



SCHOOL TOURS AND OUTINGS POLICY

ETSS WICKLOW

SCHOOL ADDRESS: THE GLEBE, WICKLOW TOWN

COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN:

There are restrictions on School Tours and Outings During the Pandemic:

School tours and outings are subject to Covid-19 guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

School tours and outings allow learning to extend beyond the classroom and as such are an integral part of a balanced educational process. School outings require good preparation and organisation to optimise the learning experience for students.

The Board of Management of Educate Together Secondary School Wicklow (ETSSW) supports and encourages school outings. The Board of Management concurs with Department of Education guidelines which state that:

"The objective of educational tours for schools should be that they provide a significant benefit in the educational, intellectual, cultural and social development of the maximum number of pupils in the particular grade(s) taking part in the tour and which benefit cannot be provided by in school activities alone." (DES Circular M20/04)

The policy operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following:

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- The Equal Status Act. 2000
- The Equality Act, 2004
- Circular Letter M 20/04 (DES)
- Child Protection Guidelines for Post – Primary Schools, 2004
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs, 2004

RATIONALE

It is school policy to organise outings for the benefit of students when this is deemed appropriate by the teaching staff, in consultation with management. The school recognises the benefits of outings to complement normal school work, for educational or sporting purposes.

Some trips are demanded by a curriculum subject, such as field trips. Other outings and trips are additional to the curriculum and are not deemed a core activity though they deepen the student's knowledge and understanding of the cultural, social and physical aspects of the areas or countries visited. Student tours to develop linguistic skills are a good example of the latter.

CRITERIA

The lengths of trips may vary from a short local visit to a foreign or domestic tour involving staying away for several days. School trips, outings and tours are a privilege, not a right. The school reserves the right to disallow a student from participation in a school trip if the health or safety of the student or other students or teachers are deemed to be at risk by including that student.

All school rules and all school policies apply while on school trips. In particular, parents and students should be aware that permission to travel on a school related activity is conditional on adherence to the Code of Behaviour. All students selected for sports teams and who travel as part of a class group represent ETSS Wicklow. Students and parents/guardians shall be acquainted in advance of the tour with rules, regulations and special requirements of that tour e.g., clothing, sunscreen, phones etc.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in extra-curricular activities and outings is subject to staff approval. School tours are generally organised on staff initiative. As they are not part of the curriculum, participation is always voluntary and therefore a history of misbehaviour by a student and a previous lack of co-operation may cause the school to decline to accept an application for a place on the tour – therefore application does not mean that a student can simply claim a right to participate in the tour. Only students enrolled in ETSS Wicklow are eligible for consideration for participation in school tours and trips organised by the school.

PROCEDURES

(a) Day Trips

Permission for day trips should be sought from management. Teaching staff are asked to allow adequate time between making a submission of a proposal and the date of the proposed trip. Insofar as possible a full schedule of events should be known and approved at the beginning of the school year in which they are to take place. In granting approval for a school trip consideration will be given to:

- Conformity with the criteria in circular letter M20/04.
- The number of other proposed events to take place during the course of the year
- The timing of the event and its effect on other school activities
- Its implication for the normal teaching routine of the school
- The suitability and cost of travel arrangements

In general, written permission is required from a parent/guardian of a student before they may go on a trip. Students intent on participating in a school trip must use the transport organised by the school and must return home on the aforementioned transport. On occasion, and only with prior written permission from a parent/guardian and agreement with the organising teacher, a student may make other transport arrangements. It is understood that students who play as part of a team representing ETSS Wicklow have on-going parental permission to travel to all away matches.

While every effort will be made to adhere to arranged times on trips, in particular the arrival time back at the school, the school cannot guarantee such times, for example where circumstances arise which are outside the control of staff involved, such as traffic delays.

(b) Overnight Tours

The approval of any overnight school tour must be sought and obtained from the Board of Management.

In granting approval consideration will be given to:

- Conformity with the criteria in circular letter M20/04.
- The number of other proposed events to take place during the course of the year.
- The timing of the event and its effect on other school activities.
- Its implications for the normal teaching routine of the school.
- The suitability of travel, cost and accommodation arrangements.

Once the Board of Management has been informed of all the details of a tour and has given its approval, then the tour leader is fully empowered to proceed with the tour.

(c) Tour Team (School Tours Only)

- A tour team, led by the tour leader will be put in place as soon as possible. It is recognised that the organisation of or participation in any school tour is voluntary on the part of teachers.
- Teaching staff will be informed of the planned tour and invited to indicate to the tour leader if they are interested in being a member of the tour team that will accompany the students. All members of the team will be expected to share the workload beforehand where necessary and during the trip. The tour leader together with management will decide on the team composition to meet the needs of the students involved.
- The tour leader will meet the full Tour Team at the outset so as to discuss the tour, duties and responsibilities.

SUPERVISION OF TOURS AND TRIPS

The number of staff which accompanies a group will be influenced by a number of factors including;

- The number of students travelling.
- The age and maturity of the students.
- The location of the trip.
- The availability of alternative adult supervision e.g. Special Needs Assistants.
- Additional supervision which may be provided at the trip destination.
- If the group will be dividing into smaller groups, each requiring supervision.
- The type of transport used.
- The activities to be engaged in.

Certain tours/trips may facilitate shopping or recreation which may not be directly supervised, as appropriate. This situation will usually be indicated on the permission slip, itinerary or information letter sent to parents/guardian.

Students on tours which involve overnight stays in Ireland or abroad will be supervised throughout the day but not on a 24-hour basis. All extended school tours will involve periods of time without direct supervision. Staff are on call at all times, but do need to sleep. Students are expected to show personal responsibility when it comes to behaviour and to their own sleep time during the night as per the rules of the outing. Parents who are concerned about this point should not permit their child to take part in such trips. If staff are woken to deal with issues during the night, these issues may be reported to school management and dealt with through the Code of Behaviour on return to the school, or in serious situations may lead to the parents/guardians being asked to organise transport home for the student immediately.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL TRIPS

- **Ensure sufficient knowledge of the background of all students involved in the trip, including special educational needs, medical needs and other relevant information;**
- Carry a list of all group members
- Regularly check that all group members are present
- Ensure all students know what to do if they become separated from the group
- ensure that all group leaders have contact details to ensure good communications during the trip
- ensure as much prior knowledge as possible of all elements of the trip
- Risk assess each activity before setting off and ensure everyone is aware of any potential hazards
- Ensure that the group behave well and follow school rules
- Ensure that a First Aid kit is available in cases of any minor accidents
- Students must wear seat belts on buses or helmets if cycling
- Evacuation procedures at the place of residence are understood

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SCHOOL TOURS AND TRIPS

- Staff member has to seek approval from management a minimum of three weeks before the date of the trip;
- A **Request Form** must be filled in outlining all the details for the trip and the plan;
- The teacher must confirm in the **Request Form** that a risk assessment has been carried out for the tour.
- Parents/guardians shall be given an outline of the purpose, itinerary, dates and costs of the tour/trip before a deposit is sought.
- Each student, along with their parent/guardian shall be given a form outlining the rules, regulations and special requirements and shall be required to sign that (i) they understand the rules and (ii) they are willing to abide by them at all times.

The Board of Management specifically wishes to draw attention to the following:

- Students on tours must be adequately insured and have a valid passport for both leaving and returning to the country.
- Students must follow all instructions given by members of staff/external instructors/supervisors at all times and be courteous friendly and co-operative.
- Students must stay with the tour group and are expected to be punctual for all deadlines.
- Smoking is strictly prohibited – any smoking inside buildings may be reported to police and involve a financial penalty.
- The Board of Management requires parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that when their child arrives with the group for the start of a school tour that the child does so free of tobacco, alcohol, illegal substances or any medication which the tour organiser has not been informed about either on the child's person or in the child's luggage.

- Possession, custody, purchase, sale, exchange, free distribution, import, export and/or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs (and even if not illegal in the host country's laws) is expressly forbidden and will result in students being sent home as soon as possible at the expense of parents/guardians – such actions are also likely to further lead to most serious disciplinary measures at the school.
- Possession, custody, purchase, sale, exchange, free distribution, import and/or export of any sharp, barbed, or blunt object which can be used as a weapon is forbidden even when authorised by the host country's law or local regulations.
- It is forbidden at night for students to leave the group's accommodation without express permission of the staff in charge
- Students must bring and wear age-appropriate clothing and comfortable walking shoes.
- Students are not permitted to have piercings or tattoos applied whilst on tours or trips.
- Downloading/distribution/possession of distributing indecent or degrading material is strictly prohibited.
- Recording, videoing or photographing staff/students without their permission is an invasion of privacy and is prohibited – students sharing rooms must not use cameras unknown to other students or without their express permission
- In the case of overnight trips:
 - a) The teacher in charge assigns bedrooms;
 - b) Students must stay in their assigned rooms throughout the stay;
 - c) Students may not allow guests in their rooms;
 - d) Once the group has retired at night, no student has permission to be outside their room, on the corridors or in any other area of the premises unless prior permission is sought and granted by the teachers;
 - e) In addition to the Code of Behaviour and school tour/trip rules, students must adhere to the law of the country which they visit – in the event of a breach of this, due process of law will follow.
- Students are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards the habits, customs, laws and regulations of the host country when abroad and to refrain from any act likely to offend the sensitivity of local people.
- Parents/guardians should bear in mind that applications for identity documents take time to process and should therefore be made as far in advance of the tour as possible in order to avoid the disappointment of not being able to travel.
- The school will not take responsibility for any student whose personal documentation is not in order by the deadlines established by teachers and who is therefore prevented from travelling abroad as a result.
- A student may be sent home, at their parents' expense, if the conduct of the student warrants it.

COSTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FINANCES

In general, trips and tours occur in addition to the normal academic and extra-curricular programmes of the school. There is normally an additional charge.

All school tours travelling outside of the Republic of Ireland must be booked through a bonded licensed travel agent or tour operator from the approved list on www.aviationreg.ie and payments from students should be made **directly** to the travel agent or tour operator and not collected through the school. The tour organiser at the school will work closely with the tour operators in establishing procedures to ensure the school retains full control of the tour.

It is important to note that **families of students who withdraw from a tour/trip after a deposit, or full monies have been paid, will not be entitled to a refund. Similarly, a student who is prevented from travelling for disciplinary or safety reasons will not be entitled to a refund.** The overall cost of a school tour/trip and the destination will be agreed in advance and will take into account the ability of students and their parents to pay.

The income and expenditure of funds associated with the tour/trip will conform fully to the accounting practices of the school. A full account of income and expenditure is reported to school management and to the Board of Management.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety of students and supervisors is a priority when organising and taking a school trip/tour. Teachers taking any tour/trip will exercise due care, common sense and judgement when issues of health and safety arise.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be requested to inform the tour/trip leader in writing of any special needs, medical needs or medication required by their child while on the tour/trip. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to sign a consent form which will allow medical advice to be followed in the event of injury/illness and where it is not possible to contact them in the time available.

In case of an accident, staff will normally apply basic first aid only. Expert medical attention will be sought should this be thought necessary and best practice will be followed. Where a serious accident occurs, staff will seek medical assistance as a first priority and contact the school to inform the office of events. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible by tour leader as well as the school. The Board has full confidence in the staff and their decisions. The teacher planning the outing will ensure that the bus company being used is approved by school management.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to confirm contact details and emergency contact as part of the planning for the tour;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given the phone number for the accommodation venue/s during school tours
- Students are allowed to bring their mobile phones to facilitate direct contact with home;
- The tour leader must ensure that all important contact information is easily available to him/her and ensure that a copy of this information is also available at the school during the tour for use in the event of an emergency. This should include:
 - a) a list of all of those taking part and their home contact details.
 - b) the itinerary to be followed.
 - c) a contact telephone number for the tour leader.

NOTICE TO PARENTS

Parents of students eligible to participate in a tour/trip are given adequate notice outlining:

- The objectives of the tour/trip.
- The itinerary and duration of the tour/trip.
- The costs involved and methods of payment.
- The rules which apply to the tour/trip.
- Parents are made aware of their duty to inform the school of any relevant Health or Safety issues which might affect their child.
- Parents will submit all relevant contact and medical information to the school prior to the trip.
- The signed consent form for parents is an essential pre-requisite for the participation of their child in any school tour/trip.

INSURANCE AND INDEMNITY

- The teacher in charge of the tour must check the situation in relation to insurance – this involves contacting the insurance company to check if all elements of a tour are covered by the school insurance policy. If not, the teacher must organise an additional insurance to cover any gaps.
- Insurance is mandatory for participation in all trips.
- When travelling to providers of physical activities the tour leader will ensure to use facilities/centres approved by the relevant governing bodies which can provide their own personal injury and accident insurance.
- In the case of school tours outside of Ireland, the teacher acting as tour leader must ensure that appropriate travel insurance has been taken out to cover those embarking on the tour and that the individual students and teachers involved take out their own travel insurance if necessary.
- Tours to Europe with bonded tour companies have their own insurance to cover personal injury and accident.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In emergency situations, teachers are expected to stay calm and establish the nature and extent of the emergency as soon as possible. A key priority is to ensure that everyone in the group is safe and establish the names of casualties and medical attention required. A teacher must notify police and emergency services where necessary and accompany casualties to hospital, providing doctors with any relevant medical information. The correct procedure is to inform school management by phone or email as soon as possible and contact the tour operator if anything needs to be rescheduled. The school will notify parents/guardians. If the situation is attracting media attention, the tour leader should point them to the designated media person at the school.

REPORTING BACK TO SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The tour leader of any overnight school tour must organise a debriefing meeting with management on return and submit a report to the Board of Management outlining:

- The achievements of the tour.
- Any difficulties or problems which arose during the course of the tour.
- Further recommendations to improve the tour policy if necessary.

The Leader of a day trip may submit an evaluation form to management if any difficulties or problems arose during the course of the trip.

REVIEW

This policy was adapted on Tuesday 9 November 2021

The next review is in 2024-2025 or as required (if new circulars are issued or important recommendations made after a tour has been completed)