



# OFF-SITE VISITS POLICY

## Summary of changes

Staff member responsible	Revision date	Approved by	Approval date	Reason for update	Frequency of review
Deputy Rector	Oct 2023	SSG	Nov 2023	New policy	
Deputy Rector	Sept 2024	SSG	Sept 2024	Annual review	36 months

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## LINKS TO UNCRC

This policy links to the following UNCRC articles:

- Article 28 – Access to Education
- Article 29 – Aims of Education

## LINKS TO OTHER DOLLAR ACADEMY POLICIES

This policy has links with the following Dollar Academy policies:

- Critical Incident Plan
- Health and Safety Policy and Manual
- Missing Pupil Protocol and Attendance Monitoring Policy
- Use of Vehicles for School Business Policy (for Staff)
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy

## INTRODUCTION

At Dollar Academy, we believe that learning extends well beyond the classroom, with off-site visits (also referred to as trips) forming an invaluable part of our broad curriculum. It gives our pupils unique opportunities to develop their resourcefulness and initiative and to spend time together in an informal environment. Each trip is different; some are directly related to the taught curriculum; some are designed to promote social awareness, or to enhance physical skills, self-reliance and team-working; others will extend pupils' knowledge of the world. The common factor is that they all make a contribution to the pupils' development. This policy has been written taking account of *Going Out There* (<https://www.goingoutthere.co.uk/>), the framework which has been developed in partnership by the Scottish Government, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE), Education Scotland and the Association of Directors of Education, with input from other partners including voluntary organisations and providers.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### The Academy

The Academy aims to provide a rich and broad curriculum and as such encourages and supports staff to provide off-site visits to enhance the pupils' educational experience. In addition to having overall responsibility for the educational needs and wellbeing of the pupils at Dollar, the school's leadership provide support in the planning, administration and delivery of trips, training and technical advice, and ensuring appropriate insurance is in place.

### Trip Leader

The Trip Leader has the delegated authority from the Academy to plan and lead the off-site visit. They are responsible for every element of the trip, as outlined in this policy, ensuring the aim of the trip is achieved and the school's educational principles, expectations, policies and guidelines are adhered to. They are responsible for the production of the Visit Plan and ensuring it is followed. They should also have a knowledge of the latest edition of *Going Out There*.

### Trip Staff

Additional staff on the trip should be aware of the Visit Plan, including the risk assessment and are there to support the Trip Leader in the delivery of the trip, as described in this policy.

### Pupil

The pupils are expected to engage positively in the activities on offer, listen closely to the instructions of the Trip Staff, pay due respect to local codes and customs, and behave in line with the Academy's expectations (which are the same as when at school).

### Parent/Carer

The parent/carers of the child is responsible for giving their consent for their child/ward to take part in the off-site visit, engaging positively with their child/ward in advance, during and after the trip, including ensuring the pupil is aware of the behavioural expectations on them. In the unlikely event of extremely poor behaviour, pupils may be removed from trips prior to departure, or during the trip itself, if their

conduct and behaviour do not meet the Academy's expectations.

### **OFF-SITE VISIT PLANNING PROCESS**

#### **The aims of the off-site visit and proposing an off-site visit**

The aims of an off-site visit are an essential starting point in the trip planning process. The Trip Leader should be able to articulate what the benefit for the pupils is going to be. Once this has been established, the Trip Leader should make the following considerations:

- Which venues/destinations allow for the trip to achieve its aims.
- The maximum number of pupils that can be taken on the trip.
- The number of staff/adults required to run the trip.
- The timing of the off-site visit and the target audience, considering whether it will conflict with other events or a particularly busy time of year.
- The notice period given to parents and carers.
- The cost of the trip; we aim to make all our off-site experiences accessible to as many pupils as possible; one way of doing this is keeping the cost of a trip low.
- The impact on the environment; with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals, trying to keep a trip's carbon footprint to a minimum.

Once these initial planning thoughts have been established, a Proposed Off-Site Visit Form should be submitted to the Off-Site Visits Coordinator (who is also the Deputy Rector): <https://forms.office.com/e/hLXcrUUqNx>

#### **The Visit Plan**

The Visit Plan is the operating manual for the trip and once complete will include:

- A detailed itinerary, including transit arrangements and contact details of any external providers;
- Risk assessments;
- Contact numbers of pupils on the trip;
- Copies of pupil passports (for international trips);
- Emergency contact details for the parents and carers of all pupils on the trip;
- Medical information for all pupils on the trip;
- Staff next of kin details and staff medical conditions (for residential trips).

The amount of content and detail in the Visit Plan will be determined by the nature of the trip.

The Visit Plan should be built in the designated SharePoint folder (which the School Office will share with the Trip Leader once an off-site visit has been approved). It can be in electronic form, but there should be at least two hard copies held by Trip Staff whilst on the trip.

#### **Off-site visit checklists**

To assist with the planning of the Off-Site Visit, when the Sharepoint folder has been created for the trip, a comprehensive checklist will be placed in the Sharepoint folder. It is essential that the Trip Leader ensures that all points are actioned in good time.

#### **Routine visits**

There are a number of off-site visits which are routine, for example sports fixtures, co-curricular activities and boarders' weekend trips that happen off-site. These visits do not require an individual Visit Plan to be completed for every trip off-site, rather a generic Visit Plan which is updated annually. In the case of sporting fixture and co-curricular activities, the register on SOCS should reflect which pupils are taking part in the off-site visit. For boarders' weekend trips, an electronic register of pupils on the trip will be held on SharePoint. Any risks that fall outside those that are covered by the routine visit risk assessment or the generic off-site risk assessments should be covered by a specific risk assessment.

There will also be times when a teacher chooses to take pupils to the town, e.g. a Prep School teacher taking their class to the post box as part of a letter writing activity. Activities such as these are classified

as a Routine Visit.

### External providers

The term 'external provider' refers to an individual or group of adults who are not Dollar staff but assist with the running of the trip, for example, tour operators, co-curricular instructors/tutors, outdoor education centres, museums etc. If used, the Trip Leader is responsible for selecting a reputable provider, liaising with the provider to discuss aims, the needs of the group and checking adequate insurance is in place. When an external provider is leading an activity, their risk assessments should be used. The Trip Leader should have taken time to review these, including checking that any external provider has sufficient qualifications.

There may be times during a visit where the pupils come under the direction of the external provider(s); in these circumstances, however, the Trip Leader still retains ultimate responsibility. Where an external provider is used, parents should be informed in advance.

### Staffing

It is important to have a suitable ratio of adult supervisors to participants for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:

- The pupils (including age, stage, experience, behaviour and additional needs (e.g. learning and medical needs));
- The experience of the staff;
- The venues;
- The activities;
- Transport;
- Medical and behavioural issues.

The Trip Leader will always be an employee of the school or a contracted coach in the case of routine sports visits. The staffing requirements should be met by a core of Dollar Academy Staff. If a high adult: pupil ratio is required, it may not be feasible to use staff alone. Parents or volunteers may be used to supplement staff numbers, provided that they have gone through the necessary checks, including a PVG check. Any queries relating to the use of volunteers should be referred to the Deputy Rector and the Director of HR.

Generally speaking, unless agreed with the Deputy Rector and covered within the risk assessment, the following ratios should be adhered to:

<b>Daytime</b> off-site visits for Prep 1	1:8
<b>Daytime</b> off-site visits for Prep 2-5	1:10
<b>Daytime</b> off-site visits for the Junior School	1:13
<b>Daytime</b> off-site visits for the Senior School	1:20
Sporting fixture	1:25
<b>UK based residential</b> off-site visits for the Junior School	1:10
<b>UK based residential</b> off-site visits for the Senior School	1:15
Off-site visits involving <b>adventurous activities</b>	1:8*
International trips	1:10

\*If the activities for the visit are being provided by an external provider, then the provider's staffing ratios and risk assessments apply.

If it is a residential trip, and the pupil group is mixed-sex, then the staffing make up will ideally be mixed-sex; if the trip is single sex, then ideally at least one member of staff (and ideally more) should be of the same sex as the pupils. If it is not possible to achieve this position, a conversation should be had with the Deputy Rector who will make an assessment based on the nature of the trip and the participants.

Moreover, it is important that at least 25% of the staff on the trip have a basic first aid qualification. For

outdoor and adventurous activities, the risk assessment will define what level of first aid qualifications are required.

### **Parental consent**

Once approval for the trip has been gained, early and detailed communication with parents and carers is essential. It may be that the first communication with parents is gauging interest for their child's participation on the trip to see if there are appropriate numbers for the trip to go ahead. Equally, it may be that parents are asked to sign their child up and commit to the trip immediately. Either way, parents should be provided with an overview of the trip including itinerary, including transit and accommodation provision, whether external providers are being used, costs and payment plans and the cancellation policy. All communication with parents should happen via the School Office, using MySchoolPortal

As well as confirming their consent for their child's participation on the off-site visit, parents and carers are required to provide emergency contact details and medical conditions (including mental health conditions). Additionally, they should provide their child's mobile phone number (where applicable) as this forms an important part of the Visit Plan.

A deadline for responses should be advertised, making clear that if a trip becomes oversubscribed a ballot process will be operated. A first come, first served approach is not recommended as trips can become oversubscribed quickly and this may hinder parents who have work commitments at the time a trip sign up goes live. If a trip becomes oversubscribed and a ballot is used, this should be communicated to all parents; those pupils who are unsuccessful in gaining a place should be placed on a waiting list.

To help parents plan, the Academy aims to publish a schedule of educational residential off-site visits for the coming 18 months.

Routine off-site visits, e.g. sports fixtures and boarders' weekend trips, do not need parental consent as this is an accepted part of the Academy's educational offering and parental consent is given when they enrol their child at the Academy. The only exception to this is if there is an additional cost implication or if the activities require specific parental consent, e.g. outdoor or adventurous activities. Parents can of course opt their child out of participating in routine off-site visits if they wish.

### **Detailed itinerary**

A detailed itinerary should be produced as early as is realistically possible. This should include transit arrangements, specific activities, accommodation arrangements, curfews, bedtimes and what supervision plans are in place during periods of downtime.

If the trip is provided by an external provider, the Trip Leader should work with them to produce the itinerary.

### **Remote supervision**

Remote supervision is the term used when the Trip Staff are not directly present with pupils. This comes in varying degrees and is used in a variety of circumstances; pupils may be given time to look around a museum on their own or on an expedition where they have limited contact with the staff for a period of time. In this case, leaders must be confident that pupils have the appropriate skills to operate without undue risk – the risk assessment and pupil briefings on the trip should reflect this.

### **Insurance**

Comprehensive insurance cover is arranged by the Academy for all off-site visits. The Trip Leader should liaise with the Bursar's Office early on in the planning stages. If the trip is an international one, pupils will also need a valid Global Health Insurance Card.

For any trips which involve private cars, the Academy has insurance which covers the use of private cars for an approved Academy purpose. Staff planning to use their own vehicles must first contact the Bursar's Office and complete the necessary paperwork.

An off-site visit might involve activities that are considered adventurous in nature. Where unusual or hazardous activities are involved, teachers, supervisors, or the centre responsible for organising the activity must be appropriately qualified and competent or an external provider (with staff who have the appropriate qualifications and experience) should be used. Parents will be informed in writing of any hazardous activities involved in the trip or visit. If adventurous activities form part of the off-site visit, the Trip Leader must discuss insurance cover with the Bursar's Office as early as possible to ensure that the necessary cover is in place. If the activity is not covered, an extension with the Academy's insurers might be possible.

Staff who take part in visits and activities outside the Academy may feel concerned about the possibility of being held personally liable if an accident should occur. However, they can be assured that Dollar Academy, as their employer, will always stand behind them in the unlikely event of an accident occurring, provided they have exercised reasonable care and followed the Academy's guidelines.

Dollar Academy has £10m of Employers' Liability Insurance and £10m of public liability insurance, as well as a group travel policy that covers most visits inside the UK and overseas. Cover includes cancellation or delay, medical expenses, replacement of passports, personal possessions and money. It does not cover pre-departure cancellation because of Covid 19 illness or isolation.

If the off-site visit is overseas, the Trip Leader should confirm with airlines or external providers that ATOL protection is in place.

### **Charges and payments**

The Trip Leader is responsible for coordinating payments to external providers, venues and transport providers. The Trip Leader should set payment deadlines to parents, where possible, four weeks in advance of when the Academy is expected to make a payment to an external provider, venue or transport provider. The Trip Leader should then liaise with the Bursar's Office to chase any parents who miss the payment deadline.

Where costs are non-refundable (or become non-refundable beyond a certain date), the Trip Leader should clearly articulate this to parents so that there is no confusion surrounding their liability for costs, should their child withdraw from the trip prior to departure.

### **Risk assessment**

Pupil and staff safety is of the utmost importance. Whilst the Academy's leadership will have an overview of the trip, they are not able to manage the risks on the trip as the detailed understanding is held by the Trip Staff. Therefore, the management of risk is the responsibility of all Trip Staff. The Trip Leader is responsible for the production of a thorough risk assessment. Dollar's risk assessment template should be used, with the exception of CCF who are required to use MOD risk assessments.

The risk assessment must include:

- any planned activities, including transit of pupils and when staying in accommodation, during the off-site visit;
- suitable levels and methods of supervision, including remote supervision;
- specific pupil medical conditions (including mental health conditions);
- a first aid plan.

The Trip Leader should also talk to the relevant Heads/Assistant Heads of Year and consult *Keep In View* to see if there is any pertinent information about pupils they need to be aware of.

There are some risks that are common to a number of trips. To help with the administrative burden on Trip Leaders, there are a number of generic risk assessments that can be applied to an off-site visit, for example, minibus travel, coach travel, management of behaviour.

Risk assessments should be completed in advance of the trip as follows:



One day trip	Two weeks
UK based residential	Three weeks
International trip	Three weeks

The risk assessment should be available for review in advance of the trip departing (as per the above table) in the Off-Site visits folder on SharePoint; once it has been saved in their the Deputy Rector should be notified. This allows for checks to be done but also to allow it to be accessible during the trip for the SSG school-based contact.

Ideally, during the early planning stages of an off-site visit, consideration should be given to conducting a site visit if no member of the staff team taking the trip is familiar with the location/environment. Clearly, for residential trips, particularly overseas ones, this is difficult; where possible a reputable external provider/tour company who knows the area well should be used as they will be able to help manage risk. If this is not possible, the risk assessment needs to take these factors into consideration.

#### **Additional staff/volunteer needs**

In addition to ensuring risk is minimised for pupils, it is also important for staff and volunteers on the trip to share any additional needs they may have with the Trip Leader and Trip Staff, for example a member of staff letting the other staff on the trip that they are diabetic. Staff should be given the opportunity to disclose this information confident that it will only be used to ensure the best possible care of them. The responsibility lies with Trip Leader to ask this information of the Trip Staff.

For residential trips the Trip Leader should have next of kin details for all staff on the trip.

### **RESIDENTIAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRIPS**

It is recognised that a residential trip, particularly a trip overseas, provides a greater level of complexity and thus more planning. It is for this reason that four weeks in advance of a residential trip departing, the Trip Leader will have a meeting with the Deputy Rector to review the arrangements in place. The Trip Leader should also check with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office about travel advice to that country.

#### **Accommodation**

Careful consideration needs to be given to accommodation during a residential trip. The following is required:

- The accommodation is of a good standard, complying with fire and safety regulations and allowing appropriate levels of privacy, e.g. lockable bathrooms;
- Pupils must be in single sex rooms and, where the trip is mixed sex, staff rooms should ideally separate boys and girls rooms;
- For DofE, pupils should be in single sex groups;
- Pupils must be able to get in touch with a member of Trip Staff easily overnight.

The Trip Leader should also try to establish with the accommodation provider if there are any other school or youth groups using the accommodation at that time. If there are, this should be factored into pupil and parent briefings and addressed in the risk assessment.

#### **Homestays**

Homestays, where pupils are hosted by families, are an excellent way of ensuring pupils fully immerse themselves in the local culture. By their very nature, with pupils being spread across a number of different homes, there are a greater number of considerations which need to be taken into account to ensure a positive pupil experience.

The major considerations are:

- Matching a pupil with a suitable family.

- Where possible, vetting host families; this might be done formally via the country's governmental systems.
- Where there is not a governmental system in place to vet host families, the Trip Leader should work with partner schools or external providers to ensure the appropriateness of a host family.
- Ensuring that host families understand the Academy's expectations.
- Ensuring the pupils have their own bedroom or are sharing with another Dollar pupil and that they have access to a lockable bathroom.
- Ensuring that there are good communication protocols in place; these should exist between:
  - the Trip Staff and host families;
  - the pupils and Trip Staff;
  - the parents/carers and the Trip Staff.
- Ensuring that host families have awareness of pupils' additional support needs (e.g. medical conditions) and what they need to put in place to support the pupil.
- Requiring each pupil to email their host family in advance to introduce themselves to the host family.
- Ensuring the risk assessment details the mitigations in place to ensure pupil safety and wellbeing.
- Providing the parents/carer of the Dollar pupil with detailed information so they can give informed consent.

### **Medication administration**

The Trip Leader must gain accreditation in administering medication to pupils. This is done through a 30 minute online course. The Trip Leader should speak to the nurses for details about the course.

### **Foreign currency and mobile phones abroad**

If pupils are required to pay for items and services in a foreign country, they should be advised of this in advance, including the best way to pay for items and services that reduce the chance of theft or loss of money or bank cards.

It is the pupils' responsibility (and that of their families) to ensure they fully understand any potential data roaming charges used if they choose to use their mobile phone abroad.

### **Visas and passports**

For international trips, information about any visa requirements should be communicated well in advance. Additionally, the Trip Leader should consider any additional requirements for non-British passport holders.

## **PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION**

### **Preparing the pupils**

Prior to a trip departing the pupils must receive a briefing which covers the following:

- the aims and nature of the visit;
- behavioural expectations of them (which will reflect the expectations when a pupil is in school);
- the itinerary and supervision arrangements;
- how to stay safe;
- what to do in the event of an accident/emergency.

If it is a residential trip, pupils must be asked to sign a code of conduct; for international trips the parent/carer should also sign the form. The code of conduct form is standardised; however, there is an option to add additional points or expectations. Please note that none of the standardised points should be amended or deleted.

### **Preparing staff**

Prior to a trip departing the staff must receive a briefing which covers the following:

- Detailed review of the Visit Plan;
- Emergency procedures;
- Sharing of staff contact numbers, including SSG school-based contact.

### **Communication with parents and carers**

In advance of a trip there should be good levels of communication with parents and carers, so they understand the basic outline of the trip. They should have this information prior to giving consent for their child/ward to participate in the trip. Depending on the nature of the trip it may be necessary to communicate further in the lead up to the trip, for example if there are changes to dates, cost or the itinerary.

For any UK based residential trip, parents should receive an email two weeks in advance of departure which provides final details of the trip, including:

- a detailed itinerary (including contact details of any external providers);
- emergency contact details for the Trip Leader;
- emergency contact details for the SSG school-based contact;
- The code of conduct their child has signed (it does not have to be the actual signed copy).

For international trips, in addition to providing the same information for a UK based residential trip, an information event should be put on for parents and carers – this can be online or in person.

## **DURING THE OFF-SITE VISIT**

### **The Visit Plan**

Every member of Trip Staff should have access to the Visit Plan, which includes the following:

- A detailed itinerary, including transit arrangements and contact details of any external providers;
- Risk assessments;
- Contact numbers of pupils on the trip;
- Copies of pupil passports (for international trips);
- Emergency contact details for the parents and carers of all pupils on the trip;
- Medical information for all pupils on the trip;
- Staff next of kin details and staff medical conditions (for residential trips).

There should be at least two hard copies of the Trip Plan. For international trips, the Trip Leader should check what data roaming charges are in place for staff on their devices. This may need to be factored into budgets when the device is used for trip purposes.

### **Checking in with pupils**

Pupil check ins, where a register is taken should happen during a trip. These should be communicated clearly to the pupils and adhered to. The frequency of these check ins is dependent on the age and stage of the pupils. Particular consideration should be given when there are periods of unsupervised activity. If a pupil goes missing then the Missing Pupil Protocol and Attendance Monitoring Policy should be followed.

### **Keeping belongings safe**

Having already covered how to keep themselves safe, pupils should then be periodically reminded during the trip any risk factors they need to be aware of. The age and stage of the pupils will dictate the nature and frequency of these reminders.

### **Other equipment**

The Trip Leader should take charge of the trip phone(s), which can be booked via the School Office. If the trip is a residential one, the number should have been shared with parents in advance.

There should also be sufficient first aid materials to be used as part of the initial response to deal with any medical emergencies. Additionally, the Trip Staff should consider taking travel “sick packs”.

### **Dynamic risk assessment**

Whilst good planning can help mitigate risk, it is understood that not all hazards can be foreseen. With this in mind, a dynamic approach to risk assessment should be adopted by all on the trip (staff and pupils). The Trip Leader should brief all party members at the start of the trip on this expectation.

### **Transporting pupils**

Any transport should be outlined in the itinerary and risk assessed. Additionally, the school's policy on transport should be adhered to, for example a member of staff using their own car to transport pupils.

### **Staying in touch**

During the off-site visit, the Trip Leader should maintain periodic contact with the Deputy Rector (or other named SSG member) and should get in contact as soon as is practically possible following any accident or emergency.

### **Alcohol**

No alcohol should be consumed on the trip by pupils.

Once pupils are settled in bedrooms at the end of the day and overnight supervision is covered by an on-call rota that guarantees at least three members of staff, with at least one being first aid trained, who are immediately available, it is acceptable for other off-duty staff on the trip to consume one glass of wine or equivalent, as long as it is appropriate to do so in line with local law. This is compatible with safeguarding and professional standards because it does not impair judgment, response readiness, or compliance with the Academy's alcohol policies.

### **Illness or Accidents**

If a pupil has a minor accident or becomes ill, a first aid qualified member of staff should deal with this in the first instance. If it is felt that further treatment is required, then this should be sought. Parents and carers and the relevant member of school-based SSG should be kept informed of any illness or injury that results in professional medical attention.

If the trip is an overseas one and medical assistance is required for an illness, accident or injury, the Trip Leader should notify the insurers on their helpline. Medical bills and associated paperwork should be obtained and handed to the Bursar's PA as soon as possible following the return of the trip to enable a claim to be lodged with the insurers.

If the accident is more serious, the Academy's medical insurers may arrange for the pupil, accompanied by a member of staff, to be repatriated to the UK.

The school's accident report form should be completed at the time.

### **Critical Incident**

If there is a critical incident, the relevant member of SSG should be informed so an urgent response can be formalised, following the Critical Incident Plan.

### **Delayed Return**

If a visit is delayed, the Trip Leader should phone the School Office, or the relevant member of SSG, to make them aware. In the first instance, pupils should be asked to contact their parent/carers to inform them of the delay.

### **Expenditure**

The Trip Leader is also responsible for producing a schedule of all expenditure on the trip and ensuring the Academy's policy on expenditure is followed. Unused balances will be returned to the parents by way of refunds through ParentPay, or credits shown on the next Academy bill.

## **AFTER THE TRIP**

### **Review of off-site visit**

The educational aim of the trip is vital to ensuring a valuable experience for the pupils. Upon returning to the UK, an off-site visit review should be conducted to establish what went well and where further enhancements could be made if the trip was to run again. The Deputy Rector will prompt the start of this process.