



National
Guidance
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Coronavirus

This document provides guidance for planning and managing outdoor learning, off-site visits and learning outside the classroom during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It must be read within the context of current government guidance, which is likely to change as the situation develops.

Although the guidance is focused on schools, it is also intended to be applicable to other establishments such as children's homes.

You must also follow any guidance issued by your employer.

Government Guidance

It is essential that current government guidance is followed. It should therefore be monitored for any changes.

The latest UK government advice and information is available at:
www.gov.uk/coronavirus

The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidance to educational settings about COVID-19:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19

It has also issued specific travel advice for educational settings:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice-for-educational-settings

There are planning guides for the reopening of different types of establishment:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-early-years-and-childcare-settings-from-1-june
and
www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools

Equivalent Welsh government guidance is available at:
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
<https://gov.wales/guidance-educational-settings-about-covid-19>
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-travel-guidance-education-settings-and-students>

Outdoor Learning and Off-Site Visits during the Pandemic

Learning outdoors has many educational and health benefits. During the pandemic, it also provides opportunities for 'social distancing' and fresh air, and so establishments should consider how they can maximise the amount of time that children and young people spend outdoors.

For example, in addition to using their own playgrounds and gardens, many schools routinely use outdoor areas adjacent to and nearby the school for educational activities, sometimes designated as a 'Local Learning Area'. It may be possible to continue to use some of these venues and activities, and to develop new activities within current limitations.

It might also be possible to negotiate temporary exclusive use of an outdoor area close to an establishment, with the landowner.

There are many ideas and resources available online, for example:

- Council for Learning Outside the Classroom
www.lotc.org.uk/resources/education-resources
- Learning Through Landscapes
www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources
- National Trust
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/50-things-to-do-before-youre-11--activity-list

Apart from places adjacent to and nearby the establishment, options for off-site visits are likely to be limited for some time. However, there could be opportunities for them within current government guidance and while managing any risks to participants, staff and the public. Visits might be possible to nearby outdoor spaces such as nature reserves, but perhaps also to indoor venues. For example, during the pandemic many venues such as theatres, art galleries and museums are closed to the public. It might be possible to arrange for them to be used as venues for teaching and learning.

Planning and Managing Activities during the Pandemic

The following guidance for planning and managing activities is specific to operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. You should also be familiar with other National Guidance documents relevant to your role, as the normal principles of good practice still apply.

You should review your standard operating procedures to ensure that they include the measures that you need to take to reduce the risks from COVID-19.

It is particularly important to follow government guidance about 'social distancing' and hygiene, whether indoors or outdoors, on-site or off-site.

You should consider avoiding activities which have a high likelihood of minor injuries, so as to reduce the need for first aid, close contact with participants, or visits to hospital.

If the planned activity is in an area open to the public, you should consider carefully how you will ensure that your group is isolated from the public. This includes isolation from children who normally attend the establishment, or other local

establishments, but are currently not doing so and who may therefore be attracted to your group and be disruptive.

The consideration about isolation from the public, including children not at school, also applies if the activity is off-site and so involves walking or transport (such as by the establishment's minibus).

Venues should therefore be selected to minimise any possible interaction with the public, including children not at school, and to keep travel distance to a minimum.

The same attention should be given to hygiene when outdoors as when indoors. For example:

- Regularly washing/sanitising hands including when going outside, before and after touching shared objects such as activity equipment, before eating, after using the toilet, when getting on or off transport such as a minibus, when returning inside;
- Avoiding touching objects shared by the public – for example, a member of staff could hold a gate open to avoid everyone touching it;
- Avoiding activities which involve touching each other (e.g. holding hands);
- Sanitising equipment before it is used;
- Thoroughly cleaning/sanitising vehicles before and after use.

Consider carrying, or having easily available, antiseptic hand gel, antiseptic wipes, tissues, bags for waste, gloves and face masks and possibly disposable aprons and eye protection, in case staff need to administer first aid or give direct support or personal care to a participant.

Be aware that antiseptic hand gel usually contains a high proportion of alcohol, and could therefore be a temptation for abuse by some young people. It should be used under close staff supervision.

During some activities, it may be possible to designate or mark out 'zones' within which individual participants work, to avoid contact between them.

It is important to keep parents informed about your plans and the precautions you are taking, both indoors and outdoors, as they will naturally be concerned. Some schools may be working with staff and children who normally attend other schools, where policies, procedures and expectations are different, and so it may be necessary to establish a common understanding with staff, parents and children.

Where staff are working with children with whom they are unfamiliar, or in an unfamiliar establishment and local area, they should take this into account when planning activities.

Future Visits

Restrictions on visits could continue for a significant time, and so it would be unwise to make any definite plans until it is known when they will be relaxed.

When the time comes to make such plans, you should take the current government guidance into account as part of your process of risk assessment, and then check it regularly in the days and weeks leading up to the visit, and during a residential visit, and make any changes necessary to your plans.

Parents and participants may naturally be concerned, so you should discuss their concerns with them and keep them informed about the situation and how you plan to mitigate any risks.

If you plan to visit a venue such as a museum or gallery, or to attend a public event such as a concert or sporting fixture, or to stay in accommodation such as a hostel or hotel, or if you are using a tour operator or activity provider, discuss the potential effects of COVID-19 with them at the time of booking, and keep in touch with them during the run-up to the visit.

If you make any bookings or financial commitments, you should clarify how the terms and conditions will apply if you, or the provider, have to cancel, or are prevented from going ahead because of COVID-19 or its effects. You should also ensure that parents are clear about any financial consequences of cancellation. See document [3.2i "Contracts and Waivers"](#).

If the visit involves any significant financial commitments, such as travel or accommodation, you should discuss the potential effects of COVID-19 with your travel insurance provider. For example, will the insurance cover the cost of cancellation, curtailment or delay due to changes in government guidance or virus control measures (such as members of the group being isolated at home or in a hotel and prevented from travelling)? See document [4.4c "Insurance"](#).

The Association of British Insurers has published advice on the travel insurance implications of COVID-19, mainly focused on overseas travel, at: www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-qa

Because of COVID-19, there may be a higher than normal risk of leaders being unable to go on a visit, and so you may need to take this into account when planning the staffing of visits.

If you are planning a visit which involves another group (perhaps a group overseas), such as an exchange visit, or if you are planning to host or work with another group (perhaps an overseas group visiting the UK), you should keep in contact with them and be aware that they might need to change or cancel the arrangement.

Future Overseas Visits

See also document [7r "Overseas Visits"](#).

You should monitor the government's foreign travel advice for any country you plan to travel to or through: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Liaise closely with your travel provider about the situation in the country that you are planning to visit and consider the alternatives and options should that visit no longer be able to proceed.

Specific advice for people travelling overseas during the pandemic, and on protecting themselves on their return, is at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus

The advice given above about insurance is particularly important for overseas visits.

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has published guidance about travelling overseas at: www.abta.com/news/coronavirus-outbreak

