



<http://oeapng.info>

Safeguarding

All adults involved have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people during outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom.

Such visits and activities have many benefits, but there are also potential safeguarding risks which should be considered during the planning process.

Visit Leaders should ensure that they are informed of any children and young people who may be particularly vulnerable or have specific safeguarding needs, and ensure that other staff/adults are made aware as necessary.

Reporting

When any concerns about a young person are identified these should be raised with the establishment's designated safeguarding lead. When visits occur out of hours, or out of term time, you should ensure that adequate and appropriate cover arrangements are in place for this role.

If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, you should make a referral to children's social care and/or the police immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the designated safeguarding lead, you should inform the designated safeguarding lead that a referral has been made as soon as possible. Reporting child abuse to your local council via the following link directs you to your local children's social care contact number.

<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

Overnight stays

Where activities and visits involve overnight stays, careful consideration should be given to sleeping arrangements, taking into account issues of privacy and child protection. Children, young people, staff and parents should be informed of sleeping arrangements prior to the start of the trip. Careful attention should be given to ensuring safe staff/participant ratios and to the gender mix of staff.

New places and new people

A key benefit of off-site visits is that children and young people have the opportunity to explore new places and meet new people. This may leave them vulnerable unless they are adequately prepared and appropriate measures have been put in place to control any significant risks.

Relationships and professional behaviour

During outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom, relationships between staff and participants are often less formal than in the usual school or workplace. Young people may also build relationships with each other and with other adults and young people from outside the group, such as students from another school, activity instructors or members of the public. This can have many positive benefits, but it also brings risks, of which all staff involved should be made aware.

Adults are in a position of trust and need to ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays within clearly defined professional boundaries. They are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions. They should operate, and be seen to operate, in an open and transparent way. The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.

Staff should:

- always be publicly open when working with children and young people, and avoid situations where they and an individual child or young person are completely unobserved
- when physical touching is required (e.g. when coaching an activity or fitting a climbing harness), seek permission and do it openly – ideally with other staff present
- comfort or reassure a distressed child or young person in an age-appropriate way, whilst maintaining clear professional boundaries
- follow their employer's reporting procedures if a child or young person makes a disclosure of abuse

Staff should not:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or horseplay
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching in any form
- Allow children or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person, even in fun

Mobile communications and social media

Mobile phones, smart phones and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and messaging services can be very useful in organising visits. For example, they can be used for keeping parents informed about the progress of a residential visit, about changes in arrangements such as travel times, or in the event of an

emergency. They can also present some challenges and risks, of which staff should be aware.

- Comments and/or photographs shared by students or staff on social media can appear very different when seen in another context. What appears at the time as a bit of harmless fun, or as a joke within the group, can easily become very damaging to either the individual who is the butt of the joke, or to the reputation of the establishment, students and staff when seen in another context by parents, colleagues or members of the public. Once these things are shared by other users on the social media they become very difficult to remove.
- Allowing personal information to circulate on social media about vulnerable individuals (such as information about where they are spending a residential visit), can pose risks.
- Smart phones may give access to unsuitable web content.
- Individuals may be vulnerable to cyber-bullying.

It is recommended that:

- Any visit behaviour agreement, particularly for residential visits, addresses the issue of social media use either through applying existing establishment policies or by laying down some basic ground rules.
- Any such policy about the use of social media should take into account whether any children or young people are particularly vulnerable or have specific safeguarding needs.
- Children and young people should be made aware of the risks in an age-appropriate way.
- Staff should take care to keep confidential their personal information, phone numbers, social media profiles, etc.
- Staff should not engage in private texting or messaging with group members.
- Photographs of children or staff taken during visits should not be displayed on social networking sites.

See also the document in this guidance "Vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks".

