



— **ST THOMAS** —
AQUINAS

CATHOLIC MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

EDUCATIONAL VISITS POLICY

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1. Introduction

The St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust ('the Trust') acknowledges the educational value of off-site visits and school trips in enhancing learning experiences. This policy ensures that such activities are planned, managed, and executed with the highest safety standards in compliance with national guidance and statutory regulations.

- The Trust adopts the OEAP's 'National Guidance' (NG): www.oeapng.info References throughout this document hyperlink to specific documents within the National Guidance.
- The Trust uses the robust web-based system 'EVOLVE' to facilitate the efficient planning, management, approval, and evaluation of visits www.evolve.online.
- The Trust have signed up with Evolve Advice for advice, guidance, training and support to its schools.

2. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2018) 'Health and safety on educational visits'
- HSE (2011) 'School trips and outdoor learning activities'
- DfE (2013) 'Driving school minibuses'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Business Continuity Plan
- Health and Safety Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Minibus Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- DBS Guidance

3. Definitions

Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC): will support the Headteacher/Principal with the implementation and management of this policy.

In loco parentis means that the group leader of any school trip or educational visit has a duty of care over the pupils in place of a parent.

School trip means any educational visit, foreign exchange trip, away-day or residential holiday organised by the school which takes pupils and staff members off-site.

Local Area Visit refers to specified visits/activities within a designated geographical area that are part of the normal curriculum and take place during the normal school day. Usually within walking distance.

Residential means any school trip which includes an overnight stay.

Activities of an **adventurous nature** include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Trekking
- Caving
- Skiing
- Water sports
- Climbing

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety on educational visits with the employer.

4.1 Trust Board

- Ensures compliance with legislation and national guidance.
- Oversees the approval process for trips that require board-level review (e.g., overseas trips, residential trips, high-risk activities).
- Monitors and evaluates the impact of school trips on educational outcomes.
- Ensures that adequate resources are allocated to support safe and inclusive trips.

The Trust Board has delegated this responsibility to the CEO and the Director of Business Services.

4.2 Headteacher/Principal

- Provides final authorisation for trips, ensuring they meet legal and safety standards.
- Ensures that trip leaders and staff have received appropriate training and guidance.
- Reviews trip reports and risk assessments before approval.

4.3 Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC)

All schools have an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) who will support the Headteacher to fulfil the health and safety obligations for visits and to comply with [DfE Guidance](#). In small schools the Headteacher may be the EVC.

- Ensures all trips comply with school policies and national guidance

- Provides support to staff responsible for organising trips
- Manages risk assessment processes, ensuring all necessary control measures are in place
- Checks communication with parents, ensuring they receive relevant trip details.

The EVC should attend EVC training (minimum 6 hours) as soon as possible after appointment.

This training provided is provided by www.evolveadvice.co.uk. This training is 'blended', i.e. part e-learning, part webinar – e-learning alone is not sufficient. Thereafter, update EVC Training or a repeat full course is on a 3 yearly basis. The EVC should ensure that a record of their training is logged on EVOLVE, as all Visit Forms link to this. Schools should also ensure their trained EVCs are listed on the Trust's EVC Register.

The EVC should support the Headteacher in ensuring that competent staff are assigned to lead and accompany visits, with approval and other decisions.

4.4 Visit leader

The Visit Leader has the overall responsibility for the visit. This includes the learning, development, supervision and welfare of the participants and the health and safety of all, including any other leaders and helpers.

All leaders have a legal duty of care and must comply with the employer's policy and guidance.

- Takes overall responsibility for planning, executing, and supervising the trip.
- Conducts pre-trip risk assessments and ensures all documentation is complete.
- Liaises with external providers to confirm safety procedures and logistical arrangements.
- Ensures all participants are briefed on safety measures, trip schedules, and emergency protocols.
- Keeps a record of any incidents or concerns that arise during the trip and reports them to the Headteacher and EVC.

In order to help ensure the safety of participants, and to maximise learning outcomes and enjoyment, all visit leaders must complete the Trust's Visit Leader Training Course which can be found on SharePoint in the Training Hub.

The competence of the visit leader is the single most important contributory factor in the safety of participants.

The EVC and/or Headteacher must therefore consider the following when assessing the competence of a member of staff to lead a visit:

- a. What experience has the visit leader in leading or accompanying similar or other visits? (check Staff History on EVOLVE).
- b. Has the leader completed a Visit Leader Training course?
- c. Is the leader competent in planning and managing visits?

- d. What are the leader's reasons for undertaking the visit?
- e. Is the leader an employee of the Trust?
- f. Does the leader have the ability to manage the pastoral welfare of participants?
- g. Does the leader exhibit sound decision-making abilities?
- h. What experience has the leader of the participants they intend to supervise?
- i. What experience has the leader of the environment and geographical area chosen?
- j. Does the leader possess appropriate qualifications?
- k. If appropriate, what is the leader's personal level of skill in the activity, and fitness level?
- l. If leading adventurous activities, has this been 'approved' by the Lead Approver?
- m. Is the leader aware of all relevant guidelines and able to comply with these?

4.5 Staff and Volunteers:

- Adhere to supervision ratios and ensure pupil safety at all times.
- Provide first aid support when necessary and manage minor incidents.
- Support the trip leader in carrying out planned activities and managing pupil behaviour.
- Maintain effective communication with the trip leader, ensuring all pupils are accounted for throughout the trip.
- Follow safeguarding procedures and respond appropriately to any concerns that arise.

4.6 Parents/Carers:

- Provide consent for their child's participation in trips and update the school on any relevant medical conditions.
- Ensure their child is prepared for the trip by providing necessary clothing, equipment, and medication.
- Comply with deadlines for payments and return of consent forms.
- Support the school's policies on pupil behaviour during trips.

4.7 Staff Competence

The Trust recognises that staff competence is the single most important factor in the safe management of visits, schools can support staff in developing their competence in the following ways:

- An apprenticeship system, where staff new to visits assist and work alongside experienced visit leaders before taking on a leadership role.
- Supervision by senior staff on some educational visits.

- Support for staff to attend training courses relevant to their role, where necessary.

In deciding whether a member of staff is competent to be a visit leader, the Head Teacher will take into account the following factors:

- Relevant experience.
- Previous relevant training.
- The prospective leader's ability to make dynamic risk management judgements, and take charge in the event of an emergency.
- Knowledge of the pupils, the venue, and the activities to be undertaken.

5. Planning and Risk Management

Thorough planning is essential for ensuring the success and safety of educational visits. Every trip must have clearly defined learning objectives that align with the school's curriculum. Risk assessments must be conducted to identify potential hazards related to transport, accommodation, activities, and individual student needs. Special consideration must be given to students with pupil-specific needs including medical conditions dietary or special educational needs, ensuring appropriate measures are in place. A contingency plan (Plan B) must also be prepared in case of unforeseen circumstances such as severe weather or transportation delays.

The individual carrying out the risk assessment process will have the skills, status and competence needed for the role, understand the risks involved, and be familiar with the activity.

The process is as follows:

- Identify the hazards
 - Decide who might be harmed and how
 - Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
 - Record findings and implement them
 - Review assessment and update if necessary

A risk assessment will be conducted for each school trip before it is undertaken to identify hazards and control measures specific to the trip.

6. Inclusion and Accessibility

Educational visits should be accessible to all students, regardless of ability, background, or financial status. Reasonable adjustments must be made in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure full participation. Consideration must be given to the needs of students with disabilities, medical conditions, or learning difficulties, and support staff should be assigned where necessary. Religious and cultural considerations, including dietary needs and prayer arrangements, should be

accommodated.

The school is committed to ensuring fair selection criteria for oversubscribed trips and actively seeks feedback from students and parents to improve inclusivity in trip planning.

- Trips will be planned to ensure full participation, accommodating pupils with SEND and medical needs.
- Due to the popularity of some extra-curricular trips and activities, the school offers places on a first come, first served basis.
- For school trips that require additional payment, the fee will be reasonable and help will be provided where possible for pupils who cannot afford the initial fee.

7. Parent/Carer Consent

Parental consent is a fundamental aspect of trip planning. While routine, low-risk visits may not require written consent, any trip involving higher risks, overnight stays, or international travel must be formally approved by parents or guardians. Parents should be provided with comprehensive information, including trip objectives, itinerary, costs, and emergency procedures, well in advance. Consent forms must include updated emergency contact details and relevant medical information to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

8. Staffing and Supervision

Prior to the visit, staff must ensure that all participants understand what is expected of them. This includes any 'rules' that will be in place. These should be re-emphasised as appropriate during the visit.

The on-going monitoring of all aspects of the visit by the leader and accompanying staff is an essential aspect in the risk management of visits, and hence the safety of participants.

Following the visit, the visit leader should record any significant issues as a note on EVOLVE, for both reference, and to inform future visits.

- Under no circumstances should staff or volunteers consume alcohol or use drugs on school trips (including residential and trips abroad).
- On all visits there must be an effective level of staff-student supervision that has been approved by the EVC and the headteacher. The level of supervision required for each trip is determined by factors such as student age, trip complexity, and activity risk. A visit should not go ahead where either the visit leader, EVC, or Headteacher is not satisfied that an appropriate level of supervision exists.
- Staff must undergo relevant training before leading or supervising trips. All visit leaders must complete the Trust's Visit Leader Training.
- DBS checks are required for staff and volunteers who work frequently or intensively with or

have regular access to young people. Frequently is defined as 'once a week or more', intensively is defined as 'four or more days in a month, or overnight'.

- Volunteers must be briefed on their roles and responsibilities before the trip.
- All staff and volunteers will be provided with a clear itinerary, emergency procedures, and pupil medical and contact information.
- Staff leading high-risk activities will receive specific training relevant to the activity, such as water safety or first aid.
- Pupils with additional support needs will have designated supervisors to ensure appropriate care and assistance.
- Supervision arrangements will be flexible to accommodate unexpected situations, such as staff illness or pupil emergencies.
- Regular headcounts and check-ins will be conducted throughout the trip to ensure accountability and safety.
- In the event of an emergency, staff will follow a clear chain of command, reporting to the trip leader and designated emergency contact at the school/Trust.
- Overnight trips will have at least one staff member available at all times to respond to pupil concerns and emergencies.

9. First Aid

For all visits there should be a responsible adult with a valid first aid certificate. The EVC should make a professional judgement regarding the level of first aid required.

A first aid kit appropriate to the visit should be carried.

For EYFS outings, there must always be at least one member of staff present who holds a current Paediatric First Aid certificate.

10. Transport and Travel

Safe transportation is a key consideration for educational visits. All transport arrangements must comply with school policies and legal requirements, ensuring that vehicles are roadworthy, drivers are licensed, and safety measures such as seatbelts are in place. Minibus drivers must be qualified and meet medical fitness requirements. When using external transport providers, schools must verify their safety records and insurance policies. Travel itineraries should incorporate scheduled rest breaks, emergency contact details, and contingency plans for delays or disruptions.

- Minibus use must comply with school transport policies and licensing laws.

- External transport providers must meet safety standards and insurance requirements.
- Travel itineraries will include rest breaks and emergency contacts.
- Pupils must follow safety guidelines, including seatbelt use and conduct rules

11. Vetting External Providers

When working with external providers for accommodation, activities, or specialist instruction, schools must conduct thorough vetting to ensure safety and quality. Providers should hold relevant accreditations such as the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge. The EVC is responsible for verifying provider credentials, including insurance coverage, health and safety policies, and safeguarding procedures. Where possible, site visits should be conducted to assess suitability, and agreements should be documented to outline responsibilities and risk management measures.

- External providers must hold relevant licenses and accreditations, such as the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge or equivalent.
- The EVC will verify the provider's insurance, health and safety policies, safeguarding measures, and staff qualifications.
- Background checks, including DBS verification for provider staff who interact directly with pupils, will be conducted.
- Site visits or reference checks may be required for new or high-risk trip providers.
- A written agreement outlining responsibilities, risk management, and emergency procedures will be signed before engaging an external provider.
- Providers failing to meet the Trust's standards will not be used.

12. Insurance and Emergency Procedures

Comprehensive insurance coverage is essential for all educational visits. All schools have travel insurance through the DfE's Risk Protection Arrangement which covers medical emergencies, trip cancellations, liability, and travel-related incidents. Emergency response plans should be in place for each trip, detailing procedures for missing persons, accidents, and major incidents. Trip leaders and supervising staff must be familiar with emergency contacts and procedures, ensuring a swift and coordinated response in case of an incident.

13. Approval

Final approval is delegated to the Headteacher for all visits, with the exception of:

- Overseas visits
- Residential visits
- Adventurous activity visits

which require approval from EVOLVEadvice. These visits should be submitted to EVOLVE **at least 4 weeks in advance**.

In approving visits, the Head and EVC should ensure that the visit leader has been appropriately inducted/trained, and is competent to lead the visit.

What does 'Visit approved by EVOLVEadvice' mean?

When the Headteacher authorises a visit on EVOLVE, they are confirming that the visit complies with school and the Educational Visit Policy, and that in their opinion the visit leader and any accompanying staff are competent to supervise the visit.

This task can only be the responsibility of the Headteacher/Senior Management, as the approver from EVOLVEadvice does not have first-hand knowledge of the intended participants or of the competence of the staff team in order to make this decision.

EVOLVEadvice therefore relies on the Headteacher to make an appropriate professional judgement prior to authorising visits, by taking all aspects into account, including but not limited to:

- The competence of the visit leader
- The competence of the accompanying staff
- The ages and level of maturity of pupils, including those with special needs
- The intended learning outcomes
- The proposed itinerary
- The contingency plans in place (eg. Plan B)

The approver from EVOLVEadvice assumes that the Headteacher would not submit the visit for approval if they were not satisfied with the intended arrangements.

Although all visits requiring the EVOLVEadvice approval are viewed, it is not feasible for EVOLVEadvice to scrutinise in detail all information and attachments, and so this is undertaken on a 'sample' basis.

The exception to the above is where school staff lead adventurous activities themselves (ie. not using an external provider). In these instances it is unlikely that the Headteacher will have the necessary expertise to assess the technical competence of the activity leader, and therefore this task is carried out by the approver from EVOLVEadvice.

14. Evaluation and Review

Post-trip evaluation is crucial for continuous improvement. Trip leaders must review outcomes, safety measures, and participant feedback to identify areas for future enhancements. Any incidents or concerns must be documented and used to refine risk assessment procedures. This policy is reviewed annually to incorporate updates in legislation and best practices. Schools actively seek feedback from students, staff, and parents to enhance the quality and inclusivity of educational visits.