



Thinking Schools Academy Trust  
***“Transforming Life Chances”***

Plymouth High School for Girls



**POLICY: Educational Visits & Offsite Activities Policy**

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This policy was adopted:	June 2022
This policy will be reviewed:	March 2025
Statutory Policy?	No
Source	Trust/School/LA

## PLYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### OFFSITE ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

#### **Introduction**

Plymouth High School for Girls fully recognises the educational and self-developmental benefits of offsite activities and educational visits for young people which support us in the promotion of our school motto “Non Scholae Sed Vitae Discimus”, (“For Life Not School We Learn”). The school encourages exploration of the wider range of opportunities available for learning outside the classroom, supported by a policy that clearly identifies what is needed to plan for and deliver a successful trip whilst keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.

This policy replaces the withdrawn document which was based on the government regulations “Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HaSPEV)”. In 2011, Lord Young carried out a review called “Common Sense Common Safety”, which aimed to significantly reduce the amount of ‘red tape’ believed to be restricting offsite activities. The result was that in February 2012, the 150-page HaSPEV regulations were replaced by an eight-page guide called “Health & Safety Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies”. Subsequently, the National Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (NOEAP) produced a National Guidance document called “Guidance for the Management of Outdoor Learning, Offsite Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom”, which achieves the aim of reducing ‘red tape’ whilst providing an appropriate level of technical and professional guidance for anyone involved in Offsite Trips and Educational Visits.

The school has formally adopted, through its Governing Body, Plymouth City Council Summary of Guidance for Use by Employers in the conduct of Offsite Activities 2012’ which is not far removed from the National Employers Guidance produced by OEAP [www.oeapeg.info](http://www.oeapeg.info) Further procedures have been agreed with the Governing Body to ensure that this policy is adhered to.

This policy will be formally reviewed regularly, and in response to legislative change and lessons identified from incidents and any near miss as appropriate.

#### **Rationale**

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the following Legislation and Guidance:

#### **Legislation**

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding vulnerable groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education Act 2002
- Adoption and Childrens Act 2002
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Border, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009
- Apprenticeship, Skills Children and Learning Act 2009
- Education Act 2011

## Policy and Guidance

- Working Together to safeguard children 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in education 2015
- Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board – Policies and Guidance:
- <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/localsafeguardingchildrenboard/>

At Plymouth High School our vision is to enable every young person to experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of their learning and personal development.

Through learning opportunities outside the classroom, we aim to raise achievement and create aspirations through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about *what* we learn but importantly *how* and *where* we learn and what development takes place.

We want the young people in our care to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and to develop aspirations that will lead to achieving future economic wellbeing.

Activities have to be carefully planned, well supervised with excellent delivery of teaching objectives. They should extend learning through careful preparation before, and follow-up activities after, the event.

Just as important as the quality of individual activities is planning learning outside the classroom into the curriculum map, and teaching and learning more widely, so that it can provide a regular and frequent diet from 11 to 19 years. In this way knowledge, skills, development and understanding can be progressively built up.

## Role of this Policy

This information sets out how staff at the school plan and manage learning out of the classroom, off the school site. Following these procedures provides guidance as to what is required at each stage and where decisions are drawn from. It identifies that best practice has been used as a model wherever it exists. This adaptation is based upon the policy and guidance produced by Plymouth City Council. The document 'Plymouth City Council Summary of Guidance for Use by Employers in the conduct of Offsite Activities 2012' must be referred to alongside the policy when an offsite activity or educational visit is being planned and undertaken.

## Description of relevant Activities

Learning out of the classroom draws upon the local and worldwide environment to provide enrichment experiences contributing to an exciting balanced curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, and prepares young people for the opportunities and experiences in adult life.

Most of these activities involve leaving the school site for a period of time on visits that range from day, short duration, to extended days and overnight residential trips. These activities could have a naturally occurring and contributory level of risk as they could include travel to a venue in another country where there are very different regulations.

The experiences they provide often require voluntary, additional effort and considerable resources and expense, and therefore require specific consideration for risk and quality. This policy also sets out the background and the specific commitments expected of all volunteers and young people. Through this commitment Plymouth High School seeks to protect valuable staff and ensure opportunities are protected for future generations of learners who will want to follow in the footsteps of current students.

Examples of trips we at Plymouth High School currently undertake are as follows:

**English/Literacy** – theatre visits, Carnegies poetry competition, public speaking competitions

**Mathematics** – University of Plymouth masterclasses, enrichment activities at Taunton racecourse  
**History** – Imperial War Museum, London Eye, Houses of Parliament, Plymouth museum  
**Geography** – fieldwork at Nettlecombe and Dawlish Warren  
**Modern Foreign Languages** – Monschau Germany, Celle Germany, China  
**Art and Design** – art gallery visits, Eden Project, Bristol urban art project, Tate Modern and National Portrait Gallery  
**PE** – sports activities Brickfields, extra-curricular activities for example sailing, skiing, surfing, horse riding; national competitions and events  
**Music** – Glynebourne opera, concerts, regional workshops  
**Design and Technology** – Cardiff, Clothes Show, Engineering in Education scheme  
**RE** – visits to local centres of worship, visits by local clergy  
**STEM** – Hummingbird Formula 24 racing car events, Langage Energy Centre, At Bristol Science Centre, Plymouth Medical School, CERN Geneva  
**Cross curricular themes** – Isles of Scilly; Morocco, Swaziland, Sekondi-Takoradi Ghana, Tuscany, Discover Plymouth

### **Inclusion**

The Equality Act 2010 states that the school must not discriminate, harass or victimise a student to whom one of the protected characteristics applies (Disability; Gender reassignment; Pregnancy and maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex and sexual orientation) in the way that it affords (or not) the student access to a benefit, facility or service. There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Every effort will therefore be made to ensure that Offsite activities and Educational Visits are available and accessible to all; reasonable and practicable measures will be taken to include all young people.

**Please refer to the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) charging / remissions policy, available on the TSAT website:**

<https://www.tsatrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Charging-Remissions-Policy-2021.pdf>

### **Approval Procedure**

The Governing Body has delegated the consideration and approval of offsite visits and activities to the Headteacher except in the case of hazardous, residential and overseas visits. The Headteacher delegates the co-ordination of educational visits to the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) who has received training from the LA or the Trust.

Before a visit is advertised to parents the Headteacher and / or EVC will approve the initial plan and the risk assessments. The EVC will agree the completed plan and risk assessments for the visit before departure which the Headteacher will then approve.

Generally this will be undertaken using **EVOLVE** as the planning and approval system [www.tsatvisits.org.uk](http://www.tsatvisits.org.uk) Very occasionally a member of staff may complete the risk assessment and submit documents as hard copy not electronically if it has been agreed in advance. In these instances, the documents will then be added electronically as soon as is practicable to the EVOVLE system.

The school has agreed a policy for categorising its visits in line with Plymouth guidance i.e.:

**Level 3:** Overseas residential visits and adventurous activities led by our own staff must be approved via Evolve and the TSAT's on-line approval gained.

**Level 2:** Residential, day visits and adventurous activities led by an external provider within the UK are approved at school level through Evolve by the EVC/Head

**Level 1:** Local & regular day visits for which generic risk assessments and standard operating procedures are in place are approved at school level through Evolve by the EVC/Head.

## Staffing

The school recognises the key role of staff accompanying a visit in ensuring the highest standards of learning, challenge and safety on a school visit.

The OEAP National Guidance sets a clear standard to which Visit Leaders must work. The guidance states that a competent Visit Leader requires:

- Knowledge and understanding of the guidance, supported by school and TSAT/LA led training.
- Knowledge and understanding of the school's procedures supported by a structured induction process specified by the school.
- Knowledge and understanding of the group, the staff, the activity and the venue.
- Appropriate experience.
- The capacity to react effectively and efficiently when things do not go as planned during a visit.
- In some circumstances (e.g. first aid, adventurous activities) a formally accredited qualification.
- Refer to '**3.2d Assessment of Competence**' National Guidance and '**4.3a Good Practice Basics**'

Staff are encouraged and supported to develop their abilities in organising and managing visits. There is a system within the school to allow less experienced members of staff to work alongside more experienced colleagues on visits. The selection of staff for offsite visits will be a key priority in the initial approval of any proposed visit. Staff will be suitably qualified and experienced for proposed activities.

The school values and recognises the contribution of volunteer adults such as governors and parent helpers assisting with offsite activities and visits. Any volunteer will be approved by both the Headteacher and Visit Leader and is entered on the voluntary helpers list kept by the School. They will be carefully briefed on the scope of their responsibility. Where it is appropriate the school will ensure that an enhanced DBS check is carried out.

The appointed Visit Leader will be fully supported in the tasks required to arrange the visit. This will include, as necessary, making time or finances available to conduct an exploratory visit, briefing teachers and/or other staff, accessing training courses, reviewing and evaluating the visitor identifying time when the leader and EVC might work in partnership to undertake planning and risk assessments.

There are no legally set ratios to abide with in respect of staff to student ratios. Guidance states:

- Trips in the UK 1:20 with a minimum of 2 staff
- Trips abroad 1:10

Ratios should be determined by the result of an effective risk assessment, taking into consideration:

- The group – age, gender, ability, behaviour, medical needs, Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Staff competencies
- Environment – location of visit, time of year, remote setting, crowded, easily accessible
- Activity – skill level, duration, equipment

Plymouth High School requires all visits to have one identified Visit Leader and an Assistant Leader, both of whom should meet the requirements specified by the National Guidance for these roles. There may be some circumstances, such as sporting fixtures, where it is deemed appropriate, following the risk assessment, for the visit / activity to take place with one member of staff. In these circumstances the member of staff must be an experienced leader of offsite visits and activities, and must not be a volunteer.

The school expects the good practice ratios identified by OEAP to be used as starting points; therefore, for most groups where there are additional needs of the young people, for example: hazardous conditions, remote environments, higher ratios will be required.

Visit staff will not be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs such that their ability to recognise hazards or respond to emergencies is in any way restricted.

## **Risk Assessment**

The Visit Leader will seek to identify any significant risks from any activity that is under their control and take appropriate steps to ensure all participants are safe. Good practice precautions and safety measures will be taken and this will be recorded in a risk assessment.

Many aspects of a trip are covered by generic risk assessments and these should be referred to rather than repeated. If a generic risk assessment is deemed to need amendment prior to the trip, the Visit Leader should discuss this with the EVC. Following a visit, if the risk assessment has proved not to cover all eventualities, a risk assessment must be amended in discussion with the EVC.

Some activities such as DoE and Sixth Form trips require the students to work in teams without an adult present but with appropriate checks and balances in place as outlined in the risk assessment.

If anything, unexpected happens on a trip such as the sudden illness of a member of the party or transport breakdown, an adult must phone school (or the visit's emergency contact outside of school hours) as soon as it is practicable, to inform school what has occurred, what has been put in place to deal with the matter and if necessary to seek advice / assistance on how the trip can continue safely, if at all. In such circumstances it may be agreed that the staff to student ratio will need to change in order to release a member of staff to deal specifically with the problem that has arisen. However, no student on the trip / activity will be left alone unsupervised.

## **External Activity Providers**

Where external contractors are involved in organising all or part of the visit, the contract will be made with the school on behalf of the students. All payments for the visit will be made through the school accounts.

The Visit Leader will make appropriate checks before committing the school to the contract. This will include seeking assurances about health and safety, and any accreditation and licensing. Wherever possible the school will seek to use holders of the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge for which no Providers contracts or other assurance checks are required. If the provider does not hold the LOtC Quality Badge then they must fill in, sign and return to the Visit Leader a **PSOE5** form.

## **Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations**

The Headteacher/EVC and Visit Leaders should have a basic understanding of where and when the provision of adventurous activities is legally regulated.

The Activity Centre (Young Persons Safety) ACT (1995) established the Adventure Licensing Regulations and Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA), which was initially responsible to the former Department for Education and Schools. The scheme is now the direct responsibility of HSE and operated through the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS).

The activities covered by the scheme are: caving; climbing; trekking; water sports. The regulations and supporting inspection regime provide a formal process of professional inspection to confirm that providers have effective safety management systems and processes, meeting a national standard.

The definitive source of advice on the Licensing Regulations can be found in the HSE publication 'Guidance to the Licensing Authority Activity Licensing Regulations 1996'.

Refer to OEAP National Guidance '3.2f AALA Licensing'

## **Gaining Informed Consent**

For visits and activities that usually take place within the school day, the Headteacher approves all such visits in advance. Approval will be sought from the Governing Body for any overseas residential trips. We follow TSAT's guidelines relating to health and safety, and we ask parents to give written permission for their child to take part in any activity that takes children off the school site. If we do not receive this written permission, the child will be unable to participate. At the beginning of each school year, each parent is asked

to sign the statement in their daughter's Planner or the low risk consent form for students in the Sixth Form giving permission for their child to take part in activities within the locality (The school's definition of locality is the area around the school and covers sites up to 20 minutes walking distance from the school), and not including transport, for that academic year.

We commit to providing parents with the necessary information that will enable them to give an informed consent and further to ensure that they are aware of any risk that is naturally present. We will endeavour to make this information available in a variety of ways that will give it the best possible chance of being seen. Parents are encouraged to email the Visit Leader if they have further questions about the visit or wish to have access to more detailed information concerning the organisation of the trip and risk assessments. Parents may request to come into school and speak to staff directly should they feel that they need to, and an appointment with the visit leader will be organised. For more major events, a meeting will be arranged well in advance to enable all the information to be presented.

Teachers plan educational visits and activities that support the children's learning. We give known details of these visits and activities to parents as early as we can and with as much notice as possible.

Some activities are planned that naturally require higher levels of risk; or continue on after the school day or normally active period; or overnight. When this is the case a specific risk assessment is carried out that forms the basis of the briefing to parents and is therefore an integral part of the consent they give. (See also The Adventure Activities Licence guidance)

We follow TSAT's guidelines and we ask parents to give written permission either for a block of activities (e.g. regular sporting events) or individually for their child to take part in any activity that takes children off the school site. If we do not receive this written permission, the child will be unable to participate.

In some instances, the school may pass onto parents, details of events that it considers are complementary to its curriculum. Where a provider's information about a specific event is commended by the school but the school will not be arranging participation, it is necessary to clearly point out that the parents must judge the provider themselves and consent to their child's participation directly with the provider and not through the school. Where the school can, it does its best to ensure that a provider it commends operates legally and is health and safety compliant. However, parents are advised to always check carefully with a provider before making any commitment.

### **The expectations of Students and Parents**

The School has a clear Code of Conduct laid out within the 'Behaviour Policy'. This Code of Conduct will be part of the condition of booking by the parents. In addition, a Visit Leader may set additional rules dependent on the nature of the trip. These will be made clear to students and parents prior to the trip. Students, whose behaviour is such that the Visit Leader is concerned for their safety, or for that of others, can be withdrawn from the activity. The Visit Leader will consider whether such students should be sent home early and parents will be expected to cover any cost of the premature journey home.

### **Evaluation and Value of Offsite Activities and Educational Visits**

Ofsted have recognised and reported on the value of learning outside the classroom. However, they have noted that visits are rarely evaluated with sufficient rigour.

Evaluating offsite activities and educational visits is paramount to ensuring learning outcomes and Visit aims were achieved, and to inform the Visit Leader of future adjustments that may be required.

Refer to OEAP National Guidance '**Rigorous Evaluation of LOTC: Meeting Ofsted Expectations and Assuring Quality**'

**Critical Incident Support and Emergency Planning** A critical incident is defined as:

1. Any member of the group on an offsite activity or educational visit is involved in an incident where they have suffered a life-threatening injury or fatality, is at serious risk or has gone missing for a significant and inexplicable time.
2. An incident becomes critical when it goes beyond the normal coping mechanisms of the leaders.

TSAT has an Offsite Response Team to provide support to a group in crisis.

In the event that an incident occurs offsite, the school's critical incident plan which is based on that of TSAT, will be put into operation.

#### Emergency Contact

The school will appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team as the emergency contact for each visit. For most visits there will be a second member of SLT appointed for back up. All major incidents should immediately be relayed to this person especially those involving injury or that might attract media attention. The emergency contact will be contactable 24/7 for the duration of the visit.

The Visit Leader will leave full details of the visit, including all students and accompanying adults on the visit with the emergency contact, medical information, itinerary and the home contact details of parents and next-of-kin, as appropriate.

#### Reporting Accidents

All incidents and accidents occurring on a visit will be reported back and recorded following normal school procedures for reporting and investigating accidents.

#### **Transport**

Statistics demonstrate that it is much more dangerous to travel to an activity than to engage in it, therefore careful planning is required.

There is clear guidance on the requirements on using mini buses and private cars and the use of public transport. Generic risk assessments are in place covering different modes of transport and these should be amended prior to the trip if the Visit Leader deems that there are potential risks not covered. Following a visit, a risk assessment must be amended if it proves not to cover all eventualities.

Refer to OEAP National Guidance '**Transport: General consideration**'.

#### **Retention Schedule**

A child can make a claim for an incident three years after they have reached the age of maturity, meaning until they are 21 years old. In the case of those with special educational needs, the age limit is 25 years. The school therefore requires visit details and consent to be retained until the youngest child on the visit reaches 25 years old. EVOLVE will store information electronically. Parental consent will also need to be kept for this period and can be held electronically.

#### **Review by the Local Authority**

The school is supported in its arrangements for offsite visits by the Thinking School's Academy Trust. Where necessary the school/Trust will seek advice from an external provider for Outdoor Learning.

All visits that involve a trip overseas and any that involve hazardous adventurous activities will be notified to the Trust prior to departure through EVOLVE.

The Trust will provide an independent reassurance check of the plan and the precautions and safety measures that will be taken. Some sample monitoring will also be undertaken by the Trust and the school agrees to facilitate this when and where required. Any advice provided will be fully considered prior to the trip taking place.