

The American School in London

Educational Visits and Off-site Activities policy

The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version held on the ASL website. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are following the most up-to-date version.

Responsible party	Head of Finance & Operations
Responsible board committee	Student Experience
Approval date	May 2025

Introduction

ASL recognizes that an educational trip or visit has enormous potential for enriching the school curriculum and, in some cases, it is an essential requirement of courses. Such enterprises, though often demanding, are intended to be enjoyable experiences for both students and staff. Many school trips, both day trips and overnight experiences, take place each year. It is therefore very important that procedures are in place to ensure that all trips and visits are properly planned and organized. The staff involved with school trips and visits must have clear guidance and take all reasonable steps to ensure that risks are minimized.

Aims and scope

ASL frequently uses day and overnight trips to enhance student learning and appreciation of different cultures.

Educational visits are activities arranged by, or on behalf of, our school, which require students to leave the school premises, having been authorized to do so by the divisional principals or other designated employees.

Educational visits are a valuable way to supplement and enhance the curriculum, expand students' education and provide enriching social and cultural experiences, teach life skills and promote independent learning, and provide a foundation for lifelong learning. School trips form an integral part of our approach to furthering our students' education and personal growth.

This policy sets out our approach to planning and operating educational visits, to ensure the health and safety of our students and employees, and to make sure that our visits are available to all students. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of employees, students and volunteers when it comes to visits.

This policy applies to activities taking place within and outside of normal school hours, including weekends and holiday periods. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Visits to places of interest in the local area
- Day visits to places such as museums and other cultural and educational institutions
- Sporting activities
- Adventurous and recreational activities
- Residential trips organized by the School
- Trips abroad organized by the School

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's guidance on [health and safety on educational visits](#), and the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

In addition, this policy should be read in conjunction with the ASL guidelines for supervision of student travel.

Roles and responsibilities

The divisional principals are responsible for:

- Approving employee requests for educational visits, including having final authority to approve any educational visit of less than 24 hours
- Making sure employees, including the divisional trip coordinators and advanced trip coordinators, have received any necessary training

- Working with the head of school to approve overnight trips of more than 24 hours

The divisional trip coordinator's role is to:

- Oversee and guide other employees to arrange and organize educational visits
- Assess the ability of other employees to lead visits and designate a suitable trip lead for each visit
- Assess outside activity providers
- Advise the divisional principal when they are assessing trips prior to approval
- Access the necessary training, advice and guidance
- Help to evaluate trips once complete, from planning to the visit itself, and use this to improve future arrangements

Educational trips and visits will have an employee designated as the trip leader. The trip leader will:

- Plan the proposed visit, taking into account the health and safety risks to students, employees and volunteers
- Complete the required application forms for trip evaluation
- Seek and obtain approval for all educational visits from the divisional principal
- Assign employee and volunteer roles, as needed
- Make sure the School has accurate and up-to-date information about the trip destination, to be used in risk assessments
- Make sure the needs of everyone taking part are considered, including coordinating any additional support needed
- When needed, make sure parents/guardians are given accurate information about educational visits, including any costs or necessary equipment not supplied by the School or a third party
- Communicate key details about the visit and all locations to employees, students and parents/guardians, including roles and responsibilities and expected behavior
- Make sure employees are capable and able to fulfill their roles at all times while responsible for students and others

For more advanced trips (such as the environmental science trip to South Africa), ASL has advanced trip coordinators with the experience and training needed to ensure the trip is planned and conducted safely. The advanced trip coordinator helps their colleagues in schools to assess and manage risks.

The advanced trip coordinator will be:

- an experienced visits leader

- have the status to be able to guide the working practices of other employees
- be confident in assessing the ability of other employees to lead visits
- be confident in assessing outside activity providers
- be able to advise administrators when they are approving trips
- have access to training, advice and guidance

Additional employees or chaperones who join educational trips and visits will:

- Carry out any required risk assessments and work with the trip leader
- Communicate with parents/guardians and make sure trips are inclusive of all students' needs
- Look out for the health and safety of themselves and those around them
- Help manage student behavior and discipline as required while on the visit
- Share any concerns or worries with the trip leader and others, as appropriate

Volunteers attending school trips, including parent/guardian volunteers, agree to:

- Follow the directions of employees and act accordingly
- Behave appropriately and model good behavior for students
- Report any concerns to the trip leader or other employees present as soon as possible
- Make sure students under their supervision are acting safely and appropriately, and raise any issues with employees as soon as possible

By agreeing that students can take part in educational visits, parents/guardians agree that they will:

- Provide all information required, such as emergency contact details and health/medicine information if applicable
- Sign and return consent forms and any other documentation required in a timely manner
- Share any concerns or information about the student that may affect or impact their ability to safely take part in the trip - this to include a contingency plan for emergency pickup in cases where the student cannot complete the trip.

Our divisional student behavior policies also apply to all educational visits. This includes the expectation that students will:

- Follow instructions given to them while on the trip
- Dress and behave as expected for the length of the trip
- Take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others, reporting any concerns to an employee or trip leader

- Be reminded of our behavior expectations before going off-site for a visit as necessary, and will be expected to uphold the school's behavior policy at all times.
- Adhere to the [Behaviour policy](#)

Planning and preparation

The decision on whether or not a trip/visit will take place will be made by divisional principals, and based on factors including:

- Cost (including any potential cost to parents/guardians)
- Timing in the school year and any potential clashes
- Educational purpose and value
- Disruption to the normal running of the School
- Health and safety considerations
- Employee/volunteer-to-student ratio
- Any other factors deemed appropriate and relevant

As part of the planning protocols, information will be gathered by employees proposing the visit, including:

- Location and travel distance
- Travel plans or options
- Full cost breakdown, including multiple options where available
- Resources, including staffing, volunteer, and physical supplies
- Accommodation options, where needed
- Insurance details, where needed
- Risk assessment plans and first aid provision
- What safety measures can be put in place in order to reduce any risks
- Any additional minimum standards, depending on the age of the children

Written parental consent will be required for overnight trips, and for trips requiring a higher-than-normal level of risk assessment.

When warranted, we will evaluate trips and visits after their conclusion, from the planning through to the visit itself, to continually improve the planning and experience of our future visits.

Inclusion

All students, regardless of background or abilities, should be able to take part in every aspect of our school life, including visits.

If a student with a disability, statement of special educational needs (SEN) or an education health and care (EHC) plan, or any other specific needs (e.g., medical conditions, including allergies) is participating in the visit, they will have the same support that is available to them during the school day.

We will adjust the trip program where necessary, working with parents/guardians to provide additional support, making reasonable adjustments to itineraries, providing additional employees, and other adjustments as appropriate.

Additional risk assessments may be carried out to ensure the safety of all employees and students.

Trip evaluation and planning protocols

ASL follows a protocol for evaluating which educational visits and off-site activities require permission forms from parents/guardians, risk assessments, and evaluation of off-site activities providers. As appropriate to the particular trip, some or all of the following forms/actions should be completed. These can be found in the field trip section on asl.org.

- Preliminary application for the approval of school trips
- Final application for the approval of school trips
- Confirmation from the divisional principal for a visit to go ahead
- Steps to follow when assessing risk
- Risk assessment(s)
- Evaluation of the visit to be completed by the trip leader for future reference
- Checklist for students going on a visit
- ASL overnight field trip medical information and consent form
- Off-site swimming pool consent form

Our two main types of visits are day field trips and overnight/abroad field trips. Each of these trips has a specific flowchart to follow for administrator approval and a range of health and safety mitigations. Administrators also follow a checklist for trip approvals.

Process flowchart for [day trips](#).

Process flowchart for [overnight and overseas trips](#).

[Admin approval and checklist](#).

[Chaperone signature list](#).

[List of travelers procedure](#).

ASL evaluates visits and trips once they have been concluded from the planning through to the visit itself. We keep a record of any incidents, accidents and near misses.

This helps us to

- evaluate whether its planning has worked
- learn from any incidents that took place

Divisional trip coordinators collect this information.

Day trips and educational visits

These trips normally involve an everyday level of risk and are covered by a school's current policies and procedures. They only need a little extra planning beyond the educational aspect of the trip. They can be considered as lessons in a different classroom. Examples of these trips could include supervised short visits to the St. John's Wood High Street with student advisories, short visits to local parks, and other routine day trips to museums or other locations of interest.

Parental permission for day trips are given at the start of each school year. We have all parents complete a Day Trip/Activity Consent and Medical Information Form at the beginning of the school year that covers all day field trips taken by students through the course of the school year. Parents/guardians are asked to review and sign this form again at the start of each school year, or before their children start attending mid year. This form also includes parental permission for their children to use the swimming pool on our campus (for PE classes and other activities).

All day trips have risk assessments done, even if they are basic local trips, as we take security and safety precautions seriously for all off-campus travel. These risk assessments will range in complexity based on the type of day trip taken.

Parents/guardians may be informed of more involved day trips, so they are aware the trip is taking place. We will contact individual parents/guardians if there are any possible concerns about particular students, and parents/guardians can always contact us to decline a trip for their child.

An emergency contact list and medical summary list will be created for the participants for all day trips. Employees managing or leading visits will not decide to add activities during the trip that have not been risk assessed. The risk assessments may require detailed planning and informed approval beforehand. We will consider the abilities of the children when assessing risk.

Our divisional trip coordinators have the job of developing the risk assessment and will ensure that trip leaders:

- have the [skills, status and competence needed for the job](#)
- understand the risks involved

- be familiar with the activity

Plans should be proportionate and sensible, focusing on how to manage genuine risks.

There will also be an agreed emergency communication and follow-up plan with the divisional trip coordinator (see below).

Overnight and trips abroad

Overnight or overseas trips take place outside of normal school hours, and they will always require a unique permission form to be reviewed and signed by parents. These forms also ensure that parents/guardians can let us know of any changed or current medical conditions of their children, or medications that would need to be taken during the trip.

Overnight or overseas trips will also have risk assessments for the necessary travel arrangements as well as for any higher risk activities during the trip. A security review by our security manager will take place for destinations of elevated risk, as well as a review by our security consultants (Arup) if there are concerns or risks about the locations themselves. We will review the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's detailed guidance on [safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas](#) and [foreign travel advice](#) when organizing visits abroad.

If the trip includes significant risks, such as challenging terrain, going to remote places or extreme climates, we may review and use the guide to the [British Standard for adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom](#).

An emergency contact list and medical summary list will be created for the participants in overnight or overseas trips. There will also be an agreed emergency communication and follow-up plan with the divisional trip coordinator (see below).

Risk assessment

A system of risk assessments is conducted for trips based on their complexity, duration and destinations. This process is completed using the school's ASL risk assessment template. Existing risk assessments or those provided by the destination itself might also be used to support this process. The risk assessment will include any specific medical issues and allergies (for employees and students), the role of additional support on the visit, specified activities to be carried out, as well as risks associated with transport to and from the destination. Where practical, employees may make a preliminary visit to the trip destination as part of the planning and risk assessment process, but this is not mandatory. Trip leaders will raise any concerns or questions

about potential risks and safety measures with the head of school and, where appropriate, third party vendors.

Every risk assessment will be shared with trip leaders and may also be reviewed by divisional principals before trips are approved. Trips with destinations that may have additional risks related to political unrest or increased risk of terrorism will be reviewed by our external security firm before a decision is made about trip approvals.

Staff ratios and first aid

Risk assessments for trips and visits will ascertain the safe level of supervision required. On all educational visits, we will make sure:

- We normally follow the following ratios for chaperones on trips:
 - K1 and K2: one adult for four students
 - Grades 1-3: one adult for five students
 - Grade 4: one adult for seven students
 - Grade 5 and above: one adult for 10 students
- We have one male and one female chaperone for mixed gender trips when possible (and always for overnight trips)
- At least one supervising adult able to administer first aid is present on all trips
- Appropriate first aid equipment will be taken on all trips, in accordance with the school's first aid and health and safety policies.
- All supervising adults will be made aware of any medical issues or allergies at the start of the trip
- Adults without a DBS check will not be left alone with students at any time
- The trip leader will take regular headcounts and/or roll calls

Transport

Transportation for trips will be organized by the School, in line with our safety procedures. We will make sure students, employees and volunteers are transported safely and efficiently, with the required first aid provision.

Unless previously agreed with parents, transport for visits will leave from, and return to, the ASL campus.

Volunteers

Where appropriate, parents/guardians may be asked to volunteer to attend and supervise students alongside employees on trips. Where more parents/guardians volunteer than required on the visit, those invited to attend will be selected as fairly and transparently as possible, while taking into consideration:

- The needs of the students going on the trip
- The setting and circumstances of the trip
- Volunteers' skills, attitude and past behavior, including previous volunteer experience

Volunteers will receive an induction from employees on the day of the visit, prior to departure, including on their responsibilities, expected behavior, the process for raising concerns, and the expected timetable of the trip.

Where practical and as required by the nature of visits (i.e., when volunteers may be left with children without employees present), volunteers may be asked or required to undergo safeguarding checks, including DBS checks.

At no point will volunteers on whom no safeguarding checks have been carried out be left alone with students or given sole responsibility for the care of a student.

Communication and consent

Parents/guardians provide permission for day trips at the beginning of each school year, and this includes permission for students to swim in the pool on the Waverley campus. Additionally, parents/guardians are contacted and asked for consent in advance of all trips that involve overnight stays or trips with additional higher risk activities. We will contact the parents/guardians well before the proposed date of the trip via email or letter, and information provided will include the date, travel times, destination, purpose of the visit, and the size of the group attending.

We will also communicate:

- Times and details of travel, including drop-off and pick-up times and location
- Student-to-employee ratios and employee qualifications, where relevant
- Clothing and equipment required, and whether this is provided by the School
- Expected behavior and consequences of students' failure to meet these standards

Where required, parents/guardians will be asked to provide written consent for educational visits by signing and dating a form to be returned to the School.

Parents/guardians will also be asked to provide current and relevant medical information and dietary requirements, as well as emergency contact numbers where they can be reached.

In the case of overseas trips, they will be asked to provide passport information and European Health Insurance Card or UK Global Health Insurance Card information, if available. If visas are needed for the trip, the School will help facilitate the paperwork

process. We will follow the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office's overseas travel guidance](#) and [foreign travel advice](#) when organizing trips abroad.

Because most visits during the school day will be part of the curriculum and covered by the written permission at the start of the year, we will not always need written consent for individual trips; however, we will always inform parents/guardians as above and request permission about any overnight trips or day trips with additional risks, and give an opportunity for them to withdraw their child.

Emergency procedures and incident reporting

For each trip, trip leaders liaise with their divisional trip coordinators (or divisional principals) to ensure they are ready to manage an incident away from school. This will include clarity about how routine communications should be handled, including regular check-ins and calls to reassure people. All trip leaders will know who to call first if there is an accident or if a participant needs medical attention.

For higher-risk day trips, and all overnight and abroad trips, leaders and chaperones carry emergency contact lists and signed emergency medical provision forms for participants (in case permission is needed for emergency medical treatment when parents are unreachable).

Trip leaders are briefed on emergency planning in advance of trips. This could also involve specific advice for a location from our security manager. During overseas trips, our security manager and security consultants (Arup) are on call in case there is a sudden and unexpected local event or increase in unrest in a location close to where the trip is taking place.

Generally, emergency planning will be defined as planning for:

- Serious and unexpected risk
- Serious and life-threatening injury
- Individuals going missing
- A serious breach of safeguarding expectations

The trip leader will be familiar with these plans for each visit.

In the case of an emergency, the trip leader or other supervising adult will contact the school office, divisional principal or main security desk. The school office or divisional principal will then contact parents/guardians as required, and inform them of changes to plans or cancellations of trips and/or alternative travel plans. This will form part of a wider communication plan that covers how routine communications should be handled in such situations.

One employee will always accompany a student seeking medical treatment.

All incidents and accidents will be reported in line with our health and safety policy, including required reporting to Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) if necessary.

Smaller incidents, accidents or near misses that do not require external reporting will still be covered by an internal report, to include steps that can be taken in the future to avoid similar incidents.

There will also be a clear process for evaluating visits and trips once they have been concluded from the planning through to the visit itself. This will help with evaluating whether planning worked and to learn from any incidents that took place.

Charging and insurance

We will follow our school's charging and remissions policy at all times. Most trips are covered by tuition and do not require additional fees, but some athletics, robotics or advanced trips will require additional remissions from parents. Financial aid is available to families for trips and visits that involve additional fees.

We will make sure adequate insurance is in place for all trips, including, but not limited to: cancellation insurance for contracts with external providers, travel insurance, accident and medical cover, and loss of luggage and other personal items. Specific trip activities may be reviewed with our insurers and additional coverage will be added when needed.

Trips that involve residential overnight accommodations

ASL no longer conducts trips that include residential overnight accommodations for students. All overnight accommodations are in hotels or similar commercial accommodations with appropriate supervision, as defined in the ASL Safe Working Practices document.

Using outside organizations

When ASL uses an outside organization to provide an activity (such as lower school Bushcraft trips), we check they have appropriate safety standards and liability insurance.

We check to see if the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the [Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge](#) to organizations who meet nationally recognized standards. [Check if an organization holds the LOtC Quality Badge](#).

If an organization does not hold the badge, ASL checks that it is an appropriate organization to use. This could include checking:

- their insurance
- that they meet legal requirements
- their health and safety and emergency policies
- their risk assessments
- control measures
- their use of vehicles
- staff competence
- safeguarding
- accommodation
- any sub-contracting arrangements they have
- that they have a license where needed

ASL will confirm with the organization to delineate areas of responsibility. This is especially important if the organization is taking over supervision of the students.

Adventure activities: caving, climbing, trekking and watersports

These kinds of activities are always risk assessed beforehand. We check to see if the organizations need a license to provide some adventure activities. Organizations that hold the LOTC Quality Badge should hold a license for the activity they provide. We refer to the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) website when seeking to inform ourselves about the license status of adventure activities providers.

Watersports

When planning for watersports, ASL will consider the need for:

- instructors
- lifeguards

ASL has an on-site pool that follows all safety, staffing and operational requirements. The Day Trip/Activity Consent and Medical Information Form includes parental permission for their children to use the ASL pool. For off-site pools, we have a separate permission form.

We take particular care when using hotel swimming pools and other water leisure activities, which may not have a trained lifeguard. We review the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) advice when undertaking adventure specialist activities,

including swimming. When needed, we also have an off-site swimming pool consent form that is signed by parents/guardians before the trip.

Appendix: Guidelines for Supervision of Student Travel

The American School in London has a duty of care to all students and staff that requires that each student must depart, travel, and arrive together as a collective school group at *all times* during any school trips both national and international. This includes returning to London as a school group.

The request from a parent/guardian to collect their child at the end of the trip or drop off their child during the middle of the trip encloses many hazards that could easily be avoided. The result of preventing a parent/guardian from extracting their child from the school trip may avert a number of unnecessary health and safety risks, such as;

- a. Possible separation of the class and/or teachers in order to meet the requirements of the parent/guardian.
- b. Attention is diverted from the main body of the group.
- c. Potential delay in meeting, resulting in the class missing the flight, train, activity etc.
- d. Potential handover to the wrong person (uncle, friend of family etc.)
- e. Last minute change in meeting plan, resulting in any of the above.
- f. No contingency plan in place if the meeting fails.
- g. Financial implications; increase of additional costs.

These risks make exceptions to the travel guidance rare. In most cases, students must stay together with the chaperones and the group throughout their trip.

Frequently Asked Question	ASL Guidelines
1. When on a school trip, local or international, can a parent take a student away for a meal or outing and return them to the group?	No. It risks group cohesion and detracts from the purpose of the trip. School trips are meant to help students connect with their teams, clubs, or groups through bonding. There are safeguarding risks to the group if, for example, the parent gives permission for alcohol consumption and then the student returns to the group. Full team meals, with parents and coaches, are appropriate as it contributes to team bonding. One DBS-checked ASL coach must be present for safeguarding.

2. When on a school trip, can a family friend take a student away for a meal or outing and return them to the group?	No. Under no circumstances would ASL allow a child to leave the group with a family friend. This is a safeguarding risk to our students.
3. When a school trip travels internationally, can my student meet the group at a London airport?	Not recommended and requires ASL's Handshake Rule. If a family wants to arrange for the student to meet the group at the airport, this must be written ahead of time to the chaperone, the meeting point must be pre-arranged and the parent must accompany the student to the meeting point at the airport.
3. When students are away on an international school trip or have traveled outside of London, must the student return to London by airplane, train, or bus with the group?	In most cases, yes - specific exemptions apply. Arrangements can be made in advance that meet ASL's Handshake Rule. Otherwise, students must return to London with the group.
4. Once arriving at a London airport from an overnight trip , at least one chaperone will travel back to ASL with the students. With written permission , can students travel home directly unaccompanied from a London airport?	Yes. The trip can legitimately be deemed to have finished at the arrivals lobby of a named airport. With written permission by email from the family to the trip leader before the trip leaves London a student can leave directly from the airport. Otherwise, the student(s) will be accompanied back to ASL from where they could be dismissed (or returned to parental care).
5. Once arriving at a London train/tube station from an overnight trip , at least one chaperone will travel back to ASL with the students. With written permission , can students travel home directly unaccompanied from a London train station in Zone 1-4?	Yes. The trip can legitimately be deemed to have finished at the arrivals lobby of a named London train/tube station. With written permission from the family to the trip leader before the trip leaves

	London a student can leave directly from the station. Otherwise, the student(s) will be accompanied back to ASL from where they could be dismissed (or returned to parental care).
6. Once arriving at a London train/tube station from a day trip, at least one chaperone will travel back to ASL with the students. Can students travel home directly unaccompanied from a London train station in Zone 1-4?	Yes. The trip can legitimately be deemed to have finished at the arrivals lobby of a named London train station. Families do not need to provide written permission to the trip leader for a student to leave directly from the station. Otherwise, the student(s) will be accompanied back to ASL from where they could be dismissed.