Reviewed by Ian Sheldrake January 2025

Code of Practice

Throughout our service we will ensure the highest possible quality of provision.

Session and course programmes

All sessions offered are designed to meet the specific demands of visiting groups, for example:

- specified National Curriculum (Programmes of Study) POS and DfEE strategies;
- specific examination syllabus requirements;
- broader educational aims, including personal, social, spiritual, moral, cultural and environmental education.
- NGB qualifications following recognized syllabi.

Session and course programmes will make provision for equality of opportunity for all pupils in line with our Equity Policy

Objectives

Objectives for all sessions will be defined clearly in advance of the course, indicating the;

- areas of knowledge and understanding of specific topics to be developed from work at the centre and in the field;
- skills to be involved in: the preparation for outdoor and environmental activities, and the collection, interpretation and presentation of evidence acquired;
- environmental and other issues to be considered;
- learning outcomes to be achieved;
- contribution that outdoor and environmental activities can make to the development of personal, social, spiritual, moral, cultural and environmental education.
- links to other curriculum areas

Outdoor and Environmental activities

Outdoor and Environmental activities will be prepared thoroughly by staff highlighting the:

- selection of sites and facilities available at the various locations used;
- introductory activities that can be carried out before arrival that will introduce session aims and objectives
- teaching and learning to be developed with indications of the standards to be attained;
- follow up activities that will consolidate the learning and allow the pupils to communicate what they have learnt in a variety of ways.

At the start of a session or course the group will be given a briefing to introduce the course content and expectations to enable pupils to carry out their work;

Sites used for sessions

Sites will be selected on the basis of:

- appropriateness and accessibility for the age and ability of pupils and the size of the group;
- suitability for accomplishing the teaching and learning objectives previously specified;
- safety
- environmental impact

Training

All staff employed by ***Venture-Out*** will have National Governing Body qualifications and/or experience appropriate to the session they are leading. All staff on sessions will receive induction training and will be provided with up to date operating procedures and current risk assessments for all session.

Equipment and Clothing

We will ensure that we offer suitable equipment and clothing to carry out the range of activities programmed. The equipment will be well maintained and may include:

- a range of field study equipment such as measuring and recording devices (which will ensure users may observe and measure with the degree of accuracy commensurate with their ability);
- A range of outdoor adventurous equipment such as group development through problem solving equipment, mountain bikes and archery equipment, canoes and kayaks.
- reference materials to enable users to investigate beyond their immediate fieldwork background;
- protective clothing, where required, for specific activities, such as mountain bike helmets, arm guards for archery, waterproofs clothing, ropes, harnesses, climbing activities, buoyancy aids and helmets for canoeing and kayaking where appropriate.

We will ensure that centres hold sufficient equipment appropriate to the activities and sites, and that this is made available for use by pupils. We will make arrangements to ensure that the equipment is frequently checked, well maintained and fit for the purpose intended. All checks will be documented. Damaged equipment will be replaced. Worn or outdated equipment will be assessed for their usability and either withdrawn or allocated to an appropriate use. Equipment that has been identified as not safe will be withdrawn immediately.

Venture-Out staff will ensure that clothing and footwear worn or carried by pupils provides sufficient protection for the present and expected weather conditions and the activities.

Facilities

Our premises will include adequate provision for briefing and follow-up activities, together with toilet, cloakroom and drying facilities appropriate for the type of course. Residential centres that we may make use of will also provide suitable accommodation for sleeping, dining and relaxation. We will work alongside the managers of these locations to ensure that the accommodation will be maintained to the highest possible standard and there will be a documented system for checking the maintenance of the premises.

Visiting staff and group leaders responsibilities

We will require visiting staff to comply with safeguards designed to ensure quality courses and sessions. These will have been notified to visiting staff and discussed with them prior to the start of the course.

We will hold visiting staff responsible for ensuring that:

- their group will comply with the adult: pupil ratios recommended for the age and ability of the pupils, the type of course and the sites used according to our operating procedures
- pupils are well briefed prior to the visit, including guidance on equipment and clothing requirements;
- they provide **Venture-Out** staff with information on pupils' ability levels, previous experience, particular physical, mental or sensory impairments, medical conditions and any other information that may help to ensure quality of provision prior to the start of the course.

We will ensure that, prior to the course/session visiting staff understand and accept those responsibilities that fall on them as distinct from those which fall on centre staff especially in respect for:

- being in 'loco parentis';
- providing tuition both in whole class situations and in situations when pupils are working in smaller groups in different locations;
- pupils and their activities during non-teaching times;
- premises and equipment;
- pupil behaviour both within the building and in 'the field'.

Evaluation and Review

will form an important part of **Venture-Out's practice**. We will:

- operate a self-review system for all courses/sessions, paying particular attention to pupil achievement;
- ensure that all visiting groups have opportunities to offer feedback on courses, services and facilities provided;
- have in place systems to record and analyse feedback and to maintain records of actions taken as a result and the effectiveness of such actions;
- operate a fully documented complaints procedure;
- review the quality of all courses, services and facilities at regular intervals, or immediately if circumstances demand, introducing amendments and improvements as necessary and sharing these with others.

Safety

We will ensure the safest standards of practice and provision.

Centres have a written policy for the management of health and safety in line with HCC policy and practice documentation. The policy includes:

- responsibilities of centre staff;
- risk assessments for all activities;
- arrangements and procedures for:
    - fire safety and evacuation;
    - accident and emergency procedures;
    - first aid;
    - premises, security and insurance
    - equipment and clothing

Responsibilities of Venture-Out staff

We will ensure that all centre staff are fully conversant with those parts of this code that are relevant to their areas of work, and their responsibility to work within its requirements.

Venture-Out will have systems for checking that all the responsibilities identified in the Health and Safety Management Policy are carried out.

Risk assessments

Hazards exist in all educational activities. The types of hazard present in outdoor and environmental education mean that the degree of risk is heightened in comparison with many classroom activities. For the purpose of this section, a hazard is defined as something that has the potential to cause harm or injury, and a risk is the likelihood of harm or injury resulting from a hazard. In order to minimise risk, all centres have carried out risk assessments for all activities and areas of working, including all aspects of outdoor and environmental activities, indoor classroom space, activity equipment and remote locations.

Hazards fall into three broad divisions:

- hazards resulting from physical factors;
- hazards resulting from the nature of the activities;
- hazards resulting from the nature of the group.

Centres will assess the particular hazards associated with their operation and will identify in their Health and Safety Management Policy through the risk assessment file appropriate risk minimisation measures, which will be communicated to pupils and adults in briefing prior to sessions reinforced in the field.

In order to minimise the risks associated with physical factors providers will assess:

(a) hazards associated with the physical surroundings. **Venture-Out** will have carried out risk assessments on the locations they use. These will be documented fully along with the associated safety procedures. They will be an integral part of all the work of **Venture-Out** staff. Visiting teachers will be briefed on all risks and safety procedures relating to the sites. They will also be expected to comply with procedures when working independently or with **Venture-Out** staff and to ensure that pupils also comply;

(b) hazards related to present and expected weather conditions. **Venture-Out** staff will have alternative plans that might include the abandonment or modification of activities. **Venture-Out** staff will recognise local weather patterns as they develop as part of their risk assessment of the area. The effects of severe weather conditions, such as heavy rain, wind chill, full sunshine and severe frost, will be taken into account;

(c) Biological hazards associated with particular sites. These include hazards such as bites and stings, and waterborne diseases. **Venture-Out** staff will be aware of the symptoms and the recommended action. They will also ensure that school or college staff are aware of any symptoms that may become apparent after departure from the centre, together with recommended action.

In order to minimise the risks arising from the nature of the activity, providers will assess:

(a) hazards associated with outdoor and environmental activities. Some activities are more hazardous than others, but the risks involved in each activity will be assessed and documented and safety procedures put into practice. The degree of risk will relate to the nature of the activities and to the age, abilities, previous experience and behaviour of individuals and the group.

(b) hazards and the related risks associated with other activities that may include classroom based activities as well as recreational activities and in the case of residential centres, catering and overnight arrangements.

In order to minimise risks arising from the nature of the group, providers will:

(a) prior to the start of a visit, require the school to have supplied information on:

- pupils' medical conditions, medical regimes, allergies and any other health information which may be relevant, such as mobility, hearing or visual impairment;
- potential behavioural problems which may affect the safety of the individual or group;
- arrangements for contacting school or parents. Day and residential group leaders should have a group list with details of contact details for all pupils and adults. If a child needs to leave site, **Venture-Out** staff must be informed.
- parental permission where required for specific activities;
- dietary requirements in the case of residential visits.

Such information will be treated with respect, sensitivity and in confidence by the **Venture-Out** staff.

(b) at the start of a visit, supply information to the visiting group on:

- location of first aid equipment;
- expectations with regards to behaviour. For all outdoor and environmental activities, centre staff will have determined what constitutes unacceptable behaviour in the context of the safety of the individual and the group. The centre's behaviour policy will make provision for the withdrawal of individuals or groups from activities on safety grounds wherever behaviour becomes unacceptable.

(c) at the start of each activity, ensure that **Venture-Out** staff brief the visiting group on:

- the nature of the activity;
- the hazards associated with the activity and how they will be managed;
- the supervisory roles of the adults which have been agreed previously

(d) during the activity, ensure that the **Venture-Out** staff and school/ college staff will:

- constantly monitor physical factors and the nature of both the activities and the group, and, if any source of risk affects the well being of individuals or the group, modify or abandon the activity or withdraw to the centre facilities. In the case of abandonment, contingency plans will be introduced.
- Have access to pupil lists with contact details and regularly monitor numbers and names of pupils present, especially at the start and end of activities, and at any changes of venue. Where any absences are discovered emergency procedures will be implemented immediately.

(e) at the end of each activity, ensure that **Venture-Out** staff and school staff will:

- monitor the safe return of pupils, implementing emergency procedures, if necessary.

Arrangements and Procedures for:

Accident and Emergency Procedures

We have written accident and emergency procedures in line with HCC policy and practice guidance, which are amended in the light of experience and reviewed termly. The procedures include the use of mobile telephones or radio, but will not be reliant upon them.

Dealing with missing groups or individuals

If a child is discovered to be missing from a group;

- Identify which pupil is missing
- Establish if anyone seen them leave the group
- Identify one adult to remain with the group either where they are or return to classroom whichever is felt to be most appropriate.
- Make an initial search in the immediate area
- A co-ordinated search will be made with all available members of centre staff.
- If appropriate the **Venture-Out** staff will contact the police to establish a wider search.

Calling assistance

When the visiting group is accompanied by a member of **Venture-Out** staff and assistance of any kind is required, the member of staff will use a mobile telephone to call one of the duty managers, clearly stating who is required, what assistance is required and the location. If the member of staff is unable to telephone for assistance the group leader/class teacher should take over this role. If the phone message is either not possible or successful, an accompanying adult should be sent to summon assistance, or in the case of no additional adult help two responsible pupils should take a written message.

Fatalities ands serious incidents

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In case of a fatality or serious incident the Duty Officer should inform Ian Sheldrake or Kevin Beattie immediately and the following procedures carried out:

- Accident book should be completed
- Equipment and area quarantined to allow for investigation
- Risk assessments updated

- Riddor forms completed and sent to HES

Ian Sheldrake or Kevin Beattie will then liaise the school/college and emergency services, no comment should be given to media or other external agencies by centre staff

Dealing with emergency services

The lead member of staff leading the activity should be the only point of contact with the emergency services to ensure the accuracy and continuity of communication.

Counselling

This will be organised through the visiting group leader or Head Teacher.

Dealing with the media

All contact with the media should be through either Ian Sheldrake or Kevin Beattie

Venture-Out staff are trained to carry out the above procedures and will contact telephone numbers to mobilise assistance at any time and in all contingencies.
All accidents, incidents and near misses are recorded and the records reviewed termly.
Records comply with appropriate local and national procedures such as RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

First Aid

We will ensure that all groups are accompanied by, or have access to at least one responsible person with a valid, nationally recognised, first aid certificate.
In the field, this person will carry a first aid kit with approved contents and suitable emergency equipment, reflecting the nature of the terrain and the activities for which training has been undertaken.
All kits and equipment will be checked weekly and replaced or renewed as required. All actions will be recorded.
Where groups work independently, all group members will be briefed in the emergency procedures.

Premises, security and insurance

We will ensure that all premises comply with national and local safety requirements.
We will ensure that procedures are in place for the security of the grounds, premises, equipment, personnel and property.
We will hold public liability and third party insurance, or recognised alternative provision. Copies of current certificates will be available for inspection on request.

Supervision

We will ensure that **Venture-Out** staff with will:

- be suitably qualified and experienced;
- have been subject to criminal record checks when appointed;
- possess a current first aid certificate;

- have detailed prior knowledge of the nature and location of the activities and the hazards associated with them.

We will identify the minimum adult: pupil relationship for each type of activity and for the age, abilities and previous experience of the group. This will include reference to the sites and activities where pupils over a minimum age may work independently of immediate adult supervision. Where such independent work takes place, pupil briefing will include time deadlines, written emergency procedures, the location of adults and contact telephone numbers. Although some local education authorities and, in some cases individual schools will have declared a ratio for all outdoor activities, this might be inadequate for certain sites and activities. Where this is the case, we will impose our own recommended ratios. In residential centres, as far as possible, we will ensure that mixed male and female groups are supervised by both male and female adults overnight.

Sustainability

Venture-Out will ensure the sustainability of its practices

We will ensure that the centres have a biodiversity policy that governs their use of sites for all outdoor and environmental activities. This policy will specify the centre's practices with regard to:

- prohibiting the collection and removal of samples from the most sensitive sites;
- minimising the collection and removal of samples from other sites;
- ensuring the safe return of live animals sampled;
- managing the volume of use of sites;
- using routes which follow recognised paths as far as possible;
- amending programmes to avoid sites which may need additional protection in extreme weather conditions;
- reporting the need for repair, maintenance or conservation work, and wherever appropriate, carrying out or assisting with such work.

As far as possible, we will demonstrate and promote sustainable practices, including:

- exercising care and concern for the environment both within the centre and beyond;
- minimising energy and water use;
- maximising waste reduction, re-use and recycling;
- ensuring sustainable purchasing practices;
- developing systems for auditing the centre's environmental performance;
- demonstrating all of the above practices to visiting groups;
- promoting positive attitudes towards the environment.