

Athboy Community School



Trips/Events and Visitors Policy

September 2024

Trips and Outings Policy

1. School Mission Statement

Athboy Community School prides itself on creating a safe, caring, creative and culturally diverse environment and on offering an innovative curriculum which challenges students to reach their full potential.

We promote an open culture in which relationships between staff and students are prioritised. We commend and reward positive behaviour and encourage student participation in all aspects of school life so they can flourish academically, physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically.

"Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí"

Our Core Values

Our Core Values are: Care, Inclusion, Safety, Creativity and Respect

2. Aims and Objectives of the Outings and Trips Policy

2.1 Scope of Educational Outings and Trips Policy

This policy applies to all members of the staff of Athboy Community School who take students off site. It is applicable to the students participating in the activity and to their parents/guardians.

2.2 Rationale

Athboy Community School strives to provide an effective education for all its students and is committed to the education, in the broadest sense of the word, of all students who attend the school.

The curriculum content of some subjects requires field studies/trips/outings/ recreational activities, which take place off school grounds.

Trips assist in bonding between students, as well as providing teachers/SNAs with an opportunity to get to know students in a non-classroom environment.

There should be a balanced programme of outings and trips for the school year that does not prove too costly to parents and does not overburden the school timetable.

All education trips must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the Department of Education & Skills in Circular Letter M20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy all of the criteria contained in this circular.

The school owes a huge debt of gratitude to each and every member of staff who facilitate the involvement of our students in extracurricular activity.

2.3 Permissions

The Learning Code of Athboy Community School applies to all students of Athboy Community School and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours; it applies both on and off the school grounds and anywhere students are clearly identified as students of the school.

The Learning Code applies to all outings and to trips, whether or not they involve an overnight stay.

Before a student is accepted for a trip, their previous behaviour may be taken into consideration. All students will need Year Head Permission to attend all trips or outings. Parents/Guardians will be notified, in advance, of all trips and parents/guardians should sign the appropriate consent form through school app. In this way parents/guardians, students and teachers enter into a partnership promoting good and appropriate behaviour at all times.

2.4 The Purpose of the Policy

- To assist staff in the planning of trips and outings, so that they are aware of all necessary precautions which must be observed to provide for the health and safety of staff and students. It also ensures that trips and outings take place efficiently and smoothly and that the standard of supervision is firmly within guidelines and standards as determined by the Board of Management.
- To clarify expectations of behaviour for all trips and to outline the conditions whereby a student may be refused permission to be included on a trip.

2.5 Objectives

- That the health, safety and welfare of our students is safeguarded by ensuring that reasonable care has been taken in the nature of the trip chosen, the level of supervision provided, the venue, the means of transportation, the demands on the physical resources of the students, having regard to their age and capacity, and the dangers to which they may be exposed.
- The students gain maximum educational benefit and enjoyment from all trips/outings.
- That staff are aware that the degree of care required of them should be that of a 'careful parent' which would vary with the circumstances and the age of the student.

3. Types of Trips and Outings

This includes matches and sporting events, career days, visits to academic institutions or cultural or fun activities.

3.1 Day Trips within Ireland

- Day trips may take place during the school day or may extend beyond normal school hours.
- Day trips must have the approval of the Deputy Principal and Principal.
- Members of staff who wish to take students on a day trip must make their request to the Deputy Principal and Principal giving as much notice as possible.
- If buses need to be hired, the organising teacher will contact the bus companies.
- Specific parental permission is required for any trip.
- Members of staff must follow the protocol for taking students out on extra-curricular activities.

- Students who have not adhered to the Learning Code may be excluded from trips.
- Once the Deputy Principal/Principal has approved a trip, the organiser should send a list of students participating in the trip to the teaching staff by email and create a group in VS Ware for the recording of attendance.
- On all trips there must be an appropriate ratio between the number of students and the number of staff travelling. This ratio will vary depending on the nature of the trip and the age of the students travelling. On a private coach there should be at least one member of staff in addition to the driver. The Board of Management has determined at the first BOM Meeting of the year is 10:1.
- Day trips may involve a financial cost to the student. For example, a fee may be charged to cover the cost transportation to/from sporting events. This must be approved by the principal and all fees to be paid in advance of the trip through the app.
- The school will always have the mobile/contact numbers of the coach company or staff involved in case of delays or any other occurrences.
- On occasion it may be suitable for Senior Cycle students to travel independently to and/or from an event. In such an instance, the organiser of the trip must advise parents and senior management in advance. Junior Cycle students may not do so.
- For trips that extend beyond normal school hours, it is responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that arrangements are in place for their son/daughter's journey to/from the school. The organiser of the trip must be informed in advance of these arrangements.
- A member of staff should never intentionally arrange to travel alone with a student.
- A risk assessment should be done prior to the trip to assess the level of staffing required and the possible risks inherent in the planned activity.
- Staff must check that the students on the trip have the necessary equipment or medication appropriate to their medical conditions as recorded in the school medical records, eg, inhaler
- A review of the trip should take place afterwards to evaluate the activity or transportation so that other staff can decide to repeat the activity at another time.
- An Accident/Incident Report Form 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.
- From time to time retreats will be organised for students and the expectation is that students will be respectful of the atmosphere of reflection and of the host(s) of the retreat.
- Parents are expected to make arrangements to drop off or collect their children before and after trips or to let the school know well in advance if they are unable to do so.

3.2 Overnight trips, inside or outside the Republic of Ireland

- Members of staff, who wish to take students on an overseas trip, must submit their request for approval to the principal, who will then seek Board of Management approval. Included in the proposal should be the rationale and educational benefits that the students will derive from the trip.
- 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 and as recommended by the travel agency and approved by the Board of Management.
- In the case of trips being oversubscribed, priority is given to these students who are studying the relevant subject. The school reserves the right to refuse students who have not adhered to the Learning Code in the School. The Year Head will make that decision in conjunction with the deputy principal.
- Before a student with a medical condition is accepted to participate in a trip the school must be confident that they can manage the needs of the student without compromising the health & safety of the student in question and the other students participating or the itinerary of the trip. Each case will be considered on an individual basis in consultation with parents.
- The initial letter 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.
- Parents are expected to ensure that all payments are paid to the travel company who is organizing the trip. Failure to comply with the arrangements set out by the travel company may result in loss of deposit etc...
- If a passport is required, parents/guardians should ensure that passports are valid for at least six months following the trip.
- Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. Parents should be informed that students with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries.
- Students must have their E111 or 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 child 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 understand that the onus is on them to make arrangements for their child to receive all necessary inoculations.
- Students must attend all information meetings and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the trip.
- Following payment of the deposit to the travel company, parents will receive the Permission Letter and Form, all sections of which must be completed and the form returned to the organiser by a specified date. Details of accommodation, travel arrangements, any special local conditions, personal items that the

students' needs to bring, guidelines for spending money and money for extras such as meals and excursions will also be sent to parents.

- Mobile phones communication between teachers and students on the trip may be necessary. A list should be made of participants' mobile phone numbers (as given on the Permission form) and students may be given (if appropriate) the mobile phone number of trip leader – to be carried with them while on the trip. A mobile phone is available from the school, as staff members are advised not 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.
- If necessary two members of staff should carry out an 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 students 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 the Learning Code, the staff in charge must contact the principal immediately.
- An Accident/Incident Report Form 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.
- Serious breaches of school rules include alleged or proven alcohol or substance abuse
 - regardless of the legal age for consumption of alcohol and/or legality of the substances in the country in which the trip is taking place.
- The school expects that all students travelling on an extended tour will act in accordance with school rules at all times. Students on trips, which involve an overnight stay in Ireland or abroad, cannot be supervised on a 24 hour basis and all extended school tours will involve periods of time without direct supervision. Parents who are concerned that such a level of supervision is inadequate should not permit their daughter/son to take part in such trips.
- Staff accompanying students are expected to conduct themselves as they would in school and to be aware of their responsibilities as they are acting in place of the students' parents/guardians.
- Arrangements will be made to be sensitive to the needs of students who are navigating gender reassignment in relation to overnight accommodation. Parents/guardians will be consulted.

3.3 Yondr Pouches

All students should bring their Yondr pouches on trips (or their Waiver stamp) and phones should be locked into the pouches. Staff travelling with the group will have a

device to open the pouches in the event that phones are needed.

For overnight or international trips, the pouches will be used for some of the time and staff will have devices to open phones for different reasons including health and safety and for any kind of emergency or as required for the purposes of the trip.

3.4 Visiting Speakers/Coaches

A visiting speaker/coach Form should be completed in advance. All visitors need to sign in and out at reception. As garda vetting specific to this school is required for all visitors and as such is not feasible to organise for all visitors. The organising teacher must ensure that visitors are accompanied by a staff member at all times.

3.5 Transition Year Programme

The Transition Year Programme at Athboy Community School aims to give students a wide variety of experiences. Many of these experiences take the form of outings and trips.

At the start of the year parents will give advance permission for all such trips that have been approved by the Principal as part of the Transition Year programme.

4. Protocols for Taking Students on Extra-Curricular Outings

When organising a trip, staff must adhere to the following guidelines;

- i) The organising teacher should request the School Trip/Events Permission Form, fill it out and get it signed by principal and deputy principal
- ii) The organising teacher must compile a list of students going on the trip and email it to the relevant Year-Head for approval.
- iii) The Year head approves or refuses permission for students to attend and informs the parent/student
- iv) The organising teacher creates a group of students on VSWare attending the event to the front office so that the secretaries can answer any questions parents may have.
- v) The clerical officer enters “school approved” on the roll on VS Ware so that the student is not marked absent for the classes when they are at the event.
- vi) The organising teacher emails a list of students attending to all staff
- vii) The organising teacher ensures that they are aware of any students who require specific care in relation to their medical or care needs as recorded in the school Medical Records for that student.
- viii) It is the responsibility of a parent to inform the school if there are any medical or care needs for the student that have not been communicated to the school previously.
- ix) Students who have access to an SNA in school will require the support of an SNA or a teacher to ensure the primary or secondary care needs are catered for.

(see Appendix 2 Teacher Checklist for Planning a Day Trip)

5. Visiting speakers/External Coaches

When inviting visiting speakers or external coaches to work with groups of students, permission must be sought from the principal and deputy principal at least two weeks prior to the planned visit. The School Trip/Event/Visitor Booking Form must be filled out and signed by the principal and deputy principal.

The organising teacher must ensure that garda vetting is sought for Athboy Community School if the visitor/coach is to be alone at any time with students or if the visitor/coach will be working with students on successive occasions, ie, one session each week for six weeks.

Otherwise the organising teacher must ensure that the visitor/coach is always accompanied by a supervising teacher.

Staff should ensure that references have been procured in relation to any visitors/coaches working with children to ensure that the content of the planned session is appropriate to the age, abilities and background of students.

Visitors/Coaches should receive a letter/email/card thanking them for their work with our students after the event.

6. Monitoring and Review

As part of the Development Planning process Athboy Community School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedure on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.