



Excursions Policy

Rationale:

Experiences of students outside the school grounds contribute to the development of their understandings, skills and attitudes. The provision of opportunities for students to learn from the wider community builds on and reinforces the school curriculum. Excursions are an important means of providing such opportunities.

Activities conducted outside the relatively protective environment of the school site involve greater risk, therefore particular attention must be given to ensuring the safety and welfare of all excursion participants.

Aims:

To reinforce, complement and extend the learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

To develop an understanding that learning is not limited to school, and that valuable and powerful learning takes place in the real world.

To provide a safe, secure learning experience for students in a venue external to the school.

Implementation:

Approval for excursions

Prior to the conduct of an excursion, the approval of the school council or the principal must be obtained. In approving the excursion, consideration should include:

- the contribution of the activity to the school curriculum
- the adequacy of the planning, preparation and organisation in relation to:
 - the school policy
 - the guidelines and advice provided by the Department of Education and Training in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide, section 4
 - appropriateness of the venue
 - the provisions made for the safety and welfare of students and staff
 - the experience and competence of staff relevant to the activities being undertaken
 - the adequacy of the student supervision
 - the cost.

School council approval

The school council is responsible for the approval of:

- overnight excursions

- camps
- interstate (domestic) visits
- excursions requiring sea or air travel
- excursions involving weekends or vacations
- adventure activities.

Principal approval

The principal is responsible for the approval of all single-day excursions (other than those referred to above that must be approved by school council) and the staff involved that are employed by the Department of Education

Selection of venue

The selection of the venue chosen for a camp or excursion activity must be based on sound risk management principles. Camp or excursion venues should be assessed for their inherent safety and suitability as well as for the risks associated with the activities that may occur during camp or excursion.

When choosing a camp or excursion venue, consideration should be given to the following factors:

- certification
- accreditation
- registration
- references from other schools
- health, hygiene and safety
- cleanliness
- certification and qualifications of staff
- first aid facilities
- buildings and facilities
- condition
- fire precautions
- emergency equipment
- activity equipment and conduct of activities
- condition of facilities
- risk management plan
- safety precautions

- skills and competences of operators
- business administration
- emergency procedures
- currency of emergency plan
- regularity of review and testing
- evacuation procedures
- warning systems
- communications
- participant supervision
- numbers and qualifications of supervisory staff
- experience
- quality assurance and consumer protection

Excursion Emergency Management

The emergency management process in schools should extend to and incorporate all excursions. The four components of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery need to be addressed (see 6.14.1 of the Victorian Schools Reference Guide).

Emergency procedures should include the effects of an emergency on student supervision in the event of excursion staff being required to assist injured students or to go for help.

All excursion staff and, where appropriate, the students need to be familiar with the specific procedures for dealing with emergencies on each excursion. In particular, emergency procedures pertaining to campsites should be explained as soon as practicable after arrival and a trial evacuation exercise should be carried out immediately to ensure that procedures are appropriate and to familiarise staff and students with emergency evacuation protocols.

On days of extreme fire danger or total fire ban, the principal may need to cancel excursions at short notice. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.

All excursion groups and buses used to transport the students are to be equipped with mobile telephones to be used in emergency situations.

Notification of school activity

Relevant details about school council approved excursions should be provided to the Department's Emergency and Security Management Unit using the online notification form available at: www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/forms/school/sal/enteractivity.asp

This notification should be provided at least three weeks prior to the activity.

The information will be used to provide initial information to the emergency services during an emergency. Where additional information is required during emergency, schools will be expected to provide it from the documentation prepared for the activity.

The Emergency and Security Management Branch can be contacted on telephone 9589 6266 if further information is required.

Communication during an emergency

A mobile phone should be taken on every excursion. In the event of an emergency, an accident or an injury to a participant, staff on the excursion should, in addition to undertaking appropriate emergency action, immediately notify the school principal. The principal should make arrangements for the Department's Emergency and Security Management Unit to be telephoned on 9589 6266. This is a twenty-four-hour service.

For excursions held outside school hours, parents/guardians should be advised of the telephone numbers (both during and outside of school hours) of the designated school contact person. While the students are on the excursion, if parents/guardians have reason to believe that an emergency may have occurred (for example, a media report) they should in the first instance contact the school and not personnel on the excursion. This will ensure that the telephone lines are kept free at the excursion site.

Participation Rates

As excursions and incursions are an integral part of the school program, it is not viable to run them with less than 80% participation.

Camps require sufficient participation rates to ensure that they do not run at a financial loss.

Identity tags

Any student with a disability who may have difficulty in communicating in an emergency, should wear an identity tag on excursions that identifies the school and a contact phone number.

Excursion documentation

It is important that relevant details to do with each excursion are provided to the school office and are readily available during both school hours and outside school hours.

These details should include:

- the exact location of the excursion participants at all times, including during travel
- the relevant telephone number(s) through which excursion staff may be contacted in an emergency
- Children, teachers' and parents' names attending the excursion, separated into bus lists.
- Parent permission forms. (Copies to be taken on excursion)

Teachers need to know how many children are attending the excursion and do a regular head-count, including when boarding buses or other transport. If there is a discrepancy, there must be a roll-call using the bus list.

Parental/guardian approval and information

Parents/guardians must provide written approval for their child to take part in an excursion and in any particular adventure activities that will be undertaken during the excursion.

Parental consent is required for the following reasons:

- to authorise the school to have the student in its care after normal school hours (for overnight excursions)
- to authorise the school to take the student out of the school environment (for day excursions)
- to authorise the school to consent to emergency medical treatment for the student
- to enable the parent/guardian to alert the school to any medical condition or allergies of the student
- to provide the process for the parent/guardian to consent to any financial cost of the excursion
- to provide the process for the parent/guardian to consent to the student being sent home from the excursion in the event of serious misbehaviour.

Parents/guardians asked to sign consent forms must be given sufficient information about the nature of the proposed activity and any risks involved, and supervision, to enable them to make an informed decision and to ensure the school obtains a proper consent.

Consent forms are to be taken on the excursion by the teacher in charge. A list of participants and contacts in the case of an emergency should be held by the office staff.

First-aid

Principals and teachers have a legal duty to protect students in their charge from the risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable. They must also assist students who may be injured or ill. As the range of activities undertaken on excursions is extensive, the principal will ensure that excursion staff have levels of first-aid training which are appropriate to the excursion activities and location.

Information to parents/guardians about student accident insurance

It is recommended, particularly where an adventure activity is planned, that parents/guardians should be reminded that:

- the Department of Education and Training does not provide student accident cover or ambulance cover

Student medical information

It is essential that excursion staff have adequate and up-to-date medical information about students who are participating in each excursion. A confidential medical information form must be completed by the parent/guardian of each student in advance of each school council approved excursion. These forms provide the parent/guardian with the opportunity of varying any information given to the school annually for use during normal school hours.

These forms must be taken on the excursion by the teacher-in-charge and be accessible by other excursion staff in emergency situations. The forms will be archived after the excursion.

A student should not be denied attendance at an excursion, including a camp or swimming program, because the parent/guardian refuses permission for a blood transfusion. Transfusions or other courses of treatment are matters for legally qualified medical practitioners.

Teachers cannot be held liable for medical treatment given against the wishes of a parent/guardian.

Guidelines for supervision

Subject to Department of Education and Training requirements and guidelines, the degree of supervision for students involved in school excursions is a matter for local decision. Department guidelines provide the minimum requirements for staff–student ratios, staff experience and staff qualifications. In many instances, principals will implement enhanced measures to cater for the safety of students.

Sufficient excursion staff to ensure appropriate and effective supervision must be provided.

In deciding what constitutes sufficient excursion staff, the principal should take into account the guidelines contained in the *Safety in Outdoor Adventure Activities Series* booklets as well as:

- the qualifications and previous experience of the excursion staff
- the age, maturity, experience and sex of the students
- the size of the group
- the nature and location of the excursion
- the activities to be undertaken
- any other relevant factors of which they are aware.

When requesting parental approval for their child to take part in an excursion, it is essential that parents/guardians are provided with relevant details about the supervision, the nature of the activity and risks involved.

In addition to more specific Department of Education and Training guidelines, the following general guidelines for supervision apply:

- for the great majority of excursions, including those types of excursions for which school council approval is required, the excursion must be under the direct control of a teacher employed by the Department of Education and Training or the school council and at least one other excursion staff member must be present
- for some excursions where it is considered safe and appropriate, principals may approve small group excursions in the local area where the supervision is provided by one or more excursion staff who are employed by the Department of Education and Training or school council (for example, school services officers such as integration aides and teacher assistants)

- Where excursions involve overnight stays for mixed groups, excursion staff should include at least one person of each sex. In primary schools this requirement may be waived where staff of each sex are unavailable.

Excursion staff

In addition to teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training or the school council, excursion staff may include other adults on a volunteer or paid worker basis such as parents/guardians, school services officers, community members, specialist instructors, campsite staff and trainee teachers. All approved excursion staff can be included in the staff–student ratio. School students cannot be used as excursion staff.

In approving excursion staff prior to the excursion, the principal or school council must:

- be satisfied that each excursion staff member is able to provide effective supervision of the activities involved
- ensure that there are sufficient excursion staff to provide effective supervision of students. For the great majority of excursions, including those types of excursions for which school council approval is required, there must be sufficient teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training or the school council to maintain appropriate control of the excursion and of each activity. In general, teachers should comprise at least half of the excursion staff
- ensure that where specialist instructors are employed, they
 - have the necessary skills or qualifications for the activity
 - have appropriate experience for the age and skill level of the students
 - hold appropriate public liability insurance
 - have a ‘Working With Children’ check
- ensure that all volunteers have a current ‘Working with Children’ police check and that their names are recorded for the purposes of volunteer workers’ insurance

It is important that the specific roles and responsibilities of each staff member (teachers, instructors, campsite staff, volunteers etc) are clarified and understood by all staff and students prior to the commencement of the excursion.

Instructors

In some instances schools may use specialist instructors to ensure that excursion activities are undertaken correctly and safely. These instructors can be included in the staff–student ratio with the approval of the principal/school council and can be either volunteers or paid.

While instructors have the technical knowledge and expertise to instruct the students, the teachers have the overall responsibility for the safety and welfare of the students, even where the teachers do not directly provide the actual instruction.

Guidelines for staff–student ratios

Staffing ratios in the Victorian Schools Reference Guide provide the minimum requirements for school excursions. It is the principal’s responsibility to ensure that sufficient excursion staff

are present to provide adequate supervision for students during the excursion and for each activity undertaken.

With few exceptions excursions must be under the direct control of a teacher employed by the Department of Education or the school council and at least two excursion staff must be present.

Day excursions (not involving adventure activities)

- One excursion staff member per twenty students.

Overnight excursions (not involving adventure activities)

- Base camps in residential premises or under canvas: one excursion staff member per ten students.
- Tours, including interstate tours: one excursion staff member per fifteen students.

Student behaviour and discipline

Students and their parents/guardians need to be made aware that acceptable standards of behaviour will be expected during excursions. Disciplinary measures applying to students on excursions should be consistent with the school's student code of conduct.

Use of private motor vehicles

The use of private motor vehicles should be avoided whenever possible, although it is realised that there are occasions when a small number of students may need to be transported.

Excursion staff cannot be directed by their principal to transport other excursion staff, school students or equipment in connection with any school function.

When a private vehicle is to be used to transport students, the parent/guardian of each student should be advised of the name of the driver(s) and requested to sign a consent form for their child to travel in a vehicle(s) driven by the named driver(s).

The principal should verify that any vehicle used for the transport of students is currently registered and that the driver holds a valid driver's licence.

Accurate records should be kept of the names of students travelling in each vehicle used on an excursion. In the event of a road accident, this information may be needed by emergency services for identification purposes and before parents/guardians of the injured can be informed.

Any vehicle used in connection with the school program or any school function should have a comprehensive insurance policy.

Adventure activities

Adventure activities are those that involve greater than normal risk such as:

- travel into a relatively undeveloped area of country in which vehicle contact is difficult and/or uncertain
- areas that have poor network connection
- exposure to the natural elements with less than the normal physical protection provided in day-to-day life

- confrontation with environmental challenges requiring greater reliance upon personal resources than would normally be required in day-to-day life
- base camping, bushwalking, canoeing, snow activities, orienteering, cycling, horse riding, rock climbing and abseiling, swimming (other than school swimming programs), surf activities, water-skiing, snorkelling, sailing and other similar activities

The guidelines and requirements for school excursions apply to the organisation and conduct of adventure activities.

Policies on legal liability, risk management, and emergency and security management should be understood before embarking on an adventure activity.

Information concerning staff qualifications, staff experience, student preparation, protective clothing and other safety measures is provided in the *Safety in Outdoor Adventure Activities Series* booklets. The relevant booklet must be consulted before undertaking adventure activities.

Information provided by community groups and organisations that specialise in adventure activities should also be taken into account, especially for activities that have no Department of Education and Training guidelines.

In line with existing practices, teachers or contracted instructors who lead adventure activities must have the required experience and qualifications or document these in lieu of certification or accreditation. Principals need to carefully check the qualifications and experience of any teacher or instructor who is leading any adventure activity, and make sure that these are appropriate for the activity planned.

Refer to the Reference Guide for specific Student Teacher ratios for adventure activities.

Please also refer to Westbreen P.S. Camping policy.

Refer also to the Reference Guide for specific regulations regarding Swimming and water Safety Programs

Review Cycle and Evaluation:

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

Ratified by School Council: September 2020

Next review: September 2023