

CAMPS & EXCURSIONS POLICY

Rationale

Excursions are a recognised part of school activities, and staff can reasonably expect to be required by the school to conduct an excursion as part of their normal work duties. Because excursions necessarily involve both staff and students leaving school premises, there may be increased risks to their health and safety. The increased risk may arise from either or both of the following factors:

- the nature of the excursion itself (for example, a short walking excursion to look at environmental features in the school's vicinity poses less risk than a camping trip)
- a less controlled environment (that is, the reduced control that the school can exercise over external factors such as the safety of the excursion site or the people with whom students might come into contact).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the health and safety of staff and students on excursions is managed just as it would be within school grounds.

Definition

An excursion is any school-approved activity which involves the students and staff leaving the school campus during or outside of school hours.

Implementation:

Overview

- During an out-of-school activity the teacher has responsibility for the safety of the students from the moment of leaving to the moment of dismissal.
- The principal or delegated authority, having reviewed and ratified the activity plan in advance, will not approve an activity unless he or she is satisfied that the activity is reasonably safe and that it can be adequately supervised.
- The parent/guardian must receive prior written advice about travel plans (including times of departure and arrival and mode of transport), educational activities and supervision arrangements. Consent forms must be signed by the parent/guardian, although parental consent does not relieve teachers supervising excursions from their responsibilities towards students.
- A parent's consent is consent to allow the child to engage in an activity for which reasonable care will be taken for the safety of the child.
- Where reasonable care is not taken, it falls outside the scope of what has been consented to by the parent/guardian.

Planning Requirements

- A designated 'Teacher in Charge' will plan and coordinate each camp, excursion or activity. Refer to Excursion/Guest Presenter Procedures (Google Docs).
- In consultation with the Principal the teacher in charge is responsible for approving the activity. An activity will normally be approved where the following conditions have been met:

- Activities are relevant to the classroom curriculum program.
- The Excursion/Guest Presenter Details form (Google Docs) has been completed in full and signed by the principal.
- A risk assessment has been completed (Google Docs).
- Hazards pertaining to the excursion have been identified.
- The potential risks associated with the hazards have been assessed.
- Ways of controlling the risks have been identified.
- Sufficient numbers of school staff or other approved persons are assigned to accompanying each party of pupils to ensure proper and adequate supervision. The ratio of staff to students must reflect the nature of the risk involved. For example, more staff may be required for high-risk activities such as rock climbing. Refer to Supervision of Students on Camps, Excursions and Outdoor Activities (Google Docs).
- Reference is to be made to the "Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide"

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/default.htm>

- Only parents with a current Working with Children Check accompany the students.
- Parents accompanying an excursion must be given a copy of the Volunteer Information Form (Google Docs).
- Parents have been informed in writing of the details of the activity and of the arrangements made for the children.
- Where the children are required to leave school property a written statement has been obtained from the parent/guardian of each child, granting permission for the child to participate in the activity and incorporating a statement of consent to medical treatment.
- The school authority or teachers are not required to meet any of the costs associated with the activity.
- Where students of both sexes are participating, then staff or approved persons of both sexes are assigned to be present.
- Satisfactory arrangements are made for those students not attending the excursion. This includes sufficient work and adequate supervision.
- Provision has been made for the consents and permissions to be kept secure by the 'teacher-in-charge' while on the excursion. And the school office has a list of all participants, and a list of contact emergency numbers.
- The excursion group has access to a mobile phone for quick communication if an emergency develops.
- The excursion group has access to a first-aid kit. First aid equipment appropriate to the excursion must be readily available at any time on the excursion. Depending on the nature of the activity, it may be appropriate to have one or more qualified first aid staff present.

- The time taken for the activity does not exceed what is considered to be a reasonable amount of time away from the normal classroom program.
- The staff responsible for the organisation and supervision of the activity are aware of their legal responsibility on such excursions.
- Parents have been notified in advance: Camps, 2 months; Excursions, 2 weeks.
- The Student Activity Locator (SAL) on CEVN is updated by administration staff. This is a record of the activity including overnight accommodation and must be completed at least 3 weeks prior to departure.
- Where 2 or more schools are involved in an activity, each school has applied for approval and, in the case of a joint activity, there should be one nominated 'teacher-in-charge' for the activity.

Permission

For students younger than 18 years, the parent/guardian consent or permission is required. If a child is living independently of the parent/guardian, then the principal will determine if the student can sign enrolment forms and enter agreements with the school concerning medical treatment, outdoor education activities (camps and excursions) and other matters for which the parent/guardian may be asked to give permission. Students 18 years or older do not require parental permission or consent but must personally provide this permission. A personal letter to the parent/guardian advising the precise details of the activity is required. Permissions need to state specific matters and give sufficient information so that the parent/guardian understands what is involved.

The permission form needs to be descriptive and informative: the date and time of excursion, the name of the responsible teacher, the staff who will be attending, the number of students involved, mode of transport, the plan of activities, the aims of the day's activities, emergency contact, time of departure and time of return. This information helps the parent/guardian make an informed decision. And the information needs to be provided in a language that the parent/guardian understands.

Transport

Where vehicles are used to transport people on an excursion, only drivers with licences appropriate to the type of vehicle can be used. Similarly, vehicles should be checked as to their condition. Vehicles should also be an appropriate mode of transport for the number and ages of people travelling and for the type of journey and destination. Though transport department regulations allow for a certain number of people to stand in buses, this practice may not be sound in a school excursion, particularly one involving young children. Instead, the school should hire buses with sufficient seats to cater for the number of people travelling. Where possible, the school should seek buses equipped with seat belts, given the extra safety these would provide. While a supervising teacher cannot influence the skill of a bus driver, he or she can have some influence over the proper loading of the bus, plans as to where children should embark and disembark, and behaviour of students while on the bus.

Insurance

Transport insurance should be arranged to cover accidents en route. If teachers use their own cars to transport students, they should ensure that their insurance cover is adequate, that the school administration is aware of the use of the car for school business and that the car used is safe.

Supervision

An important element in countering risks to students' health and safety on excursions is the provision of appropriate supervision. Schools will often engage parents to assist in excursions. It is important to realise that just as the school cannot delegate a duty of care to a teacher, it will be equally liable for any negligent acts or omissions of supervising parents. All staff and parents who are involved in an excursion should be thoroughly briefed prior to the commencement of the excursion. Roll calls and head counts are important elements of supervision, particularly with certain groups of students and in particular environments. There is always a risk of someone becoming detached from the group during an excursion by simply wandering off, lingering at an interesting attraction, or sustaining an injury, illness or other misfortune which detains them. This may expose a student to further risk of harm, whether they are lost or not. Frequent head counts and roll calls will quickly determine if someone is missing and/or in need of assistance, when time may be critical.

Risk Assessment

The school will assess risks associated with excursions methodically and plan responses to identified risks. The risks involved and the control measures used will depend very much on the particular activity.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle or as required.

Ratified by B.Marrinon, August, 2013.