



THAMES LEARNING TRUST

Name of Policy	Educational Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom Policy
Scope of Policy	This policy relates to all academies across TLT.
Approved by	CEO
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GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER



THAMES LEARNING TRUST

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1. Aims and scope

1.1 Thames Learning Trust (TLT) values high-quality learning beyond the classroom. Educational visits and Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) enhance curriculum understanding, personal development, wellbeing and cultural capital.

1.2 This policy sets the minimum Trust-wide expectations for planning, approval, leadership, safeguarding and risk management for:

- Routine local visits (e.g., walks, local library/fieldwork, sports fixtures)
- Day visits (on and off-site)
- Residential visits (UK)
- Overseas visits (including exchanges and homestay)
- Adventurous activities and higher-risk environments (e.g., water environments, remote supervision, outdoor centres, large events)

1.3 Academies may operate local procedures and templates, but these must meet or exceed the requirements of this Trust policy.

2. Core principles (proportionate, enabling, risk-benefit)

- Proportionate risk management: planning focuses on real risks and meaningful control measures. Routine visits should have simplified planning and authorisation.
- Risk-benefit approach: risk management exists to enable valuable learning to take place safely and inclusively, not to prevent visits.
- Competence-led leadership: visits must be led and staffed by people competent for the context, activity and group.
- Safeguarding is integral: safeguarding duties apply on visits exactly as they do in school, including professional boundaries and reporting.
- Clarity of accountability: the EVC supports quality assurance and consistency; approval decisions follow the Trust approval matrix and sit with the Head/Principal and Trust-defined routes.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- OEAP National Guidance (www.oeapng.info) – adopted by TLT as the Trust’s primary reference for off-site visits and outdoor learning good practice (including STAGER prompts and updated documents).
- DfE: Health and safety on educational visits (England) – including expectations for routine visits, risk assessment and provider assurance (including LOtC Quality Badge where available).
- HSE: School trips – proportionate risk management and focusing on real risks.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (from 1 September 2025, and subsequent updates) – including Annex D (host families/homestay) and Annex E (regulated activity/supervision) where relevant to staff and volunteer checks.

- The Trust’s safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, first aid policy, supporting pupils with medical needs policy, charging and remissions policy, complaints policy and data protection arrangements.

4. Definitions and visit categories

4.1 Educational visit / LOtC: any activity organised by the academy where pupils participate in learning or enrichment away from the normal school site, or where the context introduces additional risks (including local area visits).

4.2 Routine local visit: regular or repeated local visits where risks are well-known, control measures are established and staffing is familiar.

4.3 For approvals and planning, TLT uses the visit categories in Appendix A.

4.4 All visits must be recorded in the Trust’s educational visits management system (e.g., EVOLVE or equivalent) with required documentation and approvals.

5. Roles and responsibilities (MAT-wide)

5.1 Trust Board (Employer) and CEO (Accounting Officer)

TLT, as the employer, is responsible for establishing and monitoring a system that enables safe, high-quality educational visits. This includes maintaining Trust-wide standards, ensuring competent staff (including EVCs), setting approval and escalation arrangements, and maintaining incident support and learning processes.

5.2 Principal

The Principal is responsible for implementing this policy, ensuring educational value and inclusivity, ensuring competent leadership and adequate staffing, approving visits in line with Appendix A, and ensuring emergency and base contact arrangements are in place.

5.3 Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC)

Each academy must appoint a trained EVC with sufficient status to influence practice. The EVC supports planning and quality assurance, supports assessment of leader competence, supports provider/facility checks, ensures emergency arrangements are in place, and helps capture evaluation and learning. The EVC does not replace leadership accountability.

5.4 Visit Leader

The Visit Leader is accountable for planning and leading the visit, completing risk assessment and ensuring controls are implemented, briefing staff/volunteers and pupils, managing supervision and conduct, and implementing emergency procedures and communication with the base contact.

5.5 Accompanying staff

Accompanying staff follow the agreed plan, act in loco parentis, uphold safeguarding expectations, challenge unsafe behaviour and report concerns immediately.

5.6 Volunteers

Volunteers support staff and must follow the volunteer briefing and code of conduct (Appendix F). Volunteers are never responsible for overall leadership.

5.7 Parents/carers and pupils

Parents/carers must provide accurate information (medical, SEND, contacts) and comply with deadlines. Pupils must follow behaviour and safety instructions.

6. Approval process and planning requirements

6.1 All visits must be approved before they take place and recorded in the Trust visits system.

6.2 Approval is risk-based, not time-based. The level of approval required depends on the visit category (Appendix A).

6.3 Minimum planning timescales are in Appendix B. Short-notice visits may proceed only where risks and control measures are clearly understood, can be implemented, and approval is completed at the appropriate level.

6.4 Documentation must be proportionate and normally includes purpose and learning outcomes, itinerary/venue details, staffing and competence, risk assessment, participant information, provider assurances (where relevant), parent information and consent, emergency plan/base contact details, finance and insurance arrangements.

7. Risk management and risk assessment (including dynamic review)

7.1 Risk management must be sensible, proportionate and enabling. It should focus on significant hazards and effective control measures.

7.2 Risk assessment approach:

- Routine local visits: use a generic/standing risk assessment reviewed regularly, with a dynamic review on the day.
- Non-routine/higher risk/residential/overseas: use a specific risk assessment plus contingency planning.

7.3 Risk assessment and planning should consider the STAGER prompts: Staff, Timing, Activity, Group, Environment and Remoteness.

7.4 Dynamic review: the Visit Leader must complete a day-of-visit check (weather, staffing, pupil readiness, venue/travel changes) and adjust controls accordingly.

7.5 Where relevant (e.g., city centres, large venues), include security and crowded places considerations within planning.

8. Staffing, competence, supervision and ratios

8.1 Visit Leaders and staff must be competent for the environment, the activity and the group.

8.2 Ratios and supervision are risk-assessed, not one-size-fits-all. Remote supervision must be specifically planned, justified and controlled.

8.3 Staffing should support safeguarding and dignity (e.g., toileting/changing) based on pupil needs and context. TLT does not impose a blanket male/female staffing requirement.

8.4 First aid provision must be proportionate and suitable for the visit type and group. Early Years requirements must be met as a minimum.

9. Inclusion, SEND and reasonable adjustments

9.1 TLT is committed to making visits accessible. Planning must identify barriers for pupils with SEND/medical needs/disabilities and make reasonable adjustments and additional support where needed.

9.2 Where a visit cannot be made accessible despite adjustments, academies must consider meaningful alternatives that achieve the intended learning outcomes.

10. Transport and travel management

10.1 Travel planning must consider supervision at transitions, seatbelts and appropriate seating, driver competence and legal compliance (including minibus requirements), breaks/fatigue, hydration/toileting and contingencies for delays and breakdowns.

10.2 Use of taxis/private hire (where used) must follow Trust safeguarding and contracting expectations, including identity checks and clear supervision arrangements.

10.3 Staff using personal vehicles to transport pupils should only occur under exceptional, pre-approved circumstances with explicit safeguards.

11. Using external providers and facilities

11.1 Where external providers/facilities are used, TLT follows OEAP expectations for provider selection and assurance, including use of the LOtC Quality Badge where available.

11.2 Provider assurance: prefer LOtC Quality Badge providers. Where no badge exists, complete an assurance check (Appendix D) including competence, insurance, risk assessments/method statements, safeguarding interfaces and emergency arrangements.

11.3 For adventurous activities where licensing applies, confirm AALA licensing status as appropriate.

11.4 For higher-risk/provider-led activities, written clarity is required on supervision responsibilities, safety briefings, instructor competence, equipment and emergency arrangements.

12. Volunteers (including vetting, briefing and conduct)

12.1 Volunteers may be used to support supervision and learning, but staff remain accountable.

12.2 Volunteer selection should be transparent and based on the visit's needs and suitability.

12.3 Vetting and safeguarding arrangements for volunteers must align with current safeguarding requirements and Trust safer recruitment expectations, including the definition of regulated activity and supervision arrangements (see KCSIE, including Annex E). Where a volunteer's role meets regulated activity, appropriate checks (including barred list where required) must be in place before the visit.

12.4 All volunteers must be briefed on role boundaries, supervision instructions, safeguarding reporting route, emergency procedures and conduct expectations, and must sign Appendix F.

13. Communication with parents/carers and consent

13.1 Parents/carers must be properly informed about visits so they can make decisions and support preparation.

13.2 Consent approach:

- Routine local visits: may operate under a general/local consent arrangement as defined by the academy, provided parents are informed appropriately.
- Non-routine/higher-risk/residential/overseas: normally require specific written consent and fuller information.

13.3 Parent information requirements should follow Appendix E. Residential and overseas information must include accommodation, itinerary, staffing, contact arrangements, medical/medication processes and emergency plan summary.

13.4 Participant information must be collected, stored and shared securely and only as necessary, in line with UK GDPR and Trust procedures.

14. Medical needs, first aid and medication

14.1 Visit Leaders must ensure medical needs and allergies are known and planned for, medication arrangements are clear (including who holds/administers), care plans are followed where applicable, and emergency medication access is assured.

14.2 A staff member must accompany a pupil receiving medical treatment unless doing so would increase risk to others. In such cases, follow the emergency plan and seek immediate advice.

15. Safeguarding, child protection and professional conduct

15.1 The Trust safeguarding policy applies on all visits. Staff and volunteers must maintain professional boundaries and report concerns immediately to the Visit Leader and DSL/base contact as appropriate.

15.2 Residential/overseas and homestay: where homestay/host families are involved, academies must follow KCSIE Annex D (host families – homestay during exchange visits), including suitability

checks (UK host families and host families abroad), clear reporting routes, and any additional actions for extended homestays.

15.3 Any online/remote contact connected to a visit must use Trust-approved platforms and follow online safety and safeguarding expectations.

16. Emergencies and critical incidents

16.1 Every visit must have a named base contact (not on the visit) with access to visit documentation, a clear communication plan (including loss of signal plan), and an emergency action card (Appendix C).

16.2 Emergency planning should cover serious injury/illness, missing persons, safeguarding incidents, significant travel disruption and venue emergencies.

16.3 Missing person: there is no fixed '30 minute rule'. Actions and escalation must be context-led and risk-based. The Visit Leader must initiate immediate search actions appropriate to the environment, maintain supervision of the remaining group, and escalate rapidly to emergency services where risk indicates.

16.4 All serious incidents and near misses must be recorded and reviewed to improve future practice.

17. Behaviour, exclusions and disciplinary arrangements

17.1 The academy behaviour policy applies on visits.

17.2 A risk-based decision may be made to exclude a pupil from a visit where behaviour presents an unacceptable risk or required safety controls cannot be secured. Decisions should be fair, proportionate and consider equality/SEND duties.

17.3 For residential/overseas visits, expectations and consequences must be communicated clearly in advance, including arrangements for early return and associated costs where appropriate.

18. Finance, charging and remissions

18.1 All charges must comply with the academy's charging and remissions policy.

18.2 Visit planning must consider affordability and, where appropriate, include a plan to support participation for disadvantaged pupils.

19. Insurance

19.1 The Visit Leader/EVC must confirm appropriate insurance arrangements for residential and overseas travel, high-risk activities and provider-led activities/facilities.

19.2 For overseas visits, ensure appropriate travel insurance, medical coverage (including GHIC where relevant) and FCDO travel advice checks are completed and documented.

20. Record keeping, evaluation and monitoring

20.1 All visits must be recorded in the Trust system and documentation retained in line with retention requirements.

20.2 Post-visit evaluation should be proportionate and capture learning outcomes, incidents/near misses, provider performance and inclusion/accessibility learning.

20.3 The academy EVC and Principal will monitor compliance. The Trust may undertake periodic sampling/audits for assurance.

21. Policy review and training

21.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and updated sooner if OEAP National Guidance or DfE/HSE expectations change, if KCSIE is updated, or if incident learning requires revision.

21.2 Trust-wide expectations: EVCs should access training/updates and review OEAP National Guidance 'Updated documents' regularly (at least monthly) to maintain current practice. Visit Leaders for higher-risk, residential and overseas visits must evidence competence and access refresher training as needed.

Appendix A – Visit categories and approval matrix (TLT)

The following categories guide planning and approval. Academies may set stricter thresholds, but not lower.

- Category 1: Routine local – established controls; simplified planning. Approval: Visit Leader + EVC check (as required by academy system) + Principal/Delegate (per academy procedure).
- Category 2: Non-routine day visit – unfamiliar venue, coach travel, additional complexity. Approval: Visit Leader + EVC scrutiny + Principal approval.
- Category 3: Higher-risk/adventurous/water/remote supervision/large events – additional hazards or specialist provision. Approval: Visit Leader + EVC scrutiny + Principal approval + Trust escalation where required by delegation (recommended for novel/contentious/reputational).
- Category 4: UK residential – overnight stay. Approval: Visit Leader + EVC scrutiny + Principal approval + Trust delegated approval.
- Category 5: Overseas/exchange/expedition (including homestay) – international travel and enhanced safeguarding. Approval: Visit Leader + EVC scrutiny + Principal approval + Trust Board/CEO (or delegated committee) approval.

Appendix B – Minimum planning timescales (guidance)

- Category 1: as per standing risk assessment; confirm arrangements before departure.
- Category 2: normally 2-4 weeks.
- Category 3: normally 4-8 weeks (longer for complex activities).
- Category 4: normally 8-16 weeks.
- Category 5: normally 6-12 months (or longer depending on complexity).

Appendix C – Emergency action card and base contact plan (template)

Include as a minimum:

- Visit name/date/location; group list and staff list.
- Base contact name/number(s) and back-up base contact.
- Emergency services access guidance for the location.
- Nearest hospital/urgent care (where relevant).
- Agreed communication plan (including loss of signal plan).
- Summary of key risks and immediate actions.
- DSL/Principal contact route for safeguarding incidents.

Appendix D – External provider/facility assurance checklist (template)

Minimum checks (where applicable):

- LOtC Quality Badge evidence (preferred) or equivalent assurance process.
- AALA licensing confirmation where relevant.
- Instructor qualifications/competence.

- Insurance (public liability and relevant cover).
- Risk assessments/method statements and interface with school controls.
- Safeguarding expectations and reporting route.
- Emergency procedures and evacuation/medical arrangements.
- Equipment standards and suitability.
- Clarity on responsibility for supervision at each stage.

Appendix E – Parent information checklist (template)

Include:

- Purpose and learning outcomes.
- Dates/times; itinerary; venue addresses.
- Transport arrangements; drop-off/pick-up.
- Staffing and supervision summary.
- Clothing/equipment list.
- Food arrangements; allergies.
- Medical and medication process.
- Contact arrangements; base contact details (where appropriate).
- Costs; payment schedule; remissions (if applicable).
- Behaviour expectations and consequences.
- For residential/overseas: accommodation, passport/visa, insurance, health arrangements and emergency plan summary.

Appendix F – Volunteer behaviour and code of conduct (Educational Visits)

Use the Trust volunteer code of conduct as the template and ensure it includes: safeguarding reporting route, photography/mobile phone expectations, professional boundaries and supervision instructions for the visit.