



DIOCESE OF
LISMORE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

EXCURSIONS - OVERSEAS AND LONG DISTANCE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

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Related Documentation:	Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore <i>Foundational Beliefs and Practices – The Essential Framework, 2007.</i> Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulations 2013 Administering Medication Standard Operating Procedures Child Protection Policy and Procedures Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Digital Technologies Standard Operating Procedure Excursions Overnight Standard Operating Procedures First Aid Standard Operating Procedure Privacy Policy and Procedures Sports Risk Management Standard Operating Procedure Working with Children Check Standard Operating Procedure

RATIONALE

The school recognises the additional responsibility and level of care that must be undertaken when students are taken long distances from school or overseas. This Standard Operating Procedure is intended to clarify requirements for the planning of excursions of this nature to ensure that legal obligations are met and that values of the school are upheld in what is undertaken. This Standard Operating Procedure establishes a formal procedure for staff to obtain the necessary approval for excursions of this type.

The school is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students, staff and volunteers. This commitment includes the health and safety of staff and students when conducting curriculum activities at school/college or other locations.

School excursions enhance student learning by providing the opportunities for students to participate in curriculum-related activities outside the normal school routine. School activities must be well planned curriculum-related activities that aim to maximise student learning experiences. All planned school excursions are to be approved by the principal and when more than one school is involved, by the principals of all participating schools.

To ensure the health and safety of students and staff, the excursion organisers are required to proactively manage all aspects of and variations to the normal routine. The school's duty of care to students extends to excursions and camps which are integral to student educational programs. Activities conducted away from the school site may increase risks and therefore the standard of care required must reflect the increase in identified risks. The use of the Diocesan MySafety Risk Management process must be undertaken for each excursion or camp.

It is important when considering overnight excursions that the organisers are able to demonstrate that activities have been thoroughly planned to ensure the safety and security of students, staff and others whilst undertaking the activity.

This standard operating procedure specifies the requirements for the planning of overseas and long distance excursions so that legal obligations are met.

SCOPE

These Procedures and the related Policy apply to students enrolled in diocesan schools from Stage 4 to Stage 6. Students in Early Stage 1 to Stage 3 are not to participate in Overseas or Long Distance School Excursions. Schools may add material where necessary to better suit individual school circumstances however the deletion of any prescribed content in this Standard Operating Procedure must be approved by the School Services Consultant.

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Overseas Excursion means an excursion to a place outside of the jurisdiction of the Australian government.
- 1.2 Overseas Immersion Program means when a group of students live in or are involved in another culture for an extended period of time.

- 1.3 Long Distance Excursion means an excursion where the distance from school involves significant extended travel time, 3 days or more by road or air travel.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Long distance excursions must have a clear and demonstrated educative purpose. The educational worth of such an excursion must be carefully assessed, especially in relation to the context of other events at the school.
- 2.2 Overseas Immersion Programs are considered excursions and must comply with this policy and standard operating procedures.
- 2.2 Information needs to be communicated to families so that they are aware that such excursions are approved school activities and that staff are acting as employees whilst on such excursions and will be required to exercise appropriate duty of care. Staff members choose to take part in such excursions. No obligation should be placed on staff in this school to participate in or to organise such an excursion (unless there is a requirement in their contract of employment). Any extra remuneration, other than reimbursement of genuine pre-approved expenses should not be paid in respect of such excursions.
- 2.3 Any such planned excursion must be submitted to the school/college Principal for approval. The concept for the excursion needs to be submitted at least 12 months prior to the planned departure date. Where it is possible detailed arrangements of the trip should be available to the principal at least six months prior to the departure date. In any case the principal must know all arrangements one month prior to departure.
- 2.4 Planning at the school level would normally commence well in advance of this time period particularly where students will need extended training in cultural expectations.
- 2.5 When it has been determined there is an educational need for long distance excursion, the person planning the excursion must ensure all necessary requirements are met in relation to budget and number of supervising teachers to support the number of students attending. A risk assessment of the proposed excursion must be undertaken in MySafety.
- 2.6 A concept proposal must be presented to the principal for approval prior to the excursion being advertised. The sample form to be used for the concept proposal is set out in Attachment A.
- 2.7 If approval for the concept is given the school can then proceed to advertise the excursion within the community and begin detailed costings, risk assessments and travel plans. When the itinerary for the excursion has been developed and student interest is sufficient to proceed, a full proposal should be presented to the principal for approval. An itemised budget and a risk assessment must be attached to the proposal. The form to be used for the formal proposal is set out in Attachment B. The form for the budget is set out in Attachment C.

- 2.8 Teachers should ensure that costs are contained to a moderate level in order to make such excursions accessible to students. Excursions which would place financial pressure on a significant number of families should not be undertaken.
- 2.9 There are potential salary implications for teacher aides on excursions. The salary arrangements for teacher aides participating on the excursion as official supervisors need to be confirmed by the CSO pay staff well prior to departure.
- 2.10 Long distance overseas travel excursions should be planned in and around school holidays unless there is an overriding valid reason for participating during term time. It is recognised that an excursion may commence a few days before the end of a term or a few days after the commencement of a term due to scheduling needs, availability of lower airfares and similar reasons.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

- 3.1 Risk management must be undertaken using MySafety. These well-defined steps which, when taken in sequence, will support better decision making by contributing to a greater insight into risks and their impacts. Applications for overseas and interstate excursions must be inclusive of risk assessment documentation which has been reviewed by the principal. Such documentation is retained at the school/college to assist with future planning of excursions.
- 3.2 The person planning the excursion must consider emergency response planning and should check relevant forecasts or safety warnings immediately prior to the excursion. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website: www.dfat.gov.au should be consulted for travel advice generally and, in particular, for details about countries where travel is not recommended. This check should be done prior to submitting the proposal to the principal and again two weeks before the departure date. Notwithstanding the above, at any point the trip may be cancelled or varied in response to advice provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- 3.3 Excursions should only proceed or continue whilst the official advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade remains at the two lowest safety precaution levels.
- 3.4 Four levels of advice are offered:
 - i. Level 1 Exercise normal safety precautions - Trip can proceed.
 - ii. Level 2 Exercise a high degree of caution - Trip can proceed, however staff are advised to tighten student supervision, restrict student activity and to remain vigilant to potential risks. Families must be advised and requested to check the www.dfat.gov.au site to make an informed decision on whether to allow their child to attend.
 - iii. Level 3 Reconsider Your Need to Travel - Travel not permitted. Insurance policies may not be reimbursed if 'dfat' upgrades advisory from Level 2 to Level 3 or Level 4.

iv. Level 4 Do Not Travel - Travel not permitted. Insurance policies may not be reimbursed if 'dfat' upgrades advisory from Level 2 to Level 3 or Level 4.

3.5 The organizing teacher should subscribe to Travel Updates and register the excursion on Smartraveller.

3.6 The principal should review all Risk Assessments if advisory Level 2 is indicated.

3.7 If the level on Smartraveller should change to an advisory Level 3 or 4 either before or during the course of the excursion the principal should seek advice from the Director of Catholic Schools as to a course of action.

3.8 Individual health care plans for students with specific health care needs or disabilities will need to be developed and should include provision for the management of such conditions on the excursion. The implications of the individual health plans should be discussed before departure.

4. SUPERVISION

4.1 The decision about the number of teachers to accompany the students is to be determined by the principal. This decision will take into account factors such as age, maturity, location of the excursion, specific needs of students, anticipated behaviour and the nature of activities to be undertaken. There must be sufficient numbers of appropriate, responsible adults to ensure and assist with adequate supervision.

4.2 A minimum ratio of staff to students is 1:10. There must also be a minimum of two staff travelling with any excursion group no matter how small the group. It is preferable for there to be three staff travelling on any overseas excursion to ensure adequate supervision in the case of illness of either a student or a staff member. If only two staff are travelling with a group, a third staff member must be on standby and able to travel to meet the group at short notice. A contingency for this eventuality needs to be included in the budget for the excursion. Should a replacement staff member need to travel the cost would be met by the school, rather than being passed on to parents.

4.3 Accommodation and bathroom arrangements are to be such that no staff member or adult is placed in a position where there is potential for allegations of improper conduct to be made. For co-educational groups, male and female supervisors are required.

5. STAFF FARES

Proposals should show how the fares of staff and other accompanying adults are to be met. Students' participation costs are not to be increased to cover the costs of these staff and other accompanying adults without express written notification to the parents of the participating students.

6. STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 makes it unlawful for a school to subject a student to any detriment on the basis of his / her disability. This may be significant if, for example, an excursion is offered for all students taking a particular course, if one of those students suffers from a

disability. All reasonable efforts must be made to enable disabled students to attend excursions with their classes, including thoughtful selection of excursion venues and activities in the first instance.

7. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- 7.1 Financial guidance about setting excursion budgets, and maintaining books of account and records should be obtained. The school accountant is able to provide advice as necessary.
- 7.2 Monies not paid directly to the travel agent must be kept within the school's accounting and banking system.
- 7.3 A separate bank account must not be opened and under no circumstances should any funds be placed in or processed through a private bank account.
- 7.4 Whilst on the excursion, the group leader is advised to keep a daily record or activity sheet briefly recording travel details, activities undertaken and appropriate daily roll calls. All receipts are to be retained for all activities, fares, meals etc. These receipts will be required to support the accounting records for audit by the financial officer on return.
- 7.5 The financial officer is to audit the accounts within 30 days of the completion of the excursion and report to the principal.

8. TRAVEL AGENTS

- 8.1 Ideally the school should obtain at least three quotes from licensed travel agents before selecting the successful travel agent however, it is recognised that this is not always possible in regional towns. The school will regularly 'test' the market to see if the best value is being obtained. Quotes and records of market testing are to be kept on file.
- 8.2 Staff intending to organise travel for students must take note of the following legal advice from the Ministry of Fair Trading.
- 8.3 "Schools may be able to arrange some travel for students without breaching the Travel Agents Act ("The Act"). The extent to which a school carries on the activity of arranging travel will ultimately determine whether or not they are "carrying on business" as a travel agent without a licence, in breach of the Act. The risk of breach can, however, be minimised by engaging the services of a licensed travel agent whenever practicable."
- 8.4 Where a school intends to engage the services of a licensed travel agent they should engage the agent before taking any money from students and obtain the agent's agreement to the school receiving and holding that money as agent for the travel agent. Alternatively, all monies should be paid directly to the travel agent. In this way, students' monies are "protected" by the Travel Compensation Fund should the travel agent or school fail to account for the money. Monies received from other sources, e.g. through general fund raising, are to be held in the school's normal bank account.

9. INSURANCE

- 9.1 Travel insurance must be arranged before any non-refundable bookings are made.

- 9.2 Reimbursement of travel insurance in cases where Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade upgrades the travel advisory from Level 2 to Level 3 might be problematic. Schools are to notify families that should this occur reimbursement may not be possible and the school is not liable (see <http://smartraveller.gov.au/travel-advice-explained.html>).
- 9.3 Every member of the excursion group should have personal travel insurance cover for the full period of the excursion. Families should arrange personal travel insurance for students, including appropriate cover for personal property. Proof of that cover must be provided to the principal prior to embarkation on the excursion.

10. PASSPORTS AND VISAS

- 10.1 Where the excursion is to another country or countries, the staff member responsible for organising the excursion and the principal must check each participant's passport and visas (when required). Passports must be current and the expiry date must not be within six months of the date that the excursion will arrive back in Australia. Any visas required must be valid for the dates of the excursion. If more than one country is to be visited more than one visa may be required.
- 10.2 The excursion organiser needs to be aware that for students travelling on non-Australian passports there may be different visa requirements, including the need for a visa to re-enter Australia.
- 10.3 The excursion organiser will give careful consideration to ensuring the security of passports whilst the group is overseas. This might involve staff members collecting and holding student passports. The decision about who will hold passports will depend on the size of the group, the countries visited and the age of the students.
- 10.4 Each staff member is to have in their luggage a full set of copies of the passports of each member of the excursion group. This may be in the form of photocopies or in digital form. A full set must also be held at the school.

11. STUDENT EXPENDITURE ON TOUR

The school recommends that personal spending money is taken in the form of a prepaid travel card issued by financial institutions or available through Australia Post. It is expected that the travel card is used to cover expected expenditure that is unable to be covered prior to departure by the school or incidental personal expenditure. The student is fully responsible for their own card and for following instructions on its use provided by the financial institution. Students may access automatic teller machines whilst on the excursion and, therefore, are responsible for complying with security measures required by the relevant financial institution.

12. MEDICAL FORMS

An updated school medical form must be obtained for each student and taken with staff on the excursion. Prior to departure all staff members attending the excursion must acknowledge that they have read each medical form so that he/she is aware of potential medical emergencies that may arise such as asthma attacks or serious allergies. (See Appendices H and I). An appropriate plan of action in such an event should be discussed with the principal prior to departure.

Attachment D contains a model medical and family consent form.

13. MEDICATIONS – OVERSEAS DESTINATIONS

- 13.1 The organiser of the excursion must ensure he/she has a medical certificate to cover any prescribed medication being taken on the excursion. This will necessitate the student/teacher/helper taking the medication, obtaining this certificate from their medical practitioner. The medical practitioner will need to check that the particular medication is permitted to be brought into the country concerned.
- 13.2 Older students should be responsible for their own medication. The Family Authority and Consent Form – Attachment D has further advice on medications.

14. BILLETING

- 14.1 If students are to be billeted whilst on the excursion the principal will check that the host school has procedures in place that ensure the safety and welfare of visiting students. This assurance needs to be in place prior to the excursion proposal being approved. (See Attachment F for good practice in billeting.) Billeting is only to occur when two or more students can be billeted at the one location. All billeted students must be in possession of their own mobile telephone with available credit that operates in the location of the billeting for emergency contact.
- 14.2 During the excursion, 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 family informed that this has occurred.
- 14.3 Principals must ensure that all staff and accompanying adults travelling with the students 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.
- 14.4 Mobile numbers of students must be kept by the organiser and colleague teachers. Students expressing concerns about safety or comfort when in billeting situations must be attended to immediately and alternative arrangements put in place.

15. FIRST AID

All staff members of the excursion group must have a current qualification in First Aid and CPR. At least one staff member must hold a current Senior First Aid Certificate. A copy of all current certificates should be attached to the application form.

16. EMERGENCIES

- 16.1 There must be a plan of action and agreed notification procedure approved by the principal prior to departure, in case of illness, accident or other emergency.
- See Attachment E for an Emergency Contact Information form.
- 16.2 Every staff member must have a mobile phone that will operate in the countries visited - either an Australian SIM card with global roaming or a SIM card bought in the country

visited. Students are to be given these phone numbers. At least one staff phone number must be known prior to the group leaving Australia and provided to the school and to families prior to departure. This will be the emergency contact phone and must be left on 24 hours a day. Families should also be given an emergency contact number for the school for the full period of the excursion.

16.3 The Principal is required to ensure that they have the contact details the Director of Catholic Schools in the event that an emergency situation arises or a change in the Smart Traveller Level changes from Level 3 to Level 4.

17. FAMILIES AND ACCOMPANYING ADULTS

17.1 Families and accompanying adults must be briefed on arrangements prior to the excursion and sign to say they are aware of the risk management plan, accommodation arrangements, supervision details and the itinerary. (See Appendices H and I).

17.2 On the rare occasion where it is proposed that a student or group of students will participate in an independent activity without the direct supervision of a staff member, it is imperative that the family be fully informed of, and agrees in writing with the arrangements.

18. FINAL PLANS

Details of final itinerary, insurance details, rules, medical forms, emergency contact details (phone, email etc), a full list of all students, teacher and accompanying adult names and addresses and any other related documents must be lodged with the principal at least one month prior to departure. Teachers and accompanying adults must acknowledge they have read the policy, procedures and risk management plan prior to departure. (See Appendices H and I)

19. REPORT

Upon completion of the excursion, a summary report must be submitted to the principal together with any photographic or film record which may be required for the school magazine or website.

20. EXCURSION RECORDS

The principal must ensure that all records of the excursion are retained. This includes a copy of any advice given to families, costs, approval letters and administrative and travel details. In the event of an injury to a student or property damage, records relating to the excursion must be retained until the injured party reaches the age of 25, or for seven years, whichever is the greater.

21. ALCOHOL

20.1 Students must not be served alcohol under any circumstances even if some students are 18 years of age. This is regardless of licensing laws in the country or countries being visited.

20.2 The students' welfare is to be considered at all times. Alcohol must not be consumed by teachers or accompanying adults whilst on the excursion.

22. APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

22.1 Students should be instructed on appropriate behaviour, as they are ambassadors of the country and the school whilst they are away. Students participating in excursions to communities which are culturally different from our own should be briefed on cultural sensitivities (e.g. dress) and appropriate communication in cross cultural contexts.

22.2 Any grossly inappropriate student behaviour on the excursion must be reported to the principal immediately. Arrangements need to be in place to facilitate the return to their families of any student who exhibits behaviour that seriously endangers themselves or others. Written confirmation from families must be obtained prior to departure of the excursion to acknowledge agreement to the arrangements proposed.

22.3 Staff are required to ensure full adherence to the CSO Code of Conduct SOP.

23. CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

23.1 Students should be briefed about their right to be safe and protected, and about positive strategies and avenues for support should concerns arise. Organising teachers should take the time to work with students to consider unexpected situations and risks that might occur during the excursion and to discuss strategies for eliminating or controlling risks (as in risk management plan).

23.2 The legislative requirements relating to mandatory reporting of children and young people who may be at risk of harm will need to be considered and procedures set up to ensure compliance for both teachers and accompanying adults. Principals must keep a record of the names of each accompanying adult (including any adult family members of staff travelling with the excursion), their WWCC number, the expiry date of the certificate and the date of verification by the principal of that number.

24. FRINGE BENEFIT TAX IMPLICATIONS

24.1 If the school is 'part funding' this excursion, teachers should be aware that Fringe Benefit Tax may apply to any portion of the trip that is not part of the group itinerary. A full travel diary, noting each work activity, the nature of that activity, the duration, where and when it took place and the date the entry was made, and all relative receipts, will need to be kept to substantiate the non-payment of Fringe Benefit Tax.

24.2 An employee declaration must be obtained in all cases where appropriate receipts are not provided. It is expected that this would be the exception. A copy of the travel diary and employee declaration for each funded teacher is to be kept on the school file for audit purposes.

25. ORGANISATION FLOW CHART

See Attachment G.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approval Date	Authorised By	Notes
1	May 2012	Assistant Director – Education Services	Originally released
2	December 2014	Assistant Director – Education Services	Reviewed
3	July 2016	Assistant Director – Education Services	Reformatted
4	September 2019	Assistant Director-SRS	Reviewed and changes made