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SPTA Employer Policy for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom / Offsite Visits and Activities

1. Provision of Employer Guidance

The School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) has formally adopted “Outdoor Education Advisors Panel National Guidance (OEAP NG)” as “School Partnership Trust Employer Guidance”. This OEAP guidance can be found on the following web site:

www.oeapng.info

SPTA employees are strongly advised to read this policy before seeking information from the www.oeapng.info website.

It is a legal expectation that employees must work within the requirements their employer’s guidance; therefore, SPTA employees must follow the requirements of “OEAP National Guidance”, as well as the requirements of this Policy Statement.

SPTA employees should also follow OEAP NG recommendations.

Where a SPTA employee commissions LOTC activity, they must ensure that such commissioned agent has either:

1. adopted SPTA or OEAP National Guidance
or
2. have systems and procedures in place where the standards are not less than those required by OEAP National Guidance.

All SPTA academies are required to have a suitable policy for all LoTC/offsite visits and activities that clearly references the Employers Policy i.e. SPT Policy. An example can be found on www.sptavisits.org.uk and go to ‘Guidance and Resources’

2. Scope and Remit

The OEAP NG document “[Basic Essentials MUST Read - Status and Remit](#)” clarifies the range of employees whose work requires them to use the guidance. In summary, it applies to employees whose work involves any one of the following:

- direct supervision of young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;
- direct supervision of young people undertaking experiences that fall within the remit of Learning Outside the Classroom;

- facilitating experiences for young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;
- deploying staff who will supervise or facilitate experiences of or for young people undertaking experiences beyond the boundary of their normal operational base;

This applies regardless of whether or not the activities take place within or outside of normal working hours, including weekends and holiday periods.

For a more expansive explanation of legal expectations, all users of the guidance are strongly recommended to read the OEAP NG document: "[Underpinning Legal Framework](#)"

3. Ensuring Understanding of Basic Requirements

As an employer, SPTA is required to ensure that its employees are provided with:

- appropriate guidance relating to visits and LOtC activity;
- employer-led training courses to support the guidance to ensure that it is understood;
- suitable systems and processes to ensure that those trained are kept updated;
- access to advice, support and further training from appointed Consultants that have proven expertise and professional understanding of the guidance, the training and expectations set by current good practice.

The appropriate guidance for the management of outdoor learning and LOtC for SPTA establishments is the OEAP National Guidance web site: www.oeapng.info

The relevant training courses for SPTA employees are:

1. SPTA Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC) Training - all SPTA academies are required to have a current SPTA-trained EVC in post. If an academy does not have a nominated EVC, then that role will by default rest with the Principal
2. SPTA Educational Visit Coordinator (EVC) Revalidation - all SPTA establishments are required to ensure that their EVC undertakes a formal revalidation normally every three years. SPT Visit Leader Training – this course is required for all those who lead LOtC activities and is a requirement of SPTA leaders from September 2013. Visit leaders must be kept updated and current by the academy EVC. The EVC must ensure all appropriate messages received at the annual EVC Forum, Evolve message board and all other relevant SPTA communications are formally made available.
3. For the purposes of day-to-day updating of information, SPTA EVCs and Visit / Activity Leaders are directed to the posting of "EVC Information Updates" (which include information on how to access the relevant courses) available on the following web link to the Evolve system: www.sptavisits.org.uk - go to the 'Guidance and Resources' tab.

Where an employee experiences problems with finding the material they are looking for, or require clarification or further help and guidance, they should contact their academy's Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC), or the Outdoor Education Consultant nominated by their employer.

The nominated officer/consultant in SPTA is:

Mr David Barham
mail@davebarham.info

4. Approval and Notification of Activities and Visits

SPTA uses an online database system for notification and approval called Evolve which is accessed at www.sptavisits.org.uk. A key feature of this system is that visits and LOtC activities requiring approval are automatically brought to the attention of the SPTA. These are residential visits, overseas visits and activities that include an adventurous activity as determined in the terms of the AA matrix-see SPTA Operational Procedures. Those visits and activities not requiring approval may be viewed, sampled or monitored by SPTA using the database and diary facilities of the system.

It is a requirement that all SPTA academies use the Evolve system for visits and activities that need approval from SPTA. It is also required that academies within SPTA adopt this as their internal system to record all their LOtC visits and activities. This will enable the SPTA to access relevant information from the system should a LOtC activity or visits need support.

Visits requiring approval by the SPTA should be submitted at eight weeks prior to the day of the visit wherever possible. ***However, in the case of complex visits such as expeditions abroad it is essential that pre-approval is sought before any contract is signed with the provider and before any financial transactions are made.*** A pre-approval form (held in Evolve) MUST be submitted to Regional Directors for their authorisation.

For further advice and help using the Evolve system, the academy should contact the nominated officer.

The nominated officer in SPTA is:

Mr M Whittle
Education House
Carolina Court
Wisconsin Way,
Lakeside
Doncaster
DN4 5RA

Tel: 01302 379 240
Tel: 07939683591

E-mail: Michael.whittle@schoolpartnershiptrust.org.uk

5. Risk Management

As an employer, SPTA has a legal duty to ensure that risks are managed - requiring them to be reduced to an “acceptable” or “tolerable” level - and not to eliminate risks, as would be a reasonable expectation when risk assessing a piece of machinery, work shop or manufacturing process. This requires that proportional (suitable and sufficient) risk management systems are in place, requiring SPTA to provide such support, training and resources to its employees as is necessary to implement this policy.

The risk management of an activity should be informed by the benefits to be gained from participating. SPTA strongly recommends a “Risk-Benefit Assessment” approach, whereby the starting point for any risk assessment should be a consideration of the targeted benefits and learning outcomes. This appreciation of

the benefits to be gained through participating provides objectivity to a decision that any residual risk (i.e. the risk remaining after control measures have been put in place) is “acceptable”. HSE endorse this approach through their “[Principles of Sensible Risk Management](#)” and advocate that it is important that young people are exposed to well-managed risks so that they learn how to manage risk for themselves.

There is no legal or SPTA requirement to produce a risk assessment in a particular format; but there is a legal requirement for the process to be recorded and for suitable and sufficient control measures to be identified for any significant risks i.e. those that may cause serious harm to an individual, or harm several people. However, SPTA EVC Training ensures that academies are supplied with an electronic generic risk-benefit assessment for LOtC and visits. Further exemplar event-specific assessments, risk management materials and advice are available by contacting the Outdoor Education Consultant.

It is strongly recommended that establishments adopt and adapt these materials to ease the burden of bureaucracy that might otherwise discourage leaders from making full use of LOtC learning opportunities.

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Risk Management](#)”

6. Emergency Planning and Critical Incident Support

A critical incident is an incident where any member of a group undertaking an off-site activity has:

- either suffered a life threatening injury or fatality;
- is at serious risk;
- or has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.

As an employer, SPTA is committed to providing emergency planning procedures to support establishments in the event of a critical incident.

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Critical Incident Management: The Employer’s Role](#)”

To activate support from SPTA contact immediately the academy link Director/critical friend

These telephone numbers should be carried by leaders at all times during an off-site activity but should only be used in the case of a genuine emergency. The contact details for the academy EVC should under normal circumstances be the first point of contact. Under no circumstances should these numbers be given to young people or to their parents or guardians.

7. Monitoring

As an employer, SPTA ensures that there is sample monitoring of the visits and LOtC activities undertaken by its academies, either by attaching such monitoring duties to its officers, or by delegating these tasks to academies. Such monitoring should be in keeping with the recommendations of LOtC National Guidance. There is a clear expectation that the monitoring function is a delegated task, principally carried out through systems put in place by the establishment EVC. However, from time to time SPTA will monitor selected activities.

Refer to OEAP NG document: “[Monitoring](#)”

8. Assessment of Leader Competence

OEAP National Guidance provides clear advice regarding the assessment of leader competence. It is an expectation of SPTA policy that all SPTA leaders and their assistants have been formally assessed as competent, the academy EVC to undertake such responsibilities as they have been assigned in line with the LOTC guidance - see also 3.3 in this policy document.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Assessment of Competence](#)"

9. Role-specific Requirements and Recommendations

OEAP National Guidance sets out clear and detailed responsibilities and functions of specific roles that relate to roles to be found within SPTA management structures. These are:

1. CEO School Partnership Trust Academies
2. Principal / EAB members of individual academy
3. Line Manager of an Outdoor Education Adviser – SPTA Director of Facilities
4. Outdoor Education Adviser/Consultant
5. Visit or Activity Leader
6. Assistant Visit leader
7. Volunteer Adult Helper
8. Those in a position of Parental Authority

Refer to individual OEAP NG documents headed as above.

10. Charges for Off-site Activities and Visits

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SPTA Principals/Managers, Curriculum Planners, EVCs and Visit/Activity Leaders must take account of the legal framework relating to charging, voluntary contributions and remissions as set out in sections 449 to 462 of the Education Act 1996.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Charges for Off-site Activities and Visits in an Educational Establishment](#)"

11. Safeguarding

All adults involved in any offsite visit or activity are required to work within the appropriate sections of the academy safeguarding and child protection policy.

SPTA employees who work frequently or intensively with, or have regular access to young people or vulnerable adults, must undergo an enhanced DBS check as part of their recruitment process.

For the purposes of this guidance:

- frequently is defined as "once a week or more";
- intensively is defined as 4 days or more in a month or overnight.

However, it must be clearly understood that a DBS check (or other vetting procedure) in itself, is no guarantee as to the suitability of an adult to work with any given group of young or vulnerable people.

The placement of an adult within a situation of professional trust (where young people could be vulnerable to physical or mental exploitation or grooming) should always be on the understanding that an overview based on a common sense risk-benefit assessment process has been considered.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Vetting and DBS Checks](#)"

12. Requirement to Ensure Effective Supervision

In general terms, the Law does not prescribe activity-specific staffing ratios; but it does require that the level of supervision and group management is "effective".

Effective supervision should be determined by proper consideration of:

- age, aptitude, experience (including the developmental age) of the group
- gender issues
- ability of the group (including special learning needs, behavioural, medical and vulnerability characteristics etc)
- availability of prompt outside assistance
- nature and location of the activity including the type of activity, duration, skill levels involved, as well as the time of year and prevailing conditions
- staff experience and competence
- communication between sub groups

Nursery and Early Years should apply , DoE guidance for staffing

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Ratios and Effective Supervision](#)"

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Group management and Supervision](#)"

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13. Preliminary Visits and Provider Assurances

All visits should be thoroughly researched to establish the suitability of the venue and to check that facilities and third party provision will meet group expectations. Such information gathering is essential in assessing the requirements for effective supervision of young people. It is a vital dimension of risk management.

Wherever reasonably practicable, it is good practice to carry out a preliminary visit. Academy policy and/or consultation with the EVC should clarify the circumstances where a preliminary visit is a requirement.

It is good practice for Visit Leaders to take full advantage of the nationally accredited, provider assurance schemes that are now available, thus reducing bureaucracy.

Examples of such schemes include:

- The LOTC Quality Badge
- AALS licensing
- Adventuremark
- Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC) Gold Badge
- National Governing Body (NGB) centre approval schemes (applicable where the provision is a single, specialist activity).

SPTA takes the view that where a provider holds such one of the above accreditations, there should be no need to seek further assurances regarding risk assessments. Establishments should ensure however that leaders complete a risk benefit assessment and record any significant findings for any aspects of a visit which they are leading or responsible. This will usually include transport to and from the venue plus any stops of visits en route.

Refer to: OEAP NG document "[Preliminary Visits and Provider Assurances](#)"

14. Insurance for Off-site Activities and Visits

Employer's Liability Insurance is a statutory requirement and SPTA holds a policy that indemnifies it against all claims for compensation for bodily injury suffered by any person employed by it. This cover should extend to those persons who are acting in a voluntary capacity as assistant supervisors. SPTA also holds Public Liability insurance, indemnifying it against all claims for compensation for bodily injury from persons not in its employ, as well as for the accidental loss of, or damage caused to, property. Employees (as agents of the employer) are indemnified against all such claims, as are voluntary helpers acting under the direction of the employer's staff. The indemnity covers activities such as off-site activities and visits organised by all academies and settings for which the employer is responsible.

Some level of Personal Accident Insurance is provided for all SPTA employees in the course of their employment, providing predetermined benefits in the event of an accident. However, Visit/ Activity Leaders should be advised that they should consider taking out less limited personal accident cover privately, or obtain cover through a professional association.

SPTA Visit and Activity leaders can contact their academy financial team to seek clarification of the above, including any circumstances requiring early notification of specialist activities to the insurer. They should also ensure they have obtained current information regarding any special policies that may be available to offer more comprehensive cover. Cover for Winter activities can be included but will require an additional premium-contact academy finance staff

SPTA Principal Insurance Officer:

Mrs K Bromage
*Education House
 Carolina Court,
 Wisconsin Drive,
 Lakeside
 Doncaster
 DN4 5RA*

Tel: 01302 379 240

Email: Karen.bromage@schoolpartnershiptrust.org.uk

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Insurance](#)"

15. Inclusion

Every effort should be made to ensure that outdoor learning activities and visits are available and accessible to all, irrespective of special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, gender or religion. If a visit needs to cater for young people with special needs, every reasonable effort should be made to find a venue that is both suitable and accessible and that enables the whole group to participate fully and be actively involved.

Academies should take all reasonably practicable measures to include all young people. The principles of inclusion should be promoted and addressed for all visits and reflected in establishment policy, thus ensuring an aspiration towards:

- an entitlement to participate
- accessibility through direct or realistic adaptation or modification
- integration through participation with peers

Employers, Principals/Managers, Curriculum Planners, EVCs and Visit Leaders should be aware of the extent to which Inclusion is or is not a legal issue.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, it is unlawful to:

- treat a disabled young person less favourably;
- fail to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled persons are not placed at a substantial disadvantage without justification.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Inclusion as a Legal Issue](#)"

16. Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations

Employers, Principals/Managers, EVCs and Leaders should have a basic understanding of where and when the provision of adventurous activities is legally regulated.

The Activity Centre (Young Persons Safety) Act (1995) established the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations and the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA), initially responsible to the DoE. The scheme is now the direct responsibility of HSE and operated through the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS).

The intention of the regulations is to provide a regulatory framework to protect children, parents, teachers and schools when using providers of defined adventurous activities in closely defined environments. The regulations and supporting inspection regime provide a formal process of professional inspection to accredit that providers have effective safety management systems and processes, meeting a national standard.

The definitive source of advice on the Licensing Regulations is to be found in the Health and Safety Executive publication: "[Guidance to the Licensing Authority on Adventure Activity Licensing Regulations 1996](#)"

Leaders should be aware that the AALS license is an assurance of safety. It does not accredit educational or activity quality. Leaders should also be aware of the Government's intention to repeal the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 in England in 2012.

Refer to LOtC NG document: "[Summary of Adventurous Activity Licensing Regulations](#)"

17. Good Practice Requirements

To be deemed competent, a SPTA Visit / Activity Leader, or Assistant Leader must be able to demonstrate the ability to operate to the current standards of recognized good practice for that role.

All staff and helpers must be competent to carry out their defined roles and responsibilities.

OEAP National Guidance sets a clear standard to which SPTA leaders must work. The guidance states:

"a competent Visit /Activity Leader (or an Assistant Leader where they may take sole responsibility for a sub-group) requires:

- Knowledge and understanding of SPTA employer's guidance supported by relevant training. SPTA will provide formal and accredited training to support their guidance e.g. EVC Training, Visit Leader Training, while an academy can provide additional 'in-house' training.
- Knowledge and understanding of academy procedures supported by a structured induction process specified by the academy.
- Knowledge and understanding of the group, the staff, the activity and the venue.
- Appropriate experience
- In some circumstances (e.g. first aid, adventurous activities) a formally accredited qualification."

Staff participating in off-site activities and visits must be aware of the extent of their duty of care and should only be given such responsibilities as are in keeping with the above guidance. It is particularly important that careful consideration of competence issues is applied to both newly qualified and newly appointed staff. Academies should view the original documents and certificates when verifying leader's qualifications, and not rely on photocopies. EVCs should scan these and upload them to EVOLVE. For help with this please contact the SPTA nominated officer.

Where a Volunteer Helper is a parent (or otherwise in a close relationship to of a young person taking part in the visit) they should be made aware of the potential for their relationship to compromise the Visit Leader's plans for group management. The Visit Leader should directly address this issue as part of the Risk-Benefit assessment.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Good Practice Basics](#)"

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18. Transport

Careful thought must be given to planning transport to support off-site activities and visits. Statistics demonstrate that it is much more dangerous to travel to an activity than to engage in it and establishments must follow the specialist guidance provided in SPTA transport policy. All national and local regulatory requirements must be followed.

The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk management process when planning the journey, giving proper consideration to issues of driver-distraction when considering what supervision is required for the specific group of passengers being transported in a minibus.

The Visit Leader should ensure that coaches and buses are hired from a reputable company. Consideration should be given to questioning potential transport suppliers on whether:

- the driver(s) to be used will hold a valid and current CRB clearance;

- seat belts will be provided on the vehicle to be used, not all large passenger vehicles have a legal requirement to have seat belts fitted and those that do may only have lap belts (as opposed to 3-point belts) which are only suitable for short journeys;
- they are able to supply (where required) child seats and booster cushions for younger children, otherwise these will need to be supplied by the organiser;
- they possess a valid and recent risk assessment for 'school day trips/outings'

For vehicles owned and operated by an academy they should observe the policy document SPTA_Minibus usage (Policy document available on www.sptavisits.org.uk).

For further information or advice concerning any of the above, contact SPTA.

Transporting young people in private cars requires careful consideration. Where this occurs, there should be recorded procedures. Young people should not be allowed to drive other young people to LotC activities or on educational visits.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Transport: General Considerations](#)"

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Transport in Minibuses](#)"

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Transport in Private Cars](#)"

19. Planning

Planning should reflect the consideration of legal and good practice requirements, ensuring:

- The plan is based on academy procedures and employer guidance.
- All staff (including any adult volunteer helpers) and the young people to be involved, have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including their role in the risk management process.
- Those in a position of parental authority have been fully informed and, where appropriate, formal consents have been obtained.
- Proportionate assurances have been obtained from any providers (making full use of national schemes that accredit that assurances have already been obtained by credible inspection regimes).
- Designated emergency contact(s) have been identified that will work on a 24/7 basis where required.
- All details of the activity provision are accessible to the emergency contact throughout the period of the activity.

It is strongly recommended that at a very early stage of the planning process, the provisional staffing team carry out a brain storming exercise in order to identify the benefits and learning outcomes that the activity (or range of activities) might or are intended to achieve. If the outcomes are to be evaluated with any rigor (an Ofsted expectation), then it will be essential that these outcomes are prioritised, and appropriately targeted. A record of these outcomes will help keep the plan focussed and also be a vital part of the risk management process in providing some objectivity in a "Risk Benefit Analysis". Once the targeted outcomes have been recorded, it will then be possible to identify appropriate on-going review and evaluation strategies, including indicators.

To reduce bureaucracy and encourage activity, academies need to take account of the legalities regarding a requirement for formal consent. When an activity is part of a planned curriculum in normal curriculum time and no parental contributions are requested, then a formal consent is not necessary. However, in the interests of good relations between the academy and the home, it is good practice to ensure that those in a position of parental responsibility are fully informed. Consent forms are often used to update

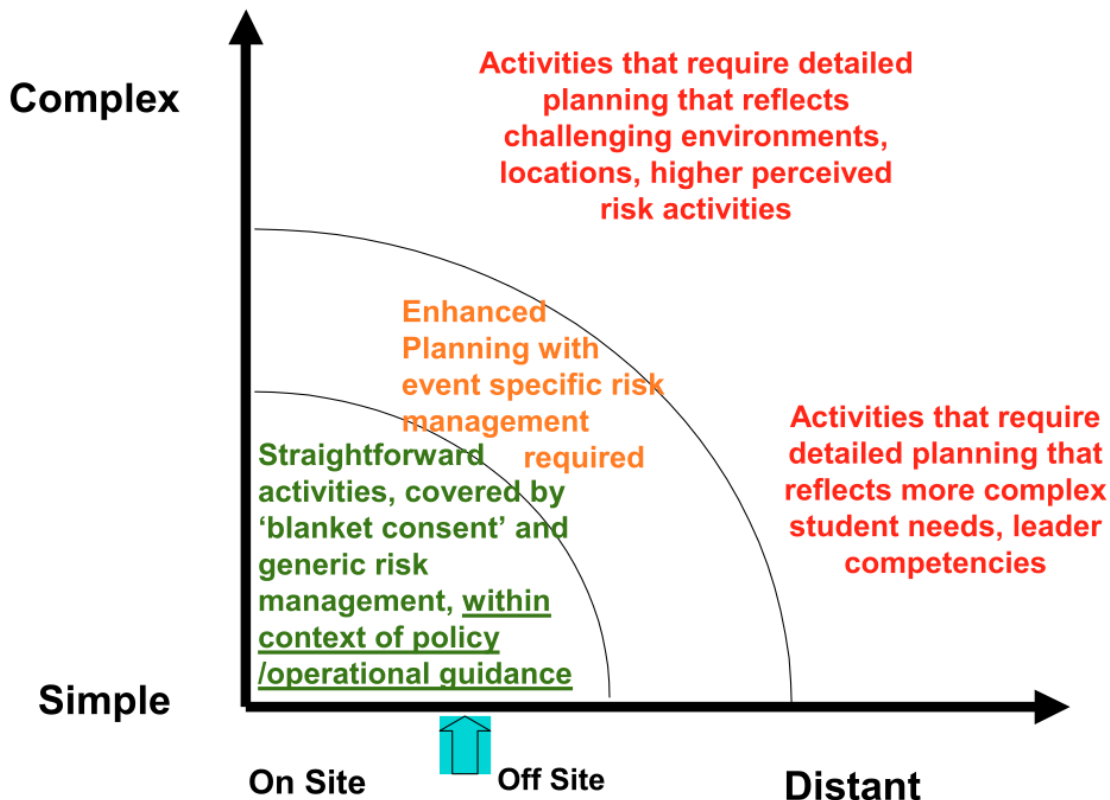
parents/carers current phone numbers, contact details plus any medical conditions which have developed since the last check.

This supports the move towards developing activity-specific policies at academy level for regular or routine activities. Such policies should be robust and equate to “operational guidance” that makes it clear how the activity should be planned and delivered, meeting all necessary recommendations and requirements, as well as assuring educational quality.

The degree of complexity of a particular plan or policy (along with its supporting procedures) will need to reflect the nature and complexity of several variables that can impact on any given activity. These variables can be remembered as “SAGED” as explained below.

- Staffing requirements – trained? experienced? competent? ratios?
- Activity characteristics – specialist? insurance issues? licensable?
- Group characteristics – prior experience? ability? behaviour? special and medical needs?
- Environmental conditions – like last time? impact of weather? water levels?
- Distance from support mechanisms in place at the home base – transport? residential?

Refer to OEAP NG document: [“Planning Visits Off-site Activity and LOTC”](#)



20 OFSTED

The Ofsted report "[Learning Outside the Classroom – How Far Should You Go?](#)" (October 2008) makes statements in the strongest terms to support the value of LOtC, including the fact that it raises achievement. SPTA Principals, Managers, EVCs and Visit Leaders are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves with the main content of this report.

Refer to OEAP NG document: "[Ofsted and LOtC Summary](#)"

However, it also highlights the finding that even where LOtC is highly valued and provided to a high standard, it is rarely evaluated with sufficient rigor – i.e. in the way that classroom learning is evaluated – and a methodology to address this is provided within the OEAP National Guidance document: "[Rigorous Evaluation of LOtC: Meeting Ofsted Expectations and Assuring Quality](#)"