

5. APPROVALS

5.01 Submission of Information

The details of all visits must be entered into the Bracknell Forest online monitoring and approval system, including:

- Children and young person participants;
- Staff and volunteers;
- The venue, including telephone contact number;
- The mode/s of transport;
- The nature of the activities and programme.
- Emergency contacts taking into account the opening hours of the establishment.

5.02 Approvals Process

Bracknell Forest operates a three tier approvals process depending on the nature of the visit. The only individuals with authority to approve Offsite and Adventurous Activities are:

- 1) The Offsite Visits Co-ordinator, who approves that the arrangements put in place by the Group Leader are satisfactory.
- 2) The headteacher/Service Head who gives approval on behalf of the establishment/Service.
- 3) The Offsite Visits Advisor, who gives approval on behalf of the Council for more complex visits.

This procedure is set out on the table below:

TYPE OF VISIT	APPROVAL
Visits Involving a Journey by Air or Sea Visits over 24 hours Duration Residential Visits Adventurous Activities A Distance of More than 30 miles A Travel Time of More than 40 Minutes Visits to London	Offsite Visits Co-ordinator ↓ Headteacher/Service Head ↓ Offsite Visits Advisor

TYPE OF VISIT	APPROVAL
All Other Visits	Offsite Visits Co-ordinator ↓ Headteacher/Service Head

Approvals are given on-line electronically, and authorisers can access the system from anywhere with an internet connection.

5.03 Approval by Offsite Visits Co-ordinators (OVCs)

OVCs provide the first tier of approvals for all visits, and OVCs should check that the planning and preparation has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance in this Manual, with particular emphasis on risk assessment and risk management.

5.04 Approval by Headteachers/Service Heads

Headteachers or Service Heads for non school establishments, provide the second tier of approvals for all visits, and Headteachers/Service Heads should check that the activities meet the specified objectives of the visit, that adequate risk assessments are in place and that the appropriate financial arrangements are in place.

5.05 Approval by the Offsite Visits Advisor (OVA)

The OVA provides the third tier of approvals for the more complex visits including:

- Visits involving a journey by air or sea
- Visits over 24 hours duration
- Residential visits
- Adventurous activities
- A distance of more than 30 miles
- A travel time of more than 40 minutes
- Visits to London



Where required, OVA approval must be obtained BEFORE the establishment is committed financially to running the activity.

When approval is required from the OVA the visit must be submitted within the required notice periods (see 5.10) or risk the visit not being approved.

Colleagues should also be aware that if there is any doubt about the safety or quality of an offsite activity the Council's OVA will be obliged to refuse approval, whether the Establishment is financially committed or not.

5.06 Adventurous Activities

Adventurous Activities are activities that by their nature involve a higher level of risk to the participants, for example Archery or Rock Climbing. The level of risk will be dependent on the nature of the activity, the venue, and the age, experience and special and additional needs of the participants. Most of this will be common sense but the Offsite Visit Advisor (OVA) will advise on whether a particular combination of these factors should be classified as Adventurous, requiring the third tier approval from the OVA.

5.07 Non Approved Activities

The following activities are not approved by Bracknell Forest Council:

- Paintballing
- Bungee jumping
- Base jumping
- Microlight parachuting
- Parascending
- Shooting – guns and crossbows

This list is not exhaustive and if there are any doubts regarding an activity the OVA must be consulted prior to any commitment being made.

5.08 Approval by School Governors



In addition to the three-tier approvals system outlined above, school governing bodies also have a duty to approve Offsite and Adventurous Activities. It will be for Headteachers to agree the scope and arrangements for these approvals and to bring details of visits for approval to Governing Body meetings. Where Governors approve visits this should be recorded in the Governing Body minutes and approvals entered into the Bracknell Forest electronic monitoring system.

Where an opportunity for an Offsite or Adventurous Activity is being taken at relatively short notice headteachers might find it necessary to make arrangements with governors other than through the normal Governing Body meetings.

Governors must be given sufficient information, in sufficient time, to allow them to make a fair and objective decision. They should be given at least as much information as parents/carers.

It is the responsibility of governors in this context to:

- Ensure that an activity is appropriate to the aims of the school as an educational establishment:
- Ensure that an activity is appropriate to the needs of the children and young people involved;
- Satisfy themselves that the school can be run efficiently in the absence of any staff on the activity;
- Satisfy themselves that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure the safety of the children and young people involved and that they have no concerns about safety.

It would be wise for governing bodies to undertake an annual appraisal of the off-site activities at the school in order to:

- Ensure a suitable spread of such activities throughout the school;
- Ensure that financial commitments for parents/carers are reasonable.

Governors might also feel it appropriate that information about offsite and adventurous activities should form a part of the governing body's annual report to parents/carers.

5.09 Approval of Recurring Activities

Approval must be obtained in respect of recurring activities that are part of an ongoing course or a programme, e.g. a series of swimming lessons, or away matches as part of a football league. These should be entered on-line as a single visit with the dates of the first and last visit entered as the visit start and finish dates and with the individual visit dates and times uploaded as a supporting document.

5.10 Lead in Times for Approvals

Details of offsite and adventurous activities must be put onto the online monitoring and approval system in good time to allow for proper consideration as part of the approvals process. Planning for visits can take place well in advance and the guiding principle should be the earlier the better.

Visits should be submitted for approval prior to the date of departure and prior to any financial commitment to undertake the visit. Submission for approval should be sufficiently far ahead to allow time for consultation with, and Medical and Consent forms to be received from signatories.

The following should be used as a guide as to when details of forthcoming visits should be entered onto the online system:

TYPE OF VISIT	NOTICE PERIOD
Visit to Youth Club or other facility	7 working days
Adventurous Activity	14 working days
Residential Activity	One month
Activities Abroad	Six months
Exchanges (six months - year)	Six months

For major expeditions to foreign countries outline details of visits must be submitted at least 12 months prior to departure, and prior to any financial commitment being made

Requests for approval will usually be responded to within two weeks. In calculating the time to submit details of the visit, colleagues should remember that delays in monitoring can occur during holiday periods or between the Spring half term and the end of the Summer term which is the period of greatest activity.

5.11 How Much Detail is Required

As much of the requested information should be given as possible, even if only in outline. If the OVA requires more information it will be asked for and can be provided later.

5.12 Evaluation Form

All residential visits should be evaluated after the visit has taken place. This is so that the quality of experiences provided by external providers can be continually assessed.