

Offsite Educational Trips and Visits Policy

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Policy reviewer:	GEMS Risk and Compliance Committee, SVPs Education, SVP Children Services
Relevant related policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POLCSG 001V2 GEMS Safeguarding Policy • IMS-MGT Occupational Health and Safety Policy • IMS-MGT 03 Risk Assessment Policy • IMS-MGT 09 First Aid Policy • IMS-MGT 10 Incident Reporting Policy • IMS-MGT 16 HSE Training and Awareness Policy • IMS-MGT 17 Legal and Other Requirements Policy • IMS-MGT 19 HSE Roles and Responsibilities Policy • IMS-MGT 38 Allergy Management Policy • POLRM001 Crisis Management Policy • POLHR0007 Safer Recruitment Policy • POLHR0008 Code of Conduct Policy • POLHR0009 Employee Discipline Policy • POL/HR0014 Whistle-blowing Policy • POLPROC00001 Procurement Policy
Other relevant documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Emergency Response Plan • GEMS HS Form 5 Risk Assessment Guide • GEMS HS Form 19 Incident Investigation Form • GEMS HS Form 22 Training Record • KHDA International Trip Guidance • ADEK Private School Policy and Guidance Manual

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 GEMS Education is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of staff and students from its schools while participating in off-site educational trips and visits.
- 1.2 This document sets out GEMS' expectations of how off-site educational trips and visits should be managed and conducted. The guidance within this document is based on the National Guidance for England and Wales provided by the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) and the UAE Educational authorities such as KHDA, ADEK, and SPEA.
- 1.3 Guidance within this policy pertains to any activity or visit beyond the school's campus. This can be day trips, overnight in-country visits, overseas visits and sports fixtures.
- 1.4 Off-site educational trips, visits, and other outdoor learning activities are widely accepted as valuable experiences that should form a key part of the school's educational offering. Correctly planned off-site educational trips and visits provide learning opportunities in new and different environments and can enhance engagement and improve learner outcomes.

2. Policy Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to GEMS MENASA Holdings Limited (the "Company" or GEMS) and its subsidiaries and subsidiary undertakings (together with the Company, the "**Group**", and any of them, a "**Group Company**"), which includes:
- 2.2 All GEMS' employees working at all levels and grades, including education staff, senior managers, administration staff (whether permanent, fixed-term or temporary), consultants, contractors, wherever located; and
- 2.3 All those who represent GEMS in any capacity, including agents, sponsors, intermediaries, representatives, finders, and introducers.

3. Overview of Establishment Roles & Responsibilities

Within each school, there will be a range of roles which will be accountable and interdependent in ensuring off-site educational trips and visits meet rigorous high standards. These roles may include:

- Principal
- GRE (Government Relations Executive)
- MSO (Manager School Operations)
- EVC (Educational Visit Coordinator)
- Visit/Activity Leaders
- Assistant Visit/Activity Leaders
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- School Medical Team

Principal: Responsible for implementing clear policies and ensuring that effective procedures are in place for managing off-site educational trips and visits, including the appointment of an EVC and the implementation of staff training. It is mandatory for each school to identify an EVC. Where there is a need, a Principal may appoint more than one EVC to be responsible for a specific section of the school.

School Government Relations Executive (GRE): This role must support the trip submission process to relevant authorities, informing the operations team of the result of approval or if any further information is required.

Manager School Operations (MSO): This role is responsible for notifying the school staff of any changes or modifications to the GEMS Policy or best practice guidelines. In addition, MSOs are responsible for liaising with the School Buyer from the GEMS School Support Centre (SSC) concerning approved vendors and sharing the information with the Visit Leader. Where relevant, the MSO is responsible for ensuring that the trip Purchase Order (PO) has been raised on DAX.

MSOs are responsible for ensuring that relevant staff members receive risk assessment training. This may be delivered by the MSO directly if they are IOSH or NEBOSH certified or can be arranged through the support of the GEMS HSE team.

Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC): This role is responsible for ensuring that all planned off-site educational visits conform to the school policies, procedures, and requirements, including safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures. This includes approval, monitoring, and evaluation of off-site educational visits.

In addition, EVC is responsible for coordinating all parental consent forms, behaviour agreements, medical information and any additional code of conduct in place for a single trip.

Note: The EVC and Visit Leader (VL) are recommended as international best practices. It is advised that the EVC receive risk assessment training.

Visit Leaders (VL): This role is responsible for the overall supervision and conduct of the visit and must implement the school policies and procedures. There should be a single designated VL to avoid any confusion. When visiting a local venue for the first time, the VL should arrange a pre-trip visit by the education team attending the trip, at least one member who is competent in the area of risk assessment, to ensure the location serves the intended purpose and is considered safe. For out of Emirate trips or international trips, the reliance will be on the expertise of the approved provider.

Assistant Visit/Activity Leaders (AVL): This role is responsible for working with the VL to deliver the off-site educational visit in accordance with the school's policies and procedures.

School Medical Team: The school medical team are responsible for supporting the VL with information about chronic illnesses and allergies of students attending the trip.

The school medical team are responsible for obtaining completed medical forms for all students at the school and subsequent follow-up, where needed. Students without completed medical forms may not be permitted to leave the school site, even with parental permission.

4. Appointment of an EVC

- 4.1. EVCs and VLs attending trips must be appointed or approved by the Principal.
- 4.2. An EVC should meet the following criteria:
 - Experience in organising and leading off-site educational visits.
 - Sufficient status within the school to enable them to influence and implement the policies and practices of the school.
 - Sufficient time allocated to fulfil the role with rigour.
 - Adequate training and access to further advice and guidance.

5. Assessing venues/providers

- 5.1 All providers must be appointed by GEMS Procurement system before confirming a trip. APs shall ensure their organization and subcontracted approved vendors comply with the GEMS Health & Safety, Child Protection and any other policies communicated by GEMS to the approved provider.
- 5.2 Approved Providers will be held accountable to the terms of their contract with GEMS Education. When working with Approved Providers EVCs must have an active role in determining the relationships with the AP, including but not limited to:
 - Does the provider have health and safety, safer recruitment procedures and Safeguarding policies and training in place that aligns with GEMS?
 - Is there a clear understanding of what role will be held by school staff and what role will be held by venue/activity staff during the trip?
 - Are the APs aware of how to report health and safety or safeguarding concerns?
 - How prepared is the AP when it comes to emergency response or unexpected change?
- 5.3 Other events/venues: Occasionally, valuable educational opportunities will fall outside of a specific provider, e.g., one-off conferences, exhibitions, or other events. The EVC would be responsible for ensuring a risk assessment and risk management of the particular event is planned and completed; they may seek guidance and support from experienced school colleagues. Before a trip is confirmed, the EVC would need to clarify insurance, emergency procedures and other arrangements as detailed in GEMS procurement, safeguarding and health and safety policies.

6. Prior Notification and Approval of Visits:

- 6.1 All proposed off-site educational visits must be notified and agreed upon in advance by the relevant section head and EVC.
- 6.2 Before promoting the activity with parents, the required regulatory approvals must be obtained (ADEK, KHDA, MOE etc.)
- 6.3 The execution of the trip and all related paperwork must be completed by the Trip Leader and submitted to the EVC.
- 6.4 The Principal must provide the final sign-off for trips to proceed.
- 6.5 All commercial proposals must be reviewed and evaluated by GEMS procurement personnel prior to entering into an agreement with parents or providers.

Stage 1: Application (form 1)

The application should contain as much information as possible about the planned visit, including but not limited to:

- Type/nature of the visit, including activities that are expected to occur;
- Educational objectives/benefits/outcomes;
- Location, provider, transport;

- Dates and duration;
- Cost;
- Students – Number, age range, expected additional needs
- Staff – Number, minimum ratio to students, first aid certified (minimum 1:100)
- Potential/expected weather conditions at the destination.
- Other relevant details.

Stage 2: Approval in Principle

The EVC should review the application and, if appropriate, authorise the application, seek further information or provide additional feedback. There must be sufficient time for EVCs & Procurement to review and respond to visit applications.

The approval of all applications must meet the required standards for the proposed nature of the visit or activity, including but not limited to the following:

- Risk Assessment, including safeguarding considerations and additional needs
- Educational value;
- Use of Approved Providers;
- Selection of appropriate staff, staff-to-student ratio;
- Completion of pre-visits;
- Health and Safety and Safeguarding emergency procedures
- Due diligence on expected weather conditions at the destination during the trip.
- Type and level of insurance in place;
- Value for money.

Stage 3: Promotion

Once approved, the proposed visit can be promoted to the students and parents, and agreements entered with providers.

The VL is responsible for completing the pre-trip checklist (Form 2).

The person with parental responsibility must provide written consent for their child to participate. To achieve this, they must receive detailed information about the proposed visit, including:

- Dates;
- Departure times;
- Method of travel;
- Destination;
- Emergency contact arrangements;
- Visit Leader's name and experience;
- Aims and purpose of the visit;
- Proposed activities;
- The nature of supervision;
- Cost and method of payment;
- Cancellation terms;
- Advice on personal equipment, e.g., kit list, prohibited items;
- Advice on insurance, e.g., what is included/not included;
- Medical screening arrangements;
- Code of Conduct;
- Any other relevant information, including the school's responsibility and duty of care.
- The school's behaviour policy should be communicated, as well as items that may be restricted on the trip. Consequences should be made clear should restricted items be brought.

Parents must also understand their responsibilities; this includes:

- Provide full information regarding medical or other needs. Details must be provided to the school medical team within the outlined timeline as a minimum:

- o Three (3) months prior for international trips;
- o One (1) month prior for an overnight trip within UAE; and
- o Two (2) weeks prior for day trips

The requirement for relevant visas and visa checks is at least one (1) month before the trip. Note that GEMS do not hold any responsibility for obtaining visas for students.

Stage 4: Final Approval

Immediately before departure, the EVC and the VL should ensure that all specific actions listed have been completed, including but not limited to:

- Approval and training of visit staff;
- Awareness of roles and responsibilities.
- Review of student medical and other inclusion requirements.
- Meeting between Visit Leader and DSL to discuss any safeguarding information before the trip.
- Communication structures are agreed upon and in place.
- Communication and awareness of risk assessment

Stage 5: Delivery

During the visit, the VL is responsible for implementing agreed policies, including but not limited to:

- Risk assessment (form 3).
- Adherence to supervision ratios.
- Behaviour management.
- Recording and reporting incidents, accidents and near misses on GEMS HSE Guard.
- Reporting all safeguarding concerns about child safeguarding or allegations against adults on GEMS Safeguarding Guard.

Stage 6: Evaluation

Immediately following the trip, VLs and EVCs should evaluate the outcomes and experiences, record the findings and share any relevant information as appropriate.

- What went well, what was difficult, what lessons were learnt;
- Update risk assessment documentation;
- Review incident records and support with any further information gathering as required.

7. Types of Visits and Approvals:

7.1 The type and nature of each off-site educational visit will determine the level of approval required.

- **Category A:** The school can arrange all local day trips that do not have a field study, adventure or overnight element in liaison with the Procurement department. The mode of transport should be school buses through STS Group or the local approved school transport service.
- **Category B:** Full-day trips or any trip outside of regular school hours arranged through Approved Provider
- **Category C:** Adventure Activities, out-of-Emirate excursions, overnight arranged through Approved Provider
- **Category Sp:** Sports squad trips to events/matches at other schools within the UAE (school to liaise with other schools and make necessary arrangements).
- **Category Host:** Host trips overseas (Conferences and debates for which schools must liaise with GEMS SSC for tickets and insurance).

It is recommended that a statement on Compliance with GEMS Corporate Policy is obtained regardless of the visit type or location. A risk assessment is required for all offsite events, including sports fixtures.

8. Approval of Staff to Lead Visits or Activities:

- 8.1 GEMS Schools recognise that the competence of VLS are of utmost importance to ensuring the safe management of off-site educational visits.
Schools must have a clear process for approving Visit or Activity Leaders, Assistant Visit or Activity Leaders and any others involved in direct supervision of the students.
Accountability: The Visit Leader will have completed an appropriate vetting, induction and training process and understand the relevant policies, procedures, and expectations for leadership.
Confidence: The Visit Leader must be able to take charge of a situation while being aware of and understanding their abilities and limitations.
Competence: The Visit Leader must have sufficient knowledge and experience of the specific activities, environment and group involved to make reasonable judgements. The Visit Leader may require particular qualifications for some events. These should be reviewed by the School Principal or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. These documents may be checked and verified during internal audits.
- 8.2 Approval of Visit Leaders involves the professional judgement of the school Principal and the Educational Visits Coordinator to determine the person's suitability to lead a particular group for a specific activity or environment.
- 8.3 Factors to consider:
- Observation of group management and decision-making skills.
 - Evidence of relevant experience, e.g., assisting on previous visits.
 - Evidence of appropriate training and qualifications (a valid in date First aid and other Health and Safety qualifications deemed necessary and Safeguarding Level 1 Basic Awareness Training).
 - Knowledge of the students, venue, and activities.
- 8.4 Schools should maintain records of Visit Leader approvals and experience.
- 8.5 Monitoring: The EVC is responsible for regularly monitoring, observing, and evaluating offsite educational visits. This may be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to:
- Pre-departure checklist.
 - Field observation.
 - Peer monitoring.
 - Feedback from approved providers.
 - Staff feedback
 - Parent feedback
 - Student feedback

It is advised to place educational trips and visits as a recurring agenda point at the monthly HSE Committee meetings.

9. Induction and Training

- 9.1 Members of the education team, Visit Leaders, EVCs and relevant persons from the operations team involved with the organisation and implementation of off-site educational trips and visits should be subject to appropriate induction and training, including but not limited to Health and Safety and Safeguarding training.
- 9.2 EVCs should attend a workshop covering their roles and responsibilities in planning, authorising, supporting, monitoring and evaluating off-site educational visits. The practical aspects of conducting risk assessments and developing and implementing robust internal systems for the safe management of visits.

- 9.3 Visit Leaders should be inducted into the school's off-site educational visit policies and procedures and complete relevant training related to planning, organising and leading visits. Schools should consider an apprenticeship-style scheme for less experienced staff. Internal training should include clear guidance on record-keeping requirements.
- 9.4 The school's appointed DSL can deliver safeguarding training.
- 9.5 Health and Safety training, including risk assessments, can be delivered by the school MSO/AMSF if they hold an IOSH or NEBOSH certificate. Alternatively, training can be requested from the SSC HSE team.
- 9.6 School senior leadership teams can raise awareness and set expectations on what the educators require whilst offsite.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1 All off-site educational visits involve some level of inherent risk, and accepting some level of risk is necessary to access many of the associated benefits. Therefore, schools, EVCs and Visit Leaders must actively weigh the risks against the benefits and judge what is acceptable.
- What are the benefits of participation?
 - What are the risks to health and safety, including safeguarding and security risks?
 - Do the risks exceed the benefits?
- 10.2 Levels of Risk Management
- Generic: Policies and procedures that apply across a range of visits regardless of the nature of the visit.
 - Visit Specific: Identification and planned management of risks not covered under the generic heading. Unique to each occasion and should address staffing, activity, group and environment.
 - Dynamic/ongoing: Live, continuous monitoring of the visit and proactive responses to amend or curtail activities as appropriate.
- 10.3 Risk Assessment – What to record (see form 3)
- A Risk Assessment is a record of planned actions to mitigate any identified risks. It should not be overly complicated or lengthy.
 - A trip risk assessment must be completed for every trip before final approval can be given; a generic risk assessment has been developed and is available for all schools (form 3)
 - The Visit Leader must review the risk assessment and ensure that it is amended to fit the needs of the actual trip. The risk assessment must be submitted to the EVC as part of the approval process and shared with all key adults attending the trip.
 - For activities the approved provider manages, such as water park, rock climbing, etc., the provider is responsible for providing risk assessment to the trip organiser. In this instance, a risk assessment is still required for travel, emergency, medical, inclusion, behaviour and safeguarding risks. The risk assessment should be approved by a person trained in risk assessment. Training records should be held for those appointed to 'review' them.
 - For sports fixtures, a sports risk assessment covering each sport being conducted will be sufficient for a 'sports-related injury' hazard. Where schools mention "please see vendor's risk assessment" or "please see swimming pool risk assessment", etc., the mentioned risk assessment should be attached to the trip pack and form part of the approval procedure.
 - Where schools would like additional support, the GEMS Health and Safety department is available.
- 10.4 Obtaining Risk Assessments from Providers
- It is the responsibility of the Visit Leader to request copies of the vendor's risk assessment.
 - Visit Leaders and EVCs should ensure the provider meets the relevant standards. It is prudent for the Visit Leader to request details of any information relating to their

understanding of the venue, facilities, and activities to enable them to plan effectively, e.g., specific hazards, emergency procedures, contingency plans, and required clothing and equipment.

- For the local trips, Visit Leaders or Assistant Visit Leaders must visit the venue to assess the health and safety arrangements in place and obtain a site-specific risk assessment from the venue. They must complete the school-based risk assessment for travelling to and from the venue and other medical, safeguarding and security considerations.

10.5 Group Management

- The Visit Leader and Approved Providers always retain a duty of care for the whole group.
- Where Assistant Visit Leaders are employed, the Visit Leader should arrange the group into sub-groups and ensure each Assistant Visit Leader knows who they are responsible for. The group control measure being used should form part of the risk assessment.
- Students must be informed who is responsible for their group.
- The Visit Leader is responsible for ensuring all leaders and students are aware of the overall expectations and agreeing on key strategies for group management, e.g., headcounts, communication, and emergency procedures.

11. Supervision & Ratios

11.1 Different types of visits will require different levels of supervision depending on the nature of the visit, including what activities will be undertaken, the location and duration of the visit, the age and ability of the young people and the experience of the visit staff. The level of supervision may be direct, indirect, or remote at different times during the same visit.

- Direct Supervision: The group remains within sight and contact of Visit Leaders/Assistant Visit Leaders.
- Indirect Supervision: The group can operate away from direct supervision within clearly identified and agreed boundaries, e.g., visiting a museum or marketplace.
- Remote Supervision: The group is significantly removed from the Visit Leader and are monitored less frequently or from a distance, e.g., during an International Award/conference.
- The responsibility for student supervision remains continuous, 24 hours a day.
- Care and supervision must be maintained during periods outside of structured activities and should align with the additional GEMS policies in this document.

11.2 Ratios

- The ratio of supervisory adults to students should be determined through a risk assessment process considering the specific type of visit, the group's needs, and the individuals within it.

Note: The ratio must also consider students with preexisting medical conditions or any emergency that might arise during the trip, i.e., students falling sick.

To determine which ratio best suits the trip being planned, consider PASS:

P – Public

A – Access

S – Support

S – Supervision

- The following ratios can be used as a *guide* for schools; however, the final ratio is determined based on the completed risk assessment.

Age Group	Teacher/student ratios
Early years	1:8
Lower Primary	1:10
Upper Primary	1:15
Secondary	Minimum of two staff, thereafter 1:20
Residential in-country	Minimum of two staff, thereafter 1:10
International trip	Minimum of two staff, thereafter 1:10
Students of Determination	1:1 if you already have a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) (these do not count in the overall ratio and should be treated separately) Assess risk for any Student of Determination who does not have LSA in consultation with the Inclusion Department.

12. Safeguarding

- 12.1 The safeguarding of students and staff whilst on an education visit is of paramount importance to GEMS Education. The GEMS Safeguarding Policy applies to all operations organised by GEMS whilst on and off the school site. Please refer to the GEMS Safeguarding Policy and the GEMS Safer Working Practice Guidance.
- 12.2 Adults remain in a position of trust and must ensure that their behaviour always remains professional and cannot be interpreted as seeking to establish an inappropriate relationship or friendship.
- 12.3 Staff organising educational visits should use the GEMS Offsite and Educational Trips and Visits Policy in conjunction with Emirate/country-specific legislation.
- 12.4 Adults should take particular care when supervising students on trips and outings where the setting is less formal than the usual workplace. Ensuring they are aware of expected behaviours and how to report anything they are unsure about.
- 12.5 Where out-of-school activities include overnight stays, careful consideration needs to be given to sleeping arrangements. Adults, students and parents should be informed of these before the start of the trip.
- Male students should only share rooms with other male students.
 - Female students should only share rooms with other female students.
 - Staff and students must never share bedrooms.
 - Consideration should be in place for overnight supervision. This may include contacting the GEMS travel desk to request males on one floor and females on the other and the positioning of staff rooms.
- 12.6 In all circumstances, those organising trips and outings must carefully ensure safe staff/student ratios and a suitable gender mix of staff. If a Safeguarding concern is identified or alleged, this must be reported to the Visit Leader, who will coordinate with the school DSL, ensuring this is logged on to the Safeguarding Guard.
- 12.7 GEMS requires staff members to keep colleagues/ employers aware of their whereabouts whilst involved in activities outside the usual workplace, such as residential visits at home or abroad. Arrangements should be in place for regular updates and emergency contact.

This means that adults should:

- Be present throughout the trip, ensuring they care and supervise the students. If they cannot perform their duty (due to illness, etc.), they should immediately report this to the EV.
- Undertake risk assessments in line with the GEMS Policy.
- Have parental written consent to any activities taking place.

- Ensure that adults' behaviour remains professional and follows all guidelines as per this Policy.
- Adults must never share beds or bedrooms with a student.
- Adults must remain vigilant in areas of public access and protect students from unwanted behaviours such as communicating with members of the public or being photographed.
- Adults must not share their mobile numbers with parents to share updates. Instead, use of school-approved alternative channels, such as Seesaw and Padlet, should be used to keep parents abreast of trip activities. Where relevant, schools may provide a school mobile phone and SIM card for communication during travel.
- The school's social media policy should be followed, and written parental consent for sharing student images must be obtained prior to sharing of any images of their child.

12.8 Volunteers (including parents accompanying local school day trips)

- Volunteers should not accompany students to the toilet alone, even if with a group of students.
- Volunteers may be allocated a group of students to accompany them but should always stay with a teacher and their group.
- Schools should always ensure parent volunteers who have pre-registered with the school have received school safeguarding training and provide all relevant documentation, e.g., UAE certificate of good conduct, passport copy and Emirates ID copy. All documentation should be collected and kept by the EVC and shared with HR for the single central record.
- If an emergency situation, e.g., a volunteer has not turned up for a trip and the ratio is incomplete, an alternative school staff member may join the trip or postpone the trip.
- Regular head counting of students should occur, particularly before leaving areas.
- The group leader should establish rendezvous points and tell students what to do if they become separated from the group.
- To protect students and adults, all adults should ensure they are not alone with a student wherever possible.
- Visit Leaders should carry a list of all students and adults involved in the visit at all times. The list should include emergency contact details and relevant medical/allergy information.
- The Visit Lead remains responsible for students even when not in direct contact with them. Younger students (KG/FS) should be easily identifiable, e.g., wearing school uniforms. Students should not wear name badges.
- When returning to the school, it is imperative that the drop-off point is coordinated and managed effectively. A head count must be taken for all exiting the bus; the bus must be thoroughly checked before departing from the drop-off point. Parents should wait at a pre-determined area within the school for their children to return.
- Staff on the trip must not leave until all students have been collected. If a parent has failed to collect a student within a reasonable late time, the school Principal should be alerted.

13. Communication:

- 13.1 Student contact with parents: The Visit Leader will contact parents for adventure activities, overnight, weekend or residential excursions where staff can update them on the group's adventures, progress and wellbeing. This should be done via school-approved communications channels; however, staff should keep their personal contact numbers private. WhatsApp groups where numbers are directly shared with parents should be avoided. Staff should not share their private numbers with parents, and under NO circumstance should staff share their personal mobile numbers with students. The school mobile phone should be used for any contact.
- 13.2 Where school permits, students may have a dedicated time to contact their parents to alleviate potential anxiety. Additionally, where schools permit, students may have access to their phones

at set times (down time/travel etc.) however, it is the responsibility of the supervising staff to ensure mobile phones are used inline with the school's behaviour policy, BYOD policy, code of conduct and any other relevant school specific policy.

- 13.3 Parents should be informed that their children will be encouraged to communicate their well-being appropriately during an overnight, weekend or residential excursion. However, parents should be discouraged from contacting their son/daughter directly for frequent updates to allow students to learn independently in a new and challenging environment.

14. Emergency procedures

- 14.1 An emergency is defined as an incident where a group member:
- Has suffered a life-threatening injury or fatality.
 - Is at serious risk.
 - Any incident deemed to be putting a student or staff at significant risk of harm.
 - Has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.
 - Any incident beyond the normal coping mechanisms of the Visit Leader and their team.
- 14.2 By their nature, emergencies are usually unexpected and stressful. Applying a risk assessment approach and ensuring, through recorded training, that all staff on trips are aware of and understand the GEMS Crisis Management Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and School's Emergency Response Plans, have access to local emergency numbers and are aware of other available GEMS policies, can prepare staff on trips to handle unexpected events.
- 14.3 The Visit Leader and accompanying staff should stabilise the situation to the best of their ability and alert the school's Emergency Contacts for additional support and implementation of the Emergency Plan.
- 14.4 The vendor-specific and site-specific emergency response protocols should also be followed for immediate evacuation as necessary.
- 14.5 Basic Emergency Protocols to be considered for each trip;
- Emergency Contacts: Key Emergency Contacts at the base should be established before all off-site educational visits. They must be available to assist 'out of hours' as required.
 - Communications Plan: Visit Leaders should have access to communication, and where possible, phone lines should be kept clear and not shared with parents or other parties, e.g., the media. Communication via group members must be addressed.
 - Emergency Procedure Cards: Consider printing and distributing versions of the protocols for quick reference in an emergency. These should be shared with staff and group members as appropriate, e.g., where remote supervision is utilised.
 - If a Safeguarding concern is identified or alleged, this must be reported to the Visit Leader, who will coordinate with the school DSL, ensuring this is logged on to the Safeguarding Guard. Colleagues from the central Safeguarding Team will see the incident report.
- 14.6 First aid
- The trip risk assessment must detail the trip's first aid requirements, including any special requirements.
 - As a minimum, a suitably stocked first aid kit is required for all trips.
 - Any students with a specific medical plan must be identified, and the trip supervisor must be aware of any such students and meet their needs.
 - The Visit Leader will be responsible for holding any epi-pens or other special medical equipment for students with a medical plan. This can be signed over to the Group Leader responsible for the student to allow for swift action in the event of a medical emergency when groups are separating from each other.
 - Appointed first aiders must attend each trip, local or international, and adhere to the ratio of 1:100 as a minimum. Additional needs must be identified within the risk assessment.
 - School appointed first aiders do not include additional first aiders provided by the approved provider.

- School Nurses and School Doctors are responsible for the health and care of all students on site and should not be utilised as first aiders on school trips. In exceptional circumstances, this can be reviewed based on numbers attending the trip with chronic illnesses and allergies and the risk assessment completed.

14.7 Students of Determination and those with additional Medical Needs: Every effort should be made to include students of determination and those with additional medical needs. Special attention should be given to appropriate supervision ratios, and additional safety measures may need to be addressed at the planning stage.

The following factors should be taken into consideration:

- How can the student best participate in and benefit from the activity?
- How can the activity be adapted to enable the student to participate at a suitable level?
- What additional/different resources are necessary?
- What additional supervision will be necessary, and how will that be organised to ensure the student can access any activities safely and successfully?
- The Visit Leader should discuss the visit with the parents to ensure that suitable arrangements have been put in place to ensure their safety.
- Students with Special Medical Needs: All teachers supervising visits should know about a student's medical needs and any medical emergency procedures. In certain situations, asking the parent to accompany a particular child may be appropriate. This must be pre-determined and included in the risk assessment.

14.8 Parents should be asked to provide the following:

- Details of medical conditions.
- Emergency contact numbers.
- The student's doctor's name, address, and phone number.
- Written details of any medication required (including instructions on dosage/times) and parental permission to administer.
- Parental permission is required if the student needs to administer their medication or if the student agrees to a teacher administering it.
- Information on any allergies/phobias.
- Information on any dietary requirements.
- Information on any toileting difficulties.
- Parental home and daytime phone numbers and address

14.9 Special transport needs for Students who require help with mobility. Enquiries should be made at an early stage about access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at excursion venues, etc.

All teachers supervising the visit should be allowed to talk through any concerns about their ability to support the child. Extra help should be requested if necessary. If teachers are concerned about whether they can provide for a student's safety or the safety of other students on a trip because of a medical condition, they should seek general medical advice from the School Nurse, SENDCO and/or the child's parents.

14.10 Developing a School Trip Emergency Plan. The purpose of an Emergency Plan is to:

- To meet the needs of the group
- To support the needs of the school and parents
- To respond to the needs of other agencies
- To respond to media demands

The plan should be comprehensive, clarify the roles and responsibilities of those who will need to contribute to the management of an emergency, and clearly outline the pre-planned response to setting the plan in motion.

- Identify key staff and allocate roles, including the DSL.
- Maintain up-to-date contact details of key staff and parents.
- Ensure contact details of relevant agencies are available, e.g., Police, Tour Operator, Embassy, Insurer
- Identify and establish a suitable base for managing the situation.
- Develop a communication structure and plan, including advice for dealing with parents and the media.
- Ensure recording and reporting protocols are in place and collated.
- Consider annual scenario-based training.

15. Behaviour

- 15.1 Schools should ensure that the expected standards for behaviour before and during travel are communicated to parents and students in advance. This may take the form of a Code of Conduct or Behaviour Agreement. The expected standards will likely reflect the school's core values and key behaviour policies and procedures but should consider adaptations for the specific environment and activities involved.
- 15.2 It may be reasonable to exclude a student from participation where their behaviour presents a significant, unmanageable, and unacceptable risk to the health, safety and welfare of themselves or others. Disciplinary procedures and sanctions should be communicated in advance, especially for international trips where repatriation is likely to be expensive and time-consuming.
- 15.3 It may be prudent to require parents and students to sign to demonstrate their acceptance of the agreed conduct.

16. Consent:

- 16.1 Written parental consent must be sought for all off-site educational visits.
- 16.2 Where consent is required, parents must be supplied with sufficient detail to make an informed decision about their child's participation. More complex visits will require more information, which may need to be delivered in multiple ways, e.g., written and a presentation/briefing evening.
- 16.3 Medical Consent
This should form part of the parental consent (see Form 4). Parents should be asked to agree to the student receiving emergency treatment as considered necessary by the medical authorities. All parents should be asked to make staff aware of cultural beliefs, sensitivities or customs that would impact any medical decision. If parents do not agree to this, the principal or designated member of SLT may decide to withdraw the child from the excursion, given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.

17. Insurance:

- 17.1 The trip organiser is responsible for ensuring that adequate insurance coverage is in place, advice can be sought from the SSC Insurance Team. The following insurance coverage is available:

Category A - This is covered under the Group Comprehensive General Liability Policy for GEMS MENASA

Category B & C - This is only arranged through International Trips approved providers, which is acceptable as these providers have comprehensive liability coverage in place

Category SP - Covered under GEMS MENASA Policy within UAE & Qatar.

When planning to use adventure activity facilities or facilities offered by a commercial company in the UAE or abroad, the Visit Leader should check whether the provider is legally required to hold a licence for the activities it offers and, if so, whether the provider holds a licence. This is generally already completed for you for Category C trips, as we only use GEMS-approved travel companies.

18. Visas:

18.1 Visits taking place outside the UAE may require parents to obtain travel visas. The extract below forms part of the Approved Provider Agreement and should be reflected in the related Approved Provider Terms and Conditions.

“It is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- (i) Identify the visa requirements for their child (including but not limited to transit visas for airport transfers),
- (ii) obtain such visas.
- (iii) ensure the continued validity of such visas throughout the entire travel period and
- (iv) ensure their child carries the required visa or residency permit for re-entry into the UAE. The school will not be held liable for any claims arising due to students failing to obtain the correct visa or being refused travel”.

Approved Providers and schools may signpost parents to where visa information can be obtained, e.g., Embassy or High Commission websites.

19. Finance:

19.1 The EVC should ensure that parents have early written information about the cost of the trip. Parents should be given enough time to prepare financially for the trip. The Visit Leader should discuss all payment and banking arrangements with the school Accountant and ensure that all other financial arrangements are transparent.

Costs to consider:

- Cost of the trip.
- Cost of Air & Ground Transport
- Cost of food & accommodation.
- Payment milestone (instalments)? How? By whom? Notice given to accounts to arrange payment on time.
- How is money being collected?
- What is the refund process if the trip is cancelled or the student cannot attend?
- Is there a cost for staff to attend? Is this cost built-in to student cost?
- VAT form completed.

20. Transport:

20.1 The Visit Leader must give careful thought to planning transport. The main factors to consider include:

- Passenger safety;
- Type of journey, local or will it include long-distance driving, i.e. motorways;
- Traffic conditions
- Weather conditions & Geographical location
- Journey time and distance;
- Stopping points on long journeys for toilet and refreshments;
- Supervision.

20.2 Students using transport on an excursion should be made aware of basic safety rules, including:

- Arrive on time and wait for transport in a safe place.
 - Do not rush towards the transport when it arrives.
 - Sit in the seat assigned to you by a staff member at all times.
 - Only change seat when the vehicle is stopped as requested by any staff member.
 - Always wear your seatbelt and stay seated whilst travelling on transport.
 - Never tamper with any of the vehicle's equipment or driving controls.
 - Bags must not block aisles or cause obstructions.
 - Never attempt to get on or off the moving transport.
 - Never lean out of or throw things from the transport window.
 - Never kneel or stand on seats.
 - Never disturb or distract the driver.
 - Be aware of the excursion rules for eating and drinking while using transport.
 - Avoid bringing speakers or playing loud music.
 - If they feel unwell, tell a teacher or supervisor immediately.
 - Always follow the instructions of the adults at all times.
 - Do not take photographs of students or any other people unknown to you on public transport.
- 20.3 The Visit Leader is always responsible for students, including maintaining good behaviour and discipline. All students should be made aware of the position of the emergency door, and the Visit Leaders should be aware of the first aid and firefighting equipment on transport.
- 20.4 Factors that the Visit Leader should consider when planning supervision on transport include:
- Safety when crossing roads – Students must know how to observe the safety rules.
 - The group leader should make clear to Students how much or little freedom they have to 'roam'. Appropriate supervision and discipline should be always maintained.
 - Drivers of buses and coaches must comply with legislation covering maximum periods of driving and minimum rest periods.
 - Age of students and whether there are students with additional needs.
 - Head counts by the Visit Leader or assistant Visit Leader should always be carried out when the group is getting off or on transport and regularly throughout the trip.
 - Responsibility for checking that seat belts are worn.
 - Medications should only be administered to a student with previous authorisation from the parents (parents' consent for international trips) and, if possible, should be administered by the parents or by clinic staff before the trip (for local trips) so that the responsibility does not rest on the Visit Leader.

21. Cancellation:

- 21.1 Parents should be made fully aware of any cancellation Policy at the planning stage. Financial implications and penalties must be transparent and communicated to all parents clearly as early as possible in the planning process.
- 21.2 The group leader should forward any cancellations to the insurer/operator as soon as possible, in writing, if a replacement is not available. A delay in notification may incur cancellation charges.

22. Breach of this Policy

- 22.1. Any breach of this policy by Personnel may result in disciplinary action against them, which may include termination of employment or service. Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the requirements of the **Group's Employee Discipline Policy (POL/HR0009)**
- 22.2. All Personnel who suspect or become aware of any non-compliance with this policy have an obligation to report this immediately. Reporting can be made via the routes described at paragraph 4.1 of this Policy.
- 22.3. A failure to report suspected or known non-compliance with this Policy is itself a breach of this policy.

Obligation to report non-compliance with this policy

22.4. All Personnel who suspect or become aware of any non-compliance with this policy have an obligation to report this promptly. Reporting can be made via the following routes:

- a. For GEMS Personnel, to the relevant individual's line manager.
- b. To the Compliance department (compliance@gemseducation.com).
- c. Anonymously through the Group's Whistle-blower hotline in accordance with the Group's

Whistle-blowing Policy POL/HR0014.

Channel	Contact Details
Toll free number (UAE)	800 50 37283
Email Address	concerns@whistleblowerhotline.com
Fax Number	+971 6 517 0979
Surface Mail	GEMS Whistleblowing, PO Box 28653 (Sharjah) or 346038 (Dubai), UAE

Investigation of reports of non-compliance

- a. Reported allegations of non-compliance with this policy will be considered and, if appropriate, investigated by the Compliance department.
- b. Questions related to this policy could be directed to the Risk Management department (riskmanagement@gemseducation.com).
- c. Unless otherwise directed by the GEMS Board or Board Risk & Audit Committee, except in respect of reports made through the Group's Whistle-blower hotline, the Chief Risk & Compliance Officer (in conjunction with the Legal Department and any other department, as required) is responsible for initiating and overseeing any internal investigation of non-compliance with this policy.
- d. If a report is made through the Group's whistle-blower hotline, the Chief Audit Executive is responsible for initiating and conducting any corresponding investigation.

The Chief Audit Executive shall at periodic intervals make arrangements for audit of compliance with the internal control systems and procedures governed by this policy on an office and function basis. The results of such audits shall be reported to the Senior Management Committee and Risk & Audit Committee of the GEMS Board.