

SCHOOL TRIPS POLICY

This policy is drafted in the context of the Health and Safety at Work Acts 1989 and 2005, and Circular Letter M20/04 issued by DES.

1. INTRODUCTION

The organisation of out of school group activities has long been an integral part of school life. Such activities may include attendance at sporting events, visits to appropriate exhibitions, conferences, etc. and longer-term educational tours, either in Ireland or abroad. These events serve to significantly enrich both the academic curriculum as taught in school, and the social and personal development of those pupils participating in them.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of organising educational tours is to provide our pupils with opportunities to develop their educational, intellectual, cultural and social skills.

Educational tours and field trips should:

- reinforce classroom activities
- enhance the learning process of as many pupils as possible by providing educational experiences which the classroom alone cannot provide
- support the curriculum content of some subjects through field trips, tours, outings or other recreational activities
- develop interpersonal skills of the students

3. COSTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- The overall cost of the trip should be agreed in advance and should take into account the ability of parents to pay
- The income and expenditure must conform fully with the accounting practices of the school
- A full written account of income and expenditure should be reported back to the Principal

4. ROLE OF Board of Management

- To approve any trip outside the State
- To ensure that the trip offers a worthwhile educational experience for the students
- To ensure that pupils who are not participating in the event are adequately catered for while their teachers are away, in accordance with Circular PPT -1/03
- To consider the timing of the event so that there is minimum impact on the normal work of the school
- To consider the number of proposed events to take place during the course of the year.

5. ROLE OF PRINCIPAL

- The Principal will complete Appendix 1 of Circular Letter M20/04
- The Principal will seek the approval of the Board for any trips outside of Ireland
- A tour leader, whose role will be to ensure that the tour is conducted according to agreed procedures and standards, will be appointed by the Principal and provided with detailed information on procedures
- The Principal will ensure that the following information is available in the school:
 1. A list of those taking part together with home contact details
 2. The itinerary to be followed and contact details of those involved
 3. School mobile contact number for tour leader and teachers

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

- The Tour Leader must have that contact details for school management and parents in the event of an emergency.
- The Tour Leader must carry all relevant personal details regarding each member of the tour i.e. health information, home contact details, approval for medical attention etc.

7. PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO

The ratio of teachers to pupils should reflect the level of risk of the activity and should be increased as the degree of difficulty or danger increases. The following should be considered:

- Gender balance of staff so as to reflect the gender balance of the students travelling
- The age and maturity of the pupils involved
- The number of pupils travelling
- The location of the trip
- The length of the trip
- Additional supervision which may be provided at the destination point
- The type of transport used

8. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

- Parents/Guardians will be informed in writing of any off-site activity or tour
- The content of the consent form will vary according to the type and duration of the trip.
- Before residential visits or when pupils travel abroad or engage in adventure activities parents/guardians will be invited into the school to attend a briefing meeting where details, oral and written, of the proposed trip will be provided

- Pupils must attend all information meetings in school and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the tour
- Following receipt of the non-refundable deposit, parents/guardians will receive a letter asking them to complete a parental consent form. This should be completed for each pupil in the group. Included in this form should be the following:
 1. Any medication the pupil is taking
 2. Any recent illness suffered by the pupil
 3. Any special medical or dietary requirements
 4. If the pupil suffers from travel sickness
 5. The pupil's ability to swim
 6. Any other information the parent deems relevant
 7. The parent's/guardian's mobile and home phone numbers and address
 8. An alternative contact phone number and address
 9. Any special requirements relating to students with disabilities or special needs as related to the trip
- Medical consent will form part of the parental consent form for foreign and residential trips. Parents/guardians will be asked to agree in writing to the pupil receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If the parents/guardians do not agree to this, the pupil will not be permitted on the trip – given the additional responsibility this would entail for the school. Doctors in another country may be reluctant to operate on a student unless assured of parental authorisation for such treatment.
- If a passport is required, a photocopy of the pupil's passport must be included with the final instalment. All passports must be valid for at least six months following the trip.
- Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. Parents should be informed that pupils with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries.
- Parents will be informed in good time if there are any mandatory or recommended inoculations for the destination. It is important that parents realise that the onus is on them to make arrangements for their child to receive all necessary inoculations.
- Pupils must have a current European Health Insurance Card for travel to EU countries and supply a copy of this to the tour leader prior to travel
- It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the tour.
- Parents should be aware that they are responsible for funding the immediate return of a pupil whose conduct gives rise for serious concern on a trip.
- Parents and pupils are advised that deadlines for booking a place on a tour may have to be adjusted if demand exceeds places. Pupils should always assume that places will be allocated on a first come first served basis (provided all conditions are satisfied).

9. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

The Code of Behaviour to be observed during the course of the tour will be the school's Code of Behaviour as adopted by the Board of Management of Pobalscoil Neasáin. All pupils selected for sports teams and who travel as part of a class group represent Pobalscoil Neasáin.

- Parents/guardians will be notified of tours. They will be expected to sign the appropriate consent form. In this way, parents/guardians, pupils and teachers enter into a partnership promising good and appropriate behaviour at all times.
- The school management charge reserves the right to refuse any student they deem unsuitable for the tour. Those considered unsuitable would include:
 1. pupils who in the past have proved unruly or undisciplined on tours
 2. pupils who have a poor discipline record in the school
- Two members of staff, gender appropriate, may carry out inspection of rooms or personal property (bags, suitcases, etc) with the student present. This will only be done when based on reasonable grounds i.e. concern for physical safety, suspected possession or use of a banned substance or other concerns. Students and parents will be made aware of this prior to application to participate on a trip.
- The possession or use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs is forbidden.
- In the event of a serious breach of the school's Code of Behaviour the staff in charge must contact the school management immediately.
- The participation by the pupils in all of the activities of the tour/trip is expected
- Pupils are permitted to bring digital entertainment items including a camera phone on school trips. The taking or sharing of images considered inappropriate is not permitted. Unauthorised recording of staff or pupils, transfer of images of staff or pupils, or using the phone to harass others will be considered a serious breach of discipline.
- Pupils are prohibited from posting images of staff/pupils on social networking sites.
- The school website will be the official record of school trips and pupils will have the facility to submit photographs.
- The Board will respond appropriately in the case of inappropriate camera use and will have the full range of sanctions, including expulsion, open to them.

10. SUPERVISION

- Pupils leaving on a day activity must have their attendance recorded on the Roll prior to departure.
- On trips which involve an overnight stay in Ireland or abroad, pupils will not be directly supervised on a 24-hour basis and all extended school tours will involve periods of time without direct supervision. Parents who are concerned that such a

level of supervision is inappropriate or insufficient should not permit their son/daughter to take part in such trips

- Certain trips may facilitate shopping or recreation which may not be directly supervised. This situation will usually arise for senior pupils and will be indicated on the permission slip, itinerary or information letter sent to parents/guardians.
- Good practice will include:
 - Counting students on/off buses etc.
 - Having designated meeting times and places
 - Pupils carrying identification and contact/itinerary details
 - Pupils always remaining in pairs/groups

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- In case of an accident, expert medical attention will be sought should it be deemed necessary.
- On return from, or during any trip, staff may advise a parent/guardian to seek medical advice.
- Where a serious accident occurs, staff will seek medical assistance as a first priority and contact the school to inform the school management of events. Parents will be contacted by the school.

12. IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- Any teacher wishing to work with pupils after school hours or at the weekend in the school will seek written permission from parent/guardian and provide a list of those participating in the activity to the Principal.

13. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- Pupils who withdraw from a trip after a deposit or full cost has been paid, may not be entitled to a refund
- Any pupil who is prevented from travelling for disciplinary reasons will not be entitled to a refund

14. CONDUCT OF PUPILS

- to be addressed by the Principal or Deputy Principal before departure
- must follow the rules of the hotel/hostel/host family where they are staying
- must be well behaved on public/private transport

- are responsible for leaving their seats on buses, trains, boats and planes tidy
- are responsible for leaving their hotel/hostel room tidy
- Tour leader/teachers to check all rooms and fittings before allowing pupils access to the rooms. This precaution is taken in the event of breakage or damage to property in the room prior to entering and a note must be taken of any area of concern.

15. INSURANCE AND INDEMNITY

- School tours within the island of Ireland by pupils and teachers from Community and Comprehensive schools are normally covered by the State Indemnity.
- Where the tour is involved in an activity of a specialist nature, requiring supervision by trained professionals, the Board of Management may not rely entirely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes.
- In the case of school tours outside of Ireland, the Board of Management should not rely on the State Indemnity for insurance purposes. Appropriate travel insurance must be taken out to cover those embarking on the tour

In considering applications/requests from teachers to bring students on an outdoor activities type tour e.g. Transition Year Group for orienteering, canoeing, hill walking etc. activities the Board should ensure:

- Written applications giving full details of the proposed tour are submitted to the Board of Management.
- The school receives a copy of the Outdoor Activity/Pursuits Centre Public Liability insurance certificate and notes any limitations stated in the policy.
- The school receives details of the professional qualifications/training of the Outdoor Activity/Pursuits Centre staff who will be leading/guiding the students in the specialist outdoor activities.

16. UNIFORM AND DRESS CODE

- Pupils will be required to wear the official school uniform on all trips unless otherwise decided in advance by school Management.

17. REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

A post-trip report should be written to include:

- A review of the educational benefit to students
- A financial statement
- Achievements and highlights
- Any difficulties/problems encountered during the tour

18. EXCHANGE TRIPS

1. The success of an exchange trip depends largely on good relationships and communications with the partner school.
2. School exchanges differ from other trips abroad in that students will spend most of their time with host families and are, therefore, not always under the direct supervision of school staff.
3. Students must be made aware of behavioural expectations agreed with the host family.

The group leader should ensure the following:

- A good personal knowledge of the host school and its environs.
 - Satisfactory 'pairing' arrangements. The partner school should inform the host family of any special, medical or dietary needs of their guests, age and gender.
 - Matches should be appropriate.
 - Parents, students and the host school should be clear about the arrangements for collecting and distributing students to families, and for transporting students throughout the exchange.
 - The principal should retain a list of all the students involved and their family names, addresses and telephone numbers
 - Students living with host families should have easy access to their teachers, usually by telephone and should be provided with a means of communicating with the teacher leading the exchange
 - Parents should be made aware that their children will be living with host families and will not always be under direct teacher supervision.
4. The group leader should ensure that host families are vetted by the Host school. The group leader should, as a minimum requirement, seek assurances from the partner school as to host family suitability.
 5. The exchange organiser should ensure that all necessary insurance arrangements are in place.

Draft Policy adopted by Board of Management Pobalscoil Neasáin 9th March 2010

To be reviewed February 2011