

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING: VARIATIONS IN PROVISION AND
PARTICIPATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**Sally Power
Chris Taylor
Gareth Rees
Katie Jones**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite overwhelming evidence of the benefits of out-of-school learning activities for enhancing cognitive and affective outcomes, there are growing concerns that the provision of such activities is threatened by increasing resource constraints, regulation and risk aversion. This research set out to investigate how schools experience these threats and how they impact on the provision of and participation in out-of-school learning activities.

Aims and objectives

The broad aim of the research was to identify factors which foster or hinder provision of and participation in out-of-school learning activities at secondary level. Specific research objectives were:

- to examine **school-level variations** in out-of-school learning opportunities
- to identify factors which contribute to these variations, in terms of **policy and provision** (at national, local authority and school level), **location, school attributes** (school type, student composition and academic performance) and **professional perceptions and capacity**.
- to identify the potential **obstacles** in the provision and opportunities for out-of-school learning.
- to identify **strategies that promote the availability and uptake** of out-of-school learning activities.

Methods

The research involved collecting data on out-of-school learning activities at secondary school level for students in Years 7 to 11. It comprised three main elements: a) a desk-based policy review; b) a UK-wide survey of secondary schools; and c) case studies of under- and over-providing schools.

Policy Review

The research began with a desk-based review of policy and legislation relating to out-of-school learning in the UK, which explored differences between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Policies and pronouncements from key statutory and voluntary agencies were collected and analysed.

UK-wide survey

A questionnaire was sent to a 10 percent sample of randomly selected secondary schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Additionally, a randomly selected 10% sample of all special schools and fee-paying independent schools in the UK was surveyed. The overall response rate was 32.45%.

Case studies

In order to illuminate patterns identified in the survey, more detailed research was undertaken within 12 case study schools which appeared to be either ‘under’ or ‘over’ providing out-of-school learning activities. The schools involved included: high and low providers with **high levels of free school meal eligibility** in a) England and b) Scotland or Wales; high providers with **low levels of free school meal eligibility** in a) England and b) Scotland or Wales; high and low providers from a **rural area**; and, high and low providers from an **urban area** and two special schools (both high providers).

Main findings

Patterns of provision

There is wide variation in the extent to which schools provide out-of-school learning activities at Key Stages 3 (KS3) and 4 (KS4). The average number of visits per school at KS 3 is 11.5 across key subject areas. However, the most prevalent trips are not directly curriculum related, but can be loosely categorised as ‘adventure activities’. Perhaps not surprisingly the frequency of these drops off slightly in Key Stage 4 as GCSEs approach. Additionally, the number of trips for work-related learning or careers education increases during this stage. The provision of opportunities is unevenly distributed, however. There are significant variations in terms of geography, size, levels of free school meal (FSM) eligibility and type of school.

Small national differences could be identified across the UK – with English schools providing marginally more out-of-school learning activities than Scottish, Northern Irish or Welsh schools. However, there were more marked differences between urban and rural schools, with fewer rural schools providing activities than urban schools. This may be also be related to size. Small schools (with fewer than 500 students) offered on average less than half as many activities as large schools (with more than 100 students).

There was also a relationship between levels of disadvantage and level of provision. Those with high levels of FSM eligibility offered on average the fewest number of activities. Perhaps not surprisingly, independent schools offered more activities – particularly extra-curricular activities - than state-maintained schools. Grammar schools offered more activities than comprehensive schools and 11-18 schools offered more activities at KS3 and KS4 than 11-16 schools.

The majority of schools thought that they provided ‘enough’ opportunities for students to participate in out-of-school learning. However, while there was some relationship between actual levels and perceived levels provision, over half of those who felt they offered ‘enough’ or ‘too many’ trips fell into the category of ‘low providers’.

While the survey reveals numerical differences in the provision of out-of-school learning opportunities, the case study data show qualitative differences in the nature and purpose of the activities. Some schools offered highly localised vocationally-oriented provision, whereas other schools offered an array of international and academically-oriented activities. In comparing different kinds of provision, it was clear that some schools were resource rich and others resource poor, both in terms of school and family investment. What was also very clear is that the more advantaged schools offered pupils horizons of opportunity that were way beyond the poorer schools and families.

Additionally, there appears to be differentiation of provision *within* schools - with different kinds of trips being offered to different students. In particular, it would appear that the least able and/or the least well-behaved tend to be offered provision primarily designed to promote social rather than academic objectives.

Patterns of participation

Less than one half of schools report that participation rates in their school are ‘high’ – with over one in ten reporting ‘low’ participation rates. It would appear that those schools which are the highest providers also enjoy the highest participation rates – while

the low providers have relatively low participation rates. This may suggest that within schools that have an active culture of promoting out-of-school learning, pupil participation is not a problem.

There are, though, likely to be socio-economic factors at work. As with levels of provision, independent schools are most likely to report high levels of participation. Similarly, within the state sector, those with the highest rates of FSM eligibility are the most likely to report low levels of participation.

In terms of *within* school differences in participation, the majority of schools identified groups of pupils who tended to ‘miss out’ on out-of-school learning activities. The under-participation of pupils from poor homes was mentioned most frequently. This was particularly an issue for residential visits and ‘luxury’ trips:

A number of students from minority ethnic groups were identified as ‘missing out’ on out-of-school learning. These included traveller children, Turkish students, Sikh girls and asylum seekers. However it was Asian, and particularly Muslim, girls who were most commonly identified as not participating. Residential trips were mentioned as particularly difficult for these students.

A significant number of schools in the survey mentioned problems experienced by students who lived a long way from school. This appears to be a particular issue for special schools where specially adapted transport is needed to take pupils at home.

In general, though, while many special schools experience difficulties in ensuring universal participation, pupils at these schools may well be more likely to go on field trips than pupils with special needs who attend mainstream education. This appears to be particularly pronounced in relation to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Many schools identified students who were ‘disaffected’ and/or had behavioural problems as least likely to participate. However, this lack of participation may result from school bans on attending as much as student reluctance. Virtually all of our comprehensive schools used school visits to punish or reward behaviour:

The use of participation in out-of-school learning activities as a means of rewarding or sanctioning behaviour raises a number of issues. While it is understandable that schools may wish to avoid the risks – and the anxiety – of pupils behaving badly outside the school gates, it is almost certain that the overwhelming majority of pupils excluded for these reasons will be those who are most in need of the curriculum enrichment that out-of-school learning can provide.

Policy and practice

Policy documents that focus on out-of-school learning activities fall into two broad categories: guidelines and legislation on the organisation of such activities and exhortations by out-of-school learning providers of the benefits of such activities. Despite the exhortation by governments of the value of such activities – as is evident in the recent *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*, the overwhelming majority of policy and guidance relates to the dangers of taking students outside the school. Moreover, there is no *requirement* in curriculum legislation that students should undertake out-of-school learning.

There are national variations in policies relating to the provision of out-of-school learning activities. In England, for example, schools are required to designate an Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) and LEAs should have an Outdoor Education Advisor. This has subsequently been recommended in Northern Ireland and Scotland too. In Wales, these responsibilities have not been designated - despite advice from Estyn to the Welsh Assembly Government.

In each of the countries, though, the national level guidance is not intended to replace local or other professional guidance or regulations.. As one might expect given differences in the amount of guidance, more schools in England (74%) reported that their local authority had an Outdoor Education Advisor. This was least likely to be the case in Wales, where only 31% reported that their local authority had an advisor.

In general, state-maintained schools (including special schools) were largely positive about the support they received from their local authority, with less than one fifth claiming support was poor or inadequate and one third finding support very good.

There was a close relationship between the presence of an outdoor education advisor and high levels of support. Over 90% of the reports of 'very good' support came from LEAs which had an outdoor education advisor. Over 70% of reports of 'poor or inadequate' support came from LEAs which had no such advisor.

However, the role of the Outdoor Education Advisor often appeared to be one of regulation and risk assessment. Monitoring rates of participation across authorities appears to be very limited.

At school level, the overwhelming majority of English schools reporting that they had an EVC and a minority of Schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Despite being under no obligation to do so, over 70% of independent schools have an EVC.

However, the case studies show that the designation of an EVC does not necessarily lead to clarity over their role. And even in those schools where EVCs did have clearly designated responsibilities, these were mainly to do with ensuring procedural regularities rather than more strategic and educational objectives. As with policy in this area in general, the principal purpose of the EVC is to minimise risk rather than promote out-of-school learning.

And while many schools had policies to guide practice – and in some cases information packs to help teachers plan activities – these policies were again procedural rather than promotional.

Barriers and strategies

It would appear that a range of factors at national, local and school level contributes to the difficulties that schools experience in out-of-school learning. The factor that was most frequently identified related to 'lack of finance/resources amongst pupils' families in attending such activities' – being mentioned by 81% of schools.

Other significant barriers relate less to participation and more to problems with provision. These include risk assessment and other bureaucratic requirements, lack of space in subject timetable or emphasis on other curriculum subjects, limited supply cover

for staff participating in activities, transport costs and staff anxiety about safety and litigation risks.

In terms of the cost of out-of-school learning schools had developed a range of strategies to help students, particularly poor students, participate. However, each of these had drawbacks. For example, school contingency funds (if they existed) were limited and parents sometimes reluctant to ask for support. Voluntary sector bursaries and business sponsorship provided one source of funding – particularly for special schools – but cannot be relied upon. Another strategy is for pupils to undertake special fundraising events. However, this creates further pressures on time.

The continued emphasis on risk and regulation also creates barriers. However, many schools report that they are now finding risk assessment procedures more streamlined. There appear, though, to be a new raft of regulations which teachers find create barriers – in particular, the requirement for accompanying adults to be CRB-checked, new driving licence regulations and specialist qualifications for adventure trips.

The amount of administration has enhanced time pressures – on top of a crowded curriculum. In particular, the increasing amount of assessment throughout the school year has meant that it is often difficult for teachers to take time out without disrupting the education either of the trip participants or those left behind. Possible strategies include designating activity days and/or making more use of the local environment. However, both strategies are unlikely to facilitate comprehensive provision of activities to support academic purposes.

Other barriers include lack of appropriate venues for students with severe learning and physical disabilities and a lack of staff willing or confident to undertake out-of-school trips. These concerns reveal how vulnerable out-of-learning provision is to changes of personnel and indicate the lack of structured support and strategic direction at school, authority and national level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

It could be argued that young people today have far greater awareness of the world around them than their parents and grandparents. For example, where overseas travel was once exceptional, for many young people it has now become the norm. New information technologies have also reduced geographical barriers and vastly increased the ways in which young people can explore and engage with distant communities.

However, while these changes have undoubtedly opened up new horizons, there are other ways in which it might be argued that young people's experiences are more limited than previously. Time spent with new technologies, for instance, has reduced the time they spend outside the home exploring their more local environment. This has been compounded by increased anxiety over child safety and protection which has made parents more risk-averse in what they let their children do (Valentine 1997). A recent survey, for example, found that while 71 per cent of adults recalled playing outside in the street or area close to their homes every day when they were children, only 21 per cent of children do so now (National Children's Bureau 2007).

One way of redressing this imbalance is for schools to offer more out-of-school learning activities. A significant volume of research has concluded that these kinds of activities enhance student development in terms of both cognitive, affective and social outcomes (see Rickinson et al 2004).

The benefits of out-of-school learning have also been politically endorsed. In November 2006, the Education and Skills Secretary, Alan Johnson, launched the *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* (DfES 2006) with the promise that Government was committing itself to making learning outside the classroom an integral part of school life. Those who sign up to the Manifesto are committed to:

1. Providing all young people with a wide range of experiences outside the classroom, including extended school activities and one or more residential visits.
2. Making a strong case for learning outside the classroom, so there is widespread appreciation of the unique contribution these experiences make to young people's lives.
3. Offering learning experiences of agreed high quality.
4. Improving training and professional development opportunities for schools and the wider workforce.
5. Enabling schools, local authorities and other key organisations to manage visits safely and efficiently.
6. Providing easy access to information, knowledge, expertise, guidance and resources.
7. Identifying ways of engaging parents, carers and the wider community in learning outside the classroom

The (former) Department for Education and Skills is investing £2.7 million in promoting the aims of the Manifesto, which currently is underwritten by a coalition of nearly 600 stakeholders across the UK.

However, despite the research evidence and the current political impetus behind out-of-school learning, there are anxieties that the opportunity to engage in these activities is declining. Various studies have pointed to a range of obstacles which threaten provision – school fears about pupil safety (Jacobs 1996, Thomas 1999), professional inexperience and anxieties (Clay 1999), diminishing local authority advisory services and facilities (Rickinson *et al* 2004), increasing legislative responsibilities (Thomas 1999), timetable pressures (Michie 1998) and parental and student reluctance (Bixler *et al* 1994). While a recent survey of schools in England (O'Donnell *et al* 2006) reports that teachers do not perceive a decline in out-of-school-learning, there is little doubt that the continued provision of out-of-school learning is under considerable pressure.

There is also little doubt that the pressure will have varying significance for different areas, for different schools and for different groups of students. For instance, since democratic devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, there is increasing divergence between the four nations in educational policy and funding. Additionally, in terms of area, there may be an urban-suburban-rural pattern in the provision of out-of-school learning activities. Certainly at local level, some local authorities, such as Bristol and Dorset, provide their own field studies centres while others do not. There may also be an area-basis, perhaps related to resourcing levels or to the use of for-profit and not-for-profit providers of out-of-school learning activities. Issues of resource may also be an important factor in explaining the availability of opportunities at school level. Even where there is an authority and school-level commitment to providing out-of-school learning opportunities, there are likely to be variations in student participation rates. Some of these may be to do with family resources, but others may be connected with gender, 'race'/ethnicity and other pupil attributes, such as special educational needs.

Through exploring the contextual and social factors that lie behind the provision of and participation in out-of-school learning activities, this research has attempted to pinpoint barriers to more effective and equitable provision and to identify strategies which might diminish these barriers.

Aims and objectives of the research

The broad aim of the research has been to identify factors which foster or hinder participation in out-of-school learning activities¹ at secondary level. Specific research objectives were:

1. to examine **school-level variations** in out-of-school learning opportunities
2. to identify factors which contribute to these variations, in terms of **policy and provision** (at national, local authority and school level), **location, school attributes** (school type, student composition and academic performance) and **professional perceptions and capacity**.
3. to identify the potential **obstacles** in the provision and opportunities for out-of-school learning.

¹ For the purposes of this project, it is envisaged that out-of-school learning activities will primarily include those defined by Rickinson *et al* (2004) as 'fieldwork and outdoor visits' and 'outdoor activities' rather than 'school grounds and community projects'.

4. to identify **strategies that promote the availability and uptake** of out-of-school learning activities.

Methods

The research involved collecting data on out-of-school learning activities at secondary school level for students in Years 7 to 11. Although such learning activities are also important for students at primary phase and in their further and higher education, it is in the compulsory secondary level that differences in provision and participation are likely to be most visible and have greatest significance. It is during this stage that students begin to elect which subjects they will take for further study and are increasingly channelled into different educational pathways. It is the phase at which fears of risk and danger during out-of-school activities are likely to be most acute.

The research involved three main elements:

1. A desk-based policy review
2. A UK-wide survey of secondary schools
3. Case studies of under- and over-providing schools

1. A desk-based policy review

The research began with a desk-based review of policy and legislation relating to out-of-school learning in the UK, which explored differences between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Policies and pronouncements from key statutory and voluntary agencies were collected and analysed.

2. A UK-wide survey of secondary schools

In order to ascertain a national picture of variations in school provision of out-of-school learning opportunities, a survey of UK secondary schools was undertaken. After piloting, the survey was sent to a national sample of secondary schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Ten percent (or approximate) of all state-funded secondary schools in each local authority were randomly selected in order to ensure every home nation and local authority of the UK is represented proportionately, including a mix of schools serving urban, rural and suburban locations. Additionally, a 10% randomly selected sample of all special schools and all fee-paying independent schools in the UK (from across all the home nations) were surveyed.

The survey elicited data on:

- Range and frequency of out-of-school activities
- Perceived participation rates
- School policy on out-of-school activities
- Awareness of and perception of local authority policy and support
- Commonly used suppliers of out-of-school activities
- Perceptions of the issues and dilemmas in the provision of out-of-school activities.

A copy of the survey sent to English state maintained schools can be found in Appendix A. The survey was modified to reflect the different curricular components of the four nations and the Welsh survey was made available in both Welsh and English.

The surveys were sent to headteachers for the attention of members of staff with primary responsibility for the organisation of out-of-school learning provision. Non-responding schools were followed up through email, letter and telephone in order to increase further the response rates. The final response rates for each of the six samples were as follows:

	Sample size	Returns	Response rate
England	347	112	32.28
Wales	25	13	52.00
Scotland	47	14	29.79
N. Ireland	16	5	31.25
Independent	126	28	22.22
Special	117	48	41.03
Total	678	220	32.45

The survey data were supplemented by centrally held national school data on school characteristics, including student eligibility for free school meals (FSM), admissions arrangements and size of school.

Analysis of these background characteristics indicates that, overall, the differences between the original sample and the responding sample are small. There is, for example, good representation in terms of school size and there is very little difference in the proportion eligible for FSM. The main issues with bias are at the level of the sub-samples, particularly at the level of individual nations where the number of respondents is small. For example, the very small Northern Irish sample contains a disproportionate number of schools with low FSM eligibility. Our most representative sub-sample is for England. These difficulties mean that reported differences at national level should be treated with caution.

3. Case studies of under- and over-providing schools

In order to further illuminate the patterns identified in the analysis of the questionnaire data, more detailed research was undertaken within a number of case study schools which appeared to be either ‘under’ or ‘over’ providing out-of-school learning activities. Fourteen schools were identified: 12 mainstream state funded schools and two special schools. They were selected to provide instances of:

- One high and one low providing school with *high levels of free school meal eligibility in England*
- One high and one low providing school with *low levels of free school meal eligibility in England*
- One high and one low providing school with *high levels of free school meal eligibility in Celtic nation*
- One high and one low providing school with *low levels of free school meal eligibility in Celtic nation*
- One high and one low providing school from a *rural area in UK*
- One high and one low providing school from *urban area in UK*
- High providing special provision.

In the event, and as is often the case, we were unable to undertake research in two low providing schools. Details of the schools (using pseudonyms) can be found in Appendix B. The schools identified declined to participate. Within each of the twelve participating schools, a semi-structured interview was undertaken with the relevant personnel to

further clarify data obtained in Phase 2 and to elicit more detailed data on their experiences and perceptions of the challenges of out-of-school learning. Where available, policies and other documentary data (eg risk assessment schedules) were collected.

Structure of the report

Each chapter draws on data from both the survey and the case studies. The next chapter looks at variations in provision across the UK and between different kinds of schools. Chapter 3 explores variations in participation. Chapter 4 tries to locate these variations in provision and participation within the policy context at national, local and school level. Chapter 5 explores how the barriers to provision and participation are experienced differentially – and also identifies examples where schools have successfully managed to overcome barriers. The final chapter draw together the main conclusions and identifies possible recommendations for schools, local authorities and national governments.

The appendix contains a sample of one of the survey questionnaires and further details on the case study schools.

2. VARIATIONS IN PROVISION

This chapter examines variations in the provision of out-of-school learning activities. It begins by looking at the overall distribution of activities across the UK – in terms of the volume and kind of activity. It then outlines some of the factors that seem to be associated with variations in provision. Two principal types of factors are considered: those relating to geography and those relating to more local school-level attributes.

While the survey data outline broad-brush variations in provision, they cannot pick up *within* school variations in provision. These are discussed in the latter part of this chapter and illustrate even greater complexity in the nature of out-of-school learning provision.

Overall distribution

One of the main findings of the survey is that there is wide variation in the extent to which schools provide out-of-school learning activities at Key Stages 3 (KS3) and 4 (KS4). Chart 1 shows the number of schools reporting that they offered provision in different subjects. Chart 2 shows the average number of trips per school per subject.²

Chart 1: Proportion of schools offering activities by subject area

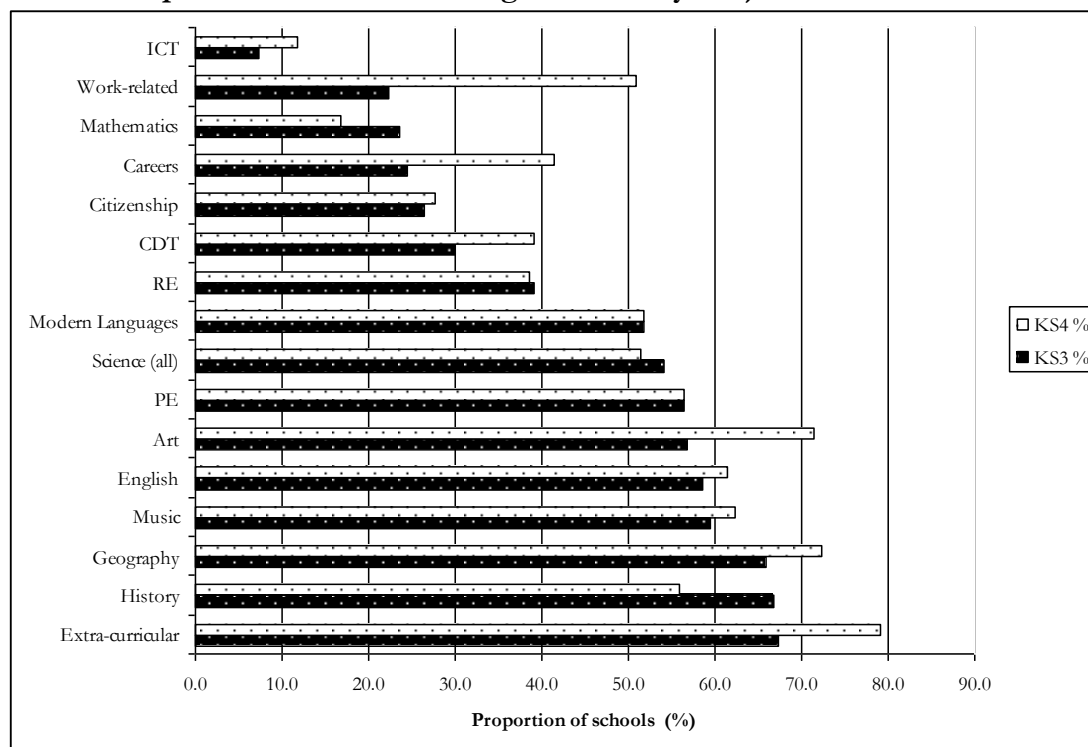


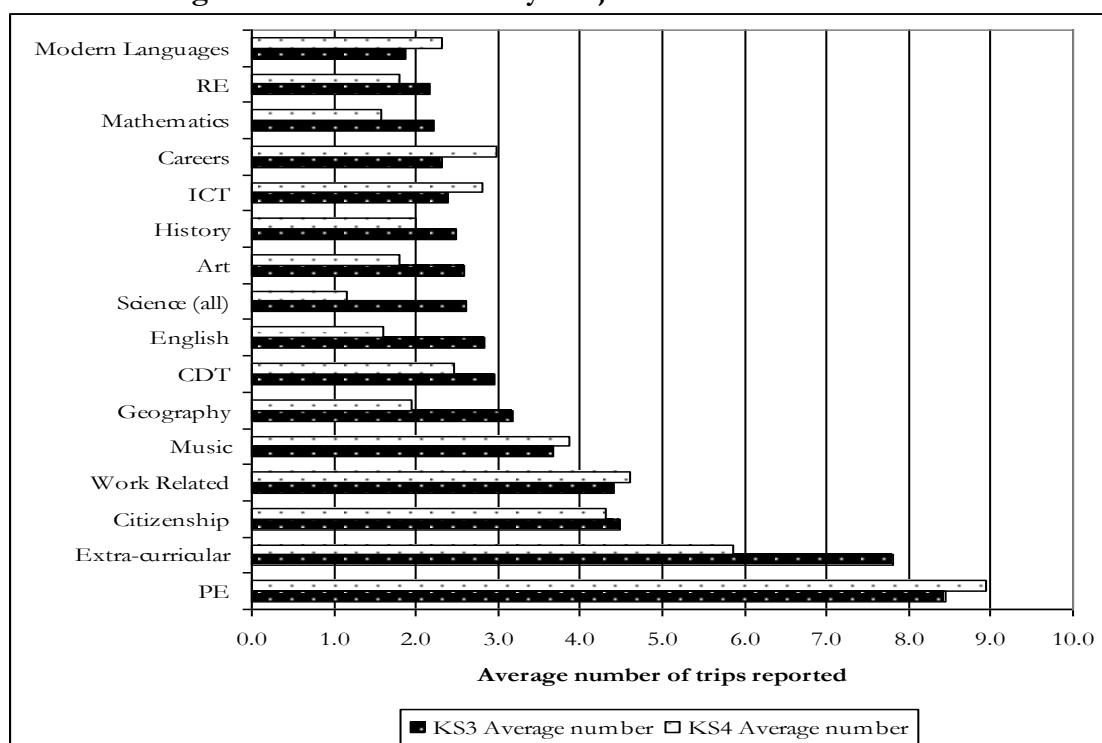
Chart 1 indicates that the kind of activity offered by the largest number of schools is not directly curriculum related, but can be loosely categorised as extra-curricular. This includes provision such as outward bound activities, skiing trips or visits to theme parks etc. However, the majority of schools also offer out-of-school learning activities in Modern Languages, Sciences, PE, Art, English, Music, Geography and History. At Key

² Nil and missing responses to the number of activities organised against the range of subject-related questions were removed when calculating the average number of activities provided. It is therefore the case that where the average number of activities organised is reported this is only for schools that actually report having organised activities – they are not the average number of activities organised for *all* schools. These figures would be considerably smaller.

Stage 4, the majority of schools offer work-related activities. Those subjects for which the fewest schools offered out-of-school learning opportunities are ICT and mathematics. Most schools offer a variety of day and residential activities – although residential trips were more commonly offered for extra-curricular than subject-orientated activities.

The relative frequency of activities is reported in Chart 2. The most-frequent activities relate to PE. However, we suspect there is significant over-reporting here as some schools appear to have included regular team sports events within this category. As in Chart 1, extra-curricular activities feature strongly. Perhaps not surprisingly the frequency of these drops off slightly in Key Stage 4 as GCSEs approach. Additionally, the number of trips for work-related learning or careers education increase during this stage.

Chart 2: Average number of activities by subject area



In order to reduce such complex data into simpler measures to aid comparison, we have grouped activities in three ways: a) main subject areas at KS3; b) core subject areas at KS4; and, c) extra-curricular activities at both Key Stages. These categories are used throughout the Report.

a) Key Stage 3

The Key Stage 3 category includes the majority of traditional curriculum subjects that most students take up to the end of Key Stage 4. These comprise: all science (combined from all science options on questionnaire); mathematics; English; modern languages; history; geography; art; and RE. We thought it important to include this range of activities because the overwhelming majority (89.1%) of schools offer out-of-school learning in at least one of these subject areas and because the benefits of out-of-school learning may be particularly crucial at Key Stage 3 when students are thinking about which subjects to focus on at Key Stage 4. On average, our sample provided 11.5 activities across these eight subjects.

b) Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4, we chose to focus the analysis on the ‘core’ curriculum areas of science (combined from all science options on questionnaire), mathematics and English. The complexity of subject choices at this stage meant that putting more subjects in the mix would have privileged some schools (particularly those specialising in particular subjects) over others. Over three quarters of schools offered out-of-school learning in these subjects at this stage. On average, our sample provided 4 activities across these three subjects.

c) Extra-curricular activities

In order to examine patterns of provision in extra-curricular activities, we combined responses from both key stages on the grounds that some schools preferred to offer these activities earlier in their students’ secondary education, while others offered them later. On average, our schools provided 14 activities during both Key Stages.

The summary statistics of the proportion of schools offering such activities and the average number of activities offered per school are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Outline statistics of activity categories used in the report

	Number of schools that organised day/residential activities (n*)	% of schools	Number of schools that specified number of activities (n†)	Average number of activities
KS3	196	89.09	187	11.50
KS4	168	76.36	157	4.20
Extra-curricular	188	85.45	166	13.85

n* refers to the number of schools which indicated that they provided activities in this area.

n† refers to the number of schools which specified the number of activities they had offered in the last year.³

In trying to understand variations in the provision of out-of-school learning opportunities, we explored the extent to which provision was associated with a range of factors relating to a) location and b) school characteristics, such as school type, size and proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Location

As mentioned in the introduction, there are geographic variations in the development of policy relating to out-of-school learning. We were interested to see whether these reflected – or contributed to – geographic variations in the number of out-of-school learning opportunities provided.

³ N is usually larger than n because some schools indicated that they offered trips but did not indicate how many. n* is used for measures relating to the proportion of schools which offer activities. n† is used for the calculation of average number of activities. In general, n* is used throughout the report in order not to under-represent the prevalence of provision. As outlined in Footnote 2 (p.14) the average number of activities organised is always calculated on the responses of n†.

National variations

At national level, there are small differences in the provision offered by state-maintained schools (excluding special schools) across Britain – although the differences are complicated and the numbers of respondents from Scotland and Northern Ireland are small. For example, there appears to be more consistency in Wales where virtually all schools offer activities at both key stages and for extra-curricular purposes (Table 2). However, the average number of activities that Welsh schools offer is generally lower than for each of the other three nations – particularly for extra-curricular activities. England, on the other hand, has a lower proportion of schools offering activities, but higher averages per school – indicating greater diversity – and possibly polarisation – in the provision of out-of-school learning activities.

Table 2: Percentage state (excluding special) schools offering activities by country

	England (N=112)	Wales (N=13)	Scotland (N=14)	N Ireland (N=5)
KS3	93.75	100.00	92.86	100.00
KS4	87.50	92.31	85.71	40.00
Extra-curricular	84.82	100.00	71.43	80.00

With the exception of Northern Ireland (where the sample of five schools, one of which returned very high numbers, is too small to make meaningful comparisons), English schools generally provided marginally more activities than their counterparts in Scotland and Wales – particular at Key Stage 3 and for extra-curricular purposes (Table 3).

Table 3: Average number of activities per state (excluding special) school by country

	England	Wales	Scotland	N Ireland
KS3	11.19	8.67	9.58	17.80
KS4	4.16	3.64	4.64	2.00
Extra-curricular	13.34	5.70	9.86	35.25

Some of these differences might be explained by the more local area in which a school is located, as there are more urban schools in Wales and Scotland, than in England.

Urban-rural differences

There is no straightforward relationship between area location and the proportion of schools which offer activities – although the relatively few (54%) rural schools offering activities at Key Stage 4 is noteworthy (Table 4). There is, though, a significant locational dimension to the average *number* of activities (Table 5). Rural schools offer significantly fewer activities at both key stages than schools located in towns, which in turn offer significantly fewer activities than urban schools. There is no straightforward relationship between location and extra-curricular activities – for which rural schools appear to offer far higher levels of provision than town or urban schools.

One reason for the lower number of subject-related trips might be related to transport. The larger the catchment area, the more difficult it is to arrange transport for extended day visits. This is particularly the case for special schools, which traditionally draw their students from across a wide area. As the following special school commented:

Our catchment area is Northumberland, about 1000sq miles. Pupils routinely travel 40-60 minutes a day each way to school. We cannot get them home if the activity is after school.

Table 4: Percentage schools offering activities by location

	Rural (N=13)	Town (N=25)	Urban (N=169)	Unknown (N=13)
KS3	92.31	96.00	88.17	84.62
KS4	53.85	76.00	76.92	92.31
Extra-curricular	92.31	76.00	85.21	100.00

Table 5: Average number of activities per school by location

	Rural	Town	Urban	Unknown
KS3	8.58	9.96	12.23	7.89
KS4	2.86	3.21	4.31	5.50
Extra-curricular	27.67	9.44	14.09	6.20

School characteristics

School sector

The pattern of provision by school type reveals sector and activity differences. In terms of the proportion of schools offering activities (Table 6), perhaps not surprisingly, a lower proportion of special schools offered subject related activities. Only half offered any activities relating to the core subjects at Key Stage 4. On the other hand, they were more likely than either mainstream state or independent schools to offer extra-curricula provision.

Table 6: Percentage schools offering activities by sector

	State (n=144)	Independent (n=28)	Special (n=48)
KS3	94.44	85.71	75.00
KS4	86.11	71.43	50.00
Extra-curricular	84.72	85.71	87.50

These patterns in proportion offering activities are interesting when set alongside the average number of trips (Table 7). In relation to special schools, for example, it is clear that while they are, as a sector, less likely to provide subject-related out-of-school learning activities, those schools which do make provision, offer a lot of trips. The special school average (Table 7) at Key Stage 3 is significantly higher than that of either mainstream state or independent schools. The extent of provision in special schools is particularly noteworthy in view of the considerable difficulties which such schools experience in finding venues and incurring transport costs.

Table 7: Average number of activities per school by sector

	State	Independent	Special
KS3	11.07	9.74	14.53
KS4	4.12	5.42	3.53
Extra-curricular	13.22	19.43	12.55

Table 7 also shows that state schools (both mainstream and special) offer more activities than independent schools at Key Stage 3. However, at Key Stage 4 independent schools offer more activities in the core curriculum areas and significantly more extra-curricular activities at both key stages. It is in the area of extra-curricular activities that independent schools stand out as being, on average, such high providers.

Type of school

There are also clear patterns between schools according to their age intake and selective status (Table 8).

Table 8: Average number of activities by school intake

	n	KS3	KS4	Extra-curricular
Form 7 entry not known	81	11.89	4.24	14.28
Comprehensive 2 tier Junior 11-14	1	2.00	1.00	7.00
Comprehensive all-through 11-16	30	8.67	3.33	12.64
Comprehensive all-through 11-18	44	13.02	4.76	16.26
Comprehensive Upper 14-18	1		5.00	2.00
Comprehensive Upper School 12-15/6	2	8.00	4.00	10.00
Comprehensive Upper School 13-18	3	5.33	4.00	8.50
Grammar School	9	18.38	4.67	21.14
Middle School 9-13 (deemed Secondary)	7	9.14		3.50
Modern School	5	11.20	4.80	5.20
Other Secondary School	1	2.00	1.00	1.00
Technical School	1	3.00		

England state-maintained mainstream schools only⁴

While the number of schools in some categories is very small, it is clear that grammar schools offer significantly more activities than others. At Key Stage 3, for example, grammar schools offer more than twice as many activities as 11-16 comprehensives. Table 8 also indicates that schools with sixth forms offer more activities than those without.

Size of school

The lower number of activities offered by rural schools and by 11-16 schools may be related to school size. There is a very clear but complicated relationship between the size of school and the provision of out-of-school learning activities.

Table 9: Average number of activities per school by school size

	Small (<500)	Medium (500-999)	Large (1000+)
KS3	12.61	8.03	14.95
KS4	4.46	3.75	4.56
Extra-curricular	14.41	8.85	20.51

⁴ These classifications are only available for English state schools. There are no state-maintained selective schools in Scotland or Wales.

If we look at the average number of activities (Table 9) we can see that small schools look as though they offer more activities than medium size schools. However, if we look at the proportion of schools which offer *any* activities at Key Stage 3, small schools as a group are the lowest group of providers (Table 10). This suggests that there is great variation among small schools – with some offering no opportunities, and others offering many.

Table 10: Percentage schools offering activities by school size

	Small (<500) (n=77)	Medium (500-999) (n=75)	Large (1000+) (n=62)
KS3	79.22	93.33	95.16
KS4	51.95	88.00	91.94
Extra-curricular	81.82	89.33	83.87

Similarly, when looked at together, the two tables suggest that large schools as a group (defined here as being in excess of 1000 pupils) offer significantly more opportunities. For extra-curricular levels this is particularly marked.

Issues relating to size were touched on by our case study schools. While large schools can experience difficulties (for example, Avebury School spoke of the problems of difficulties arranging trips for whole year groups because they were in excess of 300 pupils), it was the smaller (rural) schools that experienced the greatest logistical difficulties. Staff at both Llanmyn and Rillmere spoke of the difficulties of arranging trips when so many of their staff worked part-time. Rillmere also experienced difficulties because of the multiple roles which teachers had to assume:

We have capacity issues. As the head I'm time-tabling, sorting out options, running the school. My assistant head is also head of English, my other assistant head is head of modern languages. So one of my PE teachers is in charge of visits, but he teaches 16 hours out of the 18 hours that he's here. So there is a capacity issue I need to deal with [Rillmere]

FSM eligibility

There is a relationship also between the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in schools and the level of provision for outdoor education activities. Table 11 suggests that the lower the levels of children eligible for free school meals, the greater the number of trips offered at KS3. And while the overwhelming majority of schools offer activities irrespective of level of FSM eligibility (Table 12), schools with relatively large proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals also offered fewer extra-curricular activities (Table 12).

Table 11: Average number of activities per school by level of FSM eligibility

	Low	Medium	High
KS3	11.88	11.43	8.70
KS4	3.90	4.56	4.10
Extra-curricular	14.07	14.00	10.18

Excludes special and independent schools

However, it is also evident that there is relatively little difference between levels of provision offered by schools with low and medium levels of FSM eligibility. This would

suggest that low levels of provision for KS3 and extra-curricular outdoor education activities is of particular concern amongst schools serving the most disadvantaged areas.

Table 12: Percentage schools offering activities by level of FSM eligibility

	Low (n=74)	Medium (n=42)	High (n=24)
KS3	93.24	100.00	87.50
KS4	85.14	88.10	87.50
Extra-curricular	85.14	88.10	79.17

Excludes special and independent schools

The relationship between provision, participation and levels of resource – both in the school and in the home – is something which figures prominently throughout our data and the Report.

Qualitative variations in provision

While the survey data reveal broad differences in the provision of out-of-school learning activities and enable us to explore patterns and factors, our case study data show that beneath the crude figures there are subtle differences in the forms and purposes of provision being offered. While there may be little difference in the number of trips offered, there can be significant differences in the nature of activities. Some schools appear to be particularly cosmopolitan in the scope of provision – while others confine activities to their more local environment. Additionally, schools use field trips for different purposes and for different groups of students. These processes of internal differentiation are likely to have a significant impact on pupils’ experience of out-of-school learning.

Cosmopolitan and local of activities

One aspect that was evident from the case study schools is the variation in the range of activities undertaken. Some schools, particularly the low providers appeared to offer a far narrower range of activities. The following quote, for example, comes from Westhill, a low providing comprehensive school in England serving a large outer ring council estate:

Craft and design - they’ve been on food craft placements. They’ve been up to the University and they’ve made things, some of the girls on the B’Tec course. And they’ve gone up to the university and they’ve learnt about things to do with catering. You know we’ve got a connection with one of the universities, who is actually doing a little sort of programme with them. So when they’re creating meals for 300/400 people, the girls have been helping them out ... Citizenship, they’ve been down to the police station. They go to the job employment place, the Jobcentre, to show them. And we’ve had a lot of people in to school, like banks. People from the bank talking about how to do banking, and we’ve had the police in, the army in, the fire brigade in. And they do talks, sometimes they invite them back down. [Westhill]

The following interview extract from Chalkhill – a high providing comprehensive school in England with a low level of FSM eligibility – reveals a very different picture:

There are art residentials are Barcelona, Paris. So you’ve got Gaudi in Barcelona, you’ve got Monet in Paris. You’ve got Italy ... so they do tend to be foreign trips. Craft, design, technology - there are an awful lot of companies, industrial

companies who are willing to put up facilities on the weekend. So let me give you an example. Like the Ford motor company virtually shuts down at the weekend so all the plant is available for them to use. So wind tunnels, cad-cam design and all that is available providing they have the links ... Yes I'd say we do here a wide variety of trips. I mean the German department go to Berlin, the French department go to Paris, the art department go to Barcelona and Paris. I can't think of any that doesn't do any kind of trip ... KS4 they go on the Cruise to the Red Sea and to Egypt. [Chalkhill]

The contrast between the two accounts reveals different forms of provision which will be underpinned by very different levels of resourcing and open up very different kinds of horizons to students. Firstly, the activities of both schools have very different reaches. Those offered by Westhill are localised. Those offered by Chalkhill are international. The focus of the provision also feels very different. Activities organised by Westhill centre largely on vocational dimensions of student learning through opening up contacts with local employers. Chalkhill, on the other hand, seems to provide out-of-school learning which extends student learning in academic areas – and imaginative use by the School of industrial resources.

Clearly for special schools there are different issues and finding locations that can offer a broad range of activities is a particular challenge. However, even in these schools, the activities provided appear far more enriching than those offered by Westhill:

We do educational visits, which will be things to the museums or things like that. We have a few people going to Chester for the day or things like that. We have geography trips, so if we're teaching them about villages, then we would put them in the bus and take them to see a village. If we're doing streams or whatever then we take them somewhere to see an actual stream ... We have hydrotherapy ... There's things like horse riding and swimming as well, so where they would go outside of school on a weekly basis for those sorts of visits And we've got our Ecocentre. There was a residential last week ... There's annual trips too. [Westhill]

Out-of-school learning for academic or social purposes

It is not only the scope of the activities that varies, but their purposes. Our survey made a distinction between activities that were directly subject-related and extra-curricular activities, in particular adventure type activities. It could be argued that the former are largely designed to promote academic understanding and the latter social objectives. All of the staff we spoke to stressed that most activities provided a range of benefits – both academic and social, eg:

There's very few trips now that are purely recreational. You know you just can't get the time off anymore and you do justify, and rightly have to justify trips with an academic or a social development of the student when they're actually away. [Chalkhill]

However, subject-focused activities are designed to have *direct* impact on understanding and an *indirect* impact on social outcomes. Conversely, social activities are designed to have *direct* impacts on behaviour and *indirect* impacts on academic understanding. The following is typical of a number of statements made about the sort of indirect benefits that the provision of extra-curricular activities brings to academic development:

The children are being encouraged and not discouraged by you saying 'bring a pen'. Well it definitely gives the kids a different outlook on school. Far too often the kids just see school as academic A lot of these kids feel really alienated, and it's like 'Ugh I've got to do writing again'. But you know, if you break it up into other things then it does encourage them. And hopefully it will encourage attendance. And hopefully ... well the theory goes, that if your brain is active and if it's doing *something*, then it may encourage other academic things. [Westhill]

While most schools offer an array of curricular and extra-curricular activities, the case study data reveal that there is within-school differentiation of provision. It reveals that the least able – or the least well-behaved – are more likely to be offered provision primarily designed to promote social and/or vocational objectives. For example, Flintlock, in Scotland, makes offers special provision for pupils who 'struggle':

Just last month we had identified a group of pupils who would sort of struggle at the end of their school years to find work and to know what was beyond school for them. So together with Careers Scotland we had a programme put together called Activate for these 10 youngsters ... But this particular outdoor education trip I'm speaking about [Activate] the youngsters are hand picked for that ... they're the ones that work through our base and they work with one particular teacher and he takes them all. So we know the pupils that are going on that one because it's specifically targeted at them. [Flintlock]

By contrast, the more academically able can be offered more academic development:

Some of them will be specifically targeted at our gifted and talented kids either academically or musically, or sport whatever. [Farhampton]

Out-of-school learning is sometimes presented as a form of compensatory education – providing poor students with experiences that their home circumstances would usually deny – either because of material or cultural constraints. This idea was expressed most clearly and frequently in schools serving largely disadvantaged or minority ethnic communities. For example, the Westhill teacher points out:

A lot of these kids, live on the edge of [City], within about a mile of here there's open countryside. To talk to some kids, they've never been there. They've always been into town to do stuff, they're socialising. But we've got the Mendips on the doorstep, some kids don't even know where it is. [Westhill]

Similarly, at Briarswood School, a girls' school with a majority Asian enrolment:

They don't always understand why they're going out, and they don't always understand the kind of behaviour, and that's why we are actually putting on these enrichment activities, the way you behave if you go to a theatre is not the same way you behave when you're waiting for assembly to start. And it's a learned behaviour we feel that we're responsible for. Because they don't get opportunities to do that, you know if they're life revolves around Asian videos, or they might go to the Asian cinema, it's a completely different ethos from going to the theatre, or Pantomime or something and how you would behave there. [Briarswood]

However, while these schools may provide a range of activities offering new experiences and opening up new horizons, these are more limited and narrower than those provided by schools with more affluent populations. Far from compensating for home disadvantage, the uneven distribution of high quality out-of-school learning both between and within schools may well exacerbate educational inequalities.

3. VARIATIONS IN PARTICIPATION

As we have seen, provision of out-of-school learning activities varies widely – both from school to school and within schools. In this chapter we explore issues surrounding participation. First we examine survey data on reported rates of participation and the extent to which these rates vary by school type and location. Secondly, we identify whether there are any particular activities which appear to be particularly easy or difficult in fostering participation. Finally, drawing on both the survey and case study data, we explore whether there are any groups of students who might be consistently missing out on such provision as is available.

Overall rates of participation

Less than one half of schools (45%) report that participation rates in their school are ‘high’ and over one in ten (11%) report ‘low’ participation rates. There is some school sector variation here (Table 13). Independent schools were the least likely to report low participation rates and special schools the most likely.

Table 13: Reported participation rates by school sector

School sector	Reported participation rates		
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
State mainstream (n=143)	10.49	46.85	42.66
Independent (n=28)	3.57	39.29	57.14
State special (n=48)	16.67	39.58	43.75

While clearly we should be cautious about self-reported participation rates, it would also appear that those who are the highest providers also enjoy the highest participation rates – while the low providers have relatively low participation rates (Table 14).

Table 14: Relationship between level of provision and reported participation rate at KS3

Level of provision	Reported participation rates		
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Low provision (<10) (n=11)	14.55	47.27	38.18
Medium provision (10-19.99) (n=54)	0.00	48.15	51.85
High provision (20+) (n=22)	0.00	36.36	63.64

This suggests that schools with a strong culture of promoting out-of-school learning find participation easier to promote. There are, though, likely to be socio-economic as well as institutional factors at work. For example, as the Table 15 indicates, those with the highest rates of FSM eligibility are the most likely to report low levels of participation.

Table 15: Relationship between level of FSM eligibility and reported participation rate at KS3

Level of FSM eligibility	Reported participation rates		
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Low FSM (<10%) (n=73)	8.22	39.73	52.05
Medium FSM (10%-24.99%) (n=42)	9.52	50.00	40.48
High FSM (25%+) (n=24)	20.83	62.50	16.67

Pupil engagement with out-of-school learning activities

We were interested to know whether some types of activities are more attractive to pupils than others, as this may be a factor in participation. In the survey over one third of those schools that responded to this question claimed that there were *no* activities which they struggled with, eg:

- The school does not struggle to get students to attend or participate. Every visit offered by staff is taken up by students.
- The activities are negotiated with the students and chosen appropriately.
- If we put events on we have takers.

The survey data did not indicate any clear-cut consensus or patterns over which kind of trips or activities appeal and which do not. Activities which some schools listed as ones which they struggled to get students involved in, other schools listed as those they found it easy to get students to join.

For example, some survey respondents claimed that they had no difficulty recruiting students to visits related to the curriculum but that they struggled with ‘those perceived by parents to be non-academic ‘fun’ activities’. Others claimed their students would go on any trips *other* than those which were directly curriculum-related: Eleven schools commented on general problem with ‘academic’ or subject related activities, eg:

- More academic e.g. poetry conference for year 11 had to be cancelled through lack of interest.
- Curriculum based activities e.g. Maths trips!!

Activities for some particular subjects were singled out as being particularly difficult to get students to join, but again, there was no clear consensus. While sport-related activities were the most frequently mentioned, poetry, maths, languages, art and drama trips were also identified as problematic. One school simply commented that their pupils ‘do not like ‘muddy’ or ‘wet’.

Difficulties with participation appear to be less to do with curriculum factors and more to do with the duration, distance and cost of the activity. Nineteen schools mentioned difficulties with residential trips – seven referring specifically to foreign ‘exchanges’. In general, students appear to have problems with activities which disrupt their ‘outside’ lives. Several schools mentioned that it was difficult to get students to go on trips that extended beyond the school day – particularly if they lived in rural areas where transport was difficult. Another school reported that its students did not like weekend residential ‘which clash with ‘part-time jobs and other interests’. Our more detailed case study data confirmed this:

The trips will be in school time, they don’t like going out of school time.
[Briarswood]

Some parents are very wary about letting their kids go away on holiday or away on trips and other parents. [Farhampton]

It was the cost of trips, though, that was most frequently identified as creating problems. One in ten of the schools said they found it difficult to get pupils to go on ‘expensive trips’. One school (with over 30% of its students eligible for FSM) identified theatre trips

as being ‘prohibitively expensive’. A less disadvantaged school (11% FSM eligibility) noted that ‘cost is a factor and yet our first trip to China is planned for 2009’.

Patterns of pupil participation

We were also interested to know whether, irrespective of overall participation rates, there were any particular groups of students which were less likely to participate than others. The majority of schools (55%) identified groups of pupils who tended to ‘miss out’ on out-of-school learning activities. A total of 149 groups⁵ were mentioned (Table 16).

Table 16: Frequency of mentions of groups volunteered by schools as being ‘less likely to participate in out-of-school learning activities

	Number of mentions
Students from poor homes	42
‘Disaffected’ students	19
Students with special needs	18
Behaviourally challenged students	15
Students living at a distance	15
Minority ethnic students	11
Girls	9
Students in their ‘exam’ years	8
Least able students	7
Other	5
Total	149

The reasons given for why these students tended to ‘miss out’ vary widely, but usually relate to poverty, gender, race and ‘ethnicity’ and the exclusion of students with behavioural difficulties.

Poverty

The under-participation of pupils from poor homes was mentioned most frequently. As the following typical responses from the survey on under-participating groups indicate, this was particularly an issue for residential visits and ‘luxury’ trips:

- Low income family members - residential visits have to be paid for.
- More expensive visits, particularly residential, tend to attract more ‘affluent’ children.
- We have an inclusive approach. However, money is a restraint for some families. Trips to China/USA are expensive. We try to offer a wide range of opportunity with minimum cost.
- Finance has to be a problem for some parents.
- Financially disadvantaged in holiday visits e.g. ski trip (we subsidise term time trips).
- Only holiday based experiences - Ski trip is expensive for some families.

Two respondents commented that it was those just above grant eligibility who were most disadvantaged – especially if there were multiple siblings. The challenges of resourcing participation in out-of-school learning activities are further discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵ Some schools identified more than one group.

Interestingly, but exceptionally, one of our case study schools identified 'the more affluent' pupils as one of the under-participating groups:

You need a bomb under them to get them to go because they're so used to their parents providing experiences for them, you know. It's nothing special to be taken away somewhere skating or to go horse riding. They've had these experiences through their families. [Flintlock]

Gender, 'race' and ethnicity

The questionnaire survey identified a number of other groups of students who participated less. These included traveller children, Turkish students, Sikh girls and asylum seekers. However it is Asian, and particularly Muslim, girls who are most commonly identified as 'missing out'. This was usually explained in terms of the limits imposed on them by their parents:

- Some students from ethnic minority backgrounds whose parents want them to go straight home after school.
- Some of our parents (Asian or Muslim) do not allow their children to stay after school at all.

Residential trips were mentioned as particularly difficult for these students. The teacher from Briarswood felt that in general these girls had very restricted mobility:

Because we're 99% Muslim or Asian ... girls in particular are constrained ... For example I teach business studies and IT. Part of our policy is a visit every term, so we're going out on a visit next week ... But I can guarantee you we'll get in the coach, go half a mile down the road and the vast majority of our youngsters will not know where they are. Because they don't go out. They don't go wandering the streets, they go to cousins', aunties', uncles' houses and they're bussed, or fetched and car-ed, if that's a word. Yes but they're taken and fetched. [Briarswood]

She also spoke of the difficulty of being sensitive to different moral codes when arranging trips:

For example when you take them to an art gallery ... if you go to the gallery, or sections of the gallery it's got nudes in it, and statues. So that can be a problem if it's not handled properly. It depends on the confidence of the member of staff. [Briarswood]

Reflecting the earlier observation that it was difficult to get students to go on trips which disrupted their home or social lives, the teacher from Mannington mentioned other commitments that these students in particular were sometimes expected to undertake and which made attendance at any activity outside normal school hours difficult.

They have the lowest attendance, Sikhs and Asians. Parents, I think they see it more as they should be at home working, or picking up their younger sisters or brothers or they should be working in the family shop, things like that. A lot of our kids go to mosques as well. [Mannington]

Farhampton was the only school we visited which undertook monitoring of participation – probably reflecting the greater awareness and experience of London boroughs in issues of ‘race’ and ethnicity:

We have to have some sort of monitoring in place, but our own sort of monitoring is about ‘are we hitting the right ethnic groups?’ ... Are enough Black Afro-Caribbean boys who want to go on the ski trip going? So what’s the uptake? One of the groups who don’t involve themselves as much and is a particular target group is Turkish boys. And we believe, having been talking to some of the Turkish parents, that some of the reasons are cultural. [Farhampton]

Only two schools in the survey mentioned further issues with boys’ non-participation; one identifying less academically able boys, the other, boys in general:

- Older children who don’t get their permission slips signed - mostly boys!

Students living at a distance

While the survey did not show any statistically significant relationship between reported rates of participation and geographic location, 15 schools in the survey mentioned the problem experienced by students who lived a long way from school. They identified the least participating as:

- Those parents who will not collect them from after school activities.
- Those who have to use school transport - school in semi rural area.
- Those who live more than 1 hour travel distance from the school - rural area.
- Those who live outside the area (need buses/trains).
- Those whose parents have no transport and can’t collect their child.

This was particularly an issue for special schools where dedicated transport was needed to take pupils home, eg:

- Pupils on school transport - this leaves at 3.15. We are a special school so many pupils are not independent travellers and live long distances away.

The challenges of transport are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Special needs

Out-of-school learning creates very real challenges for schools serving special needs pupils. Our interview data reveal the difficulties of providing trips to cater for those with profound disabilities, particularly those who require nursing. Groups of special needs students who under-participate include:

- Highly emotional/vulnerable/agoraphobic;
- Most profound multiply disabled. Those requiring nursing;
- Pupils with profound and multiple LD and those with extremely challenging behaviour;
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties miss out on ‘full day’ visits due to medical/clinical needs; and
- Very dependent wheelchair children with high medical needs, requiring 1:1 support.

Our data, however, suggest that while many special schools experience difficulties in ensuring universal participation, pupils at these schools may well be more likely to go on field trips than pupils with special needs who attend mainstream education. This appears to be particularly pronounced in relation to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In special schools, tremendous efforts are made to include all students. In mainstream schools, students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are often banned from participating. It is to this phenomenon that we now turn.

Out of school learning for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties

As Table 16 revealed, many schools identified students who were ‘disaffected’ and/or had behavioural problems as least likely to participate. However, our interview data reveals that this lack of participation may result from school bans on attending as much as student reluctance. Virtually all of our case study comprehensive schools used school visits to punish or reward behaviour:

In terms of engagement, our trips tend to be offered to those who do behave, are keen, do work hard, therefore by the very nature of those pupils there wouldn’t be that much difficulty in recruiting them into various trips, do you see what I mean? Whereas the ‘baddies’ they don’t get to go anyway unless they can demonstrate some form of improvement and we use that as incentives to a certain extent as well. [Tunnoch]

Poor behaviour would lead to exclusion:

If someone continuously doesn’t tow the line in school, and is told, this is the sanction. Well at the end of the day, that will be the sanction. [Westhill]

In reality if a student is particularly poorly behaved then they may be excluded from a visit. [Avebury]

Behaviour is a consideration, we don’t let them go for example if there’s misbehaviour ... they are kept away from certain activities. But it works both ways. If a student shows they can behave and has improved their behaviour then they go on the trip. [Chalkhill]

While some schools (eg Briarswood) only used such sanctions for the social trips, other schools did not make that distinction. It is difficult to gauge the scale of exclusion, but the teacher from Chalkhill estimated that five to ten students in any year group would be barred from school visits:

Good behaviour or performance could additionally lead to extra trips:

There’s a lot of behaviour improvement stuff that we do. Like if we’ve got a good group of attenders, and this is across the board, then they go down to the Superbowl and they’ll have an afternoon there. So it’s like saying ‘you’re good attenders’ or ‘you’re the best academics’. [Westhill]

Of course it could be argued that misbehaviour may put the student and their classmates in danger and that it is therefore appropriate for participation in out-of-school learning to be banned. The teacher from Churchfield, for example, recalled an occasion when they

had to leave behind a 'looked after' child who had a compulsion to light fires. Such examples are very rare, however. In most instances, exclusion from school trips is used to punish far less serious behaviours:

You'll see up there on the wall a list of pupils entitled no privileges ... They would be pupils that even if they wanted to go on school trips would, for various reasons, would not be entitled to go ... it's usually behaviour ... you know due to an inability to wear a school uniform or you know they're falling behind, they've missed a lot of classes, or they can't be trusted to behave outside of school. [Tunnock]

Some fourth year lads were taken to a careers convention and they were quite rude to passers-by from the bus window when they were on the trip. So we got the culprits and they were prevented from going on the next one because we felt they couldn't be trusted [Flintlock]

The use of participation in out-of-school learning activities as a means of rewarding or sanctioning behaviour raises a number of issues. While it is understandable that schools may wish to avoid the risks – and the anxiety – of pupils potentially behaving badly outside the school gates, it is almost certain that the overwhelming majority of pupils excluded for these reasons will be those who are most in need of the curriculum enrichment that out-of-school learning can provide.

4. POLICY AND PRACTICE

Democratic devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales has brought about increasing divergence of education policy and practice across the UK. However, in relation to out-of-school learning, there is only slight variation in policies as it appears that the four nations tend to ‘borrow’ off each other. For example, guidance documents for England, Wales and Scotland are practically word-for-word identical, with only country-specific variations in the terms used. The Northern Irish version is slightly different but covers the same topics.

In general, most policy in this area focuses on the safeguards and responsibilities which local authorities and schools need to be aware of. For example, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 lays out the responsibilities of schools for the safety of staff and pupils on out-of-school visits. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires schools to undertake risk assessments for activities. The DfES *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits* (HASPEV) guide 1998 and its Scottish equivalent, *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Excursions* (HASEE) 2004, provide key guidance in the area and clarify the respective responsibilities of local authorities and governing bodies.

The main differences at national level surround the designation of key personnel responsibilities at local authority (LA) and school level. For example, in England, DfES guidance (DfES 2002) *requires* that schools designate an Educational Visits Co-ordinator and that local authorities identify an Outdoor Education Advisor. The nomination of co-ordinators and advisors has been *recommended* in Northern Ireland and Scotland. In Wales, these responsibilities have not been designated - despite advice from Estyn to the Welsh Assembly Government.

However, understanding the policy context of out-of-school learning requires more than looking only at government directives and exhortations that are directly focused on education visits. It also involves looking at complimentary or competing policy advice from governments and a range of other stakeholders which bear indirectly on schools’ ability to provide out-of-school learning opportunities.

For example, there is virtually no requirement within the English National Curriculum that schools undertake out-of-school learning to support core or foundation subjects. Indeed, the recent moves towards reducing the coursework element of assessment at GCSE and A level may even further threaten out-of-school learning. It may reduce the traditional centrality of field-based studies for subjects such as biology and geography.

Similarly, the capacity of local authorities to provide resources and facilities to support out-of-school learning is likely to have been seriously jeopardised by firstly, the successive delegation of budgets to schools during the 1980s and 1990s and secondly, by the more recent integration of welfare and education into Children’s Services Departments in England.

At school level, it is possible to argue that increasing pressure from ever more complex curricular in each of the four nations – particularly when associated with assessment at key stages – will drive out activities that are anything other than essential.

In addition to these pressures, there are others arising from the guidance of other stakeholders. Teaching unions in Scotland and Wales have made it clear that participation

by teachers can only be voluntary and stress the importance of ensuring that teachers are protected against litigation in the event of accidents. NASUWT actually advises members not to participate in educational visits and journeys.

When taken as a whole, the overwhelming majority of policy and guidance on out-of-school learning relates to the regulation and risk-assessment of these activities, rather than to their promotion and sustainability. This is evident at every level of the system – from national government, through to local authority and down to school level.

Local authorities and out-of-school learning

In each of the countries, the national level guidance is not intended to replace local or other professional guidance or regulations. Most national policy documents make it clear that local authorities (or their equivalent) should be the first source of advice.

As one might expect given differences in the amount of guidance, more schools in England (71%) reported that their local authority has an outdoor education advisor. This was least likely to be the case in Wales, where only 31% reported that their local authority had an advisor.

In general, all maintained schools were largely positive about the support they receive from their local authority. Less than one fifth overall claim support is poor or inadequate and one third find support very good (Table 17). There are some small but significant differences between mainstream and special schools in terms of their perceptions of local authority support.

Table 17: Evaluation of local authority support by maintained schools

Local authority support	Mainstream		Special	
	frequency	%	frequency	%
Poor or inadequate	21	15.2	11	24.4
Satisfactory	63	45.7	20	44.4
Very good	46	33.3	13	28.9

While there was no statistically significant relationship between evaluations of local authority support across the four nations, there was a close relationship between the presence of an outdoor education advisor and high levels of support. Over 90% of the reports of ‘very good’ support came from authorities which had an outdoor education advisor and over 70% of reports of ‘poor or inadequate’ support came from authorities which had no such advisor.

The variability of authority support was also evident in the case studies. Farhampton appeared to offer high levels of activity despite a lack of support from their authority:

We are at the moment working on our travel plan and we’re not happy with the amount of support we’ve had from the LEA and it’s an enormous amount of work. Generally we do it ourselves. [Farhampton]

Chalkhill, on the other hand, and also a high providing school, commented on good levels of support and a long tradition of collaboration:

It's just a thing particular to [Local Authority]. They have always done it over 20 years now they've been going every two years, it costs an absolute fortune about £2,000 or something it's like 15 days on a ocean liner in the Mediterranean. And that's all the schools in Local Authority] come together to do that. They buy a ship sort of thing for the 15 days. [Chalkhill]

Evidence of similar collaboration was rare, however. It may well be the competition between schools has replaced collaboration – alongside other pressures on schools, eg:

A lot of things in [Local Authority] have ended. Like at one time you used to have a swimming gala, but you know with pressure and money, and union action, it died a death. The same with athletics. So you know, some things need to be placed in the wider context, with other schools playing a more active role. [Westhill]

In general, schools' relationship with their local authority concerned support for compliance on risk assessment. This was the dominant theme in all comments about local authority relations, eg:

There's a document called HSP6 which is produced by the local authority which we must comply with if we are to do any trip, and it's basically just a document that covers the authority if anything goes wrong and it's a liability thing if anything goes wrong. [Tunnock]

There's a chap that's in charge of all the educational visits and provides all the training or advice, so if there's anything we're not sure of we ring him, and they get a copy of all the residential goings on They have to approve the visits and that all the risk assessments have been done and so on. [Kiley Grange]

As mentioned in the last chapter, only one of the case study schools undertakes monitoring of participation – and even this was seen as yet another burden rather than a supportive exercise:

Sometimes, what we're asked to do is monitoring the kids who go there. What we will try and always do is record the trips that kids go on ... But sometimes some of the stuff we've been asked to do... they want to know how many one-legged Vietnamese boys there are or how many people there are who have an income of under £20,000 and really it can get a bit silly and that really annoys everyone. [Farhampton]

School level support

Not surprisingly these variations in policy and practice are reflected at the level of the School. For example, because of the legislative differences between the four nations, the overwhelming majority of English maintained mainstream schools reported that they had an EVC compared with only a minority in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Table 18). Despite being under no requirement to do so, over 70% of independent schools have an EVC.

The survey reveals that there is a relationship between having an EVC and the amount of provision. If we look at English maintained mainstream schools (Table 19) we can see

that the presence of an EVC is associated with higher average number of trips at Key Stage 3.

Table 18: Proportion of schools reporting having an EVC

	Percent
England (n=111)	87.39
Wales (n=13)	30.77
Scotland (n=14)	35.71
Northern Ireland (n=5)	20.00

Excludes independent and special schools

Table 19: Average number of trips for KS3 subjects by presence of an EVC

	Average number of trips at KS3
EVC (n=99)	11.75
No EVC (n=32)	9.03

English maintained mainstream schools only.

Of course it is highly likely that the designation of an EVC reflects rather than leads to higher levels of provision of school visits. In England, the presence of an EVC does not appear to be associated with the location or size of the school. However, it is strongly correlated with participation rates (Table 20)

Table 20: Relationship between presence of an EVC and reported participation rate

	Reported participation rates (%)		
	Low participation	Medium participation	High participation
EVC (n=97)	4.12	50.52	45.36
No EVC (n=14)	42.86	28.57	28.57

That the presence of an EVC may not in itself foster high levels of provision is evident in the fact that national differences in provision are marginal yet national differences in the designation of an EVC are large. Evidence from the case study schools also indicates that the designation of an EVC alone is unlikely to act as a catalyst for out-of-school learning.

The role of the EVC

Data from the case studies indicates that simply having a designated EVC may mean very little. As one respondent comments:

I'm not sure what the EVC does ... I do need to follow him up actually.
[Rillmere]

Even where EVCs did have clearly designated responsibilities, these were mainly to do with ensuring procedural regularities rather than more strategic and educational roles. As with policy in this area in general, the principal purpose of the EVC is to minimise risk rather than promote out-of-school learning. The following extracts highlight this dimension very clearly:

... that role [EVC] exists in the form of a health and safety officer, because of obviously the implications of filling in the various DELL forms or letters home or risk assessment, and that gets done by the health and safety person ... So he oversees all the paperwork that goes with the trips [Westhill]

She's assistant head, err she's head of KS4 and she's also child protection, and if you want to go on a visit then you have to go through her as a person, so she monitors all the visits that go on, to make sure that ... basically if the children are paying anything the rights forms are done, risk assessments, coaches are booked and so on. [Briarswood]

In the following school, the EVC was not even on the teaching staff:

He is really there to make sure a) they look after the buses, b) they book the buses appropriately and c) that they risk assess every single aspect of the activity. And he goes through the risk assessments, gives them help with that in case there's ever an allegation or an accident to make sure we've done our bit really well. [Churchfield]

Where there is no EVC, schools simply undertake these roles either within departments or through the local authority:

It's all done departmentally, and the risk assessment and whatever else is done departmentally and it's signed off by what we call our business manager who's part of our management team so he would go through all the paperwork. [Tunnoch]

In the time I've been here we haven't had an educational co-ordinator, all the paper work is done via the local authority and then it goes to the office and then one of the girls in the office sends it off. And then when we go out on the day she then faxes the authority to say these are the kids that have gone. So we do it that way. [Llanmyn]

The level of support and guidance at school level appear, much like that at the local authority level, to vary according to history and circumstance, eg:

There's certainly not a culture in this school from our management team of encouraging, certainly not actively encouraging this type of thing, or it doesn't feel like that. I do think it's down to historical issues, you know 'we do this trip because we've always done it, it works well, the pupils get benefit from it, we've got good links elsewhere'. [Tunnoch]

It is difficult to see how the designation of an individual as an EVC can make a strong contribution to the promotion of out-of-school learning when it is conceived largely in terms of health and safety.

Internal school policies and processes

Over half of the schools (58.6%) surveyed had a school policy relating to educational visits. As with the presence of an EVC, there was significant variation by country. Over two thirds (71%) of English mainstream maintained schools has a policy compared with a minority in other countries – although again the low numbers need to be borne in mind.

Perhaps not surprisingly, special schools were the most likely to have a school policy and independent schools the least likely (Table 21).

Table 21: Proportion of schools with a school policy by sector

School sector	School policy on out-of-school learning activities	
	Frequency	%
State mainstream	83	62.88
Independent	13	56.52
State special	33	71.74

Even if they had no specific policy, all of the case study schools had some kind of system in place. Several had information packs to support staff – although again these concentrated on regulation and risk assessment:

We have a visits pack basically, which has a check list which helps the teacher plan the visit. It has an approval form which ... obviously you have to get approval from the school before the visit can go. And it's got a risk assessment form where you have to fill in and identify risks. Information about ratios, a model letter to go out to students. [Avebury]

The complexity of the process is evident in the following description from Chalkhill of the stages of gaining approval:

Basically for a visit, no matter what the visit is, whoever is the leader of the visit has to submit a hard copy, just a piece of paper asking for the trip to be given the go ahead. To the EVC. So she then presents that to the Leadership group and it's given a basic 'yes' or a 'no'. Or it might go back with the proviso that 'yes you can commence preparing for the visit but you can't take 5 members of staff you can only take 3. You've got to take two additional adults.' That sort of thing. They then submit another form with the risk assessment provided. It's checked once again by the EVC and her administrative assistant. It's like a flow chart, it gets sent back again. We receive it, it's checked. It then gets sent to [Local Authority] and they check it. And they make any recommendations, or requests or clarifications and things like that. The visit gets passed. And at that point the leader of the visit can then start contacting students and parents with letters (we call it the green form), which is the medical details and all that sort of thing. So every student fills one of them in so when they go on a visit or a trip we've got a hard copy of everything medical allergies and stuff like that. And basically that's the procedure. [Chalkhill]

The range of aspects that need to be taken into account is evident in the following list of 'other' policies which schools reported in the survey having used when planning activities:

- Child protection.
- Manual handling of children policy.
- Administration of medicines.

- Medical needs policy.
- Minibus policy.
- Complaints procedures.
- Jewellery and valuable items policy.
- School behaviour policies, eg on discipline and uniform.

In their lists of which policies they consult, only very few schools (8 schools, 4%) mention inclusion, equal opportunities or community education policies. And only a handful (4 schools, 2%) referred to subject-related policies, such as those of the Geographical Association.

Organisations used for out-of-school learning activities

Over half of maintained schools used the local authority when organising trips. There was no marked variation between the four nations – although a higher proportion of Scottish schools list the local authority.

It is unclear from the responses whether ‘using’ the local authority when organising activities relates to facilities as opposed to advice and guidance. There have been concerns over recent years that local authorities’ capacity to provide facilities for out-of-school learning has been seriously eroded (and indeed research on the impact of this in England has just recently been commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families).

There did not appear to be heavy use of local authority resources or organisational among our case study schools. Westhill, for example, chose not to use such local authority services because they claimed to be able to get better deals elsewhere:

At one time the LEA would have always tried to organise a big ski trip. But to be honest we never went with the LEA because we always got a better deal, we could always get a better deal ourselves. So the power of the LEA as an organisation has never been seen to be a useful thing for us. [Westhill]

It is perhaps not surprising then that the list of organisations ‘used routinely’ by schools when organising out-of-school learning activities is topped by two private companies – STS (School Travel Service) and PGL. STS, which specialises largely in overseas trips, was identified by 17.7% respondents as an organisation ‘routinely used’. PGL, which specialises in adventure and activity trips, was identified by 16% of respondents. There are some within-sample variations, though. Maintained mainstream schools were more likely than independent schools to use either organisation with 22.9% compared to 14.3% using STS and 18.8% compared to 14.3% using PGL. Special schools were least likely to use either (4.2% for STS and 10.4% for PGL).

Voluntary sector organisations were used routinely by a small proportion of schools: YHA was identified by 14.5%; Field Studies Council by 12.3%; Wildlife Trusts by 6.8% and the RSPB by 5.5%. Only one school identified Growing Schools as being routinely used. In addition, schools nominated a wide range of other organisations, most often local trusts, museums and parks. Special schools often had very particular needs which required experience on the part of the provider – or particular attention, making ‘package’ educational visits less appropriate.

BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES

The last three chapters have sought to explore the patterns of provision of and participation in out-of-school learning across the UK. They have found that there is considerable variation between schools and areas that is related to a number of factors, such as the size and location of the school and the level of student poverty (as measured by FSM eligibility). This chapter explores the schools' accounts of what *they* perceive to be the major barriers to provision and participation.

Perceived levels of provision

The extent to which schools experience barriers or develop strategies in relation to out-of-school learning is likely to depend on whether they think their provision is adequate. The majority (66.8%) of schools of all types thought that they provided 'enough' opportunities for students to participate in out-of-school learning. However, we were interested in assessing whether there was any relationship between actual levels of provision and perceived levels.

There was a statistically significant relationship between perception and provision overall. Nevertheless, over half (52%) of those who felt they offered 'enough' or even 'too many' trips fell into our category of 'low providers' who offered fewer than 10 activities in the main curriculum subjects at Key Stage 3 (Table 22).

Table 22: Relationship between perceived and actual level of provision at KS3

	'Not enough' (%)	'Enough' or 'Too much' (%)
Low provision (<10) (n=103)	75.6%	51.9%
Medium provision (10-19.99) (n=53)	20.0%	33.1%
High provision (20+) (n=22)	4.4%	15.0%

Commonly identified barriers

It is clear that schools experience a complex range of barriers. A few relate to the factors external to the school (eg lack of resources in the home, parental anxieties), but the majority relate to institutional barriers.

Respondents were given a list of aspects that are often identified as barriers and asked to identify those which were barriers for their school and which were not. They were also asked to identify whether the barrier was major or minor (Table 23).

Table 23: Barriers to provision of and participation in out-of-school learning

	Barriers to provision (%)		
	Major	Minor	Not a factor
Lack of finance/resources amongst pupils' families in attending such activities	28	53	19
Risk assessment and other bureaucratic requirements	30	47	23
Lack of space in subject timetable or emphasis on other curriculum subjects	30	47	23
Limited supply cover for staff participating in activities	36	40	24
Transport costs and/or transport resources	31	43	26

Staff anxiety about risk to themselves (safety and litigation)	24	46	30
Limited staff training/experience in running activities	10	48	42
Concerns over pupil behaviour on such activities	14	38	49
Unclear guidance and advice to teachers	10	40	50
Parental/guardian anxieties about risks involved in activities	3	45	51
Teacher unions advising against participation in activities	13	36	52
Inadequate provision of facilities for activities	7	38	54
Changes within subject syllabuses	6	31	63
Lack of pupil interest in activities	6	29	65
Lack of support from other teachers in the school	3	31	66
Difficulty or cost of obtaining insurance	5	22	73
Lack of support from senior management	2	9	89

There are six barriers which are commonly experienced across at least 70% of respondents. These relate to cost, risk and regulation and other curriculum priorities. We consider each of these in turn and, wherever possible, identify strategies that schools have developed to try and overcome these barriers.

The cost of out-of-school learning

Reflecting some of the comments on participation in Chapter 3, the most frequently identified barrier was the cost for pupils' families of participating in activities – cited by over 80% of schools. There was, not surprisingly, some sector variation here with over 90% of maintained schools (including special schools) citing it as a barrier, and nearly one third citing it as a major barrier.

Relatedly, because of the implications for parental contributions, the majority of schools also cited transport costs as a barrier:

The school has a mini bus, only one unfortunately ... when you're doing trips, class sizes aren't 15! ... So you end up having to hire buses which again adds to the cost. So you always end up, the cost of coaches can start putting things up. [Westhill]

Transport costs were particularly burdensome for special schools, eg:

Wherever we go, they always need transport. So either we pay for transport or they've got to have the mini bus. For instance, the summer school ... we're bussing them all in for the summer school but we're having to cover the cost of that ourselves. So I think last year's summer school total cost about £9,500 and about £3000 of that was transport. [Kiley Grange]

The case study schools have developed a range of strategies to try and meet the cost of out-of-school learning. These include school contingency funds, special school fund-raising events, seeking local authority support and applying for grants and sponsorship.

Contingency funds

Some schools manage to support some students who cannot afford to go on particular activities through holding a 'contingency fund' or finding money from 'somewhere':

We subsidise a lot. Our [head] is so kind hearted she can't see someone miss out so if there's somebody struggling, she'll always dip in her pocket, or find it somewhere. [Churchfield]

The governors also offer funds to support visits for students, and regularly do so. Certainly for residential trips, they will financially support. We've got a, we call it a 'helping hands fund' to assist students. [Avebury]

We do carry a small contingency float, so that if necessary we will subsidise children that are very needy. [Westhill]

There are, however, limits to this strategy. Firstly, not all parents are prepared to admit they need support. As the Westhill teacher continues:

The children in this area do not like the stigma of being given handouts. If they're on free school meals, they won't admit to it, because it's a stigma. And the same sort of thing with school trips, a child's parents will normally pay. [Westhill]

Secondly, some schools do not have the financial flexibility to provide such support:

I can't subsidise. Not because I don't want to but because at the moment I'm sitting on a £25,000 deficit. [Rillmere]

And even if there are some funds available, it is difficult to know where to draw the line. As reported in chapter 3, respondents pointed out that it was difficult for those children just above any eligibility threshold – particularly if there were multiple siblings. The use of any contingency funding will depend entirely on the scale of disadvantage. As the Avebury respondent argues:

If you get anymore than probably about 5% of your parents responding in that way, I mean 5% would still even be massive. The public finances just won't bear that cost and you then have to take a view on how important that visit is. [Avebury]

School fundraising

A few of our schools provided financial support for education visits through fundraising activities specifically designed for that purpose. For example, at Churchfield's:

Most of the money for school trips comes from the head's efforts and the Environmental Task Force – for example an old lady whose hedge they cut may donate £30. Last year ETF raised £2.5-3,000 which was then redistributed to subsidise school trips. [Churchfield's]

Tunnock also works hard to raise extra funds:

Next summer they're going to Peru ... that's the current S4 who will be at the end of S5 ... they've got to raise £3,000 per head to be able to do it, and they've

got to do that themselves. So we have karaoke, we have quiz nights to raise money, staff and pupils football, cake baking, bag packing at the local supermarket, you know anything that can bring in a bit of money to help. But you know the pupils organise all that themselves. And they're very, very good at it as well. [Tunnock]

These activities are clearly one way of addressing the funding shortfall – and clearly have a role in supporting students going on expensive overseas trips. However, whether students should be expected to raise funds to support activities of direct relevance to their academic studies is another issue. It is also worth questioning whether there is enough space in an already pressured curriculum and assessment timetable to justify allocating time for fundraising purposes.

Local authority support

Some schools report that they get additional financial support from their local authority. Churchfield's local authority, for example, pays for one trip each year. Other authorities will provide funds to support all children eligible for free school meals. It would be worth exploring the extent of this support and how viable it is in the long term. Again, such financial pressure is likely to be experienced most acutely by the most deprived authorities.

Bursaries and sponsorship

One strategy which has become increasingly common in recent years is for schools to seek support from voluntary organisations and business sponsors. Avebury, for example, has received bursaries from an arts foundation to fund students on an art and history residential visit. One of our case study special schools reported that they found it relatively easy to obtain outside support:

I would say that grant funding is sometimes easier to obtain for special schools than it is for mainstream. Places often have to provide a certain percentage of things to special schools to meet their targets or whatever, and obviously it's a smaller amount of people applying for that funding, so we do seem to be able to get funding a bit easier than other places. [Kiley Grange]

The other case study special school also receives external funding from business. However, as the EVC pointed out, the school cannot rely on it as it is not guaranteed annually.

Westhill, our disadvantaged low providing school has managed to secure significant funds from an international bank:

I have been involved primarily this year with an organisation that has put over £120,000 in to the school too allow for year 9, the whole of the year 9 cohort to go out and experience outdoor activities. So they've put this sum of money in, and the year has been split into two cohorts. Roughly 60 in each cohort. [Westhill]

Clearly sponsorship such as this provides an important lifeline to schools like Westhill. However, it can hardly be seen to provide a sustainable strategy for supporting schools throughout the system. Not only is such money often contingent on personal connections, it is unlikely to be recurrent. Moreover, there is some evidence that

sponsorship of this kind is often unevenly distributed across the system – with the poorest schools receiving least (Whitty et al 1998).

Risk and regulation

As we saw in chapter 4, there is extensive regulation around many aspects of school visits. This creates additional procedural barriers but it also reveals and reinforces high levels of staff anxiety about taking students out of school.

Risk assessment

To some extent, risk is an inevitable component of out-of-school learning activities. Indeed, one of our interviewees highlighted the positive learning dimensions of risk:

I think the kids should be, to some degree, put into that risk situation - to learn from it. Because otherwise you wrap them up in cotton wool and they never get to experience the risk. If they never get to experience the risk how do they learn where the danger point is, where the safety point is? If I go too far I know I'm going to hurt myself. If I go that far, well I'm alright doing that. If they don't have any risk at all ...

For most of our respondents, though, risk is to be avoided. Certainly, government regulations require that it is assessed. As we saw in the last chapter, there are often complicated procedures for evaluating and 'signing off' risk.

Some staff see risk assessment procedures as a burden:

We've got generic risk assessments that the county council provide and then we've got ones that we tweak ourselves, and we've got 65 pages for PE and teaching lessons before we have anything to do with trips off site and fixtures or anything else. And that's just our department, I'm sure science and DT will have a lot as well. [Rillmere]

Some of the conditions can seem absurd, as the following extract illustrates:

It is a hindrance ... We're going to Paris. I had my risk assessment refused. They were fine apart from the river walk. And I said 'yes, we're going for a walk by the River Seine'. But they see it as a river walk and therefore they could fall down the bank and into the river (laughs) even though there's a big fence there. So then you've got to make provision for what we'd do if somebody *did* fall in the River Seine. [Chalkhill]

However, as the teacher concedes, the procedure does 'cover' teachers against litigation:

Now that is petty in a way, but at the same time, if somebody *did* fall in and heaven forbid somebody did drown, you had done it and you'd covered yourself. So to me they're a necessary evil. They can be a hindrance but at the same time it's a necessary evil because there's so much legislation now and you're leaving yourself open to so much, you know being sued and everything else, prosecuted. [Chalkhill]

It is also clear from the case study schools that over the years risk assessment procedures have become more streamlined and staff more used to complying with them:

And it's in quite a sleek system now, it didn't used to be but it is now. [Briarswood]

And now because some of our trips are really the same over and over again, once Richard has done the risk assessment with the member of staff they can use that same risk assessment over and over again. So you know it doesn't become a problem and it also does help people to think about things. ... [Churchfield]

Other regulations

However, while schools may have got used to risk assessment protocols, they are now confronted with a range of other new regulations. The requirement for CRB checks was highlighted as an issue by several of our case study schools:

Everybody on a visit now has got to be CRB registered, you know. 'Do you fancy coming to the art gallery Mrs Jones?' has gone out the door because Mrs Jones hasn't got a CRB so that has made people wary and has made people hesitate a little bit and I think that numbers have gone down.

The need for accompanying adults to be CRB-checked is particularly an issue for trips where extra support is needed because of students' learning or behavioural difficulties.

On top of CRB checking, ordinary driving licences no longer cover members of staff driving minibuses so that they now need an additional licence:

But we've now got a problem ... when you pass your test now you don't get on your licence the ability to drive a minibus. Whereas my licence is fine because it's an old one. So what we've got now is two young PE teachers who can't drive the minibus because they're only 23 and 24 so their licences don't allow it. [Farhampton]

There are a range of other qualifications which trip leaders may need:

I mean you can't go up a mountainside now without a certain level of mountain leadership. You can't go canoeing. You can't take them skiing unless somebody has the leadership qualification. [Chalkhill]

Perhaps the main barrier though is the more intractable problem of general staff anxiety:

I think there's also the climate these days of what could go wrong and where do I stand if things go wrong and could I be sued and how liable am I and am I putting my career on the line, and all that kind of stuff, because we're getting more of that ... like the American kind of [litigation] culture if you like. [Tunnock]

On a positive note, some teachers felt that the general level of anxiety had abated somewhat in recent years:

I think it's not as much a barrier as it once was. A few years ago, no teacher their right mind would have ever taken a kiddie out because unions were dictating DO NOT get involved. Do not do anything. There was this air of scare mongering.

Litigation – don't touch it. Now, I think with some government legislation, it's actually easing off a bit now. And I think people are actually coming back round to thinking you know, let's give it a try again. [Westhill]

Curriculum pressure

Finding time in the school year for out-of-school learning is clearly difficult and was seen by the majority of schools as a barrier. Many chose to elaborate on this, talking about 'anxiety to cover the set syllabus', 'the necessity to finish syllabus in time for external tests and exams' and 'general time issues with such pressure on pupils - far too many exams'.

Clearly, one aspect of managing time is to ensure that activities are not organised at key assessment times. This was highlighted by several of our case study schools:

Sometimes we're very wary of pulling youngsters out of their lessons .. I think there was something we backed out of ... it was too close to their Highers. I remember as a guidance teacher we discussed it round a table and thought 'no we cannot do that with these youngsters at this stage' ... We've got to be careful not to forget that achieving their exams is the priority. [Flintlock]

I think that's a timing issue, especially this time of year when it's exams ... exam timetable is just about to kick off, and I think there would be a reluctance to support pupils missing classes and being out of classes and so our trips, whether it's day trips or even afternoon trips or just pulling pupils out of classes even for a short time period. [Tunnock]

However, the amount of the school year where assessment takes place has increased significantly:

The big thing is there's examinations now all the time in schools. There was a time when it just used to be the summer that was exams. Now A-level in particular, KS5, they're doing modular exams three times a year. They're doing re-sits. They're doing re-sits of the re-sits, They're having to re-take subjects. 'Can Harry go on my science trip?' 'No he's got to his English; he's got an English re-sit tomorrow'. [Chalkhill]

Relatedly, other schools commented on the disruption that school visits could cause not just to participating students, but to the school as a whole, eg:

Out of school learning activities are always disruptive of other learning opportunities and it is never easy achieving a balance.

There were concerns that leaving classes with supply teachers might be damaging:

It's hard sometimes to get your teachers off the timetable to go on trips, because you know you're leaving them with cover teachers. [Mannington]

For some schools in the survey, these difficulties meant there simply wasn't the time to either organise or undertake as many visits as they would like:

- It is difficult to fit in our out-of-school activities - everyone is so busy.

- Availability of time for the organisation and planning, in context of initiative overload in the educational world!

Strategies to address this pressure were difficult to identify. Rillmere, a rural school, spoke of the need to build activities around lessons and took a more relaxed approach to time missed:

.... especially with the geography stuff, a double lesson is now an hour and 40 minutes, if they take lunch in and are a bit late then they've got a few hours. So their impact is minimal. There is an onus on the students to make sure they catch up but most of the students that are doing the trip do tend to. And I suppose, you know, if you miss one day, it's only like being ill. [Rillmere]

Clearly if short local trips are built around lesson times, the local environment becomes *the* main learning resource. For a rural school such as Rillmere, geography and biology field studies can be more easily catered for than art and English activities – whereas the opposite may well be the case for schools in urban locations. Relying on the locality as the main area of investigation will further differentiate students' experience of out-of-school learning.

Another strategy, used by Briarswood amongst other schools, was to dedicate out-of-school learning days in advance.

You can work it so it's in your time, and if you've got dedicated days, and a lot of schools now, I would say the vast majority, have activities days or enterprise days, or industry days, and any school worth their salt, will be looking towards those days as opportunities to get the youngsters out. I think so, anyway. And well when I talk to colleagues, that's what seems to be happening, especially in the summer term. [Briarswood]

While this may well be appropriate for some kinds of activities – particularly extra-curricular activities which are often arranged between the end of exams and the start of the summer holidays – it is not likely to provide a solution for structured subject-focused learning which will be need to be undertaken throughout the year as the syllabus demands.

Other issues

Almost a quarter of all schools – and half of our special schools - identified further barriers. Primarily these related to: lack of suitable venues for students with special needs and staff willingness and capacity.

Lack of venues for students with special needs

Special schools consistently identified additional barriers. In addition to the difficulties of transport already mentioned, there were problems finding suitable venues – both in terms of the facilities and attitudes towards special schools. Typical comments from special schools in the survey mention the problems they experience finding:

- Appropriate places to visit which are DDA friendly and understanding of pupils with significant complex needs.
- Finding places/activities that can meet the needs of our students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

- Suitable venues and lack of suitably trained staff.
- Organisations whose facilities are properly adapted to meet the needs of students who have a severe disability.

Clearly, the range of alternatives will depend on the nature and degree of disability, but given the frequency with which special schools raised this as an issue, this would appear to be a fairly generic issue. As our interview from Kiley Grange comments:

Obviously we can't go to some of the residential places that the mainstream schools go to ... There's a place that we haven't been to for a couple of years, well there's two places actually over in Cumbria where they do rock climbing and things and all the staff are geared up for, and geared up for working with disabled children. It's all for disabled children you know and they have all the special equipment. And you see them going down zip wires and absolutely everything, but you know it's an expensive place. [Kiley Grange]

The lack of places, the large catchment areas that special schools cover, and the additional transport costs contribute to create barriers to provision.

Staff willingness and capacity

An additional barrier indicated by several schools was the lack of staff willing or confident to undertake activities.

One of the survey schools felt that a key difficulty was the lack of 'energetic enthusiastic teachers' within 'an ageing teaching force'. These sentiments are echoed in the comments of the teacher from Tunnock:

Different members of staff are at different places in their careers. Some of the younger members of staff are maybe eager to get things onto CVs and to demonstrate that they are able to do things to move up the career ladder and the spin off is that, they've done something, it's enjoyable and everyone's got some benefit. But we've got a kind of older staff and I think, you know, many have seen it before, done it before, had enough and are you know seeing out their time. [Tunnock]

Others commented, however, on the lack of confidence among younger staff, eg:

Lots of probationary teachers are really keen but they don't feel they have the confidence, so it's teaming those teachers up with more experienced teachers. I'm saying to them you know go on trip with somebody not as a leader but as an assistant. [Flintlock]

The interviewee goes on to recount the changing profile of activities at Flintlock:

We used to run a trip to Holland each year ... But the member of staff who ran that trip has retired so it's not happening this year which is unfortunate ... We used to have a member of staff and our SEBB [Social, emotional and behaviour base] and he was trained in outdoor education and he used to run such a lot of things for youngsters, so I mean I would like to see more of that, but it's having the staff who can do that I was in the music department we went abroad, but it was a working holiday because we took the school swing band and we took

another musical ensemble and they performed. Wherever we were we had arranged a programme of concerts and the youngsters would perform when we were away. And it was really good. But of course I've changed jobs and I'm not associated with the music department and it hasn't happened for a number of years. [Flintlock]

His narrative indicates just how much the provision of activities is dependent on the interests and enthusiasms of individual teachers. As staff leave or take on new responsibility, activities in the area wither. Without more strategic direction - at school, authority and national level - it is hard to see how provision will ever be anything other than patchy and intermittent.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research has revealed a pattern of provision and participation in out-of-school learning which is uneven and under threat. There is considerable variation in the amount of activities that students are offered – both in number and nature. While some students attend schools where out-of-school activities are regular, rich and rewarding – often opening up new horizons – other students attend schools where opportunities are far more limited. In these schools, provision will be less frequent, less well resourced and less expansive. Different levels of provision are not randomly distributed, but relate to the different characteristics of schools. Small schools, schools in rural areas, and schools with high levels of FSM eligibility tend to offer fewer opportunities. Within the state-maintained sector, grammar schools offer more than comprehensive schools, and 11-18 schools offer more than 11-16 schools. These processes of differentiation are evident within schools as well. Academically able students appear to receive more subject-related activities; the less able appear to be offered extra-curricular activities. Additionally, students with behavioural difficulties may be denied the opportunity to participate in *any* activities. There are also gender and ethnic dimensions to patterns of participation – with Asian girls being least likely to participate in out-of-school learning.

Despite the potential of out-of-school learning to open up new learning horizons to disadvantaged students, our research suggests that it is the most disadvantaged students who will be offered the least inspiring experiences.

Policy at national, local authority and school level may exhort the importance of out-of-school learning, but for the most part is concerned with risk and regulation. Such systems and strategies that are in place are *avoiding* danger rather than *encouraging* schools or even *entitling* students to participate in out-of-school learning.

In conclusion, it would appear that a range of factors at national, local and school level contributes to the difficulties that schools experience in out-of-school learning. Chief among these is the financial cost of providing activities. While schools have developed a range of strategies to support students, none can ensure sustainable provision. Similarly, some schools have developed strategies to overcome other obstacles – such as curriculum pressure and administrative overload. The effectiveness of these strategies is questionable, however.

In short, if high quality out-of-school learning is to become an entitlement rather than an ‘add-on’ that only some can afford, it will be important to invest significant resources, develop structured support and clarify strategic direction at school, authority and national level.

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