



Excursion Policy and Implementation

Introduction

School excursions and camps are structured learning experiences provided by, or under the auspices of, the School which are conducted external to the School site. They can pose risks. This policy and procedures are directed at managing such risks.

The School is committed to providing a safe, secure, disciplined and quality learning environment in which students can develop their individual talents, interests and abilities through a curriculum that fosters the intellectual, physical, social and moral development of the student. Excursions are part of quality teaching and learning programs.

Excursions are a valuable teaching and learning vehicle, often integral to quality curriculum delivery in that they provide access to teaching content and learning experiences not available at the School.

School excursions vary in terms of the curriculum focus, the students involved, the duration of the excursion and the excursion venue(s). The student group participating in the excursion may be a class or classes or students drawn from a number of classes. They may be, for example, a team, a performance group or an audience for a performance. An excursion can range from a brief visit of less than one hour to a local point of interest, to an extended journey occupying a number of days or weeks requiring overnight accommodation.

Some excursions may involve overseas travel. Particular additional mandatory procedures would relate to such excursions.

Policy statement

1. Determining the educational value of an excursion must take account of the needs and resources of the School, the needs of the students and the total learning program.
2. Excursions are inclusive, and all students within the specific learning group are to be given the opportunity to participate.
3. A duty of care is owed to students in the School environment and while on excursions. The Code of Conduct is applicable on excursions.
4. The duty of care owed to students for the duration of an excursion cannot be delegated from the School to parents, caregivers, volunteers or employees of external organisations.
5. The obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people applies throughout all stages of an excursion, as it does in Schools.
6. A risk assessment is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed prior to excursions.
7. Signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in specific activities provided by outside providers, as well as medical information are to be obtained from parents or caregivers.
8. Safe transport or a safe walking route is to be organised for excursions.
9. Students must behave appropriately at all times while on excursions as per the Positive Behaviour Policy.
10. Incidents occurring on excursions must be reported and records kept.

Implementation

Inclusivity

Excursions are inclusive, and all students in the specific learning group, including those with disabilities, are to be given the opportunity to participate.

Where a student cannot participate in an excursion, alternate activities must be available that provide for similar learning outcomes, particularly where an assessment task relates to the excursion.

The support needs of students with disabilities or medical conditions will require careful consideration and consultation with parents and caregivers. Appropriate support should be provided for these students so they can access the learning experiences available through excursions.

Duty of Care

A duty of care is owed to students in the School environment and while on excursions.

1. Excursions are potentially the most hazardous activities for School-related accidents. The duty of care owed to students applies whether the excursion is held during School hours, after School, on the weekend or during School holidays.
2. Teachers planning excursions must adopt a risk management approach to emergency response planning, including medical procedures, and should check relevant forecasts or other safety warnings, including fire bans, immediately prior to events. In consultation with relevant authorities, Schools must be prepared to alter or cancel excursions due to emerging safety concerns. These decisions must be communicated to students and parents as soon as possible.
3. All excursions must be accompanied by a member of staff whose FIRST AID qualifications are current. An appropriately equipped first aid kit must be taken on all excursions as well as an updated class list containing medical information. If additional or specific requirements for the first aid kit are needed, supplies can be purchased or ordered by the office.
4. Staff planning excursions involving students diagnosed at risk of an emergency will consider issues such as administration of prescribed and emergency medication (e.g. EpiPen, Ventolin) health care procedures and emergency response plans.
5. Particular care should be taken where casual staff attend and/or replace regular staff members on excursions. Among other things, they must be briefed about any student with particular health care needs and the role they may have in supporting those needs. They must also be briefed on any student who is the subject of a risk management plan.
6. Under work health and safety legislation, the School has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of staff at work. Consequently, excursion planning is to take account of staff health and safety issues in addition to those of students.
7. Teacher to student ratios
 - a) The number of teachers to accompany the students for each excursion is to be determined in consultation with the Principal. Decisions about the number of students and teachers should take into account factors such as the age of the students, their maturity, the location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of the activities to be undertaken. Fewer students per teacher will be necessary for some excursions such as aquatic and outdoor recreation activities.

- b) There must be sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults, including support teachers and School learning support officers, to ensure and assist with adequate supervision. Other adults assisting with supervision may include parents, volunteers, specialist instructors and venue staff.
 - c) Students on excursion must be subject to direct adult supervision and should not be allowed to 'go off on their own'. The exception is in Upper Primary and High School when permission has been granted from the Excursion Coordinator/Teacher.
8. Overnight excursions
- a) On overnight and extended excursions, supervisory and accommodation arrangements are to be such that no staff member or accompanying adult is placed in a position where there is potential for allegations of improper conduct to be made. In particular, sleeping and washing arrangements should not place any adults in a situation where the propriety of their behaviour could be questioned. Likewise, for sleeping and supervisory arrangements every attempt must be made to ensure that there is no sexual contact between students.
 - b) For coeducational groups, male and female staff supervisors are required.
 - c) Volunteers on overnight camps require a working with children check obtained through the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian web site.
9. Unsupervised activities
- On rare occasions, where it is proposed that an individual or a small group of mature students participate in a specialised excursion, it may be necessary for part of the excursion (e.g. independent travel) or all of the activity to take place without the direct supervision of a staff member. In such circumstances, it is imperative that parents or caregivers be fully informed of, and agree to the arrangements, and that the Principal and the teacher in charge of the excursion take all steps to ensure the safety and welfare of the unaccompanied students.

Parents, Carers and Volunteers

The School's duty of care owed to students for the duration of an excursion cannot be delegated from the School to parents, caregivers, volunteers or individuals associated with external organisations.

1. Parents or caregivers will frequently volunteer to assist in excursions. The number of parents or caregivers who might be of assistance will vary according to circumstances.
2. The Principal must be satisfied that there are sufficient teachers to maintain adequate control of the whole excursion. Teachers retain the ultimate responsibility for supervision.
3. In most circumstances parents, caregivers and volunteers who assist on excursions should not have to pay to attend.
4. Parents, caregivers and volunteers must be briefed on safety and behaviour measures prior to the excursion to ensure competency.
5. Volunteers on overnight camps require a working with children check obtained through the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian web site.
6. The Principal must ensure that all parents, caregivers or volunteers accompanying School excursions complete a Volunteer Code of Conduct. Volunteers are not to accompany the excursion if:
 - a) they refuse to complete a Volunteer Code of Conduct
 - b) they indicate they are a prohibited person.

Depending on the circumstances, principals might also consider consulting referees.

Child Protection

The obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people applies throughout all stages of an excursion, as it does at School.

1. The same standards of conduct and the obligation to report suspected risk of harm to children and young people, including any allegation of child abuse or misconduct or improper conduct which may involve child abuse by an employee against children or young people, apply throughout all stages of an excursion, as they do in Schools.
2. Students should be briefed about their right to be safe, relevant safety strategies and ways of seeking help should concerns arise during an excursion.

Risk Management

A risk assessment is to be conducted and a risk management plan developed before approval can be given for any excursion.

1. The *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011* requires principals and teachers organising excursions to use risk management to ensure the health and safety of students, staff and excursion volunteers. Risk management supports better decision making by contributing to a greater insight into the potential risks and their impacts.
2. Risk Management Process and Proforma provides advice on the major steps in the risk management process as it relates to School excursions. A sample risk management plan proforma for excursions is provided. The School's WHS Officer can assist with Risk Management plans and proforma.
3. The Principal should ensure that individual health care plans for students with health care needs or disabilities include provision for the management of such conditions on excursions. A copy of this plan should be given to the teacher in charge of the excursion and its implications discussed before departure.
4. The extent of pre-excursion planning will depend on the nature of the excursion and its location. In many situations prior experience of the site or a briefing from a responsible person with a sound knowledge of the site will suffice. However, a visit to the proposed excursion site is recommended when unfamiliar or potentially high-risk activities are contemplated e.g. wilderness camping or field trips to inhospitable terrain. In these circumstances the pre-excursion visit should address issues such as access, injury prevention and emergency evacuation. Note also that staff involved in wilderness camping or field trips to inhospitable terrain or remote areas will require additional skills and competencies.
5. Fundamental to effective excursion risk management is the communication of risk management plans to those who need to know, including staff and other adults on the excursion and appropriate School-based staff members who may be instrumental in initiating emergency response.
6. Where a particular excursion activity requires special protective equipment or apparel (e.g. hard hats, helmets for snowboarding), these must be used. Staff and student safety must not be compromised. Students and staff on outdoor excursions should be encouraged to wear clothing that protects them from the sun, such as broad-brimmed hats and long sleeves and to apply sunscreen. Students should also be encouraged to carry water in a non-breakable container.
7. Staff planning excursions which involve visits to industrial sites must establish the particular requirements relating to site induction by industry employees and the wearing of personal protective equipment, including footwear, by staff and students while on the site.

8. Swimming and water activities:
- a) Where any excursion involves swimming or water activities, the principal must ensure that the eight elements of the [Water Safety Guidelines for Unstructured Aquatic Activity](#) (venue selection; parent/caregiver consent; staff supervision; risk management; staff induction; student induction; testing student proficiency; and classifying students) are all complied with.
 - b) Parents must be asked to indicate the swimming ability of their children when giving consent for students to participate in excursions involving water activities. The determination of whether or not a student will participate in swimming or water activities while on the excursion will not, however, depend solely on advice from parents.
 - c) It will also be necessary to determine the aquatic proficiency of students prior to participation in unstructured aquatic activity. This assessment must take place irrespective of parental or caregiver permission for the students to participate in the swimming or water activities.
 - d) When planning excursions involving aquatic activity other than swimming such as boating, sailing or board riding, the School should investigate requirements relating to the provision of personal flotation devices (such as lifejackets, buoyancy vests or buoyancy garments) and ensure all students and staff comply.

9. Billeting of Students on Excursions

Billeting, which involves students staying overnight in the homes of volunteer host families, and sometimes referred to as “homestays”, is a component of some excursions.

While most homestays are a rewarding and successful experience, students can be placed in situations where they are unsafe or are vulnerable to abusive behaviour. It is therefore important that teachers planning overnight, extended or overseas excursions should recognise their special duty of care for student safety and welfare in these circumstances. They should take all necessary steps to minimise any risks to students.

Processes to screen the accommodation and the billeting families may be difficult to arrange. In these circumstances alternative accommodation may be more appropriate.

If the wellbeing or safety of a student is at risk, or there is a suspicion that this could be so, the student should be relocated to another approved accommodation arrangement and the student's parents informed that this has occurred.

Principals must ensure that all staff have received training in child protection and are aware of the need to be vigilant in all matters relating to the safety and welfare of students involved in billeting.

Consent

Signed consent forms granting permission for students to participate in an excursion and a medical information form are to be obtained from parents or caregivers.

1. Emergency and medical information is updated annually by the office and teachers provided with updated class lists which they should take on excursions.
2. Each term, a General Consent Form is sent to parents by class teachers, listing excursions that are planned for that term and providing relevant information. Parents are required to sign and return to School. Teachers are to provide additional information prior to the excursions.

3. The fact that parents or caregivers consent to the participation of their child in an excursion should not be taken as removing the responsibility of School staff for taking all reasonable steps to ensure the particular activity is safe. For many excursions it will not be necessary to collect new medical information. Medical information held by the School should, however, be updated regularly and as required and take account of activities proposed for the excursion.
4. Information identifying food or other allergies, special dietary needs and other health care related issues (including prior conditions such as medical procedures in the last 12 months), should be provided by parents or caregivers. This information will assist planning to support students and minimise risks, including the risk of exposure to allergens for students at risk of anaphylactic reactions.
5. Excursion consent forms do not create any waiver of rights by the parent or the caregiver in relation to their child. The main purpose of consent forms and information forms is to give enough detail to parents and caregivers to allow them to make an informed decision about whether their child should attend the excursion. It is also to assist the parent or caregiver to provide relevant information to the School about the child's care needs. If, following the return of an excursion consent form, the parent's wishes and consent are not clear to the School, it is incumbent on the School to clarify any unresolved issues prior to the student proceeding on the excursion. This is particularly important when the excursion involves relatively high-risk activities such as swimming or water activities.
6. Excursions involving the same or very similar activities that take place on a regular basis, e.g. each week for a term, are covered by the general consent form. Parents should still be informed of the activity beforehand and have the opportunity to withdraw consent.
7. As a general rule, students without a signed consent form from a parent or carer must not be permitted to participate in a School excursion.
8. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible to obtain signed consent forms from parents or caregivers, oral approval can be sought. The Principal must keep a written record of any oral approvals given by parents or caregivers.
9. In some circumstances, consent forms may need to be translated into languages other than English.
10. If parents or caregivers do not permit participation of a student in an excursion, the School will make available a sound alternative educational experience which provides for similar learning outcomes, particularly where an assessment task relates to the excursion.
11. Collection of personal information such as consent and medical information should be done consistent with the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act](#).
12. **Unscheduled activities:**

In addition to excursions, occasions for leaving the School grounds for brief, local, spontaneous educational activities will arise from time to time. The value of such visits is recognised and on rare occasions there may be insufficient time to obtain the permission of parents or caregivers prior to the visit.

The Principal must be informed prior to the excursion. Teachers should ensure as far as possible the safety and welfare of students and be satisfied as to the value of the visit as an integral part of the School curriculum. It is expected that such local unscheduled "excursions" would not involve vehicular travel.

Transport

1. Safe transport or a safe walking route is to be organised for excursions.
 - a) In some circumstances where the site of the excursion is close to the School, it will be appropriate for students and their supervisors to walk to the site. The decision to walk should be preceded by a risk assessment and the route should be determined consistent with the objective of ensuring staff and student safety.
 - b) Bus, rail and ferry services should be used for School excursions, wherever appropriate.
2. Bus and train travel
 - a) When hiring buses or coaches for excursions, Schools should attempt to hire vehicles with seatbelts wherever practicable and particularly for long distance travel outside urban areas. Seatbelts must be worn on buses and coaches when they are available.
 - b) In the case of large vehicles, the number of passengers must not exceed the number that the vehicle is licensed to carry.
 - c) If students with disabilities are participating in an excursion accessible transport will be required.
 - d) Staff planning excursions involving bus and coach travel, including the use of School owned vehicles, should be aware of the national [heavy vehicle driver fatigue reform](#) program and its impact on travel time and driver availability.
 - e) Drivers of the School's larger bus must have the required licence and be briefed on the use of the bus prior to departure.
 - f) School buses are serviced regularly and undergo regular inspections. These are generally scheduled just prior to camps.
3. Car travel
 - a) The transporting of students in the cars of staff members, parents, caregivers, volunteers and other students should only occur in those circumstances where there is no feasible option available to provide alternative transportation. This may only occur under the following conditions:
 - i. written permission from the parent(s) or caregiver(s) of the student(s) being transported obtained.
 - ii. the driver is licensed.
 - iii. the number of passengers in the vehicle does not exceed the number of seatbelts.
 - b) Comprehensive insurance is not generally required. Nevertheless, comprehensive insurance is required if a member of staff is authorised to use his or her vehicle for official business and wishes to make a claim for the payment of mileage.

Student Behaviour

1. Students must behave appropriately at all times on excursions.
 - a) Students on excursions interact with the public and are representatives of their School and community. Prior to excursions, they should be reminded of expected standards of behaviour and the application of the School's discipline code.
 - b) Policies and procedures relating to student discipline also apply while students are on excursions. The Discipline Policy applies outside of School hours and off School premises because there is a "clear and close connection" between the School, the students and the activity in which they are engaged.

- c) Students who have not displayed sensible, reliable behaviour at School may be excluded from participation in an excursion. This decision will be made by the teacher in consultation with the Principal.
2. Students must behave appropriately when animals are encountered on excursions.
 - a) Students also should be briefed on appropriate behaviour around animals. Responsible behaviour involves not interfering with the animal. Injury is most likely to occur if the animal panics and either attacks or attempts to flee the situation. If people remain calm, the risk of injury to either students or the animal or both will be lessened.
 - b) Appropriate touching of animals, where there is educational value in the activity, should be supervised by teachers, parents, caregivers or volunteers.
 - c) Further information can be found in the [*Animal Welfare Guidelines for Teachers*](#).
 3. Briefing Students Prior to Excursions:
Prior to any excursion, students should be briefed on the School's expectations of their behaviour.

Students should also be briefed about their right to be safe and protected, about protective strategies and of avenues for support should concerns arise. Organising teachers should take time to work with groups of students to consider unexpected situations and risks that might occur during the excursion and to discuss strategies, consistent with the risk management plan, for eliminating or controlling risks. Students should also be given strategies for seeking help and regaining safety.

Individual students with particular health care needs should be briefed about how these needs will be met during the excursion, especially where the arrangements differ from standard practice at School.

Students participating in excursions to communities which are culturally different to their own should be briefed on cultural sensitivities and appropriate communication in cross-cultural contexts.

Students should also be briefed on appropriate behaviour around animals.

Reporting of Incidents Occurring While on Excursions

1. Staff leading School excursions are required to report incidents occurring while on excursion. Such incidents can include those which cause disruption to the excursion, create danger or risk that could significantly affect individuals participating in the excursion, impact on the effective operation of the excursion, attract negative media attention or a negative public profile for the School, or is an incident which WorkCover describes as a “notifiable incident” which must be reported by law.
2. Staff leading the excursion are expected to be familiar with the Kindlehill Incident and Accident Reporting Procedure.
3. Retention of Excursion Records:
Teachers must ensure that a record of all excursions is maintained. The record must include a copy of the risk management plan, any advice given to parents or caregivers, costs and approval letters and administrative, supervision and travel details.

In the event of an injury to a student or third party or property damage during the course of an excursion, all records relating to the particular student as well as any general information about the excursion must be retained until the injured party reaches age 25, or for seven years, whichever is the greater.

4. Insurance Arrangements Relating to Excursions:

The School will not generally accept liability for the loss of, or damage to students', parents', caregivers' or volunteers' personal property brought on excursions or for personal items purchased while on excursions.

Staff members accompanying students on excursions are considered to be "on duty" and are covered by the School's insurance arrangements.'

Staff organising School excursions should establish whether the School has Ambulance School Cover. Schools with such cover are assured that if a student has an accident or falls ill whilst at School or on an organised School activity (such as an approved excursion) and requires the ambulance service, that neither the School nor the parents will be responsible for the payment of the ambulance account.

Please also refer to the Checklist for School Excursions.