

Willow School Policy



Local Area Visits Policy

Date: October 2026

Review Date: October 2027

Aims

Willow School is committed to providing and maintaining a safe and nurturing learning environment for all pupils, and this extends beyond the school buildings and grounds.

Local area visits are a valued and regular part of our curriculum. They give pupils real-life opportunities to develop independence, communication, road safety, social and life skills, and to take part in their community, supporting both curriculum intentions and the outcomes in pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Local area visits normally involve no more than an everyday level of risk, such as slips and trips, and can be considered as lessons in a different classroom. However, because our pupils have complex needs, every visit must be planned, purposeful and informed by the individual information we hold about each pupil, including individual health risk assessments and pupil risk assessments.

Scope

This policy applies to visits that:

- Take place within the Local Learning Area (see Boundaries below)
- Are part of the normal curriculum and take place within the normal school day
- Are made on foot from either school site, without the use of transport
- Do not involve adventurous, water-based or other higher-risk activities, or any cost to parents/carers

Any visit that falls outside these criteria (for example, a visit using a minibus, car, taxi or public transport, a visit beyond the Local Learning Area, a visit extending beyond the school day, an overnight stay or an adventurous activity) is an educational visit and must be planned and approved in line with the **Educational Visits Policy**.

Legislation, Guidance and Related Policies

This policy has regard to:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- DfE guidance: Health and Safety on Educational Visits
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils)
- DfE statutory guidance: Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions
- The Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

It should be read alongside the school's Educational Visits, Health and Safety, Child Protection and Safeguarding, First Aid, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, Allergy, Behaviour, Physical Intervention, Intimate Care, Photograph and Video, and Reporting of Incidents, Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences policies.

Boundaries

The Local Learning Area covers walking distance around our Jermyn Street and West Banks sites in Sleaford. It includes, but is not limited to, the following frequently used venues:

- St George's Academy
- Sleaford Recreation Ground
- Sleaford Library
- Sleaford Castle
- Sleaford Leisure Centre
- Sainsbury's supermarket
- Tesco supermarket

Any new venue within walking distance must be agreed with the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) before it is used and staff should carry out an exploratory visit without pupils to identify hazards and suitable routes.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Headteacher and Proprietor (Mrs Miller)	• Holds overall responsibility for the safety of local area visits and approves this policy • Ensures staffing, equipment and training are in place to allow visits to run safely • Carries out the pre-visit check when the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) is unavailable • Reviews the generic Local Area Visits risk assessment annually and after any significant incident • Monitors Local Area Visit records termly for patterns, incidents and near misses
Assistant Headteacher and Curriculum Lead (Miss Hemming)	• Receives the pre-visit discussion for every local area visit and confirms the visit is safe and purposeful before it goes ahead • Maintains the list of staff approved to lead local area visits • Ensures pupil risk assessments are in place, current and shared with staff
Assistant Headteacher and SENCo (Miss McNeil)	• Ensures individual health risk assessments are in place, current, agreed with parents/carers and shared with staff • Ensures staff complete any pupil-specific training required by an individual risk assessment (for example, epilepsy training) and that certificates are held on file • Carries out the pre-visit check when the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) is unavailable
Visit Leader (Class Teacher or Nominated Approved Member of Staff)	• Plans the visit with a clear learning purpose • Completes the pre-visit check with SLT before the group leaves • Reads the individual health and pupil risk assessments for every pupil attending and briefs all accompanying staff • Ensures required equipment, medication and trained staff are in place • Signs the group out and in and reports any incident or near miss

Role	Responsibilities
Accompanying Staff	- Read and follow the generic risk assessment and all relevant individual risk assessments - Take up agreed positions, carry out headcounts and carry a charged mobile phone - Report any concern, incident or near miss to the Visit Leader
Pastoral Lead and Family Support Co-ordinator (Mrs Clarke)	- Supports pupil preparation for visits where needed and provides pastoral support following any distress or dysregulation - Supports communication with families following an incident
First Aid Co-ordinator (Mrs Coleman)	Ensures the first aid kit in the Going Out Bag is checked and fully stocked
School Office (Mrs Pearson)	- Records the mobile phone number taken by each group - Acts as the first point of contact for a group needing support and alerts SLT

Before the Visit: Pre-Visit SLT Check

Before any local area visit, the Visit Leader **must** complete the Local Area Visit Form (Appendix 2) and speak to the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead). If the Assistant Headteacher is not available, the Visit Leader must speak to another member of the Senior Leadership Team. This should be done in advance at the start of each term, wherever possible. The purpose of this check is to ensure that every visit is safe and purposeful.

The Visit Leader must share:

- **Date and time:** Time leaving and expected time of return
- **Destination and route:** Where the group is going and the route to be taken
- **Staffing:** Names of staff attending, the Visit Leader, the member of staff with first aid training and any 1:1 allocations
- **Pupils:** Which pupils are attending
- **Rationale:** The learning purpose of the visit and how it links to the curriculum or pupils' EHCP outcomes
- **Individual risk assessments:** Confirmation that the individual health and pupil risk assessments for the pupils attending have been read, and that any required equipment, medication and trained staff are in place

The SLT member will confirm the visit can go ahead, or ask for changes (for example, to staffing, timing, route or the group) where they are not satisfied that it is safe and purposeful. The discussion should take place in advance where possible and must always take place before the group leaves. The name of the SLT member consulted is recorded on the Local Area Visit Form.

Risk Assessment

Local area visits are managed through three layers of risk assessment, together with dynamic risk assessment by staff during the visit.

Type	What It Covers	Completed By	Review
Generic Local Area Visits Risk Assessment	Hazards common to all local area visits and the standard control measures that apply to every visit (summarised in Appendix 1)	Headteacher with the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead)	Annually and after any significant incident or change
Individual Health Risk Assessment	Created where a pupil's medical condition gives rise to additional hazards off-site (for example, epilepsy, anaphylaxis, diabetes or mobility needs). Records pupil-specific control measures, equipment to be carried, staff training required and emergency triggers. Read alongside the pupil's Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP)	SENCo with the Headteacher, parents/carers and health professionals where appropriate	Annually and whenever the pupil's presentation or Care Plan changes
Pupil Risk Assessment	Individualised support for a pupil's behaviour, regulation, communication and safety, such as known triggers, de-escalation strategies, agreed line position, 1:1 support, regulation spaces and absconding risk	Class teacher and supported by SLT as needed	Termly, and following any incident

The following principles apply:

- Individual health and pupil risk assessments are **in addition to** the generic risk assessment; they never replace the generic control measures
- Before each visit, the Visit Leader checks that all staff attending have read the individual risk assessments for the pupils in the group
- Where an individual risk assessment requires specific equipment (for example, a rucksack containing a stopwatch, blanket and umbrella), staff with specific training, a 1:1 staff member or medication, the pupil does not leave school until these are in place
- If any of these requirements cannot be met, the Visit Leader must raise this at the pre-visit check. The visit should be adjusted or rescheduled so that the pupil can take part wherever possible, in line with our duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010
- Individual risk assessments and Care Plans are held in the pupil's SEN file and on the OneDrive Staff Share Folder. Staff carry only the key information needed off-site (for example, emergency triggers and contact numbers), keep it secure and return it to school
- Staff use dynamic risk assessment throughout the visit and must change or end the visit early if conditions or a pupil's presentation change

Operating Procedure

Leaving School

- The pre-visit SLT check has been completed

- The visit is recorded on the Local Area Visit Sheet in the staff room (location, date, time out, expected return, pupils, staff, Visit Leader, SLT member consulted and mobile number)
- A charged mobile phone is taken by each group and the School Office has a note of the number
- Staff wear Willow School hi-vis
- The Going Out Bag (including the first aid kit) is taken, together with any pupil-specific equipment and medication required by individual risk assessments and Care Plans
- The weather forecast is checked and pupils' clothing and footwear are checked for suitability
- Pupils are briefed using visual supports where appropriate: the route, expectations, keeping their distance from members of the public, and what to do if they become separated from the group
- A headcount is completed before leaving

During the Visit

- There is a minimum of two adults. Staffing is based on the area, the activity and the needs of the pupils, including any 1:1 support set out in individual risk assessments
- Staff are positioned at the front, middle and rear of the group and pupils keep to line places agreed before departure
- The least busy route is used and roads are crossed only at pelican or zebra crossings, with a clear road safety reminder before each crossing
- Headcounts are carried out at key transition points (for example, crossings, entering and leaving venues)
- Staff use agreed code words to alert colleagues discreetly if help is needed
- Before an activity begins, staff check the area for hazards, define the space pupils may use and agree a meeting point
- Staff follow each pupil's individual strategies and may return to school early if a pupil becomes distressed, unwell or dysregulated

Specific Hazard Management

- When crossing the road on Sleaford High Street, the pelican crossing must be used
- Pupils must be informed that they are not allowed to use the vending machines at Sleaford Leisure Centre
- When using play and outdoor gym equipment at the Recreation Ground, staff must check the area thoroughly before use for any dangerous or hazardous objects or materials

Returning to School

- A final headcount is completed on arrival back at school
- The group is signed back in on the Local Area Visit Sheet with the time of return
- Any medication and pupil-specific equipment is returned and stored correctly
- Any incident, near miss, accident or concern is reported to SLT the same day and recorded (see below)

Medical Needs and First Aid

- At least one member of staff with current first aid training accompanies every visit
- Pupils' own prescribed medication (for example, adrenaline auto-injectors and inhalers) is taken where their Care Plan requires it. The school's spare adrenaline auto-injectors remain on site with the first aid kits and are not taken on local area visits
- Where a pupil's Care Plan states that medication is not administered at school or on visits, staff must not administer medication and must follow the emergency procedure in the pupil's individual health risk assessment
- Staff know the location of the nearest public defibrillators: White Hart Mews (Ringrose Law) for the Jermyn Street site and the Masonic Centre (Old Fire Station) for the West Banks site
- Accidents and injuries are recorded in line with the First Aid Policy (on Tapestry and in the Pupil Accident Book for more serious incidents), near misses are recorded in the near miss book.

Emergency Procedures

Situation	Action
Pupil Missing or Absconding	• Keep the rest of the group safe and together with staff • Follow the absconding procedure in the Behaviour Policy and the pupil's risk assessment • Phone school immediately; SLT will co-ordinate support, decide when to contact the police (999) and inform parents/carers • If the pupil is in immediate danger, call 999 straight away
Medical Emergency	• Give first aid and follow the pupil's Care Plan and individual health risk assessment, including any emergency triggers • Call 999 where required, then phone school; SLT will contact parents/carers • A member of staff stays with the pupil at all times
Serious Incident or Injury	• Make the group safe and phone school; SLT will send additional staff if needed • SLT records the incident and considers whether it is reportable under RIDDOR, in line with the Reporting of Incidents, Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Policy

Parental Consent and Communication

- The Local Learning Area and this procedure are explained to parents/carers at the pre-admissions meeting and consent for local area visits is gained as part of the admissions process
- Parents/carers may withdraw consent at any time by informing the school in writing
- Individual health risk assessments are agreed and signed by parents/carers
- Parents/carers are kept informed about local area learning through Tapestry and are contacted promptly by SLT following any significant incident

Training and Competence

- Only staff judged competent and approved by the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) may lead a local area visit
- New staff accompany visits before being approved to lead one
- All staff read this policy, the generic Local Area Visits risk assessment and the absconding procedure in the Behaviour Policy
- Staff complete any training required by a pupil's individual risk assessment before supporting that pupil off-site

Monitoring and Review

The Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) monitors Local Area Visit records termly and reports any patterns, incidents or near misses to the Headteacher. The generic Local Area Visits risk assessment is reviewed annually. This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Proprietor or sooner following a significant incident or change in guidance.

Appendix 1: Hazards and Control Measures from the Local Area Visits Risk Assessment

Risk key: H = High, M = Medium, L = Low. Individual health and pupil risk assessments apply in addition to these control measures.

Identified Hazard	Initial Risk	Existing Control Measures	Residual Risk	Responsibility
Pupils Going Missing	H	- Pre-visit SLT check of date, time, staffing, pupils and rationale - High staff-to-pupil ratio, including 1:1 support set out in individual risk assessments - Regular headcounts at key transition points - Line places for pupils and staff agreed before departing - Agreed visual meeting point in shops and venues as needed - Exploratory visit without pupils before a new venue is used - Parental consent gained as part of the admissions process	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff; Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead) at pre-visit check
Road Safety and Traffic Accidents	H	- Route pre-checked for safe crossings - Pelican and zebra crossings used only - Clear road safety reminders before each crossing - Staff at front, middle and rear of the group - Extra adult assigned for wheelchair users - Road safety taught and modelled within the behaviour curriculum and recapped through the year	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff

Identified Hazard	Initial Risk	Existing Control Measures	Residual Risk	Responsibility
Behaviour Incidents and Dysregulation	H	• Staff know and apply individual support plans and pupil risk assessments • Familiarisation visits or preparation in class, including social stories • Access to sensory items and fidgets as needed • Planned quiet break locations • Flexible visit plan allowing early return • Staff trained in de-escalation and calming strategies • Mobile phones carried to contact school for extra support	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff; Pastoral Lead
Absconding	H	• Staff know and apply pupil risk assessments, including agreed line places and 1:1 support • Absconding procedure in the Behaviour Policy known and applied • Staff at front, middle and rear of the group when travelling • Mobile phones carried to contact school for extra support	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff

Identified Hazard	Initial Risk	Existing Control Measures	Residual Risk	Responsibility
Medical Emergencies	H	- Member of staff with current first aid training present - Staff have read individual health risk assessments and Care Plans for the pupils attending - Pupil-specific equipment and pupils' own prescribed medication carried as set out in Care Plans - Staff supporting a pupil have completed any training their individual health risk assessment requires - First aid kit carried in the Going Out Bag; mobile phones charged; emergency contacts carried - Staff know the nearest first aid facilities and public defibrillator	L	Visit Leader; first aider; SENCo (individual health risk assessments and training); First Aid Co-ordinator (first aid kit)
Trips, Slips and Falls	H	- Pre-check of walking routes - Suitable footwear required - Supervision in playground areas and use of age-appropriate equipment - Extra support for pupils with mobility needs - First aid kit carried in the Going Out Bag	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff
Public Interactions	H	- Constant supervision, with staff positioned to observe all interactions - Appropriate behaviour in public taught as part of class preparation - Staff code words used to alert other staff discreetly if help is needed	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff

Identified Hazard	Initial Risk	Existing Control Measures	Residual Risk	Responsibility
Weather-Related Hazards	H	- Weather forecast checked before leaving - Appropriate clothing required (coats, sun hats, sunscreen) - Water bottles taken - Shaded or sheltered rest areas planned - Flexible visit plan allowing early return	L	Visit Leader
Communication Barriers	H	- Visual supports and PECS cards taken for pupils who use them - Staff aware of individual communication methods and pupil risk assessments - Pre-visit social story about the visit	L	Class teacher; Visit Leader
Premises	H	- Area checked for hazards and security before the activity begins (for example, St George's field) - Hazards removed safely, or reported to the premises owner or manager if this is not safe to do - Activity does not start until hazards are removed, or an alternative location is used - Space pupils may use is defined and a meeting point agreed	L	Visit Leader

Identified Hazard	Initial Risk	Existing Control Measures	Residual Risk	Responsibility
Animals	H	- Pupils prepared in advance for the possibility of seeing animals - Safe behaviour around animals discussed (no sudden movements, no touching without staff permission) - Pupils do not touch or approach dogs or cats - Staff supervise when feeding birds or ducks - Staff alert to allergies or fears; contact with animal faeces avoided; hands washed wherever possible	L	Visit Leader; accompanying staff

Appendix 2: Local Area Visit Sheet and Pre-Visit SLT Check

To be completed by the Visit Leader before leaving and on return. Kept in the staff room and retained by the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum Lead).

Item	Details
Date	
Destination and Route	
Time Out and Expected Return	
Visit Leader	
Staff Attending (Including 1:1s and First Aider)	
Pupils Attending	
Rationale and Learning Purpose	
Individual Risk Assessments Read, and Required Equipment, Medication and Trained Staff in Place	Yes / No
Going Out Bag and Hi-Vis Taken	Yes / No
Mobile Number Given to Office	
SLT Member Consulted and Time	
Time Returned and Final Headcount Correct	
Incident, Accident or Near Miss to Report	Yes / No If yes, reported to: