



National  
Guidance

<http://oeapng.info>

## Overseas Visits

### Rationale

The potential benefits and learning outcomes of Overseas Visits include:

- Knowledge, skills and understanding to live in, and contribute to, a global society.
- Understanding the world in which we live, including the values, cultures and everyday life of different societies.
- Enriching curriculum areas such as languages, history and geography.
- Personal and social development including self-confidence and independence.
- Meeting new people and developing new friendships and inter-cultural understanding.
- Broadening horizons.

### Leader and Staff Competence

In determining leader competence it is important to take into account the extra complexity involved in leading a visit overseas as compared to within the UK. It is important that there is someone who can communicate effectively and has a good understanding of the local culture. In the absence of this ability in the visit leadership team then a suitable emergency contact should be available on a 24/7 basis.

All leaders should be trained in child protection/safeguarding, taking into account the additional risks involved in residential situations and being overseas. In order to avoid situations that could lead to accusations of inappropriate behaviour, leaders and helpers should be aware of issues relating to personal safety, including personal and professional protection.

When determining staffing ratios consideration should be given to the ease with which a substitute leader may be dispatched during the visit, should they be required to cover an incident, emergency or to replace another leader.

Visits should include 'succession planning', and any future Visit Leader should have the opportunity to learn as much as possible as an Assistant Leader.

### Preparation of Staff, Young People and Parents

The Visit Leader should ensure that any employer competence requirements for leaders are met.

The establishment should provide parents with full information about the visit so that they can make informed decisions when consenting to the arrangements, including any “Plan B” alternatives. A pre-visit parental briefing session is good practice. It will provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions. The briefing should:

- Set clear expectations about the behaviour of young people, including circumstances in which parents should be prepared for young people to be sent home early, or to be responsible for their collection, and when such repatriation may be at parental expense.
- Include a detailed programme of the visit, including any specialist activities.
- Explain the supervision arrangements, including any use of remote supervision (e.g. shopping during a visit without direct supervision).
- Cover expectations about downtime, curfew times, bed times, alcohol, smoking etc.
- Ensure that parents are aware of the need to disclose information about any aspects of their child’s emotional wellbeing or mental health that may affect the young person during the visit.
- Set expectations about mobile phone and tablet use, social media activity etc.

It is good practice to supply participants with some form of ID card that they carry with them, containing:

- Name and contact details of the establishment.
- Contact details of accommodation.
- Leader mobile phone number for emergency use.

## Passports and Visas

Personal identification is required for international travel and within many countries, usually in the form of a passport.

Collective (group) passports, which are valid for certain European countries, are a lower-cost alternative to individual passports. They are for groups of between five and fifty children, all of whom must be a British national and under 18 at the end of the visit. A group leader over 21 with a British passport must be included, and a deputy group leader should be included because the passport will otherwise become invalid if the group leader does not travel. If there are more than fifty in the group you may split the group and apply for two or more passports. A collective passport costs £39 (in March 2018) and applications take about six weeks. Each young person will need a collective passport photo card, available from the Passport Office.

Some countries have an immigration requirement for a passport to remain valid for a minimum period (usually six months) beyond the date of entry to the country. You should ensure that all passports are in good condition and valid for at least 6 months from the date of return.

There may be a requirement for a visa to enter particular countries. Check visa requirements with the travel company, or contact the Consulate or Embassy of the country to be visited.

Check the national citizenship status of all members of the party with care. If a party member is not British, or is a British Overseas Territories Citizen, British Overseas Citizen, British Subject, British National Overseas or British Protected Person, they may need a visa that is not required by British Citizens. This may be relevant to countries through which the party passes in transit.

If you are planning a visit to Europe from a school or sixth form college (but only these) with non-EU pupils, you may apply to the British Council for a 'List of Travellers form', which is a visa waiver. The waiver is valid only for pupils attending the applicant's school or sixth form college and does not include non-EU teachers travelling with the visit, who would need to apply for their own visas. Further information and an application link can be found at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/partner/list-travellers>.

An emergency plan for an Overseas Visit should consider action in case a member of staff becomes incapacitated or has to leave the visit. If the country visited requires a visa, you will need to address the issue of whether there is a back-up leader who holds an appropriate visa.

It is recommended that at least two photocopies of all passports, visas and other important travel documents are obtained. One set should be kept by the home base emergency contact, and the second copy kept with the party - but kept separate from the original documents.

## Leaving and Re-entering the UK

Visit Leaders should be aware that young people leaving the country may be flagged on police watch lists if, for example, there are concerns that they may be at risk of child sexual exploitation or abduction. If airport police pick this up from their routine checks on passenger lists, they may wish to interview the young person and see evidence of consent for them to travel abroad, prior to allowing them to board the aeroplane. Interviews have also been known to happen on the aeroplane before take-off. If Visit Leaders have been informed that a young person in their group is flagged, or suspect that they might be, they are advised to ring 101 in advance of the visit. The caller will be directed to the appropriate police section to pre-empt any flagging issues at the airport.

The UK Government has issued guidance for groups on entering the UK when bringing school parties and other groups by coach. The guidance, which explains how to prepare for border control and avoid delays, says that all passengers must get off the coach at border control so that a Border Force officer can check them face to face.

You can make sure you are prepared for crossing the border by:

- Asking passengers to put on shoes and coats.
- Ensuring that each passenger is holding their passport or travel document.
- Letting passport control know that you are the leader of the group.
- Ensuring that passengers leave food and drinks on the coach.
- Leaving all luggage on the coach.

## Health

When temporarily visiting a European Union (EU) country, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland, UK residents may be entitled to free medical treatment or treatment at a reduced cost. Only treatment provided under the state scheme is covered. To obtain treatment, party members will need a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Not all UK residents are covered in Denmark, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland. Refer to the NHS and Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) websites for up to date information.

If in doubt as to whether vaccinations or travel medication are required, consult a GP at least 3 months prior to the visit. The NHS and FCO websites are useful sources of information.

## Insurance

Travel insurance is essential for all Overseas Visits. Any tour company with whom travel is arranged will usually offer travel insurance, but it may also be taken out separately, possibly through a local authority. There should be a close examination of what is covered and what is excluded. Before taking out insurance, you should check whether the establishment already has an appropriate policy.

Medical insurance should be taken out even if an EHIC card is carried, to cover those expenses not covered by the card.

Check that:

- Repatriation expenses are included.
- Rescue expenses are covered. In remote regions, air ambulances can cost in excess of £30,000 per rescue.
- The costs of parents are covered, should they need to come out to stay with a young person in hospital, or to accompany them home.
- Personal belongings, baggage and money are covered.

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel Advice

When planning a visit to countries that are further afield, or that have experienced disasters, conflicts, terrorism or civil unrest problems in recent years, check the FCO website [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) in the early stages of visit planning, at regular intervals and immediately prior to leaving.

The site provides information about safety for tourists. The exact wording of this statement is usually the basis upon which insurance companies decide whether or not they will cover visits to such countries, including costs incurred by a cancellation based on terrorism and civil unrest.

Cancelling visits at a late stage may incur major financial penalties and may not be included in insurance cover.

The Government has provided specific advice to help you prepare for a visit to a place where there is a risk of a terrorist attack.

If the hyperlink does not work, please copy it and paste into your browser:

<http://tinyurl.com/pp4fxmu>

See also the FAQ 6k "Visits and the Threat from Terrorism".

## Legal and Cultural Differences

The legal definition of what constitutes a 'child' and a 'criminal offence' varies. Crossing the road without using pedestrian crossing points or dropping litter are two examples of offences punishable by spot fines in some countries.

You should ensure that the party is aware of the legal position of issues such as the age at which young people may consume alcohol and give legal sexual consent. Where necessary, you should make sure that parents have been informed of how such matters will be dealt with during the visit. It is strongly recommended that these issues are addressed by ensuring that both young people and their parents have agreed a behaviour code or set of ground rules that includes possible sanctions, including the circumstances in which it may be necessary to repatriate a member of the party.

## Emergency Procedures

Both the establishment and any third party provider should have an emergency or critical incident plan. The establishment should ensure that the two plans will interact effectively before the visit takes place.

The plan should outline actions to be taken and include the following:

- 24/7 emergency contacts back at the establishment, including over-night, holiday periods and at weekends.
- Whole group evacuation/repatriation.
- Contingency funding arrangements.
- Getting support out to the group

Visit Leaders should refer to their employer and establishment Critical Incident/Emergency Planning guidance for details of how they should respond to a serious emergency and how to initiate support from their employer.

An emergency plan for an Overseas Visit should consider action in case a member of staff or a young person becomes incapacitated or has to leave the visit, including the need for a back up member of staff to meet any visa requirements.

Please also see the documents about critical incident planning and emergency procedures.

## Issues Relating to Privacy, Taste and Judgement

Although mobile phones can provide a link between young people and their parents, they can also create difficulties - particularly camera phones. Visit Leaders should have a policy for the use of mobile phones by young people during a visit. This should be clearly stated for the benefit of both young people and their Parents and should be included in any Code of Conduct or Behaviour Agreement.

Visit Leaders should establish clear policies for acceptable use of the Internet.

## Young People with Specific Needs

It is widely recognised that young people with special educational needs and disabilities are more vulnerable and therefore face additional risks whilst visiting abroad. The following additional precautions and procedures are recommended:

- A preliminary visit is strongly recommended for trips involving children and students with special educational needs and disabilities.
- More adults/carers may be required to provide effective supervision and ensure access to appropriate male or female support. As part of the risk-benefit assessment process, it should be considered whether any specifically trained person(s) are required to be part of the visit leadership team.
- All leaders supervising the visit should be aware of the young people's medical needs and medical emergency procedures.
- Visit Leaders should check whether travel insurance covers pre-existing health conditions.
- Visit Leaders should check whether there are appropriate housekeeping arrangements for disposal of soiled dressings, pads, etc.
- Bunk beds may not be appropriate.
- Leaders should check the availability of an interpreter trained in Makaton, signing or other appropriate communication medium.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

After any visit, it is good practice to ensure a system of feedback, review and evaluation. This should involve the participants, the parents, the leaders and partner organisations. It can help the celebration of success as well as feeding in to the planning of future visits. Any significant issues should be shared with the EVC, the Head/Manager and the employer's Outdoor Education Adviser.

