



EDUCATIONAL TRIPS POLICY

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The Value of Educational Visits and Offsite Activities

Visits are an essential part of curriculum enrichment. They are used by many courses as a means of extending and reinforcing the classroom experience of students, making theory more relevant, providing insight into what is learned and developing valuable group cohesion and personal social skills. They can often enhance student motivation and commitment and make a considerable contribution to the process of adding value. They are valued by students who, on their personal statements on reports and on UCAS forms, often refer to the rich experience derived from particular activities. They can often make a significant contribution to the development of good working relationships between staff and students. Our portfolio of visits is also used widely in marketing material or presentations and may be a major factor in attracting students. The College values its broad range of extramural activities and appreciates that staff members frequently devote their time and energy to the essential planning and organisation these require.

Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all reasonable and practical measures are taken to ensure the health and safety of all employed staff and any enrolled student who might participate in any educational visit or offsite activity. Under the **Health and Safety etc. Act 1974** Varndean College as an employer is responsible for the health and safety and welfare at work of its employees and also has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonable, the health and safety of anyone else affected by its activities, including participants in off-site activities. This policy aims to make more specific that responsibility by complying with the **Health & Safety Executive's Guidance (2011) "School trips and Outdoor Learning Activities"** which has been used as references for this policy. Organisers educational visits and off-site activities are encouraged to consult this guidance: www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf

Policy Objectives

In order to provide an appropriate context for all educational visits and off-site activities, the College intends to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its staff and students who may participate in any educational visit or off-site activity, or any member of the public who may be affected by such activity
- 2) To support and guide staff in meeting their responsibilities via relevant information, guidance and training
- 3) To ensure the accessibility of educational visits and off-site activities for its students, including those who have disabilities or experience financial difficulties
- 4) To control the negative impact of educational visits and off-site activities on teaching and learning and student success in terms of staff or student absence

Procedural Objectives

The procedures relating to the planning and organisation of educational visits and off-site activities have been determined in order to achieve the above objectives. It is essential that the procedures are followed closely because they set out the legal and organisational framework within which educational visits and off-site activities take place, clarifying the major responsibilities of all parties involved – staff, students, parents and college managers. The objectives of the procedures are to:

- 1) Define and distinguish between different types of visit and off-site activity
- 2) Ensure each educational visit or activity has a clear rationale and is authorised by a member of the College Management Team
- 3) Clarify organisational responsibilities
- 4) Provide appropriate information, guidance and proformas to support staff organising visits and off-site activities
- 5) Require that comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken and records are kept in compliance with legislation
- 6) Require that the visit is planned and conducted to take account of the health and safety of participants and the safeguarding of young people from hazards including abuse.
- 7) Ensure effective administration and sound financial planning
- 8) Ensure effective communication about planned educational visits and off-site activities to teaching and support staff, students and parents
- 9) Minimise or mitigate disruption to the on-going work of the College

General Responsibilities and safety considerations

- 1) All teachers who have a responsibility for looking after students have a duty of care in common law. If the persons in their care are under 18 they are said to be ***“in loco parentis”*** (“in the place of the parent”) and are expected to exercise the degree of care that a “reasonable, prudent and careful parent would exercise” to protect the students from potential hazards including abuse.
- 2) However, because teachers are trained, professional people, courts have tended to expect them to exercise a higher standard of care than that which might be expected of an ordinary parent. Courts have also recognised over the years that some environments present greater hazards than a classroom and that ***“a higher duty of care”*** applies. Providing a “higher duty of care” plays a significant part in the safety of participants.
- 3) Relatively high risk activities such as skiing, climbing, canoeing etc need to be carefully regulated and should be under the control of experienced and appropriately trained people exercising close supervision.
- 4) This duty of care is continuous during the time of an educational visit and cannot be transferred to anyone else. It cannot be set aside until the students have been returned or have been dispersed at the end of an otherwise normal college day.
- 5) High levels of supervision are necessary in all activities regardless of their nature, their frequency or duration. Care should be taken to avoid complacency and lack of vigilance.

- 6) The degree of supervision required is determined by the age of the student(s) and the nature and location of the activity. Staff should bear in mind any known propensities of particular students. Actions should be in line with well-developed and accepted “good practice” and the knowledge, advice and recommendations of well-qualified and experienced staff.
- 7) The procedures set out in relation to this policy should be followed by all staff participating in educational visits and off-site activities, including the use of appropriate forms (see College intranet).
- 8) Staff wanting help or support with interpreting this Policy and its related procedures should speak to the Vice Principal (Teaching & Learning).

Access for Students with Disabilities and/or Challenging Behaviour

Young people with disabilities can gain a great deal from educational visits and off-site activities from opportunities to take part in challenging activities, broaden their horizons, develop friendships and be closely involved in the College community. Young people who exhibit challenging behaviour can also learn important lessons from the experience of working or staying with their peers away from home. They may also experience a boost to self-esteem from participating in certain activities that helps them address their behavioural issues. Although different considerations apply to these two groups of young people, there are a number of important considerations in common particularly with respect to anti-discriminatory legislation. Although persistent behavioural problems may result from social or environmental circumstances, some may occur as a result of an underlying physical or mental impairment amounting to a disability. Many cases where there is no pre-existing diagnosis, if tested in a court of law, could be deemed to result from an underlying disability. It is therefore an advisable precaution to generally treat students with behavioural issues as if they were covered by the legislation.

Under the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** and **Special Needs and Disability Act 2001** people with disabilities have the same entitlement to access to education as non-disabled people. It is therefore illegal to discriminate “without justification” against disabled students. The College and its employees have two key duties:

- Not to treat disabled students less favourably for reasons relating to their disability
- To make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage

These duties are “anticipatory” and therefore educational visits and off-site activities should be organised in the expectation that disabled students might wish to participate.

Discrimination on the basis of ability is permitted by the legislation in certain circumstances e.g. a sporting visit for those who have reached the standard required for selection. The legislation does not require activities to be adjusted for all students so that a disabled student may participate. It is permitted to offer a choice of activities at the same time, some of which may not be accessible to a disabled student, provided that the different the activities offered are of comparable educational value and at least one of the options is accessible to all pupils.

It is important in following the procedures relating to this policy that significant risks associated with particular students are identified and precautions are in place to manage these risks acceptably. In general risk assessment should facilitate planning so that all pupils may be safely included rather than serve as a barrier to their inclusion.

However in some circumstances, particularly in relation to students exhibiting challenging behaviour, their exclusion may be justified:

- Where behaviour is not related to disability, it is lawful, as part of the College's approach to behaviour management, to deny access to a visit, provided it is not an essential component of the curriculum.
- Where a comprehensive risk assessment and substantial evidence indicates it would be unsafe for a disruptive student to participate, they may be excluded for this reason, provided their behaviour is not related to disability.

Such exclusions may only be exercised by a member of the College Executive Team and parent(s)/guardian(s) should be informed.

Financial Impact on Students

Visits must be self-financing. Income from payments from students should cover all the costs of the visit, including staff expenses. Where a visit or activity is integral to the course, a subsidy from capitation may be considered.

Students and their parents, depending on their study programme, can often be asked to pay significant amounts to fund extension activities. This could marginalize some students from more financially disadvantaged backgrounds. Staff considering organising visits should therefore think carefully about costs to students (and parents). However some students and parents may be prepared to pay more for what they consider to be a worthwhile experience. Therefore value for money should also be taken into account.

Where visits are an integral part of a student's course, the College is not legally entitled to ask for payment and a student may not be excluded from an activity on the basis of their inability to pay the cost. Students and parents should be informed that a voluntary contribution is required and that the activity may not run unless payments are forthcoming. The Discretionary Learner Grant will be used to support participation of students in visits which are essential to the teaching and assessment of a qualification course.

Controlling the Impact on Teaching and Learning and Student Success

Taking students out of College and out of lessons can have an adverse impact on their learning and success in those courses where they are losing contact time. For staff there can be considerable frustration when important lessons are prepared only to find a number of students absent on visits. Therefore staff planning to organise educational visits and off-site activities should:

- be mindful of this impact and take steps to minimise or mitigate it
- ensure visits have a clear rationale
- consider alternative means for achieving the same educational objectives
- follow procedures to ensure that due notice is given to other staff
- inform students about their need to find out and catch up on all missed work
- set work for their own missed lessons

Policy Review and Monitoring

This Policy and its related Procedures sets out the provision and guidelines relating to Varndean College's responsibilities for all educational visits and off-site activities. The College will not allow any educational visits or off-site activities which are not organised within the requirement of this Policy and subsequent Procedures.

This policy will be reviewed on a three year cycle by CET & CMT. Implementation will be monitored through the Equality and Diversity Group and Health and Safety Team, who will also monitor the impact of relevant legislative changes within three years and then advise on the need to revise and amend the Policy and Procedures.