunity to talk through any concerns they may have about their ability to support participants with special needs or disabilities. Extra help should be requested, if necessary, for example by involving a care assistant.

The following factors should be considered when determining staffing requirements:

- The need to administer medication;
- The need for support with toileting;
- Any heightened likelihood of a participant absconding;
- The likelihood of a medical emergency arising;
- The way in which being away from the normal setting will affect behaviour (for example, some young people have unpredictable fears and phobias that will be more difficult to cope with out of their normal environment);
- The risk of violence or assault, and therefore the need for skills in de-escalation and positive handling;
- The need for manual handling of participants, and whether staff require training in this;
- The need for flexibility for staff working on a 1:1 basis to take a break;
- Where a member of staff is needed to supervise or care for an individual participant, they should not be considered to be part of the overall staffing ratio, as their role will be focused on their charge's wellbeing, not on the wider supervision needs of the group;
- If a member of staff is driving a minibus, they will not be able to supervise passengers, nor deal with any emergencies – if participants need supervision while travelling, you should ensure that sufficient staff are available.

Costs

You must not pass on any additional costs of the necessary adjustments, such as additional staff, to the participants who require it or to their parents, but the costs may be shared by the whole group through the visit funding arrangements (fees, voluntary contributions, establishment funds etc.).

See also OEAP National Guidance document [3.2c "Charging for school activities"](#).

