



THE HERMITAGE SCHOOLS

Inspire, Learn, Achieve

Outdoor Learning and Visits Policy

Person Responsible: Outdoor Learning Lead and Educational Visits Co-ordinator
Date Adopted: Autumn Term 2018
Date of last review: Summer Term 2026
Date of next review: Summer Term 2029

Rationale

We believe that every child and young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances. At The Hermitage Schools, learning happens everywhere; in our classrooms, on the field, in the Forest School area and throughout the school grounds and, in addition to this, it happens outside of the school environment. We believe that the children need to understand that the world around them is not limited to what happens within the classroom or even within the bounds of the school fence. Our curriculum aims to include outdoor elements of teaching in every subject, so that they come alive for all our learners.

We nurture our children's social and emotional development, both within our Life Skills lessons and with our variety of extended learning educational visits. Children have many experiences beyond the school, such as visiting local areas of interest, forging strong links with other local schools for outdoor activities and, for our older children, going on activity based residential visits.

The school adheres to the Surrey advice and guidelines for schools on educational visits and outdoor learning by following the procedures set out by the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel.

Where possible and appropriate, the staff incorporate learning outside the classroom into their weekly curriculum. Across all year groups, the staff are supported and encouraged to take learning beyond their classrooms and into the wider school environment. The learning environment has been developed accordingly, including undercover areas outside some of the classrooms. Activities are periodically planned and set up in the large outdoor areas to allow children to develop, become independent and take risks. These areas enhance what is taught within the classroom, including topic work and learning activities. The schools have developed the external learning environment, and continue to do so to ensure there is space to explore including:

- The Hermitage Biodome
- An amphitheatre

- Gardening areas
- Wildlife shelters
- Activities on the hard surfaces
- The school playing field
- Forest School area
- Gym equipment
- Trim trails
- Bouldering wall
- Infants School cycle track
- The garden and pond area

Aims and purposes of Educational Visits

The school has a strong commitment to the benefit of learning beyond the school premises by the use of carefully planned educational visits. This is part of the schools' required role, to provide a wide and engaging curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development and prepares young people for the opportunities and experiences of adult life.

Each year the school will arrange a number of activities that take place off the school site, which support the aims of the schools. Parents/carers will be notified about upcoming activities.

The Local Governing Committee has given its approval to the following types of activities being arranged in support of the educational aims of the school:

- Regular local visits to support curriculum activities
- Day visits for particular year groups
- Residential visits
- Visits to local primary and secondary schools to access external expertise
- School teams away fixtures

Developing a planned and progressive programme of visits

Year groups will arrange at least one class trip to enrich the curriculum each academic year. In addition to this, children in Years 4, 5 & 6 will have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit each academic year. This will be to different residential centres providing differing opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities.

Approval Procedure

The Executive Headteacher has nominated a School Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) and the Local Governing Committee (LGC) has approved this appointment. This person will have attended the Local Authority (LA) EVC training course (and updates) and will be given sufficient time and resources to carry out the role. The LGC has delegated the consideration and approval of educational visits and other offsite activities to the Executive Headteacher and will nominate, where appropriate, an Educational Visits Governor to liaise, as necessary, on behalf of the LGC.

The Executive Headteacher will keep the LGC aware of its educational visit events and programme via the termly report to governors.

The school will comply with the Local Authority (LA) guidelines for Educational Visits and Journeys. Before a visit is communicated to parents, the Executive Headteacher and the EVC must approve the initial plan. They will also approve the completed plan and risk assessments for the visit at a later date and update the EVOLVE system (an online system for the planning, approval and management of educational visits, sports fixtures and extra-curricular activities) accordingly.

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 pupils. The LA Providers Contract form will be used. All payments for the visit will be made through the schools' accounts.

Consent

For regular out of hours clubs, parent/carer permission is sought termly through the return of a consent slip choosing the activities. For school teams and nearby visits requiring transport, parents/carers will be asked to sign a letter of consent for participation in these activities. Parents/carers will be given the information for the activities that pupils are involved in and will be informed either by letter, email, phone call or text message, as appropriate, if an activity has to be cancelled.

For any visit lasting a day or more or involving significant travel, or adventurous activity, parents/carers will be asked to complete a form which consents to their child taking part. As part of the parent/carer consent, they will be fully informed of the activities and arrangements for the visit. For all residential visits, parents/carers will be invited to a briefing meeting where they can ask for clarification of any aspect of the itinerary and organisation of the visit.

Staffing

The school recognises the key role of accompanying staff in ensuring the highest standards of learning, challenge and safety on a school visit and within the learning outside the classroom environment. The schools have at least one member of school staff who is fully Forest School trained. Teachers and other staff are encouraged and supported to develop their abilities in organising and managing pupils' learning in a variety of environments through induction and training. When employing staff, there is an expectation that the new staff will use both the internal and external environment as a learning space.

The school encourages and appreciates additional adults accompanying educational visits who are not part of the agreed staff complement. Where it is appropriate, the school will ensure that DBS screening is completed for volunteer adults assisting with Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) within school, on educational activities and for visits.

The appointed Visit Leader (usually a lead teacher), 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 other staff, accessing training courses, reviewing and evaluating the visit or identifying time when the Visit Leader and EVC might work in partnership to undertake planning and risk benefit assessments.

Charging

Parents/carers will be asked to make a voluntary contribution to day trips and visits to enable them to take place. No individual child will be excluded from a trip because of parents'/carers' inability or unwillingness to pay. However, if there is a significant shortfall in funding, the trip or visit may not be able to take place. In order to provide high quality experiences of learning outside the classroom for all pupils, pupil premium funding may, at the Executive Headteacher's discretion, be used to enable trips to take place when the families of pupils entitled to free school meals have been unable to make a voluntary contribution to the cost of a visit. Please see 'The SWAN Trust Charging and Remissions Policy' for further details.

Inclusion

At The Hermitage Schools, we ensure that we provide opportunities for all children, regardless of ability, special educational need or disability, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background.

Differentiated activities are well planned for by teachers, and children are given opportunities to work both independently and in groups. We support children who are working below the level of their peers whilst also ensuring children are challenged by offering opportunities to engage in extended research, with the intention of developing a greater understanding of the world around them. Learning outside the classroom offers an opportunity to access higher order learning as well as opportunities to challenge misconceptions and ways of thinking.

The schools' Inclusion Leader will lead consultation with parents/carers and county advisors or medical officers or doctors, as appropriate, for pupils with SEND and/or special medical needs, to ensure appropriate planning is put in place so that all pupils are able to participate in activities.

Safeguarding

It is important that all safeguarding and reporting procedures are in place on educational visits. The Visit Leader will follow the normal school procedures for reporting any incident via the school's secure online reporting system (CPOMS); if access to the system is not available, a paper copy should be made and the incident recorded on CPOMS at the earliest opportunity. Staff members must record and act on any incident, including disclosures, immediately, following the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The Visit Leader should contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, to discuss an incident or disclosure so that a decision can be made about next steps and whether a referral to Children's Services is appropriate.

All volunteer helpers should be provided with a basic understanding of safeguarding before participating on a trip. This should include procedures if a child makes a disclosure and who the information should be passed to.

Code of Conduct

The schools have a clear code of conduct, outlined in the 'Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy'. This code of conduct is applicable for all outdoor learning activities, including school educational visits.

Emergency Procedures

The schools will appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team as the emergency school contact for each visit. All major incidents should be communicated immediately to this person, especially those involving injury or that might attract media attention.

For residential visits, the Visit Leader will leave full details of all pupils and accompanying adults on the visit with the emergency school contact, including the home contact details of parents/carers and next-of-kin, as appropriate.

The Visit Leader will take with them a copy of the Surrey County Council Emergency Procedure (Operation Duke). All incidents and accidents occurring on a visit will be reported back through the school systems.

The school will have emergency funding available to support the Visit Leader in an emergency.

Evaluation

Each visit and activity should be evaluated to ensure that the objectives are met. It also enables staff to consider whether the visit/activity should be repeated in future years, either with or without modifications.

Risk Assessments

For each visit outside the school grounds, the Visit Leader will prepare a risk assessment, based on a preliminary visit. The risk assessment should identify any significant risks, and the control measures which will be employed to reduce the risks to an acceptable level for the trip to take place.

Generic risk assessments may also have been prepared by external providers. Staff may use these generic risk assessments as a basis for their own specific risk assessment, but they should be considered and edited in light of the children they are taking, and any other specific factors relating to the trip (for example, the time of year may affect the need for clothing to protect against the cold or the sun). A preliminary visit should still be undertaken to check for any changes in the visit destination, which may affect the risk assessment.

Risk assessments for on-site activities should be prepared by the Activity Leader and should identify any significant risks and the control measures which will be employed to reduce the risks to an acceptable level for the activity to take place.

Copies of all risk assessments are kept centrally in an internal risk assessment file by the EVC or recorded by the EVC on the EVOLVE online system for specific visits, including all residential or high-risk activities.

All risk assessments should be reviewed after the completion of a trip, activity or visit. The EVC will ensure that reviewed risk assessments are dated as having been evaluated and/or modified as a result.