

Athboy Community School

Policy on Overnight Expeditions or Trips Abroad

Rationale

The Board of Management supports the active involvement of staff in organising trips/ outings / activities for the pupils, viewing this as an enriching part of the school experience. The following information is provided to assist staff in the planning and conduct of such activities and ensure that such activities meet the necessary requirements of health, safety and welfare for all involved.

Scope

This policy deals with events that entail a great deal of structured organisation such as residential, field and adventure trips as well as foreign tours/school exchanges. Guidelines for day/trips/sporting activities are contained in a separate document

Approval of Board

Members of staff, who wish to take students on an overseas trip, must submit their request for approval to the Board of Management by completing the **attached Trip Proposal at least six months** in advance (Appendix 1). Included in the proposal, should be the educational or other benefits that the students will derive from the trip. The Board of Management will consider the following when reaching its decision

- The appropriateness of the proposed trip in terms of DES Circular M20/04.
- The impact on students not participating in the trip.
- The staffing arrangements for the trip and for the school
- The financial controls in place for the trip
- The most current information available on security issues in the country or countries of destination.
- In the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Board of Management to discuss the cancellation of a previously approved trip the Board will delegate this decision making role to the Event Leader.

Except in the case of school exchanges, the school will only use the services of licensed tour operators/travel agents when organizing trips outside the state.

Supervision

The number of students participating varies depending on the nature of the trip and the staff/student ratio will be appropriate to the age group, gender and as recommended by the travel agency. The Board recommends that the following ratios should apply as general principles regarding the supervision of students on particular trips:

Field Trips: (Ireland)	1 Teacher: 20 Students(may vary depending on centre)
Adventure Activities	1 Teacher: 10 Students (may vary depending on centre)
Residential Trips	1 Teacher: 10 Students
School tours (Abroad)	1 Teacher: 10 Students
School Exchanges	1 Teacher: 10 Students

Regular head counting of students should take place, particularly when leaving any venue. All supervisors should carry a list of all students and adults involved in the activity. The group leader should establish rendezvous points and tell students what to do if they become separated from the group. The group leader should ensure that all supervisors are aware of their duties and responsibilities during the trip.

Remote supervision may have to take place on occasion, e.g. if students are on shopping trips, certain adventure activities, during parts of school exchanges. Parents should be notified of this in advance. Students should be advised to stay in groups of at least 3 or 4 students, as appropriate and adequate arrangements should be made re: checking in with supervisors at certain times.

Teaching Staff will be informed of planned expeditions and invited to indicate to the teacher-in-charge if they are interested in being a member of the staff team that will accompany the students. All members of staff will be expected to share the work load beforehand, where necessary and during the trip. Decisions about which members of staff join a trip will depend on such factors as the size of the group, the gender balance, requirements specific to the particular trip e.g. Irish teachers on a trip to the Gaeltacht, French and/or German teachers on a trip to Europe, teachers with Outdoor qualifications on adventure trips, Year Head/Tutor with year group, a mixture of male and female staff in the case of mixed gender groups.

Financial Guidelines

The following general financial guidelines should be followed when organizing a trip

- At least two teachers should be involved in the financial administration.
- Separate financial records should be maintained for each school trip.
- A detailed record of all participating students and the amounts paid should be retained.

- Where school tours abroad are being organized all monies must be paid directly to the tour operator or travel agent and not to staff or event coordinator(s).

Parents should be informed as early as possible of the full cost associated with the trip. Written permission should be received from the parents of all trip participants and a receipt for all money paid should be issued.

Proper and full insurance cover must be in place for all school trips.

Students should be required to pay an initial deposit, followed by the remainder of the money within a stated period of time. They should be given at least one month from the date of distribution of the details of the trip to pay the deposit. In order for a student to participate in the trip all outstanding school fees should be in order before the initial deposit is paid. All payments should be made directly to the tour operator as directed by the tour organizer.

A financial statement should be submitted to the Board of Management within 28 days of return. This should include all details of income and expenditure in relation to the trip as well as a balancing statement.

Access

In the case of trips being oversubscribed, priority is given to those students who are studying the appropriate subject. All students who want to participate should be facilitated in as far as possible. School Management reserves the right to withdraw permission for a student to participate in an activity where there is evidence that the student has engaged in behavior in school that could jeopardise the programme or does not have a satisfactory record of attendance.

Information to Parents/Guardians/Pupils

The initial letter to parents should contain a draft itinerary and deadline for registering and payment of non-refundable deposit. Parents must be made aware that the organiser reserves the right to make minor changes to the itinerary, that deposits may not be refundable and that students on the de-privileged list on the day of departure may not be able to participate in the trip.

Before residential visits or when students are to travel abroad parents/guardians and pupils should be invited to attend a briefing meeting where details (oral and written) of the proposed trip should be provided. There should be alternative arrangements for parents who cannot attend.

Students should clearly understand what is expected of them and what the activity will entail. They must understand what standards of behavior are expected of them and why rules must be followed. Students should be made aware of any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. Parents/Guardians and students should be told in advance about the procedures for dealing with misbehavior, how a student will be returned home safely and who will meet the cost.

Documentation

If a passport is required, a photocopy of the student's passport must be included with the deposit. This should be taken on the trip for emergency use. All passports must be valid for at least six months following the trip.

If a group includes students whose national or immigration status or entitlement to an Irish passport is in doubt, it is advisable to make early enquiries to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Justice and Law Reform and the Passport Office.

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/guardians should be informed that students with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries.

If a student is subject to a care order, foster parents will need to ensure that Social Services consent to any proposed trip. If a student is a Ward of Court, the principal should seek advice from the Court in relation to trips abroad well in advance.

Students must have their European Health Insurance Card for travel to countries in the EU.

It is important to impress upon parents that the onus is on them to ensure that their son/daughter has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the trip.

Parents should 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 son/daughter to receive all necessary inoculations

Students must attend all information meetings and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the trip.

Parents must sign parental consent forms specific to the trip for students up to the age of 18. In addition to contact details, this should include details of medical conditions, current medication or dietary requirements as appropriate. A medical consent form should be part of the parental consent form for foreign and residential trips. Parents/Guardians should be asked to agree to the student's receiving emergency treatment including anesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities.

The school management may decide that students with certain medical conditions may not be brought on trips. Such decisions shall be taken on the basis of medical evidence and in the interest of the health and safety of the student and others.

Mobile phone communication between teachers/supervisors and students on the trip may be necessary. A list should be made of participants' mobile phone numbers (as given on the Consent Form) and students should have the mobile phone number of trip leader *assigned by the school* – to be carried with them at all times while on the trip. A mobile phone is available from the School for foreign or overnight trips, as staff members are not required to give their personal mobile phone numbers to students.

The trip organiser should have two emergency contact numbers; usually this will be the Principal and the Deputy Principal.

Insurance

Public and Employer's Liability

The Board's Public and Employer's Liability policies operate to cover the legal liability in relation to Educational Tours/Activities organized by the school subject to the normal terms, conditions and exceptions of the policies.

Where activities are of a specialist or high risk nature the teacher organizing the activity should ensure that the centre providing the activity is a reputable provider and that evidence of their Public Liability Insurance including an indemnity to the school and the Department of Education and Science is obtained. The current recommended indemnity is €10 million.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance should be organized for educational tours/activities which involve travel outside the island of Ireland. School tour operators normally provide travel insurance as part of the tour package. However, when travel and accommodation are organized directly by the school (e.g. language exchanges). Travel insurance must be organized with the Travel Agency or an Insurance Broker. Exclusions in the Travel Insurance Policy should be noted, including the cost of early repatriation should this be necessary.

Personal Accident Insurance

It is the school practice to cover all students for Personal Accident insurance.

Supervision

Where groups consisting of boys and girls are sharing accommodation boys and girls should stay in separate rooms. If necessary two members of staff should carry out inspection of rooms or personal property (bags, suitcases etc) with the student present. This will only be done for good reasons based on reasonable grounds, such as concern for physical safety, suspected possession or use of a banned substance or other concerns.

Staff should not have any physical contact with a student's clothing. If a search is deemed necessary, the student should be asked to empty his/her own pockets or to search the clothing that he/she is wearing.

If a student is found to be in serious breach of any of the rules in the School Code of Behaviour, the staff in charge must contact the Principal immediately.

An Accident/Incident Report Form (see attached) must be completed for all accidents or incidents which have occurred. Examples of reportable incidents include: persistent lateness at the rendezvous point; not staying with the group; rudeness to teachers; and serious breach of school rules, particularly in relation to alleged or proven alcohol or substance abuse.

Members of staff taking students on trips which involve travel in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out later in this policy document. (Appendix 2)

A rota should be organized to assign nighttime corridor duty.

Exchange Trips

School exchanges differ from other trips abroad in that students will spend a lot of their time with host families and are, therefore, not always under the direct supervision of school staff. The group leader should remember that host families are not subject to Irish law.

Students must be aware of behavioural expectations agreed with the host family. The group leader should ensure the following:

1. A good personal knowledge of the host school and its environs.
2. Satisfactory "pairing" arrangements. The partner school should inform the host family of any special, medical or dietary needs of their guests, age and gender.
3. Matches must be appropriate.

4. Parents, student and the host school should be clear about the arrangements for collecting and distributing students to families, and for transporting students throughout the exchange.
5. The principal should retain a list of all the students involved and their family names, addresses and phone numbers.
6. Students living with host families should have easy access to their teachers, usually by telephone.
7. Parents/Guardians should be made aware that their children will be living with host families and will not always be under direct teacher supervision.

The group leader should ensure that host families are thoroughly vetted including criminal background checks insofar as these are available. The group leader should, as a minimum requirement, seek assurance from the partner school as to host family suitability.

The success of an exchange trip depends largely on good relationships and communications with the partner school.

Sanctions on Tour

The Tour Leader will avail use sanctions as deemed appropriate. A verbal warning may be adequate in some cases. However, if the misbehaviour is deemed to be more serious, the student(s) involved may also miss out on certain activities at the tour Leader's discretion. A student prevented from participating in an activity must be supervised by a teacher for the full duration of the activity. Further sanctions may be imposed following the student's return to school, including being banned from future trips.

In the case of very serious misbehavior, e.g. use/possession of alcohol, illegal substances, cigarettes; disruptive behavior on coach, plane, boat or in accommodation; lack of respect for accompanying adults; theft or criminal damage, the parents/guardians will be informed and if necessary arrangements will be made for the offending student to travel home. The parents/guardians may be liable for the extra cost involved in this instance.

In the case of a serious/criminal incident, such as shop lifting/violent attack, the parents will be informed immediately and the matter will be handed over to the local police authorities

Emergency Procedures

If an accident/incident happens, the priorities are to:

- Access the situation.
- Safeguard the uninjured members of the group.

- Attend to the casualty.
- Inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know about the incident.

The group leader should take charge in an emergency and ensure that back up cover is arranged.

All those involved in the school trip should be informed of the proposed arrangements in advance.

There should be a named school contact with all the necessary information about the trip. This person is the school's link with the group and the parents/guardians, and to provide assistance as necessary.

If an emergency occurs on a school trip, the main factors to consider include:

- i. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible.
- ii. Ensure that the group is safe and looked after.
- iii. Establish the identity of any casualties and get immediate medical attention for them.
- iv. Ensure that parents/guardians are informed and in cases of minor injury adequate arrangements should be made, where appropriate, to get the student home, to liaise with the parents and to ensure that the injury is monitored.
- v. Ensure that all members who need to know are aware of the incident, and that all group members are following the emergency procedures.
- vi. Ensure that the teaching personnel accompany casualties to hospital and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together.
- vii. Notify police if necessary.
- viii. Notify the Irish Embassy/Consulate, if abroad and if appropriate.
- ix. Inform the school contact.
- x. The following details should be passed on to the school via the school contact:
 - Nature of the incident.
 - Date and time of the incident.
 - Location of the incident.
 - Names of casualties and nature of injuries.
 - Names of others involved so that parents can be reassured.
 - Names of witnesses.
 - Action taken so far.
 - Action yet to be taken and by whom.
- xi. Notify insurers, especially if medical attention is required. This may be done by the school contact.
- xii. Where relevant, notify the Travel Agent or transport operator. This may be done by the school contact.

- xiii. Ascertain telephone numbers for future calls. Landlines should be used, where practicable, to ensure quality of communication.
- xiv. Write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details, and preserve vital evidence.
- xv. Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident.
- xvi. Complete the Committee's accident report form as soon as possible. Copies should be brought on residential and foreign trips.
- xvii. No one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to families. Media enquiries should be referred to a designated media contact in the home area.
- xviii. No one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties.
- xix. In the event of an emergency at home parents should contact the group leader/school contact, who will then liaise with the student.
- xx. In the event of an emergency on the trip, students should not contact home directly, before the group leader/school contact has done so or directed by the group leader.
- xxi. Appropriate first aid equipment should be brought on all trips, as well as a person who is competent to use the contents of the first aid box.

Conclusion of Tour

Within two weeks of returning to the school the tour Leader should provide the Board of Management with a general written report outlining:

1. The achievements/success of the tour.
2. A completed Financial Statement.
3. Details of any incidents which necessitated the imposition of sanctions.
4. Details of any incidents which necessitated medical intervention.
5. Details of any changes which were made to the original itinerary and why this was necessary.
6. Recommendations for future overnight expeditions or trips abroad.

Adopted at Meeting of Board of Management on 18th September 2013

Amended at Meeting of Board of Management on 25th January 2016

Amended at Meeting of Board of Management on 15th December 2016

Appendix 1

ATHBOY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Details of Proposed Overseas School Tour

Tour Dates

From _____ **To** _____

Number of School Days _____

Brief Outline of Tour

Number of Students Participating _____ Male _____ Female

Expected benefit to accrue from the tour

Why is the tour deemed to be necessary?

Adults accompanying the students

Group Leader _____

Number of other teachers _____ Male _____ Female

Number of other adults _____ Male _____ Female

Confirmation

That appropriate arrangements are made for those classes whose teachers are absent with the tour

Yes _____ No _____

That adequate Insurance is in place to cover all risks while on tour

Yes _____ No _____

That parental permission has been secured for each student who is to participate on the tour.

Yes _____ No _____

Signature of Group Leader _____ Date _____

Signature of Principal _____ Date _____

Appendix 2

Coach Trips

Members of staff taking students away in coaches should note and apply the following:

All coaches used by the school must have an up to date PSV License and Cert.

Before setting off, the emergency exits must be pointed out to students.

Central aisles and access to exits must be kept clear at all times.

Students must be advised to remain seated facing forward and not to have unnecessary movement during the journey. Where seat belts are fitted, these must be used.

Smoking is not permitted on board coaches.

In the event of any emergency, students should leave the coach by the nearest exit as quickly as possible and re-assemble at a given area where a head-count can be quickly made.

Students should not go back to the coach for any reason until the all clear is given..

If the teacher in charge considers that there was anything the matter with the coach or driver, a full report must be given to the Tour Company as soon as possible.